

EAST ROCKAWAY UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
East Rockaway, New York  
Regular Meeting of the Board of Education  
7:00 P.M., February 28, 2017– East Rockaway Jr. /Sr. High School  
Preceded by a PTA Reflections Contest Winners Recognition, a  
Presentation on K-12 Writing Framework and a Public Forum

MINUTES

Present: Members of the Board of Education: Patti Nicoletti, Keith Gamache, Kristin Ochtera, Superintendent, Lisa J. Ruiz; Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations, Jacqueline A. Scio; Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Technology, John Piccarella, District Clerk, Vitina Fazi

Late: Neil Schloth

Absent: John Giannotti, Jr.

1. The meeting was called to order by Patti Nicoletti at 7:06 p.m. Keith Gamache led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board President Patti Nicoletti welcomed everyone to the meeting. She stated that Ms. Ruiz has planned two presentations. The regular meeting will follow the presentations. She turned the meeting over to the Superintendent.

Ms. Ruiz welcomed the audience to tonight's meeting. She said that tonight the first presentation will be recognizing the Rhame Avenue School PTA Reflections contest winners. She introduced Mr. Erik Walter. Mr. Walter welcomed the students who will be receiving awards for their participation in this year's PTA Reflections contest. He spoke about the criteria for this volunteer arts program and contest. This year's theme is "What is Your Story." A slide show and video presentation showcasing the art work of the participants was shown. Mr. Walter thanked Ms. Maini for her participation in putting the slide show together. He also thanked Mrs. Elias for her hard work and dedication to the Reflections Program. Mr. Walter thanked the judges (Ms. Ochtera, Ms. Massa, and Dr. Meagher) for their involvement and for taking the time to learn about the program. They were presented with certificates. Mrs. Beyrer accepted the certificate on behalf of Dr. Meagher and Ms. Massa. Mr. Walter then introduced all the student winners and presented them with certificates. Ms. Elias said that 48 students participated and two will move onto the New York State level. Ms. Ruiz thanked Mrs. Elias for her effort in keeping the program alive and for her dedicated hours of time she volunteers to provide this opportunity to our students. She congratulated all the winners.

Ms. Ruiz then introduced Mr. John Piccarella who spoke about the K-12 Writing Framework Committee. Mr. Piccarella provided a thorough presentation and update to the Board of Education of the District's K-12 Writing Framework program. This being the first year of implementation,

Mr. Piccarella stated that writing instruction is complicated and shared with the Board what the Committee decided. Mr. Piccarella introduced third grader teacher Mrs. Beyer who shared samples of student writing and demonstrated how students develop their writing skills to address various tasks. Mr. Piccarella then asked if there were any questions and a brief question and answer period then ensued. Ms. Ruiz thanked Mr. Piccarella and all the committee members who have dedicated much time to this committee and reminded the audience that this is still a work in progress and she is very proud of the work that has been done.

Mr. Piccarella reminded the audience that the subject of the board presentations has changed since originally scheduled. There will be a budget presentation at the April meeting and the STEAM presentation will take place at the June meeting.

The meeting was turned over to Ms. Nicoletti at 8:10 pm. Ms. Nicoletti reminded the audience that they will have an opportunity to ask specific questions about the agenda at the beginning of the meeting. She reminded the audience to fill out a card with any questions or comments for “privilege of the floor.”

2. Upon motion made by Keith Gamache and seconded by Kristin Ochtera, the Minutes of January 24, 2017, were unanimously approved.
3. Acknowledge Receipt of Financial Reports – December 2016
4. Correspondence - None
5. Hearing of visitors on items in the Agenda – none
6. Action Agenda

Upon motion made by Kristin Ochtera, and seconded by Neil Schloth, the following Items 1 through 8 were unanimously approved on a consent agenda.

A. Personnel

1. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, accept the following resignations:
  - a. Dania Valenzuela, food service helper, effective February 10, 2017
  - b. Kelli Halatas, substitute food service helper, effective February 28, 2017
  - c. Lisa Blank, substitute monitor and substitute teacher aide, effective February 28, 2017
2. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, accept, with regret, the resignation, for the purpose of retirement, of Marie Lyons, from her elementary teacher position, effective June 30, 2017.

3. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, accept, with regret, the resignation, for the purpose of retirement, of Karen Lee Callaghan, from her elementary teacher position, effective June 30, 2017.
4. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the following short term substitute teacher appointments at the per diem salary set forth on the Non-Contractual Salary Schedule for the 2016-2017 school year:
  - a. Katherine Rich, effective January 31, 2017, through April 7, 2017
  - b. Teresa Clausi, effective February 2, 2017, through March 10, 2017
5. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the Spring Sports Coaching Schedule dated February 28, 2017.
6. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the appointment of Lisa Blank to the position of teacher aide, effective upon Civil Service approval, at the Step 1 hourly salary set forth in the East Rockaway Teacher Aides Association Agreement for the 2016-2017 school year.
7. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the appointment of Kelli Halatas to the position of food service helper, effective upon Civil Service approval, at the Step 1 hourly salary set forth in the East Rockaway Food Service and Monitors Unit Agreement for the 2016-2017 school year.
8. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the following temporary assignments at the salary approved by the East Rockaway Board of Education on the Non-Contractual Salary Schedule for substitute workers for the 2016-2017 school year:
  - a. Philip Jennette, substitute cleaner, effective March 1, 2017
  - b. Ruth Dorf, substitute teacher, effective March 1, 2017
  - c. Katherine Rich, substitute teacher, effective January 31, 2017
  - d. Troy Henshaw, athletic supervisor (day/evening), effective March 1, 2017

B. Other Items

Upon motion made by Keith Gamache, and seconded by Neil Schloth, the following Items 1 through 6, and Addendum Item 7, were unanimously approved on a consent agenda.

1. Approve the following resolution:

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the Board of Education of the East Rockaway Union Free School District approves the terms of the Memorandum of Agreement dated January 27, 2017, between the Board of Education and the United Public Service Employees Union (“UPSEU”) representing the employees in the District’s custodial

bargaining unit regarding the terms and conditions of employment for the members of the bargaining unit; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Superintendent of Schools be authorized to execute the resulting collective bargaining agreement on behalf of the Board of Education of the East Rockaway UFSD.

2. Approve the terms of the Consultant Services Contract with Aaron Braun, Community Educator, for a faculty meeting presentation, and authorize the President of the Board of Education to execute the Contract on behalf of the East Rockaway Board of Education.
3. Approve the Trading Partner Agreement between the East Rockaway UFSD and NYSDOH, for the purpose of allowing Frontline to submit Medicaid claims on behalf of the East Rockaway UFSD to NYSDOH, and authorize the President of the Board of Education to execute the agreement on behalf of the East Rockaway Board of Education.
4. Approve the Health and Welfare Services Agreement between the East Rockaway UFSD and the following school districts for health and welfare services for the 2016-2017 school year and authorize the President of the Board of Education to execute the agreement on behalf of the East Rockaway Board of Education.
  - a. Uniondale UFSD
  - b. Hicksville UFSD
5. Approve the Health and Welfare Services Agreement between the East Rockaway UFSD and the following school districts for health and welfare services for the 2016-2017 school year and authorize the President of the Board of Education to execute the agreement on behalf of the East Rockaway Board of Education.
  - a. Baldwin UFSD
  - b. Elmont UFSD
  - c. Freeport UFSD
  - d. Hewlett UFSD
  - e. Island Park UFSD
  - f. Lawrence UFSD
  - g. Long Beach UFSD
  - h. Lynbrook UFSD
  - i. Malverne UFSD
  - j. North Bellmore UFSD
  - k. Oceanside UFSD
  - l. Rockville Centre UFSD
  - m. Roosevelt UFSD
  - n. Uniondale UFSD

