

Minutes of **Wednesday April 10, 2024, Public Budget Meeting** of the Orange Board of Education held at 6:00 pm.

**Vice President Shawneque Johnson is presiding over tonight's Meeting.**

Ms. Sueann Gravesande

Mr. Derrick Henry - **absent**

Ms. Samantha Crockett

Ms. Fatimah Turner, Ph.D. - **absent**

Mr. Siaka Sherif – **absent**

Ms. Shawneque Johnson

Mr. Jeffrey Wingfield

Mr. David Armstrong

Mr. Tyrone Tarver

**ROLL CALL (5) PRESENT (1) LATE (3) 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. Johnson motions to close the Executive session and move into a public meeting.

**Moved by Mr. David Armstrong Seconded by Ms. Gravesande**

**ROLL CALL (6) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (3) ABSENT**

Mr. Armstrong motions to open the meeting second by Ms. Crockett

**ROLL CALL (6) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (3) ABSENT**

Ms. Johnson introduces our student representative, Mr. Tito.

Mr. Tito communicates the findings of the survey conducted regarding the school lunches in the cafeterias. He explains that the meals served play a crucial role in the students' daily lives. It impacts their health, focus on class, and even their overall satisfaction with the school environment. Mr. Tito received a response from over 300 of his peers. He shared a presentation with the findings of the survey. The students shared how often they eat the lunch, if they like lunch served and what they do not like about the lunch served. The last question was open-ended where the students voiced their opinions about the school lunch to improve. The board challenged Mr. Tito to dig deeper in his findings on what the students truly feel and what changes they would like to see.

Ms. Johnson introduces the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Fitzhugh.

## **Community Reports**

**Scholarship Update:** Dr. Fitzhugh proudly communicates the district's scholarship update:

- OHS: \$11,162,589
  - STEM: \$6,330,940
  - OHS: \$7,753,589
  - STEM: \$4,383,280
- Total as of April 8, 2024: \$17,493,529

**STAR Students of the Month:** Dr. Fitzhugh communicates and congratulates the STAR students of the month of March.

**Student Attendance:** Dr. Fitzhugh communicates the importance of student attendance every single day at school. He also encourages all parents to download the parent portal for access to their child's information. He explained that every year they are getting better with their students coming in their doors and thanks the committees that are working diligently for their hard work.

Dr. Fitzhugh introduces Mrs. Felicia Ware, Supervisor of Guidance, to discuss SEL/Wellness.

**SEL/Wellness:** Mrs. Ware discusses college and career exploration, social emotional learning initiatives and the benefits of the SEL program. She shared the seven mindsets they want the school counselors to believe when it comes to our students. The mindsets become the purpose. Mrs. Ware discussed the 3 Tiers of Support (a comprehensive counseling program) as they become the delivery of service. The work that the counselors do reflects academic work. Each school is supplied with the resources for the students with Tier 1 (core classroom instruction with the counselors), Tier 2 (targeted small groups with instruction) and Tier 3 (intensive individual intervention).

Mrs. Ware communicates that when students have supportive relationships and opportunities to develop and practice social, emotional, and cognitive skills across many different contexts, academic learning accelerates. The investment in the whole student creates an investment in the academic student. She breaks down the partners and stakeholders of SEL, which is classrooms, schools, families and caregivers, and communicates, thus highlighting that we all play a vital role. She shared the five SEL components and the categories: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. This helps the students view the world and themselves and helps them develop a growth mindset. She further provided examples of what a fixed mindset statements and growth mindset statements look like.

Mrs. Ware provides the following three programs in our school district can be delivered by staff who are fluent in English, Spanish, and Creole.

- **NJ4S-Essex/Orange Partnership**-DCF's Family Connections provides 3-tiered mental health/well-being services to all schools in district. Individual, small group and assembly. Provide an array of wellness services to support students and their parents or caregivers.

- **Second Step Program** builds social-emotional skills in students through interactive lessons lead by school counselors, social workers and teachers. This program helps students build social-emotional skills—like nurturing positive relationships, managing emotions, and setting goals—so they can thrive in school and in life
- **Mental Health First Aid Program** trains school staff and students the skills to respond to the signs of mental illness and substance use.

Mrs. Ware communicates a few of the career exploration opportunities to help our students, a list of professional development opportunities that the school counselors and social works have and will be participating in. She further states the official date of SEL day was March 8<sup>th</sup> across the state of NJ.

The board president asks what is done for Pre-K 3 and Pre-K 4 as young learners? Mrs. Ware explained that they are taught self-worth at their level of understanding.

