

Regular Meeting
South Orange-Maplewood
Board of Education
February 26, 2026

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 and via an online video conference platform on February 26, 2026.

Board President Meyer called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: Board Member Bennett, Board Member Brown
Board Member Callahan, Board Member Higgins,
Board Member Kapadia, Board President Meyer,
Board Member Nayar, Board Member Sackett-Gable
Board Member Stephan

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 7:58 a.m. on January 6, 2026.
- 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.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

WHEREAS, the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-11, permits the Board of Education to meet in closed executive session to discuss certain matters, and

WHEREAS, the length of the Executive Session is estimated to be seventy-five (75) minutes after which the public meeting of the Board shall (select one) reconvene and immediately adjourn or reconvene and proceed with business where formal action will be taken, now, therefore be it

RESOLVED: The Board of Education adjourns to closed session to discuss personnel, legal, and miscellaneous confidential matters. Be it further

RESOLVED: The minutes of this closed session will be made public when the need for confidentiality no longer exists.

Motion made by Board Member Callahan, second by Board Member Higgins to adjourn to Executive Session. Motion unanimously approved.

***Board Members adjourned to Executive Session at 6:40 p.m.
Board Members reconvened at 8:28 p.m.***

***Student Representatives Present, Board Member Kapadia left the meeting during Executive Session to attend the Maplewood Planning Board Meeting
Eight Voting Members Present***

Resolution 4919 Adjustments

Superintendent Bing noted that resolution 4918 will be amended to add Ryan Harman as the Assistant Boys Varsity Outdoor Coach and resolution 4919 will add Alex Simon as Head Coach for Varsity Boys Outdoor Track and Michael Johnson will also be the Assistant, boys and girls, varsity, track coach.

STAFF RECOGNITION

Clinton School Principal Melissa Butler recognized teacher Dr. Antoinette Gelin for her exceptional leadership and service as liaison to Multilingual families, especially Haitian Creole families at Clinton Elementary School. She meets families where they are, whether in school, at conferences, in their homes, or within the community, building authentic relationships grounded in trust and respect.

Her work goes beyond communication to elevate culture, celebrate Haitian heritage, and ensure families feel seen, heard, and empowered. Her advocacy strengthens connections between families and staff and deepens belonging across the school community.

Superintendent Bing acknowledged that Ms. Gelin's work over the past two years has been very challenging due to the current political climate. She has gone above and beyond to make these families part of the SOMSD family. We understand how tough it has been and sincerely thank her for her efforts.

HEARING OF INDIVIDUALS AND DELEGATIONS - STUDENTS

Board Member Bennett made a motion seconded by Board Member Sackett-Gable to move up public speaks for students only. Motion unanimously approved.

Students Ellie Tamir Hoehn, Izzy Sandoval, Olive Witte, Caroline Shaw, Alice Vitale, Audrey Marvell, Gwendolyn Butkus, Levi Taber, Levin Roth Devis Amalia Mullen, Katie Calhoon, Jane Moffitt, Christina Taber, Jeremy Crawford Julius Marshall, Riley Rucker, Theo Galkin, Abraham Hoffman, Leo Clint, Harry Gottlieb addressed the Board regarding the removal of the AP Literature book, *'The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao'*, concerns of mismanagement of district funds, the need for greater transparency and the inclusion of students' voices, strong support for the reinstatement of track and field Coaches Simon and Johnson, and concerns about the management of the athletic department.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion made by Board Member Callahan seconded by Board Member Sackett-Gable to approve the minutes of the following meetings: January 5, 2026 Reorganization Meeting and January 29, 2026 - Executive and Regular Board Meetings. Motion unanimously approved.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES UPDATE:

Scarlet Strogov

- AP Literature Book Removal - I want to reiterate what students have already shared with the board about the book ban. If we are a school district that prides itself on engaging with diverse and challenging topics, then we should not shy away from them out of fear. Discussing and reading difficult material is essential to fulfilling that mission. I also believe that the most effective way to address student mental health struggles is not to silence them, but to bring those experiences to light. Doing so helps students who may be struggling realize that they are not alone. Students should feel safe discussing mental health in supportive environments, including classrooms like Ms. Martling's AP Literature class.
- Internship Program - We are currently developing software to support the program and progress has been very positive. We expect to have a base version completed by the end of March.

Penuel Shapiro

I want to thank the board, along with the track athletes here tonight, for their decision regarding Coach Simon and Coach Johnson. However, I am deeply concerned about the lack of transparency from the district and athletics department before this decision. Students woke up to rumors about their coaches being fired, and communication was limited. The spring track Google Classroom was deleted, and meet schedules were left unclear.

This situation highlights a recurring issue at Columbia this year—mismanagement in athletics and poor communication from the department. For instance, as a captain of the wrestling team, I saw a similar case last November when we lost our head coach, Mike Friedman, the district's Coach of the Year, just weeks before the season. There was little communication, many unanswered questions, and the team was left confused. Luckily, we found a replacement in time, but the original decision was not changed. This left us uncertain about the future at the start of the season.

