WHARTON BOROUGH BOARD OF EDUCATION

MINUTES – REORGANIZATION MEETING
TECHNOLOGY LIBRARY CENTER - MACKINNON MIDDLE SCHOOL
January 6, 2026- 7PM

I. CALL TO ORDER – Mrs. Cammarata read the following:

The Board of Education calls the Reorganization Meeting of the Wharton Borough Board of Education to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. OPEN PUBLIC MEETING STATEMENT – Mrs. Cammarata read the following:

The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Law was enacted to insure the right of the public to have advance notice of and to attend the meetings of public bodies at which any business affecting their interests is discussed and acted upon. In accordance with the provisions of this act and Board of Education Bylaw 0160, the Wharton Borough Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting to be sent to the Daily Record, posted on the bulletin board in the Wharton Public School, filed with the Wharton Borough Clerk, and mailed to all those people who have requested individual notice and paid the required fee.

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IV. ELECTION RESULTS – Mrs. Cammarata reported on the results of the November 4, 2025 election:

Seats on the Board of Education:

Candidate	Votes
Three (3) Three-Year Full Term	
Robin Ghebreal	**1,087**
Kelly Elardo	**1,059**
Alexander Berniz	**980**
One (1) Two-Year Full Term	

Paul Breda	**26 Write-in**

V. OATH BY BOARD MEMBERS

Mrs. Cammarata administered the Oath of Office to newly-elected Board members:

VI. ROLL CALL

Roll Call	Anthony Astrologo	Alexander Berniz	Paul Breda	Kelly Elardo	Robin Ghebreal	Pamela Schiele	
Roll Call	X	X	X	X	X	X	

Also present, Dr.Connie Sanchez, Superintendent, Mrs. Sandy Cammarata, Business Administrator/Board Secretary, Mr. Jeffrey Merlino, Attorney and members of the public: Kimberly Astrologo, Amelia Nittolo, John Nittolo, Aggie Breda, Marisa Gonzalez, Roxanne DiAndrea, Jessica Martinez, Jennifer Parsells, Ana Jones, Michele, Howe, James Howe, Paola Vasquez, Leticia Marquez, James Godshall, Scott Hutchins, Michael Elardo.

VII. ELECTION OF PRESIDENT

The Board Secretary asked for nominations for the position of President.

NOMINATION: **Mrs. Ghebreal** was nominated by **Mrs. Elardo**.

Mrs. Ghebreal accepted the nomination.

Vote for President	Anthony Astrologo	Alexander Berniz	Paul Breda	Kelly Elardo	Robin Ghebreal	Pamela Schiele	
Name: Robin Ghebreal	X	X	No	X	X	X	

ELECTION RESULTS: **Mrs. Ghebreal** was elected President of the Wharton Borough Board of Education.

VIII. BOARD PRESIDENT TAKES CHAIR

IX. ELECTION OF VICE PRESIDENT

Mrs. Ghebreal, President declared nominations were in order for the position of Vice President.

NOMINATION: **Mrs. Elardo** was nominated by Mrs. Ghebreal.

Mrs. Elardo accepted the nomination.

Vote for Vice-President	Anthony Astrologo	Alexander Berniz	Paul Breda	Kelly Elardo	Robin Ghebreal	Pamela Schiele	
Name: Kelly Elardo	X	X	No	X	X	X	

ELECTION RESULTS**:** **Mrs. Elardo** was elected Vice-President of the Wharton Borough Board of Education.

X. CODE OF ETHICS FOR NEW JERSEY SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

The Code of Ethics for New Jersey School Board Members will be recited each January.

XI. REORGANIZATION ACTION ITEMS

1. The Board of Education officially designates an abstention as a non-vote.

2. The Board of Education adopts the Mission Statement that was developed as part of the Strategic Planning process:

“Learn to thrive in a dynamic world***.”***

3. The Board of Education adopts all bylaws, policies, and regulations in effect on January 2, 2026 in compliance with N.J.S.A.18A:11-1.