- o. Vally Stream #13
  - p. Valley Stream #24
  - q. Valley Stream #30
  - r. Valley Stream Central High School District
  - s. New York City Department of Education
6. Accept the following donations:
- a. Checks from the Centre Avenue PTA for the following:
    - i. Curriculum enhancement for in-classroom workshops for third grade students in the sum of \$286
    - ii. Curriculum enhancement to support the kindergarten chick program in the sum of \$260.08
    - iii. Curriculum enhancement for classroom supplies for first grade teachers in the sum of \$110.96
    - iv. Additional funds for sixth grade activities in the sum of \$200
    - v. Curriculum enhancement for an in-class workshop for second grade students in the sum of \$318.50
    - vi. Curriculum enhancement for an in-class workshop for first grade students in the sum of \$260
  - b. From the Rhame Avenue PTA:
    - i. Board games for lunch recess valued at \$169.11
    - ii. Dry Erase Fully-Ruled Pupil Boards valued at \$38.18
    - iii. Supplies to be used during sessions with math specialists valued at \$55.42
- C. Budget Transfers - None
- D. Upon motion made by Keith Gamache, and seconded by Kristin Ochtera, the CSE Recommendations were unanimously approved.
- E. Upon motion made by Neil Schloth, and seconded by Keith Gamache, the CPSE Recommendations were unanimously approved
7. Policy Matters - None
8. Good and Welfare
- a. Congratulations to Robert and Heather Kennedy on the birth of their son Jack Robert, born on February 6, 2017
  - b. Condolences to Karin Leary and family on the passing of her grandmother, Irene Keating
  - c. Condolences to Adrienne Stender and family on the passing of her husband, John Stender

- d. Condolences to Joe Lores and family on the passing of his father-in-law, Thomas Carney III
- e. Condolences to Darlene Woods and family on the passing of her mother, Helen Wood

## 9. Superintendent's Report

### **Achievement**

Teachers, staff, and administrators at Centre Avenue recently held meetings to discuss the middle of year student assessment data. The conversations were productive, as the team analyzed the data and made adjustments to programs as needed. This year a key focus is to help students at *all* levels show progress and growth.

In writing, students at Centre Avenue are now working on informational writing pieces that incorporate research and nonfiction sources. Many teachers are trying to use Thinking Maps as visual tools to guide the students. These pieces are expected to be completed in mid-March. Students in all grades are working on this writing piece and going through the entire writing process together.

Rhame and Centre Avenue Schools recently met to discuss the middle of the year data collected on all students to make informed decisions about instructional practices and interventions moving forward. Each grade level met with the building principals, reading and math specialists to analyze this very important data and discuss certain adjustments to be made in order to best support our students' progress as we move toward the end of the year. We are proud of the progress that our students have made thus far and confident that we will see more as we move forward.

Our Achieve 3000 Educational Consultant recently visited both elementary school buildings to work with teachers in Grades 3-5. The focus was on data analysis and the effectiveness of the program being used in each classroom. Through the use of high-interest articles that are non-fiction and aligned with Journeys, Engage NY Modules and current events, our students have been using the program to boost their Lexile Scores both in school and at home. Usage is on the rise as students become more familiar with the program which has led to an improvement in their ability to comprehend informational text.

Congratulations to the entire cast and crew of *Shrek the Musical* for a truly outstanding performance. The shows drew large, enthusiastic crowds who were impressed with the stage design, student performances, and overall inclusiveness of the cast. Special thanks to Ms. Murano, Mr. Schloen, Ms. Hirten, Ms. Cabasso, Mr. Gerken, Ms. Mihalek and Ms. Weill.

Rock Rivalry is in full swing. Quiz Bowl and Sports Night took place yesterday and students were highly engaged in these events. Rock Rivalry preview will be held on March 16, 2017, and Rock Rivalry Entrance is on March 17, 2017.

Congratulations to the students in the College and Career (AVID) elective who continue to

implement the AVID strategies, this time by calculating their GPA and delving more deeply into understanding their grades and the importance of GPA for college acceptance.