This pattern raises serious concerns. Why would skilled coaches want to come to Columbia High School if they do not feel respected or supported by the athletics department and the school board? Likewise, why would talented student athletes especially those hoping to compete at the collegiate level choose to stay if they cannot count on consistent support? If this continues, we risk losing not only great coaches but also top athletic talent. We have already seen this happen, and it will only get worse over time. Future students may be less motivated to join programs in which they do not feel secure or supported.

I'm glad we resolved this immediate issue, but the bigger concern remains: how can students, families, coaches, and staff be confident this won't happen again? Scarlet and I will focus on these concerns going forward. This isn't the first time, and it needs ongoing attention, not just during crises. We should not only recognize our coaches when they are gone, but continuously

celebrate and support them. That fosters school pride and strengthens our athletic programs.

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE - Mr. Jason Bing

- **Strategic Planning Initiative** - The district is launching its first five-year strategic plan in approximately a decade. Three optional planning sessions will be held at 6:30 PM in the high school library media center on March 16, April 15, and May 11. Facilitated by the New Jersey School Boards Association, these sessions will focus on shaping the district's future priorities and goals. Students, staff, and community members are encouraged to participate.
- **Mental Health Town Hall & Ongoing Focus** - A district-wide mental health community town hall will take place on March 19 at 6:30 PM, featuring a panel of experts. This event will serve as the launch for a series of workshops throughout the year. The district has identified student mental health as a critical and ongoing priority.
- **Black History Month Celebrations** - Schools across the district engaged in meaningful educational and cultural programming centered on the themes of visibility, truth, and belonging. Programming included:
 - *South Orange Middle School*: "My Black is Beautiful" student showcase celebrating identity, creativity, and student voice
 - *Seth Boyden Elementary School*: "Gallery of Heroes" living museum featuring student research on influential Black figures. The district aims to extend these values into a more inclusive, year-round curriculum.
- **Athletic Achievements**
 - Boys basketball team won the Essex County Invitational Tournament and advanced in state competition
 - Girls basketball team completed a remarkable turnaround, achieving their best season since 2010
 - Girls fencing team won the South Sectional Championship
 - Boys fencing team secured a key victory; both teams advanced to state finals
- **Arts** - Maplewood Middle School's production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* was recognized for its high quality, energy, and collaboration among students and staff.
- **Global Day of Unplugging** - The district will participate on March 6, encouraging students and staff to disconnect from technology and focus on well-being, relationships, and mindfulness.
- **AP Literature Curriculum Clarification** - The novel in question was not banned; rather, families were given the option to opt in. The decision reflected sensitivity to current student mental health concerns. The novel will remain part of the curriculum in future years.
- **Rising Mental Health Needs** - The district is experiencing a significant increase in student mental health challenges, including incidents of self-harm. In response:
 - Mental health is being prioritized as a long-term focus
 - Student councils will play a role in shaping solutions
 - Expanded support systems and initiatives are being developed
- **Staff Training & Support** - There is a growing demand for professional development in mental health and trauma-informed practices. Educators are increasingly serving as "mental health first responders," despite limited formal training. Nationally, 85% of educators report feeling

underprepared to address current mental health challenges. The district is working to strengthen training and support for staff.

- **Whole Child Approach** - The district is shifting toward a "whole child" model of education, emphasizing students' emotional, physical, and social well-being alongside academic achievement. This approach recognizes that student learning is deeply connected to overall wellness and development.
- **Career pathways Student Recognition** - Congratulations to Christian White, Roel Gimenez, and Donald "DJ" Ryzen on graduating from Columbia High School's New Jersey Car Technician Advancement Program.

Board Member Stephan made a motion seconded by Board Member Higgins to hear public speaks specifically for those individuals who have indicated a desire to speak about the coaches. Motion passed unanimously.

Community Members Cindy Hairston, Janine Guida, Laura Wallis, Scott Greenstone Yves Hart, Micah Gottlieb, Jurga Marshall, Julie Lew, James LaCroix, Jeremy Donahue, Will Emmons and Anwar Salaam Bey addressed the Board.

ACTION ITEMS MOVED FORWARD

Board Member Callahan made a motion seconded by Board Member Brown to move forward resolutions 4918 and 4919 for discussion and voting. Motion passed unanimously.

Board Member Brown Made a motion, seconded by Board Member Callahan to amend Resolution 4919B Belinda Glymph from Girls Varsity Outdoor Track to Assistant Girls Varsity Outdoor Track and Michael Johnson from Assistant Varsity Girls Outdoor Coach to Varsity Girls Outdoor Coach.

ROLL CALL MOTION TO AMEND RESOLUTION 4919B YES: Bennett, Brown, Callahan, Higgins, Meyer, Nayar, Sackett-Gable, Stephan NO: None

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

4918A. MEMORIAL

BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE BOARD OF EDUCATION approve the following memorials:

John Van Teeckelenburgh Sr., former Building & Grounds Supervisor passed away on February 12, 2026;

The Superintendent is asked to convey our condolences to the family and friends of John Van Teeckelenburgh, Sr.

