



OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

December 7, 2016

The Boston School Committee held a meeting on December 7, 2016 at 6 p.m. at the Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building, 2300 Washington Street, School Committee chamber, Roxbury, Massachusetts. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit www.bostonpublicschools.org, email feedback@bostonpublicschools.org or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

ATTENDANCE

School Committee Members Present: Vice-Chair Dr. Hardin Coleman; Michael Loconto; Jeri Robinson; Regina Robinson; and student representative Keondre McClay.

School Committee Members Absent: Chairperson Michael D. O'Neill; Alexandra Oliver-Dávila; and Dr. Miren Uriarte.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Grants for approval totaling \$675,866:

- Boston Public Schools Teaching Fellowship - \$165,898
- Early Childhood Entitlement Grant (FC 262) - \$469,968
- Supplementary Support to School Districts with High Concentrations of At-Risk Students: MassGrad Promising Practices (FC320) - \$40,000

The Value of Shifting Grade Configurations

FY16 and FY17 Budget Update

BPS Innovation Schools: Renewal, Conversions, and Schools in Development

CALL TO ORDER

Dr. Coleman led the pledge of allegiance and called the meeting to order.

MEETING MINUTES

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The Committee approved by unanimous consent the minutes of the November 16, 2016 School Committee meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

**As prepared for delivery.*

Good evening, we have some really important information to share with you this evening, as well as some positive news. This evening, we will be sharing an update on the Fiscal Year 17 budget. Also, you will hear two reports focusing on the future of Boston Public Schools. One will be on innovation schools and another will be on my recommendation for preferred grade configurations. Our goal in Boston Public Schools is to expand our portfolio of high-quality schools we offer to our families. As we know, Boston is a global leader in innovation and technology. BPS is refining our system of schools so we support multiple innovative pathways of educating students to meet their personalized learning needs.

Yesterday, I joined [U.S. Secretary of Education John King Jr.](#), Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education Mitchell Chester, teachers and school leaders at a roundtable discussion at the [Mildred Avenue K-8 School](#) in Mattapan. His visit was to highlight Massachusetts' performance on the 2015 Programme for International Student Assessment, otherwise known as PISA. It should be noted that Massachusetts - if it were its own country - would be at the top of the world rankings in literacy and second only Singapore in science. During Secretary King's visit, we also highlighted the incredible turnaround progress of the Mildred Avenue K-8 School. I made comments at the gathering applauding the partnerships that teachers and the school leaders have developed at the school; the relentless focus on instruction; and leadership that understands the importance of collaboration. The story of Mildred Avenue is that when teachers, partners, students and leaders come together to create solutions, great things can happen! We congratulate the school again for attaining DESE Level 1 status this year.

Brighton High School took the Boston City League North title, leading to head coach Randolph Abraham being named this week's New England Patriots High School Coach of the Week. Patriots and Pro Football Hall of Fame linebacker Andre Tippett visited the Brighton players and coaching staff to present the football program with a \$1,000 donation on behalf of the New England Patriots Charitable Foundation.

I am so proud to highlight the recent achievement of a BPS student. Mayor Walsh honored Dearborn STEM Academy student, Melisa Depina, with the We Are Boston Youth Action Award. This award was given out at the We Are Boston Gala last Tuesday evening, a gathering to celebrate our city's immigrant communities.

This week, BPS students from all grade levels are participating in "Hour of Code," where they will be engaging in at least one hour of "coding" and other computer science related activities. I am proud that 80% of our schools are planning to participate. I would also like to say congratulations to the Horace Mann School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Today, they were

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announced as the winners of the 2016 Congressional App Challenge! Students made an app to educate deaf and hard of hearing voters on the voting process, candidates, and referendum questions.

We want to create coherence with all of the partners of BPS and bring together one collective vision of improving instruction in our schools. Two hundred partners from over 150 organizations gathered for breakfast this morning to learn about our strategic plan and participate in a workshop entitled "Setting a Collective Vision" around Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices (CLSP). The workshop was led by Assistant Superintendent Dr. Colin Rose and Hayden Frederick-Clarke, Director of Cultural Proficiency.

