

Regular Meeting  
South Orange-Maplewood  
Board of Education  
December 19, 2024

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of South Orange-Maplewood was held in the District Meeting Room at the Administration Building, 525 Academy Street, Maplewood, New Jersey as well as utilizing the online video conference platform on December 19, 2024.

Board President Qawi Telesford called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: Board Member Callahan, Board Member DuVall Wilson,  
Board Member Eckert, Board Member Gifford,  
Board Member Meyer (v), Board Member Sackett-Gable,  
Board President Telesford, Board Member Vadlamani,  
Board Member Wittleder

Absent: None

*NINE VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT*

Pledge of Allegiance

NOTICE OF THE MEETING

Adequate notice of this meeting has been provided in the following manner:

- A. That written notice was sent from the Office of the Secretary of the Board at 2:30 p.m. on January 5, 2024.
- B. That said notice was sent via email to Maplewood and South Orange Township Clerks and the Editors of the News Record, Star Ledger, TapintoSOMA and the Village Green.

SOUTH ORANGE-MAPLEWOOD BOARD OF EDUCATION RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING EXECUTIVE SESSION

WHEREAS, while the "Sen. Byron M. Baer Open Public Meetings Act" (N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq.) requires all meetings of the South Orange Maplewood Board of Education to be held in public, N.J.S.A. 10:4-12(b) sets forth nine (9) types of matters that may lawfully be discussed in "Executive Session," without the public being permitted to attend, and

WHEREAS, the Board has determined that one (1) issue is permitted by N.J.S.A. 10:4 - 12 (b) to be discussed without the public in attendance and shall be discussed during an Executive Session to be held on Thursday, November 21, 2024 at 6:30 PM, and

WHEREAS, the nine (9) exceptions to open the public meetings set forth in N.J.S.A. 10:2-4(b) are listed below, and next to each exception is a box which will be marked when the issues to be privately discussed fall within that exception, and after each exception is a space where additional information that will disclose as much information about the discussion as possible without undermining the purpose of the exception shall be written:

X "(1) Any matter which, by express provision of Federal law, State statute or rule of court shall be rendered confidential or excluded from public discussion." The nature of the matter, described as specifically as possible without undermining the need for confidentiality, is attorney/client privilege, HIB reporting, and Litigation Status Report.

X "(4) Any collective bargaining agreement, or the terms and conditions of which are proposed for inclusion in any collective bargaining agreement, including the negotiation of terms and conditions with employees or representatives of employees of the public body."

WHEREAS, the length of the Executive Session is estimated to be forty five (45) minutes after which the public meeting of the Board shall reconvene and proceed with business where formal action will be taken.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the South Orange Maplewood Board of Education will go into Executive Session for the above-stated reasons only; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board hereby declares that its discussion of the aforementioned subject(s) will be made public at a time when the public's interest in disclosure is greater than any privacy or governmental interest being protected from disclosure.

Motion made by Board Member Callahan, second by Board Member Sackett-Gable to adjourn to Executive Session. Motion unanimously approved.

***Board Members adjourned to Executive Session at 6:43 p.m.  
Board Members reconvened at 7:25 p.m.  
Student Representatives Present  
Nine Voting Members Present***

Columbia High School Strings Orchestra performed.

Athletic Department Recognitions

Athletic Director Sjocquelyn Winstead honored the girls' field hockey and volleyball teams, along with their coaches, for their outstanding seasons. Ms. Winstead recognized the Junior Varsity Captains: Rebecca Weinfeld, Fiore Scarfone, and Sonya Lynch, as well as the Senior Captains: Daisy Bennett, Charlotte "Charlie" Drechsler, Campbell Connell, Violet Jacobs, and Ann Elise Van Varick.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion made by Board Member Vadlamani seconded by Board Member Callahan to approve the minutes of the following meetings: November 20, 2024 Special Public Meeting and October 15, 2024 and November 21, 2024 Executive Sessions and Regular Public Meetings. Motion unanimously approved.

BOARD RECOGNITION AND APPRECIATION FOR BOARD MEMBER SERVICE

RECOGNITION OF BOARD MEMBER KAITLIN WITTLEDER

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Nubia Duvall Wilson honored Board Member Kaitlyn Wittleder.

*It is an honor to recognize and celebrate the leadership and service of our former Board President, Kaitlin Wittleder. Kaitlin, the Board legacy you leave behind has a trail of successes, challenges, triumphs, and perseverance that continues to inspire me and many others today. Serving as your Second Vice President during my first year afforded me the privilege of witnessing your leadership behind the scenes; you were elected president when the community demanded change, and you delivered on it. You led with the utmost integrity and demonstrated the relentless commitment and determination it takes to guide the Board and drive meaningful progress. Your vision, paired with your tenacity, enabled the Board and District to advance in critical areas that have brought us to where we are today.*

*Some of the highlights of your term: Reinstated Regular Municipal Partnerships Committee meetings, which greatly supported our efforts to increase transportation for elementary students, advocated for changes to the ELA curriculum, which resulted in the district launching a new pilot program and adopting magnetic reading for grades K-3 which brought focus to phonics in the early years, added a Business Administrator updates to Board meetings which included ongoing updates on the long-range facility plan. The district conducted a long overdue hazardous route audit, resulting in a new policy with 12 hazardous routes identified. Under your leadership, policy 8600 was revised to increase access to transportation, which serves to strengthen the Intentional Integration Initiative, required that the district review, approve, and improve athletic coach training practices, which resulted in a districtwide sexual misconduct and harassment training plan for all coaches and activity leaders. To ensure compliance with the Black Parents Workshop settlement, created Fergus Implementation Committee, now called Rutgers Report Implementation, to provide oversight around the more than 20 required recommendations, and the list goes on.*

