

**EAST STROUDSBURG AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION
EDUCATION PROGRAMS & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING
November 10, 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: Gail Kulick, Angela Byrne, Tabitha Bradley, Brad Fitzpatrick, Trenee Lurry, Jennifer Marmo, Jessica Barlotta, Heather Piperato, Gillian Turner, William Riker, William Vitulli, Christine Reed, Patricia Tiernan, Anthony Massa, Carrie Panepinto, Jennifer Moriarty, Craig Reichl

IV. Community Members Present: George Andrews, Steven Lurry, Keleisha Phillip-Stringer, Santos Rosas, Lisa Diaz, Isabella Diaz, Sidney Jefferies, Nialee Morales, Jennifer Floyd, Maria De Jesus-Perez, Olivia Thomas

V. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

RECOMMENDATION BY THE COMMITTEE:

Motion was made by Debbie Kulick to approve the agenda for November 10, 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 Jason Gullstrand and carried unanimously, 4-0.

RECOMMENDATION BY THE COMMITTEE:

Motion was made by Rebecca Bear to approve the minutes of the October 13, 2021 meeting. Motion was seconded by Debbie Kulick and carried unanimously, 4-0.

VI. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

a. Informational - J.T. Lambert student climate survey results - Craig Reichl (V.a.)

Dr. Damary Bonilla handed the meeting off to Dr. Vitulli to get started. Dr. Vitulli started by welcoming everyone and introduced Craig Reichl who is the principal of JTL and has been for four years. Several months ago the C&I team gave the EPR committee some insight to the approach for the school year: what tools are going to be used, what methods, what programs, and anticipated interventions. Part of that process was a survey at the immediate level, which Mr. Reichl is going to share the results from the survey at the beginning of the year. There will also be something later at towards the end of the year that to examine any changes, hopefully, for the better. He then turned the meet over to Mr. Reichl. Mr. Reichl started off by thanking everyone for attending and letting them share some information. He went on to say they wanted to get some baseline data on where students were at when they were just coming into the building with the knowledge that their sixth graders had never been in the building before, seventh graders would have some indication of prior knowledge and obviously eighth graders had a significant

history but obviously their life has changed dramatically, so they wanted to use the baseline data to figure out where to go. He introduced Carrie Panepinto and Christine Reed, as two of the people that work in the MTSS and SAP world inside of the school help take everyone through what the data looks like and what they are doing as a building to address the needs that they saw come through with the data. Carrie Panepinto began by saying she is a math teacher, but also working with the MTSS. Her and Christine work together with the student climate survey results, and created the presentation. She opened up the presentation which was the Climate survey data report for the fall, their first one, which they did the first week of school after doing some SEL and different wellness activities with the students, they did this survey. She handed the presentation over to Christine Reed who went on to say they analyzed the data for trends, patterns, and gaps. The data reflected in the following slides and tables indicate the responses of those who strongly agreed and agree combined, so the percentages are combination of the strongly agree and agree responses. They identified they were not going to talk about every single question, but Christine went through and found some trends and patterns and they are going to talk about those in more detail, but there were 211 sixth graders 200 seventh graders and 195 eighth graders that participated in the surveys. She highlighted in green and red the highest and lowest in the averages. Through this, it is easily seen that the sixth graders were definitely more positive as you get through to the eighth graders, it becomes a little bit less positive. The students feel that the teachers notice them if they're absent, they feel the teachers care about the students, the students feel that there's lots of activities and chances to get involved, they feel safe. Teachers are available when students need to talk and students feel school rules apply equally to all. All those responses are 90% and above. At the other end, students feel that's other students stop and think when they get angry, students attend school sponsored events, students participate in after school activities and extracurricular activities, and students feel that teachers are making connections to the outside of the classroom are responses that fell to the lower end of students that agree, so they were 65% or lower. Ms. Panepinto passed the meeting to Christine Reed. She went on to say that they noticed there were some discrepancies or gaps between the percentages in the questions that would have been more closely related in percentages. They put them into a table and the table included the responses to if teachers will notice if students are absent and teachers can be talked to if there are problems. They have a higher percentage at JTL of students who feel that teachers will notice that they are absent but then successively those same students felt a little bit less confident about teachers being able to be approached to talk to, if there were problems. There were the same kind of discrepancies with students who feel teachers are available to talk to, which was hovering in the 80 to 98th percentile range, but then, when it came to students who felt that teachers were easy to talk to, they saw a drop of about 20%, especially in the seventh and eighth grade.

Ms. Panepinto continued to say with the results of the survey, with many students feeling that teachers are available to talk, but fewer percentage of students feel that they're easy to talk to and most students felt that the teachers notice that they are absent but less students feel that the teachers can be talked to about those problems: The next steps would be to continue to utilize the ripple effects program that they have already begun. They are going to use the scripts to advance the dialogue with students around the SEL topics and provide time for teachers to become more comfortable with the program scripts so that it becomes a more natural conversation with the students. They are also going to begin the process for check-in/checkout and have a leadership team that's involved in that process it will be a light rollout so they don't haphazardly do it. Then they also have bi-weekly data meetings to discuss the students who might benefit from the intervention.

Ms. Reed went on to say large percentages of students felt that teachers cared about them but there was a drop to the tune of 17-18% of students who felt that teachers make them feel good about themselves.

Ms. Panepinto jumped in to say the results of students feeling that teachers care, but fewer feeling that teachers make them feel good about themselves; they have been rolling out their new SWPBIS Program which allows the teachers to be able to provide feedback to the students regarding their positive behaviors and rewards those students for those behaviors. With this new SWPBIS Program being at JTL, the students are cooperative, are ambitious, have values, and are supportive. The SWPBIS program will help

the students to know the teachers feel good about them and will be giving them the feedback through this program.

Mr. Reichl added that one of the differences between this new positive behavior program and the program they had the past couple of years was they wanted to align more to the high school model, so it's common language for the kids when they're moving through the school buildings. They also got more staff and student feedback in terms of how they were going to do things to ensure buy in with the intention down the road that they would have student committees that are going to be part of the school-wide positive behavior Committee so they have more of a direct impact on where the school goes.

Ms. Reed went on to say that another trend they noticed across all grade levels was students feeling that teachers are not always connecting learning to outside of the classroom.

Ms. Panepinto added that with a relatively low percentage of students, it is a concern that must be addressed by looking at how they can bring real life examples into the classroom, provide learning from people in the industry, and then cross curricular learning when available for large projects that meet the standards and are of high interest of the students.

Ms. Reed: There were a number of questions that dealt with student activity; student participation in activities, the availability of activities to students, and how many students attend those activities. The results showed the students felt that there were a lot of activities to participate in, but many fewer students were participating in those activities and attending those activities.

Ms. Panepinto took over to say that with the majority of the students feeling that there are enough activities to be involved in, fewer are participating, so they have decided to reach out to students and find out their interest, using interest surveys. They will survey students to determine why they're not involved in the activities. Perhaps it's transportation, or if they're not interested in those activities. They will also work to provide more after school clubs and activities that will allow for more student participation and for them to be involved and then extend those after school activities and clubs to in school, so they would have some in school clubs as well.

Ms. Reed went on to explain a similar slide that we had a number of questions that asked students if they felt happy if they felt safe and if they felt like they belong in school so. The majority of our students felt safe in school and most of the sixth graders felt happy at school. There was a slight drop in percentage of seventh and eighth graders who felt happy in school, but the most profound piece of this data was a gap in students who felt like they belong in school. So, although they feel happy and safe, they saw a drop in a percentage that felt like they belong.

