



OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE HYBRID BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

May 8, 2024

The Boston School Committee held a hybrid meeting on May 8, 2024, 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 Zoom. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit www.bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee, email lpavex@bostonpublicschools.org, or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

ATTENDANCE

School Committee Members Present: Chairperson Jeri Robinson; Stephen Alkins; Chantal Lima Barbosa; Brandon Cardet-Hernandez; Rafaela Polanco Garcia; Quoc Tran; and Student Representative Diego Mehta.

School Committee Member Absent: Vice Chairperson Michael D. O'Neill

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

[Agenda](#)

[Meeting Minutes: April 24, 2024](#)

[Grants for Approval Totaling \\$\\$61,730](#)

[Memo UP Academy Boston and Dorchester Charter Amendment](#)

[Equity Impact Statement UP Academy Boston and Dorchester Charter Amendment](#)

[UP Academy Dorchester Accountability Plan](#)

[UP Academy Boston Accountability Plan](#)

[Memo Massachusetts School Choice Plan, SY 2024-2025](#)

[PowerPoint Massachusetts School Choice Plan, SY 2024-2025](#)

[Memo Long-Term Facilities Plan](#)

[Equity Impact Statement Long-Term Facilities Plan](#)

[PowerPoint Long-Term Facilities Plan](#)

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Jeri Robinson called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance. Dr. Alkins and Chantal Lima Barbosa joined the meeting after it had started. Ms. Robinson said that tonight's meeting was being live-streamed on Boston City TV and 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 April 24, 2024 meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

As prepared for delivery.

Good evening Chair Robinson and members of the School Committee. We have a full agenda tonight. We have three presentations:

- UP Boston and UP Dorchester Charter Amendments;
- Inter-district School Choice Program;
- And a Long-term Facilities Plan Update

I will keep my Superintendent's Report short tonight - highlighting a few bright spots so that the remainder of our meeting time can be dedicated to our presentations.

BPS Sustainability, Energy, and Environment Program Director Katherine Walsh participated in the White House's first-ever Summit for Sustainable and Healthy K-12 School Buildings and Grounds on April 26. The event highlighted the Biden-Harris administration's commitment to providing equitable access to energy-efficient, climate-resilient, healthy school facilities that are conducive to learning and emphasized the need for 21st Century school infrastructure.

Speaking on the Equity and Justice panel, Katherine shared best practices from the Green New Deal for BPS, such as our improvements to drinking water access, indoor air quality, and outdoor teaching and learning through the use of the unprecedented federal funding for schools.

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Throughout the summit, BPS was recognized as a national leader in these areas, and commended for approaching sustainable infrastructure improvements through a commitment to protecting public health and creating a healthier school environment. I want to thank Katherine for representing the outstanding work of our district.

Students from Snowden International High School recently participated in the HBCU Tour Experience - the second annual five-day tour of historically Black colleges and universities for 50 high school students stretching from Atlanta to Washington D.C. In addition to the campus visits, students are immersed in the local culture by visiting significant museums, including The National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta and the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington D.C. This trip is organized by Snowden's Black Educators Group. This educational journey consistently stands out as a highlight for the Snowden school year, and we are looking forward to expanding the program in the following years.

The BPS Office of Specialized Services hosted its annual Autism Acceptance celebration on Monday, April 29th here at the Bolling Building. It was a great celebration of the spectrum of neurodiversity within our student community. BPS offers a wide array of support and services for autistic students ranging from ages three to 22. Event participants explored activities aligned with these supports by visiting tables showcasing these services. I want to thank the Specialized Services team - especially the work of Special Education Family Engagement Coordinator Yashira Perez - for making it a great event.

BPS and Special Olympics Massachusetts celebrated the expansion of inclusion in sports programming in the district at two Unified Basketball Jamborees at UMass Boston's Clark Athletics Center and the Reggie Lewis Track and Athletic Center on April 26th and May 1st. The games were an example of our commitment to creating a more inclusive and equitable environment in our schools. Through sports we are breaking down barriers and celebrating the diverse talents of all our students. The Unified Basketball teams consisted of 239 athletes - students with Intellectual Disabilities or Autism - and 181 partners - students without Intellectual Disabilities or Autism - from 18 BPS schools and one charter school.

