

**EAST STROUDSBURG AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD OF EDUCATION  
EDUCATION PROGRAMS & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING  
October 13, 2021  
VIA Zoom  
7:00 P.M.  
Minutes**

- I. The Chairperson,** Dr. Damary Bonilla, called the Education Programs & Resources Committee meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance. Secretary Jessica Barlotta called the roll.
- II. Board Committee Members Present:** Dr. Damary Bonilla, Rebecca Bear, Jason Gullstrand, Debbie Kulick
- III. School Personnel Present:** Stacey Brescancine, Jackie Doyle, Tabitha Bradley, Barbara Miller, Karin Hogan, Erin Dreisbach, Brad Fitzpatrick, Trenee Lurry, Jennifer Marmo, Jessica Barlotta, Heather Piperato, Gillian Turner, William Riker, William Vitulli
- IV. Community Members Present:** Richard Schlameuss, George Andrews, Lisa VanWhy, Heather Bennett, Steven Lurry, Tiffany Cofer, Cheri West, Jane Gagliardo, Tiffany Davis, John Gerhardt, Jennifer Floyd, Lauren Langdon, Angelica Morales, Tyne Cruz, Rodney Dennehy
- V. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES**

**RECOMMENDATION BY THE COMMITTEE:**

Motion was made by Rebecca Bear to approve the agenda for October 13, 2021 and with members of the Committee reserving the right to add to the agenda and take further action in the best interest of the District. Motion was seconded by Debbie Kulick and carried unanimously, 4-0.

**RECOMMENDATION BY THE COMMITTEE:**

Motion was made by Debbie Kulick to approve the minutes of the September 8, 2021 meeting. Motion was seconded by Jason Gullstrand and carried unanimously, 4-0.

**VI. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:**

**a. Equity for School Boards - Dr. Heather N. Bennett, PSBA**

Dr. Damary Bonilla explained that she is connected to Dr. Bennett through the PDA equity Task Force. Dr. Bonilla thanked her for the work that she's leading and mentioned she is hoping that Dr. Bennett will go to neighboring school districts and continue to talk about equity and the importance of equity. PSBA, PDE, NSBA, and other organizations are all focusing on educational equity. Dr. Heather Bennett is the director of equity services at the Pennsylvania School Board Association. In this role, she assists public school boards and districts with equity focused tools, programming, and research. Dr. Bennett received her PhD in educational leadership at Penn State University. And previously taught high school social studies in Fulton County, Georgia. She also earned her juris doctor from Penn State Dickinson School of Law and is licensed to practice law in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Dr. Bonilla pointed out that she is honored that Dr. Bennett is doing this work for the Commonwealth and that she is partnering with school districts and supporting the work the district is doing on a day to day with the students.

Dr. Heather Bennett thanked the committee and went on to have a conversation about what equity is, as well as talk about some of the resources that they have at PSBA. She presented a slide show explaining her role as Director of Equity Services for the Pennsylvania School Board Association. She works with almost 500 school districts on moving equity forward. Every district is very different, the contexts are different, even if the issues can be very similar. It is all about what does the district need where they added this work and how do they create a program and process to move them forward and move people along the way. That is Dr. Bennett's job. The Pennsylvania School Board Association's mission is to provide school board directors with services, supports, and Council as they navigate relationships, lead their districts, and promote public education across Pennsylvania. They work with almost 500 school districts in Pennsylvania. They work with about 4500 school board directors, as well as with superintendents, solicitors, intermediate units, board secretaries, CTC's, and various other public school entities as well and in variety of different spaces. They have a government affairs space, communications, education and training, and policy services. Their goal is to really support our boards and the district level education stakeholders, to ultimately support the needs of students. She goes on to remind everyone that school experiences really shape a child and they are moving towards the thinking that school is really about feeling like they belong. Research says that if a student feels like they belong, they will perform. If they do not feel like they belong, it's going to be a struggle so how do they create an environment as welcoming to our all of the students, no matter who they are. No matter who they are, where they come from, they are welcomed here in this school district. The Board goes on to answer their favorite teachers in school. Dr. Bonilla's was her third grade teacher. Rebecca Bear's was Miss. Brooks in fifth grade because she loved shoes as much as Ms. Bear did. Jason Gullstrand's was his high school history teacher. Deborah Kulick's was Mrs. Walton in high school and a fifth grade teacher who had chickens in the classroom. Trenee Lurry said her favorite teacher was Mrs. Oliver who was her kindergarten teacher and was a woman of color and was the first person that she saw that was doing what Ms. Lurry wanted to do at the time.

PSBA has defined equity as the just and fair distribution of resources based upon each individual student's needs. Equitable resources include funding, programs, policies, initiatives, and supports that target each student's unique background and school context to guarantee that all students have equal access to high quality education. This equity definition is thinking about all the districts in the area, but they always ask districts to think about their local context and defining equity for themselves, because the local data is going to show what the needs are, what are the concerns, what are the language that's going to be needed to move the needs of the students forward. When Ms. Bennett thinks about equity as a whole, just even giving students more of certain or less of certain things is not what it is. Sometimes students are going to need something outside and different than what a district has or what they think that they should or shouldn't need. It is important that we're meeting the context of that student. Ms. Bennett shows a slide and asks someone to please tell her the comparison of what they see in the reality piece on the screen. Deborah Kulick and Gillian Turner gave their explanations of the slide. Dr. Bennett goes on to say that the assumption is that equity is to get to equality, but there are generations and histories of people not receiving access to opportunities. Our student's experiences have never been equal. Their experiences have been where some kids are in families that are getting a lot of options and a lot of privileges, while we have students who are also existing underground and are experiencing so many barriers to opportunity that we don't even notice what they're going through. They are also talking about issues of trauma and mental health, access to healthcare, access to food and services, and discrimination and being beat down every day. All because of the way they look, the way they are, their gender: A lot of different aspects. It's extremely important that, when talking about equity work, that the reality and why the work is so hard, is because we do not see other people's experiences. We only see our own, and so what we do is we go through the world, and some of us have a lot of boxes and will never look down and see that other people are experiencing different things. To get to equity, we need to be really, really focused in on what are the barriers that students are having to overcome every single day within our classrooms, as well as outside our classrooms. In order for us to get what they need to fully access the opportunity. It's really important

