

Minutes of **Tuesday, February 8, 2022, Public Meeting** of the Orange Board of Education held at 6:00 pm.

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

Ms. Guadalupe Cabido

Ms. Sueann Gravesande

Mr. Derrick Henry

Ms. Samantha Crockett

Ms. Fatimah Turner

Mr. Siaka Sherif

Ms. Shawneque Johnson, President

Mr. Jeffrey Wingfield

Mr. David Armstrong

**ROLL CALL (9) PRESENT (0) ABSENT**

**ALSO PRESENT:**

- Dr. Gerald Fitzhugh II, Superintendent of Schools
- Dr. Tina Powell, Assistant Superintendent of Innovation and Systems
- Mr. Jason Ballard, Business Administrator/Board Secretary
- Shebra Jones, Executive Director of Human Resources
- Mr. Lamont Zachary, Assistant Business Administrator
- Ms. Jessika Kleen, School Board Attorney with the firm of Machado Law Group

**FLAG SALUTE**

Ms. Johnson motions to close Executive session and move into public meeting.

**Moved by Mr. Jeffrey Wingfield Seconded by Ms. Crockett**

**ROLL CALL (9) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN**

Ms. Johnson re-open public meeting and introduces Dr. Fitzhugh for his Superintendent report.

**Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Gerald Fitzhugh II, Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Fitzhugh communicates to the community that there will be two presentations at this board meeting.

Dr. Fitzhugh communicates that all schools are celebrating Black History for the month of February.

Dr. Fitzhugh celebrates and congratulates the STAR Students of the Month district wide.

Dr. Fitzhugh hands over the presentation to Ms. Faith Alcantara for the Career and Technical Education expo.

Ms. Alcantara communicates to the community that February is known for CTE recognition month. It allows the district to highlight all of programs that are available nationwide.

Ms. Alcantara communicates to the community that in Orange in the next few weeks the district will have events that will help the community better understand the programs that are offer at Orange.

Ms. Alcantara communicates to the community the dates for the expo's which we be held on Wednesday, Feb 9 1:30-430pm and Thursday, February 10 5:30-7:30pm.

Ms. Alcantara hands over presentation back to Dr. Fitzhugh.

Dr. Fitzhugh hands over presentation to Mr. Devon to discuss COVID-19 vaccination, safety, and testing clinics being offered in district.

Mr. Devon communicates that the district has engaged in a series of vaccination programs, PCR testing throughout the school year. In the next upcoming weeks, we're coming to a relative conclusion. However, we will be having a little twist to our clinics. Clinics will no longer have age restrictions; the clinics will be offered to all residents of the City of Orange.

Mr. Devon communicates vaccine dates and location and it's available at the district website.

Dr. Fitzhugh communicates to the community to remain safe, monitor the students at home if they are exhibiting symptoms, please keep them home. This will allow the staff and students to remain safe and thus not have to quarantine.

Dr. Fitzhugh communicates the importance of Genesis login credentials. Genesis will provide the most up to date to reach parents and caregiver in the event of an emergency.

Dr. Fitzhugh communicates the symptomology of COVID-19. Such as difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headaches, fever, and chills.

Dr. Fitzhugh goes over hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette to maintain the safety of everyone in the district.

Dr. Fitzhugh communicates the attendance across the district and goes over the January attendance report for the month of January.

Dr. Fitzhugh communicates the overview of the START Strong Assessments presentation.

Dr. Powell communicates that the START Strong assessment was given in October 2021. Three areas were tested, ELA, Mathematics, and Science.

Dr. Powell communicates the purpose of the assessment.

Dr. Powell communicates that this assessment was not given just to rate the students. It was given to better provide proper instruction to our students.

Dr. Powell communicates that the test is based on subset of prioritized prior-year academic to provide a data point on the level of support a student may need to engage in grade-level content.

Dr. Powell communicates the difference between the NJSLA and START Strong Assessment.

