

Regular Meeting
South Orange-Maplewood
Board of Education
February 22, 2021

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of South Orange-Maplewood was held using the online video conference platform on February 22, 2021.

Board President Thair Joshua called the meeting to order at 7:47 p.m.

Adequate written notice of this meeting of the South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education was sent to the Township and Village Clerks, The Star Ledger, the News Record, TAPintoSOMA.net, villagegreennj.com and the District website.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL: Present: Board Member Bergin, Board Member Joshua,
Board Member Maini, Board Member Malespina,
Board Member Siders, Board Member Winkfield,
Board Member Zubietta, Student Rep. Forman

Absent: Board Member Cuttle, Board Member Wright
(technical difficulties)

SEVEN VOTING MEMBERS AND ONE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE PRESENT

Motion made by Board President Joshua to allow distance participation in our monthly Regular Board Meeting during the COVID-19 emergency.

Motion passed 7 yes, 0 no.

The Board held a moment of silence to acknowledge the loss of 500,000 lives due to the Coronavirus Pandemic.

RECOGNITIONS - Lily Forman

Student Recognitions:

NAME/SCHOOL	RECOGNITION
CHS Girls Basketball Team	Congratulations to members of the CHS girls' basketball team who so far have an undefeated record for their season (9-0) with their defeat against, Newark Tech yesterday. Go Cougars. [Note: The team has a 2/18 game against Bloomfield, update will be provided by BOE meeting)
CHS: Natalie Urosov, 9 th Grade	Natalie Urosov a CHS freshman received a triple win for the 2021 Scholastic Art & Writings Awards presented by the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers. Natalie won Gold Key, Silver Key and

	<p>Honorable Mention for her works and received the award letter in late January. Her Gold Key work award automatically advanced her to the national level of adjudication in NYC. National Medal award will be announced on March 17.</p> <p>Since 1923 the Scholastic Awards have recognized some of America's most celebrated artists when they were teenagers. Natalie is part of an esteemed group of Alumni which include, Andy Warhol, Stephen King, Charles White, Joyce Carol Oates to name a few.</p>
<p>CHS: Elizabeth Crofton, Senior Lillian Petruziello, Sneior</p>	<p>Columbia High School Seniors Receive Scholastic Art Awards</p> <p>Columbia High School Seniors Elizabeth Crofton and Lillian Petruziello are both recipients of 2021 Scholastic Arts Awards! The Scholastic Art & Writing Competition is the nation's longest-running, most prestigious recognition program for creative teens. Teens in grades 7-12 (ages 13 and up) can apply in 28 categories of arts and writing.</p> <p>The students submitted several pieces to the Scholastic Awards Competition in December 2020 and were thrilled to hear some of their pieces received honorable mention and a Gold Key award in this regional competition. Elizabeth Crofton's works are "Contrasting Cubes: Growth and Decay" which received an honorable mention and her "Treehouse: Bahay Kubo" earned a Gold Key Award.</p> <p>Elizabeth Crofton created a treehouse inspired by "Bahay Kubo," the Filipino indigenous house, which was inspired by her mother's heritage. For "Contrasting Cubes: Growth and Decay"] Crofton was tasked to craft cubes that explore two opposing characters so she chose to contrast growth and decay.</p> <p>Lillian Petruziello's pieces "Kewpie" and "Phobia" both received honorable mentions. "Kewpie", is a colored pencil still life of objects from her mother's childhood and "Phobia" is a watercolor painting.</p> <p>Special thanks to CHS Art Educator Kirk Maynard for mentoring the students and encouraging them to submit their art works.</p>

Staff:

NAME/SCHOOL	RECOGNITION
<p>Maplewood Middle School:</p> <p>Jonathan Crosse, 8th grade</p>	<p>Jonathan Crosse an 8th grader at MMS has been selected as one of EVERFI's FutureSmart scholarship recipients! As a winner, Jonathan will receive a \$1,000 college savings gift card that can be deposited into the 529 savings plan of his/her choice.</p> <p>Jonathan was encouraged to apply by his teacher, Mary-Alice Zavocki, STEM Teacher - Creative Comp/Design at MMS. The FutureSmart scholarship program is provided through the Mass Mutual Foundation. The FutureSmart program course provided at MMS provides interactive exercises that challenge students to make choices in real-life scenarios to achieve important goals around saving, job planning, and budgeting. Using their knowledge and experience from the course, students set their own financial goals and make plans for their future.</p> <p>The FutureSmart Scholarship contest is open to any U.S. student in grades 6-8 who has completed at least three of the FutureSmart digital lessons. In addition, to completing the digital lessons, students had to submit a short essay about what they learned, and how the FutureSmart program has made an impact on them.</p>

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Board President Joshua declared the minutes of the January 25, 2021 Regular Meeting, Executive and Public Sessions approved as presented.

BOARD PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT

The School Board meeting is a business meeting in public not a meeting with the public. Oftentimes it may appear to members of our audience that the Board of Education takes action with very little comment and in many cases a unanimous vote. Before a matter is placed on the agenda at a public meeting, the Administration has thoroughly reviewed the matter with the Superintendent of Schools/Chief School Administrator (CSA). If the Superintendent of Schools/Chief School Administrator is satisfied that the matter is ready to be presented to the Board of Education, it is then referred to the appropriate Board Committee. The Members of the Board Committee work with Administration and the Superintendent to assure that the members fully understand the matter. After the committee discusses the matter, it is presented to the full Board for discussion before any action is taken. Only then, is it placed on the agenda for action at a public meeting.

Motion made by Dr. Taylor, seconded by Board Member Maini to change the order of tonight's agenda.

Motion unanimously approved.

AUDITOR'S REPORT

Business Administrator Mr. Paul Roth introduced Auditor Andrew Hodulik of Hodulik and Morrison a division of PKF O'Connor. Mr. Hodulik shared an overview of the District Financial audit for the year ending June 30, 2020. In accordance with Government Auditing Standards, their procedures included a review of any prior year recommendations. There were no findings or recommendations.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE UPDATE - Lily Forman

Student Representative Forman provided an update on the following:

- This month at CHS students had a variety of opportunities to celebrate Black History Month thanks to MAC, Student Council and other school organizations. Events ranged from talent shows to open discussions to movie screenings. These important conversations about race will continue tomorrow at 3:30 p.m. at the CHS Asian American Student Alliance open discussion panel, in response to the recent surge of Anti-Asian violence.
- Grades are on many students minds as the first semester comes to a close. For many it's not a matter of whether their A will turn into a B or C, it's a matter of whether they will pass their classes, be promoted at the end of the year or graduate on time. As discussed in Board committees, online learning has led to an increase in students receiving failing grades in their classes. Having reached the half way mark of the year, it is crucial that we address this issue as soon as possible. I am extremely grateful that the Board, Dr. Taylor, Mr. Sanchez and other administrators are committed to this issue.
- As student representatives Jakhi and I are asking the Board of Education and district administrators to implement changes that will reduce the pressure on students and give them every reasonable opportunity to succeed. These recommended changes include more frequent asynchronous days, decreased work loads and an overall sense of leniency for students who are struggling.
- The results of the student survey distributed last week demonstrates the extent to which students are struggling. The survey asked students to describe their experiences and emotions about online learning as well as what supports would be helpful to them. We received over 1,000 responses and believe these survey results provide a road map for next steps. We hope the Board and Administration consider student requests with the urgency and seriousness they deserve.

Dr. Taylor commented about his meeting with Student Representatives Forman and McCray regarding students supports. The thought that we can do nothing is not an option for us. Dr. Taylor, the Curriculum & Instruction Committee, Asst. Superintendents, Dr. Friedman, Dr. Alegria and Dr. Perez

met with high school administration to discuss this topic as well. One temporary fix that was applied to support students in these unprecedented times, was a course destination entitled *Course in Progress*, which allowed students to have more time to complete their course work until this past December. When Student Rep. Forman and I spoke about this concern, we discussed that there may be parents who felt the opposite and did not feel there was enough rigor. I want to acknowledge the thoughtfulness of student representatives.

***Board Members Cuttle and Wright joined the meeting at 8:08 p.m.
Nine voting members and one student representative present***

HEARING OF INDIVIDUALS AND DELEGATIONS

Gina Preoteasa

We need to be focused on opening the schools with the end goal of FULL DAY, IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION for PreK - 8 in the Fall. There can be a virtual option, but there should be NO hybrid option, as it complicates the process and is not necessary once teachers are vaccinated. To make this happen, we need to plan now and focus on two main things: 1) Vaccinate teachers. Do whatever is in our power to distribute the vaccine to our teachers. Make it available to them and easy to get. Other districts are doing this. How are they doing it? How can we do it here? Essex County is LEADING the nation in vaccine rollout. How can we work with our County to distribute the vaccine to our teachers? 2) Audit our facilities to ensure that they are operational and meet basic standards. We have been doing this, but clearly, we're not doing a good job. How can we do a better job? What are the main roadblocks? These two things should be top priority and all resources should be going to meet these 2 objectives.

Moraima Garcia

Given the strong negative impact virtual schooling has had on our children we cannot in good conscience keep submitting them to hours of screen that have worsen anxiety and ADD symptoms for my oldest daughter and have yielded no meaningful progress for a preschooler with special needs. The situation we find ourselves in is not based on science or keeping concern for our children's well-being at the center. We've continued to wait patiently for resolution and every time we seem to make progress we go back to square 1. Until the district can offer meaningful education and support for our kids we will stop the daily torture on our household of trying to force them into remote learning not appropriate for their ages and developmental needs. The union is advocating for their members, we don't have any way to advocate for our children except do what we consider best for our kids. Our family cannot afford private school or has ability to homeschool so our only option is to move out of the district. We are not the only ones. Property values will decrease once is no longer an open secret that schools in our town have not been able to get kids back to school. What this is doing to the kids and our town might be irreparable harm.

Mike Benediktsson

I am the father of a 10-year-old boy enrolled at Seth Boyden, and a 6-year-old daughter who I unenrolled from Seth Boyden earlier this year, because she could not tolerate virtual kindergarten. My son has been remote schooling in our unheated garage, with two other boys, since school started in September. They are supervised by a college kid from our block, whose brother has an autoimmune disease and is highly vulnerable to COVID. As a result, the boys keep the door and windows open in the garage at all times, and wear masks when distancing is impossible to protect each other from asymptomatic infection. It hasn't been even close to 68 degrees in the garage since October. This morning it was below freezing when school started. We cover our kids with blankets, but their hands and feet are always cold. Still, they're making it work. Their attitude is generally positive, and their solidarity and camaraderie gets them through the long, cold, silent mornings of ST Math and Google Meet and other dehumanizing software that is a sorry substitute for direct human connection. They're committed to learning, and most of all, to each other. At the same time, they are paying a steep price for the lack of in-person school. The boys are isolated from other kids. They generally don't see or speak to children their own age. And this isolation, along with the enormous amount of screen time involved in remote education, is taking a toll on their emotional, cognitive, and social development. This year has changed our son. He was always the happiest and most energetic kid in the room. He now goes silent for long periods - neither happy nor angry, just seemingly sad and dejected. We find him face down on the couch or sitting on the ground, staring into space. Hopeless. It's really tough to see, and impossible for us - his parents - to remedy. It is not his fault. It's not our fault and it's no longer Covid's fault. The pandemic is not stopping millions of school kids in other districts from safely attending schools. In spite of the emotions he is dealing with, our son trudges through the snow to the garage every morning, puts on his mask, turns on the space heater, rubs his hands together, and logs onto his Chromebook. I have one question for all of you. Why is it that three ten-year olds and a college kid in an unheated garage have succeeded where the district's leadership has failed? Why are they able to make this work, when, by all appearances, their teachers and administrators have not even come close? We love our kids' teachers. We love our school, Seth Boyden. We will remain committed to the district, if (and only if) it can solve this problem in the weeks to come. But no matter what, it will be very hard for us to get past the impression that when the going got tough, the leadership in the district - BOE, Superintendent, and Teachers' Union - threw our kids under the bus rather than taking the difficult steps needed to reopen our schools. Times are tough all around. We don't envy you, or the teachers in the district. But everyone should be clear on what is happening. The fact that schools remain closed a full year after this crisis began, in spite of clear evidence that they could be safely reopened, sends a message: the district is willing to make kids, particularly the most vulnerable among them, bear the brunt of this crisis. We entrust you with our kids' lives every school day, whether we put them on a school bus or log them onto a laptop. Please, please stop betraying this trust. Please stop failing our kids. Please stop asking them to make sacrifices that you - administrators, teachers, etc. - are apparently unwilling to make yourselves. If the teachers' union is the issue, please

work tirelessly to get beyond this childish impasse. Teachers and administrators - please get past the emotions that are preventing you from doing your jobs - the fear, the frustration, the sadness. Think logically about what needs to be done to move ahead. Put on a mask, open the windows, rub your hands together, do what it takes. And get to work. Remember why you got into this business. We are thankful for you, we (still) support you, but we need you all to rise to the occasion. Our kids are doing it. You can too.