to think about the characteristics of equity. Are we inclusive? Are we making sure that our students and families are part of the decision making process? Are we listening to students in general? Are our parents, specifically new parents in the district, being a part of the overarching narrative and the process in the task force and committees in our districts? Who aren't we hearing from and who do we hear from all the time? It's not saying we need to diminish other people's voices, but what is being said is we need to add to the voices, so that we can really address and think about what people need. Then it's fairness, giving people what they need to fully accept the opportunity. They can't get the fairness until you get to inclusion. If we're inclusive, we're hearing what people need in their experiences in our district and in our communities. To promote public education, we have to support our students. Public education is here to serve which is done through equity and ensuring we are removing the barriers that students face. We must think about changing demographics. When thinking about changing demographics, you can take your own district, how has that shifted and changed over time. A third of our students are of color now. There are more and more students who are English language learners or whose parents' first language is not English. More students are identifying as non-binary. Students that are coming in with different learning abilities. Family structures are shifting and changing. Poverty rates are changing. Employment numbers are changing. Along with COVID, we now have to think about access to technology, access to housing, and access to food services. Students are changing and they require different things and therefore equity is providing students what they need not what we think they need in order for them to fully access the educational system.

Next is looking at data for achievement and opportunity gaps. We focus primarily on achievement gaps. If we're looking at our numbers: early childhood education, school segregation, transportation, technology, access to rigorous coursework, students who are overly identified in terms of special education or school discipline, students who are getting access to certain curriculum over others; opportunity gaps are what leads to the achievement gaps that are seen in the districts.

The equity data is showing that students are not getting access to opportunities the same as other students are, depending on geographic location and race. Finally, in terms of the why equity, we need to think about the legislators' shifts. She presented a slide for the Every Student Succeeds Act, which is to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable and high quality education and to close educational achievement gaps.

The next point here is the role of board. The board plays a huge role in the equity movement. Dr. Bennett then goes over all the things the Board does and how they can do those items through the lens of equity. She circled back to our School District mission then continued on with the PSBA mission. The work that they primarily do at PSBA is how is equity implemented in the district. Internal work to identify the inclusion versus exclusion is useful, but if changes are not made in the external systems that are governing the work with the students and really dealing with the bears they have to overcome such as professional development, the curriculum, the budgets, the data, the tools, and research then we're not going to move this work forward whatsoever. At the same time, if work is only being done externally, but there is no effort to build capacity internally into the district, then the external work will be a fight all the time. There must be a combination of internal and external work at the same.

The job of Dr. Bennett and PSBA is to support districts and boards to think about the internal and external work. That's where they think about how they build a program and a practice towards equity. She then introduced slides that show the services her organization offers. They started around four and a half years ago and were the first school board association in the country to have an equity director position. They have a PSBA equity toolkit, a webinar and podcast series, and an equity policy management service. The management service is to help districts review their policies from an equity lens as well as develop and educational equity policy. They also have a model for trauma and foreign policy as well. They do presentations and workshops for equity committees. They will be having their fourth annual equity summit this year and they are going to highlight a student from our school district. When they started the

work, they started off with an equity statement. Their definition of equity is just part of a whole collective understanding of the difference between achievement, opportunity gaps, what does equity require of board directors and what do they mean when they achieve it. A lot of districts stopped their equity work during Covid-19 and did connect the equity work with Covid and feeding children, making sure they're getting access to digital supports and resources, housing, healthcare, and trauma mental health curriculum. They are all equity issues that had to be dealt with. The job of equity has to be shared and so they have some guidance for districts. PSBA offers an Equity System Continuum to help Districts and schools identify where they are. It starts with equity as a misunderstanding, moves into equity as a topic, then equity as a recommendation, and finally, equity becomes the foundation.

Equity as the foundation frames every aspect of the educational system such as curriculum, instruction, professional development, family and community engagement, and school climate. School leaders in the stage approach every decision, practice, and policy with an equity lens. Districts of other school entities incorporate equity into the school structure through action plans and policies that set a cohesive direction for the district that holds them accountable.

Equity is systematic, it is a paradigm shift. It is a set of frameworks in systems and questions that are going to make sure that we are meeting the needs of students and that we are addressing what they need to overcome. The equity lens approach is a set of five questions meant to be a continuous loop meant to think about every aspect of the decision making process. It starts with 'What is the decision' then 'what does the data say', 'do we see disparities in the data' and if we do, 'why do they exist and who is missing in the discussion to address the disparities'. And finally, 'how will we mitigate the disparities?' Then there is an equity action plan as well. This consists of eight different steps and this works as a part of their equity toolkit which will be provided to our district. Are we including and affirming the voices of students, families, and communities? Are we understanding the data of the demographics, that are going on in our districts and are we analyzing the data? Are we defining equity, for our district and community? Are we embedding equity training into all levels of professional development? Are we pursuing and practicing cultural awareness and proficiency? Are we evaluating our existing policies and practices with an equity lens? Are we developing a strategy and really thinking about policies to incorporate equity to district structure?

PSBA also offers webinars and podcast series on a whole lot of topics ranging from immigration policy to digital learning. They also have a policy management service, a template on developing an educational equity policy, and how to use and develop your own educational equity. The template is supposed districts to have the language for equity, but it cannot articulate what a district is going to actually need for the district so there is a lot of work to do to get ready for a policy.

