

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
BOARD OF EDUCATION – February 7, 2022**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Dr. Archer  
Mrs. Austin  
Mrs. DeForest  
Mr. Gross  
Mrs. James Murad  
Mr. Leach  
Ms. McKenney  
Mrs. Souser  
Mr. Zoghby  
Ms. Evans

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

**ADMINISTRATION PRESENT**

Dr. Smith, Superintendent  
Mr. Reyes, Assistant Superintendent  
Mr. Franz, Assistant Superintendent  
Mr. Timothy Decker

Mrs. DeForest called the meeting of the Board of Education to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Cafeteria of Tecumseh Elementary School.

In attendance were: H. Bernard Alex, Jahnjae Alex, Ernestine Cooper, Linda Ervin, Anna Morris, Delores Perry, Susan Glisson, S. Scott, Milena Crosby, Candace Johnson, S. Rhines, Davis Willers, Charlie Lester, Gretchen Bliss, Bonnie Shoultz, Lester Greene, Diane McLean, Jackie LaSade, Charlies Pierce, Al Williams, Victor Okereke, Emily Frank, and Kevin Frank.

**Board of Education Statement,  
Mrs. DeForest**

Mrs. DeForest read the following statement on behalf of the Board of Education:

*“On behalf of the Jamesville-DeWitt Central School District Board of Education, I would like to express our extreme disappointment and disgust that someone used the n-word, the b-word and made other disruptive sounds during one of our virtual school events on Jan. 31, a high school curriculum night for incoming ninth-grade students. We sincerely apologize to our families, students and staff members that something like this happened on our watch.*

*We especially would like to apologize to Jamesville-DeWitt High School Assistant Principal Ms. Candace Johnson, who was attacked and called the n-word during her online presentation. We stand by and in support of Ms. Johnson and would like to commend her for exemplifying composure, grace and professionalism in the face of such hatred. While we cannot take away the pain and hurt that Ms. Johnson and our community continue to feel from that day, we can promise to learn from this event and to do better.*

*We celebrate and value that Jamesville-DeWitt is a multi-racial, multi-ethnic school district—as is the world we live in—and here at Jamesville-DeWitt, we will not tolerate the use of any racist language or acts. Our technology department and the DeWitt Police Department continue to work together to identify the individual or individuals who made the appalling comments.*

*Such investigations take time and ours is still ongoing. If these perpetrators are part of our J-D school community, rest assured that their actions will be subject to the district’s code of conduct, as well as possible criminal or civil charges. Our technology staff has also worked to tighten security controls for future Zoom meetings.*

*We continue to stand with our superintendent and his messages to our community. Along with Dr. Smith and more than ever, we are committed to our work to ensure that every student and staff member feels welcome, accepted and included in our schools. We are dedicated to creating a school community where differences are celebrated and valued.*

*We understand that many of our families, students and staff members, especially those of color, may question if J-D is a district that just “talks the talk.” We are not. We are committed to change.*

*We must stay committed to our diversity, equity and inclusion work, known as DEI, and embed the four key tenets of the culturally responsive-sustaining education framework in our work. They are as follows:*

- 1. To create a **welcoming and affirming environment** where we build close relationships with students and families and share a collective responsibility to learn about staff and student cultures and communities.*
- 2. To set **high expectations and rigorous instruction** that supports project-based learning and student leadership opportunities, such as the addition next year of a Senior Capstone course.*
- 3. To support **inclusive curriculum and assessment** where instructional strategies adapt to diverse learning styles and resources reflect racially, culturally and linguistically diverse perspectives.*
- 4. To provide **ongoing professional learning and support** in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, including our current staff training with the NYU Metro Center and the work that our curriculum council is doing in evaluating our curriculum through an equity lens. This work needs to continue and grow.*

*As stated in the District Strategic Plan, we will continuously search for ways to improve the enriched learning environment at our schools, eliminate racism, eradicate disproportionality and build equity for all staff and students. We appreciate the expertise of our recently formed District Equity Council, whose members met Feb. 3 to discuss what happened during the curriculum night presentation. They shared their insights, analyzed the situation in a historical context and offered suggestions to help our J-D community move forward together. We appreciate their time and expertise.*

*We look forward to the work of this council, which will include:*

- Offering insight and support around the district’s diversity, equity and inclusion goals,;*
- Serving as advisors;*
- Learning about district equity initiatives; and*
- Bringing forth concerns so that the district can work with the larger J-D community to seek solutions.*