Dana Hall

When can we expect the next update from the district? What steps are currently being taken to re-open the schools quickly? If SOMEA is deeming the buildings to be unsafe what are the interim solutions being suggested? What are the plans for the fall? Do you foresee a chance at a full 5-day re-opening once teachers have been able to receive the vaccine? What if they continue to refuse based on children not yet receiving the vaccine? Why do you think virtual instruction has been successful? What happens if the assessments prove differently?

Stephanie Stecker

I am deeply disappointed in the administration and unions decisions in relation to getting our kids back in school. While the rest of the school year needs to be addressed, what are we doing to ensure that we are ready for a 5 day, full in person school for the Fall?

Gemma Jordan

Virtual learning is not working for our family and our kids are suffering as a result. Our 7th grader has gone from being an honor student who was achieving As and Bs, including during remote learning in the Spring, to a student who struggles to complete her work and turn it in. She is barely passing 7th grade at this point. She finds it hard to stay engaged in class and dreads turning on her computer each day. She has developed anxiety about school and the stress she feels is not conducive to turning in good work. We're expecting too much of our kids to expect them to stay motivated while sitting on a google meet for hours on end. As an adult I know how draining and unfulfilling this form of communication and collaboration can become over time. Inevitably, her work does not get completed in class and that work becomes "homework." Since there is no separation between school and home anymore, we are left trying to find the balance between putting some pressure on her to complete and turn in assignments, while ensuring she gets outside time, fresh air, exercise and a break from her computer. We are currently failing at finding that balance and it's agonizing to watch our child go through this. We both work full-time and are not able to monitor what our kids are doing 24/7, yet we feel under pressure to do so. Our 4th grader already had a hard time sitting still and staying focused when he was attending school in person. Virtual learning has been a disaster for him. We suspect he has ADHD but have been holding off on getting him assessed until he is able to get back in the structured environment of a classroom.

At the beginning of the school year, fearing that he would get left behind, especially in ELA which he struggles the most with, I voiced my concerns to his teachers. I was trying to anticipate how hard it would be for him to do synchronous learning on a computer for hours on end, and asked if there was any flexibility. I was told there were no options other than synchronous instruction and submitting his work through Canvas. His teachers try to keep him engaged and on task by pulling him aside into small groups, and for that I am grateful. Nevertheless, most days he is just going through the motions and we had to hire a tutor to give him some one on one instruction. Not everyone can afford to do that. How many kids are slipping through the cracks while we continue down the path of this virtual learning experiment? The teachers are doing their best but they can't see what each child is doing when they are just a tiny box on a screen and have to be muted most of the time. I often have to sit in the room with my son to make sure he stays on task, which is not easy when you already have a demanding job. His struggles have led to many meltdown, temper tantrums and general friction in our home. On occasion I have been tempted to pull him out of school completely. The switch from Google Classroom to Canvas has been arduous for our family across the board. It is unsuitable for children of elementary school age. My husband and I are both computer savvy, and we have a hard time navigating it. The fact we can't see the work that our kids have turned in is unacceptable. Our son has trouble following instructions on a computer, and remembering what the task is when he constantly has to click back and forth between different tabs. Keeping him on task with homework was much easier when we had the daily planner that the kids had to fill out themselves. Neither of my kids get to do much hand-written work anymore which is detrimental to their development and success. The neurological benefits of writing by hand have been well-documented. It increases neural activity and our ability to retain information. It also taps into parts of the brain that stimulate creativity. There is sadly very little creativity around here these days since we're all just muddling through each day. Muddling through was fine last Spring, when we didn't know anything about this virus. But at this point, we know a lot. We know how to stop it from spreading, we know that transmission in schools is low and we know schools have been successfully and safely operating during the pandemic.

Anecdotally, I have family in the UK. My nieces and nephews went back to school in September full-time, aside from the most recent nationwide lockdown. They were organized into bubbles of six children who did not have to be six-feet apart. Even during periods in the fall as businesses needed to close when transmission rates went up, education was prioritized and schools were kept open. Where there is a will, there is a way. The argument that our school buildings are not up to par doesn't hold weight when our neighboring New York City public schools were able to figure it out and get kids back to school in September. I know firsthand that if anything many of the NYC buildings are more dilapidated than ours. Where there is a will, there is a way. The trouble is that now, after months of broken promises and ever-shifting deadlines, the people in this community don't trust this district anymore to get it done. We feel like we're in the middle of a toxic tug of war between the union and the district. And we're supposed to just be patient and hope that things will be resolved soon, while our kids continue to suffer. I implore the Board of Ed to be creative and

resourceful, to follow the science but think outside the box, to work with the union on renegotiating this ridiculous mandate that classrooms need to be a minimum of 68 degrees in order for them to show up for work, and to please stop shifting your deadlines. If you announce that kids will back in school in April, do whatever it takes to get that done. We have run out of patience. Our kids need to be back in school in the Spring so that by the Fall all the kinks have been ironed out. Where there is a will, there is a way.

Ailyn Abin

We need our children to return to school. Other districts and schools have been able to safely return and there is no reason that with our resources, and frankly the amount of taxes we pay, our children should be left to virtual school. The school is ill prepared for virtual schooling. My son is behind in reading math and has become an introvert. He has become a shell of his former self. We also need assurances about the fall. The district and union have had ample time to come up with a plan. It is irresponsible and unacceptable to be at this point. My request is, list concretely the barriers to getting back to school and a solution for each.

Lauro Gachko

I just moved my family to Maplewood this summer. I moved here for the community, the diversity, the progressive thinking, the culture, the interesting and creative people, the proximity to New York City, and the list goes on and on. I did extensive research and knew that the district has had its fair share of issues over the years. I did not, however, expect this. To say that I am disappointed in how the school district and the Union are handling this pandemic and then whatever you would call this "reaction" to the pandemic is an understatement. Expecting families to manage full-time jobs PLUS the education of their children, particularly young children who simply cannot do virtual learning without the supervision of an adult, is both unnecessary and incredibly damaging. I weep for the children and families of children who have IEPs. I do not downplay the risks of COVID.

I come from a long line of teachers: my mother and my grandmother both taught public schools for decades. Many of my closest friends are teachers. In looking at all the issues that the district faces in re-opening (and I have in fact looked at ALL of them), I know that they can all be overcome with enough collaboration, creativity, and a real singular goal of getting kids back in the classroom. I hear time and time again that this IS the same goal for all parties (the BOE, the superintendent, and the union): getting kids back in the classroom. But it is very clear that what this really boils down to is some dysfunctional pissing match between groups that have likely held resentments and grudges for years. It is shameful and it is embarrassing and, most importantly, it's the families here who pay the cost.

I, like many other families here, are already looking at neighboring towns where I can send my children to five-day-a-week in-person instruction. I have also enrolled my children in private school for this coming Fall,

knowing that the district will very likely not be offering five-day-a-week in-person instruction. I am pleading with you to find a resolution before families start fleeing SOMA.

Koleen McCrink

Dear Board and Dr. Taylor - First of all, I want to apologize for misunderstanding the dynamics at play in the last few months of this whiplash time. As is the case for many parents, my involvement with high-level district dynamics is new as of 2020. I recognize better now the complexity of issues, the lack of power by people I assumed had some, and the systemic and longstanding problems in our district. The increased and more-clear communication from your team over the past few weeks has greatly helped with this. Second, I write to encourage you to stand firm against the unreasonable and ever-changing demands of the local teacher's union, and to renegotiate the terms for reopening that were agreed upon initially.

I am so heartened by the recent change in tactics and tone - more vocal pushback against the aggressive, hurtful, and counterproductive tactics of SOMEA, leaving the door open for legal action, but also most importantly the involvement of neutral mediators who can provide a fair and clear path forward. Finally, I once again ask you to reconsider with your health committee the format of the valuable COVID dashboard. Hybrid and virtual cases must all be reported, staff and students should be separated, and hybrid and virtual should be separated. The privacy concerns are real, but they are overwhelmingly swamped by the core need by all stakeholders to use this tool to calculate risk.

Abbie Lebowitz

What steps are being taken to ensure the buildings will be ready for September?

Deirdre Gleeson-Brown

It is with so much anger and sadness that I write this. We have been out of school for coming onto a year. The lack of inaction and leadership by the SOMA BOE to get our kids into the schools is despicable. The fact that, after a year, the only board member who has made a stance on schools reopening is Thair Joshua is shameful. First, thank you Mr. Joshua. I applaud your bravery. To the rest of the members, I would like to remind you that you represent the people of Maplewood and South Orange--the parents and children of the community. You do not represent the teachers unless they live in our community, which very few do. I understand that you have wanted to be thoughtful of the teachers' position and safety, and I applaud that. However, you have let this go for too long. No matter what you concede, SOMEA will push and push and will change the goal post every time. Based on the petty letters and complaints I have read--which lack any type of problem solving or true effort--it is clear that SOMEA absolutely does not have the students' best interests at heart. Why do you keep letting them make the offensive moves and BOE the defensive? You are the BOE. You have the power to say that we are continuing with hybrid. If SOMEA doesn't like it, they can strike and/or teachers can use their sick days.

This situation will not end until you act like leaders and put the children first. Furthermore, our District has done everything the CDC recommends as the top actions to open schools: masks, social distancing, hand washing, taking into account community spread, contact tracing, and phased opening. We are being as safe as possible and still the union says no. It is ridiculous. The teachers will not all be fully vaccinated by the fall, nor will the students. This could go on for another year, if the BOE does not take a firm stance. Virtual learning does NOT work. It does not work for the strong students, who are floating by getting straight As with zero homework, because they are not being challenged in the least. It does not work for the students who need more help but can't get it because of the impersonal, screen-based format. It does not work for many students who were formally strong students, but now are barely passing/engaged because sitting in front of a screen all day with zero personal interaction is making them depressed. It is sad that we even have to push for hybrid. With the limited hours of teaching in the hybrid model, it is barely better than all virtual. But this the place we are in, because you have let union guide the way, even when CDC guidance doesn't support it. Schools across the nation are open. Old schools, with ventilation issues like ours. You don't even need to look far--look at NYC, look at our neighboring towns. Our children are losing. You are letting them lose and if you don't take a stand against the union now, they risk losing another year. By fall our kids will have been out of school for 18 months and I say "out of school" because really that is what virtual/hybrid is--it is not true learning and you are kidding yourself if you think it is. They need be back in school full time by the fall, so action needs to happen now to make that possible. I implore you to (a) make public your stance on schools reopening and (b) no long bend to the childish and unrealistic demands of SOMEA, and (c) take action now so that our schools can be fully open by the fall--not hybrid; fully reopen.