*Kaitlyn, you have done so much to champion the students of our district. If you ever question if you did enough during your tenure, I want you to remember that all students, no matter their background, benefited from your leadership. Hold your head up high. In addition to being proud to call you a board colleague, I'm proud to call you a friend. Thank you for all that you've done. I will miss you so much, and I'm excited for your next chapter.*

Board Member Kaitlin Wittleder

*As I prepare to step away from my role on the South Orange Maplewood Board of Education, I am filled with gratitude and hope. I want to thank my family, Greta, Nora, Thomas, and my husband, Eric; you've been on this journey with me through all the highs and lows. Thank you for your patience, big hugs, and words of encouragement. I'm so happy you guys are here tonight; I love you so much.*

*To my fellow Board colleagues, past and present, it has been an honor to serve alongside you; thank you for the hard work and dedication you've put towards making SOMSD better every day. Bill, Regina, and Nubia, your leadership and friendship have meant the world to me, and I am so grateful for each of you. I also want to thank Vanessa, Noah, Gwyneth, ASA, and Oliver, our amazing Student Board Representatives whom I had the privilege of serving with over the past three years. As conduits to the student body,*

*your presentations and updates have helped shape board priorities and helped make me a better Board member. Thank you to Liana and Cassandra, who work in the Superintendent's office, and to Keith and his technology team. You helped make our meetings run smoothly and much more; I appreciate your hard work.*

*I also extend my heartfelt thanks to our students and teachers. I am admittedly biased, but we have the most inspiring kids and teachers in this District, and their voices have been essential to our Board work. Last but not least, thank you to the community. I have enjoyed building bridges of connection and partnership with you as we have worked hard to make progress in this District together. I have met so many incredible people during my time on the Board, some of whom are here this evening, and I am truly grateful to you all.*

*What has motivated me most over the past 3 years is the profound responsibility of ensuring that every child, whether in the classroom, in the cafeteria, on the soccer field, on stage performing, or on their way to and from school, has the resources and supports they need to thrive academically socially and emotionally. The weight of a child being underserved or not being seen, heard, or cared for has weighed heavily on me, and I've worked hard to represent those needs throughout my term. I'll never forget one of my earliest board meetings where we heard a family's testimony advocating for transportation for their child; the discussion centered around a disagreement on 0.1 miles. That vote was a pivotal moment for me. It was a stark reminder that every decision we make as board members impacts a child's life. Suddenly, I felt like I went from having three of my children I was responsible for to almost 7,000; that perspective guided me throughout my tenure, pushing me to advocate for every child as if they were my own.*

*During my time on the Board, we have accomplished many things that I am proud of; we introduced a phonics-based curriculum in our elementary schools and provided transportation to support the Intentional Integration Initiative and meet our district families' needs. We followed through on some of the Rutgers recommendations, including the long and outstanding introduction of IR&S; at our elementary schools, we passed policies that improve the student experience, and we have begun a period of rebuilding within this District.*

*Someone once told me that serving on the Board of Education is about passing the baton. You work hard to keep the District moving forward and leave it better than when you started. I believe we have done just that. The District is on an upward trajectory and I am optimistic about the progress still to come. As we look to the future, my hope is that under new leadership, our District will establish clear and consistent operating procedures, foster open and transparent communication, build and engage in a thorough and transparent budget process, and, most importantly, always put the best interest of students first. I hope that teachers and students will receive the support services that they need to excel and that board agendas align with the collective goals of our District's stakeholders. We have laid a foundation, but there is more to build.*

To our community, thank you for trusting me with this role. Your stories, advocacy, and passion have been the heart of my work. As I step away, I do so with immense pride in our kids and optimism for the future of our schools.

**Board Member Meyer left the meeting at 7:58 p.m.  
8 Voting Members and 2 student representatives present**

RECOGNITION OF BOARD MEMBER ARUN VADLAMANI

Board Member Callahan honored 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Arun Vadlamani.

*It's truly an honor to speak about you tonight. When I first sat down to reflect on what I wanted to say tonight, the answer came quickly to me; I knew exactly what was going to resonate with you, so naturally, I started drafting an epic roast, but as it turns out, the tone we are aiming for tonight is a little bit different. So, instead, I'm going to save that for another time, and I'm going to focus on celebrating your incredible contributions. All jokes aside, to know Arun is to know someone who is tenacious, opinionated, honest, yet incredibly warm, caring, and funny. Arun served during a period of tumultuous times in our District, tackling challenges with his characteristic pragmatism and unwavering focus on creating a secure and stable environment for students, teachers, and administrators.*

*As a new Board member joining during this challenging time, I deeply appreciated Arun's guidance, direct approach, and pragmatic problem-solving. Arun has been an integral part of the FFT committee throughout his three-year tenure, serving as the chair in 2022 and 2024. In 2022, he also served on the Policy Committee and acted as a liaison to the Achieve Foundation and the Board of School Estimate. In 2023, Arun contributed to the BPW and OCR Adhoc committees. In 2024, he served on the Personnel and Negotiations committees while continuing as the liaison to the Board of School Estimate. His involvement across these roles reflects his dedication and his versatility in addressing our District's unique needs.*

*Arun's ability to refocus on what truly matters, ensuring equity and maintaining a high expectation for all of our students, is a vision that we both share and is always evident in all his work; this was evident in his steadfast centering of student achievement and outcomes during discussions in committees and his focus on stabilization and improvements for our largest school, Columbia High School, his advocacy for equitable playing fields, a new girls locker room and for stabilizing and returning our high school principal. Board Member Vadlamani played a pivotal role in the hiring of Superintendent Bing, and he served as 1st Vice President this past year.*

*As part of a leadership team and Board collective whose efforts have led to a noticeable improvement in Board culture and the tone of our public discourse, his thoughtful contributions helped steer our District towards greater collaboration, accountability, and information sharing internally and externally. It's been an honor to serve alongside and nudge him when needed, engaging in spirited debates when we disagreed but always being able to share a laugh afterward. His positive impact on our District will*

be felt for years to come. So, on behalf of the Board and our community, I extend my heartfelt thank you to Arun Vadlamani for his service and my very best wishes as he embarks on the next chapter, where I know he has a long to-do list and hopefully more time with his beautiful family.

