



OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE HYBRID BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

November 1, 2023

The Boston School Committee held a hybrid meeting on November 1, 2023 at 6 p.m. at the Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building, 2300 Washington Street, School Committee Chamber, Roxbury, Massachusetts. The meeting was also live streamed on [Boston City TV](#) and on Zoom. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee, email esullivan3@bostonpublicschools.org or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

ATTENDANCE

School Committee Members Present: Chair Jeri Robinson; Vice Chair Michael D. O'Neill; Chantal Lima Barbosa; Rafaela Polanco Garcia; and Student Representative Diego Mehta.

School Committee Members Absent: Stephen Alkins; Brandon Cardet-Hernandez; and Quoc Tran.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Agenda

Meeting minutes: [October 18, 2023](#)

[Exam School Admissions Policy Summary Memo](#)

[Grants for Approval Totaling \\$3,205,595.38](#)

[Office of Human Capital Update Memo](#)

[Annual Hiring & Workforce Diversity Report Equity Impact Statement](#)

[Office of Human Capital Office of Retention, Cultivation, and Diversity Annual Hiring & Workforce Diversity Update PowerPoint Presentation](#)

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CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Jeri Robinson called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance. She said that tonight's meeting was being live streamed on Boston City TV and on Zoom. It will be rebroadcast and the video will be posted at bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee and on YouTube. She announced that simultaneous interpretation services were available virtually in Spanish, Haitian Creole, Cabo Verdean, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin and American Sign Language (ASL). Translated meeting documents were posted at bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee prior to the start of the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Approved – The Committee approved by unanimous consent the minutes of the October 18, 2023 School Committee meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

As prepared for delivery.

Thank you, Chairperson Robinson, and good evening. I would like to begin my Superintendent's Report by addressing the resignation of some of the members of the English Learners - or EL - Task Force yesterday. First, on behalf of the district, I would like to thank the members for their years of service and deeply appreciate their advocacy for Boston's multilingual students. Second, I want to acknowledge that the status quo is not working for our multilingual learners based on decades of data and DESE's guidance. We know from our most recent MCAS results that our multilingual learners are five times less likely to be reading on grade level. The data is clear: we must change the way we are serving our multilingual students.

Our district is committed to adopting inclusive practices so that multilingual students have access to native language support while receiving their required ESL services and while also engaging in learning alongside their peers. Our Inclusive Education plan calls for the district to shift our current practices of isolating our multilingual students to practices that align with DESE's definition of SEI. DESE defines an SEI classroom as *"a classroom with at least one EL, where SEI-endorsed, content-licensed educators shelter instruction so that ELs can meaningfully engage with grade-level content, and develop discipline-specific academic language."* We are committed to doing better for our students and working with the community to move this work forward. Since the Task Force is an official body of the School Committee, I know the Chair is working with staff to figure out next steps for the EL Task Force.

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I would also like to follow-up on a request for information on the process that led to the current exam schools admissions policy. Today you received a detailed memo explaining how the policy was developed including the distribution of additional points. We want to ensure that all members and the public have the historical context and rationale for the policy decisions and recommendations that were made by the Exam School Admissions Task Force and subsequently approved by this body.

The memo includes four key areas:

- Review of the task force discussions between March and July of 2021 and why particular recommendations were made
- A timeline for the public and the School Committee of the admissions process, including when the School Committee will receive additional updates
- Responses to specific questions from the October 4 and October 18 meetings from committee members
- Other considerations for potential recommendations

The memo is publicly available on the [School Committee's website](#).

Please join us at the BPS Office of Family and Community Advancement - or OFCA - open house this Friday, November 3rd from 4-7 pm here at the Bolling Building at 2300 Washington Street in Nubian Square. Join the district's parent leaders and their children and learn more about the work of OFCA and the resources available to BPS families. Pre-registration is appreciated. More information is available at bostonpublicschools.org.

I want to share some great news about a new study that was conducted on a longtime BPS partner - the After-School Debate program. The study was published last week in *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, a peer-reviewed journal of the American Educational Research Association. The study shows that participating in the program is associated with improvements in ELA achievement and increases in the likelihood that students graduate from high school and enroll in postsecondary education. The study relied on data from the Boston Debate League, BPS, and the National Student Clearinghouse for students enrolled in BPS over a 10 year period - School Years 2007- 2008 to 2017 - 2018. It included the more than 3,500 students who participated in the Boston Debate League over that time. The Boston Debate League has been a BPS partner for nearly 20 years and serves close to 700 middle and high school students annually through the debate program and its Resolved program for Black and Latino young men. They also support the work of our teachers by providing instructional coaching and professional development.

Students and staff at New Mission High School - and the seniors from the Boston Community Leadership Academy - got a surprise visit in Hyde Park earlier this week from Celtics forward Jayson Tatum who spoke to the students about working hard to achieve their goals. Thanks to

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Mayor Wu and her team for organizing the special event.

