

VI. Board Comments/Presidents Report

Good Evening Everyone-

Happy New Year.

Tonight we would like to thank Mrs. Buccino for serving on the Board for the past 3 years, and for staying on after your last child graduated to finish out your term. We are so lucky to have had your help during this time. We are going to miss you and wish you all the best.

Welcome to Mrs. Haber and Mr. Mehta. We are grateful that you have chosen to join the Board. It is especially appreciated at this time when the work will not be easy, and we really appreciate you offering a helping hand.

We are grateful to have a community of people who want to do everything they can to make Essex Fells School succeed no matter what challenges we are faced with.

Over the break, Mrs. Gadaleta has worked closely with the Health Department, Dr. Nitti, Mayor Davis and parents to ensure a safe return to school. Anyone who has traveled, has observed or is observing a quarantine period of 14 days before returning to school. Anyone who has been ill, has also been in contact with the school and following proper procedures before returning in person.

As we have previously shared, the American Academy of Pediatrics states that “evidence shows the academic, mental and physical benefits of in-person learning outweigh the risks from the coronavirus.” While some community members have elected for a fully remote learning option, the overwhelming majority have elected to have their children attend in person. Since our children range in ages 3-12, and we have a fully inclusive special education program we are determined to stay open for in-person education as long as the health department feels it is safe to do so. If the health department feels that we need to close temporarily for health and safety reasons, we are ready to pivot to remote learning at any time.

This fall, we were successfully open for 3 months, with minimal cases and quarantines before the December closure. This is because of the efforts of Mrs. Gadaleta, Nurse Renz, Dr. Nitti, Mayor Davis, the West Orange Health Dept., the staff and our parents working together for a common goal. The mitigation strategies that have been put in place are too numerous to list here, but are available on the school website under “reopening plan” if anyone needs a refresher. These strategies must be working as we have seen almost no absences due to illness unrelated to covid quarantine. In December, when the cases became too numerous due to spread within the Essex Fells Community, we pivoted the entire student body to remote learning for 2 weeks for health and safety reasons.

We want to be open for in-person education as much as possible the rest of the school year. That is why we are stressing the importance of following the school health and safety guidelines. The plan can only succeed if everyone works together to follow the rules with the common goal of keeping the school community healthy and safe.

Besides practicing social distancing, wearing masks and good handwashing, please follow these guidelines:

1. Keep your children home if they, or another member of the household, are experiencing covid-19 symptoms, and get tested.
2. Notify Nurse Renz or Mrs. Gadaleta of any household exposures to Covid-19.
3. Notify Nurse Renz or Mrs. Gadaleta of any positive Covid-19 cases in your home.
4. Notify Nurse Renz or Mrs. Gadaleta of any travel or visitors to your home from anywhere besides NY, CT, PA or Delaware.
5. Quarantine for 14 days after traveling outside of NJ (with the exception of NY, CT, DE and PA) or if you had visitors from outside of those states who were unable to quarantine in advance.
6. If your child is in quarantine for any reason they should not socialize whatsoever.

If we all work together and err on the side of caution, we can avoid any unnecessary closures.
Thank you all for your understanding and cooperation.

VI. Public Comment on Agenda Items Only

- None

VIII. Old Business / Board Discussion

- None

IX. New Business / Board Discussion

- Mrs. Gadaleta noted that January is School Board Recognition Month. Mrs. Gadaleta thanked Mrs. Buccino for her years of service and for staying on the Board. Mrs. Gadaleta thanked the other BOE members their time and efforts during these challenging times. She thanked the Board for the perspectives they provide. Mrs. Gadaleta noted that the BOE acts on behalf of all the children in the district.
- Dr. LoCascio thanked Mrs. Buccino for her time serving on the Board.
- Mrs. Huegel thanked Mrs. Buccino and welcomed Mr. Mehta and Mrs. Haber for being elected to the BOE.

X. Reorganization Action Items

RESOLVED that the Board of Education approves Reorganization Action Items # 01 - 02.

1. RESOLVED that the Board of Education adopts the New Jersey School Board Member Code of Ethics.

NOTES: Code of Ethics Attached

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio

Seconded by: Mr. Skopak

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

2. RESOLVED that the Board of Education approves the following dates for its meetings in the ensuing year (*dates subject to change):

Wednesday	January 20, 2021	Regular Monthly Business Meeting
Wednesday	February 3, 2021	Workshop Meeting
Wednesday	February 17, 2021	Regular Monthly Business Meeting
Wednesday	March 3, 2021	Workshop Meeting
Wednesday	March 17, 2021	Regular Monthly Business Meeting
Wednesday	April 21, 2021	Regular Monthly Business Meeting
Wednesday	May 5, 2021	Workshop Meeting
Wednesday	May 19, 2021	Regular Monthly Business Meeting
Wednesday	June 16, 2021	Regular Monthly Business Meeting
Wednesday	August 18, 2021	Regular Monthly Business Meeting
Wednesday	September 1, 2021	Workshop Meeting
Wednesday	September 15, 2021	Regular Monthly Business Meeting
Wednesday	October 6, 2021	Workshop Meeting
Wednesday	October 20, 2021	Regular Monthly Business Meeting
Wednesday	November 3, 2021	Workshop Meeting

Wednesday	November 17, 2021	Regular Monthly Business Meeting
Wednesday	December 1, 2021	Workshop Meeting
Wednesday	December 15, 2021	Regular Monthly Business Meeting
Wednesday	January 5, 2022 (TBD)	Reorganizational/Workshop Meeting

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio

Seconded by: Mr. Skopak

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

X. Public Comment

- Mr. Dionisio welcomed everyone back and asked if there was an increase in remote students. Mrs. Gadaleta noted 1 additional student.
- Mayor Davis provided an update on vaccinations per his discussions with the state. The state is currently still in phase 1-A, which is for healthcare workers. 1-B includes police, firefighters and teachers. Some police and firefighters have been moved up to 1-A, and he is still waiting to hear if teachers will be moved up in priority, as Mayor Davis noted the state does recognize the importance of in person learning. Mayor Davis congratulated the newly appointed BOE members.
- Mr. Dionisio asked how negotiations will be impacted by remote learning. Mrs. Gadaleta noted that will be an ongoing discussion with the EFTA.
- A parent thanked the school staff and BOE for their efforts in making it possible for in person education.

XII. Resolution to Enter Executive Session

At 7:52 P.M. the Board made a motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss legal matters. The items discussed in Executive Session will be disclosed to the public when the need to maintain their confidentiality no longer exists.

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio

Seconded by: Mrs. Haber

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

XIII. Adjournment

At 9:04 P.M. the Board of Education made a motion to adjourn. The next **Regular Meeting** of the Board of Education will be held on **Wednesday, January 20, 2021, at 7:30 P.M.** virtually.

Moved by: Dr. LoCascio

Seconded by: Mrs. Haber

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Steven J. Lella
Business Administrator/
Board Secretary