1<sup>ST</sup> VP Arun Vadlamani

Thank you, Board Member Callahan. As a new subscriber to the Instagram group of CHS Commits 2025, I see that our students have already broken all records for early admissions, receiving offers from prestigious colleges like Princeton, Brown, UPenn, Trinity, and Vanderbilt. I hope this continues over the next few years. I would also love to see a decrease in chronic absenteeism, an increase in graduation rates, and an increase in all demographics taking the AP courses. I've been fortunate to work with these wonderful board members over the last three years to move the needle forward for our children, and I look forward to our district being a positive force for all students.

Public Service is very rewarding, and I strongly recommend that everyone in our two towns participate. We can only improve when we are all working together, especially for our children. I wish the best to the students, teachers, administrators, and the incoming and continuing Board members. Parents stay involved.

RECOGNITION OF BOARD PRESIDENT QAWI TELESFORD

Board Member Shayna Sackett-Gable recognized Board President Telesford.

Qawi, you have served with distinction on our Board of Education for the past three years. You have served on virtually every one of our committees, including FFT, C&I, Policy, and Personnel, as well as negotiations, Data and Technology, Municipal Partnerships, Special Education and Safety and Security Adhoc Committees, and the Board of School Estimate, and of course, you have served us as Board President for the 2024 Board. You came to our Board as an Alum of our school district and a proud graduate of Columbia High School. I believe the first Board President to have done so, and perhaps most notably, you have done all of this while bringing into the world two young children who will be part of the next generation of South Orange Maplewood students. You have brought to the Board an intentional focus on data-driven decisions, placed priority on high expectations and achievement, and always demonstrated a strong commitment to the equitable education of all of our district students.

As Board President, you oversaw a time of significant transition in the district under the interim leadership of Dr. Gilbert and the hiring of Superintendent Bing, along with numerous other complex issues, including, of course, the reinstatement of our high school principal, Frank Sanchez. You have shown yourself to be a person of strong, unwavering principles and left our Board and District in a strong and growth-oriented posture. Your contributions will not go unnoticed, and we extend our deepest gratitude for your service to our community and students; we are sure you will not stop serving our towns.

## BOARD PRESIDENT TELESFORD

*As I reflect on my board service over the past three years, I ask myself, what is the power of a Board? The way I see it, a Board of Education does nothing to directly advance the education of children nor should it. We are not experts, and, in my experience, when the Board thinks it knows better than the educators who have spent decades devoted to educating our children, it only creates problems. So, what is our power? Our power is to support this cadre of educators and administrators who have one goal, to improve student outcomes.*

*When I joined the Board, I had hopes of collaborating with my colleagues and our dedicated administrative team. Our focus was simple, we must improve the lives of all students in this District. Fast forward to today, I can attest to joining a relatively stable board and watching as it descended into chaos. That is when I realized the true power of a Board. Beyond our good intentions, we can derail forward progress that affects all students. As I look at the important advances we've made in workforce diversity, student achievement in ELA, and increasing the accountability for educating our black and brown students, I am thankful we retained Dr. Bean Folks, who continues to make substantial gains in student outcomes in equity for our students. I also tip my hat to the work of Ms. Bodnar and Dr. Correa for their tireless efforts in advancing the conversations around student achievement. Decisions by the Board are not what propelled these efforts forward; it is their dedication that has reformed our IR&S practices across the school district, better targeting our interventions of students facing challenges in classrooms, improving our ability to identify gifted students, and securing a data platform that will lead to further improvement for our students. These achievements remind me of the importance of stability, which, unfortunately, we've learned all too well through the follies of a Board and how it can negatively affect our high school.*

*When I was a student at CHS, we had five principals, that's right, five. Reflecting on that time, I'm glad to see today Columbia's helm by Frank Sanchez. Thinking about the last school year, I realized how close we came to seeing our high school slip into the old patterns of disarray. I'm not only happy to see Principal Sanchez receive tenure, but I am also glad to have attended the Building One New Jersey year-end celebration, where Principal Sanchez received the award for 2024 Public Servant of the Year. It was an honor to celebrate an educator who exemplifies courageous leadership, fearless advocacy and a commitment to inclusive and equitable education.*

*Again, I ask what is the power of the Board? It is to ensure that the actions of bad actors do not stymie the progress of our school district; this also underscores the immense power of the school board. While we can support growth, we also have the potential to thwart progress. That is a sobering reality and a responsibility we must never take lightly.*

*I am also grateful for Dr. Gilbert, who stepped up when the district needed him most. His resolve and devotion to ensuring equity infuses every aspect*

of our District's work. It serves as a testament to what we, as a Board and our community, must continue to demand in every decision we make.

I also want to thank my fellow Board colleagues for the lessons I learned from them. Liz, you show me what it means to advocate fearlessly for equity. Some may call it too equity-driven, but that's exactly what we need. Regina, you have taught me what it means to center students in our work and ensure that it is part of every conversation. Nubia, you taught me the importance of communication and what is essential for reaching our community. Bill, you taught me what it means to be present and step up for a cause. Will, I appreciate the depth you take in approaching a topic, dissecting it thoroughly, and seeking to understand every voice with an eye toward the broader picture. Shayna, I think you embody everything that we need as a Board member, one who has a wealth of experience but knows exactly how to use that experience to enhance and support the great work being done in our district. Kaitlin, you taught me what it really means to galvanize a community. Finally, I want to thank you, Arun. A few years ago, we didn't know each other, and despite having completely different backgrounds and approaches, we often aligned on key topics. It reminds me of that age-old claim that many board candidates say, "I'm an independent thinker," but you truly embody that, and I'm proud to call you a friend after our Board service ends.