Congratulations to O'Bryant High School coach Kevin Gadson for being chosen as the New England Patriots High School Football Coach of the Week. In honor of head coach Gadson, the Kraft family and New England Patriot Charitable Foundation made a \$1,000 donation to the O'B football program. Congratulations to Coach Gadson and the O'B Tigers.

I would like to close this week with congratulations to our newest City League Champs!

- Madison Park Cardinals - the 2023 City League Volleyball Champions
- And the Dragons - both the Boston Latin Academy Girls and Boys soccer teams were named 2023 City League Soccer Champions

Later tonight, Chief of Human Capital Francesse Canty and Rashaun Martin, acting managing director of Retention, Cultivation and Diversity Programs, will present an annual update on BPS hiring and workforce diversity. That concludes my Superintendent's Report - back to you, Madam Chair.

Chair Robinson thanked the EL Task Force for their service and commitment to BPS students and formally accepted their resignations. She echoed the Superintendent's comments that BPS must work differently to better serve multilingual learners. She said the Superintendent has laid out a roadmap to put students' needs and best interests at the forefront while meeting state and federal compliance requirements with DESE regulations and the Successor Settlement Agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice. She expressed confidence that the Superintendent and her team are working thoughtfully to shift the district's practices in a way that will better support our students and families. In the coming days, the Chair will meet with School Committee staff and members to determine next steps for the EL Task Force. She closed her comments by reaffirming her commitment to helping all students succeed.

Mr. O'Neill congratulated the BPS City League Champions. Mr. O'Neill said he is looking forward to reviewing the exam schools admissions policy memo. He said that sharing the historical context of policy revision work undertaken by the Exam Schools Admissions Task Force will be important as the Committee considers potential recommendations. He said that he is particularly interested in reviewing the data showing the differences in composite scores between Title I and the non-Title I schools both in aggregate and by tier. The Superintendent confirmed that the memo includes that requested data as well as a series of questions to consider related to exam schools admissions. She said that she and her team have not changed their thinking on the policy based on one year of data but reaffirmed that they will continue to update the Committee as they look for data patterns.

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Mr. O'Neill said that in places where the district made a hypothesis and now has some data, there may be an opportunity to take a closer look at the policy. The Superintendent confirmed for Mr. O'Neill that the BPS Inclusive Education Plan is aligned with DESE guidance. She said that DESE informed BPS that it had not been applying the definition of Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) appropriately. DESE told the district very explicitly that it should not be segregating multilingual learners but rather it should provide multilingual learners with access to English-speaking peers and the appropriate amount of ESL instruction. BPS will continue to provide programming for newcomers and Students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) students as they begin to learn English.

The Superintendent confirmed for Ms. Robinson that families of students with IEPs will meet with educators and staff before any changes are made. She said it's a team process that drives the identification of services. She said that while the model will change, there will be no disruption to services for multilingual learners

Approved - The Committee approved the Superintendent's Report by unanimous consent.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

John Mudd, Cambridge resident and advocate, testified regarding the EL Task Force and the district's Inclusive Education Plan.

Sarah Harold, West Roxbury resident and Kilmer and Mozart parent, testified regarding compensatory special education services.

Karen Kane, Roslindale resident and BCLA/McCormack School librarian, testified regarding concerns about the school's Dorchester facility.

Paula Grillo, Roslindale resident and BCLA/McCormack School teacher, testified regarding concerns about the school's Dorchester facility.

Mike Heichman, Dorchester resident and Boston Education Justice Alliance member, testified regarding the Committee's public comment protocols, multilingual learners, and Excellence for All.

Edith Bazile, Hyde Park resident and Black Advocates for Educational Excellence, testified regarding the BPS Inclusive Education Plan.

The following people testified with concerns about the current exam schools admissions policy:

- Mano Katsompenakis, Charlestown resident and Eliot K-8 and O'Bryant School of Math and Science parent
- Deirdre Manning, Dorchester resident and Murphy School K-8 School parent

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- Kathleen Chardavoyne, Charlestown resident and Eliot K-8 School parent

GREEN-GARNER AWARD RECOGNITION

Ms. Robinson congratulated Vice Chair Michael O'Neill for being awarded the Council of Great City Schools' 2023 Green-Garner Award, the nation's highest honor in urban education leadership. The prestigious award is presented by the Council each year in memory of Richard R. Green, the first African American chancellor of the New York City school system, and Edward Garner, who served on the Denver school board. The award recognizes, in alternating years, an outstanding superintendent and school board member from 78 of the largest urban public-school systems in the country. Mr. O'Neill was among five school board members from big-city school districts who were selected as finalists. The winner was chosen by an independent committee. Mr. O'Neill is a BPS graduate and a 15-year member of this Committee. Ms. Robinson commended Mr. O'Neill for being a champion for BPS students, particularly in the areas of special education, food and nutrition, and supporting off-track youth. He's also provided the district with much needed stability during multiple leadership transitions at the city and district level. As the recipient of the 2023 Green-Garner Award, the publishing company Scholastic will give Mr. O'Neill a \$10,000 college scholarship to present to a BPS student.