PSBA also offers a level set of workshops that start off with what is equity and why is it important. Then they address understanding and dismantling barriers to equity. They walk people through this because there is a lot of misunderstanding and fear in this work, so they want to make sure that people are getting a full understanding of what it is and why, before they get into a deeper level. Then they have how to utilize and leverage the equity toolkit. And for districts that are interested in a policy, they have a workshop on that.

Dr. Bennett proceeded to invite everyone to their fourth annual Equity Summit on October 25. They have grown over the years and work with districts across the state. They have an equity Task Force advisory committee that helps support a lot of the initiatives that they have in place. They helped develop the policy that they have in play, as well the guidance on equity focus positions. She then went on to thank the board for giving her the time.

Dr. Bonilla thanked Dr. Bennett. She said she found herself at the edge of her seat nodding a lot and just feeling really refreshed about our district being in a good space about some of the things Dr. Bennett talked about, knowing that we have either done or moving to do or reworking what Dr. Bennett talked about. We always talk about equity here as a continuum, you have not arrived, you will not arrive. Dr.

Bonilla appreciates Dr. Bennett giving a foundation for individuals who may not do this work day to day, but also validating for our board, our staff, our administration, our teachers that are on, and the Community who is watching; where we are, some of the areas that we can move to, what this work looks like, and while we've been talking about DEI in this committee monthly for a while, but we want to continue that and we want to go deeper to ensure that the right conversations are happening. Dr. Bonilla invited Dr. Bennett to stay for the DEI update once the Education Committee members asked their questions about Dr. Bennett's presentation. She opened it up to Rebecca Bear first.

Rebecca Bear went on to say she is very excited to go the equity summit. She signed up and is taking PTO time from work. She thought Dr. Bennett's presentation was really good and some of the things she said kind of made Rebecca chuckle, because one thing Dr. Bennett said is that everyone is special, and that's actually something Rebecca told her kids since they were little. She laughed because when she went to her son's open house in first grade, she told him there's a lot of special needs kids in his school. He looked at Rebecca, put his hands on his hips, and told her that she always told him they are all special and those kids just need more help than her son does. From that, she realized she said something wrong, so her son actually corrected her because of what she told him when he was little. She realized everyone is special and our differences are what makes us special and you need to embrace them, because if we're all the same, life would be boring. Her son actually took it to heart when he was little and her kids to this day, still believe that. The work of equity is very, very important to Rebecca, because she sees that they all need different things and that's what equity is to her; giving each student what they need and embracing the differences and helping them grow.

Dr. Bonilla said that they are excited about the summit and are planning where they are going to watch it together, and who is going to provide lunch. She called on Jason to go next.

Jason spoke but was having significant connectivity issues and was very hard to understand. Dr. Bonilla thanked Jason and moved to Debbie Kulick.

Debbie thanked Dr. Bennett and mentioned that it will be very helpful to know that there are resources that can supplement what they are doing. She went on to say that she is happy that there are resources that can be drawn upon because they will be giving the same message and it won't be changed and delivered in different ways, so at least the base is the right message which we can then craft things around what our needs are in our Community will be a little bit easier because we start with a base that is something that is already fitting. She appreciates the work that's been done.

Dr. Bonilla opened it up other members of the Board of Education, as there were several on the call. George Andrews said it was a great presentation and while he was not signed up for the summit, he was going to sign up for it. Dr. Bonilla invited Richard Schlameuss to add a question or comment. He went on to say that he wanted to thank them for all the committee's work and for Dr. Bennett being with the Committee for the meeting, and to continue the good work.

Dr. Bonilla thanked Richard Schlameuss. Dr. Bennett went on to explain that she has noticed that there's a question about resource and access and can she provide access to the resources presented. She said she would provide a lot of the context from the presentation, including the equity statement, aspects of the presentation, and the equity toolkit so everyone on the committee has access to those things. If the committee wants anything specific or has a question specifically about some type of content or an issue in our district as well, she can therefore provide more resources based upon those topics.

Dr. Bonilla went on to say that Richard is our Board President and she was happy he was able to join the conversation. She asked Lisa VanWhy if she had anything to add. Lisa went on to say she just wanted to echo Richard Schlameuss' sentiments. Dr. Bonilla then opened it up to members of the administration.

Dr. Riker thanked Dr. Bennett. He told her she always gives him much to think about and Dr. Riker always takes pages of notes, because he thinks it's important to not only hear what she is saying, but to be

reflective on the things she is saying and there's a lot of heavy lifting, there's a lot of information, in just the short time she spent with the in the evening, and he wanted to mention two of the things that stood out to him. He really liked that we remember our school experiences, and how important it is for us as educators, to remember what it was like to be a child and to be in school and to know that the world was ours to really get what we can out of it and ensure that our schools, of course, in our practices and our systems give that opportunity to every student in our schools. He also liked the comment about the work is hard, because we do not see other people's experiences. Dr. Riker really found that to be critical, because we look at people on the outside, but we really need to take the time to understand what's on the inside and a lot of great things to think about. He went on to say he is proud to be the superintendent at East Stroudsburg and he is proud to serve in this capacity to help do this work and it is hard work. He is also proud of the board members that were on the call that evening, because he knows they support this work for our district, our community, and our students. He wanted to publicly thank them as well, for their presence, but especially wanted to thank Dr. Bennett because he has listened to her a number of times and he will be at the equity summit and will probably take many more pages of notes.

Dr. Vitulli wanted to echo the things that have been said already and thanked Dr. Bennett for coming. He also wanted to say her passion and her knowledge comes through and it makes the whole topic so contagious. He went on to say Dr. Bennett's delivery is amazing, and her messages are so good. He also wanted to say that he took some comfort, as she was going through various parts of the presentation and I think the things that our district is already putting in place and much to the result of many people on this this zoom, the work that these people have done already, to get us moving in the right direction, so he thinks we have great start and he is just very proud to be a part of a district that's going the direction we're going and working as hard as we are.

Dr. Bonilla opened the discussion to any other staff. Trenee Lurry went on to say how she enjoyed the presentation and she is excited to see the outcome from all the work that is being done around equity. Dr. Bonilla opened it up to one more question or comment. Gillian Turner asked about the slide Dr. Bennett used with her likes and dislikes as a child, she wanted to know if it was something Dr. Bennett came up with or if she was asked it by a teacher. Dr. Bennett responded that she did it for the purpose of the presentation but she came up with it from seeing her likes and dislikes in her fourth grade yearbook. Gillian Turner responded that she likes feedback from her high school kids and just recently did an exercise with her students where she let them grade themselves because they tend to be harder on themselves than she would be. She discussed how she likes to reflect on how successful or not successful she is so that she can teach her students to do the same. Dr. Bennett commented on how she experienced a class on trauma and they asked 'how do you feel about that?'. The idea of unpacking how people feel and finding out what the kids need shifted her mindset. Dr. Bonilla thanked Dr. Bennett for the conversation and went on to say how it expressed the sentiments that they are grateful to have her as part of the conversation and how they want to continue to work more closely with her. She also offered Dr. Bennett to stay for the DEI Update that they moved up on the agenda.

## **b. DEI Update - Trenee Lurry**

Trenee started by saying how nice it was to follow something so exciting and she thanked the committee for moving her up. The DEI team are doing some great work, as they have talked about. There is admin training that's taking place with the central administration and the administration throughout the district. She's excited about the PSBA conference, because they have Santos Rojas, who is a student in the district who she is excited to hear speak about his experiences in diversity, equity and inclusion. There was also a conference that was held by the IU on social emotional learning where Ms. Lurry presented. It was about how the 'why' needs to resonate with us in regards to the work, and it has to keep you grounded and it has to be foundational because if you don't have the then it's going to be when things get really tough and really rough. She went on to say that you have to have something that keeps you connected to why you're doing what you're doing so in leading into that she has some speakers, herself included, who are going to

speaking about their why, including why do they do this work, why are they excited about the work, what brought them to this place to want to be a part of what they're doing in this district. Trenee said she would begin and would then move to Gillian Turner to speak, followed by Erin Dreisbach. Trenee Lurry went on to say her why was solidified by her worldview. She was always a minority and knows what it feels like firsthand to be perceived in a certain manner because of an expectation of an individual housing ignorance not due to malicious intent but just to a lack of experience with others, different from themselves. She saw what an open door of education and knowledge can bring to dark places, so she knew that the work was for her, as children deserve better. The door of opportunity is open to be better, and let us walk through the door to be better together. Trenee then handed the meeting over to Gillian.

Gillian went on to say that she volunteered to teach in Philadelphia and that is where she learned about equity. She grew up in poverty but survived because people assumed she could make it so she did. She participates in DEI because she wants to see it succeed. She has taught and lived in the community for 15 years, with all her kids graduating from the district. She has created space for students to use their voices and share their experiences. She is part of DEI because she has heard many students voice their concerns within aspects of content and curriculum. Students spend 7 hours in the buildings, and the majority of that time is endured with feeling disconnected, misrepresented, underrepresented, and that breeds anger, disillusionment and depression and anxiety. She is volunteering her time to be an advocate for student voice and inclusion of all students' personal life experiences through the content and the curriculum.

Trenee next welcomed Erin Dreisbach. Erin went on to say that she supports diversity, equity, and inclusion in the East Stroudsburg Area School District, because she believes every student has the right to feel safe, heard, connected, and supported in school. She feels DEI is not only essential for the school learning experience, but also for fostering awareness, understanding and empathy in and for students. Trenee Lurry thanked the speakers and added that she hopes that hearing the 'why's' from the people who are part of the work will help everyone gain a better understanding of why the work is necessary.

Dr. Bonilla thanked Ms. Lurry. She said that it is hard work, but hearing the 'why' from individuals who are on the front lines with the students in terms of providing the social emotional support that they need, in terms of listening to them, in terms of just ensuring that you hold our feet to the fire as the school board directors, as the administration. It makes her proud to be part of the district. That is why she wanted Dr. Bennett to stay on. Last month, they had a couple of members from the DEI Committee who shared without being asked and they want to continue that so they have invited anybody who is part of it to come and share their why and they are also going to post it on the website and they will also be linking it because they have referred to the PSBA resources, as well as NSPA and PDE, so they will be linking all of those websites to the district website in a new DEI section they've created to ensure that the community has access to the resources and the information that they refer to and are able to stay connected to the work. She thanked Dr. Bennett again and wished her a good night. She also told her we will be calling, and thanked everyone who engaged, who shared, and who asked questions. She said it was a great start to the meeting which is not over. She then handed the meeting back to Dr. Vitulli to cover the remainder of the items.

### **c. One District One Book - Dr. Bradley**

Dr. Vitulli thanked Dr. Bonilla and then went on to hand it over to Dr. Bradley. Dr. Bradley thanked Dr. Bonilla for giving the opportunity to provide an update on the one district, one book. She went on to introduce the reading team: Mrs. Miller, Ms. Doyle, Ms. Brescancine, and Miss. Hogan to give an update on the launch of the one district, one book. Barbara Miller went on to provide background for the program. She said several years ago, she attended the improving schools conference in Pittsburgh, and that was where they were first exposed to the program which was called one school one book but we are using it as one district one book. She was very impressed with the speakers and how they presented it at their schools, so she brought it back to the district, and they did it in some of their schools, a few times. In

some of the schools, this will be the first time that they will be doing it and because of everything that's been going on for the past year and a half they decided that this time we would launch it as a district and all be reading the same book as a district. Dr. Bradley was kind enough to allow them to get a team together to work on it which they started on in the summer. They have some posters that will be going up in local businesses. They are planning to launch it at the beginning of November. She then turned it over to Ms. Doyle.