I'm also grateful to have served alongside past board members like Susan Bergin, Thair Joshua, Erin Siders, Courtney Winkfield, and Johanna Wright. You all served during an incredibly challenging time in our district. Still, your leadership helped us navigate COVID, deliver one of the largest teacher salary increases in over a decade, and advance equity plans despite immense adversity. Being a Board member has taught me that our most important responsibility is to think about every single student, especially the most vulnerable. It's not about appeasing the loudest voices or those with the resources to sue; it's about ensuring every student gets what they need to succeed. Our focus on equity isn't just rhetoric; it's about taking meaningful action even when it makes people uncomfortable. Progress often does.

Above all else, I want to thank my wife, who is truly the unelected member of our Board. Our committee meetings become her committee meetings, and our long hours become her long hours. I'm deeply grateful for the time, dedication, and support she has given me every time I've sat down on this dais. While they call the school board a thankless job, I believe it's crucial to acknowledge that it is our spouses who endure the most for the advancement of our students.

To my colleagues, students, and educators in this community, thank you. Together, we built something strong, and I'm proud to have been part of it. While the work may sometimes feel thankless, the true reward is seeing our students thrive. This has always been and will always be about them.

#### BOARD RECOGNITIONS - Asa Glassman, Student Representative

Asa Glassman thanked Board Members Wittleder, Vadlamani and Telesford for their service on the Board of Education and for being incredible role models for him.



Staff

NAME/SCHOOL	RECOGNITION
<p>Ms. Danielle Patterson Teacher Seth Boyden Elementary School</p> <p><i>submitted by</i> Maureen Davenport &amp; Shannon Glander Seth Boyden Administrators</p>	<p>At Seth Boyden, Ms. Danielle Paterson helped a group of ten fourth-grade students work together for a week to create a presentation about composting for the kindergarten classes.</p> <p>They split into five pairs, with each pair presenting to one of the five kindergarten classes.</p> <p>The fourth graders did a great job explaining how the school composts food scraps and why it's good for the environment. The kindergarteners enjoyed learning about it and asked lots of great questions!</p> <p>After the presentation, the fourth graders decided to take action. They made a plan to collect food scraps from the lunchroom and take them to the compost bin every day. Mrs. Patterson helped guide the students with their work.</p> <p>This project was a wonderful example of teamwork and helping the environment. The fourth graders showed great leadership and made a positive impact at our school.</p>
<p>Columbia High School Chamber Choir and Mr. Nick Diaz Music Teacher Columbia High School</p> <p><i>submitted by</i> Eshaya Draper Director of Communications</p>	<p>Congratulations to the CHS Chamber Choir and music teacher, Mr. Nick Diaz, for performing at the South Orange Performing Arts Center with Broadway star Mandy Gonzalez this month.</p> <p>In her "Home for the Holidays" show at SOPAC, Mandy Gonzalez sang holiday carols and hit songs from Broadway musicals she's performed in- including Hamilton, Wicked, and In The Heights.</p> <p>We are proud of our high school's singers and appreciate the opportunity from Mandy Gonzalez to include our Columbia students as a part of the experience.</p>

NAME/SCHOOL	RECOGNITION
<p>Ms. Rahmiece Lawson Teacher Seth Boyden Elementary School</p> <p><i>submitted by</i> Shannon Glander &amp; Maureen Davenport Seth Boyden Administrators</p>	<p>Thank you to Ms. Lawson from Seth Boyden Elementary School for leading the affinity group Mocha Matter.</p> <p>Your dedication to inclusivity, belonging, cultural competency, and diversity is unparalleled for students. Thank you for being a leader and an inspiration.</p>
<p>Dr. Donovan Smalls Assistant Principal South Orange Middle School</p> <p><i>submitted by</i> Eshaya Draper Director of Communications</p>	<p>Dr. Smalls from SOMS presented at the National Alliance of Black School Educators International Conference on Friday, November 22nd, in Atlanta, Georgia.</p> <p>His presentation included strategies for other educators to navigate the dynamic challenges that come with educational leadership in schools.</p>
<p>Mrs. Kerri Waibel Director of Access and Equity</p> <p><i>submitted by</i> Dara Gronau, Shannon Glander, Maureen Davenport School Administrators</p>	<p>MMS and Seth Boyden are proud to recognize Ms. Kerri Waibel for her incredible leadership in Restorative Circles training. Kerri's expertise and dedication have provided staff members with powerful tools to strengthen connections and foster a compassionate, inclusive school culture.</p> <p>Ms. Waibel organized an intergenerational learning experience that brought together Principal Gronau, five MMS seventh graders, and five staff members. The moment centered on student voice, which Ms. Gronau described as 'an experience they won't soon forget.'</p> <p>Ms. Waibel's engaging and thoughtful presentations have provided Seth Boyden and Maplewood Middle School staff with valuable tools to build stronger connections with students and each other. Through her guidance, they have gained deeper insight into the power of restorative practices and how they can transform school culture, promote empathy, and address conflicts constructively and respectfully. Seth Boyden and MMS staff were deeply grateful for her lasting impact and commitment to district values.</p>

## STUDENT RECOGNITIONS

Seven student musicians from Columbia High School have been chosen as members of the 2024-2025 North Jersey Honor Bands. Their selection follows months of dedicated practice, and they excelled in their auditions on December 7<sup>th</sup>.

### Wind Ensemble

Ryan Gaykowski  
Emmett Simon  
Theo Abbate

### Symphonic Band

Julian Khaw-Briot  
Luke Witt  
Ella Levy  
Max Ginsburg

Congratulations to Sherry Chen, the Treasurer of the Columbia High School Chinese Honor Society, for receiving the President's Service Award from the New Jersey Chinese Teachers Association. She was nominated for this honor by her teacher, Ms. Liping Meng, who was also recognized as the New Jersey Chinese Teachers Association's Educator of the Year.

## STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE UPDATE - *Oliver Nesin*

Student Representative Oliver Nesin shared updates on the following topics:

- Meeting with Administrators and the Board to discuss various solutions to issues in the district and future goals.
- Possible uses of AI in the classroom by teachers and students as well as the opportunities that will be fulfilled through this growing technology, policies and Guidelines needed to protect the structure of education to ensure the technology is not abused and education on digital literacy and safe usage of artificial intelligence.
- Improved Security coverage at Columbia High School and consistent checking of student IDs at all entrances to the building.
- Push to to get scanners reinstalled at the entrances to maximize security.
- Continued discussions on priorities of Guidance Counselors especially in the middle schools.

Student Rep. Nesin recognized Board members Vadlamani, Telsford and Wittleder on their final Board of Education Meeting and shared his deep appreciation for the immense work that they put into improving the District.

## SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE - *Mr. Jason Bing*

*When you reflect, it is an everyday gift to work with people who deeply care about what they're doing and also care about our community's children, which is, to me, the greatest asset.*

*Columbia High School Representatives, it's been a pleasure working with you; I look forward to it in the new year. Support staff and administrators have welcomed me with open arms from day one, and I cannot be more thankful*

*or grateful for that. That makes for a very good holiday season for me, so I thank this community and its stakeholders.*

*I want to thank our three outgoing Board Members. They volunteer to do this work, dedicate hours a week to our board meetings to advocate for our children, and fight for issues when they need to be fought for, not only at a local level but also at the state and federal levels.*

*This is going on my 15th year as a Superintendent; this is one of the more difficult positions you will hold in a community, and it takes a lot of courage, kindness, and effort to be collaborative. I can say with all honesty from my first day here, I have been greeted with kindness, civil discourse, and support. I could not have asked for anything more, especially from these three individuals. If I could have drawn out exactly how I wanted my entry into a school district, it would have been this. I know it's due in large part to these three.*

*Our Budget Advisory Committee applications window closes today or tomorrow. We have over 100 applicants, so we will review them over the next week or so. We are excited that individuals are willing to take time out of their schedules to help with our budget.*

Superintendent Bing read a memo that was shared with the community regarding the recent shooting in Madison Wisconsin.

#### BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR'S UPDATE

Business Administrator Imani Moddy read the monthly construction update.

#### BOARD PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT

The school board meeting is a business meeting in public and 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 then shared with the other Board members for consideration. Only then is it placed on the agenda for Board discussion and action at a public meeting.

#### HEARING OF INDIVIDUALS AND DELEGATIONS

Community members Nicole Josey, Richard Fishbein, Yaacov Sheinfeld and Rocio Lopez addressed the Board.

#### COMMITTEE REPORTS

Committee reports from the November 2024 Special Services, Personnel, Finance, Facilities and Technology, Curriculum and Instruction, and Policy Committee meetings were presented by the committee chairs. Minutes for these meetings are available on the district website.

ITEMS FOR ACTION

Motion made by Board Secretary Moody to move resolutions 4696-4707 for discussion and voting. Motion unanimously approved.

The Superintendent recommends that the Board of Education approve the following personnel fiscal resolutions.

4696A. RETIREMENTS

NAME	ASSIGNMENT	EFFECTIVE DATE	YEARS IN DISTRICT
Bachenheimer, Stacey	T SCI/Biology CHS - 1.0 FTE	7/1/25	15
Goldstein, Kelli	School Counselor MM - 1.0 FTE	1/1/25	25.4
Pleasant, Shyrisa	S5/12, Secretary (Special Services) DIST - 1.0 FTE	3/1/25	25.6
Simon, Amy	T 3 SM - 1.0 FTE	4/1/25	32.1

4696B. RESIGNATION

NAME	ASSIGNMENT	EFFECTIVE DATE	YEARS IN DISTRICT
Kong, Juliana	T SS SOM - 1.0 FTE	2/7/25	6.6

4696C. 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
Banner,+ Abiodun	Assistant Principal CHS - 1.0 FTE	TBD 6/30/25	\$123,749
Burbano,+ Pedro	T Spanish SOM - 1.0 FTE	TBD 6/30/25	\$61,585*
Matsushita, Danielle	T WL/ML(ESL) CLIN - 1.0 FTE	1/2/25 6/30/25	\$70,985*
Mukherjee, Anurupa	Preschool Relief Teacher MONT - 1.0 FTE	1/15/25 6/30/25	\$67,985*
Scheurer, Jessica	T SPED/INC Gr. 3 SB - 1.0 FTE	2/18/25 or sooner 6/30/25	\$92,785*

Simmons, Hassan	Preschool Fiscal Specialist MONT - 1.0 FTE	1/20/25 or sooner 6/30/25	\$90,000
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\* Salary based on the SOMEA 2023-24 salary guide  
+ Pending receipt of appropriate NJ Certification

4696D. RESCIND LEAVE REPLACEMENT 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
Semler+, Mary Clare	LR SAC CHS - 1.0 FTE	TBD 4/25/25	\$68,985 *

\* Salary based on the SOMEA 2023-24 salary guide  
+ Pending receipt of appropriate NJ Certification

4696E. CHANGE IN START DATE

NAME	ASSIGNMENT	OLD START DATE	NEW START DATE
Berwind, Elizabeth	LR T Music SOM - 1.0 FTE	TBD	12/2/24
Kalafatis, Pothitos- Nikolaos	School Psychologist MONT - 1.0 FTE	12/1/24	12/5/24
Moody, Imani	School Business Administrator/ Board Secretary DIST - 1.0 FTE	TBD	12/9/24

4696F. CHANGE IN END DATE

NAME	ASSIGNMENT	OLD END DATE	NEW END DATE
D'Andrea, Emidio	Interim Business Administrator DIST - 1.0 FTE	6/30/25	12/6/24
Scypinski, Vanessa	LR School Counselor MM - 1.0 FTE	12/4/24	12/31/24