**Autism Awareness Month:** Dr. Fitzhugh announces that April is Autism Awareness Month and asked that all mark their calendars. April 2<sup>nd</sup> is the 16<sup>th</sup> annual World Autism Awareness Day and the UN officially declared April 2<sup>nd</sup> World Autism Awareness Day in 2008. He further explains that the Autism Society of America calls April Autism Acceptance Month and that we should help our Autism children to not be ashamed but instead celebrated. April 25<sup>th</sup> is the district program at Park Avenue School and invites Mrs. Harper to further elaborate on the events.

Mrs. Harper communicates that Park Avenue School will be presenting a Chat and Chew with parents regarding autism, on April 25<sup>th</sup> there will be a district dress down day in observance of autism. She further explains that there are more and more children being diagnosed with autism and parents and caregivers need to be educated because this is difficult not only for parents but it's also difficult for the children and not everyone has that awareness, empathy or kindness towards children on the spectrum.

Mr. Henry thanked for all that is being done throughout the district for our autism kids and recommended more opportunities.

A question was raised (not able to detect person who raised question): Will we be inviting those in our community to share their personal experiences on the Chat and Chew where they can share more experiences on how their lives can be impacted. The parent of Nadine's Place will be representing at both Forest School and Park Avenue sharing the parents' point of view and how it affects the parent and the child.

**Public Budget Meeting:** Dr. Fitzhugh announces that the public Budget Meeting will take place on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at 6:00 PM in the board conference room; 451 Lincoln Avenue and invites all to come and listen to how the district will allocate money for next year's school budget.

**National Assistant Principal's Week:** Dr. Fitzhugh thanks all of our school assistant principals for the enormous contributions they make to support staff, students and families. He also shares that our assistant principals have demonstrated unwavering leadership and continue to be a source of strength and inspiration for us all.

**National School Librarians' Day:** Dr. Fitzhugh announces that the National School Librarian Day was on April 4, 2024, and how thankful the district is for all the knowledge that our librarians possess and how they are always on hand to help us each day.

**National Paraprofessional Appreciation Day:** Dr. Fitzhugh announces that the National Paraprofessional Appreciation Day was celebrated nationally on April 3, 2024. They work alongside our teachers and our students to help them. They are our unsung heroes of our education system, and we thank you and appreciate you.

**Week of the Young Child:** Dr. Fitzhugh announces that Week of the Young Child is currently taking place this week. Established in 1971 by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the Week of the Young Child takes place the first week of April but due to Spring Break, we celebrated the Week of April 8th district wide. Week of the Young Child promotes the needs of young children, their families and the early childhood programs that serve them. Thank you, all schools that service Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten, for aligning your thinking to that of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

**Kindergarten Orientation Dates:** Dr. Fitzhugh announces the kindergarten orientation dates and states that they are also being pushed out tomorrow via social media showing all of the in-person orientation dates to tour the schools and meet the staff and learn about the curriculum that has been implemented including the humanities block.

Dr. Fitzhugh introduces Karen Harris and Mr. David Scutari to discuss the ELA, Mathematics and Science results of the winter data.

**English Language Arts Midyear Diagnostic:** Ms. Harris communicates some of the data points collected throughout the year and what is done with them.

- The distribution of general education students across all grade levels follows a bell curve with the majority of students falling in the On Level and Approaching performance bands
  - Particularly in 8th grades where the majority fall in the On level band
- The majority of students in the Far Below level are students who are multilingual learners and/or students with IEPs. After reviewing this data:
  - the Special Services and Humanities departments team up to provide targeted professional development to the Special Education self-contained teachers in ELA
  - ELA supervisors and coaches work with Bilingual and ESL teachers on the implementation of the adaptations of the curricula to support language development of multilingual learners Highlights
  - 2nd year utilizing the Acadience assessments to assess reading readiness and there is a slight improvement from previous year's data.
  - This is the first year the district will utilize Acadience to monitor the progress of at-risk 3rd grade readers.
  - Teachers have received and are implementing the guidance from the reading readiness road map to plan small group instruction.

- Early literacy intervention teams have been formed at schools to identify, support, and monitor the progress of the students performing below grade level in grades K-3.
- We are seeing strong positive progress from the students where we have initiated progress monitoring.
- New pilot for Just Right Readers - take home decodables for students in K-2 Highlights
- This is the first year we are testing reading comprehension in this manner in grades 9 - 12.
- There is a concerted effort to get students in grades 9 -12 to take the assessment seriously by working with teachers to utilize the data with intentionality and purpose for whole group and small group instruction.
- More and more students are using the writing lab and pairing the feedback with writing tutorial sessions and guidance has been given on how to utilize the tutoring sessions to improve fluency. See the ELA web pages.