Ms. Doyle thanked everyone and went on to say many of the school districts or the buildings have done the one school one book program, where one school is reading the same book and it's given to everyone who is a part of that school including students, teachers, staff, custodians, lunch ladies, lunch monitors, and bus drivers. With the pandemic insight, they have tried to reach the entire community, so they have changed one school one book to one district one book. At the end of last school year or the middle of last school year, each school was asked to choose a book. Those books were posted on class dojo and blackboard and Google forms were sent out to the families. They voted on a book that they would like to read together and when the voting was complete, they came up with the selection for the district. One district one book is essentially a family literacy program that creates a district wide book club for everyone. Students, families, teachers, support staff, and community members read the same book at the same time. Even the bus drivers have been reading chapters on the bus. Students will read while they're waiting to be let into the building and the school and community will be saturated with literacy. This creates a common thread across the buildings and across the community to build those literacy ties. For the program, they first chose a book. This year it will be The One and Only Ivan. They have worked with Erin Ilch, who's an art teacher at JM Hill, to create a poster to promote the program and those posters will be posted in buildings at different Community venues throughout East Stroudsburg. The book is a number one New York Times bestseller and a Newbery award winning book. It's now a major a major motion picture, which is exclusively streaming on Disney. It is inspired by a true story of a captive gorilla known as Ivan and this illustrated book is told, from the point of view of Ivan himself. The second step is to have a school-wide assembly about one district one book. On Wednesday, October 27, each elementary building will be holding a smaller building-wide assembly to present one district, one book to the children, the teachers, and the staff. The third step is to distribute the books, literature packets, and reading schedules to families, on that same day, October 27. They are going to be sending materials home. In their building, they've already been counted out and ready to go. They just have to run off some of the paperwork that goes along with it to start their event. She then goes on to show a calendar that has been created by their committee which has mapped out the whole month of November; assigning pages to read each night. The idea is to read about 15 minutes a night as a family. On a couple of the Tuesdays, there are some trivia questions that will be sent home for students to answer and hand back in. The next slide is an example of one of the trivia slips that they have provided. The students are given the pages and where they can find the answers. They then return them to school and turn them in. They then have the chance to win a prize which would be a book of their choice. They have all the page's color coded by grade levels and are including IU classes and everyone who is a part of the population and within our buildings. There will be a letter accompanying the two documents going home to explain in detail to the families what is happening. Step four is to read. Daily announcements will occur each morning in our buildings asking a different trivia question for students to work on, because some of the teachers know that those students aren't reading those stories at home at night, so they might read to them the following day, so they're up to date and that way they can answer a trivia question in school. Afternoon announcements will provide the answer to the trivia question for the daily trivia in school and students will be reminded of what is to be read the night coming up at home with their families. Step five is to celebrate! Each week, the students who submit their trivia slips will be put in a drawing to win a book of their choice. Each building has a selection of scholastic books that have been ordered for us by Mrs. Byrne. They're already been delivered to our buildings. At the end of our one district one book event, we will have a celebration. We will also have prizes to be raffled off and per building: we have stuffed animals that match the characters from the books, we've also been allowed to order art supplies because



Ivan is an artist, and copies of another Catherine Applegate novel. The big prize each building has been given is a family membership to the Lehigh Valley Zoo to raffle off as well. She went on to thank the committee for their support in their endeavor and they are still working as a committee to work out the logistics of a district-wide culminating event. They are looking for some Community Member involvement as well. Perhaps the reading of a chapter of the book to be recorded for students who may not have a parent or caregiver to read with them. They are also looking for some of the school board members or administrators and other staff to become involved with it too. They have developed a partnership with the Snake and Animal Farm who will be providing virtual tours for the district to be able to include those who would like to use technology as part of their involvement. They have also discussed hosting a fundraiser to raise some money to save some endangered animals. Ms. Doyle also added that she knows the gifted teacher has in the past done service learning projects with gifted students, which they thought might be a nice way to involve them. Next, she posed the question of why family literacy? The answer is because students are going to experience gains in reading comprehension, vocabulary, and phonemic awareness. They'll perform better academically, they'll want to attend school regularly, and are more likely to finish high school. They want them to gain and improve social skills, self-esteem, and attitude towards learning, increase general knowledge, score better on intelligence tests, and experience improved mental and physical health. She then went over a slide with the reasons that they want to do one district one book. Read to them, which is the company that provides the district with a lot of the materials based out of Virginia, wants to help create lifelong readers. Schools covet parent involvement and they know that's more important than ever for them to have parents involved. They need all the help they can get to encourage reading and reading aloud makes better readers. One district one book is different from other reading programs, in that it encompasses everyone and the Community. Literature opens minds and family literacy promotes healthy family habits. They're getting families to do something that is not in front of a screen. They're getting them to interact and talk about things together. Her last slide was a thanks to Dr. Bradley, Angela Byrne, Erin Ilch, Laura Munch, the other members of the elementary reading department, the East Stroudsburg Area Administration and School Board, Read to Them for providing the, with many of the materials, and a special thanks to all of the members of the one district one book committee.

Dr. Bonilla opened comments or questions for the committee. She also thanked Ms. Doyle for the presentation. She went on to say she was very excited for the project because they have participated in one school one book and it's always a fun project. She loves the idea of engaging even the broader community at a time when so many things are still uncertain and up in the air. She's really excited about the project, and she also appreciates the opportunity to engage individuals in the reading, considering family dynamics, as they talk about DEI, just keeping that as part of the consideration. She loves seeing that woven throughout the decisions and the processes. She went on to ask if there were any committee members with a question or a comment.

Rebecca Bear went on to say that she loved participating when they did Humphrey at Resica. She enjoyed reading the book and they will still read the book at home. She would be delighted to participate as a board member in any way she could help, so please let her know. She thinks it is a wonderful thing that we're including all the schools in this on the elementary level, and ESACA, so she thinks everybody can read it so everybody can take part. If schools haven't or anybody on hasn't participated as a parent of an elementary school student, it's wonderful to see them excited to read, excited to answer the questions, so she's glad that we're doing it.

Dr. Bonilla thanked Rebecca and went on to ask if Jason or Debbie had anything to add. Jason thanked everyone and went on to add that it's often misunderstood that programs just exist and just happened. People do not understand all the work that goes into putting those programs in place. Seeing all the work that he has seen over the last few months, putting programs, especially this one and getting everybody to volunteer their time and work, really shows that the school community as a whole district this year. It is a

tremendous amount of work, from his perspective, very much appreciated by the rest of the committee. He wished more Community Members can see the inner workings of how a district funds from inside. It's often overlooked so definitely. Dr. Bonilla handed the floor over to Debbie Kulick. Debbie said it was a great story. George Andrews said he would like to get involved to help with the program. Richard Schlameuss said he would be glad to read. Dr. Bonilla opened it up to any other comments from the members.

Gillian Turner wanted to add that as someone who works at the high school with all levels of kids, the applied levels of students love to read aloud. They love it and they're so animated. She went on to say that she would like to collaborate, and get some of the applied kids involved because, in talking about equity, no one usually thinks of the lower level classes when they are always thinking of the gifted and AP kids. But the lower level classes really do love to read and for bridging equity here and inclusion if we have kids reading in the elementary school, that they might see a kid that looks like them, with the same kind of struggles. It is a pool of students that are being missed that would be willing to help and really talented and helpful.

Rebecca Bear suggested having the applied kids read to the ESACA kids virtually while they are in class. She said to organize something where the applied students could read virtually. Dr. Bonilla said that she thinks it's a great idea and suggested they coordinate with Dr. Bradley to see what makes sense within the schedules and how to incorporate them. She went on to say that she knows Rebecca has talked about before: ensuring that we don't just include the gifted students but all students. She knows that even in our homes, we have some students that are academically stronger and some that are not, but when you put them to task they deliver. She definitely wants to think about how do we engage our students and thanked Gillian for thinking about those students and thanked Rebecca for her idea, then she handed the meeting back to Dr. Vitulli.

#### **d. Recent teacher hires / Classroom sizes**

William Vitulli went on to introduce the next topic, which he discussed himself which was around the recent teacher hiring. He warned that he did not want to get too deep into it, but he knows that the district has experienced some larger class sizes, as they got a very late rush of enrollments, especially to the elementary schools, of which they did not necessarily have all the people in place at the time, as the students were coming in. He went on to say he did want to make note that in the last several weeks they hired three kindergarten teachers, one second grade teacher, one third grade teacher, one fourth grade teacher, and one fifth grade teacher: all in an effort to reduce class sizes, spread children out, and make sure that everyone gets the best education possible. He then opened it up for questions.

Rebecca Bear went on to say she had a comment. She knows a lot of the public has been saying that teachers were let go and she asked Dr. Vitulli to clarify the difference between a tenured teacher and a teacher that's not tenured and why some of those teachers didn't come back and then they were actually brought back, just to clarify, for the public.

Dr. Vitulli handed it over to Dr. Riker because he has a better understanding regarding non-tenured teachers.

Dr. Riker thanked Dr. Vitulli and went on to say that teachers that are considered temporary professional employees are non-tenured teachers that typically have less than three years or less of service in a district. The difference with a tenured teacher is when the board would elect to reduce the number of staff that would include a tenured teacher, it is considered a furlough and there's all different rules and laws and regulations that need to be applied to a tenured teacher that's furloughed. A temporary professional employee has not reached the level of getting tenure and, as a result, there are no rules that apply in terms of when and if a board would choose to reduce the number of staff needed. There's really a two-pronged

process; there's the tenured teacher furlough process that boards engage in when they are reducing a staff member that has tenure, and then there are those staff members that would be temporary professional employees that have not yet reached tenure that are permitted to be reduced without the furlough process. A furloughed teacher is put on a call-back list and is offered when a position becomes available, they would be offered the position for which they are certified. A non-tenured teacher is not placed on a call backlist but they could and would have the opportunity to apply for a position that is posted and available for which they are certified.

Rebecca Bear asked the following: each year we review how many students, we have enrolled to determine how many temporary teachers, we bring back, correct?

Dr. Riker went on to say that obviously staffing is always dependent on student's enrollment and so when we look at student enrollment throughout the school year and throughout the summer, staffing decisions are based on that projected enrollment and as Dr. Vitulli indicated, this year between July 1 and the second or third week of school, the district had over 1800 appointments in the registration office for student enrollment. As the board, they actually took an approach this past summer where they sent postcards out to every mailbox in the district trying to get ahead so they would have a better idea of how many students were going to be enrolled in our schools and our different grades, so that the district would have the appropriate amount of staffing. The staffing is based on the numbers and as the numbers increased, the district obviously then needed to increase the staff and with the board's approval, that is exactly what was done. Rebecca Bear thanked him for clarifying because there has been a lot of questions and concerns going around and she wanted to make sure everybody understood how it worked.