The cornerstone of the celebration is the first-of-its-kind 450 thousand dollar partnership between BPS and the Special Olympics, which focuses on bolstering special-education services. Through the partnership, Boston Public Schools gained access to Special Olympics resources and, after meeting certain benchmarks, earned the nationally recognized Unified Champion School designation.

And that concludes my Superintendent's Report - back to you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Robinson inquired about the audience for the autism awareness event. She also expressed interest in learning more about the school's involvement with the Special Olympics, particularly in younger grades. Ms. Skipper said that the audience for the Autism Acceptance celebration brought together parents, partners, and providers. The event facilitated resource sharing and allowed parents to learn about available support for their children.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez asked for budget process updates now that it's under review by the City Council. Ms. Skipper noted the significance of the initial City Council meeting for understanding counselor perspectives and thanked Councilor Worrell for support, offering to share questions from hearings.

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

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Rosemary Kean, Dorchester resident, Community Advocate, Mass Peace Action, testified on how JROTC Programs operate in BPS.

Rowan Spote Ehn, Fenway, student, Mass Peace Action, testified on how JROTC Programs operate in BPS.

John Mudd, Cambridge resident, Community Advocate, BuildBPS/Green New Deal Stakeholders, and Boston Network for Black Student Achievement, testified regarding the Long-Term facilities plan.

Emmanuel Tikili, Braintree resident, Community Advocate, Project Right Inc., testified regarding the future plans for the Lilla G. Frederick Pilot Middle School.

Nyree Smith, Quincy resident, and Lilla G. Frederick Pilot Middle School teacher, testified regarding the plans for the Lilla G. Frederick Pilot Middle School.

Deirdre Manning, Dorchester resident, and Murphy K-8/Boston Collegiate parent, testified regarding the exam school policy inequity.

Janichka Jean, Dorchester, UP Academy student, testified in support of UP Academy.

Suleika Soto, South End parent, and Boston Education Justice Alliance (BEJA) member, testified regarding the Long-Term facilities plan.

Mike Heichman, Dorchester, Community Advocate, and BEJA member, testified regarding the facilities plan.

Jennifer Medeiros-Crabbe, Easton resident, and BPS school psychologist, testified regarding the role of the school psychologists at BPS.

Elise Pechter, Jamaica Plain resident, Community Advocate, and grandparent, BPS Families for COVID Safety (FamCosa) /MassCOSH/, testified regarding the Long-Term facilities plan.

David Lewis, Dorchester resident, and BCLA-McCormack 7-12 Pilot School teacher, testified regarding the physical space for the students for the upcoming year.

Martha McLoughlin, Charlestown resident, and Eliot school parent, testified regarding the exam

school admissions.

Cheryl Buckman, South Boston resident, Dever school parent and member of FamCosa testified regarding the long-term facilities plan.

ACTION ITEMS

Approved - The Committee approved by unanimous consent grants for approval totaling \$61,730.

REPORT

UP Academy Boston and Dorchester Charter Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Amendment - UP Education Network Chief Operating Officer Mike Bower presented the four amendments that were up for renewal.

- The Accountability Plan for UP Dorchester
- The Accountability Plan for UP Boston
- The Management contract between UP Education Network and UP Boston & Dorchester
- The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between BPS and UP Dorchester

Mr. Tran asked about changes in student population between contracts, focusing on total enrollment, students with disabilities, and English Learners (ELs). Mr. Bower noted a slight enrollment decrease but expected an increase due to the merger. He anticipated consistent demographics with no significant changes.

Dr. Alkins inquired about the district's progress tracking, as outlined in the accountability plan. Ms. Skipper explained that UP operates under the Horace Mann model, accountable directly to the state. Despite this, UP collaborates closely with the district, receiving resources and support equivalent to other district schools.

Dr. Alkins asked about the merger's impact, especially on transportation logistics. Ms. Skipper viewed the merger positively for students, especially at UP Academy Boston, where a small student population limited their middle school experience. She also mentioned no transportation impacts.

The Committee is scheduled to vote on the UP Academy Boston and Dorchester Charter Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Amendment on May 22.

Massachusetts School Choice Plan, SY 2024-2025 - Deputy Superintendent of Equity, Community and Family Advancement Dr. Ana Tavares presented an overview of the Massachusetts Inter-district School Choice Law for SY 2024-2025.

