

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE CITY OF PLAINFIELD  
IN UNION COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

MINUTES of a **SPECIAL MEETING** of the Board of  
Education Held on Saturday, October 31, 2015

A **SPECIAL** Meeting of the Board of Education of the City of Plainfield was held this day in the Plainfield High School Conference Room. Notice had been provided to Board members and to the Courier-News, Star Ledger, Public Library, City Clerk, Plainfield Police Department, and posted in all Plainfield Public Schools and on the Plainfield Public Schools' website. Mrs. Lisa Fittipaldi, Board Attorney called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. and the following action took place:

I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II. WELCOME

WELCOME to a **SPECIAL MEETING** of the Plainfield Board of Education. Members hope you will find the meeting interesting and informative. We thank you for taking the time to attend. Please be advised this and all meetings of the board are open to the media and public, consistent with the Open Public Meetings Act (Ch. 231 Laws of 1975), and that the advance notice required therein has been provided to the Courier News and Star Ledger on Tuesday, October 27, 2015 for advertisement on Thursday, October 29, 2015.

III. ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Mrs. Wilma G. Campbell, President  
Mr. Frederick D. Moore, Sr., Vice President  
Mr. Terrence S Bellamy, Sr.  
Mr. John C Campbell  
Mrs. Deborah Clarke  
Mrs. Jackie Coley  
Mrs. Carletta D. Jeffers  
Mr. David M. Rutherford  
Mr. Richard Wyatt,

ALSO PRESENT

Mrs. Anna Belin-Pyles, Superintendent  
Mrs. Lisa Fittipaldi, Esq.

The following resolution was moved by Mrs. Campbell seconded by Mr. Moore and unanimously approved by the Board:

**RESOLUTION**

WHEREAS, the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A.10:4-11, permits the Board of Education to meet in closed session to discuss certain matters, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, the Board of Education adjourns to closed session to discuss:

- Personnel
- Legal

and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, the minutes of this closed session be made public when the need for confidentiality no longer exists.

The Board of Education adjourned into its Executive Session at 1:39 p.m.

The Plainfield Board of Education began the public session of its Special Meeting at 11:25 a.m.

#### IV. REMARKS FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Mrs. Campbell welcomed the public. She said there is a critical issue to be addressed, so she would be reversing the order of meeting; public session first and executive second.

#### V. REMARKS FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

NONE.

#### VI. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Jennifer Fuller, attended the meeting to address her son's schedule. She tried to do this last semester with guidance counselor. He is a shared time student and takes honors pre-calculus and honors engineering; not this year. He takes an, online history class at Voc Tech so his schedule is set, but he has no science class; he takes band after school. The block schedule is a problem. She feels honor class all year long is not sensible. Her time was extended one minute by Mrs. Campbell, second by Mr. Bellamy. She wants it fixed by next semester.

Jeff Truitt, Social Studies Teacher, I am here 31 years. The practice was rotated so (every student) grades 9-11 were placed in remedial classes notwithstanding there was no assessment, and no pre or post assessment to see who needed it.

It is oxymoronic notion to take an honor student or gifted and talented student to give them remedial. They only require 15 math credits, we give 30. It damages the student; there is no sense of urgency to fix it. I brought it to attention of Board to get it fixed. Mr. Campbell moved to extend his time and seconded by Mrs. Coley.

Nicole Bates Volcy, had three (3) issues. Her child is a sophomore, gifted and talented child. Honors classes, English, history and geometry. We are proactive parents. They could've taken classes online. The school didn't have first PTO meeting in November because of issues happening with Board. I have to decide whether to go to a private school. I need to keep child's spirit intact, you are killing it. Motion to extend her time by President Campbell. Second by Vice President Moore. The block system came about as disciplinary issues; keeps kids from being in the halls. It is mob control to have block schedule.

Ora Lee Hill, graduated through all of Plainfield schools. My three children all went through Plainfield. Tracking was system in 1978. Mrs. Campbell made motion to extend; all Board voted yes. She was on the team that explored block scheduled; the report said not good. The Board did it anyway.

Tyler Mitchell, a student. After 50-60 minutes we get tired and can't pay attention. Electives – used to have great electives. But now students don't get what they want. I have a friend who is an honors student and put in all remedial classes.