4. The Board of Education adopts all textbooks of record on January 2, 2026, in accordance with the document below and in compliance with N.J.S.A. 18A:33-1 and 3.

5. The Board of Education adopts the following curricula and programs of record on January 2, 2026 in compliance with N.J.S.A. 18A:33-1 and 34-1:

Academic	Assessment	Support	Extracurricular
	Access 2.0 Testing ESL Students Lexia	NJ Tiered Systems of Supports	Art Club (6-8)
Art	Newsela 3-8 SmartyAnts1-2	RtI Team and Interventionists	Band (4,5 & 6-8)
Rubicon West (Atlas)			
Circulatory System as an Obstacle Course (4)	LinkIt!	Child Study Team Services	Chorus (4,5 & 6-8)
Colonial Day (5)	Authentic Assessment (K-3)	Bully-Busting W.N.B.I.	Baseball
Creative Curriculum (PRIDE)	Developmental Reading Assessment 3 (K-6)	L.E.A.D. (5)	Basketball - Boys
	Research paper (6-8) in Science and Social Studies	English as a Second Language (K-8)	Basketball - Girls
Full Day Kindergarten	NJSLA (3,4,5,6,7,8) NJSLA Science (5 & 8)	Extended School Year (ESY) Extended School Day	Wrestling (6-8)
Health Education		Reading Plus (3-8) Gim Kit	Technology Club (6-8)

Integrated Language Arts	Pre/Post Leveling Tests	Guidance & Counseling Generation Genius	Cross Country
Library/Media	Standards Based Report Cards: Grades K, 1 Grades 2, 3 Grades 4, 5 Grades 6-8 PSD - *Project PRIDE*	IXL All Subjects	Yearbook (6-8)
	Writing Rubrics	SOS Club (2,3,4,5; 6-8)	Drama Club (6-8)

Mathematics Algebra	Teacher constructed tests, quizzes, rubrics	BrainingCamp	Soccer- Boys
Medieval Faire (6)		Brain Pop	Soccer- Girls
Music – General	ABLES Test	Physical/Psychological Management Training (PMT)	Softball
Music – Instrumental (4-8)	Catalyst	Discovery Education Streaming K-8	Student Council (6-8)
Project UpGrade G&T Program, includes School-wide Enrichment		Occupational Therapy (OT) & Physical Therapy (PT) Services	
Quill			
Readers Workshop		Restorative Justice	

Reading		Fundations Common Lit Geodes	
Readers Writer Workshop		New Units of Study K-2	
Science		Bridge Program	Duffy Drop-In Morning Program (2-5)
Science		Amplify K-5	
Science		Savvas Elevate 6-8	
Social Studies		Peer Tutoring	
Spelling & Phonics Recipe for Reading K-5		ESL SOS Club	
Technology		Problem Based Learning	
		Reading Recovery (1)	
			TREP$
World Language – Spanish (2-8)		Reading Specialist	
Writers Workshop		Response to Intervention	
Science Fair 7th & 8th Grade		Speech and Language	
		Students Obtaining Success (6-8)	

		Weather Net	
		Headsprout	
		RAZ Kids	
		Sumdog	
		Prodigy (5th Grade)	
		Google for Education	

6. The Board of Education designates *The Daily Record* as the official newspaper for legal notices and other obligations, and *The Star-Ledger* as alternate official newspaper.

7. The Board of Education approves the following appointments, which are in effect until the next reorganization meeting or until changed by resolution and carry the compensation indicated:

POSITION	**APPOINTMENT**	**COMPENSATION**
Treasurer	Diana Spina	$4,293.80/year (Acct. #11-000-230-100)
Labor/Negotiations Attorney, or as assigned	Methfessel & Werbel, Esqs.	$170/hour (Acct. #11-000-230-331)
Board Secretary	Sandy Cammarata	Included in salary
Auditor	Andrew Kucinski Nisivoccia & Co.	$26,478/year $3,643/per major program tested re: Federal single audit (Acct. # 11-000-230-332)