Karen Palaitis

My son has been in a Wilderness Program for 3 weeks. I finally got a phone call from one of his teachers that he has not seen him in class for three days? He has not been in class for at least 3 months. Its why we sent him to Wilderness. 3 Days? It confirmed that we made the right choice. Leaving them in the woods Utah is safer than Colombia.

Jennifer Davis

Thank you to the Board and the Superintendent for your commitment to resuming in-person learning as soon as possible. Respectfully, please acknowledge that there are multiple stakeholders in this ongoing discussion about in-person learning, with students as our first priority. Other stakeholders include: teachers, administrators, parents, the YMCA, and the larger community. When we open for in-person hybrid learning, only to close down with less than 24 hours notice, this is extremely disruptive to all stakeholders. Children, especially, are struggling with the constant change in schedule. They need stability. We as adults are supposed to protect them and put their best interests first. WE are not doing this right now. While I respect the union's right to organize and collectively bargain, there needs to be a recognition on their part that sudden changes in schedule

have a domino effect on everyone. I urge the Board and the District to include, as part of any negotiation with SOMEA, that any work stoppages or refusals to report in person should be announced well in advance (at least 72 hours' notice). PLEASE no more "night before" refusals to report and then EVERYONE in the community has to pivot and change course. This is unprofessional and insensitive on SOMEA's part and should not be tolerated. Please include this point in any ongoing negotiations. Thanks.

Julie Dechen

As many parents, including myself, are becoming increasingly concerned about fall, what is the realistic expectation of the fall school schedule? Will it be back to full time or hybrid? If hybrid, will it be the prior hybrid two morning schedule or some other version? If hybrid, what parameters will determine the return to full time (staff and kids vaccinations, certain infrastructure updates, spacing guidelines etc.)?

Jill Ryan

Dr. Taylor and Board of Education members,

There is now clearly documented evidence of learning loss due to the limitations of remote learning, a decline in learning across the entire spectrum of students in all subjects. There are now 50% more students that fall into the "low-performing" category than at any comparable period in the past. This data comes in part from Renaissance, the company that makes the STAR tests used by our district. It is no surprise that SOMEA is pushing to avoid STAR assessments. SOMEA has stated that virtual learning is equivalent to in-person learning, but parents know our children are suffering academically as well as psychologically, and the gaps are wider for those learners who were already below grade-level. What is SOMSD doing to assess learning loss and begin delivering compensatory services? NJDOE does require that students be returned to the classroom before compensatory services can begin. Thank you for all your efforts to stop learning loss now and prevent further damage to the most vulnerable students.

Michael Krans

Dear Board Members

I'm writing to urgently ask for your help in getting our community's children back into school for in-person instruction. For every day our kids are stuck at home, attempting to learn through a screen, we are failing them as they grow less motivated, more anxious and even depressed. While my daughter, a 1st grader at Marshall, has been lucky enough to have about 6 days in the classroom this school year, the stop/start of hybrid instruction has made it even worse. While there's no doubt our dedicated teachers are working hard to make virtual learning effective as possible, the reality is that nothing compares to having children sitting with their peers in the same physical space with teachers. Most of the district's children haven't seen a classroom or teacher in person in nearly a year - this is unacceptable and we have to do better. We should listen to the experts, including the CDC, and learn from other school districts across

the country (and the world) that have returned to schools. The message is loud and clear: with the right precautions in place, schools are safe. On top of emotional issues caused by a lack of socialization, my child is constantly oscillating between joy and disappointment every time hybrid instruction starts and then repeatedly put on hold. I think it's vital that the BOE get more involved in this matter, as it's become apparent to the entire community that Dr. Taylor and SOMEA have encountered insurmountable hurdles. Furthermore, it's unacceptable that SOMEA essentially eliminated any possibility of getting kids back into school for hybrid instruction until March 15th (as outlined in their February 15th statement). This clearly demonstrated a lack of good faith and sent a clear message that there is no real sense of urgency. And while I'm worried for my child's education in the short term, I'm increasingly concerned about the 2021-22 school year, when I'll have not one, but two children enrolled in the SOMA school district. This latest public dispute between the district and SOMEA has given me renewed concern and anxiety about the possibility of a full, 5-day/week, return to school in September. I realize the logistics (and politics) of this are complicated, but I think district parents are ready to see more creative thinking and solutions from Dr. Taylor and the board of education. For instance, is there a possibility the 2020-21 school year could be extended or could the 2021-22 school year start early? Can we consider getting kids back into school 5 days a week by mid-April, when warmer weather will allow for some classes to be taught outside? I have a sinking feeling that our district will be one of a handful of New Jersey school districts not back in school full time this Fall. I urge you to do everything in your power to prevent this fear from becoming a reality.

Lucy Chambers

Why is the District putting the impracticable demands of SOMEA above the needs of our children and the guiding directives of the CDC? Please touch upon how and why students have been put last on the priority list in a system set up presumably for the education of the children of its community? If the science is telling us it is safe to return to school providing safety measures are in place and adhered to; and that not opening schools leads to severe mental health issues in a large quantity of children, how is there even a question of reopening? What will it take to show this district that children are suffering beyond measure on a holistic level? Has any member of the BOE or the Superintendent himself had the ability to spend an entire day with a student (K-2) doing virtual school, and what observations and takeaways has this person come up with? If that has not happened yet, why not? How can the District make decisions about a situation it knows little about? What concerns does the district have about the numbers of students who have and will deregister from our district and how this will impact funding and potentially lead to job loss of our teachers and staff, and the erosion of our community? As a district poised to commence an intentional reintegration plan, this seems antithetical. And for those who are unable to change schools and districts, who are forced to stay, how will the district rebuild their trust? Lastly, what of the students who have not successfully navigated the new world of virtual learning? Will they simply be left behind?

Molly Gise

I am the parent of a kindergartner and a preschooler with an IEP. My preschooler was safely receiving in person services through the district, and those have now been cut off. Virtual services simply do not work for my child and her stage of development, so she is basically going without the much-needed help mandated by her IEP. As the district and SOMEA continue to negotiate, I implore both parties to consider the district's special needs students. Hard-earned progress is evaporating, and it's heartbreaking to watch.

Heather Hartzell

I am urging the district to work with SOMEA's leadership and do whatever it takes to reopen our schools. We are rapidly approaching the one-year anniversary of the last time many of our students had in person instruction. Schools can be reopened safely as countless districts around us have shown (and as the YMCA has shown in our own buildings since September). The constant back and forth is stressful for all parties, particularly children who keep having the rug pulled out from under them with schedule changes and the recurrent switch between hybrid and virtual-only learning. I am also urging the district to prioritize inclusion classes in Phase 4 of its reopening plans so that our special education students can reap the known benefits that in person schooling provides.

Thank you

Melanie Cortese

I have a kindergartener at Marshall School and have been extremely concerned about our districts ability to plan, pivot, and move forward in a timely and responsible way. I am watching many other public school districts across the country, and many just a few miles away, develop and execute plans for live instruction. Ive watched them adjust and evolve. I've watched them learn from other schools and learn how the CDC guidelines have changed to accommodate live instruction at schools. ALL of these schools are dealing with the same pandemic. ALL of these schools are responsible for the safety and well-being of its students and staff. It is extremely hard to understand why we are so different in SOMSD? Some say "old facilities." Many other districts have older facilities and they have found creative ways to use other spaces, to re-think classroom structure, to use outdoor areas. Some say it's the SOMEA teacher's union. Many other districts have teachers' unions and have found creative ways to accommodate teachers that are at high risk but ask the rest (the vast majority) to come in and provide the education that young learners so desperately need. So, this comment addresses my concern but I will end with the question- WHY IS SOMSD SO DIFFERENT? Please let me know why we cannot seem to figure out a way to move even one step forward right now?

Mary Claire Sonneman

Dr Taylor and the BOE: Thank you for hearing my comment today. I am writing to express my concern about the excessive amount of screen time our

children are experiencing each day. I am sure we can all agree that the current amount of screen time is not healthy for students - physically or mentally. It is one of the main factors why virtual school is failing, particularly our youngest children. Would you consider making virtual only cohorts NOW, so that the children who return to the classrooms do not have to be on their computers all day? That would also allow teachers to remain virtual only as well. I think the disruption of changing teachers would be worth it.

Nathan Marinoff

To the Board of Education: As you are aware and has been well-publicized, the district's buildings have not been kept in a proper state of repair and improvements that were supposed to allow for in-person education as of this semester were not completed on schedule. The teachers' union is now refusing to allow its members to report to on-site work. Please answer the following questions: 1. When did the Board learn about this state of affairs? 2. Who was responsible for on-site supervision the work that was supposed to be taking place to get them ready for the resumption of in-person education? 3. What individual(s) failed to do their job(s) and caused these issues? Please name names. 4. How were those individuals held accountable? 5. Are the school buildings now safe for teachers and children? 6. The CDC and federal government have called for the resumption of in-person education. Despite this and ample evidence that in-person education does not pose a material risk to the health or safety of teachers, our local teachers' union refuses to allow its members to return to in-school education. Is this a reasonable stance? If so, why? If not, why not? 7. Who is negotiating with the union to get it back to in-school work? Please name names. 8. Do the members of the Board feel that the union is negotiating or conducting itself in good faith? 9. Is the primary duty of this Board to look out for the welfare of the children who attend school in the district? If not, why not, and what is this Board's primary duty? 10. What connections, if any, do the members of the Board have to outside contractors who receive funds from the district? Have any members of the Board accepted any funds from such contractors, whether towards campaign expenses or otherwise?

Ida Wainschel

The lack of adequate infrastructure for our students, teachers, and staff is appalling. Having heard that facilities contractors have been "found" by members of the BOE, I would like to know what connections, if any, do the members of the Board have to outside contractors who receive funds from the district? Have any members of the Board accepted any funds from such contractors, whether towards campaign expenses or otherwise? If none, then please dispel this rumor. Not addressing this question in the meeting will only confirm this rumor for me.

Alexis & Andrew Stein

We are the parents of two children at South Mountain Elementary. Virtual learning is not working for our children. Children cannot learn from a computer for several hours each day. Teachers cannot fully assess

children's performance in a virtual format. Science shows that schools can open safely and effectively. Our children have been safely participating in the YMCA program since September. We strongly support a 5 day in-person opening. Our schools need to open without further delay.

Jenny Ammirati

Is there a plan for 5 full days of instruction in the fall? What are the details of this plan?

SMS Parent

To our beloved educators: Today marks 346 days since our kids have been in school, our kindergartners are celebrating their first 100 days of school without being in a classroom and the start of mediation between SOMEA and SOMSD begins. It's a lot to process that this is where we are. We know you are working tirelessly to provide our students with the best education during these difficult times and have had to adapt to so much. We thank you tremendously for this! The announcement that came last Monday evening, after a holiday weekend with just over 12+ hours until school started, yet again, sent us all scrambling. The constant in and out of school and the switch up in the schedules has been so exhausting and taxing on each and everyone one of us, our families, and our students. Please know that we see you and understand how hard you are working. With all this in and out and back and forth we haven't even been able to give hybrid learning a fair chance yet. Virtual learning took some adjusting to, just as hybrid will to. If we can just get back into the classrooms and give this a fair shot we know you amazing, resilient educators will knock it out of the park. We can't succeed if we aren't even given the opportunity. We know our buildings are old and they are in desperate need of improvements. We look forward to pushing for the LRFP approval by the state and get these improvements made ASAP. With that said, just because a building is old and in need of repairs does not make it unsafe to return to and use. If we believed that the conditions weren't safe we would never send our kids back in. We care about their safety and your safety! We understand that there are some disputed issues right now, but these issues seem to be isolated issues impacting a very small portion. It is not to say that these aren't important disputes that need addressed, but do these isolated issues deem shutting down the entire district and keeping all the students out of school? We have heard from so many of you that you are angry, frustrated and upset and just want to be back in your classrooms with the kids and that you believe it is safe to do so. You are tired of this back and forth. We hear you and share these feelings with you! We understand that speaking out can often be a scary and uncomfortable thing to do. Trust us, we now this more than ever right now. As educators and parents, we teach our kids not to do something just because everyone else is and it is ok to stand up for what you believe in, in a respectful way. We aren't asking for you to speak publicly, if you aren't comfortable doing so, but we do encourage you to let your voice be heard to your union representatives and union leadership. The union is there to support and be a voice of its members. You are a member and you have a voice. This is not a call to turn against your union, not at all. This is just a reminder that you do have a voice in this too. If you believe that we should be back in school please reach out

to your representatives in a respectful and collaborative way. Let's work together to resume in-person hybrid learning as soon as possible for our youngest and most vulnerable students.