4918B. RETIREMENT

NAME	ASSIGNMENT	EFFECTIVE DATE	YEARS IN DISTRICT
Bialer, Deborah	T 4 MAR - 1.0 FTE	7/1/26	25

4918C. RESIGNATION

NAME	ASSIGNMENT	EFFECTIVE DATE	YEARS IN DISTRICT
Castaneda, Julie	T Spanish SOM - 1.0 FTE	4/20/26	0.8
Tapia-Vargas, Arelis	Social Worker / Elem Field Supervisor CLIN - 1.0 FTE	4/2/26	6.8

4918D. 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
Olinsky, Benjamin	T Math SOM - 1.0 FTE	3/16/26 6/30/26	\$67,532
Seltzer, Nadia	T SPED/INC MM - 1.0 FTE	2/1/26 6/30/26	\$73,400
Smalls, II, Dr. Donovan	Acting Principal 1.0 FTE	TBD TBD	\$128,238

4918E. 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
Gannon, Nina	T SPED/SC-LLD MAR - 1.0 FTE	2/4/26 4/16/26	\$66,100
Li, Austin	T 2 SM - 1.0 FTE	2/18/26 6/18/26	\$73,400

4918F. ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE

NAME	EFFECTIVE DATE
Employee # 4978	2/6/26 (w/pay)

4918G. CHANGE IN END DATE

NAME	ASSIGNMENT	OLD END DATE	NEW END DATE
Ramsburg, Jamie	LR T 4 TUS - 1.0 FTE	3/16/26	5/15/26

4918H. LEAVES OF ABSENCE

NAME	ASSIGNMENT	EFFECTIVE DATE
Burton, Amy	T SPED/LLD MM - 1.0 FTE	2/25/26-3/17/26 (Unpaid Medical Leave)
Govrin, Hannah	T SPED/SC-LLD MAR - 1.0 FTE	3/6/26 (1/2 day) -4/16/26 (Unpaid FMLA)
Kenniff, Tivoli	T 4 TUS - 1.0 FTE	3/17/26-5/15/26 (Unpaid Childcare Leave)

Martino, Adrienne	T Science SOM - 1.0 FTE	1/14/26 (.75 day) - 1/16/26; 1/21/26 (Unpaid FMLA)
Ng. Suzanne	Library Media Spec CHS - 1.0 FTE	1/22/26 (1/2 day) -3/6/26 (Unpaid Personal Leave)

4918I. STIPENDS

NAME	ASSIGNMENT	EFFECTIVE DATE	ACTUAL SALARY
Bennett, Telia	Student Council CHS- 1.0 FTE	9/1/25 12/23/25	\$5,719 (pro-rated)
Bernard-Awumey, Joana	Student Council CHS - 1.0 FTE	1/5/26 6/30/26	\$5,719 (pro-rated)
Karis, Katerina	National Honor Society CHS - .5 FTE	9/1/25 2/3/26	\$1,611.50 (pro-rated)
Reyes, Nicolas	JV/Asst. Coach, Baseball CHS - 1.0 FTE	3/1/26 6/30/26	\$5,614
	Freshman/Asst Coach, Baseball CHS - 1.0 FTE	3/1/26 6/30/26	-\$3,811
Meola, Joseph	Freshman/Asst Coach, Baseball CHS - 1.0 FTE	3/1/26 6/30/26	\$3,811
Harman, Ryan	Asst. Varsity Coach, Boys Outdoor Track CHS - 1.0 FTE	3/1/26 6/30/26	TBD
Carluccio, Joanna	JV/Asst Coach, Outdoor Track CHS - 1.0 FTE	3/1/26 6/30/26	\$5,614
Sumner, Jacob	Varsity Coach, Girls Lacrosse CHS - 1.0 FTE	3/1/26 6/30/26	\$5,531
Mason, Kevin	Varsity Coach, Golf CHS - 1.0 FTE	3/1/26 6/30/26	\$4,539

4918J. SALARY ADJUSTMENTS

NAME	ASSIGNMENT	EFFECTIVE DATE	ADJUSTMENT	ACTUAL SALARY
Benning, Avery	T SPED MM - .2 FTE	9/2/25 2/27/26	+\$16,246.40	\$97,478 (pro-rated)
Blackford, Meghan	T SPED MM - .2 FTE	9/2/25 2/27/26	+\$14,973.94 (per day @ 17%)	\$103,056 (pro-rated)
Amboise-Etienne, Bervelyne	School Psychologist MONT - .2 FTE	2/2/26 2/27/26	+\$20,058.40	\$120,350 (pro-rated)
Barry-Austin, Tracey	Social Worker MONT - .2 FTE	9/17/25 2/27/26	+\$18,566 (pro-rated)	\$111,398
Munoz Rosario, Kiara	Clerical Aide SM - 1.0 FTE	2/9/26 (8 hours)	\$15.10 (per hour)	\$120.80
Toledo, Magda	Clerical Aide MAR - 1.0 FTE	1/16- 2/9/26 (32 hours)	\$10.69 (per hour)	\$342.08
Bottiglierie, Henry	Director of Facilities DIST - 1.0 FTE	3/1/2026 6/30/2026	+\$10,000	\$165,000

