



OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

February 24, 2016

The Boston School Committee held a meeting on February 24, 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: Chairperson Michael O’Neill; Michael Loconto; Alexandra Oliver-Dávila; Jeri Robinson; Regina Robinson; Dr. Miren Uriarte; and student representative Savina Tapia.

School Committee Member Absent: Vice-Chair Dr. Hardin Coleman.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Grant for Approval: STARTALK Arabic Summer Academy - \$90,000

International Travel Request: Boston Green Academy: Spain, April 7-20, 2016

International Travel Request: Boston Latin School: France and England, April 14-23, 2016

International Travel Request: Jeremiah E. Burke High School: Romania, April 9-17, 2016

International Travel Request: The English High School: Czech Republic and Germany, April 13-23, 2016

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. O’Neill led the pledge of allegiance and called the meeting to order.

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SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

The Superintendent provided a brief update on race-related issues at Boston Latin School (BLS). The Boston Public Schools (BPS)' Office of Equity recently completed its investigation into allegations raised by students of improper handling of racism issues. An executive summary of the investigative findings has been released, and is available online at www.bostonpublicschools.org. One violation was substantiated out of seven incidents investigated.

Specific recommendations were made, including overhauling protocols and procedures at BLS, initiating a racial climate audit at the school, improving the culture and climate through YW Boston Dialogues on Race and Ethnicity, instituting regular communication channels between administration and student groups, investigating ways to increase diversity of staff at BLS, and initiating a systemic study of current exam school admission policies with the intent to broaden the opportunity for admission for a larger number of qualified students from a wider demographic pool.

There continues to be a large public discussion around race issues at Boston Latin. The Superintendent expressed confidence that the Office of Equity conducted its investigation with the utmost integrity. He is open to working with any outside groups, including the NAACP, which is a close partner of the Boston Public Schools, who have additional concerns. At the same time, the district's focus continues to be that all students can learn in a safe and respectful environment at all Boston Public Schools, and that all students are engaging in rigorous learning.

On February 23, BLS Headmaster Lynne Mooney Teta sent a letter to the school community, in which she apologized for not addressing concerns about racial tensions as promptly as she could have. She also expressed deep reflection. She said that while the last few weeks have been difficult for the school community, that discomfort cannot compare to the experience of students who have faced prejudice or acts of bias. The Superintendent thanked Dr. Teta for her thoughtful letter, and said he's encouraged by her acknowledgement that more work needs to be done. He pledged to work closely with Dr. Teta and the BLS community on these efforts. He added that the work of ridding schools of racism and inequity must continue.

The work of the facilities master planning process has maintained a steady pace since the last Build BPS presentation to the School Committee on December 9th. The design team has been prototyping the assessment process by visiting 19 school buildings throughout the city. These 19 schools were chosen because they represent a cross-section of building age, grade configuration and neighborhood. In late January, the design team did an assessment of the physical condition of these 19 school buildings. Over the next few weeks, the team will be revisiting these same schools to do an educational assessment. Additional information on the prototype and the 19 schools are available on the Build BPS webpage: bostonpublicschools.org/buildbps. The Superintendent's Educational Planning group is also meeting to identify key issues that will influence the future of school buildings, including technology, school types and pathways. The Community Engagement group has also been meeting and developing a listening strategy for the project, which will include answering questions about the Master Plan and opportunities for

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engagement at the individual, school, neighborhood, and citywide levels. The district is planning an exciting event in August that will provide a unique hands-on opportunity to engage in this work. The Superintendent will provide more details in future updates.

Yesterday BPS held its first employee wellness event for Central Office employees. For several hours, staff had the opportunity to learn about opportunities to increase physical activity, improve diet and manage stress. Some even took part in zumba, yoga, conditioning and Qigong classes.

BPS's Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners (RETELL) proposal has been approved by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The Office of English Language Learners will now begin to offer RETELL to eligible BPS teachers so that teachers will be able to receive their Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) Endorsement.

BPS is among 10 large school districts participating in the White House's My Brother's Keeper initiative to combat chronic absenteeism in schools. While the White House requested the initiative be piloted in three schools in each district, BPS opted to launch the program in four schools: the Jeremiah E. Burke High School, English High School, Higginson-Lewis K-8 School, and Perkins Elementary School. Several BPS leaders, including the Superintendent, visited the White House last fall to learn more about My Brother's Keeper. BPS is working with several partners, including City Year, Boston Partners in Education, Big Brother Big Sister, Mass Mentoring Partnership, and others to launch Success Mentor Teams. These mentors will work with students who are chronically absent or at high risk to become chronically absent. We consider chronic absenteeism as a student who misses more than 10 percent of the school year.