I'm pleased to offer an early update on next school year's budget. This week we'll be announcing to school leaders two pieces of good news. First, thanks to a major investment by the City in extended learning time, next year over 23,000 of our students will be participating in ELT. This represents a \$14M investment in a critical initiative which research has shown can help close the opportunity and achievement gap. This will allow more than 15,000 additional students in 39 schools to benefit from Extended Learning Time (ELT) next school year. With this added investment, BPS will have implemented ELT in 57 schools serving over 23,000 students in only three years. In addition, with central efficiencies and further streamlining of our central operations, we will be releasing school budgets at the end of this week with no changes to our weighted student funding formula. Long-term financial planning has begun to pay off and we hope it will continue to do so. We will continue to focus on that effort so we can take the necessary steps to address the long term structural pressures on our budget. We remain committed to that long term planning effort, which is necessary to allow us to continue to protect schools budgets while also unlocking resources for further investment in future years.

On Monday, November 28th, I received a letter from Commissioner Chester in response to the Mattahunt closure vote. He changed the Mattahunt "Level 4-Under Review" designation to a "Level 4" accountability designation for SY 16-17; he also extended Mattahunt's turnaround plan through SY 16-17. The Commissioner requested that within 30 days, I submit an addendum to Mattahunt's turnaround plan that will address the closing procedures for the school, with a particular focus on the supports that will be provided to Mattahunt families. The district will provide the addendum to the Commissioner by December 28, 2016. On Tuesday, November 29th, Deputy Superintendent Donna Muncey and Instructional Superintendent Mary Driscoll provided an update about the Mattahunt school closure to the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. During the discussion, Board Chair Paul Sagan indicated that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education does not have the authority to overturn a closure decision by a local school committee. Commissioner Chester indicated that he will not be requesting that the Boston School Committee overturn its closure decision for Mattahunt. Parents attended the Showcase of Schools Bus Tour where families had the opportunity to visit three schools on their choice list. For example, at the Bates, families were greeted by student tour guides where teachers from all grade levels waited to greet them. Families were extremely excited for the opportunity to visit new schools and gave positive feedback to Principal Walter Henderson.

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The New School Design Team which includes parents, teachers, partners, and experts in STEM, language and literacy and early childhood have been meeting on Tuesday evenings and are excited about the new learning opportunities and experiences that are ahead for the students. At the first meeting, the New School Design Team did a close reading of the Strategic Implementation Plan and the OAG Policy in order to ground and guide the work moving forward. The team is appreciative to have the opportunity to use a design thinking process to create and share ideas/possibilities. Teacher morale continues to be strong as they use innovative strategies to keep students engaged as we continue the current school year. Teachers and staff are planning an awards assembly for students who consistently put forward great effort to be held at the end of December.

Approximately 280 students walked out of class around 1 p.m. on Monday to express concerns around President-elect Donald Trump. We're supportive of our students' voices, however, I discouraged our young people from missing valuable learning time in class. On Monday, I issued a notice and a video to the entire Boston Public Schools community reiterating our commitment and support for all of our more than 56,000 students, their families, and our staff. A core value that guides our work is equity. And to those who may feel some uncertainty over the general political climate of the United States: please know that we are deeply committed to ensuring that our schools are safe, healthy, and welcoming. Divisiveness and discrimination have no place in Boston Public Schools or the City of Boston. The letter is on our website, in addition to contact information to link students to supportive resources. Most of all, we want our students to know that we hear their concerns and that they're incredibly important to us.

I also want to point out that our country is commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack today. That event was a flash point for our country's history. Many would argue that this event placed the United States as a global power. Unfortunately, we should not forget - as a result of that attack - our country interned over 100,000 people of Japanese ancestry, of which 62 percent were American citizens. Let's not forget that lesson.