4918K. STAFF FUNDED BY PRESCHOOL EDUCATION EXPANSION AID (PEEA)

NAME	ASSIGNMENT	EFFECTIVE DATE	ACTUAL SALARY
Burns, Nicole	Preschool Secretary MONT - 1.0 FTE ACCT# 20.218.200.105.MO.5900	7/1/25- 12/31/25	\$72,120

4919A. APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS FOR THE 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR AT \$175/DAY

STATE CERTIFIED TEACHER

1. Li, Austin
2. Mogavero, Vincent
3. Qian, Yuxin

COLLEGE GRADUATE AND STATE SUBSTITUTE CERTIFICATE

1. Dahroug, Hussein
2. Shaffron-Davis, Benjamin
3. Singh, Indira

4919B. APPOINTMENT OF OUT OF DISTRICT COACHES FOR THE 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR

NAME	ASSIGNMENT	CONTRACT YEAR	STIPEND
Anderson, Yasmeen	Girls Head Lacrosse Coach	03/2026 06/2026	\$7,780
Glymph, Belinda	Asst Girls Varsity Outdoor Track	03/2026 06/2026	TBD
Mapp, Everett	Girls Freshman Lacrosse Coach	03/2026 06/2026	\$3,749
McCombs, David	Boys JV Indoor Track	03/2026 06/2026	\$6,566
Royal, Eriq	Girls Flag Football	03/2026 06/2026	\$5,531
Simon, Alex	Varsity Outdoor Head Coach	03/2026 06/2026	TBD
Johnson, Michael	Varsity Girls Outdoor Coach	03/2026 06/2026	TBD

4919C. APPOINTMENT OF VOLUNTEERS FOR THE 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR

NAME	ASSIGNMENT
Horan, Jessica	Tuscan Elementary Library

ROLL CALL: MOTION 4918 and 4919 as amended YES: Bennett, Brown, Callahan, Higgins, Meyer, Nayar, Sackett-Gable, Stephan NO: None

Board President Meyer made a motion seconded by Board Member Stephan for a five-minute recess. Motion unanimously approved at 10:35 p.m. Board Member reconvened at 10:49 p.m.

HEARING OF INDIVIDUALS AND DELEGATIONS

Community Members Alison Berson, Elissa Malespina, Alyna Jacobs, Marian Raab, Verna Holcomb, Steven Yafet, Jonathan Castro, Lori Martling, Rocio Lopez, Edward addressed the Board regarding Gifted and Talent programming, the removal of the AP Literature book, '*The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*', bullying and budget concerns.

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR'S UPDATE

Business Administrator Imani Moody provided a brief update on the 26-27 Budget and the Ritzer project timeline.

BOARD PRESIDENT'S UPDATE - Will Meyer

Board Member Meyer shared a brief update on the following:

- A community member was seriously injured in a hit-and-run bicycle incident, prompting concern for safety among local residents, especially those who bike regularly; the individual is a father, musician, and active supporter of the bike bus program, and the community is wishing him a full recovery.
- "My Black is Beautiful" event at South Orange Middle School, showcased student performances and featured a keynote from Columbia High School alumnus Jordan Fields, whose past advocacy contributed to equity efforts in the district.
- This evening, Board Member Kapadia is attending the Maplewood Planning Board meeting regarding the proposed redevelopment of Ritzer Field; the project is still under review.
- The district is currently evaluating future capital projects and financial plans, awaiting state input on funding contributions and additional feedback from local partners before determining next steps.
- The board acknowledges receiving a high volume of community emails and concerns. All feedback is being reviewed and considered in decision-making
- Regarding the AP Literature Book removal: No formal board action has been taken. The superintendent has allowed students to read the text with parent permission (opt-in). The board is continuing to monitor the situation while balancing intellectual freedom and student well being.
- In response to public comments about track and field coaches, the board cannot discuss personnel matters due to confidentiality, but community input is being considered as part of the Boards oversight responsibilities.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Committee reports from the Rutgers Implementation, Finance, Facilities and Technology, Special Services, Personnel, Curriculum & 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 Member Sackett-Gable, seconded by Board Member Brown to move resolutions 4920-4928 for discussion and voting.

4920A. Receives and accepts the following financial reports:

1. January 2026 Board Secretary's Report
2. January 2026 Treasurer Report
3. January 2026 Transfer Report
4. January 2026 Expense Account Adjustment Analyses
5. Check Register 428136 in the amount of \$798.00
6. Check Register#428137-428741 in the amount of \$7,318,010.50
7. Check Register#200943-200947 in the amount of \$3,397,713.82
8. January 2025 Payroll Register in the amount of \$7,980,669.37

4920B. Certify the Board Secretary's Monthly Financial Report.