Dr. Tavares stated that historically, BPS had opted out of the School Choice Program, and recommended opting out again due to various factors.

- Impact on the student assignment process

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- Late registrants will have a disadvantage
- Newcomers will have a reduced chance of getting their top-choice
- District cannot set aside seats for non-resident students at specific schools/specific programs

- Cost implications:
 - Per pupil spending
 - Specialized services
 - Transportation, etc.

- Decisions of school committees in neighboring communities

- Space limitations

Dr. Tavares highlighted that a yes vote would grant nonresident students the same rights and opportunities as residents, including access to services, transfer options, special admissions high schools, and sibling preference. She emphasized prioritizing seats for city residents due to student assignment issues and budget strain from providing specialized services to non-residents. Limited reciprocity from neighboring communities and space constraints, especially in kindergarten and early childhood, further support opting out.

Ms. Lima Barbosa fully supported the recommendation but sought clarification on newcomer assignments, particularly regarding access to specialized services. Dr. Tavares clarified that assignments aren't solely district-determined, emphasizing tailored options for families based on their needs and preferences. The priority is supporting families in making choices aligned with their circumstances, even if different from expectations.

Mr. Tran expressed concerns, likening the recommendation to redlining issues. He questioned discussions with neighboring communities to address these concerns and reach agreements. Dr. Tavares mentioned existing reciprocity programs but noted differences from the current plan. Ms. Skipper highlighted limited communication between districts, shared challenges like space constraints and budget issues, and concerns about transportation and specialized services for students from other districts.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez acknowledged concerns about redlining and suggested exploring smaller-scale pilots. Dr. Tavares praised the superintendent's innovative strategies but noted challenges, including neighboring districts' unwillingness to collaborate. Ms. Skipper added that high student mobility complicates planning, and admitting students from outside raises financial and logistical issues. The priority is providing quality seats for Boston Public Schools residents, particularly marginalized students, which would be compromised by taking on more students from outside.

Ms. Robinson emphasized caution, expressing hesitation to admit more students given current uncertainties and resource strains. Understanding this impact is crucial before considering further expansion.

Ms. Lima Barbosa cautioned against expanding education access due to existing challenges. She emphasized prioritizing current initiatives due to limited resources and questioned attracting families from outside Boston given the district's constraints.

Dr. Alkins questioned the historical reciprocity between districts, particularly regarding redlining. Mr. Tran emphasized the lack of discussions with neighboring districts on the current issue and the need for consistency and expressed concern regarding civil rights.

Mr. Metha suggested future reciprocity between districts to address school access and affordability. Ms. Skipper noted legal constraints, highlighting that opting in would entail opening BPS to the entire Commonwealth, rather than choosing specific districts for exchange.

Ms. Robinson highlighted several options for students requiring specialized programming, citing examples like the Horace Mann School. She raised the question of whether similar opportunities exist in other districts. Ms. Skipper provided examples where students may opt to enroll in another district, including vocational programs like agricultural science.

The Committee is scheduled to vote on the Massachusetts School Choice Plan, SY 2024-2025 on May 22.

Long-Term Facilities Plan - Chief of Capital Planning Delavern Stanislaus, Rebecca Grainger, Mayor Wu's Senior Advisor for Youth and Schools, and Senior Deputy Superintendent of Academics Linda Chen

Ms. Skipper introduced the presentation, which focuses on the Long Term Facilities Plan and 11 significant capital projects. These initiatives are designed to expand high-quality educational opportunities for students and serve as catalysts for deeper change. The Plan offers transparent data for future investments, highlighting the team's dedication to continual advancement and collaboration with the community.

Ms. Stanislaus outlined the vision that students should learn in schools that provide rigorous and culturally affirming learning experiences, provide access to wellness and enrichment, contain a supportive network of caring adults, and have the physical spaces to support all aspects of a student's education – the four components of the BPS High-Quality Student Experience (HQSE). She mentioned upcoming proposals to be discussed with school communities before presenting them to the school committee. Transition planning aims for implementation after the 2024-2025 school year, with ongoing support planning including discussions on historical context, project updates, and grade reconfiguration. Ms. Stanislaus noted the importance of learning from past closures and prioritizing careful planning to minimize disruptions and maximize student benefits. Despite fewer closures proposed this year, efforts continue to expand quality student experiences beyond physical structures through systemic and policy enhancements for equitable education citywide.

