

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Official Minutes

Approved January 14, 2025
Board Meeting

December 19, 2024
Elizabeth, New Jersey

Board President Charlene Bathelus called the meeting to order at 5:47 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the December 19, 2024, regular agenda/business meeting of the Elizabeth Board of Education and read the following statement:

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, this is a combined regular agenda and business meeting of the Board of Education. Pursuant to New Jersey Statutes and the rules adopted by the Board of Education, notice of this meeting was sent to The Star Ledger and Cablevision of Elizabeth on December 13, 2024. In addition, this notice is posted in the lobby of 500 North Broad Street and has been filed with the City Clerk of Elizabeth.

“We want to welcome everyone present here at School No. 51, and to our television viewers to this December 19, 2024, meeting of the Board of Education. We are here to govern, provide management oversight, and make policy for the district. The Superintendent manages the district. This is a meeting of the Board in public, not a meeting of the public.

“This meeting is being recorded and will become part of the Elizabeth Board of Education permanent record. In order for the recording to adequately reflect the proceedings, please refrain from talking while others are speaking.

We ask that you silence the sound on your electronic devices. Since it is legally mandated that these proceedings be accurately recorded, we may have to ask for order periodically should noise begin to interfere with our recording capabilities.

“There will be a public portion for citizens to address the Board. Participants for the public portion must personally sign in prior to the start of the public comment portion so that they may have the opportunity to speak. The sign-in sheet states the name, address, telephone number and reason that the person wants to comment, whether it is an agenda item or a general education comment.”

We are pleased that you have taken time this evening to join us for our Board of Education meeting. Thank you for your interest in the Elizabeth Public Schools.

Present: Mmes. Barbosa, (arrived at 6:40 p.m.) Carvalho, Chevres, (arrived at 6:38 p.m.), Mr. Jacobs, (arrived at 6:18) Mrs. Moreno Ortega, Mr. Neron, Mrs. Goncalves Pestana, Mr. Rivera, Ms. Bathelus-9

Absent: none

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Olga Hugelmeyer, Assistant Superintendent for Schools, Judy Finch Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Schools, Rafael Cortes Jr., School Business Administrator/Board Secretary Harold E. Kennedy Jr., Comptroller Rajeev Malhotra, Deputy Counsel, Heather Savage Ford, Chief of Operations, Frank Cuesta, and Co-General Counsel, Michael Simitz of Kologi Simitz Law Office, were in attendance.

A Moment of Silence was held in memory of Richard M. Garry, former Elizabeth Police Officer and EBOE Attendance Officer.

Colors were presented during the Flag Ceremony by members of Admiral William F. Halsey, Jr. Health and Public Safety Academy Marine Corps Junior R.O.T.C.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Board Member, Isaias Rivera.

The Pledge of Ethics was led by Board Member, Stephanie Goncalves Pestana

The Star-Spangled Banner by Francis Scott Key was played.

Board President Charlene Bathelus introduced District Superintendent, Dr. Olga Hugelmeyer, and asked her to present the Student Representative to the Board of Education for the month of December. Dr. Hugelmeyer said that Mia Sophia Matos is an outstanding leader who has made a remarkable impact as student government president at Alexander Hamilton Preparatory Academy. Her leadership skills come shining through in her service to her peers, organizing events and promoting a positive school culture. Beyond her role in student government, Sophia is an active member of the Interact Club where she volunteers for a number of community events exemplifying her dedication to service. With exceptional grades and consistent Honor Roll placement while navigating a rigorous course load including A/P classes in Biology and Literature shows a dedication to academics as she prepares for college next year. Mia's work ethic, her passion for helping others and her ability to inspire other schoolmates, makes her a true asset to her school community. Dr. Hugelmeyer said it was her pleasure to ask Miss Jaramillo to come forward and take her seat on the Dais.

Ms. Bathelus asked Mr. Kennedy to memorialize Miss Matos's attendance in the official proceedings of the meeting. This was noted and Miss Matos's attendance is recorded in this, the official minutes of the meeting.

Ms. Bathelus then read the following statement:
Citizens may address the Board.