4920C. Approves the attendance and related travel and/or workshop expenses for the following work-related events:

EMPLOYEE	WORKSHOP/CONFERENCE	DATE(S)	LOCATION	ESTIMATED COSTS
Tunde Adedoyin Central Office	NJASPA 2026 Spring Summit - HR at Crossroads	3/12/26	Union, NJ	\$100.00
Henry Bottiglierie Central Office	NJSBGA 25 th Annual Conference	3/22/26-3/25/26	Atlantic City, NJ	\$986.10 Price increase
Cassandra Bragg Central Office	NJASPA 2026 Spring Summit - HR at Crossroads	3/12/26	Union, NJ	\$100.00
Zoila Correa Central Office	Enjoy Thinking: The Power of Math Fluency	2/9/26	Middletown, NJ	\$0.00
Jennifer De Los Angeles Central Office	NJASPA 2026 Spring Summit - HR at Crossroads	3/12/26	Union, NJ	\$100.00
Susan Ellis Central Office	Spring 2026 Careers in Education Job Fair	2/20/26	Union, NJ	\$204.40
Kathleen Gesumaria Central Office	Strauss Esmay School Law & Policy Symposium	3/10/26	Toms River, NJ	\$0.00
Dennis James Central Office	NJSBGA 25 th Annual Conference	3/22/26-3/25/26	Atlantic City, NJ	\$986.10 Price increase
Peter Kassalow Maplewood MS	2026 Education Fair & Interview Day	3/11/26	Wayne, NJ	227.40
Michael Loupis Columbia HS	ASAP NJ 39 th Annual Conference	3/5/26-3/6/26	Princeton, NJ	677.72
James Manno Columbia HS	The Jewish Federation Study Tour	4/26/26-4/30/26	Tel Aviv, Israel	\$0.00
Jaclyn Marrese Columbia HS	Strengthening Your Students' MATH Learning and English	3/31/26	Virtual	\$295.00

Philip McCormick Columbia HS	The Jewish Federation Study Tour	4/26/26- 4/30/26	Tel Aviv, Israel	\$0.00
Chris Preston Columbia HS	Annual Conference Nat'l Council for History Education	3/26/26- 3/29/26	Montgomery, AL	\$2,551.20
Alyssa Schlatmann Maplewood MS	2026 Education Fair & Interview Day	3/11/26	Wayne, NJ	27.40
Katie Simpson Columbia HS	Engaging Secondary Newcomers in Content Area Literacy	3/10/26	Trenton, NJ	\$0.00
Aaliyah Suarez Seth Boyden	Enjoy Thinking: The Power of Math Fluency	2/9/26	Middletown, NJ	\$0.00
Kerri Waibel Central Office	Strauss Esmay School Law & Policy Symposium	3/10/26	Toms River, NJ	\$0.00
Lavonne Wallace Central Office	Legal One: Student Use of Internet Enabled Devices	2/19/26	Virtual	\$0.00
Total				\$6,255.32

4920D. Approves the use of the following vendors in excess of the \$53,000 for the 2025-2026 school year:

VENDOR NAME	PRODUCT	TYPE OF VENDOR
Automated Logic Contracting Services, Inc.	HVAC Automation Maintenance	Co-op
BradyPlus Company	Facilities, Maintenance Equipment	Co-op
Kencor	Elevator Inspection and Maintenance	Co-op
Murray Contracting, LLC	General Contracting	Co-op
NJ Principal & Supvrs Assoc.	Professional Association	Other
Public Sewer	Wasteline, Grease Trap, Sewerjet Inspection, Maintenance	Co-op
Storr Tractor	Facilities Grounds Equipment	Co-op

4920E. Approves a Clinical Affiliation Agreement with Teachers College, Columbia University for the purposes of providing field/clinical experience for university students enrolled in the Psychological Counseling program. The agreement is effective for one year beginning on January 15, 2026.

4920F. Authorizes the enrollment of Student #**891 for the 2025-2026 school year through June 30, 2026, on the basis of tuition, in accordance with the terms and conditions set forth in the tuition contract.

4920G. Accepts a donation to South Orange Middle School in the amount of \$1,202.74.

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

20-005-200-890-SO-5900- South Orange Middle School \$1,202.74

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.

4920H. Authorize the Business Administrator to enter into an agreement with Camp Riverbend of Warren, New Jersey to park buses in the Columbia High School parking lot June 25, 2026 - August 14, 2026 at a rate of \$100 per bus per week.

4920I. Whereas, the South Orange Maplewood Board of Education seeks to participate in Sustainable Jersey for Schools to focus attention and efforts on matters of sustainability and pursue initiatives that will lead to Sustainable Jersey for Schools Certification.

Whereas, the South Orange Maplewood Board of Education and District Superintendent seek to support and work with school staff and administrators, students, and parents to ensure a safe and healthy environment for students by encouraging our school community to implement sustainable, energy-smart, eco-friendly, and cost-effective solutions.