4696G. ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE

NAME	EFFECTIVE DATE
Employee# 1157	10/7/21-TBD (w/pay)
Employee# 4916	12/10/24-TBD (w/pay)

4696H. TRANSFER/REASSIGNMENT

NAME	OLD ASSIGNMENT	NEW ASSIGNMENT	EFFECTIVE DATE
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Imperato, Samantha	T Academic Intervention SB - 1.0 FTE	T Academic Intervention TUS - 1.0 FTE	11/25/24
Layne, Christine	T Academic Intervention MAR - 1.0 FTE	T Academic Intervention DB - 1.0 FTE	11/25/24

4696I. LEAVES OF ABSENCE

NAME	ASSIGNMENT	EFFECTIVE DATE
Beatty, Fiona	S4/12, Secretary MM - 1.0 FTE	1/2/25-2/28/25 (Unpaid FMLA)
Goldstein, Kelli	School Counselor MM - 1.0 FTE	12/5/24-1/1/25 (Unpaid Personal Leave)
Manikad, Marites	T Math MM - 1.0 FTE	1/1/25-3/14/25 (Unpaid Personal Leave)

4696J. STIPENDS

NAME	ASSIGNMENT	EFFECTIVE DATE	ACTUAL SALARY
Guido, Carey	Head Coach, Swimming CHS - 1.0 FTE	12/1/24 2/28/25	-\$7,891
Della Fave, Jaime	SPED Team Leader (ERI) SB - 1.0 FTE	1/24/25 6/30/25	\$5,944
Wojcio, Michael	SPED Team Leader (ERI) SB - 1.0 FTE	9/1/24 6/30/25	\$5,944

4696K. SALARY ADJUSTMENTS

NAME	ASSIGNMENT	EFFECTIVE DATE	ADJUSTMENT	ACTUAL SALARY
Hamilton, Erik	T PE/H CHS - .2 FTE	11/1- 11/12/24 (6 days)	\$68.43 (per day)	\$410.58
Pruden, Christopher	T PE/H CHS - .2 FTE	11/1- 11/12/24 (6 days)	\$66.43 (per day)	\$398.58
Shannon, Robert	T PE/H CHS - .2 FTE	11/1- 11/12/24 (6 days)	\$116.82 (per day)	\$700.92
Battle, April	Guidance Counselor MM - .2 FTE	11/1- 11/11/24 (5 days)	\$132.39 (per day)	\$661.95
Dominguez, Leana	Guidance Counselor MM - .2 FTE	11/1- 11/11/24 (5 days)	\$78.87 (per day)	\$394.35
Benning, Avery	T SPED MM - .2 FTE	11/4- 11/25/24 (14 days)	\$81.76 (per day)	\$1,144.65
Hesse, Melissa	T SPED MM - .2 FTE	11/4- 11/27/24 (16 days)	\$81.76 (per day)	\$1,308.17

Reiss, Deborah	T SPED MM - .2 FTE	11/4- 11/27/24 (16 days)	\$87.54 (per day)	\$1,400.62
Soto, Nikki-James	T SPED MM - .2 FTE	11/4- 11/27/24 (16 days)	\$74.43 (per day)	\$1,190.84
Strauss, Brittany	T SPED MM -.2 FTE	11/4- 11/27/24 (16 days)	\$78.87 (per day)	\$1,261.95
Bethea, Sabrina	Clerical Aide TUS - 1.0 FTE	11/11- 11/12/24 (13 hours)	\$7.81 (per hour)	\$101.53
Copeland, Jeanette	Clerical Aide DB - 1.0 FTE	11/4- 11/21/24 (25 hours)	\$7.81 (per hour)	\$195.25
Toledo, Maria	Clerical Aide MAR - 1.0 FTE	10/15- 11/15/24 (40 hours)	\$8.49 (per hour)	\$339.60

4697A. APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS FOR THE 2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR

STATE CERTIFIED TEACHER

1. Doblowsky, Nicholas
2. Mompoint, Ingrid
3. Quatorze, Nadine

STATE SUBSTITUTE CERTIFICATE

1. Burbano, Pedro E.
2. Campbell, Kassandra
3. Tan, Meleika K.
4. Williams, Eric

4697B. RESCIND APPOINTMENT OF OUT-OF-DISTRICT COACHES FOR THE 2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR

NAME	ASSIGNMENT	CONTRACT YEAR	STIPEND
Leger, Marie	Asst. Fencing Coach (Girls)	12/2024 2/2025	\$5,614

4697C. APPOINTMENT OF OUT OF DISTRICT COACHES FOR THE 2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR

NAME	ASSIGNMENT	CONTRACT YEAR	STIPEND
Keenan, Margaret	Girls Varsity Swimming Coach	12/2024 2/2025	\$9,863.75
*Phipps, Asher	Boys Varsity Swimming Coach	TBD 2/2025	\$7,780

*\*Pending certification and background clearance*

4697D. APPOINTMENT OF VOLUNTEER COACHES FOR THE 2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR



NAME	ASSIGNMENT
Barnes, Jeffrey	Volunteer Swimming Coach

4698. Approves the attached list of students who are scheduled to attend Out-of-District tuition-supported programs for the 2024-2025 school year [list on file in Board Secretary's office].

4699A. Receives and accepts the following financial reports:

1. October 2024 Board Secretary's Report
2. October 2024 Treasurer Reports
3. October 2024 Transfer Report
4. November 2024 Expense Account Adjustment Analysis
5. November 2024 Revenue Account Adjustment Analysis
6. Check Register #200886 in the amount of \$1,567,446.60
7. Check Register #200887 for November 2024 payroll in the amount of \$7,824,599.66
8. Check Register #423765-424014 in the amount of \$10,350,692.72
9. Check Register #424015-424018 in the amount of \$40,690.00

4699B. Certify the Board Secretary's Monthly Financial Report.

