

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**EAST BRUNSWICK PUBLIC SCHOOLS ANNOUNCES RESULTS OF INDEPENDENT
INVESTIGATION INTO HIGH SCHOOL YEARBOOK**

Today, the East Brunswick Public Schools released the results of an independent investigation regarding issues with the high school yearbook that resulted in the wrong picture and missing member names for the Jewish Student Union. On June 6, 2024, the Board of Education retained attorney Yaacov Brisman of Brisman Law, who completed his investigation and issued his report on June 18, 2024.

The key findings of the investigation are as follows:

- “I conclude that the use of the incorrect photograph was not purposeful, but rather was a highly unfortunate error. Although [the ‘Lead’ Yearbook Advisor] was incorrect regarding the date that she placed the photograph on the page, it is undeniable that she did place it herself. Further, [the ‘Lead’ Yearbook Advisor] acknowledged that she placed the incorrect photograph on the page. I found [her] credible, and I have no basis to find that she acted out of any animus, racial, religious, or political, towards Jewish or Muslim students.”
- “I find that the Lead Advisor was at best careless, but her actions can also be considered negligent. She should have exercised greater attention to detail when selecting the photograph. She admittedly only “assumed” it was the correct photograph. The photograph clearly has a number of students who are identifiably Muslim. Even accounting for diversity among students, this should have triggered greater awareness. Moreover, as an experienced educator, in light of domestic and international events, [the Lead Advisor] should have had a heightened sense of awareness and sensitivity surrounding students of Jewish ethnicity and/or faith. This sensitivity also holds true for students of the Muslim faith who were clearly identifiable by their dress and who were also mislabeled.”

“While I’m grateful that the results of this investigation show that these actions were serious mistakes without malice, we must now focus on repairing the deep hurt and division that has been created in our school and community,” said **Superintendent Victor Valeski**. “We take great pride in our diversity and celebrate all of the students, teachers and faculty that make East Brunswick an exemplary district. Working with the Board of Education, we will make sure that there is accountability for the mistakes that were made and take measures, including implementing a tolerance training program for the start of the next school year, to ensure something like this never happens again.”

The report outlines in detail how a photo of Muslim students incorrectly appeared in the section for the Jewish Student Union without the names of the members of the club.

Historically, the photos for Coptic Club, Muslim Student Association, and Jewish Student Union clubs have been commingled in one shared folder and the photo of the Muslim students - like other photos in the folder - was assigned three keywords, including the tag “MSA/JewishSU.” Upon the Yearbook Advisor conducting a search for “Jewish” to find a photo of the Jewish Student Union, the photo of the Muslim students appeared as a result. In addition, although an Editor contacted the Jewish Student Union advisor to request a photograph and roster, the “Yearbook Club did not receive a JSU roster for inclusion in the Groups section.”

In addition, the report includes several recommendations for revising the Yearbook production process with more sophisticated review measures and leaves the decision regarding appropriate disciplinary measures to the Administration.

“This has been a very difficult time for students, parents, teachers and our entire community,” said **Board of Education President Laurie Lachs**. “We will work with the Superintendent to make changes to the Yearbook creation process and to bring more oversight in the Yearbook review process so that receiving a yearbook will once again be a rite of passage all students will enjoy.”

In accordance with law, staff and student names have been redacted from the report to protect their privacy. The report and exhibits can be downloaded at:
www.ebnet.org/yearbookinvestigation.