

# HOPATCONG BOARD OF EDUCATION

Special Meeting and Work Session

August 18, 2022

(Administration Building Room 41)

6:00 pm

## CALL TO ORDER

Time: 6:01 pm

### 1. FLAG SALUTE

### 2. OPENING STATEMENT

In accordance with Section 5 of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975, this public body, the Hopatcong Board of Education hereby announces that The New Jersey Herald and the Daily Record have been notified by email that this Board of Education Work Session will take place at 6:00 p.m. on August 18, 2022.

### 3. ROLL CALL

Present	Scott Francis	Present	Nicole Falconi-Shubert	Present	Jayna Gulan
Present	Joe Falconi	Present	Gerard Gruenfelder	Present	Philip DiStefano
Present	Jackie Turkington	Present	Jennifer Polowchena	Present	Kelly Gravatt

### 4. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

#### a. Superintendent's Report – **Joseph S. Piccirillo, Superintendent of Schools**

1. Mission and Vision Statements
2. Hopatcong Marketplace – Saturday, August 20, 2022
3. Beautification Day - Saturday, August 27, 2022
4. *State of the Schools Meeting* - August 31, 2022 at 6 pm - HS Cafeteria
5. District Professional Development Plan – Annual QSAC requirement
6. District Mentoring Plan – Annual QSAC requirement
7. COVID Update – State dropped non vaccinated staff testing requirement
8. Athletic Events Staff and Supervision – Stipended positions
9. Center for Prevention and Counseling
10. NJDOE DREAMS (Developing Resiliency and Engaging Approaches to Maximize Success) Program
11. Curriculum Revisions
12. Feasibility Study Update
13. Camps Update
14. Gifted and Talented Program – Cogat testing
15. QSAC
16. Using Data to Drive Decision Making – Start Strong assessments, Performance Matters benchmarks, IXL, Diebles.
17. Health Insurance Savings Proposals (looking into self insurance)
18. Parking Lot Painting Fundraisers (paint types, etc).

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\*Superintendent Piccirillo’s report is attached to these minutes

**Motion to approve 4a:**

(ACTION) Motion by Turkington seconded by Gulan

Yes	Scott Francis	Yes	Nicole Falconi-Shubert	Yes	Jayna Gulan
Yes	Joe Falconi	Yes	Gerard Gruenfelder	Yes	Philip DiStefano
Yes	Jackie Turkington	Yes	Jennifer Polowchena	Yes	Kelly Gravatt

**5. PUBLIC COMMENT – AGENDA ITEMS ONLY**

**6. OPEN SESSION - Mr. Scott Francis, Board President**

a. PRESENTATION - Board Goals and Objectives  
Scott Francis and Dr. Joseph S. Piccirillo

- *Review of 21-22 Board Goals*

- i. The Board of Education is committed to supporting programs and initiatives that overcome learning loss and help students to succeed academically.
- ii. The Board of Education will support programs and initiatives which improve school climate, student engagement, student wellness, and ensure school safety and security.
- iii. The Board of Education will continue to investigate alternate means of fiscal responsibility to provide students with a thorough and efficient education in a financially responsible manner.
- iv. For the benefit of the students, the Board of Education will communicate and foster relationships with the larger community to create opportunities and partnerships.
- v. The Board of Education will continue to evaluate and implement campus enhancements that support student learning and their academic experiences.

- *Constructing 2022-23 Board Goals.*

- i. Discussion

- How to measure successful completion.
- Agenda items in future will be mapped to goals.

\* Board Goals document is attached as part of these minutes.