Jessica Gurtman

Dear Maplewood and South Orange leaders: There are 30 odd days left of school for each cohort (if school resumes to hybrid instruction the week of February 22nd). That bar is far below the standards I expect for my children's' education, especially given the high taxes paid in this town, neighboring districts demonstrating that hybrid instruction can safely work, and the CDC guidance on how to effectively transition to in-person instruction. We can't fixate on what has happened, but rather what must happen to get SOMSD students back in school. As our elected BOE, our advocates, our voice, I implore you to lead this charge and prioritize our children. It is clear that SOMEA is NOT interested in educating our children; they are solely there to advocate for increased pay and benefits of teachers; students are bargaining chips for them. So why is SOMEA dictating how we address our children's education and needs during this critical pivoting point? Get in front of this problem and take a stand - what has to be done to get these children back in school for the remaining 60 days across two cohorts? My son is in kindergarten at Marshall Elementary. Each time, a total of four so far, he has waited for the bus to go to school, I have a pit in my stomach. Until he steps on that bus, and it's real, I expect the rug to be pulled out from under him. On the days that he has gone to school, he comes bounding home, beaming by the in-person, albeit limited, interaction with his teachers and peers. He shared with me that last Thursday, he was barely on his computer and loved it. I'm sure you've heard endless examples just like this, use these as your guidepost. My expectations next year will be much higher than they are today. For my children, school is defined as full time in-person education. That seems like a far distance from where we stand today, so you must move forward and consider all possible solutions. Get these children back in school. Please

Milagros Nores

While SOMEA and SOMSD leadership are in negotiations, what if any actions are being carried out to address the concerns brought to SOMSD leadership on different spaces across the schools. In addition, what if any actions are carried out in relation to concerns about strength and stability of wifi, and a package of technology for each classrooms (that is, smartboards, document cameras, headsets, etc.) that is systematic, up to date and effectively will support hybrid instruction.

Michael Solomon

Remote learning is an oxymoron and a colossal failure of our district towards our children. My child was given nothing more than a pile of homework re-designated "schoolwork" at the outset of the pandemic, plus (after a month's delay) a total of 1 hour of online video attention from his teacher per week from March until school closure in June. That's it. We tried to accept that as a panic-driven response to the pandemic, confident

that by Fall of 2020 the district and Teacher's Union would have had months to learn how to do something more closely resembling educating. Fall began remotely again, with teachers poorly to completely untrained in how to use Canvas (we asked them and that's what they reported to us), no training in the software for the children (a .pdf is not training, it's a document), and to date, endless glitches and failures (pages that don't load, links that don't appear, etc.). This isn't online learning; it's AOL circa 1983. My child was finally offered half-day in-person learning a few weeks ago which has made a HUGE difference in his attitude and yes, education. He began a relationship with his teachers which instantly changed everything. Only now, suddenly, he's back to staring at a computer screen, desperately struggling and failing again to stay in place for 5 hours a day (and don't give me that "just get up and stretch" nonsense...he's got ADHD like so many others). The CDC says it is safe to resume in-person learning. There is no such thing as zero risk in a pandemic unless the teacher's union is claiming none of the membership has gone shopping, dined outdoors (not to mention indoors), seen a friend, or been anywhere other than their homes the past year. Open a window or two in the classroom and put on a jacket just like you do when you've gone outdoor dining. Wear a mask like the rest of the world or better yet, two. Drop the facade that you are educating remotely...you are not even remotely educating! You may as well be tech support people from the broadband company and the service is horrible! Instead, act like the talented and valuable educators that you are, and that our community so cherishes, and come back to school. As FDR said, You have nothing to fear but fear itself and you can't teach that to our kids when you're hiding out fearfully yourselves. Thank you.

Katie Tichacek Kaplan

I am tired. Tired of not knowing what the plan is from one day to the next, not knowing where my kids will be. I'm tired of not knowing their schedules - it changes every week it seems - or who needs to log in where - and then feeling guilty about it, as if I am a bad mother, as if this indicates I am not paying attention or trying hard enough. I am sick of emails from my kids' teachers telling me they cannot pay attention to the screen. Which I know! that is what we are saying! the can't do this! but no one listens and I just feel guilty again - I SHOULD be able to do this right? The union says "virtual learning is working" so what am I doing wrong? I am tired of preparing my kids for things that never happen and having to be the one to explain it to them. I am tired of dropping them off at the Y at Clinton, one of these unsafe buildings every day and know there have been zero COVID transmissions - seeing this with my own eyes, but being thought of as a "teacher killer" for wanting my kids to go into a school building for school. This community is open-minded - if you think like the loudest and meanest amongst us. This community shuns gaslighting - unless they don't want to hear you, see you, or listen to your experiences, your evidence. I am so tired of feeling hopeless - I am not an angry person but I am angry. and with no one to be angry at. I don't know who can fix this. I just know it needs to be fixed. Parents and children are at our breaking point. Help us.

Inessa Spiegelman

It's imperative that the kids return to in person schooling immediately to preserve parents' ability to educate, work, and live in this town. Staying home affects kids socialization, academic equities, and property values. The one hour of school for pre-K students and half days for elementary school is insufficient for entire year already! How much longer can parents educate the kids full days instead for working full time? How many great teachers can we afford to lose?

Elena Radine

To our school district leaders, BOE, and teachers: We know this is an unprecedented and scary time and we are so grateful for all that you have done for our community and our children. But it is time to get our kids back to school. Our children are suffering needlessly. Science supports reopening schools unequivocally. Done properly, it is safe for students and teachers alike, as schools around the world, the US, and right here in New Jersey have found. The fact that our children cannot go to public school in South Orange and Maplewood is a deep stain on our towns and our community. Please, as parents we are begging you, hear our cries and the cries of this community's children-- get our kids back to school!

Beth Sterling

As a parent of 2 in the district that supports 5 day a week safe_reopening, I don't have an understanding of where things stand on the facilities. The bond with the State - what is the status on it? Do you foresee more delays? Why is this such a sudden emergency given the years of issues? Is it inequitable to do a fundraiser for all schools to help with the cost? Our schools need to reopen now.

Sinead Carew

My 1st grader fought back the tears when he learned yesterday that he would not be heading to the classroom today. It's the 100 day of school he said, I want to be in school. This morning he asked sadly why he was still home when his little brother was heading out to preschool (private - five days a week with masks since September). His mental health is suffering and his learning is suffering. He needs to have supervision at home during virtual school all the time and we can't always provide that supervision and some parents cannot provide it at all. Even with a computer and only part of his class my child loved being back and came home beaming from ear to ear after the three half days he had in the classroom during this school year. My son's teacher has responded to academic concerns with the comment that "If I had him in the classroom I could resolve that issue very quickly." The teacher also advised that the issue be resolved quickly before bad habits were ingrained. This leads me to my question: What are you doing specifically to get my child back in the classroom a) first in front of a computer b) next without a computer c) and then for five days a week? What are you doing to help students with special education plans who struggle even more than my child? For parents who don't want to risk another year of virtual learning or a disruptive on-again-off-again hybrid model where

children are caught in the middle of a fight between the district and the teachers union, what can you tell them? Can you please provide a concrete plan for a real reopening? If you can't do this then you're giving us the signal that we need to move to another district that's managed to open or the signal that we need to search for a private school? What do you have to say to people who don't have those options open to them? What can parents do to help you make this happen?

Rose Sala

Please open our schools for in-person learning. My kindergartener and second grader (both Tuscan) cannot learn this way. It was OK as a stopgap measure last spring, but this is no longer acceptable. The children of SOMA are falling behind their peers, because our children are attempting to learn through screens when the CDC, American Academy of Pediatrics, and numerous other science-based organizations have told us all that this is unhealthy and a poor substitute for the real thing. These organizations, as well as neighboring NJ school districts, have shown us already how to open during COVID, so instead of debating the science, I just wanted to share a bit about how this year has impacted my children and family. My bright, artistic, storytelling second grader has fallen so behind in her reading that she's now in Academic Intervention, reading five days a week...through a screen...with another group of second graders who have fallen behind. She now reads on a first grade level. She was never behind before this year of virtual learning. She's also struggling in math, teetering just on the edge between grasping concepts like multiplication and division and falling behind for good. If she were in a classroom, learning with one of our eagle-eyed teachers, I remain confident this would not have happened, and if it did, someone would be there to catch her and guide her back. My kindergartner has only known Tuscan through his screen. He's spent his entire first year of elementary school sitting in front of a Chromebook, including the four (!) days that our school managed to open for hybrid learning. This is how he met his teacher, his classmates, and this is how he's learning to read, to write sentences, and to add numbers...through a screen. He can barely sit still. He wanders around the house or just lies down on the chair during class. His moods are off the charts when he finally closes the screen. He has raging tantrums that I'm more accustomed to seeing in our 2-year-old. It's way too much screen time for his age, and way too little education. He cries when his teacher doesn't call on him, because she can't see him, and he cries throughout the day in frustration with tasks not appropriate to his age, from reading instructions to navigating tabs and a keyboard that should be foreign to him for many more years. He bumps into the table when attempting gym class from his Chromebook. He tells me daily that he hates school. He's 6! I haven't even touched on the other ways this year of remote learning has impacted my family, including my lost wages, because I cannot work full-time when I am running two separate classrooms out of our living room/dining room. They are too young to stay on task without constant prodding from an adult, which means I've taken multiple leaves from work and now am down to an extremely part-time schedule, earning just a fraction of my salary. I print out their writing paper; I help them find their specials in Canvas; I bring them snacks; and I give constant pep talks: "The day's almost over; you can do it. You're doing great." We've started looking for a home elsewhere,

perhaps in Millburn or New Providence, both of which have five days a week of class for elementary students. We cannot afford private school, and with this failure of a year, SOMA has absolutely shattered my trust in this school district. I worry you won't open next year. I worry that my kids will lose two years of their education. I worry that I will go broke trying to find a solution on our own. Thank you for listening. My kids looked like they were floating on air for those four days of in-person Question / Comment * Character Limit: approximately 4,500 characters. learning. They were not hungry and they were not cold as some have suggested. They told me all about the awesome things in their classroom, showed me through the windows where they sat, and told me about new friends. Please, please, let them have the education they deserve.

Natalie Picow

We are in agreement with the BOE that in-person learning must resume as soon as possible! My son has an IEP and was in Cohort -C 4 times a week for in-person learning. He greatly benefited from meeting his teachers even for the brief time he was allotted. We were blindsided by SOMEA and the unacceptable manner and method they used on Sunday night last week to inform us that they would not be coming back to school, hours after the Superintendent announced the plan to continue with in-person learning. Pausing in person learning INDEFINITELY and with no transparent plan to get students back into the classroom as mandated by Governor Phil Murphy is unconscionable and in violation of their duty to the parents, teachers and children in this district. Who knew that they would use this crisis against our kids! Shame on SOMEA!