Whereas, extensive opportunities exist to teach students about ecological, economic and social sustainability, environmental health, and nutrition; to integrate sustainability education into classroom learning; and to support students in becoming leaders in making their schools healthier and more sustainable places.

Whereas, many options and choices exist for schools to use resources more efficiently; to reduce, reuse, and recycle; to follow Green Building Standards for construction and major renovations; to form school partnerships; to eliminate toxic chemicals; to purchase (or produce) clean energy; and to purchase recycled paper, energy-efficient equipment and other green products to protect our global environment.

Whereas, Sustainability means using resources wisely, saving money, and reducing our impact on the environment, all of which will ensure the future health, safety, and prosperity of our children.

Whereas, the South Orange Maplewood Board of Education commits to the formation of at least one Sustainability Leadership Team (also referred to as "Green Team"), based on the guidance of Sustainable Jersey for Schools.

Whereas, Green Team members help schools adopt policies and practices addressing areas such as sustainability education and professional

training, green purchasing, waste reduction, indoor air quality, energy-saving initiatives, and community partnerships.

Whereas, The South Orange Maplewood Board of Education will encourage Green Teams at all district schools by providing networking and educational opportunities.

THEREFORE, BE IT IS RESOLVED that the South Orange Maplewood Board of Education agrees to participate in Sustainable Jersey for Schools, and it is the Board's intention to pursue certification for schools in the district.

We hereby appoint Jason Bing to be the district's liaison to Sustainable Jersey for Schools.

We do hereby recognize South Orange Maplewood Public Schools Clinton Elementary, Delia Bolden Elementary, Marshall Elementary, Montrose Early Childhood Center, Seth Boyden Elementary School, South Mountain Elementary, South Mountain Annex and Tuscan Elementary School as the agent(s) to carry out our commitment to building a sustainable school district through the implementation of Sustainable Jersey for Schools actions.

We agree to complete district actions and to support the district's schools in completing their actions.

4920J. Whereas, the South Orange Maplewood School District, desires to submit the New Jersey Department of Education Water Infrastructure Improvement Grant to carry our facility improvements.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, That

1. The South Orange Maplewood Board of Education does hereby authorize the application for such a grant; and
2. Recognizes and accepts that the Department may offer a lesser or greater amount, and therefore upon receipt of the grant agreement, does further authorize the execution of any such grant agreement; and does further authorize the expenditure of funds pursuant to the terms of the agreement between South Orange Maplewood School District and NJ Department of Education; and
3. The sustainability plan for filtration or flushing solutions has been shared with the Board of Education.

Be it further RESOLVED, that the persons whose names, titles, and signatures appear below are authorized to sign the application, and that they or their successors in said titles are authorized to sign the agreement, and any other documents necessary in connection therewith:

Jason Bing, Superintendent of Schools

4921. Approves the following:

WHEREAS, in accordance with law, hearings were afforded with regard to the children identified by student number below; and

WHEREAS, the Board has determined that, as to the students identified below, the parents or guardians are not domiciled within the District or the children are not kept in the home of another person domiciled within the school district pursuant to the affidavit pupil's statute; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board hereby orders the transfer or removal of the students identified below.

<u>NJ State ID #</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>Grade</u>
7194318756	SOMS	7 th
1138284368	SOMS	7 th
4911884898	DB	5 th

- 4922A. Adopt Policy 2530 Resource Materials.
- 4922B. Adopt Policy 2535 Library Materials.
- 4922C. Adopt Policy 5120 Assignment of Students.
- 4922D. Adopt Policy 9130 Public Complaints.
- 4922E. Adopt Regulation 9130 Public Complaints.
- 4923-1. Approves the first reading of Policy 0142.1 Nepotism.
- 4923-2. Approves the first reading of Policy 2422 Statutory Curriculum Requirements.
- 4923-3. Approves the first reading of Policy 5111 Eligibility of Resident-Non-Resident Students.
- 4923-4. Approves the first reading of Policy 9163 Spector Code of Conduct for Interscholastic.
- 4923-5. Approves the first reading of Regulation 2535 Library Materials.
- 4923-6. Approves the first reading of Regulation 5530 Substance Abuse.
- 4924A. Approves the settlement agreement for Student ID #8965098431 and authorizes the Board President to execute the settlement agreement.
- 4924B. Approves the settlement agreement for Student ID #1931949626 and authorizes the Board President to execute the settlement agreement.
- 4925. Affirms the HIB investigations reported to the South Orange/Maplewood School District for the month of January 2026.
- 4926. WHEREAS, the South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education ("Board") is a public body corporate and politic organized and existing under the laws of the State of New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, the South Orange-Maplewood Education Association ("SOMEA") is the exclusive majority representative for teachers employed by the Board; and

WHEREAS, the Board and SOMEA are parties to a collective negotiations agreement ("CNA"); and

WHEREAS, SOMEA filed a grievance concerning the assignment of a sixth (6th) teaching period scheduled during a teacher's regular student lunch period; and

WHEREAS, the grievance advanced to Level IV and was scheduled for arbitration on February 26, 2026; and