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## b. DISCUSSION TOPICS

- School Calendar and Snow Days – Discussion on bill waiting passage for virtual snow days, final calendar will be discussed at 8/29 mtg if changes are made.
- Keeping BOE members informed across committees
- Freedom to Learn
- Policy Discussions
  - P 0143.2 High School Student Representative to the Board of Education (M) (Revised)
  - P 1511 Board of Education Website Accessibility (M) (Revised)
  - P 2415 Every Student Succeeds Act (M) (Revised)
  - P & R 2432 School Sponsored Publications (Abolished)
  - P 4216 Dress and Grooming (New)
  - P & R 5513 Care of School Property (M) (Revised)
  - P 5517 School District Issued Student Identification Cards (M) (Revised)
  - P 5722 Student Journalism (M) (New)
  - R 2464 Gifted and Talented

## c. BOARD MEMBER OPEN FORUM

### 7. PUBLIC COMMENT – GENERAL DISCUSSION

### 8. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

### 9. ADJOURNMENT

#### Motion to adjourn:

(ACTION) Motion by Gruenfelder seconded by Gulan

All in favor: Yes Time: 8:53 pm

Respectfully Submitted,



Jeff Hallenbeck  
Board Secretary

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## August 18, 2022 Superintendents Report

### 1. Mission and Vision Statements

We spent a great deal of time working through these two years ago and officially launched them about a year ago today at our August, 2021 Goals meeting. I think it is valuable to revisit them as we begin our meeting tonight. As we create goals it is important to keep these in mind.

**Mission:** Hopatcong provides a thorough and efficient education, which focuses on the whole child and builds upon the unique talents and interests of each student. We expect excellence from our entire faculty and staff as we prepare our students to compete at the highest level in the classroom, on the field, on the stage, and in their pursuits after graduation. We understand our roles as partners with parents in educating children and commit to working with the community to provide added value and pride to all those who call Hopatcong home.

**Vision:** Hopatcong empowers students to blaze their own trail through trust, tenacity, and teamwork.

### 2. Hopatcong Marketplace - Saturday August 20, 2022

I will be there at Maxim Glen from noon - 4pm. I will have a table with some swag to give away. Please stop by and say "hello" and I am more than happy to hear feedback from the community, speak to families, take suggestions, share good news, etc. I know it is hard to get folks to work the table or get students involved during one of the last weeks of the summer, but if you want to participate in the future – the next one is September 10. Please let me know and I will do my best to make a schedule to include you.

### 3. Beautification Days (EDITED - 8/18/22)

This year we will be holding a few Beautification Days where the community will be invited to participate in some clean-up efforts on our grounds and campus. We had originally planned to start this this summer, but due to the short timing and the difficulties of getting folks together in the midst of vacation plans, we are very thankful that Ms. Falconi-Shubert and Mr. Falconi and their families have volunteered to put in some sweat equity into our campus by doing some mulching and planting flowers and plants this week in preparation for the start of school. Special shout-out also to Nestors and Sunnyside for their donations of plants. Stay tuned for updates on our Fall Clean Up.

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~~I am looking forward to our first Beautification Day. We are asking families and students to join us and prepare our campus for the start of school. We will be planting flowers and mulching the areas around each of the school signs at the front of the respective buildings and also pulling out as many weeds as possible. I will be there for part of the day and look forward to seeing families participate. Thanks to Ms. Falconi-Shubert, Mr. Falconi, and our Operations Committee for encouraging and supporting this initiative and for all the local businesses that are donating flowers and plants: Nestors and Sunnyside.~~

#### 4. State of the Schools Meeting - August 31, 2022 - 6pm.

One of the suggestions that came from Mr. Gruenfelder's focus group was to have "State of the Schools" meetings to give updates on the happenings within the district. I am proud to share that we will have these four times this year and our first will be Wednesday, August 31 at 6 pm in the H.S. Cafeteria. The administrators will be joining me and we will plan to spend some time covering news in each of the schools as well as wide-ranging district topics of interest such as curriculum changes, gifted and talented, items circulating the rumor mill, and – most importantly – to brag about the accomplishments of our district and communicate our direction moving forward.

#### 5. District Professional Development Plan

Each year, each of the NJ school districts must prepare a district Professional Development Plan. This plan is based in part on meeting legal compliance (e.g. NJAC 6A: 9C-5.3), but is also carefully tied to District Mission and Vision, BOE goals, and needs determined by the superintendent. The Professional Development Plan is then used by teachers in developing their own individual goals which are used as a part of their individual evaluations. This Professional Development Plan has been shared with the BOE members ([CLICK HERE](#)) in draft form and may be edited following this meeting before it is shared out with staff early in September. This will be on the agenda for approval at the public meeting.