Ms. Regina Robinson commended parents from the Mattahunt Elementary School who attended last week's DESE board meeting and asked how parents can feel heard by DESE. The Superintendent said that DESE is seeking parent feedback on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Ms. Robinson encouraged the district to conduct parent satisfaction surveys and track teacher morale. She also requested a roster of the Mattahunt School Redesign team.

Ms. Jeri Robinson requested data on the academic performance and satisfaction of students who chose to attend the Mattahunt Elementary School. The Superintendent clarified that when the Mattahunt reopens as an Early Education Center, it will have no DESE level status.

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

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GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Nate Jiles, student, Snowden International High School at Copley testified in favor of protection for undocumented students.

Kesamet Tesfazion, student, Boston Latin Academy, testified in favor of protection for undocumented students.

Victoria Omoregie, student, Snowden International High School at Copley testified in favor of protection for undocumented students.

Thomas Cherry, parent, Perry K-8 School, testified regarding the home-based assignment plan.

Herminia Diana Rosas, prospective BPS parents, testified regarding the residency policy for ISEE exam.

Stephanie Shapiro-Berkson, BPS parent, testified regarding the food and nutrition services vendor.

Sharon Parker, BPS parent, testified regarding the food and nutrition services vendor.

Erica Pastor, teacher, Orchard Gardens K-8 School, testified regarding the test scores and accountability.

Suzanne McGlone, teacher, Orchard Gardens K-8 School, testified regarding the retention of teachers of color.

Johnny McInnis, president, Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts (BEAM), requested that the School Committee rescind its vote to close the Mattahunt Elementary School.

Megan Wolf, BPS parent and member, Quality Education for Every Student (QUEST), asked for moratorium on school closures until a thorough analysis is complete.

Peggy Wiesenberg, testified regarding the closure of the Mattahunt Elementary School.

Heidi Winston, BPS school nurse, testified regarding protection for undocumented students.

Barbara Fields, member, BEAM, testified regarding the closure of Mattahunt Elementary School.

Nancy Dickerson, Mattapan resident, and former Mattahunt Elementary School principal, testified regarding the closure of Mattahunt Elementary School.

Kenneth Hawkes, resident, testified regarding the recent student walkout and the Code of Conduct.

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Maria Roges, resident, testified regarding the BPS Code of Conduct.

Mary Battenfeld, member, QUEST, testified regarding grade configurations.

ACTION ITEMS

Dr. Coleman and Ms. Jeri Robinson asked clarifying questions about the BPS Teaching Fellowship grant, all of which were answered by Assistant Superintendent of Human Capital Emily Qazilbash. Dr. Coleman encouraged the district to track competency outcomes.

Approved – The Committee approved by unanimous consent grants for approval totaling \$675,866.

REPORTS

The Value of Shifting Grade Configurations – Instructional Superintendent Alexandra Montes McNeil presented the Superintendent’s proposal seeking the Committee’s support for the concept of elementary grades Pre-K through 6 and secondary grades 7 through 12 as the district’s preferred grade configurations. Dr. Montes McNeil explained that it is not the district’s goal to limit configurations to a prescribed system, but rather to strengthen its portfolio of schools by providing fewer transitions so students can develop academically in a coherent manner and allow schools to better offer intervention, acceleration and enrichment over the course of a student’s educational progression.

Ms. Jeri Robinson asked about the potential impact on K-8 schools, which are popular with families, and how the district is providing support for middle school students. She added that the planning process is important.

Mr. Loconto said that it’s important to provide families with a variety of options but that the district should have guiding principles. He clarified with Dr. Montel McNeil that the current proposal is seeking the Committee’s support for the concept of grade configurations and that any individual school changes would come before the Committee for a separate vote.

Ms. Regina Robinson said it is unfortunate that some students who are displaced from the Mattahunt School will experience another transition.