Jennifer Hart

I call upon the Board to publicly state that they want our children back in school and to work with Governor Murphy, local leaders Frank McGehee and Sheena Collum, the principals of our schools, SOMEA and the PTAs to do everything in their power to re-open our schools to hybrid learning now with the goal of 5-day a week hybrid learning by this Fall. The Board must support the district in their mediation with the teachers' union and should call upon the Governor to make vaccinating our teachers a priority and should be working with local leaders to set up regular testing of teachers and all adults in the schools as was done for our communities at large in 2020 and as is being done in other districts and educational institutions throughout the country. The Board should be focused on assessing the mental health of our students, as well as the learning losses, and establishing in-person summer school to cover the losses our children have experienced since March of 2020. In addition, the Board should be reaching out to local leaders to learn how they successfully and safely ran summer programs in 2020 and how they are successfully and safely running in-school programs via the YMCA and learn from those endeavors, applying them to the in-person teaching of our children in our schools. 70% of parents voted for hybrid learning. That is an overwhelming majority of the families in our towns, a majority that is largely being drowned out by a more extreme ask of 5 days in person, right now. This majority is afraid to speak up and be seen as anti-teacher, but we must be heard and as stated above, we want teachers vaccinated and tested regularly and schools safely reopened under state

mandates. Families are starting to look elsewhere for education and will continue to do so if this crisis is not immediately addressed. Failure to act now could cause a crushing blow to an education system already on the brink, and the victims will be all of our children.

Katherine Gebremedhin

Dear Dr. Taylor and Board members,

I want to start out by thanking you, the board, and the SOMEA for working towards a resolution to get our children back in school safely and as soon as possible. I also want to state at the beginning of this public comment that I am in no way affiliated with the leadership of the YMCA, I am simply a parent who has relied on the Y for wrap around support for my elementary school children since my family entered the district in 2016. Our family is incredibly grateful to the Y for providing a space for my children to learn, play, and thrive since it launched its school-aged virtual leaning support program in September. The Y provides a variety of options for dual income working families like ours, from full-time care to half day care. Our family benefits from the half-day program as it is the most affordable option. Through participation in the Y program, we've watched the Y pivot at every single turn to accommodate working families. Through all of the stops and starts with hybrid education, we know that we can rely on the Y to provide a physical space for our children in this virtual reality. This brings me to my request to you, Dr. Taylor, and the school board members. The next few months are likely to bring lots of changes in the physical space that is available to the Y as we move back to Phase 3 and 4 of re-opening. As a parent to 2 of the more than 170 district children who rely on school-aged care through the Y, please prioritize coordination with the YMCA to ensure that families still have a variety of options available to support their children throughout the school day and beyond. The past month of delays with Phase 3 and Phase 4 have meant that families have had to reconsider their childcare options every few weeks. The Y seems to be constantly looking for space to provide uninterrupted childcare and learning support. In fact, the last move to hybrid caused the Y to discontinue their half day program due to space constraints. This caused families like ours to have our childcare costs double overnight. I sincerely hope that this district can help the Y to secure a consistent space to utilize until the implementation of Phase 4 when all grades will have the opportunity to attend their home schools and aftercare programming on site. Until then, please don't put the Y staff and Y families in the position to constantly shift locations, hours, and most importantly, disrupt cohorts of children and staff who have been paired together safely and already adjusted to their new environments. Please commit to securing these physical spaces now and keep them available without interruption until we enter Phase 4. Our children, parents, and most importantly, the YMCA staff, deserve to have some consistency in light of all of this uncertainty and chaos surrounding re-opening.

Thank you for your time

Jonathan Ferguson

I am writing to you as a parent of three children in the district in grades K, 4 and 4. I keep hearing from these meetings, from the BOE announcements and repeatedly from the union that virtual learning is working. I want to be very clear that remote education is a farce. While I think the individual teachers are doing the best that anyone could be doing in impossible roles they have been placed, it is not working. Despite removing myself from hours of my job each day to assist with their education and to attempt to act as a social outlet, my kids are increasingly depressed and disinterested without the structure and socialization of in-person learning. I feel helpless watching the union essentially strike without the legal ramifications of technically striking, using COVID as a facade to release their frustration against the BOE for years of apparent slights. I feel equally helpless with the lack of transparency between the union and the board. It is depressing that every conversation I hear from friends and neighbors either involves moving or which private schools they can afford to send their kids to and whether they need to start withdrawing from their college savings or retirements funds to do so. This is not sustainable. I can no longer accept a response that these decisions are being made with the students' best interests in mind. I believe this can be done safely with protocols and practices backed by science. We have seen this in the public and private schools around us, and in our very own schools, where our local YMCA currently runs emergency childcare programs. We need a clear plan of action to put students back in the classrooms, including dates, and accountability for those that cannot uphold their responsibilities to our students and our district. We need you to be the voice for our students, as they clearly have none.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

David Stahl

I am a parent in South Orange. I have two children; ages 7 and 4. One is in 1st grade at the Annex at South Mountain Elementary, and the other qualifies for an IEP. My oldest, the 1st grader, that goes to South Mountain has been struggling throughout the year trying to cope with virtual learning. He does not have the attention span or stamina to sit for hours in front of a screen and attempt to learn concepts that are entirely new and would be challenging even in person. He feels frustrated and upset by school every day because of this. I'm sure you can understand how important it is to spark excitement in children to engage them in learning. There is no spark that translates over a computer environment for this age group. As a result of his frustration with school, we are fighting with him more and more; trying to keep him on track and have him do the work that is so difficult for him. In contrast last year he was so excited and happy going to school before COVID. He would always talk about his day with a smile and could recall what he learned that day. I saw some of this excitement again on the days he went to school for in-person. I know it is the medium of trying to learn over a computer that is holding him back. I don't think it can be expected that elementary students of this age will be successful or get anything out of virtual learning. My youngest that qualifies for an IEP and is now very delayed in speech and emotional

growth, is not getting the services he required to catch-up and even be ready for kindergarten. Trying to do any kind of therapy over video is just an exercise in futility. I am truly concerned that not providing him what he needs now will adversely affect his education and growth. For the sake of these little ones we must allow schools to open back up in-person for Elementary and below.

Elena Svitavsky

Re: policy 5430 - class rank. You are discarding all means of recognition for academic achievement. To no longer have class rank, after already shifting from percentile to decile ranks, will continue to put this district in a very unflattering light. If academic achievement isn't applauded what reason does any student have to work hard? This district will continue to suffer from flight of high achieving students and will continue its quick descent into mediocrity.

Vanessa May

Dear Dr. Taylor and members of the Board of Education, We ALL want the schools open to in-person learning, including all the parents and all the teachers. Everyone agrees that safe conditions can exist—but those conditions mean precautions that include adequate ventilation and heat. I would like to urge a conversation about what it would take to open safely and make the necessary repairs to make the buildings safe, warm, and well-ventilated. Many parents (both virtual and hybrid) have already moved onto this other much more productive conversation. I understand why teachers do not want to go back to poorly ventilated and freezing classrooms in the middle of a pandemic when they have not yet been vaccinated. Just like there is a way to open safely, there is a way forward in this debate that is beyond whether to open or close. I hope the Board will choose this path.

Paul Teitelbaum

Science is now showing that our children should be back in school. Dr. Fauci stated just today that all children K-5 should be back in school full time. Public schools in lots of other towns are either hybrid or opening full time and private schools are open. Please explain exactly what is the hold up from opening the schools back up. What specific criteria did SOMEA lay down that were required to open? We're these criteria met or not? If not, why not? Is SOMEA "moving the goal posts" and, for example, adding in items they were complaining about since pre-COVID? If so, those are irrelevant for reopening - that's holding our children hostage. Those items can be address after the schools are opened. Our children are hurting from this - it is gravely affecting them. Continuing all-remote learning is not acceptable. They are not socializing and they are not learning as much as in class. This will PERMANENTLY affect them and their normal development. SoMa is also becoming a laughing stock among communities and this is going to adversely affect public perception of our towns and their ability to grow and thrive, and it will impact our property values. Why should We continue to pay school taxes for substandard education and lack of socialization? We, the parents of South Orange and Maplewood DEMAND transparency, and a plan and agreement to open up within the next couple of

months. An agreement that everyone sticks to - the district and the union. Otherwise we are prepared to start taking action. In many different ways.

Sarah C

How will the district work to have better communication with the Y? As I a parent I do not believe that the Y should find out major decisions from parents or the newspaper. What will the district do to let the Y know what is happening as far as school, snow days, and all other major decisions are concerned?

Reshma Ketkar

Dr Taylor & BOE, I am sad about the decision to move to all virtual learning because it has an impact on kids like me who can't focus on a screen for more than 2 hours a day. I miss seeing my teachers and friends and even miss writing on the board and reading actual books - not GET EPIC!! I don't understand why my friends get to go to school when it has been almost a year since I have been inside Clinton Elementary. My friend moved to Westfield and we are exploring our options too. He has been in school since September. My brother is in 2nd grade and has only been inside Clinton for 4 days over the last year. He is too small to be learning reading on a screen and is falling behind and feeling like he can't do it. My friends in private school say things like: "guess what happened at school today"? But it just makes me sad and a little jealous because I haven't been back to school since March. How is this okay? How is this fair for me and all the kids in SOMSD? At this point, my parents are talking about moving to another school district and we are looking at houses. We are looking at private school or even starting a cooperative school. But I would miss my teachers and friends at Clinton. Can you help me get back to real school?

Dr. Taylor thanked members of the community, for taking time out of their evening to share their heartfelt concerns. We understand that there is nothing that is more meaningful to a parent than their child. We respect each of the public speaks, and that is why although we are not required to respond, it is a methodology that we implemented upon my arrival, to make sure that all community members were aware that their thoughts and concerns will be immediately responded to, if not addressed. I am going to start by reading a letter that we are going to send to our families that is apropos to many of the public speaks.

Good Evening SOMSD Community,

I am reaching out to you as your Superintendent of Schools to offer you clarity on our current unfortunate circumstances. The South Orange & Maplewood School Board hopes to resolve recent disagreements with our local teacher's association, SOMEA. The union met with the Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC) a third-party mediator on Friday for a hearing, and the District is meeting with the mediator tomorrow. The Board is hopeful that an outcome can be reached as it is undoubtedly consistent with the community stakeholders' interests to resume in-person instruction as soon as possible.

Early evening on Monday, February 15, our local Association that represents many of our educators, SOMEA, directed its members to not report to schools to continue in-person hybrid instruction. On February 17th the Association expanded its stoppage to include bus drivers that refused to drive completely unoccupied buses and support staff, including clerical personnel that work alone or with limited other personnel in large workspaces where they are socially distanced well-beyond the minimum six feet.

During these recent disagreements, the Board, my Administration and I have worked to do all we can to negotiate in good faith and be empathetic to the concerns that teachers and other employees have during the Pandemic that has left us all with what some call, 'a damp blanket of depression and exhaustion.' We have expressed this empathy by investing heavily in our virtual learning approach (via our learning management platform and procuring/distributing thousands of Chromebook devices). We convened a Task Force throughout the summer with more than 100 professionals, to painstakingly plan for this school year. We also of course have purchased a stockpile of mitigation supplies (Disinfectant, Masks, signage, hand sanitizer, etc.) and added a significant number of personnel (additional evening custodians and bus attendants), while doing all we can to improve our HVAC systems (which most would describe as antiquated and due to be replaced).

Were things perfect? No...but we were flexible and SOMEA agreed that concerns could be addressed through our grievance process, but that was not allowed to continue to fruition. Our building administrators have been responsive to the needs put forward. While the District facilities are old, they are safe. Even in the best years, systems break down, it gets hot or cold in a room and we take action to fix it. We've had poorer weather this year than the last three years combined, which is unfortunate. But because so few students are in the buildings and we have a Sidebar Agreement, principals were relocating a small population of teachers as needed on a daily basis to put them in suitable rooms. Just like with anything else, we had to prioritize our responses to complaints and grievances, and there needed to be some patience to allow our facilities staff time to look into the issues presented.

We are continuing forward with a professional mediation process and we will also pursue any other legal options as agreed upon by our District counsel. We do this not because we are angry with our teachers, but because we love our students and are committed to serving our families who have been not only patient but very supportive.

In addition, we have been committed to being transparent, developing and launching a weekly dashboard of COVID-19 infections, and publicly acknowledging when there have been missteps along the way. I say all of this to again confirm to you, our stakeholders, that we have not taken this lightly. We have not done this to receive accolades, it was done to give our parents a choice and to most importantly serve our children during a time when they are most vulnerable.

The District has and continues to prepare rooms consistent with guidelines established by The Road Back, the New Jersey Department of Health, Federal

CDC Guidance, and Industry standards. We take this work very seriously and we would not open the schools if we did not believe we could do it in a safe and healthy manner for both staff and students.

We're not doing anything unique by returning for in-person instruction. Many Districts in our State are open for their kids and have invested far less, and hundreds of schools are doing this to a greater degree than we are. In our instance, we have chosen to implement a measured reopening approach consistent with what we've determined is safe for our community and staff.

As a District, we stand by science and data. Unequivocally, the science and data both nationally and from our Phase 3 days in-person, support what we already know...if students and staff follow mitigation steps (masks, social distancing, and hand hygiene) the chances of school-based transmission of COVID-19 are very unlikely. We designed our reopening re-entry approach to be phased so that we would be able to be nimble and shift/pause if necessary. We designed our approach to get our most vulnerable students in first (Pre-K-2nd, 6th, and 9th) and most often (Special Services and English Language Learners). We were conservative, as most classes had 5 or fewer students in them.

The NJ Department of Education has given every family a choice as to whether to be fully remote or to go in-person consistent with the District's plan. The families that have chosen to have their children resume in-person instruction have relied on us to provide safe in-person instruction, and in good faith, we had been providing that.

The District's primary goal at this point is for students and staff to return for in-person instruction safely within the rooms that have already been designated by the District as "ready", meaning they meet safety standards. We want to bring students back to school and most importantly continue to serve them and our families.

It is important for our community to know that today working with our Labor Counsel, we did file a verified complaint on behalf of our District regarding this action with SOMEA.

Dr. Taylor responded to questions and comments submitted during the Hearing of Individuals and Delegations with the following statements:

- I want the community to know that I as the Superintendent and our administration supports the vaccination of teachers. I helped to create and signed off on a Superintendent letter that was sent from the Superintendents of our County to the Governor, imploring his office if at all possible, to prioritize teachers in Essex County. We even made our buildings available to issue vaccinations via our nurses.*
- In the State reopening document, *The Road Back*, as well as the CDC's guidance, open windows are encouraged but they are also part of professional responsibility for teachers to make that determination as they see fit. We did not create this guidance and put it in the agreement. It is written in the State and CDC guidelines.*
- We have more than 100 professionals who were a part of our planning taskforce for reopening. We continue to have conversations with our*

taskforce around options that are manageable for a school district and all of your suggestions can be considered. But there are regulations that are against certain types of space heaters etc. Our agreement with SOMEA spoke about some of the framework.

- I want to thank the Alliance Group that spoke. We do have a meeting set up for next week and I look forward to having a conversation around bringing our community's energy towards partnership.
- I want to reemphasize that we 100% understand and acknowledge the concerns around Special Services is a very important matter. One of our first priorities was to return special need students to in-person instruction.
- We did not stop our in-person instruction due to delays in parts for the HVAC systems. Our administrators have been very creative and attentive to the needs of the rooms that are assigned.
- In our long-range facilities plan we have chapters of audits of all the spaces in our buildings. We have moved forward with the designs for elementary schools and because of the pandemic we also have a running record of all of our classrooms and all of the moves that were made in shifting teachers between classrooms, as well as a daily record that we were doing prior to in person return of the operational pieces in every classroom unit ventilator.
- I hope that from the letter that we just read that it is clear that we are not angry with our teachers and we are just very, very concerned about our students and their needs.
- Our subcommittee for health and safety is made up of members or our Departments of Health and internal health professionals and they unanimously believe we cannot share more information on our dashboard because our numbers are so low it would be very easy for people to map who the positive cases are based on attendance and would put their privacy at risk.
- There are very different feelings around screen time. We are utilizing what we feel is a very reasonable amount of instructional minutes with breaks. Parents who feel overwhelmed by screen time should speak to your child's teacher and principal.
- Right now, as part of the Executive Order from the Governor, we must provide every family with the opportunity for virtual learning. As long as that stays as the standard for September, we as a District have to develop an opportunity for that. The establishment of all virtual teachers mid-year, would take students away from teachers they are already accustomed too. However, as we go into planning for September, if this remains a requirement of reopening there is a high likelihood that our district will establish virtual only teachers for virtual only families, at least for our elementary grades. It becomes more difficult to have virtual only teachers at the secondary level, because some of those classes are very specialized. So perhaps for an AP or honors course there are only one or two teachers who teach a particular course. Additionally, for September we are also looking at what scheduling looks like. What we know is many districts who have returned, returned on a 4-hour day because there were so many recommendations against in person lunches. This is the most vulnerable way to have COVID spread in a school. So, monitoring the science and data will give us guidance on whether or not there is a way for us to mitigate the in-person lunch.

- Dr. Friedman, Asst. Superintendent for C&I and Mr. Bonds, Director of Technology have been meeting to document what technology is in place in each of our schools. Equipment may be different based on building and grade level. Our fabulous PTA leaders have spoken about fundraising and donating smartboards and other technology. We think this is a fantastic idea but we want to be measured to make sure we select the same equipment across the district. This is important to make sure we are able to easily make repairs, have parts readily available and to ensure that all of the equipment and programming can communicate with one another. We want to be smart about long term investments so we are not replacing things in a couple of years.
- No one on the Board can direct administration to pick a vendor. No one has that type of authority. There is a very public process for procuring vendors, especially large vendors.

Our goal is a shared goal, to provide families with an in person option immediately

2021-2022 BUDGET PRESENTATION - *Paul Roth, Business Administrator*

Business Administrator Paul Roth presented the 2021-2022 Preliminary Budget presentation, including a brief overview of the Budget Development Process, Projected Revenue, Enrollment, Expenditures, Tax Impact and the Budget Calendar.

[presentation on file in Board Secretary's office and on the district website.]

Board recessed at 10:35 p.m.

Board reconvened at 10:41 p.m.

Nine voting members and one student representative present

ACCESS AND EQUITY REVIEW - *Dr. Taylor, Superintendent of Schools*

Dr. Taylor presented a review of the SOMSD Access and Equity Journey which specifically addressed the following:

- Levers
 - 6th grade math choice
 - 8th grade Algebra 1
 - Children of Color course selection (middle school)
 - Intervention and Supports enrollment
 - Teacher recommendation/prerequisite Assessments
 - Math Journey to Calculus
 - Historical View of 'Adds/Drops'
 - Advanced Placement Summer Assignments

This presentation does not conclude this important conversation. We could fill so many more slides with information on this monitoring and assessment. The passion behind this work is palpable both in the public, Board and District. We are all contributors to this advocacy. Access and Equity is more than a position, policy or department, it has to permeate

all of our operations as a District. We must continue to invest in changing the trajectory...the literal likelihood that our most vulnerable students will be included in our most rigorous offerings.

In support of this work...we are considering investing in a 3rd party to assist in digging through our practices to identify implicit bias as well as students of color who are through no fault of their own not participating in the most rigorous of course though they have demonstrated that they are outstanding candidates.

[presentation on file in Board Secretary's office and on the district website.]

BOARD PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

The District is prepared to reopen.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION - *Board Member Siders*

The committee discussed the following:

- Special Services Update
- Policy Update
- Equity and Access
- District Goal #3 (*SOMSD Portrait of a Graduate Timeline*)
- NJSLA Update (*Spring 2021 NJSLA UPDATE*)
- Failing Grade CHS Update (Principal Sanchez presentation)

PERSONNEL & LABOR RELATIONS - *Board Member Maini*

The committee discussed the following:

- February 2021 personnel resolutions
- Other personnel matters
 - Guidelines of personal leaves of absence
 - School Business Administrator position.
 - The Custodial Supervisor position SLT is also rethinking
 - Director of Security job description
 - Other staffing needs
 - Update on 504 requests
- Staff Evaluation update

FINANCE FACILITIES & TECHNOLOGY - *Board Member Wright*

The committee discussed budget expenditures. Much of the discussion covered legal contractual obligations and associated costs. It was explained that the difficulty in constructing the budget is not knowing exactly how instruction will be delivered September 2021. Will the district still be in hybrid or will all students and staff return under a pre-COVID schedule?

The anticipated expenditures were created assuming the need to continue full COVID protocols and operating under a pre COVID schedule.

POLICY COMMITTEE - Board Member Bergin

The committee discussed the following

- Perkins Audit Policy
- Policy process and management
- Strauss Esmay
- Policies for first reading
 - o 0142 Board member qualifications, prohibited acts and code of ethics
 - o 0143 Board member election and appointment
 - o 5430 Class rank policy
 - o 0145 Board member resignation and removal
 - o 0148 Board member indemnification

ITEMS FOR ACTION

Motion made by Dr. Taylor, seconded by Board President Joshua that the Board of Education approves the following:

4104A. RETIREMENTS

NAME	ASSIGNMENT	EFFECTIVE DATE	YEARS IN DISTRICT
Campbell, Jon	T SS CHS - 1.0 FTE	7/1/21	25
Ceccacci, Debra	T 3 CLIN - 1.0 FTE	7/1/21	23.5
Dodd, Kate	T Art CHS - 1.0 FTE	4/1/21	19
Hershfield, Bennett	T SCI/C CHS - 1.0 FTE	7/1/21	26
Hershfield, Jennifer	T Music DIST - 1.0 FTE	7/1/21	23
Robinson, Kathleen	Clerical Aide CLIN - 1.0 FTE	7/1/21	21
Roth, Paul	Business Administrator/Board Secretary DIST - 1.0 FTE	4/1/21	20.5

4104B. APPOINTMENT

(This employment is conditional and subject to the disclosure requirement; pending compliance with NJ Public Law 2018, Chapter 5)

NAME	ASSIGNMENT	EFFECTIVE DATE	ACTUAL SALARY
Scalise, Selina	Crisis Intervention Counselor CHS - .6 FTE	2/23/21 6/30/21	\$35,076

4104C. LEAVE REPLACEMENT APPOINTMENTS

(This employment is conditional and subject to the disclosure requirement; pending compliance with NJ Public Law 2018, Chapter 5)

NAME	ASSIGNMENT	EFFECTIVE DATE	ACTUAL SALARY
Bibighaus, Janina	T Science SOM - 1.0 FTE	2/18/21 6/30/21	\$60,460
Rosenthal, Matthew	T KDG MAR - 1.0 FTE	4/2/21 6/24/21	\$56,460
Stein, Kathryn	T 2 SM - 1.0 FTE	2/1/21 6/14/21	\$78,860

4104D. CHANGE IN START DATE

NAME	ASSIGNMENT	OLD START DATE	NEW START DATE
Williams, Clay	School Bus Aide DIST - .5 FTE	2/15/21	2/16/21

4104E. TRANSFERS/REASSIGNMENTS

NAME	OLD ASSIGNMENT	NEW ASSIGNMENT	EFFECTIVE DATE
Quinitchett, Amanda	T SPED/INC SM - 1.0 FTE	T SPED/EBR JEFF - 1.0 FTE	2/23/21

4104F. LEAVES OF ABSENCE

NAME	ASSIGNMENT	EFFECTIVE DATE
Dios, Kelli	Guidance Counselor MM - 1.0 FTE	2/1/21-3/1/21 (Unpaid Personal Leave)
Fox, Mara	LDTC JEFF/MAR 1.0 FTE	12/21/20-2/17/21 (Paid Maternity Leave) 2/18/21-3/26/21 (Paid Sick Days) 3/29/21-6/25/21 (Unpaid FMLA)
Hart-Ruderman, Sophia	T H/PE SOM 1.0 FTE	11/30/20-1/25/21 (Paid Maternity Leave) 1/26/21-2/10/21 (Unpaid Maternity Leave) 2/11/21-5/12/21 (Unpaid FMLA)
Mincer, Ebony	T SPED MM -1.0 FTE	2/8/21-2/16/21 (1/2 day) (Paid Personal Days) 2/16/21 (1/2 day) - 3/12/21 (Unpaid FMLA)
Ortega, Yuridalva	T SCI/Biology CHS - 1.0 FTE	2/23/21-2/26/21 (Unpaid NJ FLA)
Pomeranc, Deborah	T 1 SMA - 1.0 FTE	2/8/21-3/12/21 (Paid Sick Days)

Williams, Ingrid	S4/12, Secretary (SPED) DIST - 1.0 FTE	2/27/21-4/15/21 (1/2 day) (Unpaid FMLA)
---------------------	---	--

4104G. SALARY ADJUSTMENTS

NAME	ASSIGNMENT	EFFECTIVE DATE	ADJUSTMENT	ACTUAL SALARY
Clyburn, Brian	School Counselor CHS - .2 FTE	1/4- 1/29/21 (19 days)	\$83.86 (per day)	\$1,593.34
Mooney-Chavis, Danielle	School Counselor CHS - .2 FTE	1/4- 1/29/21 (19 days)	\$83.39 (per day)	\$1,584.41
Renelle, Stephanie	School Counselor CHS - .2 FTE	1/4- 1/29/21 (19 days)	\$78.91 (per day)	\$1,499.29
Rucker, Courtney	School Counselor CHS - .2 FTE	1/4- 1/29/21 (19 days)	\$66.46 (per day)	\$1,262.74
Williams, Adrian	School Counselor CHS - .2 FTE	1/4- 1/29/21 (19 days)	\$60.46 (per day)	\$1,148.74
Maggiore, Molly	T PE/H CHS - .2 FTE	1/4- 1/29/21 (19 days)	\$67.76 (per day)	\$1,287.44
Mobley, Gary	T PE/H CHS - .2 FTE	1/4- 1/29/21 (19 days)	\$93.25 (per day)	\$1,771.75
Shannon, Rob	T PE/H CHS - .2 FTE	1/4- 1/31/21 (19 days)	\$93.25 (per day)	\$1,771.75
Trieu, Johnathan	T PE/H CHS - .2 FTE	1/4- 1/29/21 (19 days)	\$55.46 (per day)	\$1,053.74
D'Alessio, Tara	T SPED CHS - .2 FTE	1/4- 1/29/21 (19 days)	\$93.25 (per day)	\$1,771.75
Kaller, Nichole	T SPED CHS - .2 FTE	1/4- 1/29/21 (19 days)	\$76.26 (per day)	\$1,448.94
Keegan, William	T SPED CHS - .2 FTE	1/4- 1/29/21 (19 days)	\$93.25 (per day)	\$1,771.75
Simon, Kenneth	T SPED CHS - .2 FTE	1/4- 1/29/21 (19 days)	\$83.86 (per day)	\$1,593.34
Spina, Kathleen	T SPED CHS - .2 FTE	1/4- 1/29/21 (19 days)	\$93.86 (per day)	\$1,783.34
Bethea, Sabrina	Clerical Aide TUS - 1.0 FTE	1/6- 2/10/21 (42 hours)	\$13.72 (per hour)	\$576.24

Araujo, Viviana	School Bus Driver DIST - .5 FTE	2/17/21 (1 day)	-\$152.36 (per day)	-\$152.36
Byrd, Bernadine	School Bus Driver DIST - .5 FTE	2/17/21 (1 day)	-\$157.36 (per day)	-\$157.36
Clark, Winona	School Bus Aide DIST - .5 FTE	2/17/21 (1 day)	-\$79.54 (per day)	-\$79.54
Davis, Nettie	School Bus Driver DIST - .8 FTE	2/17/21 (1 day)	-\$255.90 (per day)	-\$255.90
Denize, Eunice	School Bus Aide DIST - .5 FTE	2/17/21 (1 day)	-\$105.43 (per day)	-\$105.43
Deroseney, Samuel	School Bus Aide DIST - .5 FTE	2/17/21 (1 day)	-\$111.68 (per day)	-\$111.68
Galvis, Maria	School Bus Aide DIST - .5 FTE	2/17/21 (1 day)	-\$81.89 (per day)	-\$81.89
Garcia, Maria	School Bus Driver DIST - .5 FTE	2/17/21 (1 day)	-\$152.36 (per day)	-\$152.36
Hightower, Gloria	School Bus Driver DIST - .5 FTE	2/17/21 (1 day)	-\$157.36 (per day)	-\$157.36
Jean-Louis, Allson	School Bus Driver DIST - .5 FTE	2/17/21 (1 day)	-\$157.36 (per day)	-\$157.36
Lidaque Gabriel, Andrea	School Bus Aide DIST - .8 FTE	2/17/21 (1 day)	-\$178.69 (per day)	-\$178.69
Pierre Louis, Renaud	School Bus Driver DIST - .8 FTE	2/17/21 (1 day)	-\$253.78 (per day)	-\$253.78
Santer, Emie	School Bus Aide DIST - .5 FTE	2/17/21 (1 day)	-\$110.43 (per day)	-\$110.43
Taylor, Peter	School Bus Driver DIST - .5 FTE	2/17/21 (1 day)	-\$146.21 (per day)	-\$146.21
Tyson, Angela	School Bus Aide DIST - .8 FTE	2/17/21 (1 day)	-\$178.69 (per day)	-\$178.69

4105A. APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS FOR THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR

STATE CERTIFIED TEACHER

NAME	INSTITUTION	DATE	DEGREE
Brown, Arielle	Pennsylvania State University	5/2014	BA

COLLEGE GRADUATE AND STATE SUBSTITUTE CERTIFICATE

NAME	INSTITUTION	DATE	DEGREE
Funderburk, Raheem	Montclair State University	5/2020	BA

4105B. APPOINTMENT OF LONG-TERM SUBSTITUTES FOR THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR PAID AT A DAILY RATE OF \$160

Arielle Brown
Steven Grice

Raheem Funderburk
Latoya Raymond

4105C. APPOINTMENT OF HOME INSTRUCTORS FOR THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR PAID AT AN HOURLY RATE OF \$35.00

Name	Certification(s)
Jeffrey Boni	Teacher of Social Studies
Ann Crowther	Teacher of English Elementary School Teacher
Daniel Festerling	Teacher of Physical Science
Pamela Noonan	Teacher of Mathematics
Emily Vite	Teacher of Music

4106. Approves the attached list of students who are scheduled to attend Out-of-District tuition supported programs for the 2020-2021 school year.

4107A. Receives and accepts the following financial reports:

1. Board Secretary's Report dated January 31, 2021
2. Expense Account Adjustment Analysis dated January 31, 2021
3. Revenue Account Adjustment Analysis dated January 31, 2021
4. Check Register #407843 in the amount of \$744,918.30
5. Check Register #407844-408029 in the amount of \$4,138,094.07
6. Check Register#408030 in the amount of \$1,753.20
7. Check Register#200727-200728 in the amount of \$2,966,514.80
8. Check Register#200729 for January 2021 payroll in the amount of \$7,062,992.98
9. Treasurer's Report of December 2020

4107B. Certify the Board Secretary's Monthly Financial Report [signed certification on file in Board Secretary's office].

4107C. Approves the attendance and related travel and/or workshop expenses for the following work-related events:

Employee	Workshop/Conference	Travel Date(s)	Location	Estimated Cost(s)
Ramon Robles Columbia High School	NJTESOL - Equity for Language Learners	5/25/21- 5/27/21	Online	\$299.00

4107D. Approves the following providers for 2020-2021 school year for the service indicated:

Provider	Service	Rate
Soliant Peachtree Corners, GA	Physical Therapist	\$90.00/hour

	Physical Therapist Assist	\$75.00/hour
	Speech Language Pathologist (SLP-CCC)	\$82.00/hour
	SLP - CFY	\$77.00/hour
	SLPA	\$70.00/hour
	Occupational Therapist	\$84.00/hour
	Certified Occupational Therapist Assistant	\$65.00
D.C. Fagan Psychological Services, LLC Franklin Lakes, NJ	General Case Consultation	\$200/hour
	Testing Follow-up Consultation/IEP	\$200/hour
	School Consultation/Observation	\$200/hour
	Travel to and from outside settings	\$200/hour
	IQ Testing (WISC-V, SB, WJ I or specific area test)*	\$500-700
	Achievement Testing (WIAT-III, WJ IV or specific area tests)	\$750-1200
	Standard Psychoeducational (IQ, Achievement, and questionnaires)	\$1,500-1800
	IQ/Extended Achievement Battery (IQ, achievement, plus one specific neuropsychological area-attention, memory, executive functioning)	\$2,000-2,500
	Neuropsychological Testing (3-4 test sessions)** (Does not include participation in IEP which would be billed separately)	\$3,000-4,500
	ADOS-2 with developmental history	\$1,000
	Court Testimony (includes travel and wait time)	\$400 per hour
	Court Preparation (with school or review of reports)	\$200 per hour
Testing can be completed at the school or at the offices in Franklin Lakes. Travel time at the office hourly rate (\$200 per hour) will be added to cost if more than 15 minutes from Franklin Lakes.		

4107E. Accepts a donation for the Parenting Center in the amount of \$5,755.00.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the following budget is increased and the Superintendent or his designee is authorized to administer it:

20-002-100-101

Municipal Alliance

\$5,685.00

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Board President, Superintendent and Board Secretary are authorized to execute and deliver any necessary contracts and reports on behalf of the Board.

4107F. Approves an agreement with Atlantic Tomorrow's Office of Bloomfield, New Jersey for a 60-month lease for the following Digital Imaging System copy machines:

- (2) - Savin IM9000
- (4) - Savin IM8000
- (4) - Savin MP6055
- (1) - Savin MP4055

The total combined monthly lease cost of \$4,495.00 for an annual combined cost of \$53,940.00 plus the cost of \$.0053 per page for maintenance and supplies (excludes paper and staples).

4107G. Accepts the district's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report and Auditor's Management Report on Administrative Findings - Financial, Compliance and Performance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020 as prepared by Hodulik & Morrison, Certified Public Accountants.

4107H. Establishes a reserve for encumbrances for purchase orders remaining open on June 30, 2020 in the amount of \$3,472,131.00.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the following budget accounts are increased and the Superintendent or his designee is authorized to administer them:

Reserved for open purchase orders:				
11	000	100	Instruction - Tuition	\$ 1,100,240.00
11	000	21X	Pur Svcs-OT/PT	\$ 153,801.00
11	000	221	Imp Instructional Services	\$ 181,552.00
11	000	222	Ed Media Services - Library	\$ 116.00
11	000	223	Training	\$ 1,817.00
11	000	230	Support Services - Central & Legal	\$ 102,317.00
11	000	240	Support Services - School	\$ 461.00
11	000	251	Support Services - Central/IT	\$ 4.00
11	000	252	Technology	\$ 1,824.00
11	000	261	Required Maintenance	\$ 543,924.00
11	000	262	Operation/Maintenance Facilities	\$ 563,291.00
11	000	263	Care & Upkeep of Grounds	\$ 1,200.00
11	000	266	Security	\$ 74,669.00
11	000	270	Transportation	\$ 73,064.00
11	190	100	Instructional Supplies/Texts	\$ 474,342.00
11	212	100	Special Education MD	\$ 4,713.00
11	216	100	PD CT	\$ 5,175.00
11	230	100	Basic Skills	\$ 378.00

11	40X	100	Cocurricular Activities/Athletics	\$ 4,960.00
12	000	270	Pur Buses	\$ 161,130.00
10	000	100	Charter School	\$ 23,152.00
Reserve for Encumbrances, June 30, 2019				\$3,472,131.00

4107I. Accepts the adjusted budget for the 2019-20 school year as attached.

