



Newark Board of Education

Where Passion Meets Progress

Committee Report

Governance Committee

Location	Date	Time
Webex	May 15, 2025	5:06 PM
Board Members		
H. Council, President	V. Santana, Co-Vice President	
A. James-Frison, Co-Vice President		
District Liaison & Superintendent Representative		
B. Liss, General Counsel	R. León, Superintendent	
Other District Staff		
P. Luke, Executive Legal Assistant	H. Nazario, Chief of Staff	
N. Deering, Director of Board Relations	M. Brewster	
V. Wilson, School Business Administrator		
Guests		
N/A		
Meeting Summary		
Call to Order: 5:06 PM		
After welcome and introductions, the Committee received an overview of the role of the Governance Committee, and then received reports and discussed the following topics:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- May Retreat Agenda- Newark Enrolls- Comprehensive Equity Plan- School Facilities- Charter Schools: Reports, Requests, Leases- Legal Update		
Adjournment: 6:43 PM		

Item: Governance Overview	
Lead(s): H. Council,	Priority/Strategy 1.1: Organize and align departments and resources to support district priorities, strategies, and initiatives.

General Counsel reviewed the role of the Governance Committee of the Board of Education, Board meetings and protocols, and Board communications. Just as the Board as a whole is charged with oversight of the district, the Governance Committee is charged with oversight of Board activity in carrying out that responsibility. The role of the Board, pursuant to the School Ethics Act, is policy-making, planning, and evaluation; and the Board's bylaws add interpretation: informing the community about the school district and informing district staff of the wishes of the community. The Board acts only as a whole body, at meetings where a quorum is present, which are conducted in accordance with the Open Public

Meetings Act. Members and others are reminded that only the Board President and Superintendent are authorized to comment or speak on behalf of the Board. Standing items on the agendas of monthly Governance Committee meetings include policy updates, enrollment updates, school facilities, and charter schools: reports, requests, and leases. One important function of the Governance Committee is to monitor compliance with the governance component of school district effectiveness under the Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC), which includes 14 indicators of effectiveness in the District Performance Review. The district is scheduled for a full QSAC review in 2026.

Item: May Retreat Agenda	
Lead(s): H. Council	Priority/Strategy 1.1: Organize and align departments and resources to support district priorities, strategies, and initiatives.

The Board President reviewed the agenda for the retreat scheduled for Saturday, May 17, which includes presentations by the Board’s NJSBA Field Services Representative on the role of the Board, the Superintendent’s evaluation, and school ethics; and a presentation on student achievement by the Superintendent.

Item: Newark Enrolls	
Lead(s): B. Liss, H. Nazario	Priority/Strategy 1.5: Develop a capital strategy aligned with the Long-Range Facilities Plan and strategic plan to modernize all facilities and plan for enrollment projections, academic programs, and community needs

This year’s school selection and enrollment process completed on April 18, when every student and their family received their match to a school for the 2025-2026 school year. The number of students enrolling this year in kindergarten in district schools and the number enrolling in ninth grade in district high schools is the highest in recent history. Freshman orientation for the Class of 2029 (this year’s eighth graders) is scheduled for May 21; and the back-to-school re-enrollment window opens June 3 for returning students.

Item: Comprehensive Equity Plan	
Lead(s): M. Brewster, B. Liss	Priority/Strategy 1.6: Create a district-wide equity framework to promote equity in all systems, policies, procedures, and practices; close existing gaps in opportunity, access, achievement, expectations, and resources; and eliminate race and class as predictors of student success.
	Priority/Strategy 3.2: Implement processes and practices to infuse a collaborative, equity-driven and responsive culture, and promote communication and trust throughout the system.

The district’s Comprehensive Equity Plan has been reviewed and updated to reflect recent policy updates, activities, and initiatives to foster equity in accordance with law and the district’s strategic plan. Per state regulations, the Board is required to review and approve its Comprehensive Equity Plan every three years, and to submit the updated plan to the Executive County Superintendent for approval. The update has been completed by the district’s Affirmative Action Team, and the new three-year plan – for school years 2025-26 to 2027-28 -- will be circulated to all Board members before action at this month’s meeting to approve its submission.

Item: School Facilities	
Lead(s): R. León	<u>Priority/Strategy 1.2:</u> Adopt a sustainable fiscal strategy and operating budget that is aligned with the strategic plan and drives district priorities <u>Priority/Strategy 1.5:</u> Develop a capital strategy aligned with the Long-Range Facilities Plan and strategic plan to modernize all facilities and plan for enrollment projections, academic programs, and community needs.

The Committee received an update on completion of the Newark School of Architecture and Interior Design and a proposed final amendment to the lease for that school facility. The school is on track to open in September 2025.

The Committee also reviewed the terms of other leases for school buildings in which the Board is a tenant and those which it owns and leases to charter schools. The rent received on the several buildings rented to charter schools during state operation under long-term leases is substantially less, proportionately, than the market-rate rent paid under the several leases which the district has been required to enter into in recent years, including the lease for the High School of Architecture and Interior Design.

The district has received approval of its most recent reimbursement request submitted for eligible expenditures of ARP ESSER funds previously approved for extended liquidation prior to the new deadline. The amount of that approved grant funding is \$16,605,241.

Item: Charter Schools: Reports, Requests, Leases	
Lead(s): B. Liss	<u>Priority/Strategy 1.2:</u> Adopt a sustainable fiscal strategy and operating budget that is aligned with the strategic plan and drives district priorities <u>Priority/Strategy 1.5:</u> Develop a capital strategy aligned with the Long-Range Facilities Plan and strategic plan to modernize all facilities and plan for enrollment projections, academic programs, and community needs.

The lease of the school property owned by the Board at 15 Boylan Street, formerly known as Boylan Street School, will terminate as of August 31, 2025. The district has toured the building, which has been rented for more than ten years, to examine its condition and determine what work is needed in order to return it to the condition in which it was conveyed to the charter school under the lease. The goal is for the district to eventually reopen the school for its original purpose, as the Open Air School, as it was named when it opened in 1930.

The district has received a request to consent to a lien to be placed on another leased school property as a condition of a grant received by the tenant charter school from the United States government. That request is under review.

Item: Legal Update	
Lead(s): B. Liss	<u>Priority/Strategy 1.1:</u> Organize and align departments and resources to support district priorities, strategies, and initiatives.

The United States Department of Justice has informed General Counsel that it (DOJ) has determined that the district has satisfied its obligations under the 2021 settlement agreement regarding its programs for English Language Learners, and therefore DOJ is concluding its monitoring of the district in accordance with that agreement. This is a significant accomplishment by the Office of Bilingual Education and all schools and staff involved in providing programs and services to our multilingual learners. We thank everyone for their efforts.

General Counsel provided updates on other pending legal matters, the details of which are confidential, subject to the attorney-client privilege.

The meeting adjourned at 6:43 PM.