*We now recognize the need to implement bystander intervention training, to provide individuals within our community the tools to say something when they see something, to stand up and speak out against racism, bullying and harassment and to take care of one another and show up for each other.*

*We also recognize the need to explore and implement more culturally-responsive, trauma-informed practices. Each person's experiences and how they see and view the world differ from one another. It is important that we listen to each other and recognize how each other's racial, cultural and social identities can shape our experience of trauma and healing. Only when we take the time to learn about the historical backgrounds and experiences of our students, staff and families and leverage their cultural strengths and knowledge will our schools become safe spaces for learning and growth and for healing.*

*The incident last Monday evening shows us why the work we have engaged in as a district surrounding diversity, equity and inclusion is so important and why we must continue educating ourselves and each other. We must continue learning and growing together and listening carefully to one another to build a stronger and more inclusive J-D community. We invite the community to join us at future [Board of Education meetings](#) and to continue our DEI work moving forward together.*

*Thank you."*

**Presentation – Tecumseh Elementary School,  
Mrs. Carducci, Principal**

Mrs. Carducci welcomed the Board of Education to Tecumseh Elementary School. Mrs. Carducci's presentation included information on student and staff numbers and background, data and trends, and successes, challenges and goals. Mrs. Carducci talked about monitoring chronically absent students as well as utilizing student engagement specialist to support families. She shared information on Tecumseh's Character Education Program, Lead Learner Training within the building and provided an update on upcoming events.

**Red Ram Recognition**

Mrs. DeForest recognized and thanked a high school senior for serving on the panel for Syracuse Onondaga NAACP Community Education Forum. She said you can view the Forum on Youtube. Mrs. DeForest also recognized and congratulated high school art students who won 57 awards in the 2022 CNY Scholastic Art Awards Competition. She said J-D students were awarded 17 gold, 23 silver and 17 honorable mention awards and the full list of all winners are listed under District News on the website. In addition, she congratulated a sophomore student who was named an American Visions Award Nominee. Her piece was selected as one of five Best in Show and will go on to compete at the national level. Mrs. DeForest congratulated the cast, crew and staff involved with the Middle School production of Bugsy Malone. She thanked them for their flexibility and talent for putting on three consecutive shows in one day due to the weather. Lastly, she recognized and congratulated a sophomore at the High School who composed a classical music piece entitled *Reflections*, which has been commissioned by the Chamber Music Pittsburgh.

**Community Comment Time #1**

Ms. Arena read the following statement on behalf of the District Equity Council:

*"We are a diverse group of stakeholders with a demonstrated commitment to, and record of work in, equity. We have been convened as part of the Jamesville- Dewitt School District's Strategic Plan. Two purposes of this council are:*

*-To serve as advisors, providing input as the district makes key decisions around the tasks outlined in its strategic plan*

*-To bring forth concerns so that the district can work with the larger J-D community to seek solutions*  
*It is in line with these two goals that we met last week for a robust conversation about the racist zoom attack on Monday January 31, 2022. The council overwhelmingly supports making the following public statement:*

*Assistant Principal Candace Johnson has our full support. Ms. Johnson along with the children and families who were impacted by this hateful act require culturally competent support aimed at repairing the harm and restoring safety.*

*This is not the first or the only racist incident in Jamesville-Dewitt.*

*This is not the first or the only racist incident to be met with silence.*

*This is not the first or the only time families and students have asked for harm to be repaired.*

*The racist attack during the zoom is not shocking to many of us. It is an obvious and very public example of the dehumanizing microaggressions and blatant racism that our students, staff, and families of color experience - in school buildings and at school functions- every day. The silence in response to such attacks needs to be addressed. We stand united in support of Ms. Johnson, and every student, caregiver, and staff who have been impacted by racist attacks and the silence they have been met with.*

*There is a long history of racism here in Jamesville-Dewitt. We need to acknowledge our history, to talk about it, to teach it to our students, and work to change our culture. We no longer want to be a community that accepts or remains silent when the n-word and other derogatory language is aimed at historically marginalized groups or anyone.*

*As advisors we are telling you that we need culturally competent support for students and staff, and we need it available now. We ask the district to immediately hire a team of counselors who look like our Black and brown students. We need a visible presence of professionals in our schools who are racially literate and equipped to deal with racial trauma. We also ask for more diverse hiring and intensive efforts to retain staff of color.*

