

# CLOSTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

*Closter, New Jersey*

AGENDA

REGULAR MEETING

*Tenakill Middle School*

*May 21, 2026 - 7:30 PM*

Call to order: \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_ P.M.

Roll Call:

Ms. Argenziano	_____
Mr. Choi	_____
Ms. Estrems	_____
Ms. Lee	_____
Ms. Micera	_____
Ms. Ravid	_____
Mr. Shih	_____
Mr. Paldi	_____
Ms. Finkelstein	_____

## NEW JERSEY OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT STATEMENT - Read by the President:

The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act was enacted to ensure the right of the public to have advance notice of and to attend the meeting of public bodies at which any business affecting their interests is discussed or acted upon. In accordance with the provisions of this Act, the Secretary to the Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting by having the date, time, and place thereof, posted at each school building within the district, district website, the Board of Education office, the Office of the Borough Clerk, and transmitted to *The Record* and *Northern Valley Suburbanite* newspapers.

## PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

## PRINCIPALS' REPORTS

## SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

## BOARD COMMITTEES

**PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS**

Moved by \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by \_\_\_\_\_ to open the meeting to the public.

*Statements made by individual participants are limited to a duration of three (3) minutes unless otherwise announced at the beginning of the discussion. A maximum of 15 minutes for public input is scheduled as per bylaw 0167. The Board urges large groups to select one person to represent them. The Board reminds those individuals who take the opportunity to speak to please step up, identify themselves by name and address, and to limit their comments to items listed on the agenda.*

Moved by \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by \_\_\_\_\_ to resume the regular order of business.

**BOARD OPERATIONS**

Moved by \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by \_\_\_\_\_ to approve Motions A - J.

Motions were \_\_\_\_\_ by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

YEAS:

NAYS:

**A. APPROVAL - Board of Education Meeting Minutes**

Motion to approve the April 30, 2026, Board of Education meeting minutes.

**B. ACKNOWLEDGMENT - School Bus Emergency Evacuation Drill - HES**

The Board acknowledges that Hillside Elementary School successfully conducted its second emergency school bus exit drill, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:27-11.2, at 8:15 a.m. on May 14, 2026, at the school's location, 340 Homans Avenue. Andrew Enrique, Board Office Assistant, was the staff member in charge. The drill was for the Closter 2 route. This is shown in Appendix A.

**C. ACKNOWLEDGMENT - School Bus Emergency Evacuation Drill - TMS**

The Board acknowledges that Tenakill Middle School successfully conducted its second emergency school bus exit drill, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:27-11.2, at 7:45 a.m. on May 14, 2026, at Tenakill Middle School, 275 High Street; Andrew Enrique, Board Office Assistant, was the staff member in charge. The drill was for the Closter 2 route. This is shown in Appendix B.

D. **APPROVAL - Monetary Donations to Science Olympiad Team - Tenakill Middle School**

Motion to accept the following monetary donations totaling \$8,500.00 to the TMS Science Olympiad team toward their trip to the 2026 Science Olympiad Nationals in California:

- \$5,000.00 from the Closter PTO
- \$1,000.00 from the Closter Coaches Association
- \$500.00 from Engineer's Mind Corporation
- \$1,500.00 from the Closter Elks Club
- \$500.00 from Michael & Julia Istrator

E. **APPROVAL - Donation of Equipment to Science Olympiad Team**

Motion to accept the following donations totaling \$541.00 from the following colleges/universities, to the TMS Science Olympiad team, toward their trip to the 2026 Science Olympiad Nationals in California:

- Rowan University - Flags, bags, stickers, lanyards, pens
- TCNJ - Flags, pens, sunglasses, sticker sheets
- Ramapo College - Stickers, pens, postcards
- Middlesex College - Notepads, shirts, hand sanitizers, chapstick
- Bergen Community College - Sunglasses, carabiner, keychains, drawstring bag

F. **RESOLUTION Urging Relief from Rising Public School Employee Health-Care Costs**

WHEREAS, at a time of continued fiscal uncertainty and mounting challenges, local boards of education from across the state of New Jersey continues to suffer under the growing crisis posed by the rising cost of health benefits, and are desperate for relief; and