#### 6. District Mentoring Plan

The District Mentoring Plan is renewed each year in compliance with NJAC 6A:9-C-5.1. As such, all teachers hired and working under a provisional teaching certificate must be assigned a mentor. The mentoring plan was revised two years ago and has been shared with the BOE members - [CLICK HERE](#). This will be on the agenda for approval and renewal at the public meeting.

#### 7. COVID Update

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As you may have heard, Gov. Murphy lifted the requirement that non-vaccinated staff test for COVID weekly. <https://www.nj.com/coronavirus/2022/08/murphy-ends-covid-test-mandate-for-unvaccinated-teachers-state-workers-child-care-workers.html> Other than that change, we will remain status quo with regard to masking and all other COVID-related items from June. (i.e. mask optional and notifying families of COVID outbreaks in a fashion similar to how we notify families of lice).

## 8. Athletic Events Staff and Supervision

On the public agenda for approval at the end of the month will be a series of positions which are approved annually and deal with the safety and security of our students, as well as the proper functioning of an athletic event. These roles include ticket sellers, scoreboard operators, crowd control, gate and parking attendants, etc. The payment for these tasks range from \$50 - \$100 an event, depending on the role.

## 9. Center for Prevention and Counseling

We have been very fortunate to have partnered with the Center for Prevention and Counseling to support our Hopatcong students K-12 through a variety of programs over the past few years. I am thrilled to share that we have been included in a grant that will now additionally provide our students in grades 3-7 with Botvins Life Skill Training which will cover personal self-management skills, general social skills, and drug resistance skills AND the PreVenture program for 8th grade students which is aimed at providing targeted interventions to promote mental health and skill development to delay youth substance use. The BOE members have been shared a [list \(CLICK HERE\)](#) of all the programs offered for free through our partnership and grants with the Center for Prevention. I am hopeful that these programs will be another tools which will help to alleviate concerns over bullying, student mental health, social-emotional learning, and substance abuse, which have been topics discussed in our SAC committee and in Mr. Gruenfelder's focus group.

## 10. NJDOE DREAMS (Developing Resiliency and Engaging Approaches to Maximize Success)

In the past we have often discussed concerns with school climate with regard to student and staff well-being, stress management, and burn out. These concerns seem to be ubiquitous across the NJDOE and in the most recent (August 3rd) [memo](#) the NJDOE has presented a new initiative called the DREAMS (Developing Resiliency and Engaging Approaches to Maximize Success) Program. It is a partnership between the NJDOE and NJDCF and is free. I am going to attend the

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orientation webinar on August 24 to learn more about it and I have already spoken to our county superintendent and agreed to lead an ad hoc committee of superintendents in Sussex County in an effort to have Hopatcong receive the supports. (It is currently not clear how districts will be chosen to participate). I am hopeful that as President of the Sussex County Superintendents' Roundtable Association and by offering to spearhead this ad hoc committee, Hopatcong will be seen as a worthy candidate for the free supports. I will update you when I receive more information.

## 11. Curriculum Revisions

Mr. DiBenedetto and a team of Social Studies teachers worked diligently this summer to revise the Social Studies curriculum. A few of the key components were aligning the curriculum to the new NJSLs 2020 standards (which go into effect this September, 2022) and to include a more purposeful focus on Civics. Curriculum updates were also made in Psychology, Cosmetology, and Gifted and Talented. During the State of the Schools meeting, scheduled for August 31, Mr. DiBenedetto will be discussing some of the specific curriculum revisions and will spend some time specifically discussing the new Health and P.E. NJSLs and how the curriculum is modified to be in compliance with the standards while honoring the recent Board Regulation on Controversial Topics passed earlier this year. Mr. DiBenedetto will also discuss the latest changes to Gifted and Talented which bring us in compliance with State regulations.