Medical Inspector	Brent Forward, MD	$6,990.00/year (Acct. # 11-000-213-330)
Architect	Coppa Montalbano Architects	$150.00/hour (Acct# 11-000-230-334)
School Attendance Officer	Jeffrey Oster	$49/hr $.65/mile (Acct.# 11-190-100-340-030, 11-190-100-340-040)
1. Affirmative Action Officer 2. Affirmative Action Team	1. Michael Windham 2. Alexandra Castillo Nicole Dixon	Included in salary
Public Agency Compliance Officer	Sandy Cammarata	Included in salary
Custodian of Public Records	Sandy Cammarata	Included in salary
Safety Compliance Officer	Sandy Cammarata	Included in salary
School Safety Specialist	Sandy Cammarata	Included in Salary
Chemical Hygiene Officer	Sandy Cammarata	Included in Salary
Indoor Air Quality Officer	Sandy Cammarata	Included in Salary
504 Coordinator	Robert Hayzler, MacKinnon Middle School Principal	Included in salary
Integrated Pest Management Coordinator	Sandy Cammarata	Included in salary
Homeless Liaisons	Michael Laudati, Heather Dentzau	Included in salary

DYFS Liaisons	Michael Laudati, Heather Dentzau	Included in salary
Wellness Committee Coordinator	Anita Williams	Included in salary

Anti-Bullying and Safety Coordinators	Robert Hayzler	Included in salary
Anti-Bullying Specialists	Michael Laudati, Heather Dentzau	Included in salary
OPRA Officer	Sandy Cammarata	Included in salary
Agent of Record - Health Benefits	Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey	fee included in assessment
Agent of Record – Workers' Compensation	NJSBAIG (NJ School Board Association Insurance Group)	fee included
Agent of Record - Property & Casualty Insurance	Morville Agency School Alliance Insurance Fund	fee included
Agent of Record – Student Insurance	Bollinger Insurance Co.	$4,752
Agent of Record-Flex Spending Account	Discovery Benefits	$4.75 per month/ per employee/$50.00 minimum per month
SEC MCDC Initiative Compliance Survey and Continuing Disclosure Agent Services	Phoenix Advisor, LLC	$1,350/year
Agent of Record - Dental & Medical Insurance	Delta Dental – Brown and Brown,	fee included

	Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey – Brown and Brown	
Disability Insurance	Prudential Insurance Co.	fee included
Disability Insurance	Colonial Life Insurance Co.	fee included
Disability Insurance	Unum Provident	fee included
Tax Sheltered Annuity	Lincoln National	fee included
Tax Sheltered Annuity	Met Life Investors	fee included
Tax Sheltered Annuity	Valic	fee included
Tax Sheltered Annuity	Met Life	fee included
Tax Sheltered Annuity	AXA Equitable	fee included
457(b)	Met Life	fee included

8. WHEREAS 18A:18A-2 provides that a board of education shall assign the authority, responsibility and accountability for the purchasing activity of the board of education to a person or persons who shall have the power to prepare advertisements, to advertise for and receive bids, and to award contracts as permitted by this chapter, and

WHEREAS, the Wharton Board of Education would like to take advantage of the maximum statutory bid threshold amount of $53,000 for school districts with purchasing agents who possess qualified purchasing agent certificates;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Wharton Board of Education, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-3 (a), and N.J.A.C. 5:34-5.4, establishes and sets the bid threshold amount of $53,000 and the quotation threshold of $7,950 (15% of the bid threshold) for the board of education, and further authorizes Sandy Cammarata to award contracts, in full accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-3 (a), for those purchases that do not exceed the aggregate of the newly established bid and quote threshold amount.