Kenar Myers – Junior at Plainfield High School. She applied to all Catholic schools in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. I came here and thought I would get electives in photography and dance. I only have 4 periods; all other schools have 8 periods. I don't have time to ever take classes I want; I would have to take class after school. In English I am learning nouns, pronouns. I asked the teacher for more advanced work, he said no. In gym class we spend first 20 minutes in a circle, it is a waste of time.

Cumise Chambliss. I lived in Plainfield most of my life. I went to Plainfield High School, and I took shop classes and education. We switched classes; this was better for my mind and behavior; we became more interactive with our teachers; children can't spell but not taught to spell in English. They can't count because in math it isn't taught. We had better education. Now students are being prepared for mediocre jobs.

Kenar Myers. Came back to speak. Freshman year there were 50 electives and I picked 5. I didn't get any.

Lynn Wallace. Board said block period would be addressed, why not.

Mrs. Campbell says this is the first time it was brought to board level. We asked to get it fixed by October 6<sup>th</sup>, so we called for a special meeting. We know the problem – we want administration to respond. We said as a board we want it fixed.

Mrs. Johnson Tucker spoke. I was invited to a first meeting. There was mention of this in a prior discussion.

Mr. Willie Worley was approved on May 19, 2015 to be the Principal at Plainfield High School.

Met with 20-25 students at a round table on May 15<sup>th</sup>. Met with individual teachers in May and June; I asked them to discuss what they love, were concerned about or believed needed to be fixed.

Not until September 9<sup>th</sup> was the question of how long students were in class was first brought up. It was a private meeting; Mr. Worley said we have to look at data. Students have to take HESPA.

They must score 200 or better to be proficient so they can graduate. Math and English had to be scheduled for 80 minutes. That decision was made because Plainfield High School kids were not passing HESPA.

In 2011-2012 there was a period schedule. In 2012-2013, they moved to block schedule. He is interrupted by President Campbell to present solutions. He says block scheduling was introduced to fix schedule. We made changes this year. Teachers have to recommend students for honors classes so we created honors classes. We collapsed classes when we could.

There was a meeting September 29<sup>th</sup> to discuss looking at the schedule and making adjustments. Two lead teachers said they would look at it, and a group is working to see what changes can be made. They have made recommendations. Research suggests kids can learn in 40 minutes; 60 minutes is the ideal length of time. There are other issues because of ESL. There are 450 courses at Plainfield High School. There are a small number of classes that are oversubscribed.

There was a meeting on September 29th that some board members attended. The Board asked that it be resolved by October 6th. Mr. Campbell then said the Board wants to hear resolutions; going into second marking period on November 11th; problem affects students' lives.

Mr. Moore stated scheduling started in summer. We are going to move it earlier. Block scheduling was mandated on Plainfield High School, but the mandate is over. What is being done for other students who don't need remediation? How are you scheduling them? How are you giving them electives? How are you moving back to a period schedule?

Mr. Worley answered part of what is raised is remediation; lead teachers are always included in scheduling process.

Deborah Johnson – Science Lead Teacher. I am working with other lead teachers. We have a solution; we have proposed a period schedule. The actual schedule goes according to the marking period. The new marking period starts 11/12. Students can choose electives. How to make it work?

Mr. Worley responded the he saw the proposal on Thursday. Dismissal time is 2:25 p.m. The new proposed time is 2:45 p.m. I haven't been able to speak to the Superintendent about it.

Mr. Moore said I can leave this meeting today and talk to neighbors saying we have moved from block schedule to a period schedule?

Mr. Worley said the presentation made by lead teachers didn't address math. He thought they proposed 60 minutes.

Mrs. Johnson Tucker said they went back to check because of ESL to make all periods equal.

Mr. Worley said part of the recommendation was 60 minutes for math and they hadn't met again to discuss it again.

Mrs. Campbell asked for the Superintendent to comment.

Mrs. Coley interrupted. She went to the September 29th meeting and learned certain lead teachers weren't involved; Mrs. Coley said she wants them involved.

Mrs. Belin-Pyles stated all lead teachers were included. What we hear today is another schedule suggestion made to the Principal. The Central Office asked for clarification. They are moving to a 45 minute period. The danger is that everyone thinks it will happen on November 12.

She says there are other considerations. They have had dialogue with PEA if they lengthen the day. Superintendent says we want best possible program. Whether it happens on November 11th or November 15th they will make the appropriate adjustment in other semesters. There are other factors to take into consideration.

Mrs. Campbell stated "you aren't saying when".