Dr. Powell communicates to the community START Strong assessment score interpretations.

Dr. Powell communicates the District and School context that impacted Start Strong data.

Dr. Powell communicates the number of students who tested in each subject area.

Dr. Powell communicates the percentage of those students who need strong support, some support, and less support.

Dr. Powell communicates the break down in the subgroup category.

Dr. Powell communicates the intervention strategies that the district has in place to support through multiple formats.

Dr. Powell communicates that the district is offering extracurricular programming in the format of after and before school.

Ms. Crockett questioned Dr. Powell for clarity whether the tutoring was in person or virtual.

Dr. Powell communicates that the tutoring is one to one, and it is offered online in a synchronous space.

Ms. Cabido questioned Dr. Powell on when the students will be assessed again.

Dr. Powell communicates that the district has various opportunities in the form of diagnostic assessment as well as interim assessments.

Ms. Crockett inquired about the numbers in the START Strong assessment, and attendance and how is the district planning on preventing from the number of absences rising and not affecting the progress that has been made.

Dr. Fitzhugh communicates that the target support is evident and will have individualized support for the students.

Ms. Gravesande asks Dr. Powell to expand on the support of the IEP intervention.

Dr. Powell communicates that in the terms of intervention the district was able to allocate funds for us to have additional layer of support for different and more resources for those students in need of it in a specific content. District is focusing on targeted, prescriptive plans for these students.

Dr. Fitzhugh communicates to the community the Scholarship announcement for the Senior class at Orange High School. On February 4<sup>th</sup> the High School class collectively total was \$5,241,112.00 earned in scholarships.

Dr. Fitzhugh communicates to the community the excitement of some of the colleges/ universities the class was accepted. To name a few, Harvard University, Ramapo College, Rutgers, Rider University.

Dr. Fitzhugh notifies the community that this week is Counselor's week and gives a hug warm shot out to our Counselor's in the district for all their hard work to our children.

Dr. Fitzhugh communicates to the community the Scholarships allocated from our STEM students. That amount is \$3,302,00.00. Many students already accepted to a few of NJ prestigious colleges / universities.

Dr. Fitzhugh communicates to the community that thanks to the grant received by the Office of Innovation the district was able to purchase new Dell laptops for the staff.

Dr. Fitzhugh reminds the community of the upcoming Winter Break.

Dr. Fitzhugh communicates to the community the importance of downloading the district app.

This concludes the Superintendent's report.

Ms. Johnson motions to approve January 11,2022, public meeting minutes

**Moved by Mr. Jeffrey Wingfield Seconded by Mr. Sherif**

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

Ms. Johnson motions to approve January 11, 2022, closed meeting minutes

**Moved by Mr. Jeffrey Wingfield Seconded by Mr. Sherif**

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

## **Community Report**

**Public Relations:** Ms. Turner communicates that the committee met on January 4, 2022, at 3:30pm. Dr. Fitzhugh and Mr. Davone attended the meeting to discuss clinics, and the updates on, vaccination cards.

Ms. Turner communicates that Mr. Davone gave the committee an update on clinic dates. Ms. Turner communicates that she was able to visit the COVID clinic, and she was highly impressed with what she saw. Nice turn out, everything was organized and great communication with the people there and with the community.

Ms. Turner communicates that she is happy the clinic will now be open for the community of Orange and not just the students.

Ms. Turner communicates that Mr. Davone and Ms. Purkiss gave them an update on the programs that took place in the district throughout the month of January. A lot of great news, a lot of equity, impressed with the student work and the turn out of the parents.

**Curriculum Report:** Ms. Cabido communicates that the committee met in January, and they had three-hour long meeting. One of the main topics of the meeting was the presentation of the START Strong Assessment.

Ms. Cabido communicates that they also talked about two resolutions that are up for a vote today. One of them being a donation to benefit our CTE program, donated by Cinema ED. The second one is from the Cinema Ed Attorney, and they will be donating DVD's and books which will help enhance the collection the district already has for our digital media courses.

**Financial Report:** Mr. Sherif communicates to the community that they financial report can be view at any time on the district website.

Mr. Sherif communicates that currently all the schools are working on their budget, allocating the funds needed for each department. Mr. Ballard and Mr. Zachary are coordinating that through the administrative level.

Mr. Sherif communicates that the committee was expecting reorganization within the charter report. However, it is being delayed because of the pandemic. The district is now in the process of looking to continue the treasury report with another company to makes sure we get that report on time.

Mr. Sherif communicates that the bill's list is at a very good standing. Bills are being paid on time and we do have some that are overdue however we are working with the companies to get that paid.

**Facilities Report:** Mr. Henry communicates the two items on the agenda. First item discussed was the introduction of the Facilitron software in which we will be incorporating to public use upon approval from Dr. Fitzhugh. This program will allow for a vendor to book a space in anyone of our facilities pending insurance, liability, etc., to make sure the space is available for use.

Mr. Henry communicates that the second item on the agenda was the proposed partnership with a green sustainability initiative which comes in three parts. First part is to teach our children of green initiatives. Second one would make available to the Orange Board of Ed green grants, and lastly it will help us to find available to find other partnership for green initiatives.

## **Public Comments**

Community member Tisa Singleton from West Ward Orange asks the board members that tonight while voting on calendar adjustments and next year school year calendar to please consider giving high school students half days on SAT and ACT testing days. She communicates that appreciation that the community feels that the district gives our students great opportunities to access free testing. Testing March 2, 8, and 14<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> it is too much for the students for their mental health as well as the teachers. Ms. Singleton urges all parents to become more active in our children's education. Show out for them at our meetings, which are now conducted virtually, and telephones. Our meetings are poorly attended. Ms. Singleton asks for the community parent to join forces with the school administration to better build and education the child as a whole. Ms. Singleton thanks Mr. Belton and Dr. Belal for all their hard work and dedication.

Dr. Fitzhugh thanks Ms. Singleton for her suggestions and coming to the board meetings to speak about the importance of engagement and asks the audience to give her a clap for being the engaged parent that wants more parents like her.

Community member James Ward from South Ward communicates to the board member that his family regularly sings the praises of the Orange Public Schools. He communicates that ever since his children began Kindergarten here at the district his vocabulary and surprising reading skill has thrived. He is amazed at the ability of his child reading at such a young age and is concerned that the advancement may be stunted due to lack of opportunities combined for PreK-3, PreK -4 classroom. This stunting has been mentioned by others in the community and we're expressing this concern tonight because we know that a solution can be found. Mr. James reminds the board member of the last time he was there to discuss embarkation being an issue for the pickups and drop-offs specifically at Heywood Avenue school, but he is sur that this is also an issue with other schools. He states that the last time the community presented a very well received diagrams, and research that we handed over about 5 months ago. As the clocks continues, we're baring closer to catastrophe. We have the knowledge and ability to make the change now. Eventually a child or parent will get hurt. Mr. James communicates that he saw some action put into it, there was some measurements with the town. Mr. James communicates that on March 7, Governor Murphy will be lifting the mask mandate, and although numbers have been low the district needs to take into consideration the children who are not able to vaccinate.

Dr. Fitzhugh communicates that the mask decision will not be taking lightly. Before any actions are taken or any policies be enacted the community will have a chance to share their thoughts on the new mask mandates.

Ms. Elaine Meredith, a teacher in district for Math and Science at Lincoln Avenue school. Ms. Meredith states that on behalf of the 88 staff members at the location signed a petition for the propose of Mr. Patrick Yearwood to interim principal for the consideration of promoting Mr. Patrick Yearwood to Principal of Lincoln Avenue school. Lincoln Avenue school serves as one of the largest populations of K-12 students in Orange, NJ, its dedicated and enthusiastic staff to not only focus on the academic and nurture the student's emotional growth. The staff has endured many changes in leadership Lincoln over the past 10 years. However, Mr. Yearwood has been that one constant. Mr. Yearwood's loyalty, dedication and support of the schools, staff, students, and community. With the current resignation of our current principal the staff at Lincoln wants to make sure the stakeholders understand their need for the strong, supportive, leadership shown by Mr. Yearwood and their request that their collective voice be heard in the process.

Dr. Fitzhugh thanks Ms. Meredith for her commentary and is content with the solution orientated crowd at tonight's board meeting.

Dr. Fitzhugh communicates to Ms. Meredith that for every principal position in this district all stakeholders on the panel which include staff members.

Ms. Crockett asks Dr. Fitzhugh to address Mr. Ward's inquiry about the pickup and drop off situation at Heywood.

Dr. Fitzhugh communicates that he's been out there to assist with the morning drop-off and is aware of the problem and he will be working continuously to get this situation under control.

Ms. Crockett states that the board members, Dr. Fitzhugh, and city officials did go around to each school to see what could be done. As of right now it was up to them to assist with correcting this.

Mr. Ballard communicates that thanks to the good standing relationship between the city official and district that we are ensuring a proper working plan to put in place for the safety of the students, staff, and parents. Mr. Ballard communicates that some of the resolutions put in place would have to go up for voting to adopt whatever is proposed fix.

Ms. Turner communicates that the board needs to do their diligence to rectify these issues throughout the district. Ms. Turner communicates that she has seen some changes being made however after a few weeks or months the people begin to get lax and the problem will arise again.

Mr. Ballard communicates some of the recommendations that have been discussed such as more crossing guards, additional officers.

Mr. Henry communicates that other thing should be considered such as painting signs, making them more visible for the community.

Community member makes the board member states that she has seen some changes however they are not consistent. She is also concerned about her daughter who is very bright and is concerned that the curriculum may not be challenging enough. What else is the district offering to those younger students who are excelling.

Dr. Fitzhugh communicates that it's not one setting in the classroom, the teachers are well versed in creating those models where students are not only engaged and challenged holistically in an everyday basis. The district has also had curriculum in place for those students who are in the higher tier in education in every grade level throughout the district.

Community member politely disagrees with Dr. Fitzhugh's response because she has firsthand seen what her daughter brings home from school, and she doesn't see that higher tier of curriculum. Community member states her daughter is not being challenged at the level and has not been challenged for the last three years ago.

Dr. Fitzhugh asks mom for her phone number so that they can discuss this in more details.

Lisa Catanzarite Six – Seven grade ELA teacher and the president of the OEA communicates that recently she's been getting a lot of feedback from the reps about the mental state of the staff as well as the students. After the students returned to the classroom on January 18 the students have done nothing but taking multiple assessments and tests for various subjects. Teachers had to get those assessments done, the scheduled date to get them done was moved up because of the state. Students were jammed with testing instead of spreading out. The students are crying, worrying, and freaking out. Ms. Catanzarite states that at some point the students and staff must be defending and that is what she is doing. She states that some of her Seven grade students volunteered to come and speak to the board however she felt that it wasn't a good idea. The staff created a packet and a survey for the kids to be able to express their experiences. She states that after working for 30 years she is not happy; the staff is not happy as well as the students. Ms. Catanzarite also mentions that the staff has at least come out of pocket for PPE supplies such as, mask, wipes, Lysol, etc.

Dr. Fitzhugh communicates to Ms. Catanzarite to send him those receipts of those PPE materials because materials have been sent to the schools.

Erin Becker Five grade teacher at Rosa Parks communicates that 53% of the staff does not feel valued at their job, 76% does not feel that their mental health is not importance, COVID procedure are not clearly stated. Ms. Becker states she contracted COVID right before Christmas at school and she never received an email, her co-workers were never notified, she worries for the safety of her students. No correspondence was ever sent to her. 62% feel that they are not well informed as relates to everything including COVID. 73% have not contracted COVID in school. She hopes to see some changes for the staff is genuinely puts the kids first.

Dr. Fitzhugh asks Ms. Becker for the entire count of the people who participated.

Ms. Becker communicates that those number are in the packet he will be sent. Ms. Becker also communicates that Rosa Parks hasn't had a working water fountain for weeks.

Dr. Fitzhugh communicates that the district got right to fixing the water fountain problem as soon as he was made aware of it. Dr. Fitzhugh also stated that he bought water to bring to the kids at Rosa Parks.

Ms. Crockett asks Ms. Becker to confirm if the water fountains are the ones you need to bring the water bottle for.

Ms. Becker confirms that it is that water fountain and it only allows one use per every hour and in a school with 600 kids that is not enough.

Mr. Ballard communicates that we do have a vendor to maintenance and services those water fountains. They are working on a remedy that will provide additional water throughout the building. Not just for this location but for all location. He makes the community ware that those changes will start to reflect in buildings.

Community member Mr. Holmes wants to find out the status of the Cleveland school, he sees construction but no status on when the students will be back at Cleveland.

Mr. Ballard communicates that the owner of the construction company passed away and unfortunately the sons who took over have not been able to successfully take over the project. The state now must find another contractor to take over the project. A more in-depth meeting will be held when more information is obtained.

Ms. Johnson motions to close public comments.

**Moved by Mr. Wingfield    Seconded by Ms. Crockett**  
**ROLL CALL (9) YEA   (0) NAY   (0) ABSTAIN   (0) ABSENT**

## **BOARD RESOLUTIONS**

Ms. Johnson motions to approve a consent agenda removing of resolution C22-00, F22-003, F22-004, G22-004, G22-005.

**Moved by Mr. Wingfield    Seconded by Mr. Sharif**  
**ROLL CALL (9) YEA   (0) NAY   (0) ABSTAIN   (0) ABSENT**



Ms. Johnson motions to approve C22-007

**Moved by Mr. Sherif   Seconded by Mr. Armstrong**  
**ROLL CALL (8) YEA   (0) NAY   (1) ABSTAIN   (0) ABSENT**

Ms. Johnson motions to approve C22-013

Ms. Johnson asks Mr. Ballard to speak on this resolution.

Mr. Ballard communicates the hopeful treasurer of school moneys who is also the custodian of school dollars pursuing to NJ Administrative code Six- Eight should complete their days 45 days in. After the passing of former BA Mr. James Mr. Benson was released of these duties. He's an auditor by trade, He's certified public account and knowledge school-based programs, his expertise is needed in order to serve as our treasure of school monies.

**Moved by Mr. Wingfield   Seconded by Ms. Crockett**  
**ROLL CALL (8) YEA   (0) NAY   (1) ABSTAIN   (0) ABSENT**

Ms. Johnson motions to approve F22-003 and F22-004

**Moved by Mr. Wingfield   Seconded by Mr. Armstrong**  
**ROLL CALL (9) YEA   (0) NAY   (0) ABSTAIN   (0) ABSENT**

Ms. Johnson motions to approve G22-004 and G22-005.

Ms. Johnson asks to speak on this resolution as it pertains to removing furniture.

Mr. Ballard communicates that the State requires to bring to the board in any disposing of school furniture. Which are the two-sound booth that are currently at Orange High School. They are outdated, inefficient and no longer support the curriculum that is in place for those programs and upgraded them.

Mr. Ballard communicates that the second item is to dispose the storage cages, are old and outdated and don't serve the needs when put in years ago and will also be upgraded.

**Moved by Mr. Wingfield   Seconded by Mr. Armstrong**  
**ROLL CALL (9) YEA   (0) NAY   (0) ABSTAIN   (0) ABSENT**

Ms. Johnson motions to approve home instruction cases 106863,108163,109399.