Ms. Panepinto took over to say that to address the need for those that are happy, but then that they don't feel belong: as Mr. Reichl had mentioned, they were going to look to see about creating student teams or student leadership groups to include representation of all students, so that they can get help with the sense of belonging and allow their voices to be part of the school wide decisions which they started with the SWPBIS program. They will continue team building activities on wellness Wednesdays, they have an alternate lunch space for students which is a happy lunch space, so that they can be in a different place. They are also extending the clubs and activities during the school day and after school as well.

Mr. Reichl added that they are going to start utilizing their Wellness Wednesdays, those times when they don't have assignments for the students to do, to begin clubs. They had clubs prior to COVID and went over really well with kids because it was reading comic books and doing stuff that kids like to do which allowed them to generate a lot of those ideas and they got staff behind the ideas so they will be getting back to that most likely in January.

Christine Reed continued to explain the next two graphs which talked about students' feelings about conflict and resolution, about students who felt other students stop and think when they get angry and then students who felt that other students work things out through talking when they get angry. They saw a relatively low percentage of students who feel that other students are stopping and thinking when they get angry and students who are willing to work things out through talking when they get angry. Ms. Panepinto took over to say that within seventh and eighth graders, about half feel that other students don't stop and think about when they get angry and then two thirds of the sixth graders don't stop and think

before they get angry. The next steps would be to continue to implement their SAP anger management groups and normal but bumpy groups. Administration will be going into classrooms just to discuss various topics such as respect and what calves means to us and building expectations, as well as conflict resolution with staff assistance and then building positive rewards into the wellness Wednesday activities. Mr. Reichl explained that he thinks they have about eight different groups right that they are running and they're completely full in his building already for the first eight weeks of school or when they begin, and he thinks they only have one or two slots available yet for individual counts and for outside services that come in. They are seeing an obvious increase in mental health needs for students in the building. They are getting them access to them as soon as possible the concern is when the second half of the year rolls around, how do they service those students that are going to need additional services and they just don't have the means to be able to provide it currently?

Dr. Bonilla asked if members of the committee have comments or questions.

Rebecca Bear thanked the team for the presentation. She thinks it's very important that we look at the whole picture of our students and she thought they did a great job.

Mr. Reichl responded that it is going to be interesting to see the survey when they get to the end of the school year. He said he is seeing some of the things decline, because he thinks some kids came in with rose-colored eyeglasses on when they started the school year. He thinks it will still be telling and allow them good information to be able to make significant changes in the future, and he thinks that is the most important thing right now.

Debbie Kulick said he answered her question of if there would be a follow up survey to see any differences as they go along.

Mr. Reichl answered that there will be a follow-up and they also will be able to share information in terms of how many students are participating in clubs and activities, once they really get that going which he foresees happening in December, which he will have better information for them the next time they meet.

Ms. Kulick followed up with when they will be sharing what their areas of interests are, so they can increase participation and she also asked if they have asked the question of do you feel safe at home, that kind of thing.

Mr. Reichl said they can share the information with the committee, so they have more detailed information. They will make sure they get the adaptability to share with the committee. They will be surveying the students again in spring in terms of the big over-arching picture. But for the students right now, he is just sending stuff out to see what their interests are, to see what motivates them to stay after school because he has to get them motivated first to stay. Once he gets that rolling, he will send something out probably mid-December to see what they can start after the holiday. He thinks it's just easier to start in January for a lot of the activities.

Ms. Kulick went on to ask if they will be able to identify, for example, the sixth graders, going forward; so that they can see over the course of time that specific group as a control group?

Mr. Reichl said he agrees that is the group they really have to be looking at for significant changes over the next three years.

Mr. Gullstrand said that having the control group, using the sixth grade class as a baseline for the next three years, along with it being a very tricky time, as a lot of these kids are coming back to school, for the first time in a year and a half, it'll be interesting to see how the data changes between now and the end of the year. He also thanked them for presenting.

Dr. Bonilla said she made a couple of notes. She thinks the SAP anger management groups are going to be very helpful, as kids are dealing with a lot of emotion and stress, so she thinks the management piece is going to be very helpful. She noted, in regards to the section where other students stop and think when they get angry, that communication exercises, such as helping build the communication skill set for students, might help them navigate some of those dynamics of communication. The reality is that kids are navigating what they're seeing on social media and video games and violence and just so many dynamics. She thinks they are looking at all of the right areas. She loves the alternative lunch space for students. She thinks sometimes just a shift of environment is helpful, whether it's where they do their homework or where they eat lunch; things like that will be very good. She also loves the team building, because if

they're able to build Community for their students from a young age, they are going to help them be able to navigate some of those dynamics. In regards to providing more after school clubs and activities and just the serving piece, she wrote student voice, because that's a big conversation for the district and she appreciates that they're engaging the students in terms of what is of interest to them, so that they're able to gauge and meet some of their needs and meet them where they are. She thinks that however we can engage them, it really stood out to her that just a little over half of the students feel like the content is relevant to them, and that conversation is really important to the committee and to the work that the board has been doing around meeting student needs. She knows the administration is paying attention to that as well, so the presentation was very helpful and they appreciate the effort they put into it and the thoughtfulness in which they are approaching it.

Heather Piperato added that she was particularly proud of the principles in regards to their three big goals for the year as they set forth in an action plan. The social emotional piece of return to school was bigger this year than ever. It was really the idea of the principals to use the climate survey at multiple times and the four principals of secondary came together to decide to use the same one. They worked to find one with good language and was research driven. Heather also credited Erin Dreisbach with doing the research for them to find the national survey from the Department of Education at the federal level. It has really good heft behind it, good research, and it has really good questions. She also informed the committee that they will be seeing the same language from other schools during other committee meetings as they present these same findings. She thanked JTL for leading the way they did. She went on to say that they may see a different analysis from other schools, but they will see that the language remains the same and they did that purposefully. The principles were very great at collaborating and agreeing to make sure they did it in a way that they can continue to collect the data on a vertical and horizontal level.

George Andrews asked how many of the students took the survey?

Mr. Reichl responded that it was offered to everyone. They had a pretty high percentage of students that actually took the assessment. It wasn't 100% each grade, but it wasn't a small sample size either.

Dr. Bonilla asked if they are going to survey the same kids every year or if they are going to have it as an open sample?

Mr. Reichl answered that he thinks they should be serving the same students to see where they are every school year.

Dr. Vitulli contributed that as much as they would like to do that, it would be too difficult so they will probably end up doing all kids which are willing to participate.

Dr. Bonilla asked if they will reflect that in the report out? Because she agrees that that it would be good to have the same students to be able to track.

Ms. Panepinto responded that they did not record who took the survey. They did it as an anonymous one, so she wouldn't be able to ensure that it's the same students the second time.

Dr. Bonilla asked Ms. Piperato if that is something they want to look at for the future, or is it not a concern to her and her team.

Ms. Piperato responded that she thinks the reason it's not a concern is because every two years, they also participate in the PAYs survey and the PAYs survey gives them the same kind of questions around the same topics, and so they can calibrate that and then figure out cohorts as they move through. They can talk about validity in terms of a cohort model because they have the internal climate survey that they do, and then they calibrate it against the PAYs. Erin and Ms. Piperato have also been working to calibrate it against the discipline data, in terms of what's the difference between what students' report to be true about their discipline and actual discipline. She goes on to say that she thinks they want to continue down that road, because the anonymity of the survey allows students to respond more freely in a risk free environment, and she thinks they will get better answers that way.

Dr. Bonilla commented that they want to talk about the diversity component, and asked if there were any demographic breakdowns other than the grade?