Mrs. Belin-Pyles said it may be delayed by a few days; it will be resolved within a week or so of November 12th.

Katherine Cardona spoke with respect to adjusting to periods. She said there is no problem with CBA. Teachers can be required to teach up to 6 periods a day. There are certain number of hours stated in the contract and compensation stated if they teach more time. No problem with a 9 period day.

Mrs. Belin-Pyles stated we may need flexibility in scheduling.

Mrs. Campbell responded then asked if Board had questions.

Mr. Campbell thanked parents and students for coming out. I am not an educator, I am a farmer and a realtor. This doesn't seem like a big problem. Why can't people who get paid fix it? We met on September 27th. Today we only have a proposal.

Muriel Coletta, Lead Math Teacher spoke. In terms of honors classes, they are by semesters and have been the equivalent of 40 minutes. Students came with NJ ASK scores. It is our responsibility to provide remediation if they didn't pass. It hasn't been 40 minutes of remediation and then 40 minutes of new material; it has been built into class. In prior years we have had double periods (only 3 years of it). Scores have improved on HSPA. 50-60% general education students passed compared to 33% who passed before block scheduling. There is a graduation requirement for math. We have to prepare them to pass PAARC in addition to regular math. I don't want to throw all of it out. Honors classes didn't have remediation. They went further. Geometry students come from middle school Algebra I in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. We feel some students need more than 40 minutes of math.

Mr. Wyatt stated when he attended Plainfield High School it was a privilege to take electives. If you needed extra help you took an extra class in that field.

Ms. Coletta said we find students should have same the teacher. If we try to use 2 teachers it doesn't work as well statistically shown.

Mrs. Campbell said our concern is that assessment data is being used to see where students belong. The Board want students being in the class they need and want.

Ms. Coletta said we have a variety of ability options to accommodate skills and ability.

Mrs. Belin-Pyles stated to answer Mr. Wyatt we will do that so electives can grow for students.

Mrs. Campbell asked is there anything that hasn't been addressed.

Mr. Worley said he met with a parent on October 22nd to establish the PTO. The PTO meets November 19th and he will meet with them.

Austin Chambliss, Student Liaison thanked the parents for coming to the meeting. There is a lack of communication in school in order to speak to the Principal. There are too many barriers from the chain of command. It is hard for students to get into programs for studying abroad. There is a lack of college prep programs and no information is passed on. His friends in college said Plainfield High School didn't prepare them. There is a lack of togetherness in school. (1) It is a lack of togetherness between teachers and students. (2) It is a lack of togetherness among students. ESL students don't mingle because they are put in one area of the school.

Mr. Chambliss says because he goes to Voc Tech he isn't affected by scheduling. He went to the ESL classes. They aren't being helped. Their dreams are being put aside. The lack of spirit in school: kids bring up ideas but they die. Student council is trying to get students involved.

Paulina De Leon, Student Liaison mentioned that there are 2 questionnaires. The longer one was not created by them. The shorter questionnaire was created by students. Latino students have complained to her that classes are overcrowded.

Mr. Chambliss returned to speak again. There is a security issue. Students have to enter through certain exits and entrances. They can't leave class to go to the bathroom within 20 minutes at the beginning class and within 20 minutes before the end. Good security guards but the orders they have to follow makes them enemies.

Ms. De Leon spoke again, stating she takes 4 block classes. She passed Spanish III last year. This year she is in Spanish II.

Mr. Worley spoke about the entrances and exits. Students enter in two (2) primary doors, 13 and 16. Students can leave through any door at regular dismissal. If they leave early, they have to use designated doors. We cannot leave all doors open all day for security reasons. Teachers have a right to decide when students could go to bathroom. Teachers can allow them, but they have to give the students a pass. Now they sign a book.

Mrs. Campbell said she has seen security at bathroom doors and it is locked.

Mr. Worley replied that during class changes bathrooms open on the second floor. They are locked and have to show security the pass at other times.

Mrs. Campbell asked if security is posted why door is locked.

Mr. Worley said if guards has to go elsewhere, it has to be locked. He didn't tell security to keep doors locked. The bathrooms are opened on as needed basis.

Mr. Campbell said he needed to use the bathroom and it had be unlocked. He says rather than talking about bathrooms being locked let's go back to scheduling.

Mr. Worley stated we have to worry about all these things. He will leave them open if the Superintendent tells him to leave them open. He said the former principal instituted this bathroom locking procedure and he kept it in place.