Dr. Vitulli went on to say that all the tenured teachers who wanted to return have been given that opportunity and have joined the district.

#### **e. Pays Survey - Erin Dreisbach**

Dr. Vitulli turned the meeting over to Erin Dreisbach. She introduced her discussion regarding the Pays Survey. It is the Pennsylvania Youth Survey PAYs Survey for short. This survey is conducted by the PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency, the PA department of Drug and Alcohol programs, and the Pennsylvania Department of Education. This survey is conducted every other year during the fall of odd numbered years. It is given to students in six 810 and 12 grades, it is offered at no charge the district, and we have participated in pays in 2015 2017 and 2019 we will be participating again this year this month. This is a primary tool and Pennsylvania's prevention approach of really utilizing data to drive decision making, so this allows schools and communities to address concerns rather than only looking at symptoms after the fact, so they are looking at lack of commitment to school, instead of work rates. Questions are asked, in four domains, and that is within the Community, the school, the family, and the individual student. This helps determine where there are strengths in the Community, and this also helps determine where potential problems may exist outside of the school that can really have an impact on the student's readiness to learn. This can include anything from food, security, housing, instability, loss of a close family member or friend. These surveys also make sure that anything that may be being dishonest or exaggerated are removed to retain validity, so there are five different validity checks. She went on to show a slides that gave some data from 2017 and 2019 PAYs surveys which showed students who had reported to have consumed alcohol within the past 30 days. The next slide showed data where students have reported using marijuana within the past 30 days. Another one with students who had reported feeling depressed or sad most days in the past 12 months. Next she showed data of students who reported feeling so sad that they stopped doing usual activities in the past 12 months. There are a ton of questions and Erin just picked a few for example, but one of the things that can be done with this data is to assess services and how they can better serve and assist the students and resources and different services. She then opened it up for questions.

Dr. Bonilla asked Erin to highlight if there are demographic breakdowns of the data in the survey. Erin said there are; it goes by gender, race, and there are many ways that they do break it down. The data is utilized within the counties as well.

Dr. Bonilla opened it up to Members of the Committee. Rebecca Bear asked if we make sure that each student understands the directions and understands the questions, knows what they are being asked because of auditory processing issues or language barriers? Are there ways to ensure we are giving equity to all of our students to make sure that they're understanding what they're doing and the purpose for it, so that they will answer honestly?

Erin responded that we do have the Drug and Alcohol Commission who is putting together a small video to present to the students to explain why is so important to be truthful with answers and staff are given proctored letters and what to read to the students, so that they have an understanding of how to use the survey. There is also a Spanish survey in case the first language is Spanish.

Heather Piperato added that they have validity and reliability checks in this survey, so that they don't just ask these questions once. They ask the same question different ways, multiple times, and so, if a student contradicts themselves in that, they throw that question out for that student, so they have many ways built in to make sure that they're having accurate responses from students and that students aren't just going and answering to get it over with. They survey has been going on for quite some time in Pennsylvania, although our district has only been using it for 6-7 years. They really have some extremely good validity and reliability measures incorporated within the test.

Rebecca Bear went on to say she wanted to make sure that if a student's reading level isn't where it should be, or a comprehension level isn't there, it would be to understand the questions and there is someone there that can help them to ensure we are getting reliable answers. That would also ensure the test is representing everybody, not just those that can answer on their own.

Dr. Bonilla thanked Rebecca and asked for anymore comments or questions. Jason Gullstrand cut in and out but Dr. Bonilla summarized to say that he was asking about the demographic data and if the district and Erin's team had access to the responses. Dr. Bonilla responded that they can have the team present to the committee and talk through some of the implications and considerations. They have done some of that before and it's really interesting. Dr. Bonilla does not like the raw data. She does not want to look at all of those details. She wants to know what are we thinking about, where do we see the needs, where are we able to make some adaptations as needed based on what they see there and using the information. They can definitely invite the team when they're ready to come and present to the committee. There were no other questions on the topic.

#### **f. Transportation Update - Dr. Riker**

Dr. Vitulli introduced Dr. Riker for the transportation update. Our district, as well as many districts across the Commonwealth and across the nation, are having trouble finding individuals who are interested in driving school buses. On the day of the meeting, Dr. Riker attended a meeting with IU 20 and other superintendents from the region and was informed that the Department of Education has reached out and sent a survey to any person who holds a CDL license in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to solicit their interest in driving school buses. As they receive that information, the Executive Director at the IU, Chris Wolfel, is going to be the conduit between the State and any individuals that may express an interest in our county where our schools are located so that we can hopefully get those individuals to express an interest directly with the school district. The Board approved, at last month's meeting, an increase in the bus driver substitute rate to \$25 an hour. The important piece in trying to drum up interest and driving school buses is the flexibility that comes along with it. By that, he means folks may be interested in only driving in the morning, mid-day, or afternoon or perhaps only for athletic teams or field trips, so it doesn't