WHEREAS, the Board and SOMEA have reached a mutually agreeable resolution of the grievance, without any admission of wrongdoing by either party, as set forth in the written Agreement to Resolve Level IV Grievance dated February 2, 2026, which includes, among other terms:

- application limited to circumstances where a sixth teaching period is assigned pursuant to Article XXI.A.14 of the CNA and results in scheduling lunch outside regular student lunch periods;
- a prohibition on scheduling a lunch outside regular student lunch periods absent the affected teacher's voluntary written consent;
- clear standards for voluntariness, written consent requirements, notice to SOMEA, non-precedential effect, and withdrawal of the pending Level IV grievance and arbitration; and
- equal sharing of any arbitrator cancellation fee associated with the scheduled arbitration; and

WHEREAS, the Superintendent has recommended Board approval of the settlement in the interest of resolving the grievance efficiently and minimizing further litigation risk and costs;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education hereby approves the Agreement to Resolve Level IV Grievance between the Board and SOMEA dated February 2, 2026; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board President and Superintendent are authorized to execute the Agreement on behalf of the Board and to take any actions necessary to implement its terms; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Superintendent is directed to ensure district administrators comply with the Agreement's requirements regarding voluntariness, written consent, notice to SOMEA within five (5) workdays of any executed consent, and the non-precedential application of the Agreement; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the pending Level IV grievance and the February 26, 2026 arbitration shall be withdrawn consistent with the Agreement, and that the Board shall share equally in any arbitrator cancellation fee as provided therein.

4927. Approves the revised school calendar for the 2025-2026 school year as presented.

4928. Approves the addition of the following class field trip destinations based upon the attached "Statements of Assurance."

DESTINATION	CITY	STATE
Harrah's Resort	Atlantic City	NJ

ROLL CALL: Motion 4920, 4921, 4922, 4923, 4924, 4925, 4926, 4927, 4928
YES: Bennett, Brown, Callahan, Higgins, Meyer, Nayar, Sackett-Gable, Stephan NO: None

Motion made by Board Member Callahan, seconded by Board Member Stephan to move resolutions 4929 for discussion and voting.

4929. WHEREAS, the Strengthening Gifted and Talented Education Act, N.J.S.A. 18A:35-34 et seq. ("SGTEA"), and N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.1 require boards of education to establish an ongoing K-12 process to identify students who are gifted and talented using multiple measures, and to provide appropriate instructional adaptations; and

WHEREAS, the South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education ("Board") has adopted and maintains Board Policy 2464 - Gifted and Talented Students, most recently revised August 24, 2023, to implement the requirements of SGTEA; and

WHEREAS, the Board received a written complaint alleging noncompliance with SGTEA and Board Policy 2464 with respect to the identification and instructional services provided to a specific student; and

WHEREAS, consistent with Board Policy 2464, the Board reviewed the written complaint, supporting attachments, the student's Gifted Action Plan, and the written response, and documentation submitted by the administration; and

WHEREAS, the Board discussed this matter with the Superintendent and appropriate administrators in executive session, consistent with the Open Public Meetings Act, OPRA, FERPA, and the need to protect confidential student educational records and personnel-related information; and

WHEREAS, the Board finds that the District maintains a lawful and compliant process for identifying gifted and talented students using multiple measures, and provides a continuum of services and instructional adaptations aligned with SGTEA and N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.1; and

WHEREAS, the Board further finds that the student at issue was identified through multiple measures and provided with a written Gifted Action Plan designed to address the student's instructional needs and to be reviewed and adjusted over time; and

WHEREAS, the Board recognizes that determinations regarding curriculum, instructional strategies, differentiation, and implementation of gifted services are matters of professional educational judgment entrusted to certified staff and administration; and

WHEREAS, the Board finds no evidence that the District's actions violate SGTEA, N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.1, or Board Policy 2464, and determines that the District's implementation of gifted and talented services for the specific student were legally compliant and educationally appropriate;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Education hereby AFFIRMS the District's implementation of the Strengthening Gifted and Talented Education Act and Board Policy 2464; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board AFFIRMS the actions taken by the administration with respect to the identification of gifted and talented students, the development and implementation of Gifted Action Plans, and the provision of instructional adaptations consistent with professional educational judgment; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board DIRECTS the administration to continue to monitor, review, and document the implementation of the Gifted Action Plan in accordance with district procedures and to maintain appropriate communication with the Complainants; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Superintendent or designee is authorized to issue the Board's written decision to the complainants in accordance with Board Policy 2464, including notice of the right to appeal to the Commissioner of Education pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:6-9.

ROLL CALL: Motion 4929 YES: Bennett, Callahan, Higgins, Meyer, Nayar, Sackett-Gable, Stephan NO: None ABSTAIN: Brown

Motion made by Board Member Stephan, seconded by Board Member Sackett-Gable to move resolutions 4930 for discussion and voting.