*We ask the administration and the board to acknowledge our past, acknowledge our current climate, and to reflect on whether you only profess a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, or whether your actions match your words. Occasionally our children are given a lesson about being an upstander instead of a bystander. We need to be ready when an opportunity comes along for us to model this behavior for our children. All of us need to be prepared at any time to do the uncomfortable thing, do the brave thing, to stand up and to speak out. Ms. Johnson should never have been left standing alone, or in silence. In our schools, in our houses, in our District: we must disrupt it if we witness cruel or dehumanizing language or behavior, we must speak out against an injustice, especially injustice against someone from any historically marginalized group. When we see bullying we must name it, calling it what it is; we condemn it, and in the same moment we turn to the person who was attacked and we embrace them, defend them, and stand alongside them.*

*Naming the harm and recognizing the complicity of silence matters, and it has to matter in every instance. Every time the n-word is hurled in the halls of the high school or the middle school, there is a person- a child!- who is harmed. Every time an elementary student notices that they are disciplined more than their white peers, a child is harmed. Every time a family leaves the district because their request for help addressing these incidents is met with silence, we all lose. This is JD. And it doesn't*

*have to be. We as a community can work to heal division and repair harm with honest and brave efforts- actions that match our words in a lived commitment to equity.*

*As advisors we ask the board to take the following five actions:*

- 1. Recognize that the attack on Candace Johnson on January 31st was not a unique or isolated event, the racist undercurrents of our society are present today and have a long history in the JD community.*
- 2. Encourage a culture that teaches the past, recognizes bias, learns from mistakes and prioritizes a safe community for ALL.*
- 3. Take immediate action towards putting supports into place for vulnerable groups, both students and staff, such as support groups and counselors whose demographics and lived experience match those of the population they serve.*
- 4. Evaluate current hiring practices and prioritize the hiring and retention of diverse staff, especially staff of color. Make cultural competency a requirement for employment.*
- 5. Evaluate our Five Year Strategic Plan's equity goals and ensure that they are properly prioritized and fully resourced."*

Jarrell Harrison commented on his experiences on being the target of racism as a student athlete while he was a student at Jamesville-DeWitt High School.

H. Bernard Alex commented on the racist comments made towards Candace Johnson and asked to recognize the importance of racism in the District.

Linda Ervin commented on the ebbs and flows of racism in the District and asked the Board to take action.

Rachel Wagner commented on racism at J-D and said it has been going on for decades and we can't wait any longer to address it.

Charlie Lester, a parent of a former J-D student commented on his daughter's experience with racism and asked the District to hire a competent professional for DEI and to make sure the Board is diverse.

Mr. Pierce commented on his knowledge of experiences of prejudice at J-D in the past. He said the Board should be diverse and that we need to treat each other as human beings.

Jaclyn Lason commented that something better needs to come out of this incident and that she stands in support of Candace Johnson.

Anna Morris commented that she stands with Candace Johnson. She said there is too much suffering that is not going away on it's own and it is in us to love one another.

Raquel Royal commented that she is the mother of Jarrell Harrison who commented earlier. She said her children have been traumatized in the past and not supported by administration or the Board of Education.

## Approve Consent Agenda

- a. Approve Minutes of January 24, 2022 Board Meeting
- b. [Accept Superintendent's Personnel Recommendations](#), and Substitute Appointments

Mrs. Austin requested "Item a" be removed from the Consent Agenda.

Ms. McKenney moved and Mr. Leach seconded the approval of the Minutes of the January 24, 2022 Board of Education Meeting.

Motion carried. (8-0-1) Mrs. Austin abstained.

Mrs. Souser moved and Dr. Archer seconded the approval of the Consent Agenda.