Dr. Chen gave an overview of the grade configuration:
The Boston School Committee adopted a grade configuration strategy in 2019, by which BPS is primarily a K-6/7-12 and K-8/9-12 system to offer students an education experience with fewer transitions

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- Research shows that multiple student transitions can have a negative impact on student success and outcomes. Each time a student moves from one school to another, there is a risk of relationships and learning being disrupted.
- Goal was to create 20 or more K-6 schools and 7 more 6/7-12 schools, while preserving K-8 and 9-12 options
- At the time, enrollment in standalone middle schools had declined by 1,800 students over 6 years. K-8 schools experienced a high level of student turnover, and many were under-enrolled in grades 7-8.

When the policy was adopted In 2019, our 10-year goal was to create 20 or more K-6 schools and seven more 6/7-12 schools.

By School Year 2024-25:

- 34 PK/K-5 schools will have added a 6th grade
- 4 PK/K-8 schools will have eliminated 7th and 8th grades
- 7 9-12 schools will have added 7th and 8th grades
- 4 6-8 schools will have closed, and the last standalone middle school will close at the end of SY24-25

Dr. Chen mentioned that reconfiguring school grade spans aligns with the academic vision for 7th and 8th-grade students' experiences. Efforts ensure diverse academic and enrichment opportunities for all, in line with BPS capital planning strategies. Examples include merging schools for clear K-6 pathways and expanding existing schools for additional grades. This reconfiguration also allows for using available space differently, like transitioning middle grades out of schools to make room for early grades.

Ms. Grainger highlighted the district's progress in implementing grade reconfiguration, showing the interconnectedness of operational, academic, and engagement elements. Long-term facilities planning involves community input, shaping priorities, and assessing support for student experiences. Key concerns include school culture, inclusion, programs, accessibility, and safety, guiding transition priorities focused on transparency, trust-building, and support for the impacted populations.

Ms. Grainger said that the presentation revisits the alignment of capital projects with the broader vision for educational improvement, aiming to offer modern facilities and bolster academic programs for diverse learners

Ms. Stanislaus provided detailed updates on 11 major capital projects, highlighting expansions, renovations, and partnerships, each contributing to a comprehensive educational experience. The presentation sets the stage for future proposals, stressing a cautious approach to change and prioritizing community engagement and ongoing conversations with stakeholders in the decision-making process.

She stated that we're expanding buildings to provide high-quality seats, aligning with our vision for an exceptional student experience. The eleven projects offer over 6,000 such seats, unlocking potential for our students. In the May 22nd meeting, new proposals will be introduced to address gaps in the BPS ecosystem while prioritizing the student experience.

Ms. Polanco Garcia raised concerns about the timing of the transition plan and asked about BPS's strategy to ensure all affected families are reached. She stressed the importance of actively involving families in the planning process and addressing their needs collaboratively. Ms. Stanislaus explained that engagement with impacted school communities will occur before presenting proposals to the school committee. A collaborative effort to build a transition plan with these communities is underway, with proposed changes not scheduled for implementation until the 2025-2026 school year. Ms. Skipper added that the summer will primarily focus on preparing for upcoming discussions, aiming to provide families with necessary information.

Dr. Alkins asked about the academic vision for grade-level configuration transitions, particularly regarding grades 7 and 8, and if there's a projected timeline. He also asked about addressing underutilized buildings beyond capital projects. Ms. Stanislaus explained the challenge of providing a precise timeline due to multiple ongoing initiatives. Ms. Grainger stressed the interconnectedness of projects and community involvement, discussing strategies for increasing building utilization beyond construction projects and the complexity of the issue.

Dr. Tran asked for clarification on the term "underutilized," highlighting its wide-ranging implications, such as student enrollment, curriculum provisions, and other factors. Ms. Grainger explained that the utilization rate is determined by dividing enrollment by capacity, indicating how effectively a building is utilized in terms of student occupancy and available space. This calculation does not incorporate factors like teacher shortages but does consider the space required for various programs.

