

Boston School Committee Meeting

March 10, 2010

*The following is a brief summary of the public meeting of the Boston School Committee held on **March 10, 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; Michael O'Neill; Mary Tamer; and Michael Davis (Student Rep.).

Rev. Groover called the meeting to order.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Last Thursday, the state released its list of underperforming ("Level 4") schools, 12 of which are Boston Public Schools. BPS had already begun the transformative work needed to turn around these schools and the district continues with these school improvement efforts, including leadership changes, significant changes in staffing, and creating turnaround design teams for each of the 12 designated schools. Dr. Johnson looks forward to working with principals, teachers, families, and partners to engage in the exciting work ahead. <http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/turnaround>

Dr. Johnson congratulated the Madison Park and New Mission boys' basketball teams, which both competed for the state championship. New Mission won its division. Dr. Johnson thanked Ken Still and all the coaches involved in athletic programs as well as the Red and Blue Foundation for its continued support. <http://bpssports.com/>

On Saturday, the district held its annual science fair at Northeastern University. Many BPS middle and high schools were represented.

Haven Ripley Daniels, science specialist at the Perkins Elementary School, has been selected to participate in the Japan-U.S. Teacher Exchange Program for Education for Sustainable Development and will travel to Japan this summer.

The Boston Debate League Championships were held Sunday at Suffolk University; Dorchester Academy won the debate against New Mission High School. Dr. Johnson noted the positive impact that participation in debate has on student achievement: debaters are 42% more likely than non-debaters to graduate from high school, and African American male debaters are 70% more likely than non-debaters to graduate from high school. The Boston Debate League banquet will be this Friday night. <http://www.bostondebate.org/>

The Boston City League All Star Basketball Classic will be held on March 20 at Northeastern University's Cabot Center. The girls' game is at 5:00 p.m. and the boys' game is at 7:00 p.m.

March 27 the Black Educators Association of Massachusetts will sponsor its annual achievement gap conference. <http://www.beamass.org/>

On March 27 BPS and several partner agencies will hold a "Golden Opportunity" summit to explore equity-minded solutions to student assignment and school reform. The summit comes as a result of a U.S. Department of Education "Technical Assistance for Student Assignment Plans" (TASAP) grant BPS received to review possible options, engage community partners in exploring innovative approaches, and identify ways to make improvements to the district's existing

school choice program. Over the two year term of the grant, the district will work in partnership with the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at Harvard Law School, the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law of the Boston Bar Association, and the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts to embark upon a multi-phased process engaging a wide range of stakeholders in making recommendations to the School Committee to redesign the district's student assignment and school choice policy

ACTION ITEMS (VOTES)

Approved: Foreign travel request for nine students and two chaperones from Boston Latin School to Toronto, Canada, March 31 – April 4, 2010.

Approved: Foreign travel request for 13 students and three chaperones from the John D. O'Bryant School to the Dominican Republic where they will work with the local school and after school program, April 19 – 26, 2010.

Approved: The School Committee approved the Superintendent's recommended change to the current student assignment plan that will provide priority assignment to the Washington Irving Middle School for 5th grade students attending the Bates, Conley, Haley, Mozart, Philbrick, and Sumner Elementary Schools.

REPORTS

Budget Update – Chief Financial Officer John McDonough provided an update on the FY11 budget along with anticipated challenges for FY12. Since the presentation of the preliminary budget on February 3, BPS has received level funding from the City of Boston – an \$8.3 million increase, which, along with hundreds of position reductions (the majority of which do not provide direct classroom services), has contributed the district's ability to narrow the gap for FY11. Today, BPS still confronts a \$3.5 million challenge in the face of losses in state aid for special education students. While the updated budget did not contain a recommendation for large-scale school closings in FY11, in order for the district to have sufficient resources to achieve the goals of the Acceleration Agenda, BPS must address complex, structural challenges, including school closings for the 2011-2012 school year.

Achievement Gap Presentation – Dr. Carroll Blake, Executive Director of the Achievement Gap Office, presented an overview of the district's work to address the achievement gap. Dr. Blake summarized the key goals as follows: alignment of policies and plans with achievement gap policy; cultural proficiency in leadership, teaching practices, beliefs, services and parent engagement; and, diversity, equity, and accountability in human resources, operations and funding. He also shared progress to date, areas of concern, and work underway aligned to the district's Acceleration Agenda strategies.

ADJOURN

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