"At this time, the microphones are open for public comment to those who have signed in prior to this session. I shall call individuals to the microphone based on the order of the sign-in. Each statement made by a participant shall be limited to three minutes in duration. The total time of public comment shall be limited to 60 minutes. No individual is able to yield their time to another individual. All comments shall be directed to the presiding officer; no participant may address or question Board Members individually. Each speaker shall comply in all respects with Board Policy 9322 (copies were provided next to the sign in sheet)".

The following rules shall apply:

1. Time limits will be strictly enforced.
2. No personal attacks on individuals or the naming of individuals.
3. No vulgar or indecent language.

4. A person may address the Board no more than once during a single meeting.
5. Comments will not be debated.

Any person in violation of the Policy will be warned, and their comments terminated if needed. If such violation continues, this individual may be escorted from the meeting.”

“As a reminder this is a meeting of the Board in public, not a meeting of the public.”

Since there were no public participants signed up to address the Board, Ms. Bathelus closed this portion of the meeting.

As this would be her last meeting as Board President, Ms. Bathelus addressed the audience:

Every story has its turning points — moments that challenge you, stretch you, and force you to rise higher than you thought you could. This year was one of those stories for me. But through it all, I’ve been reminded that growth doesn’t happen in comfort, and strength isn’t built in ease.

Serving as President of the Elizabeth Board of Education is never a role you take on lightly. It comes with weight, pressure, and the knowledge that every decision is being watched closely.

To my fellow board members — thank you for standing with me, for pushing forward even when it wasn’t easy, and for leading with intention. Every initiative you took on this year reflected your heart for service and your belief in the power of education. Together, we showed that leadership is not a title — it’s action.

To our teachers, administrators, and support staff — you are the foundation of everything we do. You face challenges head-on every single day, and yet, you still show up with heart and patience for our students. Your impact goes beyond academics. You are part of their story, and I hope you never forget how important that is.

To our parents, guardians, and community members — thank you for your trust, your patience, and your partnership. We felt your support, and we heard your voices. It’s because of you that we continue to push for better.

To our students — you are my greatest motivation. Everything we do, every plan we put in place, every goal we set, is for you.

I know this year wasn't easy for some of you either. I know what it feels like to have everyone around you expect so much from you. My hope for you is — no matter how heavy life feels, keep pushing. You are stronger than you know, and every hard chapter is shaping you for something greater.

I would be remiss if I didn’t take a moment to thank Superintendent Olga Hugelmeyer. From the moment I stepped into this role, she has been a trusted partner, a sounding board, and a collaborator in every sense. Her commitment to excellence and her unwavering focus on what’s best for our students have been a driving force behind so much of our success.

I also want to recognize the district attorneys, district directors, Support staff and IT staff. Your hard work happens behind the scenes, but your impact is seen and felt throughout our schools every single day. Your dedication makes everything we do possible, and I am grateful for each and every one of you.

Lastly, I want to personally thank Stan for embodying the true meaning of what a Vice President should be. Your unwavering support and steady presence have been a constant source of strength. Leading this district to new heights was no easy task, but knowing I had a friend and ally like you by my side made all the difference. Our friendship runs deep, and this year it became even more clear that true leadership is not about standing in front — it's about standing together. Thank you for standing with me.

This story we've written together is one I will never forget. It's a story about perseverance, courage, and faith. And while this chapter is closing, the next one is already waiting to begin. There are more goals to achieve, more partnerships to build, and more opportunities to create for every student in Elizabeth Public Schools.

As we turn the page, I leave you with this — pressure can break you, but it can also build you. Every step forward matters, no matter how small it feels. So let's keep stepping forward together. Let's keep writing, and let's make every day a good day.

Thank you for your trust, your patience, and your belief in what's possible. Thank you for being part of this story with me.

Thank you, and God bless.

A video was then presented showing the achievements of the Board and highlighting special events that taken place over the last calendar year under President Bathelus 's leadership.

Ms. Bathelus thanked the I.T. staff for their help in compiling the video and responding to her needs and requests during her term as president.

Mr. Neron and Mrs. Moreno – Ortega complimented and thanked Ms. Bathelus for her leadership and the initiatives she championed over the last year.

Board President Charlene Bathelus asked Schools Superintendent, Dr. Olga Hugelmeyer, to present the announcements for the month of December. Dr. Hugelmeyer showed Power Point Slides that highlighted the following:

Through the use of the District's web site (www.EPSNJ.org/flu-rsv) or the Flu-RSV icon on the District homepage students, families and staff may avail themselves of resources to protect themselves from flu and RSV this school year.

Christmas – New Year's Recess – Schools will close at regular time on Friday, December 20th. Schools will reopen on Thursday, January 2nd.

Dr. Hugelmeyer presented a series of Power Point Slides that were part of the Inside EPS News from our Central Administration.

Kanylah Clayton a senior at John E Dwyer Technology Alexander Hamilton Preparatory Academy has been awarded a full scholarship to the University of Notre Dame through the 2024 QuestBridge National College Match, a national program that connects high – achieving high school seniors from low-income backgrounds with full four-year scholarships to 52 of the nation's top colleges.

Ms. Clayton was among 2,627 seniors from the class of 2025 from throughout the nation who were recognized as Match Scholarship Recipients. The process included the selection of 7,288 finalists among more than 25,500 applicants to be considered for the QuestBridge National College Match Scholarship.

She is currently the No.1 ranked student at Dwyer Technology Academy's Class of 2025 with a 4.8 GPA and has earned the AP Scholar with Honor Award from the College Board by attaining an average score of at least 3.25 on all AP Exams taken and scores of three or higher on four or more exams.

On December 11, The International WeLoveU Foundation gifted winter coats to students at Jerome Dunn Academy School No.9 through WeLo's Winter Coat Giveaway. For a happier and healthier society, the International WeLoveU Foundation promotes unity and friendship among all people of the global village – beyond nationality, race, religion, and socioeconomic status – through impactful environmental and community centered initiatives carried out with the heart of a mother. During the fall, the foundation collected new winter coats for children ages 5-10 to support children in under-resourced communities in Massachusetts, New Jersey, Washington D.C. , and beyond.

Thomas A. Edison Career and Technical Academy construction technology students were honored at a celebratory luncheon provided by Habitat for Humanity at the Salvation Army in Elizabeth. Habitat for Humanity recognized these students for the food pantry renovations they performed at the Salvation Army, including installing and spackling drywall, hanging new doors, and priming and painting the ceiling, walls, doors, and trim.

For over 10 years, Montclair State University has hosted Friends Day where over 100 kids with disabilities (ages 5-21) are invited to explore the School's Student Recreation Center. Reboard, a student-led organization sponsored by the Department of Campus Recreation, plans the fun-filled day of activities for the children with games, arts and crafts, swimming, basketball, and dancing. Each child is paired with two college "buddies" to accompany him/her throughout his/her session. The department's professional staff members oversee the smooth execution of the day's events.

The Elizabeth Public Schools Physical Education Department participated in the New Jersey State Police NJ Drive event. The New Jersey State Police (NJSP) New Jersey Drive /Teen Driver Program is an interactive program that educates teens about the dangers of driving under the influence (DUI/DWI). The Program consists of a classroom presentation, a practical experience using golf carts and Fatal Vision goggles to simulate the effects of alcohol on vision and reaction time while operating a vehicle, and instruction on the Graduate Driver's License (GDL) process. Twelfth grade students who successfully completed their tenth-grade driver education course, and have a student driver permit, were selected by their ed instructors from each school to attend.

For the first time in the 14-year history of NAF (National Academy Foundation) at John E Dwyer Technology Academy, the Dwyer NAF Academy of Information Technology has reached Model- Distinguished status. This is a significant milestone that will shape the future of Dwyer Technology Academy. At the 2025 NAF NEXT Conference, Dwyer Technology Academy will be recognized for this achievement, paving the way for even greater success. Additionally, Dwyer's NAF Academy of Information Technology will go under review for Distinguished status by NAF during the 2025-2026 school year, further growing its position as a leader in NAF.

Ms. Bathelus commenced a review of the evening's Agenda.

Tab 1a) Official and Private Minutes (November 14, 2024) were added to the Agenda.

Tab 1b) Treasurer/Secretary's Report (October 31st, 2024) was added to the Agenda

Tab 2a) Personnel Report was added to the Agenda.

Tab 3) Tuitions Report was added to the Agenda

Tab 4) Superintendent's Reports

Tab 4a) Considerations was added to the Agenda

Tab 4b) Use of Facilities was added to the Agenda

Tab 4bb) Use of Facilities – Considerations was added to the Agenda

Tab 4c) was added to the Agenda

Tab 5) Authorizations Report was added to the Agenda

Tab 6) Finance and Accounting Report was added to the agenda

Tab 6a) Supplemental Finance and Accounting Report – Transfer of Funds was added to the Agenda.

Tab 7) Award of Contracts was added to the Agenda.

Board President Charlene Bathelus thanked all the Department Directors and staff who were at the meeting for providing information and insight for the Board members.

Tab 8) Committee meeting Reports

Educational Management Committee

December 4, 2024

4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Attendees: Stephanie Goncalves Pestana, Board Member/Chairperson of the Educational Management Committee; Jerry Jacobs, Board Member, Rosa Moreno-Ortega, Board Member, Board Member, Judge Malone, General Counsel, Harold Kennedy, School Business Administrator and Dr. Olga Hugelmeyer, Superintendent of Schools.

The Educational Management Committee was provided with an overview of Powerschool Analytics & Insights software program that was purchased with ESSER federal funding for the purpose of easily tracking student, school, and district performance metrics. The Superintendent presented the 2023-2024 Accountability Profiles, and the committee discussed the academic progress, English Language Proficiency, and graduation rates. The committee also reviewed the chronic absenteeism rates and the parent survey. Lastly, the committee reviewed and discussed the proposed agenda for the Professional Development Day scheduled for Friday, December 13, 2024. The agenda included a rich discussion on the New Jersey Student Learning Standards and a focus on literacy and mathematics across the curriculum.

Special Education Committee

December 5, 2024

12:00 p.m. – 1:10 p.m.

Attendees: Iliana Chevres, Board Member/Chairperson of the Special Education Committee, Diane Barbosa Board Member, Isaias Rivera, Board Member, Ed Kologi, General Counsel, Judge Malone, General Counsel, Harold Kennedy, School Business Administrator, Dr. Olga Hugelmeyer, Superintendent of Schools and Dr.

Michael Ojeda, Director of Special Services

The Special Education Committee discussed topics of interest for the upcoming parents' workshops. Access to resources from Community Providers on the district webpage under the Division of Special Services was reviewed and discussed. The discussion also included the current outreach strategies implemented to communicate with parents.

The Special Education Committee discussed the SEPAC plans for the current school year. SEPAC meetings were held on September 25 and October 23. Topics of interest are being collected for the next workshop that will take place in January.

A report was provided to the committee regarding extracurricular activities for our special needs students that included the Saturday Bowling Clinic, Soccer Athletic Clinic, Recreation Program and Special Olympics. In addition, for after-school programs, students are afforded the opportunity to participate in the CTE WorkBased Learning and Tutoring Program, Multilingual Achievement Program, K-8 POE Program, Best of Both World Programs, and the K-12 Academic Program.

The committee also received information regarding the upcoming holiday celebrations that include World Autism Month in April and Exceptional Children's Week that also take place in April.

Finance and Accounting Committee

December 11, 2024

12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Attendees: Jerry Jacobs, Board Member/Chairperson of the Finance and Accounting Committee; Stan Neron, Board Vice President, Stephanie Goncalves-Pestana, Board Member, Judge Malone, General Counsel, John Swisher, Engagement Partner Supplee-Clooney Harold Kennedy, School Business Administrator, Rajeev Malhotra, Comptroller and Dr. Olga Hugelmeyer, Superintendent of Schools.

Mr. John Swisher presented the preliminary results of the audit of the 2023-2024 financial statements. Mr. Swisher reported that the district's financial statements fairly stated and that an unmodified opinion will be contained within the report. He also reported that there will be no current or repeat audit findings contained in the auditor's Management Report. Finally, Mr. Swisher noted the balances of restricted reserves for capital and maintenance which supported the district's ability to take care of its 30 plus facilities. A full public presentation of the audit results will be presented at the January Board meeting.

Legal Committee

December 12, 2024

12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Attendees: Charlene Bathelus, Board President, Stan Neron, Board Vice President/Chairperson of the Legal Committee; Iliana Chevres, Board Vice President, Isaias Rivera, Board Member, Judge Malone, General Counsel, Harold Kennedy, School Business Administrator and Dr. Olga Hugelmeyer, Superintendent of Schools.

The committee discussed the outcome of the arbitration hearing held with PERC on December 11. The committee was briefed by the Superintendent and School Business Administrator of pending legal matters.

District Superintendent Dr. Olga Hugelmeyer presented the H.I.B. Report for the month of December.

'1.) Pursuant to Board Policy 5131.1, Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying, and New Jersey Statute 18A:37, "The results of each investigation shall be reported to the Board of Education no later than the date of the next board meeting following completion of the investigation and include: 1) Any services provided; 2) Training established; 3) Discipline imposed; or 4) Other action taken or recommended by the chief school administrator."

2.) Since our last Board of Education meeting on November 14, 2024, and through December 11, 2024, our school counselors, school based social workers and Supervisor of Anti-Bullying have completed 45 HIB investigations. Of these investigations 15 cases were Founded for HIB, as per New Jersey law. There were 16 males, 32 females, 38 regular education students and 10 special education students that were the alleged victims. There were 37 males, 32 females, 56 regular education students, 10 special education students and 3 non-students that were the alleged offenders. Of the 15 cases Founded for HIB, 5 cases were Founded based on Race/National Origin, 4 cases were Founded based on Color, 3 case was Founded based on Sexual Orientation, 1 case was Founded based on Gender Identity and Expression, 1 case was Founded based on a Mental, Physical or Sensory Disability, and 11 cases were Founded based on “Other” identifying characteristics. Of the services provided and actions taken for these investigations, there were 18 skill development lessons/trainings, 33 counseling sessions, 8 referrals for outpatient mental health treatment, 6 changes of classroom, 3 changes of school placement, 3 administrative counseling sessions, 10 in school detentions, 26 parent conferences, 14 out of school suspensions, 3 Professional Development trainings and 7 cases are continuing to be monitored.

3.) The HIB statute further requires that at the next regularly scheduled meeting after board members receive the initial report of HIB investigations, that the Board issue a decision, in writing, to affirm, reject, or modify the superintendent's decision pertaining to the 45 cases that was reported to you at the last Board meeting on November 14, 2024. In order for you to do so, the investigation summaries from those investigations which were reported to you at the last board meeting have been provided for your review prior to voting.

Board President Charlene Bathelus asked the Student Representative, Mia Sophia Matos, to present her report

Good evening Dr. Hugelmeyer, board of education, and community members. My name is Mia Matos, and I will be serving as the Student Representative for Alexander Hamilton Preparatory Academy for the 2024-2025 academic year. Currently, I serve as the President of our student government here at Hamilton, which means that I am very hands on with the activities and events at my school. We kicked off the school year with our annual Back to School night, in which parents were served refreshments and escorted to their child's classes. It was a fun and successful night. Additionally, Hamilton held an SEL Week of Respect, in which students attended an assembly which stressed the importance of respect and community. This year, our school is focusing on collaboration between clubs and activities to harbor community, and to create new events for our students. The collaboration of clubs has resulted in the collaboration of ideas. For example, the Student Government and the Multicultural Club collaborated in October to bring students a Glow Dance. The dance was successful, a great start to what is more to come from our clubs here at Hamilton.

Hamilton is looking forward to celebrating our annual Black History Month show, where our students from all backgrounds come together to create a show based off a theme, educating and appreciating black culture. Our students are working endlessly to bring a show filled with dance, poetry, and overall appreciation for cultures. Furthermore, our NJFEA club will be reading Christmas stories to children at school 27 over the course of this week, teaching young students important lessons through books while also allowing members of the club to get a one-to-one experience of what it is like to be an educator.

Other high schools have also had a busy few months. AOF students visited Trinita's Regional Medical center, in which they crafted and gave out cards to cancer patients. Their actions were recognized by the local news. STEM brought back their peer-mentor program, allowing for underclassmen at their annex to understand how the main building works. STEM also had a toy and coat drive, where students in need were given donated coats and one toy to provide warmth and comfort during the holiday season. Furthermore, Thomas Jefferson Highschool recently performed the musical “Grease”. Students from other schools attended, and it was overall a fun show that showed Drama students how musical production works. Jeff also engaged in Operation Christmas Child, which is a fun activity that encourages students to give back to the world as they fill our boxes with toys for children not just in Elizabeth, but worldwide.