Ms. Piperato responded that they have not but that does not mean that they cannot. She thinks they should certainly take it under advisement. She went on to say that she doesn't think that there is any one group in

the school that, demographically would be so small that then anonymity would be lost, so she thinks that may be something that they could absolutely talk about.

Dr. Bonilla added that when Rebecca Bear, Dr. Riker, George Andrews, and Dr. Bonilla herself participated in the PSBA Equity Summit, there was another school district that had conducted a survey, not exactly like ours, but some of their concerns were that the demographic data was not being used in a way that really painted a very accurate picture. She would love for us to explore that conversation and put a note on that for the future.

Rebecca Bear suggested adding a voluntary section where they do not have to disclose their race, gender, ethnicity, but they are encouraged to do so, just so they can make sure that they are fairly representing the community. She was referencing the idea of something like a mortgage disclosure type thing where the answers are not required to be given, but they're highly encouraged to self-identify.

Dr. Bonilla added that some language on the front end will be helpful, such as the reason why we're asking, but incorporating that student voice and giving the space for self-identity is also empowering. She suggested that Heather Piperato put a note on having a discussion around the topic but went on to say nothing has to be decided right away. She suggested that as they engage more members of the district, as they use the diversity lens, she thinks it will be an interesting conversation. She thanked Rebecca handed the meeting back to Dr. Vitulli.

b. Grant Review-Grant Coordinator - Angela Byrne

Dr. Vitulli introduced the next speaker as Angela Byrne, who is the grants coordinator. She is currently handling about \$29 million in grants, which is up from the typical amount of about \$11 or \$12 million. She works very hard and with multiple departments, not just Curriculum and Instruction but across all the Central Admin. in an effort to make sure that she can assist the district in the best way possible in getting these grant monies to where they belong, and ensuring they are being used effectively and efficiently. Angela gets our applications completed and approved on us and in a timely manner, and that can be very cumbersome we do work together on some of those but she has also created some interesting systems that are helping organize grants in general for the entire district. He then turned the meeting over Angela to provide a presentation for the committee.

Angela started by thanking everyone. She put together a brief presentation to let everyone know a little more about her and what they do in the grants office. Angela has been a resident of East Stroudsburg since 1999. She has two children that went completely through East Stroudsburg. Her son graduated in 2013 and her daughter in 2020. She worked in commercial finance first in the banking industry and then in the private sector. That is where some of her strength in grants comes from is that education and experience in accounting and finance. Then she went back to school to be a teacher. Her most recent education was from Marywood University for her Administrative Certificate. She did start her PhD but her daughter developed some chronic illness, so she will go back to that at some point. She has been with the district since 2004, and has had several different roles in the district, some at the same time. Her primary background is literacy and she was a coach literacy coach for the district when the grants director retired in 2012. She was then asked to step in and help with Title one and Keystones Grants, so this will be her 10th year doing grants for the district. She also does a lot outside of the district. As part of her Title One work, she is on all of the elementary school improvement teams and, as a coach, she was on the secondary teams as well. She also participated in the last few writings of the district's strategic plan. With one of the grants back in 2012, Angela had to work with the birth to five communities which she continues to do so, as well as working with United Way, Head Start, and a few other outside agencies. She was also able to join the Board of Directors for women's resources, so she represents the district on their board as well. She tried to break down what she does into four basic areas and she gave a brief overview of each of those areas, which there is a lot of overlap between each of them. Her current grant portfolio is just under \$29 million. There are school districts out there that have smaller budgets. Prior to COVID, Angela was handling about \$4 million, which would be about 10 to 12 grants at any given time. They are now up to 23 different grants with the various funding that's coming to them from the

government to respond to COVID. From an administrative point, Angela prepares and submits all of the applications which requires her to work with the different departments because they are the ones with the expertise, they know what their needs are, and they provide the data that Angela needs to support the proposals. Angela does a lot for the day to day management of the grants, including approving expenditures, making sure that they are in the budget of the grant that they are applicable and allowable that they've written them into their narrative. She also needs to make sure they're approved and she makes sure they are making the best use of whatever funds they have. A big part of what she does is making sure they stay compliant. The last thing they want to do is give money back, because they did something that was out of compliance with the intent of the grant so she takes that part of her job extremely serious. Program administration is one area where she is starting to have to delegate and step back a little bit. When she was just doing title one, she oversaw all of the major title one programs, and managed several programs in their entirety. This year, she is going to put in a request to hire someone with whom she will work closely to facilitate the programs. The individual will be hands on and will take them and run with it next year when they do it again. It will free up more of Angela's time for the added workload coming from the COVID grants. There are multiple reports that are due for title one as well as the other grants and Angela does spend time putting those together and making sure they get done on time. Angela does support, through title one, the elementary buildings with their school-wide planning, and parent engagement activities. Angela has presented at national parent engagement conferences on what they have done here as a district, especially with the Kinderversity and Quick Start programs. Other districts are amazed at what we have in place for transition and how well we get to know our preschoolers before they ever come in as kindergarteners. Angela also works very closely with the ESL teachers to support their needs, because they do have a Title III grant that is specifically for that department. Grant writing is the one area that Angela is having to take a slight backseat with all the COVID grants, she is not able to actively pursue as many competitive grants as she was doing. Although she does belong to several grant sites where she has set keyword searches, so that she gets alerted if a grant comes up that matches something we're looking for, for instance, she knows we will need to replace the AED's, so she has set up keyword searches for grants that might cover some security projects we're looking to implement over the next couple years. She went on to say there aren't as many competitive grants right now, especially coming through PCCD for safety and things like that, because they're overwhelmed with COVID related grants as well. She will continue to see what's out there. They have put a Google form in place for principals and staff that find grants that they might be looking to pursue so that Dr. Vitulli and her can look at those and vet them and make sure that they are meeting the district goals, and are worth writing because sometimes some of the smaller \$5,000 grants can have as many strings attached and require as much time as a \$500,000 grant; so they have to try to be selective with what they are doing and make sure it's going to support the district goals. Angela went on to thank Jeanne Wescott, who is Angela's bookkeeper in the business office, as Angela could not do the job without her, she is her fiscal partner and she helps Angela with the fiscal side of maintaining all of their expenditures and their revenue for the grants. Then Angela opened it up to see if anyone had any questions.

Dr. Bonilla thanked Angela and asked if the members of the committee had any questions. Debbie Kulick added that Angela has her sympathy. Rebecca Bear said they all appreciate Angela. George Andrews added that he learned Angela does a lot and she does a great job for the school district. Dr. Bonilla agreed with Rebecca that they appreciate Angela. Jason Gullstrand added that her role is a position that most people don't realize that exists and it has a tremendous effect on the district.

c. Spelling at Elementary - District Perspective (V.c.)

Dr. Vitulli introduced the next item as spelling at the elementary level and as a little context to the presentation, Dr. Bradley and some of the other principles will be joining in the presentation. Under Dr. Riker's leadership, they were faced with the challenge of eliminating the old practice of rote memorization and simple regurgitation of spelling and learning to spell that way. It was a very timely

change, as they were piloting or pioneering their new ELA programs, but also the focus on the reading that Dr. Bradley has taken the district in, an effort to increase students' comprehension and understanding. It's been a challenge to the district, and recently they went to Dr. Bradley, and pulled everyone together to come up with a position as to what they feel can best describe their position as it relates to spelling at the elementary level. It really got them thinking quite a bit, so Dr. Vitulli turned it over to Dr. Bradley. Dr. Bradley thanked everyone for having her and giving her the opportunity to share their information and presentation and they will also be providing a short conversation about handwriting as well, because all of it falls hand in hand. Dr. Bradley went on to say that the committee may have heard the phrase science of reading, she presented a slide of what that phrase is not, as it is a commonly used phrase right now. The quote is Dr. Louisa Moats and, as some may recall, we were one of six finalists for an award in her honor in her name. The point being that the science of reading is settled science based on research across the globe that has revealed how we learn to read; what goes wrong when we don't read and what good instruction needs to include. There are brain researchers who have done live scans of children while they read and examine the processing of it. While everyone has been working in isolation, with such ability to access and communication, the research world is combining with the education world to really solidify those things that we know. There is proof that shows how to support children as they learn to read and develop. She went on to explain that the presentation encompassed a lot of words she was not going to be reading but was intended to afford the committee the ability to see the research and give them access to the research and information they used as a part of their decision making process. She explained that Dr. Kulick would present the next screen and talk about spelling then versus spelling now.