require a full day commitment. Even for those folks that would be interested in and just doing one of those types of time slots during the school day, so that we wouldn't need someone to be committed to a full, six, seven or eight-hour day, which is what our current employees that drive buses are. They are either, six, seven or eight hour employees. But Dr. Riker thinks it is important for folks to know that they have that flexibility. He also thinks it's important that they recognize that the training is done at the school through the transportation department, and it is completely free, so there is no cost to the individual who would like to obtain their CDs. It is a process and probably takes no less than 28 days for that process to go from first day of training to final testing from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation to issue the CDL license. They are excited and put some yard signs out and have some flyers that they made available to try to gather interest from those who want to obtain a permanent position as a bus driver in the district, as well as someone who would be interested in being a substitute bus driver within the district. He was also happy to announce that the week prior, they recognized 36 of the drivers that had perfect attendance during the month of September. They also had another 29 drivers that only missed one or two days and the significance of that is that the number of drivers has a direct correlation to the number of segments of runs that need to be covered. A driver may have five segments of a run that they do in a day and the district had days in September, where there were as many as 93 segments in a single day that had to be covered by another driver in order to ensure the students get to and from school on a daily basis. He also recognizes the challenges that's creating for the athletic programs, because obviously the drivers and the buses need to be able to get back to the schools in order to get the students home at the end of the school day. Winter athletics is even more complicated so they're hoping they can get enough individuals that may be interested if not in a full time position, to become substitute drivers within our district, and again that flexibility that provides we hope will be of interest to folks who may not be able to do certain times a day, but other times, or even just other days of the week would be helpful to the students, the staff, the Community, and the families to ensure the students are getting home at when they're supposed to be getting home because of having enough folks available to get them home. He wanted the community and the Committee to recognize and understand the complexity of it and the challenges that the transportation department faces pretty much on a daily basis to cover the run segments. They have ranged from 27 segments, which was the lowest number, all the way up to 93 being the highest number. Those are one day of run segments and coverage is required by the 36 people that are there every day and the 29 that may have only missed one or two days during the month of September. Dr. Bonilla opened it up to questions. Rebecca Bear thanked Dr. Riker for the presentation. Dr. Bonilla thanked Dr. Riker as well and went on to say that the more complex issues are discussed and broken down for individuals who are not dealing with it day to day, the better they are able to communicate those issues.

#### **g. Caregiver Academy - New ELA service for parents - Dr. Bradley (V. e.)**

Dr. Vitulli started by mentioning how Dr. Bradley had previously given a presentation about New Era Resources for elementary groups and she laid out a very detailed plan on how they chose those resources and the plan moving forward. He wanted her to share what he thought was a very exciting part of the plan moving forward. He turned the meeting over to Dr. Bradley regarding the caregiver Academy. She thanked Dr. Vitulli and started by saying she would highlight for the committee the two Caregivers Academies that they offered the families. They had Super Kids being pioneered by grades K through two and another program for grades three to five. On September 30th, they had the Caregivers Academy for Super Kids. There were 29 caregivers, six teachers, and three administrators joined. There are three classes per grade level and it was exciting to see how many families kept cameras on with their students on their lap or next to them. For Super Kids, they walked them through the online resources, ways to support the students, and ways to make translation options in the digital versions. Dr. Bradley had the corresponding meeting with HMH prior to the Education Committee. It had similar concepts. The attendance was a little lower but they still had families participate and they left some really great comments in the chat about their excitement and their children taking out books from the library because they learned about those books through the content of what they are doing in the program. She went on to

say the Academy meetings were also recorded and their teachers were able to share the recordings out with families who weren't able to attend so there's accessibility for all. Dr. Bradley then asked if there were any questions.

Dr. Bonilla thanked Dr. Bradley for the update and for her hard work and leadership. She also asked Dr. Bradley to share the recordings of the sessions of the Caregivers Academy with the Committee with the option to also share with the full board as well. It can be watched for inspiration, hear the reactions and reading the comments from families about what is beneficial to them. There were no other questions.

## **VII. Questions & Comments from Board Committee Members on agenda items**

n/a

## **VIII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – LIMITED TO ITEMS OF DISCUSSION**

**Limited to comments on this agenda by residents and taxpayers of the school district (3 min. ea.)**

Dr. Bonilla opened the meeting up for public participation, limited to the items of discussion, although they already allowed some engagement throughout so hopefully the public felt like they were able to engage but was looking for anyone unable to ask a question or make a comment. There were no questions or comments.

## **IX. PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED TO FINANCE COMMITTEE**

- a. Reading Eggs- paid for with Title I funds (VII. a.)
- b. ESACA \$3,000 SWPBS - \$5 per student paid for with ESSERS III
- c. Title 1 Crate - \$5,000 paid for with Title I funds (Angela) (VII.c.)
- d. McGraw Hill - Reading Wonders - \$9,104.01- paid for by Curriculum & Instruction (VII.d.)

Dr. Bonilla went on to address the items previously submitted to the Finance Committee. There were four items. One is Reading Eggs, which was paid for with Title One funds. The second was to ESACA for \$3,000, \$5 per student paid for with ESSERS III. Number three was Title 1 Crate which was \$5,000 paid for with Title I funds. Number four was McGraw Hill Reading Wonders for \$9,104.01 paid for by Curriculum and Instruction. The Committee was provided the accompanying information of the invoices. She asked if anyone had any questions or comments on the committee, as the Finance Committee Chair is present for the meeting.

Rebecca Bear went on to explain that McGraw Hill Reading Wonders was originally removed from the agenda but added back on in order to have equity to all students, as some of the teachers asked for it with the learning support classes where they need the online learning so they are adding it back on to give equity to all students to make sure that they're learning proper.

Dr. Vitulli said that they had callouts from special education and EI teachers requesting digital access, so they are reissuing those subscriptions.

Dr. Bonilla said that she wanted it noted that Reading Wonders is digital. There were no further questions or comments on the other items.

**X. ADVISORY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**RECOMMENDATION BY THE COMMITTEE:** Dr. Bonilla asks for a motion to move the items previously submitted to the Finance Committee forward to the full Board. Motion was made by Rebecca Bear. Motion was seconded by Mr. Gullstrand and carried unanimously 4-0.

**XI. NEXT MEETING-** Wednesday, November 10, 2021 at 700 p.m. - Via Zoom

**RECOMMENDATION BY THE COMMITTEE:**

Motion was made by Debbie Kulick to adjourn. Motion was seconded by Rebecca Bear and carried unanimously, 4-0

**XII. ADJOURNMENT: 9:03 P.M.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Jessica Barlotta