

## **Boston School Committee Meeting**

**December 16, 2009**

---

*The following is a brief summary of the public meeting of the Boston School Committee held on **Wednesday, December 16, 2009** at 6:00 p.m., in the Edward Winter Chambers, 26 Court Street. 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](mailto: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); Helen Dájer; Alfreda Harris; Claudio Martinez; Michael O'Neill; and Michael Davis (Student Representative).

### **CITATION**

The Committee presented a citation to Helen Dájer, who is stepping down after five years of service on the Boston School Committee when her term expires on January 4, 2010. The Committee also recognized Dr. Elizabeth Reilinger, who is stepping down in January after serving for 15 years, many of them as Chairperson, on the Committee.

### **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Dr. Johnson recognized Chief Communications Officer Christopher Horan who is leaving Boston Public Schools (BPS) after 12 years of service.

Dr. Johnson noted that many schools are celebrating the holidays and festivities of this time of year, with performances and events taking place around the district, including a performance by the Warren/Prescott K-8 School chorus at Court Street today.

More than 15 teachers from the Tynan Elementary School will donate blood platelets to help Charlotte Kelly, the daughter of one of the teachers, in her fight against cancer. <http://bostonpublicschools.org/node/3791>

Celtics legends Cedric Maxwell and JoJo White worked with Feed the Children to distribute a semi-tractor full of food and personal care items to families at Lee Academy Pilot School in Dorchester today. <http://www.nesn.com/2009/12/celtics-legends-cedric-maxwell-jojo-white-to-distribute-food-to-lee-academy.html>

In its third annual ranking of the Best High Schools in America, *U.S. News & World Report* magazine recognized eight Boston public high schools. Boston Latin School earned a gold medal, placing it in the top 100. Boston Latin Academy and the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science earned silver medals, while five Boston schools earned bronze medals: Another Course to College, Boston Community Leadership Academy, Fenway High School, Edward M. Kennedy Academy of Health Careers, and TechBoston Academy. <http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/node/3789>

Another Course to College, Snowden International School at Copley, and The English High School have received national certification for the AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program.

Last Saturday, Dr. Johnson and Ms. Raynor attended a resource forum at the Marshall Elementary School. Many city organizations came together to discuss what has already been done to make sure the students and residents of that community feel safe and supported, and what we will continue to address going forward.

BPS and the MBTA have developed a system so that students who are not eligible for free MBTA passes can purchase monthly passes at a discounted rate. The system should begin in the new year, and headmasters will receive more information next week.

Dr. Johnson and Boston Teachers Union (BTU) president Richard Stutman recently celebrated the six Boston Public School who earned National Board certification this year. Certification by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards is the highest recognition in the profession, and educators from the BTU Pilot, McKinley, Edwards, and Carter School earned this credential in 2009.

Dr. Johnson attended a graduation ceremony for 26 students at Boston Day & Evening Academy on December 3. This was the second of four graduations that the school will hold this year.

Dr. Johnson thanked Dr. Barbara Ferrer and her staff at the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) for their work in getting the H1N1 vaccine to those most at-risk. The BPHC has held a number of clinics recently, some of which were at BPS schools.

Dr. Johnson shared an editorial by Scot Lehigh in the December 16 *Boston Globe* regarding the district's loss in the arbitration regarding the Advanced Placement incentive program for teachers at the O'Bryant, and the expense of finances and time that arbitration can have. Scot Lehigh connects this issue to some of the pending issues in the education reform bill before the legislature. There will be more discussion of the bill during the Turnaround Schools update later in the meeting.

[http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial\\_opinion/oped/articles/2009/12/16/whose\\_needs\\_come\\_first\\_in\\_schools/](http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2009/12/16/whose_needs_come_first_in_schools/)

Dr. Johnson encouraged everyone to go home and watch the final episode of this season's *So You Think You Can Dance*, on which Boston Arts Academy alumnus Russell Ferguson ('07) was a finalist. (Update – Russell won:

<http://allaboutbps.blogspot.com/2009/12/russell-ferguson-wins-so-you-think-you.html>).

## **ACTION ITEMS (VOTES)**

*Approved:* Grants, totaling \$278,865

*Approved:* The Committee approved the Superintendent's recommended changes to the Madison Park Technical Vocational High School admission policy. The changes consist of a special lottery process that eliminates walk zone and sibling priority, and does not limit or pre-determine the number of seats for Special Education students or English Language Learners.

## **REPORTS**

*Turnaround Schools Update:* Chief Accountability Officer Frank Barnes provided an update on the district's progress in determining the next steps to improve student performance at the 14 schools identified for turnaround at the November 18 School Committee meeting. Mr. Barnes also provided information on the federal priorities for the "Race to the Top" funds as well as an overview of the four federal intervention models. Mr. Barnes was joined by Jennifer Cruikshank and Keith Mahoney from the Mayor's Office of Intergovernmental Relations, who shared the City of Boston's legislative priorities around the Massachusetts Education Reform Act. The City's priorities include maximizing the state's eligibility for Race to the Top fund (application due January 19), providing tools for BPS to innovate in all schools and compete internationally, and allowing for rapid changes in lowest performing schools. Dr. Johnson is awaiting the legislation outcomes so that the district can consider the full range of options before making decisions and recommendations around the turnaround schools.

*English Language Learners Task Force First Quarterly Update:* School Committee member Claudio Martinez and Barr Foundation Senior Advisor Klare Shaw, co-chairs of the ELL Task Force, presented a brief update on the group's progress to date as well as some preliminary recommendations to improve services to ELL students and families during the school registration process, which begins in January.

The scheduled reports on Advanced Work Class and the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results were postponed until an upcoming meeting.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Dr. Johnson announced that the bi-annual Boston Foundation Indicators Report has been released. According to *A Great Reckoning: Healing a Growing Divide*, the United States exhibits far greater levels of income inequality today than any other rich, industrialized nation and the city of Boston posts higher levels of such disparities than the country as a whole. <http://www.tbf.org/UtilityNavigation/NewsPress/PressReleasesDetail.aspx?id=12928&parentId=382>