4930. WHEREAS, the South Orange-Maplewood Education Association ("Association") filed a Level IV Grievance dated January 8, 2026, alleging that the Columbia High School Principal's directive establishing a minimum marking period grade of 50 violated Article XX.B.1 of the collective bargaining agreement and related provisions; and

WHEREAS, the grievance asserts that teachers must be permitted to determine grades solely in their professional judgment, and that the directive improperly required grade overrides to reflect a minimum of 50; and

WHEREAS, the Superintendent denied the grievance at Level III, finding no violation of the collective bargaining agreement; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Education has reviewed the grievance, the Level III response, the collective bargaining agreement, applicable Board policies, including Policy 2624, and relevant legal authority; and

WHEREAS, the establishment of grading scales, grading floors, and grading parameters constitutes a matter of educational policy and educational judgment within the inherent managerial prerogative of the Board of Education; and

WHEREAS, in Middletown Township Board of Education v. Middletown Township Education Association, PERC No. 2016-7, the Public Employment Relations Commission recognized that grading practices and grading systems are matters of educational policy and therefore are not mandatorily negotiable; and

WHEREAS, the directive at issue established a grading scale parameter applicable to the marking period, and did not eliminate teacher professional judgment in determining earned grades within the established grading system;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Education finds that the establishment of a minimum marking period grade of 50 constitutes an exercise of educational policy consistent with the Board's managerial prerogative and applicable law; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board determines there has been no violation of the collective bargaining agreement; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Level IV Grievance regarding Grade Changes is hereby DENIED in its entirety.

ROLL CALL: Motion 4930 YES: Callahan, Higgins, Meyer, Nayar, Sackett-Gable, Stephan NO: Bennett, Brown

Motion made by Board Member Callahan, seconded by Board Member Bennett to move resolutions 4931 for discussion and voting.

4931. WHEREAS, the South Orange-Maplewood Education Association filed a Level IV Grievance dated January 8, 2026, alleging that certain Child Study Team ("CST") members were directed to assume increased caseloads without additional compensation in violation of the collective bargaining agreement; and

WHEREAS, the grievance asserts that several identified CST members experienced percentage increases in caseload beginning November 1, 2025, and seeks compensation at a percentage of salary corresponding to the increase; and

WHEREAS, the Superintendent denied the grievance at Level III, noting that caseloads were redistributed during a temporary absence and that each CST member received less than a 20% increase in caseload; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Education has reviewed the grievance, supporting documentation, the collective bargaining agreement provisions governing caseload compensation, and the Level III determination; and

WHEREAS, the applicable collective bargaining agreement provides that additional compensation is triggered only where a CST member's caseload increases by twenty percent (20%) or greater; and

WHEREAS, the Board finds that, with the exception of one identified member, the caseload increases did not meet or exceed the 20% threshold required to trigger additional compensation; and

WHEREAS, the Board finds that one CST member experienced a caseload increase of 20% for a period of six (6) compensable days and that the District will provide compensation consistent with applicable contract language;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Education finds no violation of the collective bargaining agreement as to those CST members whose caseload increases did not meet the 20% threshold; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Level IV Grievance regarding Increased Caseload is DENIED as to all members whose caseload increases were below 20%; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the grievance is GRANTED IN PART as to the one CST member whose caseload increase reached 20%, and the District shall compensate that member for six (6) compensable days in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution constitutes the Board's final determination at Level IV of the grievance procedure.

ROLL CALL: Motion 4931 YES: Bennett, Brown, Callahan, Higgins, Meyer, Nayar, Sackett-Gable, Stephan NO: None

HEARING OF INDIVIDUALS AND DELEGATIONS

NONE.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

Future Meetings

The Board of Education will meet in Public Session on Tuesday, March 17, 2026, at 6:30 pm in the District Meeting Room, 525 Academy Street, Maplewood, NJ. Immediately following the opening of the Public Session, the board will move to go into a Closed Session in the Superintendent's Office, 525 Academy Street, Maplewood, NJ, as well as using an online video conference platform to discuss personnel, matters within the attorney-client privilege, legal, negotiations, and other matters that may arise and require discussion, to be announced at a later date. Immediately following the Closed Session, the Board of Education will meet in Public Session (estimated to be 7:30 pm) in the District Meeting Room, 525 Academy Street, Maplewood, NJ in person, utilizing an online video conference platform which will include Hearing of Individuals. 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.

The Board of Education will meet in Public Session on Thursday, March 26, 2026 at 6:30 pm in the District Meeting Room, 525 Academy Street, Maplewood, NJ. Immediately following the opening of Public Session, the board will move to go into a Closed Session in the Superintendent's Office, 525 Academy Street, Maplewood, NJ, as well as using an online video conference platform to discuss personnel, matters within the attorney-client privilege, legal, negotiations, and other matters that may arise and require discussion, to be announced at a later date. Immediately following the Closed Session, the Board of Education will meet in Public Session (estimated to be 7:30 pm) in the District Meeting Room, 525 Academy Street, Maplewood, NJ in person, utilizing an online video conference platform which will include Hearing of Individuals. 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 Nayar to adjourn. Motion to adjourn was unanimously approved at 11:39 p.m.

Board Secretary