Transitioning into high school can be rough for many students including myself, but as I got older and found myself harboring relationships with staff and students, Hamilton has become my second home. Thank you for having me tonight, and for giving me the opportunity to advocate for not only Hamilton, but other Elizabeth high schools as well.

Resolutions 10 to 10g were added to the Agenda.

The President requests a motion to go into Private Session to consider matters exempt under the Open Public Meetings Act, specifically for discussion of:

Legal Matters – specifically Workman’s Compensation J.C., O.D.L., M.M., the H.I.B. Appeal and R.B. vs E.B.O.E.

Personnel Matters- Personnel Report 2b

Field Trip Considerations

Award of Contracts - Cybersecurity

The Board will reconvene in public and may take formal action.

A motion was made by Mrs. Goncalves Pestana and seconded by Mrs. Moreno-Ortega to go into private session at 6:36 p.m. p.m.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mrs. Carvalho, Mr. Jacobs, Mrs. Moreno-Ortega, Mr. Neron, Mrs. Goncalves Pestana, Mr. Rivera, Ms. Bathelus -7

Negative: None

A motion was made by Mrs. Moreno-Ortega and seconded by Mr. Rivera to return to public session at 7:51 p.m.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mmes. Barbosa, Carvalho, Chevres, Moreno-Ortega, Mr. Neron, Mrs. Goncalves Pestana, Mr. Rivera, Ms. Bathelus -8

The following items were added to the Agenda:

Personnel Report Tab 2b

Payment of Court Ordered Tuition Payment

Authorization for Girls Basketball Team to attend Rutgers Girls Basketball Game

Award of Contract – Vanguard Technologies Advisors.

Ms. Bathelus asked for a motion and second to adopt the following agenda.

A motion was made by Mr. Rivera and seconded by Mrs. Goncalves Pestana to approve the entire Agenda.

Opening Calendar
Official and Private Minutes (November 14, 2024)
Treasurer/Secretary's Report (October 31, 2024)
Personnel Reports
Tuition Reports
Superintendent's Reports
Authorizations Report
Finance and Accounting Report – Pay Vouchers
Supplemental Finance and Accounting Report – Transfer of Funds
Award of Contracts Report
Claims List

Resolutions:

School Board Recognition Month
Martin Luther King, Jr.
Continue Employee Assistance Program
Payment for Unused Sick Days
Payment for Unused Vacation Days
Appointing Max Plumbing & Heating, Inc. – Snow Plowing/Removal Services
Transfer Capital Reserve Funds
Transfer Maintenance Reserve Funds
Qualifying and Appointing Professional Consultant in Connection with the Board of Education's
Sustainable Structures and Processes
Appointing Kaiser Mechanical, LLC to Provide Hot Water System Upgrade at School No. 3

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mmes. Barbosa, Carvalho, (with abstention on Tab 4b Items 1&2 Elizabeth PAL use of gym at Edison Technical and Vocational Academy from Jan 2, 2025 to June 19/25 and January 4th and 5th 2025), Chevres, Mr. Jacobs, Mrs. Moreno-Ortega, Mr. Neron (with an abstention on Tab 2 A pg. 55 Mr. Thomas -Petit Saturday NJSLA program and Tab 4b Item's 1 & 2 Elizabeth PAL use of gym at Edison Technical and Vocational Academy from Jan 2, 2025 to June 19/25 and January 4th and 5th 2025), Mrs. Goncalves Pestana, Mr. Rivera, Ms. Bathelus -9

Negative: none

On a motion made by Mrs. Goncalves Pestana and seconded by Mr. Neron, the meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Mmes. Barbosa, Carvalho, Chevres, Mr. Jacobs, Mrs. Moreno-Ortega, Mr. Neron. Mrs. Goncalves Pestana, Mr. Rivera, Ms. Bathelus -9

Negative: none

Harold E. Kennedy, Jr.

School Business Administrator/Board Secretary