Ms. Gil-Landisi stated there are two sets of language arts classes; native speakers and non-native speakers. She says Paulina should have been in different class. She knows all teachers' schedules; they looked at scores that came in July; 80 students were moved to a different level based upon scores. 20-30 students scored above 4.5 which is district's proficiency level so they transitioned out of program. Since August more students have come in. They have balanced most classes; 31-33, 33 and 34 students in 3 classes. They opened additional sections in algebra.

Lenny Jimenez, stated there are 36 sections in the bilingual section. We tried to balance courses but don't have enough teachers. There are 506 students, only 2 bilingual teachers for science, 2 bilingual teachers for social studies, and 4 bilingual math teachers. The District needs more teachers for a growing population.

Ms. Landisi responded that last October there were 416 bilingual. This October there are 506. The number dies down after the beginning of the school year; and see an increase every year at Christmas.

Mrs. Belin-Pyles mentioned that we are actively recruiting qualified teachers and it is hard to find content, specific, highly qualified teachers. We are trying to meet growing population needs.

Ms. Jimenez asked if ads are on the District website.

Mrs. Belin-Pyles reply, yes, we also reached out to professional papers and journals.

Mrs. Campbell asked if there are other overcrowding problems which are different from ESL.

Ms. Jimenez said 25 out of 60 courses are PE and over 30 kids. Thirty three (33) are language ESL.

Dr. Nwanko said, I have been a teacher here for 20 years. Are my 3 classes overcrowded? Yes. I consider 30 students in a world language class to be overcrowded. I have French 2 classes and Ms. Matthews has French 2. We have a combined 61 students. We have 20 students who can be placed in French 2 honors. We used to have AP French class. It was approved. Subsequent placements didn't give enough French 3 or honors students to feed AP. It used to be called Department of World Languages. He says other things have impacted the department. ESL has taken over. World Language Department has been stunted. He was part of process to have 4 students go to summer abroad program with scholarships. We are all here for children. His classes are 30 students, overcrowded.

We should've had French II honors class yesterday. It is French II that is overcrowded. One colleague has no classes to teach next semester. I came to be part of rectifying system that needs to be rectified. I just received an invitation to be part of the Principal's Advisory Council. Teachers are willing to help at no extra cost and on their own time. It took three weeks to fix his computer and smart board and board still doesn't work.

Mrs. Campbell stated she wanted to reiterate the point that this was not to have a gripe session or to beat up administration. We are policy makers. We make sure policy is followed but when you bring problems to us we want the problems solved. We don't want to revisit this again. There is no definitive answer that the problems will be resolved by November 12th but shortly thereafter; overcrowding, equipment, and scheduling will be resolved.

Mrs. Belin-Pyles said a new French teacher will be starting. The promethium board issue will be resolved. Class numbers will be reviewed. We are making modifications to schedules to eliminate problems. We will still look for highly qualified teachers and will look at scheduled to fix overcrowding. As long as we keep getting 7-9 new students a week, we will try to get highly qualified teachers.

Mrs. Belin-Pyles then spoke about security. We are looking for a director. She will talk to the Principal to discuss school climate and safety.

Zakaes Patterson, a sophomore at Plainfield High School. There is not enough variety of electives for students. But not every student is interested in the same thing. If we have room for more electives, bring them in. Our students want to learn all we can. He is glad block scheduling is resolved, it didn't give him time for electives. We need to learn. If you fail the students you fail yourselves.

Mrs. Campbell asks him to meet with the Superintendent after the meeting. It means a lot to the Board that you came today.

Emily Morgan, is concerned about a lot of issues. She wants block scheduling to be resolved. Grateful the parents came out. She wants to see in next two months that changes are made. She is disturbed about the need for remedial classes. By the time they leave 5<sup>th</sup> grade their proficiency dropped to 32%. I want us to look at spending \$22 million on head start.

Mrs. Belin-Pyles stated the interpretation of the data is wrong. Students who started in the system and stayed made progress. The population in the District has increased 18%. You have to look at sub groups. When you look at information in sub groups it shows a different picture. We have students who are new to the District or the country. The Superintendent wants Ms. Morgan to speak with her in order to go over data.

Michelle Fields, PTO President for Plainfield High School. She is glad we met to discuss scheduling. She feels children should have electives. Her oldest has honors classes and wants to go to an Ivy League college but Ivy League colleges want AP classes. It isn't fair to the students. She wants students encouraged. Some need vocational training. 40 children in the class won't work. She announced November 19 at 6:00 for first PTO meeting.

