



Boston School Committee Meeting

March 3, 2010

*The following is a brief summary of the public meeting of the Boston School Committee held on **March 3, 2010** at 6:00 p.m. in the Winter Chambers, 26 Court Street, Boston. This summary is not intended to serve as official minutes of the meeting.*

For more information about any of the items listed below, contact the office of the Boston School Committee: feedback@boston.k12.ma.us or 617-635-9014.

CALL TO ORDER

School Committee members present: Rev. Gregory G. Groover (Chairperson); Marchelle Raynor (Vice Chairperson); John Barros; Alfreda Harris; Claudio Martinez; Mary Tamer; and Michael Davis (Student Rep.).

Absent: Michael O'Neill (*Note: Mr. O'Neill arrived after the Action Items portion of the agenda*).

Rev. Groover called the meeting to order.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Greater Egleston Community High School students Raslyn Richardson, Aja Brydie, Talisa Skeen and Indigo Wilkerson recited an original poem by headmaster Julie Coles in honor of Women's History Month.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Johnson expressed sympathy for the people of Chile and their Boston relatives in the aftermath of the recent earthquake. Boston Public Schools (BPS) continues to provide support for Haitian students in the wake of the devastation in Haiti. The district has welcomed 75 students from Haiti since the earthquake. On February 28, the Boston Public Schools Haitian-American Parents Association (BHAPA) Haitian Education Action Leadership (HEAL) held an afternoon of healing and remembrance at Mildred Avenue K-8 School. City Councilor Charles Yancey, Representative Marie St. Fleur, and several BPS principals attended.

More than 350 BPS teachers attended a workshop at the Boston Teachers Union Hall on February 27 to better understand the complexity of teaching students whose first language is not English. Since last fall, BPS has provided more than 1,000 teachers with ELL training as part of a larger effort to expand the district's ELL capacity.

BPS received a grant from the Target Corporation to fund an artist residency and ticket access program with Citi Performing Arts Center. The goal of the program is to improve school success, engage families and strengthen community by providing students at eight "turnaround" schools with access to Boston's rich offerings of music, dance, visual arts, theater and cultural events. <http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/node/3881>

At the March 10 School Committee meeting, Dr. Johnson and her senior staff will present an update on the FY 2011 preliminary budget recommendation and present a report on the district's efforts to close the achievement gap.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education released its list of 35 underperforming (Level 4) schools, including 12 in Boston, on March 4. BPS announced plans to replace leaders at six of the schools and will work with the community to create design teams for all Level 4 schools. Dr. Johnson noted that churches have "adopted" some of these schools, providing additional supports for those students. <http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/node/3894>

Dr. Johnson introduced Joan Anderson as the Executive Director for Special Education. Dr. Anderson currently serves as Senior Director of Special Education Services for Norfolk Public Schools in Virginia.

<http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/node/3879>

Dr. Johnson thanked Assistant Academic Superintendent Irvin Scott for spearheading the district's efforts to successfully lower the dropout rate (See Reports).

The Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race & Justice at Harvard Law School is sponsoring a conference, "Exploring Equity-minded Approaches to Student Assignment and School Reform," on March 27, 2010, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. at City Year Headquarters, 287 Columbus Avenue.

ACTION ITEMS (VOTES)

Approved: Travel request for 21 students and four chaperones from Boston Latin School to travel to Spain from April 15 to April 23, 2010.

Approved: The School Committee voted unanimously to table the vote on the Superintendent's recommendation to create a K-8 Pathway in Roslindale until the March 10, 2010 School Committee meeting.

REPORTS

Early Childhood Update: Early Childhood Director Jason Sachs presented a report on the district's efforts to expand and improve quality early childhood education programs. Mr. Sachs described the initiatives, investments and supports that BPS provides for early childhood education as they align to the Acceleration Agenda strategies.

English Language Learners Task Force Second Quarterly Report: English Language Learners Task Force Co-Chairs Claudio Martinez and Klare Shaw presented an update on the progress that the Task Force has made. To date, the Task Force has held four public meetings and formed two sub-committees focusing on operations and programs. The Task Force is working with the Office of English Language Learning and the Office of Family & Student Engagement to plan two community meetings.

Dropout Data Report: Assistant Superintendent for Research, Assessment and Evaluation Dr. Kamal Chavda presented a report on BPS dropout data for school year 2008-09 as defined by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education and the National Center for Education Statistics. The data showed that the BPS annual dropout rate was 6.4 percent, a .08 decrease from the previous year, and the lowest rate the district has seen in two decades.

<http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/node/3882>

ADJOURN

The School Committee voted by unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting.