

Minutes of **Wednesday, October 9, 2024, Public Board Meeting** of the Orange Board of Education held at 6:00 pm.

Vice President Sueann Gravesande is presiding over tonight's Meeting.

Ms. Sueann Gravesande
Mr. Derrick Henry
Ms. Samantha Crockett
Ms. Fatimah Turner, Ph.D.
Mr. Siaka Sherif
Ms. Shawneque Johnson – **Absent**
Mr. Jeffrey Wingfield
Mr. David Armstrong
Mr. Tyrone Tarver – **Absent**

ROLL CALL (7) PRESENT (0) LATE (2) ABSENT

ALSO PRESENT:

- Mr. Jason Ballard, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary
- Mr. Lamont Zachary, Assistant Business Administrator/Board Secretary
- Jessica Kleen, School Board Attorney Substitute with the firm of Machado

FLAG SALUTE

Ms. Gravesande motions to move into Executive Session.

Moved by Mr. David Armstrong Seconded by Ms. Samantha Crockett
ROLL CALL (4) YEA (1) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (4) ABSENT

Ms. Gravesande motions to close the Executive Session and move into a Public Meeting.

Moved by Mr. David Armstrong Seconded by Ms. Samantha Crockett
ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (2) ABSENT

Ms. Gravesande notes that our student representative is absent today; therefore, we will proceed with the presentation. As Dr. Fitzhugh is not present, Ms. Massoud and Mr. Ballard will be delivering the report.

Mr. Ballard extends his greetings to all present and announces that Ms. Massoud and he will be delivering the superintendent's report this evening. To begin, Ms. Massoud will guide us through some of the key highlights of the past month.

Student of the Month - Ms. Massoud extends her greetings to all and recognizes outstanding students, particularly the Students of the Month for September 2024. These individuals exemplify commitment, integrity, and hard work, serving as an inspiration to both their classmates and educators. We take this opportunity to celebrate their accomplishments and anticipate their future successes. She then declares the names of the Student of the Month for each school.

World Teachers Day, October 5th, 2024 – Ms. Massoud highlights the importance of this day and expresses gratitude to our dedicated teachers. They are the foundation of our district, going beyond educating, mentoring, and supporting our students. We honor their tireless efforts in shaping the future. Thank you, teachers.

October is National Principals Month – Ms. Massoud further adds that this month, we pay tribute to our principals, who are essential leaders within the district responsible for managing academic programs, supporting emotional well-being, cultivating a positive atmosphere, and prioritizing the needs of students. We value their leadership, vision, and commitment. She recognizes all principals in our district according to their schools.

Week of Respect – Ms. Massoud highlights the commitment of our district to promoting wellbeing and respect during the Week of Respect, which takes place from October 7th to 11th. This week plays a vital role in our wellness initiatives, guaranteeing that every student experiences safety, respect, and support daily. Schools will concentrate on fostering kindness, empathy, and inclusivity, in accordance with the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights.

Attendance for September – Mr. Ballard provides a concise overview of attendance categories. In September, an absence ranging from zero to 0.49 days is classified as low chronic absence. An absence of half a day up to just under one day is categorized as modest chronic absence. Significant chronic absence is defined as an absence between 1 and 1.99 days, while high chronic absence is identified as two days or more within September.

He elaborates that, according to the chart, most students exhibit low levels of chronic absence; however, approximately 953 students fall into the lowest category, each having missed at least two days in September. In total, 62% of students maintain very minimal absence records, with less than half a day's absence.

Mr. Ballard addresses our early childhood programs and raises concerns regarding the flu season and allergies affecting individuals with asthma, emphasizing the potential influence on the data. He anticipates a rise in numbers during October and offers a summary of our programs. An analysis of K-8 educational institutions reveals that a significant majority experience chronic absenteeism rates surpassing 50%, while only a limited number show elevated rates. In contrast, high schools (grades 8-12) all report absenteeism rates nearing 60%, with the Twilight Program being the sole exception. Overall, absenteeism remains consistently above 50%, often fluctuating around 60%, and is anticipated to increase due to the factors previously mentioned. In comparison to state averages, it is noteworthy that the state records an average of 95%, whereas we achieved a rate of 96%.