WHEREAS, despite record levels of state investments in public education, these school districts are facing fiscal pressures similar to those confronting the state budget, including the unsustainable growth in health-care premiums and the mounting insolvency of the state's public employees' health benefits programs; and

WHEREAS, both within the School Employees' Health Benefits Program (SEHBP) and the private market, year-over-year double-digit increases are placing tremendous strain on district budgets and local taxpayers alike; and

WHEREAS, Governor Sherrill and legislative leadership have publicly acknowledged the urgent need to address rising health-care costs and the challenges facing the state's health benefits plans, including both the state and local portions of the State Health Benefits Program and the SEHBP; and

WHEREAS, the seriousness of this issue is underscored by the mid-year SEHBP analysis released by the Treasury Department in March 2026, which concluded that “based on these projected losses and building in future trends, active premium rate increases for 2027 are likely to be in the double digits;” and

WHEREAS, these projected increases would follow the 31.9 percent premium increase that took effect in January 2026, further exacerbating an overall premium increase of nearly 74 percent in the preceding five years; and

WHEREAS, this growth in health-care costs far exceeds inflation, state aid increases, and the fiscal capacity of local communities; and

WHEREAS, rising health-care premiums are consuming an ever-larger portion of already constrained school district budgets, forcing difficult decisions that directly affect students, staff and educational quality; and

WHEREAS, these cost pressures also have significant consequences for taxpayers, as districts are often compelled to utilize the full extent of their available tax levy, even after which many districts remain unable to fully offset these increases due to the constraints of the property tax levy cap, despite the limited health-care exception; and

WHEREAS, for the families and students these districts serve, the downstream consequences — including district deficits, program cuts, and school closures — means the loss of community stability, continuity of services, and in many cases, access to the specialized supports that our most vulnerable students depend on; and

WHEREAS, these are also precisely the conditions that erode student achievement and weaken the family engagement that is central to strengthening New Jersey’s public schools; and

WHEREAS, implementing real, sustainable solutions to the rising cost of health benefits and reforming how benefits are delivered through the SEHBP would demonstrate the Governor’s and Legislature’s leadership and continued commitment to New Jersey’s students, educators, and families, which directly advances our shared goal of affordability and effective, efficient government for all New Jerseyans.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Closter Board of Education in the county of Bergen calls upon the Governor and State Legislature to provide immediate, short-term relief from the unsustainable increased health-care costs experienced by school districts in recent years; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Closter Board of Education in the county of Bergen urges the Governor to engage in meaningful engagement with all affected stakeholders to

develop and implement practical long-term reforms to the state's system of delivering health care to its public employees in order to generate meaningful, long-term savings; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to Governor Mikie Sherrill, State Treasurer Aaron Binder, Senate President Nicholas Scutari, Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin, Senator Holly T. Schepisi, Assemblyman Robert Auth, Assemblyman John V. Azzariti, Jr., M.D., and the New Jersey School Boards Association.

G. **APPROVAL - Acknowledgment of Execution and Recording of Deed of Conservation Restriction – Trees for Schools Grant Program**

Motion to acknowledge that the Borough of Closter will execute and record the Deed of Conservation Restriction on behalf of both the Borough and the Closter Board of Education in connection with the Trees for Schools Grant Program, and to direct the Business Administrator/Board Secretary to submit all remaining requirements to close out the grant.

H. **APPROVAL - Agreement between Closter School District and Ramapo College for the Teacher Assistant to Teacher Program**

Motion to approve the 3-year agreement between the Closter School District and Ramapo College Teacher Assistant to Teacher Program for the 2026-2027, 2027-2028, and 2028-2029 school years.

I. **APPROVAL - Acceptance of the Funding for Optimal Comprehensive Universal Screeners(FOCUS) Grant**

Motion to accept the Funding for Optimal Comprehensive Universal Screeners (FOCUS) Grant (25-TL02-G03) for the grant period of June 1, 2026, through May 31, 2027, as approved by the NJ Department of Education on May 19, 2026. The grant allocation for Closter Public Schools is \$3,544.00

J. **APPROVAL and RATIFICATION - Agreement with the Closter Education Association**

Motion to approve and ratify the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Closter Board of Education and the Closter Education Association for the 2026-2027, 2027-2028, 2028-2029, and 2029-2030 school years, as recommended by the Board's Negotiations Committee. The Board expresses its sincere appreciation to the Negotiations Committee for their dedicated efforts, and to the Closter Education Association and its representatives for their professionalism and collaborative spirit throughout the negotiation process. The Board hereby authorizes and directs the Board President and the Business Administrator/Board Secretary to execute the collective bargaining agreement and any other documents necessary to effectuate said agreement.

**CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION COMMITTEE**

*Chairperson: Ms. Lee; Members: Ms. Argenziano, Ms. Estrems*

Moved by \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by \_\_\_\_\_ to approve Motions A and B.  
Motions were \_\_\_\_\_ by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

YEAS:

NAYS:

A. **APPROVAL - Staff Coursework**

Motion to approve the following courses for the 2025-2026 school year as recommended to the Superintendent by the Principals:

Staff Member: Cassandra San-Emeterio  
Course No./Title: EDUC 719M Supporting Newcomer English Language Learners  
Institution: University of LaVerne  
Credits: 3

Staff Member: Katherine Dunn  
Course No./Title: 1) EDUC 7633 Structured Literacy - Students with Reading Difficulties 3  
2) EDUC 6766 Literacy, Language and Culture  
Institution: Fairleigh Dickinson University  
Credits: 6 (3 credits each)

Staff Member: Margaret Tahtabrounian  
Course No./Title: 1) EDUC 716I Hispanic Culture: Past, Present & Future  
2) EDUC 717W How the Brain Learns to Read - Decoding Comprehension and Motivation  
3) EDUC 719X Implementing Playful Learning in PreK-2 Classrooms  
Institution: University of LaVerne  
Credits: 9 (3 credits each)

B. **APPROVAL - Field Trips**

Motion to approve the following field trips for the 2025-2026 school year:

School: Hillside Elementary School  
Group: Ms. Engle's Students  
Month: May and/or June 2026  
Destination: Walking Trip to Closter Plaza  
Location: Closter, NJ

School: Hillside Elementary School  
Group: Grade 2  
Month: June 2026  
Destination: Closter Nature Center  
Location: Closter, NJ

School: Tenakill Middle School  
 Group: 15 Students in Grades 5-8  
 Month: June 2026  
 Destination: Battle of the Books at Haworth Public School  
 Location: Haworth, NJ

School: Tenakill Middle School  
 Group: Grades 6 and 7 SGLC  
 Month: June 2026  
 Destination: Bareburger - Closter Plaza  
 Location: Closter, NJ

**FINANCE AND PHYSICAL PLANT COMMITTEE**

*Chairperson: Mr. Choi; Members: Ms. Micera, Ms. Ravid, Ms. Finkelstein*

Moved by \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by \_\_\_\_\_ to approve Motions A - G.  
 Motions were \_\_\_\_\_ by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:  
 YEAS:  
 NAYS:

**A. APPROVAL - Monthly Financials and Certification**

Motion to approve the following items as required, pursuant to NJSA 18A:17-9 and NJAC 6:20-2.13, as per Appendix C attached:

- a. Board Secretary and School Treasurer Financial Reports for April 2026.
- b. Board of Education’s Monthly Certification of Budgetary Major Account /Fund status for April 2026.
- c. Transfer of funds for April 2026.

**B. APPROVAL - Payment of Bills**

Motion to approve payment of bills from May 1, 2026, to May 21, 2026, in the amount of:

General Fund (Fund 10)	\$1,606,441.57
Special Revenue (Fund 20)	\$ 3,716.44
Capital Fund (Fund 30)	\$ 6,100.00
Enterprise (Milk – Fund 60)	\$ 1,666.39
Total	\$1,617,924.40

**C. APPROVAL - Staff Remuneration**

Motion to approve remuneration to staff members as follows:

Staff Member: Jennifer Annese  
 Course: 1) EDUC 928 Whole Student Education for Social Emotional Learning  
 2) EDUC 929 Trauma-Informed Teaching  
 College/University: Fresno Pacific University  
 Remuneration: \$880.00

**D. APPROVAL – Purchase of a Multi-Year License Agreement with Cengage Learning**

Motion to approve the purchase of a multi-year agreement with Cengage Learning for Math & YOU (Grades 5–8), including digital access and student workbooks, through June 2029, at a total cost of \$37,852.25, reflecting a three-year discount of \$13,721.25.