Gail Kulick thanked Dr. Bradley. She proceeded to use the slide to take everyone through a quick little tour of what spelling was, why they did the practices they did with spelling, versus why they are looking to continue moving forward within the 20th century with their current practices. Just briefly: spelling back in the 19th century was focused on and thought that if a student knew bigger words, the rare words, that they had much more intelligence than the average person. Therefore, what they would do in school is give the students long lists of words and ask them to memorize them and through rote memorization, apply those words and they would hope that it stuck. Coming into the 20th century, they realized that the long list was no longer working for kids. They thought they would focus on spelling books, with a narrowed number of words and that these would be focused directly on how they would spell. So for example, they would get a list on Monday, memorize them for the test on Friday, and hope that some of the words stayed so that students would remember how to spell those words enough to be able to apply in their writing. Unfortunately, like the practices in the 19th century, there was no focus on what's called the orthographic principle, which is basically looking at the understanding that the letters are the symbols which represent individual sounds in the spoken language. Therefore, they were just asking the students to memorize the words using the lowest form of memory, which is your hippocampus, that does not stick with anybody. In the 1930s, they started looking at spelling lists and see what are the most frequently used words. They decided to again narrow down the list to the most frequently used words in spelling and again, use rote memorization. They found that about 4000 of the most frequently used words were constituting about 98% of the vocabulary that was used by adults and children, so they figured they would start utilizing those words for spelling. Going to the late 1930s and the 40s, they realized it was not really working very well. The changed to what's called the study method. This brought about the idea of repetition to memorize. They had students write each missed word three times to solidify that word. That again is not looking at any patterns and they realize that, through the brain research, the brain really likes patterns so that's something that was missing. Looking at the 1950s, they realized that the words were not organized in any way that would promote that orthographic generalization. It did not focus on patterns and since they were starting to understand that brain research a little bit better, they realized that they had to start looking at some of the patterns and they started changing the ways they put some of the spelling words in there and started doing them by patterns, so that resulted in moving away from the High Frequency vocabulary and focusing a little bit more on some patterns. Fast forward to the 21st century, and we have found that reading and spelling are related, which is where we come with the science of reading. We understand that, in order to be effective, students really need to better develop what's called

their “working memory” and when they're developing their working memory, they're going to be focusing more on that prefrontal lobe in the brain, which is a much higher level thinking. By doing that, they're looking for patterns and they're starting to attach relationships between the letters in the sounds. We want the student to be able to break the words apart, listen to the sounds and be able to write the sound for each letter to spell the words. We know then it also has to go further and we need to teach more rules into what we're doing. We know that there are going to be some words that students just have to memorize. There are some words that do not apply to patterns, however it's far fewer than what was once thought, which makes it easier to just simply begin memorizing those words. They are looking at moving to teaching patterns, using lists, that will be developed for specific students. They are not going to give all students the same word. They will differentiate students. Students will receive the words and work on the patterns that they struggle with. They are going to be instructing specifically on two words that sound the same and really getting to know why they are different and understanding the vocabulary aspect of it. They are working through a lot of professional development, where a lot of teachers are taking their letters of spelling where they're beginning to understand how to present those patterns to students, how to utilize the Latin and Greek derivatives, to be able to teach the spelling. Word study, is basically instead of spelling, they are studying words and knowing words. By time kids get up to the higher grades, the intent is that they truly understand how the words are developed, how to write, how to spell the words and why they use specific words in one sentence versus in another. They are looking at examining orthography for the students to be able to see the irregular patterns, to be able to know where they are coming from because it is much more effective than any rote memorization. By adding the word study to the reading instruction, ultimately, it will develop a greater comprehension for students, which is obviously one of the end goals in any type of reading. It also adds the ability of being able to break words apart to be able to understand how to start spelling those multi-syllabic words.

Dr. Bradley thanked Dr. Kulick. She also clarified that between 85 and 90% of the words in our language do follow patterns. Dr. Bradley went on to say that Dr. Kulick was alluding to the idea that at one point, we thought there were so many variations that we did not think many followed the pattern or that you can't sound out this sight word, but the majority of our language does follow a pattern. Dr. Bradley next asked where does handwriting fit into all the brain research, to which she introduced Jennifer Moriarty, Assistant Principal from ESE.

Mrs. Moriarty went on to say that they have had different discussions on their ELA Committee, and when they are talking about spelling, handwriting came up. They used to teach cursive handwriting in fourth grade and in first grade, they explicitly taught handwriting in the formation of letters. For those that have not worked with kindergarten or first grade students or even older students, sometimes they don't know how to hold the pencil the correct way. They were talking about the importance of handwriting automaticity and how it affects reading and writing. Mrs. Moriarty wanted to share a few thoughts that she had written down. Writing is a powerful communication tool. In today's digital age, effective writing is critical for personal, professional and academic successes and it's definitely an integral part of everyday life. Concerns about students writing achievement have been identified across cultures and languages of instruction. Research suggests that students that exhibit writing difficulties in early years of schooling may be the explanation for poor quality writing when they get into upper primary and high schools. Concerns about students writing development are common across the globe so it's not just a concern around here. Students spend very little time, writing and being taught how to write. Growing bodies of research argue specific cognitive benefits of handwriting during early childhood, including brain development, working memory, translation of thought to script, and just overall writing quality and production. When writing, the translations of ideas rely heavily on the writer's ability to retrieve alphabet letters and memory and produce letter forms efficiently, legibly, and automatically. Students lacking handwriting automaticity have limited ability to engage in other aspects of writing, including vocabulary selection, ideation, and revision. The lack of handwriting fluency also affects students' motivations for writing and ultimately academic success in the future. We know that letter production builds kinesthetic and orthographic memory that substantiates alphabetic knowledge. Central cornerstones that are needed for those higher level reading skills, including comprehension, and decoding. Also increasing the time

that we're spending on writing will have a positive effect on students' primary reading outcomes. Those are just some of the things that she wanted to share that she felt were important in regards to handwriting and how it all fits in together.

Dr. Bradley thanked Mrs. Moriarty and opened it up to questions.

Dr. Bonilla commented that she thought the presentation was fabulous and she definitely learned a couple of things. She felt that being walked through the way we are shifting in the benefit of the students. She has heard some parents ask about the spelling words and changes, so she thinks the more we talk about it and, with as much context as they provided, it's really a good opportunity for everyone to get on board and to be able to message the changes. She loved hearing the diversity lens in the conversation and not having to ask about it because it's woven in thinking about the individual learning styles of the students. Rebecca Bear said she loved the part where they tied the handwriting into learning, because for her to learn, she had to write it, see it, and hear it. She found that part very interesting because she thought she learned differently than others but was glad to hear that others learn that way too. She went on to say that when she studies for a test, she has to read it, listen to it, and then write it down. Then she would reread what she wrote, so that research was really interesting to her, as it is true that people do actually learn better that way.