Facilities Update – Mr. Ballard is updating facilities for Mr. Vasquez today. He tells how most summer projects are completed. The school year started with a focus on welcoming students and cleanliness, especially with more people on campus. A strict cleaning schedule, especially for high-touch areas, like door handles, is in effect. Continuous cleaning is crucial as flu and allergy season nears. He further adds that summer projects are nearly done, with completed cosmetology and culinary rooms at the high school. He states that we are collaborating with the city to finalize occupancy details and temporary certificates are held. Students are using rooms but cannot do practical work yet. Resolving outstanding issues is expected soon and progress on the STEM chemistry lab at the Innovation Academy is at 80-90%.

Mr. Ballard informs that the team will convene in October to discuss the punch list items at the newly constructed Cleveland Elementary School. Residing in the new facility has brought to light some minor concerns. Our objective is to ensure state accountability prior to their departure to tackle any significant building issues. The community expresses great satisfaction in having a permanent establishment after experiencing displacement. Mr. Ballard encourages all to stay informed about health, safety, and facility matters. He further adds that this evening's agenda includes an additional resolution that requires your approval for the ESSIP Program. Although this resolution was previously approved in August, we are now presenting it for a second reading, which is a requirement set forth by the state. To include this on the agenda and seek final approval from the Board of Education, I am pleased to inform you that we have successfully moved through the local finance board, where all necessary approvals were granted. We are now just one resolution away from commencing essential projects in each school building across the district. He concludes by encouraging all to please follow our social media channels and website (Facebook: Orange Public School District, Twitter: @ops_district, Instagram: opsdistrict, Youtube: Orange Public School District) (Social

Media Hashtags: #GoodtoGreat, #MovingintoGreatness, #OrangeStrong) for our district updates and recommends that you reach us via email at reopeningofschools@orangek12nj.com for any inquiries and our team will respond without delay.

Ms. Gravesande expresses her gratitude to both Mr. Ballard and Ms. Massoud and proceeds with the meeting.

Ms. Gravesande motions to approve the September 11th, 2024, Public Board Meeting Minutes.

Moved by Mr. Henry Seconded by Ms. Crockett
ROLL CALL (6) YEA (0) NAY (1) ABSTAIN (2) ABSENT

Ms. Gravesande motions to approve the September 11th, 2024, Closed Session Public Board Meeting Minutes.

Moved by Mr. Henry Seconded by Mr. Armstrong
ROLL CALL (6) YEA (0) NAY (1) ABSTAIN (2) ABSENT

Ms. Gravesande motions to approve the August 20th, 2024, Special Board Meeting Minutes.

Moved by Mr. Henry Seconded by Ms. Crockett
ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (2) ABSENT

Ms. Gravesande mentions that for the reports from committee meetings, the curriculum includes a concise report.

Ms. Crockett noted that the curriculum committee met to discuss various topics. They approved minutes, reviewed NJSLA data for the next meeting, and addressed the MOU between Seton Hall University and the district, vital for a school counselor program. They also looked at an agreement with Hudson County Community College on culinary arts credits and the high school CTE program's safety plan.

Ms. Gravesande thanked Ms. Crockett for the update and later asked Mr. Sharif if he wanted to provide a brief financial report.

Mr. Sharif stated that he missed the finance meeting in October but received a report on it. The committee discussed matters concerning the bill list and financial issues in the district. There is also a resolution to approve facility requests from the Justice Star Soccer Club. He concluded by indicating that the district's financial situation is reported as positive.

Ms. Gravesande expresses her gratitude to Mr. Sharif and inquires about the status of the Special Needs Committee Report.

Mr. Armstrong states that the Special Needs Committee is making good progress. He also briefly discusses our special education efforts, especially regarding SDOs and student growth objectives. General and special education both contribute significantly to the SDOs in our school district, which Mr. Armstrong considers crucial for our progress.