**E. APPROVAL - Dental Insurance Policy Renewal**

Motion to approve the renewal of the Board’s Dental Insurance Policy as a part of the employees’ benefits package with Delta Dental of New Jersey. Inc. for the period July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2028, at the premiums listed below, representing a 3% increase in premium:

One Party	\$ 56.52 per month
Two Parties	\$ 96.66 per month
Three Parties (or more)	\$160.06 per month

**F. APPROVAL – SY 2026-2027 Tax Levy Schedule**

Motion to approve the tax levy payment schedule in support of the 2026-2027 school year budget:

<u>Payment</u>	<u>Month</u>	<u>General Fund Amount</u>	<u>Debt Service Amount</u>	<u>Tax Payment Amount</u>
1	July 2026	\$ 2,100,257.00	\$ 56,719.00	\$ 2,156,976.00
2	August 2026	\$ 2,100,257.00	\$ -	\$ 2,100,257.00
3	September 2026	\$ 2,100,257.00	\$ -	\$ 2,100,257.00
4	October 2026	\$ 2,100,257.00	\$ -	\$ 2,100,257.00
5	November 2026	\$ 2,100,257.00	\$ -	\$ 2,100,257.00
6	December 2026	\$ 2,100,257.00	\$ -	\$ 2,100,257.00
7	January 2027	\$ 2,100,257.00	\$ -	\$ 2,100,257.00
8	February 2027	\$ 2,100,257.00	\$ -	\$ 2,100,257.00
9	March 2027	\$ 2,100,257.00	\$ -	\$ 2,100,257.00
10	April 2027	\$ 2,100,257.00	\$ -	\$ 2,100,257.00
11	May 2027	\$ 2,100,257.00	\$ -	\$ 2,100,257.00
12	June 2027	\$ 2,100,254.00	\$ -	\$ 2,100,254.00
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$ 25,203,081.00</b>	<b>\$ 56,719.00</b>	<b>\$ 25,259,800.00</b>

- G. **APPROVAL – Addendum to Settlement Agreement for Student ID 5437501562**  
Motion to approve the Addendum to the Settlement Agreement between the Closter Board of Education and the parents of Student ID 5437501562 in a special education matter, extending the terms of the original Settlement Agreement for the 2026-2027 and 2027-2028 school years, with the Student continuing placement at the Institute for Educational Achievement (IEA). The Board hereby authorizes the Business Administrator/Board Secretary to execute the Addendum and any related documents on behalf of the Board.

**PERSONNEL AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

*Chairperson: Mr. Paldj; Members: Mr. Shih, Ms. Finkelstein*

Moved by \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by \_\_\_\_\_ to approve Motions A - H.

Motions were \_\_\_\_\_ by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

YEAS:

NAYS:

- A. **APPROVAL - Resignation of Destiny Gallo, Hillside Elementary School Paraprofessional**  
Motion to accept the resignation of Destiny Gallo, HES Paraprofessional, effective May 6, 2026.
- B. **APPROVAL - Appointment of Juliane Bilotta as Tenakill Middle School ESL Teacher**  
Motion to approve the appointment of Juliane Bilotta as full-time, tenure track, TMS ESL Teacher for the 2026-2027 school year at a salary of \$85,557\*\*, MA +60 Step 4, starting on September 1, 2026, pending a criminal history background check. \*\*Pending BOE-CEA Contract Ratification
- C. **APPROVAL - Appointment of Ashley Ryan as District Learning Disabilities Teacher-Consultant**  
Motion to approve the appointment of Ashley Ryan as full-time, tenure track, District LDT-C for the 2026-2027 school year at a salary of \$106,220\*\*, MA +30 Step 15, starting on September 1, 2026, pending a criminal history background check. \*\*Pending BOE-CEA Contract Ratification
- D. **APPROVAL - Appointment of Joseph Moskowitz as Hillside Elementary School Grade 4 Teacher**  
Motion to approve the appointment of Joseph Moskowitz as full-time, tenure track, HES Grade 4 Teacher, for the 2026-2027 school year, at a salary of \$63,835\*\*, BA +30 Step 1, starting on September 1, 2026. \*\*Pending BOE-CEA Contract Ratification
- E. **APPROVAL - Appointment of Alexis Kastrinos as Hillside Elementary School Special Education Teacher/Reading Specialist - Long-Term Leave Replacement**  
Motion to approve the appointment of Alexis Kastrinos as Special Education/Reading Specialist - Long-Term Leave Replacement - from September 1, 2026, through December 1, 2026. Salary will be \$200 per day on days 1 through 10; then beginning on day 11, MA +30 Step 0, \$71,000\*\* pro-rated. \*\*Pending BOE-CEA Contract Ratification