The following are the Superintendent's Personnel Recommendations:

### ***INSTRUCTIONAL***

#### **Extra duty assignments/extended teaching 2021-2022**

##### **Middle School**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Stipend</b>
Paul Valentino	Cafeteria Supervision (a.m.)	\$410.75 (pro-rated from 1/3/22)

##### **Change in Status**

<b>Name and position</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Effective</b>
Laurie Fabian	Middle School	Additional Class - (\$7,516)	1/31/22-6/24/22

##### **Request for Retirement**

<b>Name and position</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Effective</b>
Paul Gasparini Principal	High School	6/30/22
Donna Oppedisano Social Studies Teacher	High School	6/30/22
Kitty Robinson Second Language Teacher	Middle School	6/30/22

### ***NONINSTRUCTIONAL***

#### **Appointments**

<b>Name and position</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Salary</b>	<b>Effective</b>
Nazife Karagoz Teacher Aide Full-time Probationary Appointment (52 wks) New Position	TEC	\$13.68/hr.	2/8/22

Lynette Mason Groundskeeper Full-time Probationary Appointment (52 wks) Replacing D. Lail	Maintenance	\$17.13/hr	2/8/22
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Lynn Simone Substitute Driver Trainer	Transportation	\$30.00/hr.	1/10/22
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**Change in Status**

<b>Name and position</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Effective</b>
Nikoahl Rioux Dispatcher	Transportation	from Aide/Clerical Unit to Mgmt. Confidential Clerical Agreement	2/8/22

**Request for Retirement**

<b>Name and position</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Effective</b>
John Marnell Custodial Worker I	Maintenance	2/26/22

**Resignation**

<b>Name and position</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Effective</b>
Eden Prindle Teacher Aid	JES	2/15/22

Motion carried. (9-0-0).

(See Supplemental Minutes for Substitute Appointments)

**Board Policies –Second Reading**

The following Board Policies were brought to the Board for second reading:

- 7110 – [Comprehensive Student Attendance](#)
- 7420 – [Sports and the Athletic Program](#)
- 8210 – [Safety Conditions and Prevention Instructions](#)
- 8260 – [Title I Parent and Family Engagement](#)

Mrs. James Murad explained that these are the same policies with a few updates but no change to the content.

Mr. Zoghby moved and Mrs. Austin seconded the approval of Board Policies 7110, 7420, 8210, and 8260.

Motion carried. (9-0-0).

**Potential Consideration for Future Meetings**

There were none.

**Budget Discussion – Operations & Maintenance,**

## **Transportation**

Dr. Smith reviewed the budgeting process to date. He then presented the Operations & Maintenance and Transportation segments of the budget. Dr. Smith said that although there are two large pieces of equipment that need to be added to the custodial equipment line, we have realized savings in both the contracts and gas and electricity lines. He said there is a slight decrease of 3.5% in the Operations and Maintenance budget. Next, Dr. Smith presented the Transportation segment and explained the slight increase of 6.82% which is due to salaries, the addition of a 10 month clerical position, the reinstating of an additional late bus run at the Middle School, as well as an increase in fuel costs. Next, Dr. Smith presented Proposition #1, bus purchases for 2022. He said we will be purchasing four (4) sixty-five (65) passenger buses and one (1) microbus, to replace four (4) buses and one (1) van.

Mr. Decker explained an additional proposition that will be on the ballot in May for the purchase of a \$200,000 tractor/loader. He said this will be used to remove snow and move things such as dirt. This will remove the cost of renting equipment and training employees on rented equipment. Dr. Smith said he will add this to the presentation.

Dr. Smith shared important upcoming dates for the budget process.

(See Supplemental Minutes for Budget Presentation)

## **Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Smith's report included an update on his 21-22 mid-year goals, pre-K, construction update at the Middle School, Mental Health Clinic at the Middle School, COVID-19 updates and upcoming events. Dr. Smith shared a presentation with the Board which reviewed his 21-22 Goals. He shared each of the four goals; Address inequity, Data based decision making, Curriculum review process, and Family and community engagement. Within each of the goals, he shared expectations, examples of work that has been done, and how successes will be measured. (See Supplemental Minutes for Dr. Smith's Mid-Year Goals Update). Dr. Smith said the Pre-K program is running great. He said he visited classrooms on the first day, 1/31, and watched the buildings welcome our youngest Red Rams. He shared the numbers at each building and said soon we will be starting the process of sending out RFP's for next year. He said as there is no increase to the money from the State, we will continue with one class of Pre-K at each building. Next, Dr. Smith shared a construction update and timeline surrounding the Middle School renovations. He said that after many months of delay, House 2 will be ready to occupy shortly. He said that teachers will be asked to pack their rooms on Friday, February 18<sup>th</sup>, and in order to give them uninterrupted time to do that, the Middle School will have early dismissal for students in grades 7 & 8. He said the contractors will work through February break and put the finishing touches on the rooms and when teachers return from break, they will be in their new rooms. Dr. Smith shared an update on COVID-19 numbers and said we are continuing to follow with the trends, and that student and staff attendance rates are high and infection rates are down. He said that as the language is shifting from pandemic to endemic, school districts have been advocating for metrics to be provided for any changes that need to be made to safety protocols. We are awaiting on directives from the governor and the Department of Health. Dr. Smith said he was happy to announce that the mental health clinic at the Middle School, through Helio Health, which was approved by the State is open. He said that we are looking at communications with families to inform them what the clinic is, who we can serve, and how families can access the clinic. Lastly, Dr. Smith updated the Board on upcoming events including the High School presentation of Matilda, the Board of Education Public Forum and Mid-Winter Recess.

## **Student Board Member Report**

Ms. Evans provided the Board with her report which included student compliments, concerns, and suggestions. (See Supplemental Minutes).

## **President's Report**

Mrs. DeForest reminded the Board of upcoming book study and the chapters to be read. She shared information on the upcoming NYSSBA webinar on February 10<sup>th</sup> and said registration is free and if you register, you can view the webinar at a later time. Mrs. DeForest also shared information on the CNYSBA legislative forum with Dr. Rick Timbs this past Saturday. She said he highlighted key points in foundation aid and thanked our legislature and Governor for keeping their promise to fund foundation aid to schools. Mrs. DeForest said that during the forum they were reminded of the DEI series supported through the CNYSBA Roundtables. Mrs. DeForest said she will send a google survey for Dr. Smith's mid-year evaluation and is asking for them to be returned to her by Saturday, February 12<sup>th</sup> so they can be compiled, shared and discussed at Executive Session on February 14<sup>th</sup>.

## **Community Comment Time #2**

H. Bernard Alex commented on his support of Candace Johnson, thanked the community for their support, and told the Board that people are watching, don't let them down.

Christiana Semabia commented on the distress brought to parents knowing their child's safety is not a concern to this Board. She said through silence, the Board said their children are not safe and that the Board is responsible.

Stacey Reynolds commented on the mask mandate and wanted to know who makes the decision if there is a choice.

Mrs. DeForest asked Ms. Reynolds to email the Board with questions and they will be answered.

Jan Alex commented that it is time for a change, and that it is not just about color but about culture. She supports Candace Johnson.

Gretchen Bliss commented regarding masking in school and that the Superintendent and Districts can choose to not listen to the state recommendation. She said, as parents we have the power to say enough is enough.

## **Unfinished and Continuing Business**

Mrs. DeForest thanked the community for sharing their comments.

Ms. McKenney expressed her disappointment and said she ran for the Board to hold the District accountable. She said she was disappointed and embarrassed that she was not informed about a letter read during the meeting

At 9:50 p.m., Mrs. Souser moved and Mrs. James Murad seconded the adjournment to Executive Session to discuss personnel history of particular employees and to discuss student discipline appeal pursuant to Section 3214.

Motion carried. (9-0-0).

At 11:40 p.m. Mrs. James Murad moved and Mr. Gross seconded the adjournment of Executive Session.

Mr. Gross moved and Ms. McKenney seconded the approval of the following Resolution:

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Education received an appeal regarding the discipline of a student pursuant to Section 3214 of the New York Education Law; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board considered the appeal in executive session,

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Board of Education of the Jamesville-Dewitt Central School District hereby expunges the five day suspension imposed by the Building Principal; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Board directs the District Clerk to provide notice to the parent of the outcome of this appeal.

Motion carried. (7-2-0) Mrs. Souser and Mr. Leach objected.

Mr. Leach moved and Mrs. James Murad seconded the approval of the following Resolution:

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Education received an appeal regarding the discipline of a student pursuant to Section 3214 of the New York Education Law; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board considered the appeal in executive session,

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Board of Education hereby affirms the two day suspension of the student imposed by the Superintendent

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Board directs the District Clerk to provide notice to the parent of the outcome of this appeal.

Motion carried. (8-1-0). Ms. McKenny objected.

At 11:45 p.m. Mrs. James Murad moved and Mr. Gross seconded the adjournment of the meeting.

Motion carried. (9-0-0).

Respectfully submitted,

Timothy Decker  
Clerk of the Board

**BOARD APPROVED: 2/14/22**