## 12. Feasibility Study Update

As you know, and as I have addressed at several previous public meetings, I have been actively pursuing various avenues that provide a better education for our students at a more reasonable cost to our taxpayers. This remains important to me considering our State aid numbers project to again decrease and our students are still recovering from what many have called "COVID learning loss." When some people hear me say I am investigating all avenues, they interpret it to mean that our school district is shutting down. This is not true. Some on social media will have you believe our HS is not opening in a few weeks. That is poppycock! I want to reiterate tonight what I shared when I discussed consolidation several months ago. In order to do this or anything of that magnitude, I would need a willing partner and a feasibility study which would take about 5-6 months to complete. This would be approved at a BOE meeting and a 100-page (or so) report would be generated giving the BOE (and the public) all the information they'd ever want to know in terms of pros, cons, and logistics for such a decision. This feasibility study also would need to be done to vacate Tulsa Trail and reconfigure the district. If I have any substantive updates on any of these fronts I will share them with the BOE and the public.

## 13. Camps Update

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I mentioned this at the July BOE meeting, but I couldn't be more proud of our students and teachers for the success of the academic and enrichment camps. We had 114 students participate (40 of those participants took part in more than one camp). In the end it was something that cost nothing for the district and helped many students (and families) tremendously! I hope to see this continue again next summer.

## 14. Gifted and Talented Program

I am proud to share that we will have G&T offered next year by Ms. Rizzo, our wonderful Media Specialist and Social Studies teacher. Students have already been identified for initial screening in G&T and families have received letters from Mr. DiBenedetto explaining the process. In order to fully qualify for pull-out G&T instruction (and this applies to students in grades 3-7), the students will need to score in the 96th percentile on the COGAT (**COGN**itive **Abilities Test**). Testing will take place for eligible students in the last days of August. Our BOE policy on G&T is included for edit and has been shared with the BOE. [CLICK HERE](#).

## 15. QSAC

Many of you will remember that the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) is a process school districts go through every few years for evaluation and to determine compliance in the areas of Instruction & Programming, Fiscal, Governance, Operation, and Personnel. During my first year in the district, we were QSAC'd and we passed. This was a big accomplishment on the part of many folks in the district, as the process is a large and painstaking undertaking. It appears that we may be the lucky recipients of another QSAC this year. Some of this is still up in the air and we have not received official notice that we will have QSAC but in anticipation of this possibility, I will be carefully working with Mr. Hallenbeck, Mr. DiBenedetto and our team to ensure our curriculum standards are up-to-date and that we are meeting all our compliance requirements. More to come on this.

## 16. Using Data to Drive Decision Making

Entering into this new school year, I want to update the BOE and public on some of the processes that we follow to ensure that students are learning. We continue to explore the "Freedom to Learn" concept that has been discussed by Mr. DiStefano and the SAC committee. We have also been meeting with teachers, counselors, and CST members regarding RTI (Response to Intervention) and members of the high school staff on some of the intervention protocols they follow to ensure student success. I anticipate that we will have someone from the HS intervention team share



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some of the recent ideas and strategies to the SAC committee or even the full board in an upcoming meeting. More to come on this. But specifically to the point of using data to drive decision making, this year presents an important opportunity for the district as it will be the first time since 2019 that things feel a little more “normal” in schools following COVID. Now more than ever our teachers will be digging into the data that will come from the beginning of the year benchmark testing – run through *Performance Matters* and the data that will come by way of *IXL* analytics, *Start Strong* testing, *DIBELS*, and *Running Records*. All of this data will be used to place students into Preparedness Tiers so that teachers can best create SGOs (Student Growth Objectives). Part of a teacher’s annual evaluation is based on how well that teacher effectuates academic improvement in their students. Our teachers will be using analytics from the testing data to make decisions on how to best instruct each student – i.e. which specific areas are they struggling in – and to track each child’s progress. Through the use of *Paper* – our new tutoring program that will give 24/7 access to tutoring for students in grades 1-12, we hope to reinforce the importance of continuous improvement and a growth mindset for our students and teachers. We will be approaching teaching systematically and purposefully and using the data to make decisions that best impact student learning.

17. **Teen Mental Health First Aid:** *JUST ADDED - 8/15*

Through the hard work of HS Counselor Michelle Minimi, Hopatcong has been awarded the tMHFA grant (Teen Mental Health First Aid). This is a training program for teens brought to the United States by the National Council for Mental Wellbeing in partnership with the Born This Way Foundation. It teaches teens in grades 10-12 how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges in their friends and peers. The grant will involve student and staff training as well as parent information sessions.