Ms. Gravesande expresses her gratitude to Mr. Armstrong and acknowledges Dr. Turner's absence from the Public Relations meeting, indicating her attendance in Dr. Turner's stead. Additionally, she mentions that Mr. Barry Devaughn and Ms. Alcantara assessed the activities from September and discussed initiatives for October. Finally, the policy committee convened to evaluate and ratify several policies from the preceding month.

Ms. Gravesande motions to open Public Comments.

Moved by Dr. Turner Seconded by Mr. Armstrong
ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (2) ABSENT

Public Comments

Ms. Gravesande asks for public comments, requesting individuals to state their name and address when speaking. Flashcards and pens will be provided in Dr. Fitzhugh's absence. Attendees are urged to print their name, contact information, and questions on the cards for Dr. Fitzhugh's accurate reception of inquiries. Thank you.

Ms. Alyssa expresses her gratitude to everyone who participated in today's virtual book club discussion on "The Other Westmore," particularly Ms. Alcantara and Mr. Wallace. She goes on to explain how the book explores significant themes, emphasizing the vital importance of connection, community, role models, and support systems in influencing the lives of children. She passionately believes that forging a connection with students is essential for academic achievement, as it instills a sense of value in them from the adults around them. We all recall a motivating teacher or coach from our youth who acknowledged our potential. This message resonates with everyone within the school community, including educators, security personnel, custodians, and administrative staff.

She continues by expressing that as we approach Mental Health Day, she encourages all to be attentive to students who may be facing challenges, as they might be experiencing stress related to their home environment. Recognizing behaviors as forms of communication rather than as punishments can pave the way for proactive solutions within our schools. She concludes by thanking all for their attention.

Ms. Gloria Stewart extends her greetings to all present and announces her retirement from the Orange School District. She recommends reinstating an attendance chart in meeting agendas, a practice that was previously observed. Ms. Stewart expresses her concerns regarding community engagement and suggests that meetings like this one be advertised in various locations to encourage greater participation. She inquires about the delays affecting the Cleveland School project and emphasizes the historical significance of both Cleveland and Oakwood Avenue Schools, drawing on her 51 years of service in the district prior to her retirement on October 1, 2023. Ms. Stewart acknowledges the advancements achieved and expresses gratitude for the initiatives aimed at benefiting students, despite having encountered medical challenges. She cherishes her past contributions to the NJEA committee and looks forward to future opportunities for collaboration.

Ms. Gravesande extends an invitation to Ms. Singleton to present her public comment, as they are familiar with her contributions.

Ms. Singleton notes that the only issue to address is an error in the board minutes showing Mr. Armstrong voting in favor when he abstained on October 2nd. She also notes the oversight in recognizing National Custodian Day, emphasizing their vital role in maintaining a clean environment.

Ms. Gravesande motions to close Public Comments.

Moved by Dr. Turner Seconded by Mr. Armstrong
ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (2) ABSENT

Ms. Gravesande motions to have a Consent Agenda except item H1 to N2 including all HIB cases, home instructions, and out-of-district placements and the Human Resources agenda.

Moved by Siaka Sheriff Seconded by Mr. Henry
ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (2) ABSENT

Ms. Crockett announces the upcoming district's public meetings.

Public Relations Committee Virtual Meeting – Wednesday, November 6, 2024, at 4:00 pm
Orange Board of Education Public Board Meeting – November 13, 2024, at 7:30 pm in the BOE
Facilities Committee Virtual Meeting – Thursday, October 31, 2024, at 4:00 pm
Curriculum Committee Virtual Meeting – Wednesday, October 29, 2024, at 3:30 pm
Special Education Committee Virtual Meeting – Tuesday, November 12, 2024, at 3:30 pm
Policy Committee Virtual Meeting – Thursday, October 31, 2024, at 4:00 pm
Finance Committee Virtual Meeting – Thursday, October 31, 2024, at 5:30 pm
Human Resource Committee Virtual Meeting – Monday, November 11, 2024, at 4:00 pm

Board Comments

Ms. Gravesande affirms that there are no further comments from the Board.

Ms. Gravesande motions to have the Meeting Adjourned.

Moved by Dr. Turner Seconded by Mr. Henry
ROLL CALL (7) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (2) ABSENT