**Moved by Mr. Wingfield   Seconded by Mr. Armstrong**  
**ROLL CALL (9) YEA   (0) NAY   (0) ABSTAIN   (0) ABSENT**

Ms. Johnson motions to approve out of district placement cases

**Moved by Mr. Wingfield   Seconded by Ms. Johnson**  
**ROLL CALL (9) YEA   (0) NAY   (0) ABSTAIN   (0) ABSENT**

Ms. Johnson motion to approve Human Resources agenda.

**Moved by Mr. Wingfield    Seconded by Mr. Armstrong**  
**ROLL CALL (8) YEA   (0) NAY   (1) ABSTAIN   (0) ABSENT**

Ms. Johnson motion to approve HIB case for January

**Moved by Mr. Wingfield    Seconded by Mr. Armstrong**  
**ROLL CALL (9) YEA   (0) NAY   (0) ABSTAIN   (0) ABSENT**

Mrs. Crockett makes the district aware of the scheduled meetings.

Curriculum virtual meeting will be held on February 28<sup>th</sup> at 3:30pm  
Facility virtual meeting will be held on March 7 at 3:30pm  
Public Relations virtual meeting will be held on March 1<sup>st</sup> at 3:30pm  
Financing committee virtual meeting will be held on March 3<sup>rd</sup> at 5:30pm  
Orange Board of Education public meeting will be held on March 8 at 6:00pm

### **Board Comments**

Mr. Armstrong thanks the community and staff for all the support and hard work. Very pleased and honored for having so many community members, staff, that not only brought up issues but solutions.

Ms. Turner states that Black History Month is 365 days a year, she wants to acknowledge our guidance consular for all their work. Ms. Turner acknowledges Ms. Singleton for always coming out and the village coming out to have their voices heard. She thanks Ms. Singleton for pointing out the good and bad. Ms. Turner says we do better when we know better with all this information today, we are supposed to do something with it. If we don't then please let us know.

Ms. Cabido thanks the community for coming out today to have their voices heard. This is what she envisioned when you have board meetings. The community coming out and giving their feedback and helping resolves the issues the district is currently having. It is wonderful to hear from difference voices for different parts of the district.

Ms. Crockett seconds to what Ms. Cabido stated. It was great to see the community come out and share, the presentations were well put together, and it is also great hearing from the public and staff on how we're doing.

Mr. Henry gives a shoutout to the counselor from our district for taking care of our student's mental space, especially going through a pandemic, and getting back to somewhat of a normal lifestyle. Mr. Henry communicates that this is the first standardized test in two years, please do not critic what they were able to do after being in a virtually and going through the changes of being back in person. Mr. Henry communicates his congratulatory letter from the state of NJ for representing Legislative District 34.

Mr. Sherif is very surprised with the turn out at todays meeting and wants to encourage the community to continue to come to the meetings, continue to have your voices heard, so that way we can make the best decision for our district and everyone who is apart of it. Thanks, the staff and parents who came out and voiced their opinions, and thanks Dr. Fitzhugh and Dr. Powell for their dedication and hard work on the data and everything they do for the district. He thanks everyone including the board members.

Ms. Johnson thanks the council for working so hard for our children. Ms. Johnson wants to make the community aware that this board collectively sits down and discusses all matters presented. Ms. Johnson thanks Ms. Singleton for being present every time. Ms. Johnson thanks Mr. Ward, and Ms. Meredith for bringing to their attention the problems that are occurring at certain buildings throughout the district. Ms. Johnson thanks the staff, and community for coming out.

Ms. Johnson moves to have meeting adjourned

**Moved by Mr. Wingfield    Seconded by Mr. Armstrong**

**ROLL CALL (9) YEA (0) NAY (0) ABSTAIN (0) ABSENT**