Ms. Bates Vosey, asked if there is an accelerated process to get teachers into class. Can we help even if we don't have an educational background?

Mr. Worley, stated we want to be phenomenal. We may have growing pains. We are committed to academic excellence.

Mr. Campbell moved and seconded by Mr. Bellamy and unanimously approved by the Board to go in executive session 1:54 p.m.

## XII. REPORT OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

**Mrs. Campbell moved Human Resources as a Consent Agenda, seconded by Mr. Bellamy. The motion carried on a roll-call vote with eight members in favor of all. Mr. Rutherford in favor of all, but abstained on Item A2. None were opposed.**

“The Board of Education of the City of Plainfield reaffirms its commitment to ensure that the district provides equal employment opportunities regardless of race, color, creed, religion, sex, age, ancestry, national origin, handicap and social or economic status...”

It is the policy of this district to provide, through a positive and effective affirmative action program equal opportunities for employment, retention, and advancement of all people.

The equal employment objective for the Board of Education calls for achieving full utilization of minorities and women, and handicapped persons at all levels of management and non-management and by job classification; to prohibit discrimination in employment because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex or age; and to have a work environment free of discrimination.”

### **A. Contractual Appointments**

#### **Strategic Plan Link:**

#### **Goal 2: Human Resources**

**To improve the recruitment, retention, and development of district staff.**

The Superintendent of Schools recommends, and I so move, adoption of the following:

### **RESOLUTION**

The Plainfield Board of Education recognizes that a highly qualified, competent, skilled and dedicated workforce is essential in the success of the District and students. Therefore, it has provided the Superintendent of Schools the authority to employ non-administrative and administrative staff members between the Business meeting of the Board of Education and next succeeding meeting of the Human Resource Committee.

The individuals listed have been verified by the Superintendent of Schools as qualified pursuant to the NJ Administrative Code, Statute 6A:9-1.1, which “sets forth the rules governing preparation, licensure, and professional development of those educators required by their positions to be certified. “The Superintendent, in this item has used his authority.

**RESOLVED**, that the Plainfield Board of Education approves the employment of the following provisionally subject to the requirements contained in Ch. 116,P.L. 1986 and upon verification of experience.

	<b><u>Name/Certification</u></b>	<b><u>Effective</u></b>	<b><u>Salary/ Pro-rated</u></b>	<b><u>Assignment</u></b>	<b><u>Replacing</u></b>	<b><u>Position Codes</u></b>
1.	Najiyah Drakeford Teacher Asst- Part Time	11/02/15-06/30/16	\$23,695.00	Hubbard	A. Hinds	PEAA-034
2.	Jordan Fields-Baskerville Teacher Asst-Part Time	11/02/15-06/30/16	\$24,196.00	Maxson	T. Shelton	PEAA-171
3.	Changyun Liu Math Teacher	12/01/15-06/30/16	\$53,010.00	PAAAS	New	PEAT-887
4.	Roxanna Valentin Senior Case Manager	11/23/15-06/30/16	\$58,110.00	SIFSS	P. Aquino	PEAI-033
5.	Bobby Akbar Elementary Teacher	12/2/15-06/30/16	\$67,460.00	Stillman	B. Plummer	PEAT-225

6.	Amanda Bowker-Paster Special Education Elementary Teacher	11/23/15-06/30/16	\$50,910.00	Cedarbrook	C. Tamasas	PEAT-824
7.	Debora Brown Math Teacher	11/11/15-6/30/16	\$55,610.00	PAAAS	L. Guenette	PEAT-389
8.	Myrlande Jenkins Elementary Teacher	11/2/15-06/30/16	\$50,910.00	Stillman	M. Rodriquez	PEAT-801
9.	Nathan Peart Special Education Elementary Teacher	11/16/15-6/30/16	\$54,410.00	Washington	J. Williams	PEAT-270
10.	Jennifer Sowden Physical Education Teacher	11/09/15–06/30/16	\$71,610.00	Cook	R. Rooney	PEAT-288

**(A roll-call and an affirmative vote of 5 board members are required for passage.)**

Mr. Bellamy moved and seconded by Mr. Moore and unanimously approved by the Board to adjourned the meeting at 3:50 p.m.

Reported by,

Lisa Fittipaldi, Board Attorney