Dr. Bradley thanked her and said that she hopes that Rebecca feels empowered as a board member to have the research at her fingertips through the presentation and she can share with folks if they want to learn more.

Dr. Bonilla added that she would like to discuss with Dr. Bradley how they can message snippets of the information so that it's digestible, to the Community using the social media channels and the website. She went on to say that Rebecca had a great point about the handwriting piece. And even Dr. Bonilla's husband has been asking why there is no cursive in school. She loves that it was all brought together and she would love for it to be shared in other ways.

Dr. Bonilla handed the meeting over to Debbie Kulick. Debbie went on to say that when she deals with people, she finds it really important that students coming out can read cursive and can spell something so that when they're sitting on the stand being cross examined, they haven't used incorrect or misspelled words in their documentation. She thinks it's really important to teach these things.

Dr. Bradley thanked Ms. Kulick for bringing up the topic. Dr. Bradley went on to explain how in thinking about printing versus cursive, the special education students, especially, deserve to learn cursive. She went on to explain that if you think about how your pen works when you're printing and you write a letter, you have to lift the pen up between letters right when you write with cursive the pen does not come off the page or pencil. So the thought processes aren't interrupted and special education students, in particular, benefit from that flow of ideas that doesn't require them to lift the pen or pencil off the page. She went on to say they have a current article from US News and World Report that talks to parents about how to do this very work at home for spelling. It was just within the past month, and the team had shared it to discuss how to get that information, particularly about spelling and how a parent can work with this word study at home, and so they wanted to talk to the committee first and provide the background information and then they do plan to share out some information. They feel like they can easily find some digestible information about the handwriting piece, that is also timely. They have some really quick reads for families to take a look and see how they can support their children home.

Dr. Bonilla went on to say that the group does such a good job of exchanging and learning. The board learned so much during the meetings and would love to translate the content to the families in the way that Dr. Bradley said, being digestible. She also wants to ensure the communication that is on social media is not just about transportation or meals, but also ensures that we are working together and communicating.

George Andrews proceeded to ask if the recommendation is cursive writing or printing?

Dr. Bradley answered that for students, both are recommended. They start with print in first grade, and then move into cursive. She thinks it's important that they continue to offer that to the students, for the reasons they discussed. It is beneficial to not only all of the students but a select group that actually research shows helps them stay on track when they're writing and thinking about the writing.

George Andrews wondered if they actually want to teach the kids to write cursive because he has heard that they are getting away from cursive because of computers.

Dr. Bradley responded to say there is a study out of Johns Hopkins where they taught two different groups: both Arabic, who never had learned Arabic; one through digital learning and one through handwritten learning and then, when they tested both groups to see who could produce that language that they had just learned: Hands down the people who had to learn it by writing it were the ones who were able to produce that new language back. It continues to be a great support that our brains were programmed to work together with our handwriting.

Rebecca Bea contributed that when she learned to write and read Hebrew as a child, her Hebrew school teacher made her write it and read it. Her younger siblings never learned to write it and Rebecca can read it better than they can speak it if they can.

Jason Gullstrand commented that he found it absolutely fascinating from seeing the development to where they are today. It also prompted him think of how to restructure his own lessons in class. He requested to get a copy of the presentation.

Tabitha Bradley said that Dr. Vitulli has it digitally and she is happy to share it in any format that needed. Dr. Vitulli added that the presentation is evidence of the complexity of the issues that the education team is dealing with, but he is hoping everyone sees the pattern of researching, reaching out, getting other people's opinions, and then moving forward. The team is really working hard and he thanked them for the presentation.

d. LETRS Training Update

Dr. Bradley began the discussion by saying the LETRS work actually ties back to the work that Angela Byrne has done in the past, and because of her work, they have an inventory of LETRS manuals with 10 plus modules. LETRS stands for Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling. Thanks to Angela's work over the years, they have accumulated an inventory, that allows our staff to attend the training at the IU for free. They are also committed to bringing the IU to the district multiple times throughout the year. The first module of LETRS is very heavily based in theory and is a prerequisite to any of the other courses. The first thing they have to do is ensure that all of the staff that want to pursue additional modules have the opportunity to take module one. Out of our 112 classroom teachers, we have 108 or 96% of them that have had module one, and the only reason we are not 100% is due to the addition of some classroom teachers to reduce class sizes. As discussed last month, the district added some additional elementary teachers. Dr. Bradley went on to say she has worked very closely with Gretchen at the IU and the four teachers will have the opportunity to take module one when the winter catalog comes out. Once the four of them complete that prerequisite course through the IU, then all of our K-five classroom teachers will have completed that gateway class that allows them to move on to other modules. Module two is called the speech sounds in English. Some background on Module two. The teachers were given a knowledge survey that was developed by Luis Emotes. It's really a kind of a quiz, about how do they understand how children learn to read. It is a 27 question teacher survey. They took it digitally right before COVID as a whole group at Resica. The median score out of the 27 points was 15, which says to us there's a lot of room for growth for the teachers. Dr. Bradley related this to her own experience of how going to Edinboro University as a student, which is a very highly regarded school for education, they were not taught the science of reading and were instead taught whole language so schools are slowly catching up. They took the results from the survey and desegregated it and examined where the areas are that the teachers need the most and least help. Ironically, when they went through and identified every question and the module for LETRS that it aligns to: the questions that were most missed by the staff (49% or less got the question right); 9 questions of the 27 had 49% or less get it right. Every single one of the questions that were most missed were aligned to spelling. That's why the focus on modules two and three, which are both spelling modules. Module two is the goal for this year and they do have some folks already moving into module three. Some folks have also taken it on their own with the IU. They currently have 74 out of the 112 (56%) teachers who have completed module two already this year with some more

time in January for professional development, to continue learning. 100% of the administrative team at the elementary level had module one training, as well as 100% of the reading specialists, 100% of the MTSS team, and 94% of the reading Para's also have module one and are well on their way to module two and beyond. Thanks to the inventory Angela has provided the district, the courses can be taken on the spot. They are very fortunate to have that stock on hand and they continue to plan to support the teachers. After modules two and three, they really want to open it up to what the teachers need. They know as a district, they need to provide the support for spelling in module two and three, based on the teacher knowledge survey. Beyond that, teachers will have the ability and do have the ability to continue their learning through the LETRS modules of their choice based on where their assignment.

Dr. Bonilla opened it up to any questions or comments from the committee.

Heather Piperato added that the work is fascinating to the secondary level also. They have a number of reading specialists at the middle school that Dr. Bradley and Ms. Piperato have been in conversation about a two to three-year plan and how do they make sure that some of the reading specialists at the sixth eighth grade level understand the language and some of the common methodology and brain science behind it, so they have continuity as students move from K to eight. They have also tackled the fact that they have a very transient population in the district so how do they fill the gaps for students who are coming in from multiple other districts, who may not have had the benefit of having the continuity of instruction. She is just anticipating some of the questions and wanted to inform them of discussions already being held. They do not want the very good instruction to end when the kids leave fifth grade, but it needs to be continued to be reinforced, as they move into secondary.

Dr. Bradley thanked Ms. Piperato and went on to add that they have already had intermediate teachers voluntarily participate in a couple of the modules as well. She is not tracking them at the current time, but she knows she has sent out the books to them inter-office and they've already jumped on board and wanted to learn. There were no other questions.

e. Multicultural Class Update - Tony Massa

Mr. Anthony Massa was introduced to discuss the Multi-cultural perspectives class, which is currently running as a social studies elective at High School North. They decided to include student voice for the meeting as they thought student voice was very important. In discussing how to incorporate student voice, the class decided to create a video where the students give testimonials. And so, they have students, as well as some staff members who are talking about why they feel the class is important, why they feel the class is valuable, and talking about the importance of diversity to them. The video was actually made, filmed, and produced by the class. It was filmed by a student named Aurora Nikshiqi and it was edited and produced by a student named Corey Lewis and obviously there was student participation, as well staff participation. He went on to say that it is something that is very special to the. He then played the video. The video provided the insight of several students and teachers on their perspective of why the multicultural class is important and what value it brings to them.

After the video, Dr. Bonilla thanked Mr. Massa and told him it was wonderful to know that the students were not just empowered to speak their mind and share their view of the course, but that they also took ownership of the project and did all of it. She went on to say it is very exciting to her and when she saw it the first time, she was a bit emotional because she loves to hear the young people speak and she also wanted to congratulate the teachers that are working with them for the support that they are giving them and the encouragement for them to be able to speak and to find themselves in the coursework. Based on the survey they were discussing earlier, they want the students to see themselves reflected in the content, they want it to resonate, and they want them to build their life skills, based on information that matters to their life and she expressed that the course is doing that. She thanked Mr. Massa for the work that he is doing. She asked if Mr. Massa had any closing thoughts he wanted to share.

He went on to thank everyone for their time and consideration as well as the students and the staff who wanted to share their thoughts and wanted to give their genuine honest thoughts and feelings about the

course, and about diversity in the district.

Dr. Bonilla thanked him for always stepping up. She said there is no better testament to the work he is doing than the students saying that he is doing a good job and they really appreciate him and the passion that he brings as well. She also added they are going to put the video on the district website. They are working to get everyone's release and to make sure everything is in order, in terms of the paperwork, but they will post it on the website so that everybody has access to the video.

Rebecca Bear added that she really enjoys hearing what the students had to say. She really appreciates it, because the group of kids in his class are very diverse as well, and she believes that probably brings up great discussion in the class too, about the pertinent topics that they are discussing too, so different sides can hear different perspectives. She is sure it's very interesting, when they talk back and forth. She knows he runs his class differently than a lot of teachers do where he allows a lot of open discussion because he can control the room very well as an educator. She gives him kudos because not a lot of teachers can teach a class like that first year, because the topics are very heavy and even when he taught civics, when Rebecca's son had him for civics, he was able to work that classroom very well to control the tone so opinions are valued and heard, regardless of what they are. She gives him kudos for that and has heard the students saying that their voices are being heard. She knows they're very grateful for the class and she is looking forward to seeing how it's going to grow and become better and maybe offer more than one per marking period or per semester, because she thinks a lot of kids want to take the class.

Jason Gullstrand added that one of the biggest things to being a classroom teacher is providing a comfort zone for students to feel comfortable enough to have topic discussions. It is obvious that Mr. Massa's kids have an environment like that. It does not happen right away, it takes a little while, but once the feeling of comfortability of those students happens within the class, it's amazing what you can get from them and the discussions you can have. And students are brutally honest and if they didn't like it, they would let you know and they don't care if the cameras rolling or not, so all the video responses are completely honest.

He greatly appreciates it absolutely thanked Mr. Massa.

Debbie Kulick added that everyone else has said everything she would say.

George Andrews added that it was very good to hear the students say what they thought of the class. He said it is one thing to have a teacher say how great the class is, but it is refreshing to hear the kids say how great the class is.

Heather Piperato added I just wanted to put my district had on really quickly, and say that just because we have been hearing about this course at North does not mean South is being left out. The same class will be offered at South next semester. There's at least one section signed up so they look forward to hearing from them next semester. She also didn't want to slight any social studies teachers that might be on the meet who do teach other perspectives. She pointed out that the time they have is very limited so they are taking thousands of years of history and putting it in 180 days, 90 days if they are talking about blocks in high school. She just wanted to give credit that one of their foundational values of social studies teachers is to make sure that they show everybody's perspectives, but what they love about the class is, they have the time to really have the conversations they don't really have during the school year. She said she was sorry to interject but she wanted to be sure that she is fair to all of the awesome teachers and all of the wonderful classes.

Dr. Bonilla added that they are talking about an English multicultural course. They definitely want to make sure that they are meeting the needs of the students and it is all of those who are on the front lines, who understand that. She appreciates Heather's input because they don't want to take away from the amazing work that is happening in the different classrooms and ideally, the exchange is happening in every classroom to some extent. She then offered Dr. Vitulli to move on to the next topic.

f. DEI Update - Trenee Lurry

Dr. Vitulli handed the meeting over to Trenee Lurry. She went on to say that they continue to have ongoing conversations about DEI and they completed their last administration training as of that day. The one of three they completed that afternoon was at the TLC Center. They had some great collaborative

conversations and deliberation. It was thoroughly enjoyed by most and the month prior, they had Heather Bennett that spoke from PSBA. They had a student speaker, Santos Rosas, who spoke at the conference through a video and did an excellent job. However; because of the technological difficulties, they aren't able to play his video. But he did a wonderful job and she was very proud of him and how he spoke about his feelings and how he felt connected to diversity and what it was doing in his life. She thought it was wonderful and so that was her update for the evening. She offered the opportunity for Santos to speak about what he talked about at the conference if he was comfortable and wanted to do so.

Santos Rosas thanked everyone for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the district at the summit. He said it would not have been available to him if he did not take the Multicultural Perspectives Class and if our district was not as focused on DEI projects, so he thanked the district again for offering that to him.

Dr. Bonilla thanked him for representing us. She said they were proud to have one of our students there and they will be pushing to have more of our students have that opportunity because they have something to say, and she wants to make sure they create those platforms for them to do so. She thanked Trene for the presentation and the work that she continues to do and her leadership in the district. She opened it up to any members of the committee with questions or comments for Trene or for Santos.

Rebecca Bear thanked them for everything they both have done. She said she was proud of Santos as both a board member and a mom.

Jason Gullstrand seconded what Rebecca said.

Debbie Kulick said ditto to what Jason had said.

George Andrews went along with everyone else. They then moved over to the last item.

g. Building Awareness of Sensitive Terminology

Dr. Vitulli handed the meeting over to Dr. Riker, who commended all the presenters, the committee, and everyone that has stuck with tonight's meeting. He thinks that the presentations they heard that evening, the topics, and the forward momentum that they have as a district is well worth celebrating. He thinks it's exciting and he is thrilled to be part of it. He commends all of the staff, the administration, and the board for supporting this direction. He went on to say he is happy to defer to the great wealth of knowledge we have in our district and people that are doing phenomenal work. With that being said, his topic is a controversial one, or at least, a topic that opens doors to varying opinions or thoughts or ideas, and he appreciates Dr. Bonilla giving him the opportunity to discuss this topic with input and listening to folks throughout the district and decisions that are being made or have been made and where that comes from and where the foundation for some of those decisions may be made. The topic he is going to talk about is a situation that was brought to his attention week prior, which was at the South High School, where there was a poster that was displayed in a hallway with the term white privilege as its primary focus. They have had discussions and Dr. Bonilla has actually done an initial training with a number of the administrative team members on terminology and the sensitivity around terminology, as well as people's understanding of what terminology means and how that terminology may be misrepresented or misinterpreted or even misused. The poster was in a hallway and now that it has been removed, the students and adults have strong opinions on both sides regarding whether posters, such as this, should be allowed to be displayed in the hallways of the schools or not. As we all know, in our society there been public debates, displays, protests, arguments, and even some level of civil unrest occurs over language. Where the differences between what is believed right and what is believed wrong are argued, but they are not always resolved. One of the things he thinks we can agree on, and would hope that we can agree on, is that misunderstanding or the misapplication of certain terminology can and does create opportunities for anger and tension and division. Those feelings are often because the terminology is not understood or it is misinterpreted or it's misapplied. So posters that are displayed in our hallways that may perhaps create that anger, or that tension, or that division do not belong in our hallways or our schools. Some may even argue whether they belong within the classrooms where students are required to be or whether the terms should even be discussed in our schools and in our classrooms at all. What Dr. Riker has said before is that no student, no race, no gender, no one in our district should be elevated at the expense of another. In