Mr. McClay asked if the new configurations would lead to school closures. The Superintendent responded that the facilities master planning process, which involves much planning and community engagement, will guide the grade configurations process. Mr. McClay requested more opportunities for student voice.

Dr. Coleman requested a deep equity analysis and suggesting holding a summit on the issue to hear from experts and stakeholders.

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BPS Innovation Schools: Renewal, Conversions, and Schools in Development – Managing Partner of Innovation Sujata Bhatt Our Managing Partner of Innovation Sujata Bhatt provided an overview of how other states in New England lead Massachusetts in student-centered innovative learning, and presented recommendations from the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education that BPS move towards student-centered education. Ms. Bhatt also discussed how the district is working to align our innovation schools to these recommendations which overlap with Focus Area 1 of the Superintendent’s Strategic Implementation Plan and efforts to broaden the portfolio of school options for families.

Three BPS school leaders made the following presentations:

- Eliot K-8 Innovation School Principal Tracey Walker Griffith requested the Committee’s approval of the renewal of the Eliot’s innovation status.
- Jeremiah E. Burke High School Headmaster Lindsa McIntyre requested the Committee’s approval of the Burke’s innovation proposal.
- Holmes Elementary School Principal Yeshi Gaskin Lamour requested the Committee’s approval of the Holmes’ innovation proposal.

The Committee is scheduled to vote on the innovation proposals on December 14th.

The Committee then received brief presentations from three design teams that have been working to create innovative plans to bring personalized learning programming to BPS sometime in the future: Boston Collaboratory School, Hale Intrepid Academy and Big Picture Learning. Ms. Bhatt explained that these new models will help close opportunity and achievement gaps and promote student-centered learning.

Mr. Loconto requested the individual innovation plans for each school, which the Superintendent agreed to share.

Ms. Jeri Robinson noted that she has worked with Holmes community and visited the school and is encouraged by their innovation plans.

Ms. Regina Robinson expressed enthusiastic support for the Hale Intrepid Academy and encouraged the district to replicate and share best practices Level 4 schools.

FY16 and FY17 Budget Update – Chief Financial Officer Eleanor Laurans and Deputy Chief Financial Officer Nathan Kuder provided an update on the close of Fiscal Year 16 and the start of Fiscal Year 17. BPS successfully closed FY16 on budget for the 26th consecutive year and is on track to do so again in FY17. Fiscal responsibility is a key priority for BPS.

Ms. Jeri Robinson asked about impact of budget decisions on special education and transportation.

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Ms. Regina Robinson requested data on private placements for students with disabilities. Ms. Laurans agreed to follow up.

Mr. Loconto asked questions about efficiencies in transportation support services and requested a closer examination of weights for students with disabilities under the Weighted Student Formula and transportation costs.

Dr. Coleman asked for clarification about language suggesting that the Office of Human Capital may be limiting hiring autonomies for some positions.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORTS

Lincoln Larmond, Mattapan resident, testified regarding the future of the Mattahunt School.

Aveann Bridgemohan, parent, Mattahunt Elementary School, testified regarding the future of the Mattahunt School.

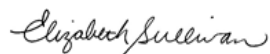
NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Jeri Robinson asked if the School Committee will discuss the Mattahunt closure again. Mr. Loconto said that the Committee need to better understand what went wrong at Mattahunt, receive an after action report, and look at successful turnaround plans. Ms. Regina Robinson asked to learn more about potential options. The Superintendent said that DESE Commissioner Mitchell Chester has expressed support for the School Committee's vote to reconfigure the Mattahunt School and cited it as the reason why he removed the Mattahunt from Level 4 under review status. Dr. Coleman called for a substantive post hoc analysis and asked the district to show clearly where displaced Mattahunt students will attend school. Dr. Coleman said he will consult with Chairman O'Neill about next steps.

ADJOURN

At approximately 9:58 p.m., the Committee voted by unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth Sullivan
Executive Secretary