The Superintendent applauded Mr. O'Neill for receiving the award, calling the recognition well deserved. She then introduced a brief video. Committee members extended their congratulations. Mr. O'Neill thanked Mayor Wu for her leadership and support, noting that he has served under four different mayors, all of whom were deeply committed to education. He said he is encouraged by the leadership of Chair Robinson and Superintendent Skipper. He spoke about how Committee members learn from one another by sharing their various areas of expertise. He thanked the School Committee staff and district staff for their support.

ACTION ITEM

Approved - The Committee approved by unanimous consent grants for approval totaling \$3,205,595.38.

REPORT

Office of Human Capital's Office of Retention, Cultivation, and Diversity Annual Hiring and Workforce Diversity Update - Chief of Human Capital Francesse Canty and Acting Managing Director of Retention, Cultivation and Diversity Programs Rashaun Martin presented the district's annual hiring update focused on workforce diversity. The majority of the more than 11,000 BPS employees, or 56 percent, identify as people of color.

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The presentation focused on the following areas:

- The increase in school leaders of color;
- The lowest turnover rate among school leaders in recent years;
- The continued increase in Garrity educators of color;
- The increased language diversity among Garrity educators and the district's efforts to capture that data;
- The decrease in job vacancies in school year 2023-2024;
- And the successes of the district's ongoing recruitment and cultivation work.

Ms. Polanco Garcia asked how the district is working intentionally to increase the number of bilingual educators. Mr. Martin said that BPS is working with partner organizations such as Latinos for Education to recruit in the Latinx community. The Superintendent said that Executive Director of Leadership Development Monica Hall is working to bring more diversity to the district's leadership development pipeline. Ms. Canty clarified for Ms. Polanco Garcia that BPS is offering both referral bonuses and retention bonuses to attract and retain Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) specialists.

Ms. Lima Barbosa spoke about the importance of multilingualism. She asked if BPS is working with the city to address issues such as the high cost of housing and transportation, which can serve as barriers to recruitment and retention. Ms. Canty confirmed that those conversations are happening. Mr. Martin offered to share a calendar of recruitment events. Ms. Lima Barbosa suggested that BPS collaborate across departments about the district's many employment opportunities.

Mr. Mehta asked for more information about the district's plan to recruit Latinx educators. Mr. Martin spoke about the growth of the BPS diversity recruitment team plan and partnerships with Hispanic-Serving Institutions.

Mr. O'Neill asked if BPS recruitment teams are working with schools of education in the area. Mr. Martin confirmed that BPS has a high number of direct partners, including Northeastern University, Boston College and Simmons University and is in conversations with Cambridge College. Mr. O'Neill requested data trends on resignations, non-renewals, and retirements by subgroups, which the presenters agreed to provide. Mr. O'Neill suggested that BPS explore recruiting from other districts that may have layoffs due to the end of ESSER-funded positions. Ms. Canty said that her team is exploring that as a possible opportunity for growth.

Ms. Canty confirmed for Mr. O'Neill said BPS currently has 160 vacant teaching positions that it is working diligently to fill. Most of the open positions continue to be in areas that have been difficult to fill, such as STEM and ESL. She said some schools have higher concentrations of vacancies, such as Madison Park Technical Vocational High School because of the difficulty of obtaining CTE licenses. Mr. O'Neill suggested that the recruitment team reach out to retiring members of the trades to consider teaching.

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Mr. O'Neill spoke about the importance of performance evaluations, which he said is a key component of retention. He requested data on performance evaluations by job category, including how many teachers, school leaders and district staff received their evaluations on time. Ms. Canty said she would follow up with the information. Mr. Martin said that the educator support program, a collaboration between the performance management team and the Boston Teachers Union, provides direct support to educators to improve their proficiency.

Ms. Robinson suggested that the team recruit adjunct college professors to work part-time in BPS, which Ms. Canty said is an idea worth exploring. Ms. Robinson suggested recruiting internationally. Ms. Canty said that involves legal considerations but those conversations are happening. Ms. Robinson noted that the Garrity Order is now almost 50 years old and does not reflect the current BPS population, which includes 17,000 English Learner students, representing 31% of the district's total student population. She expressed a sense of urgency to hire more bilingual teachers. The Superintendent said that BPS has set hiring goals at each school and provided school leaders with flexibility to ensure staff diversity.

The Superintendent confirmed for Ms. Robinson that BPS offers a pipeline program for ABAs, adding that there is tremendous competition in this area with the private sector. She said that BPS must work creatively to offer its own certification and training programs.

Mr. O'Neill asked for an update on the George Cox Fellowship. Mr. Martin said that BPS currently has four Cox Fellows.

Ms. Robinson asked how BPS is partnering with colleges of education to prepare aspiring teachers to meet the current needs of the district. Mr. Martin said the BPS is in conversations with education preparation partners about training and is looking to increase staff of pipeline programs.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURN

Approved - At approximately 8:26 p.m. the Committee approved a motion to adjourn to the meeting by unanimous consent.

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Attest:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth Sullivan".

Elizabeth Sullivan
Executive Secretary