addition, he added that no student should be made to think they are a problem because they were born white or a person of color or because of their gender identity nor should anyone be prevented from having access to an AP course because they have a disability. So without an understanding of the term white privilege, students that were not part of those class discussions should not be assumed to have an understanding of what is meant by having such a poster in their hallways. It cannot be assumed that they would read such a post and not feel angry; that it would not create tension or be interpreted as divisive. This could not have been made more clear to Dr. Riker when he was reading the 30 plus page Facebook discussion that was shared with him involving approximately 38 adults that were at odds over this. He read anger, tension, and division. He added that it is not a question of the term, but how educated students or adults are on their understanding of the term, and the meaning behind it, or how it may be misapplied. Dr. Riker assumes they will have individuals that agree and disagree with the outcome. They will also have individuals who think as a school, the topic should be discussed, while others think these topics should never be discussed in the schools. He even had individuals use this one example by one class to condemn the entire district as teaching critical race theory. So while students and families have a choice in the electives their student may take in the secondary schools; all students, including those that were not part of this class discussion, remain as per compulsory education laws, a required captive audience, to a free appropriate public education without intentional or unintentional or unintentionally created exposures to topics that may create tension or anger or cause division. And so Dr. Riker wanted to provide the backdrop as to how the decisions are made, and really emphasize that it's not the terminology, it is the terminology, but it's the lack of understanding or misapplication of that terminology that they must always be cognizant of, especially when students in the hallways in the schools, who haven't had the opportunity to have those discussions, are left to their own interpretations which may not be the interpretation we want them to have. He then turned the meeting back over to Dr. Bonilla.

Dr. Bonilla thanked Dr. Riker for weighing in and for ground setting. She did want to point out that white privilege was not the only term that was discussed in that conversation in that class; other privilege was discussed. At any given time, they will be having the discussions, as a board, as a committee, as a community, because it is important that they talk about terminology. She wanted to clarify and build on what Dr. Riker said that it is about the terminology, but it's not about the terminology. The reason they agreed to take the poster down was more about process, protocol, and ensuring that they are moving the district in a direction where they are building the understanding, the knowledge base, and the support for differences, for diversity and for open communication. Not that they are shying away from tough conversations, but also that they are being strategic, deliberate, and respectful on how they approach the spaces and conversation, so the multicultural course, for example, is a space where students come in understanding that it's conducive to having some of those conversations more freely than in another classroom. So they want to ensure that they are respectful of families and students who are not ready to have that conversation, at the same time as another family or student is; because they are not all in the same place and they have to meet people where they are. Even as a board, they have dialogue about where individuals are and really the reconciliation of their lived experience, and how that impacts comfort level with certain terminology. Dr. Bonilla, for example, is very comfortable talking about privilege, because that has been her work for over a decade. She is in marginalized populations as a woman, as a woman of color, as a Hispanic woman, but she has privileges in terms of access to higher education, in terms of being a homeowner, in terms of the Community, where she lives versus the projects in New York City, where she grew up in an impoverished Community. She is very comfortable talking about that, but she has also published a chapter in a book, has also facilitated conversations about that across the country, and so she is open in her experience. Which is not the same for everybody, and so they want to ensure that they are learning from this experience as a district, and that they are applying it to their timeline in terms of how to move this conversation forward. She then asked the Committee to weigh in and ask any comments or questions that they have and then they will move to public participation.

She handed the meeting off to Deborah Kulick. Ms. Kulick said she thinks that Dr. Riker really gave the sentiment of the district, and the way they feel about the topic and the input is exceptionally appreciated,

because he comes from a different viewpoint and sees things through a different lens so she can appreciate what they have done and how it was handled.

Dr. Bonilla handed it off to Jason Gullstrand.

Mr. Gullstrand added that unity of diversity is extremely important through understanding. It's going to take a while to get to that point to understand and to create the dialogue to create the unity between the diverse groups that the district has. He uses this to summarize what they have been talking about in regards to know moving forward and getting the understanding as a whole, as opposed to one particular viewpoint.

Dr. Bonilla thanked him and moved to Rebecca Bear. She reinforced the concept that understanding that not everyone's at the same place is very important and some discussions and some topics are very difficult and no one knows how it's going to affect anyone so she appreciates the time Dr. Bonilla and Dr. Riker took to actually address it because it's important as a district, that we do address issues and we don't sweep them under the carpet. It is also important they make sure the community knows how they feel about it, and also why action was taken in the way it was.

George Andrews added that he thought Dr. Riker did a fantastic job of presenting it and hopefully he presents the same at the school board meeting so that the whole public understand where they are coming from as a district. They want everyone to understand and Mr. Andrews felt Dr. Riker did a great job presenting and Dr. Bonilla did a great job as well.

No other board members or administrators had anything to contribute so they moved to public participation.

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.

Dr. Bonilla welcome Steven Lurry. He wanted to chime in earlier on the multicultural class. He wanted to thank Mr. Massa because both Mr. Lurry's wife and kids speak highly of him. He believes it is a step in the right direction, and so Mr. Lurry was happy that he had a chance to be able to show that video and what the kids of the school think about what's going on.

Jennifer Marmo is a part of the DEI committee. Her reason to be a part of it is because of the students. She has been in this district for 19 years at the North High School and, while she did not start out living in the district, she moved to the district, so that her children could be in the district. For her, it's always been about her students, and now it is about her own children joining the rest of her other children and wanting everyone to be able to see themselves. At North, they have a T-Wolf program that is part of their SWPBIS which is Tolerance, Wise choices, Ownership, Leadership, and Friendship. Mr. Massa is a TWOLF through and through. He is always nominated to be TWOLF staff of the month. Ms. Marmo continued on to say she is so very proud of the students in the video. She has seen some of the students grow from ninth graders. For them to take ownership of the video and show their leadership and be tolerant, all of those things are what they want from the DEI trainings.

All of those things are what she wants to see as an educator in our district, a parent, and as a Community Member. She expressed she is excited for the students to be able to have open discussions, create comfort zones, allow the students to see themselves and to be able to speak their piece. She reinforced that other teachers in other classrooms are trying to make real world connections and she is one of them in her English class because history and English are tied together. They want students to know why things were written the way they were written because of what was happening in that culture and she loves seeing it all come together and she is very excited.

Maria De Jesus-Perez was the next to speak. She said that it was her first time attending the meeting. She went on to say the first presentation from High School South was fantastic with all the data they presented. They had some really great points, but she thinks it important to get some demographics only because one of the data points that stood out to her was that 30% do feel that they don't belong, which she thinks is really huge because we know that belonging is important. She added that when we're unable to show our authentic selves and show up when we don't feel heard or seen knowing that as humans, we are hard wired to make connections and feel seen, heard, and valued so it is important that a third do not feel like they belong. She would like to know what percentage of the school took the survey, as well as some demographics and thinks it is really important.

Dr. Bonilla thanked her, asked her to let the team respond, and said it was really good feedback. Dr. Bonilla added that she was hopeful that Ms. De Jesus-Perez would come regularly to the meetings. Dr. Bonilla asked Heather Piperato if she wanted to give feedback or if she wanted to come back at a later time.