4107J. Acknowledges that the findings of the 2018-2019 Carl D. Perkins Audit and corrective action plan was publicly reviewed and discussed at the January 25, 2021 Board of Education Meeting.

4107K. Accepts and approves the 2018-2019 Carl D. Perkins Audit Recommendations and Corrective Action Plan as follows:

1. Several district board policies relating to internal controls were not provided for examination or require revision.
 - SOMSD must prepare written policies and procedures or revise existing versions as necessary for conformity with state regulations & UGG, 2C. F.R. & 200 et.seq.
2. SOMSD did not ensure compliance with certain departmental guidelines while administering the grant.
 - SOMSD must implement procedures to ensure personnel assigned to administer the Perkins grant comply with the program specific applicable to each project period.
 - Review all applicable purchase orders to ensure required information is included on issued purchase orders.
 - SOMSD will update the purchasing manual to reflect citations UGG, 2C.F.R.

4107L. Approves the use of the following vendors in excess of the \$40,000 for the 2020-2021 school year:

VENDOR NAME	PRODUCT	TYPE OF VENDOR
Staples	Office Supplies	CO-OP
Grainger	Building Supplies	State Contract
R&L Data Centers	Payroll	Other
Eastern Data Communications	Telecommunications	Co-op

4107M. Accepts State Nonpublic Auxiliary Services (Chapter 192) and Handicapped Services (Chapter 193) Aid Entitlement Funds for 2020-2021 for a total amount of \$122,054.00 allocated as follows:

<u>NP Auxiliary Services</u>	<u>Rate/Pupil</u>	<u>Pupils</u>	<u>State Aid</u>	<u>Allocation</u>
*Compensatory Education	\$995.33	60	\$41,804.00	

*E.S.L.	\$1,015.00	0	\$0.00	
*Transportation	\$0	0	\$0.00	
Total Auxiliary Services				\$41,804.00
*Prorated at 87.50%				
<u>NP Handicapped Services</u>	<u>Rate/Pupil</u>	<u>Pupils</u>	<u>State Aid</u>	<u>Allocation</u>
*Initial Exam & Class.	\$1,326.17	20	\$25,993.00	
*Annual Exam & Class.	\$380.00	25	\$ 9,310.00	
*Corrective Speech	\$930.00	35	\$25,519.00	
*Supplemental Instruction	\$826.00	30	\$19,428.00	
Total Handicapped Services				\$80,250.00
TOTAL 192/193 Allocation				\$122,054.00
* Prorated at 98.00%				

4107N. Approves the 2021 Agreement and DOT Testing Fee Schedule with Prevention Specialists, Inc. of Ocean, NJ. Cost of services is as follows:

DOT Random Drug Testing (mobile unit)	\$ 68.00 per test
DOT Random Drug Testing (Lab Site)	\$ 58.00 per test
All Non-Randomized Drug Testing (Lab Site)	\$ 68.00 per test
DOT Alcohol Testing	\$ 39.00 per test
DOT Compliance Support	\$515.00 per annum
DOT FMCSA Clearing House	\$195.00 per annum
DOT Policy	Price upon request
Training & Education	Price upon request
Litigation Support	Price upon request
Emergency Response Services	\$155.00 1 st hour \$55.00 every additional half hour plus the cost of tests
PSI Emergency Response Services	\$155.00 for 1 st hour, \$55.00 every additional half hour

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Board President, Superintendent and Board Secretary are authorized to execute and deliver any necessary contracts and reports on behalf of the Board.

41070. Accepts the Fiscal Year 2021 Elementary & Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Funds in the amount of \$1,027,158 as listed below:

<u>Program</u>	<u>Carryover</u>
Title I, Part A Improving Basic Programs	\$ 660,080
Title I, Reallocated	\$ 13,263
Title II-A, Part A: Teacher / Principal/Training/Recruiting	\$ 213,921
Title III, English Language Acquisition/Language Enhancement	\$ 24,545
Title III, Immigrant	\$ 18,557
Title IV, Part A	\$ 96,792
Total Carryover	<u>\$1,027,158</u>

4107P. Approves the following tuition rates for Summer Camp at the Montrose Early Childhood Center for the 2021-2022SY:

<u>Program</u>	<u>Cost</u>
6 Week Program	\$750
3 Week Program	\$375

Financial Aid is available for qualified South Orange or Maplewood residents or SOMSD staff for the Montrose Early Childhood Center.

Each family situation is considered on an individual basis and tuition in the amount of \$50 per week is offered to families in need of assistance.

4107Q. Approves an agreement with Teach4Results of Long Valley, New Jersey to provide consulting services and professional development/training for school administrators at a cost of \$14,500 for the 2020-2021 school year.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Board President, Superintendent and Board Secretary are authorized to execute and deliver any necessary contracts and reports on behalf of the Board.

4107R. Authorizes the purchase of a Chevrolet Mid Bus 27 passenger school bus with 16 child restraint positions from Wolfington Body Company, Inc. of Mount Holly, New Jersey for the total amount of \$74,595.55.

4107S. Approves an agreement with Kelin Heating and Air Conditioning of Colonia, New Jersey to install two hot water boilers in the B-wing of Columbia High School at a cost of \$182,500.00.

4108. Affirms the HIB investigations reported to the South Orange/Maplewood School District for the month of January 2021.

4109A. Approves a settlement agreement for special education Student ID #6554916846 and authorizes the Board President to execute the settlement agreement.

4109B. Approves a settlement agreement for special education Student ID #7232387602 and authorizes the Board President to execute the settlement agreement.

4109C. Approves a settlement agreement for special education Student ID #5346570501 and authorizes the Board President to execute the settlement agreement.

4109D. Approves a settlement agreement for special education Student ID #1730648157 and authorizes the Board President to execute the settlement agreement.

4110. Approves a settlement agreement with employee #2446 and authorizes the Board President to execute the settlement agreement.

4111. WHEREAS, the South Orange and Maplewood Board of Education recognizes that the United States, the State of New Jersey and local health authorities, as well as the World Health Organization, have declared a public health emergency regarding the Coronavirus or COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, the federal and state authorities have put in place guidance detailing the precautionary measures schools must implement to stop its spread of this disease; and

WHEREAS, public schools have a profound impact on millions of students, families and staff and are charged with the care, education, nourishment of their students and are an integral part of the health and safety of our communities; and

WHEREAS, our district has responded to the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, providing students and staff members with the technology and resources necessary to ensure the efficient delivery of instruction, virtually and in-person; and

WHEREAS, the board has a substantial public interest in protecting the health and safety of its students, staff, and community and ensuring that the district can provide staff and students with a safe and effective educational environment that supports student achievement; and

WHEREAS, the board recognizes that this health emergency made it necessary to close schools and reinvent the educational programs in a virtual setting and that this may have an adverse impact on student achievement and the emotional and social wellbeing of students; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 Vaccination Plan published by the State of New Jersey Department of Health (December 15, 2020, pgs. 36-37) prioritizes the availability of vaccines to "essential workers" in Phase 1B of the vaccine protocol; and

WHEREAS, school district staff at all levels are essential to the day-to-day operations of this district, responsible for the thorough and efficient education of all students and their social and emotional wellbeing, are critical for virtual and in-class instruction and are "essential workers;"

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the South Orange and Maplewood Board of Education finds a substantial public purpose exists to request that Governor Murphy give appropriate priority in the statewide administration of the COVID-19 vaccine to all public school district personnel.

COVID-19 Vaccination Plan published by the State of New Jersey Department of Health, see:

<https://nj.gov/health/legal/covid19/NJ%20Interim%20COVID-19%20Vaccination%20Plan%20-%20Revised%2012-15-20.pdf>

RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution shall be forwarded to the members of the 27th legislative district delegation, Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin, Senate President Stephen M. Sweeney, Governor Phil Murphy, and to the New Jersey School Boards Association

RESOLVED, That the following resolution be considered by the next NJSBA Delegate Assembly to be held in May 2021.

4112. Adopt the Code of Governance Best practices as attached.

4113. WHEREAS, The South Orange Maplewood School District is committed to equity, diversity and inclusiveness, providing safe and welcoming spaces for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, language, disability status, gender expression or identity, and sexual orientation;

WHEREAS, The South Orange Maplewood Board of Education is in support of and is committed to ensuring welcoming inclusive safer schools for all students and families and has adopted policies to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBTQ+) students and families;

WHEREAS, Findings from the GLSEN 2019 National School Climate Survey demonstrate that New Jersey schools were not safe for most LGBTQ secondary school students. In addition, many LGBTQ students in New Jersey did not have access to important school resources, such as an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, and are not protected by supportive and inclusive school policies.

WHEREAS, The STATE of New Jersey has enacted and required numerous laws to require education that is culturally responsive and equitable, and to teach respect, diversity, antibias, bullying and prejudice; and to highlight the contributions of persons in history including the LGBTQ+ community, and to ensure our schools provide safe climates for all students, regardless of gender identity, expression, and sexual orientation, and in the following laws; History of disabled and LGBT persons included in middle and high school curriculum (C.18A:35-4.35), The New Jersey Law Against Discrimination ("NJLAD"), N.J.S.A. 10:5-12(11)(f), Holocaust/Genocide Education (N.J.S.A. 18A:35-28), and African American History (Rev Stat § 52:16A-87-89),

WHEREAS, The Delegate Assembly is the official policy making body of the New Jersey School Boards Association; and

WHEREAS, Education-related policies resulting from prior Delegate Assembly and Board of Directors actions are codified in the NJSBA's Manual of Positions and Policies on Education; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the South Orange Maplewood Board of Education proposes the following additional policy language for adoption by the Delegate

Assembly and inclusion in NJSBA's Manual of Positions and Policies on Education:

The NJSBA believes that it is important to cultivate inclusive affirming welcoming school communities that contribute to the overall safety, pedagogy and school climate; and to support and work with Board Members and school districts to create a greater awareness, to ensure continued safety, support, student engagement and implementation of best practices and policies of all students including those who are perceived as being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning or who are LGBTQ+, and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the following resolution be considered by the next NJSBA Delegate Assembly to be held in May 2021.

ROLL CALL: Motion 4104A-F, 4105A-C, 4106, 4107B-S, 4108, 4109A-D, 4110, 4111, 4113 passed. YES: Bergin, Cuttle, Joshua, Maini, Malespina, Siders, Winkfield, Wright, Zubieta
NO: None

Motion 4107A passed. YES: Bergin, Cuttle, Joshua, Maini, Siders, Winkfield, Wright, Zubieta NO: None ABSTAIN: Malespina (payments to any vendor or matter in the check register from which Board Malespina is conflicted; including but not limited to Follett, Mackin, and Edmodo)

Motion 4107G passed. YES: Cuttle, Joshua, Maini, Malespina Siders, Winkfield, Wright, Zubieta NO: Bergin

Motion 4112 passed. YES: Bergin, Cuttle, Joshua, Maini, Siders, Winkfield, Wright, Zubieta NO: Malespina

HEARING OF INDIVIDUALS AND DELEGATIONS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Board members discuss the possibility of meeting twice a month and other suggestions to improve the effectiveness of Board meetings.

Future Meetings

The Board of Education will meet in Executive Session on Monday, March 15, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. via online video conference platform to discuss personnel and legal issues, negotiations and other matters to be announced at a later date. Immediately following the Closed Session, the Board of Education will meet in public session at 7:30 p.m. using the online video conference platform. Action will be taken.

Motion made by Board President Joshua, seconded by Board Member Malespina, that the Board of Education will meet in Executive Session prior to the March 15, 2021 Public Meeting to discuss personnel and legal issues,

negotiations and other matters, the nature of which will be made public at a future date.

MOTION made by Board President Joshua, seconded by Board Member Maini that the Board of Education adjourns. Motion unanimously approved at 1:13 a.m.

Paul Roth, Board Secretary