4699C. Approves the attendance and related travel and/or workshop expenses for the following work-related events:

EMPLOYEE	WORKSHOP/CONFERENCE	DATE (S)	LOCATION	ESTIMATED COSTS
Keith Bonds Central Office	NJASA Techspo	01/29/25- 01/31/25	Atlantic City, NJ	\$1,165.39
Nathaniel Butler Central Office	NJASA Techspo	01/29/25- 01/31/25	Atlantic City, NJ	\$1,165.39
Zoila Correa Central Office	NJASA Techspo	01/29/25- 01/31/25	Atlantic City, NJ	\$874.40
Claudio DaSilva Central Office	NJASA Techspo	01/29/25- 01/31/25	Atlantic City, NJ	\$1,165.39
Dr. Kevin Gilbert Central Office	HIB Training Program	01/21/25	Toms River, NJ	\$228.18
Dr. Kevin Gilbert Central Office	School Law Boot Camp: Focus on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Students	12/18/24	Monroe, NJ	\$236.59
Kevin Mason South Mountain	AI in Education Summit	12/11/24	West Windsor, NJ	\$237.08

Nicole Monfasani Columbia High School	NJAHPERD Annual Convention	2/24/25- 2/25/25	Princeton, NJ	\$294.00
Ben Myers Central Office	NJASA Techspo	01/29/25- 01/31/25	Atlantic City, NJ	\$1,165.39
Corrina Parsio Central Office	NJASA Techspo	01/29/25- 01/31/25	Atlantic City, NJ	\$1,165.39
Kerri Waibel Central Office	HIB Training Program	01/21/25	Toms River, NJ	\$228.18
Kerri Waibel Central Office	School Law Boot Camp: Focus on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Students	12/18/24	Monroe, NJ	\$236.59
Kendra Wolsky Central Office	Employee Training & Safety Education	1/14/25- 2/25/25	Online	\$668.00
Andrew Zabiega Central Office	NJASBO Workshops	12/10/24- 04/10/25	Whippany, NJ	\$986.86
<b>Total</b>				<b>\$9,148.83</b>

4699D. Approves the following provider(s) for the service indicated for the 2024-2025 school year:

Provider Name	Service	Rate
Soliant Health Peachtree Corners, GA	Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) Kimberley Lorenzet only	\$105.00
	Speech Language Pathologist (SLP)	\$95.00- \$100.00
	Speech Language Pathologist (SLPA)	\$80.00- \$85.00
	Physical Therapist (PT)	\$95.00- \$100.00
	Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA)	\$80.00- \$85.00
	Occupational Therapist (OT)	\$95.00- \$100.00
	Certified Occupational Therapist Assistant (COTA)	\$80.00- \$85.00

4699E. Approves the use of the following vendors in excess of the \$44,000 for the 2024-2025 school year:

VENDOR NAME	PRODUCT	TYPE OF VENDOR
Atlantic Tomorrow's Office	Copiers	State Contract

LBJ Flooring LLC.	Commercial Carpet & Flooring	Co-op
White Rock Corp.	Roof Repair	Co-op

4699F. Accepts a donation from the Achieve Foundation in the amount of \$6,400.00.

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

20-006-100-610-GR-5900- Education Foundation \$6,400.00

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.

4699G. Accepts a donation to Columbia High School in the amount of \$13,650.00.

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

20-069-200-890-CH-5900- Columbia High School \$13,650.00

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.

4699H. Approves submission of the one-year preschool operational plan for the 2025-2026 school year, as required by the Division of Early Childhood Education in the New Jersey State Department of Education. Projected enrollment is a total of 384 students who will participate in the District's Pre-School Program in 2025-2026.

4699I. Approves the carry-over of Fiscal Year 2024 Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, (IDEIA) Part B Basic and Preschool funds in the amount of \$43,663 listed below:

<u>Program</u>	<u>Carryover</u>
IDEIA Basic (public)	\$ 19,188.00
IDEIA Basic (non-public)	\$ 23,238.00
Total Basic	\$ 42,426.00
IDEIA Preschool (public)	\$ 1,237.00
IDEIA Preschool (nonpublic)	\$ 0.00
Total Preschool	\$ 1,237.00
<b>Total Carryover</b>	<b>\$ 43,663.00</b>

4699J. Submits and accepts the Fiscal Year 2024 Elementary & Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Carryover Funds in the amount of \$79,772 as listed below:

Program

Title I, Part A	\$ 17,528.00
Title II-A, Part A: Teacher / Principal/ Training/Recruiting	\$ 28,715.00
Title III, English Language Acquisition/ Language Enhancement	\$ 14,212.00
Title III, Immigrant	\$ 8,016.00
Title IV, Part A	<u>\$ 11,301.00</u>
<b>Total Carryover</b>	<b>\$ 79,772.00</b>

4699K. Approves the Tentative 2025-2026 Budget Calendar as presented.

4699L. Approves the disposal of the following items:

- Everett upright piano (A00738169).

4699M. Approves an affiliation agreement with The University West Florida for the purposes of providing Internships for teacher candidates enrolled in the university, effective December 19, 2024.

4699N. Approves the following organizational appointments for the 2024-2025 School year:

1. Appoint Imani Moody as Board Secretary and authorize him to sign checks, notes, drafts, bills of exchange, acceptance, undertakings or other orders for payment of money.
2. Appoint Imani Moody as the Qualified Purchasing Agent and authorize him to negotiate and award contracts pursuant to NJSA 18A:18A-3.
3. Appoint Imani Moody as the Custodian of Records for the school district.
4. Approve Imani Moody as the Public Agency Compliance Officer for the school district.

4699O. Approves the following change order to the contract with The Bennett Company, Inc. for Renovations to Maplewood Middle School and South Orange Middle School.

<u>Contractor</u>	<u>Change Order#</u>	<u>Amount</u>
The Bennett Company	7	\$52,193.00 (contract increase)

4699P. Approves the following change orders to the contract with G&P Parlamas, Inc. for Renovations and Additions to Columbia High School Project.