**Winter 2023-24 Diagnostic 2 Data:** Mr. Scutari provides the i-Ready data by grade.

- Increase in students either early on grade level or mid or above grade level
- All grades K-8 Mathematics
- Average of 9 percentage points (over 300 students)
- Decrease in students either two grade levels below or three or more grade levels below – All grades K-8 Mathematics
- Average of 14 percentage points (almost 500 students)
- 60% Median Progress Toward Annual Typical Growth – Grades K-8 Mathematics
- 43% of Students with Improved Placement (over 1,400 students) – Grades K-8 Mathematics
- Increase in students in high average or high percentile ranges – Grades 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 Mathematics
- Decrease in students in low or low average percentile ranges – Grades 8, 11, and 12 Mathematics
- 54% of NWEA mathematics students met their growth goal from fall to winter
- 63% of NWEA mathematics students increased their scale score from fall to winter
- Increase in percentage of multilingual students in high average or high percentile ranges – Grades 10, 11, and 12 Science
- Decrease in percentage of multilingual students in low or low average percentile ranges – Grades 10, 11, and 12 science
- 61% of science students increased their scale score from fall to winter

Mr. Scutari lastly shares an article of the NY Times and states that our Orange High School students are featured on page 19. Last month we were on the David 3D Printed Competition in our Orange High School Tornadoes were placed first and he announced the student names and congratulated their Coach and Teacher, Ms. Sonia Nobles, Assistant Principal, Mr. Montecino, the STEMS and coach supervisor who mentored and coached the team, Mr. McMally and their Principal Mr. Dublin.

**Facilities Update:** Mr. Ballard provides the following maintenance and custodial services update.

- Thorough cleaning and disinfecting occur daily for all our touch points in the building (examples include but are not limited to door handles, bathrooms, entrances, exits, and handrails)
- Walk-throughs of all district school facilities
- Meetings between the District and PCI are held regularly based on updates related to COVID-19 mandates and expectations
- Facility projects continue so we can ensure a safe and clean learning environment for our children and staff

Mr. Ballard communicates the following facilities updates for the district:

**Orange Board of Education:**

- Installation of the new boiler at Rosa Parks Community School was completed in February.
- The renovation of the gymnasium at Orange Preparatory Academy of Inquiry and Innovation has commenced.
- The sewage issues at Orange High School have been resolved.
- Work orders are being entered into Brightly (work order reporting system), from classroom lights being out to steam pipes breaking. The team and I, under the guidance of Mr. Ballard, will continue to address all issues as they are entered into the system. In doing so, we can ensure that we have a safe and clean learning environment for our children and staff.

**Orange Preparatory Academy of Inquiry and Innovation:**

- By removing the damaged wood flooring, we are taking proactive measures to prevent any additional water damage. It's crucial that we take action now to address the issue and avoid any potential future problems.
- The facilities department ensured that all downspouts, gutters, and leaders were clear to prevent any water from entering the building, which could potentially halt the renovation of the gym floor.

**Rosa Parks Community School:** The boiler installation is complete.

**Orange High School:** A picture shows what was causing sewage backup in the new addition of Orange High School and photos of what was found stuck inside the pipe. The debris and the old pipe were removed, and new sewage pipes were installed.

Mr. Ballard communicates that in the month of April 2024, the team and I, will continue to meet with the Schools Development Authority and Terminal Construction to make sure that there is progress related to the construction at the Orange High School and the punch -list items and the Cleveland Street School Project.

A question is asked if there was any earthquake damage in any of our buildings. Mr. Ballard explains that at STEM it was noticed the retaining wall was cracked and there was tree damage. Pictures were sent to the county, and a thorough walk through will be conducted in all our buildings.

Mr. Ballard reminds all that they will continue to update the community, staff, and Board of Education members of all progress. He also communicates that the health and safety of staff and students are at the apex of all facilities undertakings.

Mr. Ballard reminds all to follow us in social media by downloading the app and checking our social media platforms.

This concludes the superintendent's report.

Ms. Johnson communicates that since their computers were taken away, they will table approving the Public Session Minutes and will approve them at the next Board Meeting along with the committee report.

**Moved by Mr. Wingfield Seconded by Ms. Gravesande**  
**ROLL CALL (6) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (3) ABSENT**

Ms. Johnon motions to move into public comments.

**Moved by Mr. Henry Seconded by Ms. Gravesande**  
**ROLL CALL (6) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (3) ABSENT**

**Public Comments:**

Community member Tisa Singleton thanks the district on behalf of herself and her students for the solar eclipse glasses. She communicates one of the concerns for the agenda tonight is for the resolution to approve the Cosmetology Program, renovations at the high school, hoping that you already have a feasible location set out at the high school where it won't take as long as some renovations have been taken lately so our students can jump right into this program. The last concern is on behalf of the OEA, they would like assistance sent to the Cleveland Street School. The members have a significantly larger case load than some of their colleagues in other buildings and would like to know if there is some type of reprieve coming in their direction.

Ms. Helaire thanks the Board for all the knowledge shared. She asked the student representative and indicated that he is taking surveys and students are not eating which is having an effect on the academic. She would like to know if they have taken surveys on the students if the SELs are working and how do they feel about it? If students are unaware of their own emotions, how can the teachers be aware of their emotions? This impact their relationship with their peers. She is here because of her daughters. If the students are struggling, the students are unaware, parents are unaware, teachers are unaware, this affects their relationships with their peers. How are parents being informed of the great things happening in the district and how are they being educated?

Ms. Sontulu mentions that the Orange Public Library, they took a walk there and was surprised how bad the library has turned. She mentions that they can't work with ELA if the library is bad and found out that the city can't do anything. She wants to know if the district can do something so that it can be used in the summer and school year months so kids can obtain resources. If we are expecting a different outcome and not do anything it's insanity. It's not going to happen.

Dr. Fitzhugh communicates that all concerns that were raised will be addressed.

Ms. Johnon motions to close public comments.

**Moved by Mr. Wingfield Seconded by Ms. Gravesande**  
**ROLL CALL (6) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (3) ABSENT**

Ms. Johnson motions to approve a consent agenda.

**Moved by Mr. Henry Seconded by Ms. Armstrong**

**ROLL CALL (6) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (3) ABSENT**

Ms. Gravesande is requesting clarification on N2 regarding the resolution to approve field trips and why some elementary schools are missing.

Dr. Fitzhugh communicates some of the approvals can come from prior months and they may use some preapproved trips, so therefore, you will not see them in the agenda item.

Unable to detect the person speaking, they are requesting clarification on N3, N4 and N5.

Mr. Ballard communicates that some early demo work was done at OHS that was not invasive, however, right now they are waiting for the permitting process. He explains that the plan is to try and work off hours to get most of the loud-noise work done so any work done during the day does not impact the instructional time. They have also asked the principal to relocate the students that are in that area, which is a few, to other areas in the building so that non-invasive noise does not become a distraction for the kids.

Unable to detect the person speaking, they ask for clarification on the modified Master of Service agreement.

Ms. Kleen communicates that the Mox five is a company that is a data security company that will be on site remotely, available for consultation and will help install these new programs, hardware systems and do the training with the IT department.

Ms. Gravesande inquires on L3, the Mayor of Circle of Excellence Camp and requests an update on payments for the use of our facilities.

Mr. Ballard communicates that we receive payment from the city for some of our programs and use other fields such as the one across from OPA to ensure our children are successful. He also stated that we have a working relation with the city.

Mr. Tarver questions budget and yearly expenses for the use of our facilities.

Mr. Zachary communicates that a detailed breakdown has been provided for every dollar budgeted in the budget and confirms that there will be a full breakdown on April 24, 2024 at 6:00 pm.

Mr. Ballard communicates that the district is very transparent with the budget and once the budget is completely approved after the Budget Meeting, the information will be shared with the public.

Ms. Johnson motions to approve the agenda.

**Moved by Mr. Henry Seconded by Mr. Armstrong**

**ROLL CALL (5) YEA (0) NAY (1) ABSTAIN (3) ABSENT**

Mr. Tarver abstains from H1, abstain from J1-J6, L3.

The Orange Board of Education public meeting will be held on May 24<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm in the BOE.  
The Public Relations Committee virtual meeting will be held on May 1<sup>st</sup> at 4:45 pm.

The Orange Board of Education's Public Board Hearing will be held on May 8<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 pm in the BOE.

The Facilities Committee virtual meeting will be held on April 29<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 pm.

The Curriculum Committee virtual meeting will be held on April 23<sup>rd</sup> at 3:30 pm.

The Special Education virtual meeting will be held on April 30<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 pm.

The Policy Committee virtual meeting will be held on May 2<sup>nd</sup> at 4:00 pm.

The Finance Committee meeting will be held on May 2<sup>nd</sup> at 5:30 pm.

The Human Resources Committee virtual meeting will be held on May 6<sup>th</sup> at 4:30 pm.

Ms. Johnson motions to have the meeting adjourned.

**Moved by Dr. Turner Seconded by Ms. Gravesande**

**ROLL CALL (8) YEA (1) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (3) ABSENT**