## **Opportunity**

The Beautiful Me project is underway with the sixth grade girls at Rhame and Centre Avenue schools. Dr. Nunes and Ms. McCabe have been teaching the girls about self-esteem and promoting appreciation for their genuine qualities, accurate self-awareness and the satisfaction of helping others. Researchers suggest that only 2% of women think that they are beautiful. The Beautiful Me project is the antidote to this statistic and we are grateful that the Hance Family Foundation has provided us with this comprehensive and engaging curriculum to use with our young female students to help ensure that they think positively and with assurance about their bodies, their skills and their relationships with others. This program has reached over 20,000 participants with effective lesson plans designed to teach females of all ages how to think positively and with assurance about their bodies, their skills, and their relationships with others. Female students in other grades will also be working on the Beautiful Me project in the coming months.

Our Guidance department ran its annual Junior College Planning Night on January 30, 2017. The evening provided parents with an overview of the college application process.

On February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017, National Donor Day, LiveOnNY visited our school to raise awareness about organ and tissue donations. A new law now allows 16 and 17 years old to register for organ, eye and tissue donation. Thank you to Mrs. Nicoletti for supporting this important event. Fox 5 News did a fabulous piece about this event. According to the New York State Donate Life Registry, "More than 10,000 New Yorkers are on waiting lists as the need for organ donations far exceeds the supply. One person who donates organs (hearts, lungs, liver, kidneys, pancreas and intestines) can save up to eight lives, while a tissue donor (corneas, bone, skin, heart valves, tendons, veins, etc.) can improve 12 or more lives by restoring eyesight, helping fight infections in burn patients and preventing the loss of mobility and disability."

Officer Groshans provided a presentation for our Grade 4-6 students on the dangers of social media and the importance of being an up stander.

## **Innovation**

Fifth grade students working with Mrs. Schoen are now beginning research on a modern art style. They will use their research to create a multimedia poster in Glogster, and they will create an original piece by emulating a specific artist's style in Art class with Mrs. Brody. This unit culminates in a field trip to the Museum of Modern Art in the spring.

Sixth grade students are currently researching a country of their choice in library class and creating an interactive travel poster in ThingLink. As part of their science fair presentations, they will write a two-minute synopsis of their experiments, which will be recorded and superimposed on a picture of themselves through the use of the AR tool, Aurasma. The picture will be included on their tri-

boards and can be scanned through the free app by attendees of the fair to hear students' auditory presentation on their own Smart phones.

As part of this year's new STEAM initiative across both elementary schools, Mrs. Healy has begun the second cycle at Rhame Avenue and is teaching the students about Robotics! The lessons include hands-on engineering practices as the students build their own robots and make them come alive to perform different tasks. We are excited to have Mrs. Healy back in the building to provide this innovative experience for our students in Grades 3-6.

On February 11, 2017, once again our district hosted the Vex Robotics tournament. Thank you Mr. Cimorelli, Mr. Howard, and Mr. DeTommaso for their significant efforts in organizing this event. This was by far the biggest tournament we have had to date, with 37 teams participating, and included our expanded middle school program. Thank you also to the over 25 parent, student and staff volunteers who assisted in making the day a success.

### **Connections**

Our Engage Every Family Committee has continued to meet. We are reading a collegial text, *Beyond the Bake Sale*, and we will be developing a family engagement framework for our district to promote and support productive engagement of our families in order to improve student achievement. Our survey is on our website and will be available through March 6, 2017. To date we have approximately 280 responses; roughly 25% of our enrollment.

The elementary schools recently had their first Homework Committee meeting. Members included teachers across both elementary schools, parents, Mr. Walter and Mrs. Ma. The charge of the committee is to develop a consistently articulated philosophy and approach to homework in Grades K-6 that aligns to district policy and research-based practices. In the coming months, the Committee will continue to meet to discuss and determine homework expectations across grade levels and how parents and teachers can work together to help the students in the homework process.

On February 10, 2017, members of the Rhame Avenue K-Kids Club made a special delivery to the Bethany House in Roosevelt, a nonprofit shelter that provides housing to women and children facing homelessness. K-kids delivered Valentine's Day party supplies, school supplies, and games to the families residing there. Additionally, a donation was given to the Bethany House from the sale of the school's Valentine Hearts. The hearts are displayed on a bulletin board at Rhame Avenue. The members had an opportunity to speak with children who live there and celebrate the love of Valentine's Day together. We also want to thank the local Kiwanis Organization for their generous donation that helped our K-Kids Club make this experience happen for the children facing hardships at the Bethany House.

