



THE EWING PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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For Immediate Release

The Ewing Public Schools BOE Board Briefs: April 24th, 2017

The Ewing Township Board of Education held its monthly meeting in the Fisher Middle School auditorium on Monday, April 24th.

EHS Liaison to the Board of Education, Caroline Unger, gave a report on events and developments at Ewing High School, including the strong starts of the golf and softball sports programs, the final Spirit Week of the school year, the Ring and Sing (April 24th), Murder Mystery Show (April 27th & 28th) and NHS Inductions (May 18th).

For his Superintendent's Report, Chief School Administrator Michael Nitti first introduced Fisher Middle School Principal Barb Brower, who provided an update on the school year at FMS. The FMS play, *The Little Mermaid, Jr.*, opens on May 4th. At the conclusion of her presentation, many Board members expressed their thanks and well wishes to Principal Brower, who is retiring after a long career as a Ewing educator at the end of the school year.

Mr. Nitti was then joined by School Business Administrator Dennis Nettleton, to conduct the Public Hearing on the final budget for the 2017-18 school year, and then Assistant Superintendent Dr. Danita Ishibashi to present on the district's Post-Secondary Preparedness Task Force's recommendations regarding final exams and class rank.

Superintendent Recommendations Overview:

Ewing Board of Education Approves 2017-2018 Final Budget

On April 24th, at the regular Board of Education Meeting held in Fisher Middle School's auditorium, after a brief review by Superintendent Michael Nitti and School Business Administrator Dennis Nettleton, the Board of Education conducted its Public Hearing on the 2017-18 school budget.

After the hearing and public comment, the final budget was approved by the Board of Education by a vote of 8-0. The spending plan will now go into effect on July 1st.

"It continues to be a challenging time to build a school budget," Nitti stated. "We have a 2% cap on revenues and costs increasing at a much greater percentage. So our goal in building this budget was to strive to maintain our staffing, keep all the programs that our community values and look for innovative ways to move our schools forward."

Programs maintained in the final budget include full-day kindergarten, middle and high school athletics, gifted and honors education, K-12 music and art, and after-school activities and programs. The final budget also has funds for staff professional development, curriculum design and to maintain favorable class size.

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The final budget for 2017-18 actually includes some interesting developments. Due to decreasing debt service, the budget contains a decrease in taxes for the Ewing community.

“The Board has done an excellent job of maintaining facilities and moving things forward without adding more debt,” Mr. Nettleton commented. “Over the past several years, we have enhanced our school security, added Wi-Fi throughout the district, and increased our instructional technology, but managed to do so without incurring debt.”

So although the preliminary budget reflects an increase in the general tax levy, as a result of diminished debt, there will be a net decrease of approximately \$123 in the tax bill on the average assessed home in the township.

With the budget now finalized, the Board and administration is moving forward with the planning process for a proposed referendum.

“With a 2% budgetary cap, it is very difficult for the Board and administration to take care of the facilities so that they are suitable for the next generation of Ewing students,” Board President Stephane Staub stated. “Due to sound planning and prudent management on the part of the Board, our debt will continue to diminish, so we are hoping to effectively plan for the future in a way that is very respectful to the community taxpayer. Our purpose in announcing our referendum plans at this time is to signify that we intend for the process to be as inclusive as possible. The Ewing community will certainly be hearing more about our referendum goals and ideas in coming months.”

All information pertaining to the 2017-18 budgets can be found on the district website www.ewing.k12.nj.us under the Board of Education tab (Ewing Board Docs/Library/General/Budget Docs/17-18 Budget Year).

Ewing BOE Approves Task Force’s Recommendations on Final Exams/Class Rank

At its April 24th meeting, the Board of Education approved recommendations from the district’s Post-Secondary Preparedness Task Force pertaining to final examinations and class rank.

The district had formed a task force earlier this school year of involved stakeholders with expertise and relevance to examine these issues.

Superintendent Mike Nitti chaired the committee, aided by Assistant Superintendent Dr. Danita Ishibashi, who oversees curriculum and instruction in her position.

“We wanted to make sure that our current policies and protocols represent the very best practices that are emblematic of modern education, and served the best interests of the students of the Ewing Schools,” Mr. Nitti commented.

The committee met monthly, conducting research and surveys, and submitted a report to the Board of Education that was accepted in March.

As a result of the Board’s actions, the weight of the final exams at Ewing High School, with regard to a student’s final grade, has been reduced from 20% to 10%.

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“We continue to emphasize the importance of the final exams with regard to being an authentic, valuable and meaningful assessment of student learning,” Dr. Ishibashi stated. “But the feeling of the majority of the committee was that too much weight and emphasis was being placed on one examination.”

With regard to class rank, it will still be kept and reported, however, effective with the incoming EHS Class of 2021, class rank will be reported on student transcripts not numerically (i.e. 131/297) but by decile percentage (i.e. 10%, 20%, 30%...).

Individual (numerical order) class rank will still be calculated and maintained and used to determine valedictorian, salutatorian and be available for scholarships and other honors.

Ewing BOE Adjusts School Calendar Due to Unused Weather Emergency Day

School Now Closed on Friday, May 26th

Each school year, in creating the school calendar, the Ewing Township Board of Education builds three “weather emergency days” into the calendar.

With May upon us, and the winter becoming a memory, there were only two cancellations of school due to inclement weather.

As a result, due to contractual provisions and requirements, and barring any unexpected closings, the Ewing Schools will now be closed on Friday, May 26th for students, teaching staff, and contractually-connected personnel.

The following policies and regulations were approved by the Board as “Second Readings” and are now formal Board policy:

P2460 Special Education (Revised) Mandated
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R2460.1 Special Education – Location, Identification, and Referral (Revised) Mandated
R2460.8 Free and Appropriate Education (Revised) Mandated
R2460.9 Special Education – Transition from Early Intervention Programs to Preschool Programs (Revised) Mandated
R2460.15 Special Education – In-service Training Needs for Professionals and Paraprofessional Staff (NEW) Mandated
P2467 Surrogate Parents and Foster Parents (Revised) Mandated
P7481 Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS also Known As Drone) (New)

Furthermore, the following policies and regulations were approved by the Board as “First Readings”. After review and approval by the Board at its next meeting in May, they will become formal Board policy:

P2320 Independent Study Programs (Mandated)
R2460.16 Special Education Instructional Material To Blind or Print-Disabled Students (Mandated)
P8330 Pupil Records (Mandated)
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P5116 Education of Homeless Children (Revised)

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R5116 Education of Homeless Children (Revised)

The next meeting of the Ewing Township Board of Education is on Monday, May 22nd, 2017 in the Ewing High School auditorium.

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