9. WHEREAS, Sandy Cammarata has been appointed Secretary of the Board of Education, and

WHEREAS, Diana Spina has been appointed Treasurer of School Monies; and

WHEREAS, Board of Education policy authorizes school principals to establish and administer student activity accounts under certain conditions, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, the Board of Education approves the maintenance of the following bank accounts and authorizes the persons indicated to sign checks, savings withdrawals, drafts, and other instruments and to approve electronic fund transfer

TD BANK

	#	Signatories
General Account	3	President/Vice President and Sandy Cammarata or Connie Sanchez and Diana Spina
Payroll Account	1	Diana Spina
Payroll Agency Account	1	Diana Spina
Unemployment Insurance Trust	3	President/Vice President and Sandy Cammarata or Connie Sanchez and Diana Spina
Cafeteria Fund	1	Sandy Cammarata or Connie Sanchez
Capital Projects Account	3	President/Vice President and Sandy Cammarata or Connie Sanchez and Diana Spina
Capital Reserve Account	3	President/Vice President and Sandy Cammarata or Connie Sanchez and Diana Spina
Duffy Student Activities	2	Sandy Cammarata or Connie Sanchez and Michael Windham or Kasey Rhead
MacKinnon Student Activities	2	Sandy Cammarata or Connie Sanchez and Robert Hayzler or Maria Smith

Account Name	#	Signatories
New Jersey Cash Management Fund-Wharton Board of Education	1	Sandy Cammarata or Connie Sanchez
Peapack Gladstone Bank - Bond Account	3	President/Vice President and Sandy Cammarata or Connie Sanchez and Diana Spina

10. The Board of Education establishes the following **meeting calendar** for the next year. All meetings will be held in the Technology Library Center of MacKinnon Middle School and will begin at 7:00 PM unless otherwise stated:

Tuesday, January 6,2026 Snow date – Thursday, January 8, 2026	Reorganization
Thursday, January 22, 2026	Work Session/Regular Business Meeting
Thursday, February 5, 2026	Work Session
Thursday, February 26, 2026	Regular Business Meeting
Tuesday, March 10, 2026	Work Session
Thursday, March 26, 2026	Regular Business Meeting
Thursday, April 09, 2026	Work Session
Thursday, April 23, 2026	Regular Business Meeting/Public Hearing
Thursday, May 7, 2026	Work Session

Thursday, May 21, 2026	Regular Business Meeting
Thursday, June 25, 2026	Work Session/Regular Business Meeting
Thursday, July 23, 2026	Work Session/Regular Business Meeting
Thursday, August 27, 2026	Work Session/Regular Business Meeting
Thursday, September 10, 2026	Work Session
Thursday, September 24, 2026	Regular Business Meeting
Thursday, October 15, 2026	Work Session/Regular Business Meeting
Thursday, November 12, 2026	Work Session
Tuesday, November 24, 2026	Regular Business Meeting
Thursday, December 17, 2026	Work Session/Regular Business Meeting
Tuesday, January 5, 2027 Snow date – Thursday, January 7, 2027	Reorganization

Committee Assignment	***Board Member***

Liaison to PTA 02/03, 03/03, 04/07, 05/05, 06/02/2026 7:15PM	**Kelly Elardo** **Alexander Berniz**
Committee on Regionalization/ Consolidation/ Shared Services Dates TBD	**Paul Breda** **Anthony Astrologo**
Liaison to Borough Council 01/26, 02/09, 03/09, 04/13, 05/11, 06/08, 07/13, 08/10, 09/14, 10/12, 11/09, 12/14/2026 7:00PM	**Paul Breda** **Kelly Elardo -Alternate**
Liaison to Morris Hills Regional Board of Education 01/26, 02/23, 03/16, 04/27, 05/11, 06/15, 08/17, 09/28, 10/26, 11/16, 12/14/2026, 01/04/2027 6:30PM	**Pamela Schiele** **Alexander Berniz -Alternate**
Liaison to Special Education Advisory Council Dates TBD	**Anthony Astrologo** **Kelly Elardo**
Liaison to Technology Committee Dates TBD	**Anthony Astrologo** **Alexander Berniz**
Liaison to Curriculum Council Dates TBD	**Kelly Elardo** **Pamela Schiele**
Liaison to Early Childhood Advisory Council 01/21, TBD	**Anthony Astrologo** **Robin Ghebreal**
Liaisons to Strategic Planning Dates TBD : 2028	**Paul Breda**
~~Wharton Kids First Foundation Trustee~~ ~~Dates TBD~~	
Representative Assembly Member to Educational Services Commission of Morris County 2nd Wednesday of each month	**Paul Breda**
NJSBA Delegate Dates TBD	**Robin Ghebreal** **Kelly Elardo -Alternate**
Negotiations Committee Dates TBD	

11. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, the Board designates the Wharton Public School District Media Learning Center, 137 East Central Avenue, Wharton, NJ 07885 as the Official Meeting Place of the Board for the 2026-2027 Year.

12. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent that the Wharton Board of Education adopts and shall be governed in all actions and business to come before this Board by the written Board Policies, Regulations, and Job Descriptions previously duly adopted and contained in the Board of Education Policy Book.

13. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, the Board authorizes the Business Administrator to advertise for bids as needed during the school year as required by Public School Contracts Law.

14. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, the Board of Education does hereby authorize the use of state contracts as appropriate for the school year.

15. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, the Board of Education approves the Memorandum of Agreement with the Wharton Police Department/Law Enforcement.

16. Whereas, the Wharton Board of Education desires to authorize its purchasing agent for the 2026-2027 year to make any and all purchases necessary to meet the needs of the school district throughout the school year.

17. The Board of Education approves the Parliamentary Procedures for all Board Meetings to the extent consistent with State Law, policies and bylaws of the Board will be guided by “Robert’s Rules of Order” for all Board Meetings.

18. WHEREAS, certain utility, leases, and tuition payments have required due dates to be made at the end of the month following Business Meetings; be it

RESOLVED, the Board of Education authorizes the School Business Administrator/ Board Secretary to make advance payments on a monthly basis for designated vendors, as deemed necessary; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that such payments shall be approved by the Board of Education at its subsequent Business Meeting; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, the Business Administrator be authorized, in the event of a meeting postponement and following consultation with the Board President and the Superintendent, to release payments for those billings determined to be most appropriate and emergent.

Motion to Move Reorganization items #1-18:Mr. Astrologo Second Mr. Berniz

Roll Call: Mr. Astrologo:___X_____ Mr. Berniz:___X_____ Mr. Breda____X_____
Mrs. Elardo:___X_____ Mrs. Ghebreal:____X_____ Mrs. Schiele ____X_____

XIII. Superintendent's Report

Good evening, members of the Board and the community.

Thank you for joining us this evening and for your shared priority of making Wharton Borough Public Schools an incredible place for all learners. That is not only our children but also our faculty and staff who are also committed to life-long learning. I serve as your proud superintendent with a singular mission: to provide the highest level of support for our children, our teachers, and our families. While I prefer to focus on academic outcomes, the current environment, characterized by anonymous letters and targeted attempts to undermine my leadership, necessitates a formal and transparent response for the public record. I want to explicitly correct the record regarding my status in the district. I have not resigned, nor have I ever approached any board member stating that I was unhappy here and looking to leave the district ever. In my short tenure I have grown to care deeply for our children and teachers alike. I did recently have a meeting with Ms. Ghebreal and Ms. Elardo to discuss the increasingly antagonistic environment created by baseless, anonymous correspondence which has led to difficult board meetings. During this meeting, I asked for clarity on the Board's position. I said "Does the board not want me here? Do they want me to leave?" When Ms. Elardo was honest and said that "things aren't working," I responded with a professional truth: the relationship between a Superintendent and a Board is built on trust. If one party is unwilling to invest in that relationship, the partnership becomes irreparable. My comments were an invitation to collaborate, not an announcement of departure. In fact during that discussion we even talked about some changes for next year in one of our departments.

Furthermore, any claims on social media suggesting I am resigning due to my own professional choices are categorically and demonstrably false. Equally false are the reports regarding the Wharton Education Association (WEA). It was reported to me and our Board Attorney, Mr. Merlino, that the union had authored a letter of complaint and that they were holding a "vote of no confidence." This is a complete fabrication. Our board attorney Mr. Merlino and I have both confirmed with NJEA Regional Director Vickie Walsh, as well as our own WEA Co-Presidents, that:

- **The union has never reached out to any Board member with a concern regarding my leadership.**
- **No vote of no confidence was ever held or even suggested since the start of the year.**
- **The union has not received a single grievance regarding my performance or my directives.**

The only concerns were raised in the spring after an administrator was placed on leave. Our WEA Co-Presidents have since emailed the entire Board to confirm these facts. These rumors appear to be a purposeful attempt to create the illusion of labor unrest where none exists.