<u>Contractor</u>	<u>Change Order #</u>	<u>Amount</u>
G&P Parlamas, Inc.	17	\$23,203.00 (Contract Increase)

4700. Adopt the following revised curricula:

Resolution Number	New/Revised	Department	Subject
4700	Revised	Fine Arts K-12	Masterworks Chamber Orchestra

- 4701. Affirms the HIB investigations reported to the South Orange/Maplewood School District for the month of November 2024.
- 4702. Approves the settlement agreement for Student ID #6561391346 and authorizes the Board President to execute the settlement agreement.
- 4703. Adopt Board Policy 8420 Emergency and Crisis Situations.
- 4704. Approves the Nursing Services Plan for the 2024 -2025 school year in accordance with the N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.2-11(b).
- 4705. Approves the settlement agreement for Student ID #2154949772 and authorizes the Board President to execute the settlement agreement.
- 4706. Approves the Sidebar agreement with SOMEA concerning the creation of the "Lead Counselor" position at Columbia High School and authorizes the Board President to execute the agreement.
- 4707. Approves Commencement of Social Media Litigation

Whereas, in recent years the proliferation and widespread access to and use of social media among public school students has expanded dramatically, leading to significant risks of anxiety, depression, thoughts of self harm and suicidal ideations;

Whereas, students have been part of this phenomenon by engaging with social media in school and on school grounds in addition to outside of school;

Whereas, the district students widespread adoption, consumption, and use of social media has caused the district to incur costs in the form of staff time, disciplinary proceedings, emotional and social counseling, medical services, and other costs, with the expectation that these costs will only increase unless and until students use of social media is reduced or the social media platforms reform their practices in attracting students;

Whereas, the district has become aware of litigation against Meta Platforms Inc, Facebook holdings LLC, Snap inc, TikTok inc, Alphabet inc., and other parties responsible for the creation, design, marketing, and proliferation of social media platforms, with this litigation now involving more than 1000 US public school districts across more than 32 states and being led by Frantz Law Group, APLC of California; and

Whereas, the Board of Education (the "Board") of the district has determined that it is necessary, advantageous, desirable, and in the public interest and the best interest of the district that it participate in this litigation by filing a lawsuit seeking monetary and non monetary damages against the above referenced media companies and other parties responsible for the harm caused by social media platforms, approving the attorney-client fee contract with Frantz Law Group, APLC (the "Contract") attached as Exhibit A.

Now, Therefore, be it resolved by the Board of Education of South Orange and Maplewood School District as follows:

1. The board finds that all of the recitals contained above are true and correct, and the same are hereby incorporated herein by reference;
2. The board authorizes the filing of a lawsuit against Meta Platforms Inc. Facebook Holdings LLC, Snap Inc., TikTok Inc., Alphabet Inc. and other parties consistent with the recitals set forth above.
3. The contract is hereby approved and substantially the form reviewed by the board and attached as Exhibit A, together with such minor modifications as are deemed necessary by the board, with attorneys, and administrators to protect the best interests of the district.
4. The Superintendent is hereby authorized to sign and enter into the contract on behalf of the district.
5. This resolution shall be in full force and effect upon its adoption.

ROLL CALL: Motion 4696A-K, 4697A-D, 4698, 4699A-P, 4700, 4701, 4702, 4703, 4704, 4705, 4706, 4707. PASSED YES: Callahan, DuVall Wilson, Eckert, Gifford, Sackett-Gable, Telesford, Vadlamani, Wittleder  
NO: None

4708. WHEREAS, on December 19, 2024 an HIB appeal hearing was held by a Committee of the Board in closed session involving a Harassment/Intimidation/Bullying matter HIB Report #265353\_CHS\_05052024;

WHEREAS, at the hearing, the Board heard from the Anti-Bullying Specialist, the Principal and the parents who filed the appeal on behalf of their child; and

WHEREAS, the Committee carefully considered the relevant information; and

WHEREAS, the Committee has made a recommendation to the full Board during the executive portion of its December 19, 2024 Board meeting and the Board has carefully considered the matter and the recommendation of the Committee;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, THAT the Board hereby overturns the Administration's determination, and finds that incident #265353\_CHS\_05052024 DID NOT constitute HIB within the meaning of

New Jersey's statute and the Board's policy on Harassment/Intimidation/Bullying as to Student #8920336418; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, THAT the Board hereby reverses the Administration's findings, and directs the Administration to update the records in HIBster and SSDS to reflect the finding of non-substantiated HIB; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, THAT the Administration will take appropriate supportive, restorative, remedial action; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board Secretary is further directed to notify all individuals affected by this decision of the Board's determination.

ROLL CALL: Motion 4696A-K, 4697A-D, 4698, 4699A-P, 4700, 4701, 4702, 4703, 4704, 4705, 4706, 4707. PASSED YES: Callahan, DuVall Wilson, Eckert, Gifford, Sackett-Gable, Telesford, Vadlamani, Wittleder  
NO: None

#### HEARING OF INDIVIDUALS AND DELEGATIONS

Community member Khadijah White addressed the Board.

#### NEW BUSINESS

NONE.

#### Future Meetings

Board President Telesford made the following motions:

The Board of Education will meet in Public Session and hold its annual Reorganization Meeting on Thursday, January 2, 2025, at 6:30 pm in the District Meeting Room, 525 Academy Street, Maplewood, NJ as well as using the online video conference platform. The Board of Education will adjourn to Closed Session in the Superintendent's Office 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 return to Public Session at 7:30 pm. The community can view the meeting by following the steps which will be listed on the agenda. If there are members of the community who would like to attend the meeting in person, please note that masks and social distancing are optional in accordance with the guidance received from the local DOH and the CDC. Action will be taken.

Motion made by Board Member Callahan, seconded by Board Member Vadlamani to adjourn. Motion to adjourn was unanimously approved at 9:25 p.m.

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Imani Moody  
Business Administrator/Board Secretary