Ms. Lima Barbosa inquired about community engagement, stressing the need for timely communication to ensure families can participate. Ms. Stanislaus clarified that before proposals go to the school committee on May 22nd, affected schools will engage with their communities, informing them about the proposals and providing support throughout, including transition planning and family support. Feedback from families and school communities will be considered, aiming to actively involve and support impacted communities during the transition. After the vote, engagement focuses on student assignments and supporting staff, with a year-long timeline allowing families time to adjust. Effective systems and structures are crucial to support families and staff across different timelines in the district.

Ms. Skipper stressed the thorough review of all projects and the importance of community engagement throughout. She cautioned against overlooking community input, drawing from past experiences with consolidation and merger, and emphasized ongoing learning and adaptation. Finally, she highlighted the significance of listening to and learning from communities for future decisions.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez asked about the seat count in 32 underutilized buildings, new seat additions from current projects, and seats lost due to mergers and consolidations. He stressed the importance of addressing excess capacity to preserve program funding and sought strategies to

reduce it to prevent future program cuts. Ms. Grainger said the seats in the 32 underutilized buildings can be determined using available data. She explained new seats depend on building size and renovation efforts, emphasizing collaboration for quality student experiences across BPS teams.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez noted a gap between new seat creation and excess capacity reduction. Ms. Grainger suggested comparing current building seat counts with new seat additions to address this. Ms. Skipper mentioned challenges in assessing seat utilization due to differing space needs for programmatic seats, often placed in already underutilized buildings, exacerbating the issue. She acknowledged the challenge of fully answering the question due to varying space requirements for different programs.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez asked about integrating school choice data into planning and raised concerns about the budget cuts amidst seat expansions. Ms. Grainger acknowledged the complexity of enrollment and school choice, emphasizing the community's desire for quality education nearby. Ms. Skipper addressed financial worries, highlighting the need to invest in buildings and renovations for quality education, citing initial investments for long-term savings.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez inquired about the process for families affected by school mergers or consolidations regarding transfers and assignments. Ms. Stanislaus explained that families impacted by school changes will have priority options, including assistance from welcome services, to address any assignment changes and support needed for students during the transition process.

Ms. Robinson asked about the long-term plan for high schools, questioning if growth at some implies the closure of others and seeking clarity on establishing fully resourced campuses with comprehensive programs for equitable access to extracurricular activities. Ms. Stanislaus emphasized the goal of well-resourced high schools, stressing investment in academic programs, extracurriculars, and facilities to ensure closures increase access to quality seats and programming for all students.

Ms. Robinson asked about the clarity of criteria for the upcoming school restructuring, stressing the need for transparent rationale and clear district goals for stakeholder understanding. Ms. Stanislaus emphasized clear communication with impacted communities and the broader BPS community, ensuring an understanding of decisions' rationale and alignment with strategic goals. She pledged further clarification in future communications and engagements.

Dr. Alkins stressed the need for clear communication about the 10-year plan and asked about the communication between capital planning and programming teams. He also asked about potential uses for empty buildings after closures. Ms. Skipper highlighted the substantial costs associated with upgrading severely underutilized buildings and the finite nature of capital funding. She emphasized the complexity of decision-making regarding school consolidation, closure, and merger, suggesting forthcoming recommendations will provide insight. Additionally, she stressed the importance of community involvement, particularly from high school students.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez expressed concerns about the lack of clarity in the district's facilities plan, emphasizing the need for transparent criteria and targets. He also raised financial concerns about the proposed initiatives.

Ms. Skipper stressed addressing enrollment disparities to ensure quality seats for all students. She advocated for a comprehensive approach, covering tier-one instruction, equitable literacy, inclusive education, and alternative education, alongside mergers and closures, to strengthen the entire system and prevent future issues. She emphasized the current focus on providing high-quality seats, which may necessitate strategic investments, highlighting meeting parental expectations for education as crucial for retaining and attracting families.

PUBLIC COMMENT (CONTINUED)

None

NEW BUSINESS

Dr. Akins asked for an update on the Task Forces.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez requested an update on the Blackstone from the family concerns for the next Superintendent's report, as well as an update on school psychologists. Ms. Skipper said that there haven't been significant cuts to school psychologists, though there has been some shifting due to factors like classroom closures.

ADJOURN

Approved - At approximately 9.40 p.m. the Committee unanimously approved a motion by roll call to adjourn to the meeting.

Attest:



Lena Parvex
Executive Secretary