Curriculum and Professional Integrity

This week, a letter was sent to the Board and the County Office alleging that I did not "write" our curriculum. This claim reflects a lack of understanding of NJDOE protocol. Under my leadership, the district followed the standard professional process of adapting and adopting purchased programs to align with NJSLS standards and specific NJDOE requirements.

I want it to be clear that I consult with the Board's legal counsel regularly. Whenever an anonymous letter arrives I reach out immediately to see if anything was done improperly or if anything needs correction. I have been proactive in seeking legal review of my actions, and I, as well as my NJASA representative Andrew Babiak, have been repeatedly assured that my professional conduct is in full compliance with the law. Now to further to provide this Board and our community with total "peace of mind," I have formally requested an independent investigation into these allegations and actions. If any corrective action is ever needed, I will be the first to implement it, but I will not allow my reputation to be tarnished by misinformation.

Remediation of District Non-Compliance

Since my arrival in April, my work has been a race to bring this district into legal compliance and protect us from the risk of a State Monitor. Upon my arrival, I discovered several critical areas of neglect that I have worked tirelessly to fix:

● Comprehensive Equity Plan: The district lacked this mandated plan; I utilized my professional network and previous district experience to formulate and implement one.

● School Safety & Security: We were not conducting required safety drills, and we had no formal School Safety Plan. I am currently working with Chief Young to rectify this.

● Evacuation Protocols: We lacked a Board-approved evacuation plan. I have reached out to Morris Plains for assistance and am currently preparing an emergency kit at the police station to support our students in a crisis. We are also working with Chief Young to create an emergency kit to keep at the police station that mirrors that of Mine Hill.

● Bilingual Waiver: We were out of compliance with state requirements. We are now implementing creative solutions that honor our teachers' time while providing necessary student support and federally mandated professional development hours.

● NJDOE Attendance Mandate: In February 2025, the NJDOE advised the district that attendance at Marie V. Duffy was below requirements. I immediately implemented a Corrective Action Plan to address this and bring us back into alignment with state law.

The Stakes for Our Students

The urgency of my work is driven by a sobering fact: 6 out of 10 children in this district are currently unable to read, write, or perform math at grade level. This is not just a statistic to me; it is a heartbreaking reality. As a former bilingual learner from Newark and Elizabeth, I see myself in these students. They do not have time for adult distractions or political maneuvers. I am here to raise the bar, to ensure state compliance, and to give these children the education they are legally and morally owed.

I remain committed to that work.

XIV. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC FOR DISCUSSION:

Mr. John Nittolo commented that the minutes from the 11/25/25 meeting incorrectly mischaracterized his public comment and requested revision. Mr. Nittolo then repeated his comments from the 11/25/25 public meeting.
Mr. James Gottshall thanked Dr. Sanchez for her leadership and questioned what role the Board has interviewing staff.
Mr. Merlino referenced Board Policy 0155. Mr. Breda referenced School Ethics Advisory Opinion limiting the role of the Board.
Public comments were closed.
Mr. James Gottshall had a follow-up question.
Mr. Breda motioned Public Comments reopened seconded by Mr. Astrologo.
The Board voted Aye
Mr. Gottshall questioned why the Board is involving themselves in staff interviews.
Mr. Nittolo repeated his request to amend the 11/25/25 Minutes to include his full statement. Mrs. Ghebreal stated the Board would be going into closed session referencing #8.
Dr. Sanchez requested the discussion take place in a public session.

XV. ADJOURNMENT: Motion by Mr. Breda seconded by Mr. Astrologo , at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully yours,

Sandy Cammarata

Approved at the _____board meeting.