Ms. Piperato thanked Ms. De Jesus-Perez for reinforcing that point on wanting the demographics and said that she would absolutely take a look at it and see how it can be done. She said, in terms of the population that took it, it was roughly 200 in every class and at JTL, that represents two thirds of each grade level, as they have roughly 300 students at each of those grade levels. It was offered to the whole class, just to clarify, everyone can take it, but surveys are not required. Students by law, are not required to take surveys, so if they chose not to, then they didn't have to, but it was offered to everybody. great.

Ms. De Jesus-Perez responded that it would be good to know the population data and those numbers when they are presenting because it helps to put more sense to the data. She then commented in regards to Mr. Massa. She has two children at North and didn't know his class was required but she is looking forward to making sure her boys take the class. She then commented that she thought Heather answered this but then asked if the same course was going to be offered at South? And she also asked why offer a multicultural class? Are these topics not being discussed throughout all the history classes? This is her first time in the meeting so she is just learning but she has gotten some of the answers as she has heard some of the members speak.

Dr. Bonilla added that these conversations have been ongoing for over a year so she can catch up by watching the zoom meeting recordings or reading the minutes. Also, if she emails with a couple of those questions, they can share some highlights, but they did have a committee that worked for several months on putting the work together and wanted to make sure that they had a very specific space in response to the student's needs, as they were conducting an audit of what courses they were offering, but they are happy to catch her up since she is interested.

Ms. De Jesus-Perez thanked Dr. Bonilla for the information and went on to add her last comment about being one of the parents that reached out to Dr. Riker and the rest of the Community regarding the Facebook posting. She added, to Dr. Riker, that she appreciates and strongly respects him talking about it and actually respectfully loved his response to it in regards to terminology and sensitivity.

She went on to add, for those that are not aware, she had two examples of situations to present. One of which occurred in Stroudsburg, maybe a year or so ago regarding a racial video that went out and also what recently happened in Penn State in regards to a speaker that was going to talk at the University, related to hate speech regarding the LGBTQ community. She pointed out that what came out of both those cases in response to being in a public area and having posters up and talking, or basically promoting the activities on their campuses is that the campuses or the schools can't do anything due to the first amendment, the freedom of speech. She added that she couldn't agree more with Dr. Riker and his response, but how would he address someone at a board meeting that brings up the freedom of speech first amendment? How would he help them understand the district stance on it? And is it even legal to have had the poster taken down?

Dr. Bonilla commented that she will have Dr. Riker respond to the question and that he Ed Committee meeting is the right space for this conversation, as the public board meetings are more around conducting business. That is also why they don't engage in the back and forth, so this is the right forum for the conversation. She then asked Dr. Riker to weigh in as well as others on the team who would like to give

feedback and she added that she appreciates that Ms. De Jesus-Perez had done her homework in terms of the comments that she was making and the questions that she was asking, because the way that they can continue to grow in the space and really support the students and the Community is by having informed conversation, and one of the issues that they have had in the community with individuals that come to meetings is that they are sharing misinformation and so she appreciates Ms. De Jesus-Perez effort to come in informed.

Dr. Riker thanked Ms. De Jesus-Perez for the question. He added that he is not a lawyer so he is not going to give a legalese answer, but, in schools and one of the things he mentioned was compulsory education, it's similar to the reason why Ms. Piperato indicated students aren't required or can't be made to take surveys. school compulsory education, because students are required by law to be in school, it's not a choice. They have protections under faith, in terms of what the district can do in loco parentis, knowing the parent is not in the school and what protections we are obligated to provide as well. Compulsory education law and schools being not a choice for students, they have to be in the schools by law or receive an education somewhere, as such, we have an obligation as teachers and leaders in our schools, and as a Community to also protect them from things that may cause a disruption within the schools. The key is may, we don't know whether it will or not, but if we anticipate something could disrupt school, then we have an obligation to address those things. And so, he doesn't believe they are on shaky ground from a first amendment legal perspective. He believes strongly that they do have the ability to control what is displayed in the schools and what is not, and obviously to protect the students, staff, and Community in the best way so he has no reason to believe they are in any way violating first amendment rights.

Dr. Bonilla asked if anyone else from the administrative team wanted to comment?

Dr. Vitulli said he wanted to comment that he and Dr. Riker spoke in length regarding this and they saw so much potential value in using the situation but with some structure behind it. The thought of sharing those posters with kids but in a more structured setting where interaction could take place for questions to be asked and answered as opposed to just putting the poster up with no other means of information. Dr. Bonilla added that her opinion when they talked about it, was really the context, which Dr. Riker mentioned, for the students who were not engaged in the original discussion, who were not part of that particular class; not been engaged in it didn't give them the context, to be able to be part of the conversation. What they do want is to use opportunities, like this one, for students to be able to engage. She would love for every student to leave the district when they graduate being comfortable with terminology that even some of the board members and educators are not comfortable with. She would love to build the skill set and the comfort level of the students that when they hear or see a term such as white privilege, that they're not uncomfortable and they don't freak out because they understand what it means: That, if the self-identify as white, that is not for them to feel guilty, that is to understand a historic dynamic and that we're putting terminology and names to those spaces, just like Dr. Bonilla's kids and her work on ensuring that they understand that although they are Hispanic boys, they are Puerto Rican, they have a lot of privilege and she always points that out to them, because she wants them to understand and be able to own that so that when somebody makes certain comments or uses terminology, they don't freak out. So for Dr. Bonilla, terminology is so critical in this work, we have to prepare individuals from the board to the educators, to the staff across the district to the students. The one concern is that the adults are not all there yet. As Ms. Lurry conducts the training and moves the district community into a space of more education around the terminology, as they move the board, which last month they brought Dr. Bennett which was fabulous as they got a lot of good feedback, as they get to a place where terminology means the same thing to everyone within the district, so when they use the word diversity, what does that mean at the East Stroudsburg area school district? Any other Community, any other organization might use it slightly different, but we want to be at a place where when we use certain words, certain terms, everyone here understands what it means, and in that process, we also have to educate the Community. We also need to understand that there are political differences, there are religious differences and it's not just recent ethnicity. There are gender identity differences and all of these demographic dynamics that play a role in the lens that individuals bring to the DEI conversation and/or people connecting DEI to critical race theory which they have stated, over and over, that's not what they're doing, so this is an

ongoing process. She added that they appreciate the dialogue from Ms. De Jesus-Perez, they appreciate her as a parent and member of the Community coming in with the questions and she invites her to continue to join them. She also thanked Dr. Riker, Dr. Vitulli, and the rest of the team. She appreciates their leadership and the openness in which they address the topic, but also that there was a conversation between the school leadership, the principal, and the teacher because they didn't want any teacher to feel like they are not able to support their students going through the conversations and the spaces and so the dialogues did happen so that there's a level of understanding about why they made the decision and how they want to learn from this experience.

IX. PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED TO FINANCE COMMITTEE

- a. Suntex International-24 Game (First In Math) (VII.a)
- b. 3P Learning-Mathseeds (VII.b)

Dr. Bonilla went on to address the items previously submitted to the Finance Committee. One was the Suntex International-24 Game, First in Math and the second was 3P Learning-Mathseeds. The invoices were in the packet. There were no questions or comments from the committee.

BY THE RECOMMENDATION 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 Debbie Kulick. Motion was seconded by Mr. Gullstrand and carried unanimously 4-0.

X. ADVISORY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

N/A

BY THE RECOMMENDATION COMMITTEE:

XI. NEXT MEETING- December Date - To Be Determined after board reorganization

BY THE RECOMMENDATION COMMITTEE:
Motion was made by Debbie Kulick to adjourn. Motion was seconded by Rebecca Bear and carried unanimously, 4-0

XII. ADJOURNMENT: 9:28 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Barlotta