The week of February 13, 2017, was Focus on Diversity Week across the district. The week included classroom activities, announcements, and a culminating "I Am" wall built in the rotunda with affirmative statements from our middle school students. Our high school students also



participated in the I Am Activity by doing so outside their homeroom classes.

Thank you to the Guidance Department for continuing to share valuable insight and leadership. The department helped bring attention to the resources it offers during School Counseling Week and the continued publication of its newsletter.

#### 10. Privilege of the Floor - none

#### 11. Board Member Comments

Keith Gamache: Mr. Gamache commented on the Robotics Tournament which took place on February 11, 2017. He continues to be impressed not only by the program, but with the support of the staff and community. This was an all-day event and the number of teachers spending the day to help our students have this rich experience was encouraging. He thanked the PTA's for their continued support and donations for programs. Many thanks to Mrs. Elias for her work with the Reflections Program which gave our students an additional creative opportunity. Thanks also to Ms. Ruiz for sharing all the wonderful things that are happening in our schools on a continual basis.

Neil Schloth: Mr. Schloth thanked Mr. Piccarella for his K-12 Writing Framework presentation. Lots of good information was exchanged. He thanked Mr. Walter and the Rhame Avenue School teachers for allowing him to be part of their PTA meeting. He asked everyone at the meeting to write letters to local officials for additional state aid. At the suggestion of Mr. Bixhorn, a sixth grade teacher, sixth grade students will become involved in this writing campaign. Mr. Schloth said that the usual lobby day for state aid was cancelled due to inclement weather. Additional money should be made available to school districts following the outcome of a court case. He encouraged everyone to write to their representatives and to spread the word. He thanked everyone for coming and wished them a good evening.

Kristin Ochtera: Ms. Ochtera commented on two things: She recently had the opportunity to participate in Founders Day which was a privilege to attend. All of the recipients this year were especially well-deserved. She also sat in for Mr. Schloth at today's Prevention Task Force Committee meeting. This is another group that works hard to promote some fantastic opportunities for our students.

Patti Nicoletti: Ms. Nicoletti shared the sentiments of fellow board members. Last month she mentioned that the governor was quoted as saying there would be record amounts of aid provided to school districts. The proposed budget indicates that East Rockaway would lose \$3,300 in aid because of changes in the Foundation Aid formula. We are still hopeful that the number will change. The Governor mentioned free college tuition. However, there are certain requirements. It is not just free. Students must attend full time (15 credits) and have a 2.0 GPA and it is a reimbursement program. If a student passes all the courses, they will get reimbursed. If a student withdraws and only has 12 credits, they will not get reimbursed.

There has been education news on both the National and State levels. School districts have recently received guidance from NYSED on the issue of transgender students and immigrant students. President Trump and the federal Departments of Education and Justice have rescinded guidance that clarified federal legal protections for transgender students. In response, Attorney General Schneiderman and New York State Education Department commissioner MaryEllen Elia have vehemently objected to the decision and issued reminders to school districts across New York State that irrespective of the federal government's decision, school districts in New York have independent duties under state and local law to protect transgender students from discrimination and harassment in their schools and at all school functions.

On a similar note, in response to recent federal immigration related actions that have created fear and confusion in New York and across the country, Attorney General Schneiderman and State Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia, also reminded school districts of their duty to comply with existing state and federal laws that ensure the rights of immigrant children to attend New York's public schools without fear of reprisal.

Ms. Ruiz announced that there is a people's march for education justice in support of public schools on Saturday in New York City. Another event is planned in Wyandanch. Ms. Nicoletti stated that we mention this because it is important to be aware of federal government and state mandates in support of public schools. She thanked everyone for coming to tonight's meeting and invited all to next month's work session on March 14, 2017.

12. Upon motion made by Kristin Ochtera, and seconded by Neil Schloth, and passed unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Vitina Fazi  
District Clerk