F. **APPROVAL - Substitute Teachers/Paraprofessionals/Custodians**

Motion to approve the following substitute teachers/paraprofessionals/custodians for the 2025-2026 school Year:

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Certification</u></b>
Mia Heyman	Substitute Certificate
Othoniel Joseph	Substitute Certificate
Dianna Juechter	Substitute Certificate
Hannah Kim	Substitute Certificate
Lilliana Mangano	Substitute Certificate

G. **APPROVAL – June 2026 Professional Development**

Motion to approve the following staff members to attend various Professional Development Programs in June 2026, at a rate of \$50.00 per hour:

- Writing Revolution (up to eight (8) hours per teacher)
  - Patricia Brett
  - Lauren Engle
  - Catherine Gibney
  - Kaitlin Lange
  - Lisa Pantaleo
  - Lisa Posner
  - Lori Scalera
- MClass DIBELS (three (3) hours per teacher)
  - Allison Bachmann
  - Jodi Belnick
  - Lauren Finan
  - Charlene Gerbig
  - Catherine Gordon
  - Jennifer Kennedy
  - Alyssa Levy
  - Katharine Meyers
  - Grace Park
  - Catherine Ricca
  - Andrea Watkins
- Tenakill Middle School - Math and ELA Unit Writing (up to 12 hours per teacher per subject area)
  - Mary Auriti (ELA)
  - Alice Clifford (ELA)
  - Amanda Cummings (ELA)
  - Hailey Gabettie (Math)
  - Amy Kenny-Whritenour (Math)
  - Megan McCafferty (Math)
  - Ellen Norton (Math)

- Michelle Pletsch (Math and ELA)
- Shannon San George (ELA)
- Charisse Stabile (ELA)

H. **APPROVAL - Leave of Absence for Kerry Vogel, Grade 3 Teacher**

Motion to approve Kerry Vogel, Grade 3 Teacher, for a leave of absence from September 28, 2026, through June 30, 2027, as follows:

- Personal leave from September 28, 2026, through September 30, 2026;
- Paid sick leave from October 1, 2026, through the morning of October 29, 2026;
- An FMLA and NJFLA child bonding leave from the afternoon of October 29, 2026, through January 18, 2027, and
- A discretionary, uncompensated leave pursuant to Board Policy 1644 (contingent upon Board approval) from January 19, 2027, through June 30, 2027, with an anticipated return to work on September 1, 2027.

**OLD/NEW BUSINESS**

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Moved by \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by \_\_\_\_\_ to open the meeting for public comments.

Moved by \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by \_\_\_\_\_ to close the meeting to public comments.

**CLOSED SESSION MOTION (If required)**

Moved by \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by \_\_\_\_\_ to approve the following Closed Session Motion. Motion was \_\_\_\_\_ by a voice vote of the Board:

YEAS:

NAYS:

BE IT RESOLVED that the Closter Board of Education will adjourn to a Closed Session to discuss the following:

**HIB**  
**Negotiations**  
**Personnel Matters**  
**Legal Matters**

The matters so discussed will be disclosed to the public as soon as and to the extent that such disclosure can be made without adversely affecting the public.

The Board went into Closed Session at \_\_\_\_\_ PM.

The Board reconvened from Closed Session at \_\_\_\_\_ PM.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by \_\_\_\_\_ to adjourn the meeting at \_\_\_\_\_ PM.