The Superintendent congratulated the New Mission High School Boys Basketball Team and Fenway High School Girls Basketball Team on being Boston City League Basketball Champions.

Madison Park's Culinary Arts program took first place honors in the ProStart State Culinary Arts Competition in Worcester on February 23. The Superintendent congratulated team members: Aaron Penn, Naomi Penn, Kellsie Pemberton, Nyerica Davis, Joahnaliz Baez, and instructor Chefs Tonia Larkins and Jose Teixeira.

BPS high school students will now have the opportunity to take financial literacy courses thanks to a nearly \$350,000 Discover Pathway to Financial Success Grant. These courses will help ensure that BPS students get the financial education they need to make informed decisions about money allowing for a brighter financial future. The Superintendent thanked Jan Manfredi, BPS director of online and blended learning, and the Goldman Sachs Discover Brighter Futures Fund for their efforts.

The Boston Museum of Science and AIR Worldwide are bringing engineering to six BPS schools: the Adams Elementary, Edison K-8, Haynes Early Education Center, John F. Kennedy Elementary, Curley K-8, and West Zone Learning Center. A \$15,000 grant from AIR will enable

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educators to introduce 300 students to “Engineering is Elementary,” the award-winning curriculum created at the Museum’s National Center for Technological Literacy.

McCormack Middle School Principal Josue Duarte, reading specialist Adina Schecter and other school staff and volunteers held a ribbon-cutting ceremony to officially open the school’s new library. The library serves as a literacy center and a place of solace for social and emotional growth. Trinity Church and the Willow Tree Foundation were instrumental in providing funding for new books and furniture.

Ms. Tapia announced that the Boston Student Advisory Council (BSAC)’s Student Rights App has had 5,000 users to date. BSAC met with the Superintendent earlier today and looks forward to partnering with the district on issues of race and culture.

Ms. Regina Robinson thanked the Superintendent and Dr. Teta for their deep reflection and follow up to the recent events at BLS, adding that student voice is critical to implementing changes. She also suggested that the Madison Park Technical Vocational High School culinary program consider offering samples at a future School Committee meeting.

Ms. Oliver-Davila said that she is pleased that there will be teacher training on race and culture.

Dr. Uriarte echoed the importance of student voice and asked about future policy implications. She also requested a presentation from Chief Equity Officer Rebecca Shuster.

Ms. Jeri Robinson asked about race and culture education. The Superintendent responded that Assistant Superintendent of Professional Learning Dr. Doannie Tran is studying culturally sustained pedagogy aimed at preserving and strengthening culture.

Mr. O’Neill said that Superintendent Chang is new to Boston and taking a fresh look at issues such as race and culture. He read aloud the priorities of the School Committee’s strategic plan and asked how we can ensure that all BPS schools provide an atmosphere where all students can learn. He acknowledged that some Black and Latino students who are accepted to BLS choose not to attend because they don’t view the school as providing a supportive environment. He asked the Superintendent and the Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force to examine the following issues:

- The district should provide all BPS students with test preparation for the exam schools.
- The district should examine how grades are determined in BPS schools vs. private and parochial schools.

Ms. Regina Robinson suggested that the BPS Office of Engagement be part of the process of examining these issues.

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

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GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Mary Franklin, grandmother, requested bus monitors for all elementary school students.

David Goncalves and Leylainy Tejeda, students, Burke High School asked the Committee to approve their school's international travel request.

LaSheila Warren, former bus monitor, testified regarding union dues.

The following people testified regarding the Superintendent's preliminary FY17 budget proposal:

- Shade Murphy, student, Diploma Plus program
- David Vitale-Wolff, BPS parent, and Brookline Public Schools teacher
- Tommy Hayes, teacher, Diploma Plus program, and BPS parent, Mattahunt Elementary School
- Leandra Terrero, student, Boston Community Leadership Academy (BCLA)
- Evelyn Vasquez, student, BCLA
- Sung-Joon Pai, director, Diploma Plus Program
- Kristin Johnson, parent, Mendell Elementary School
- Sauscha Williams, alumni, Diploma Plus program
- Keith Magni, teacher, BCLA
- Bob Damon, parent, Philbrick Elementary School
- Christina Yee, parent, John D. O'Bryant School of Math and Science
- Maura O'Toole, librarian, Mather Elementary School
- Myrtise Kvetzedemas, parent, Roosevelt K-8 School
- Annie Spitz, parent, Boston Teachers Union School, and teacher, Boston Latin Academy
- Megan Wolf, BPS parent, and member, Quality Education for Every Student
- Rene Bernal, parent, Boston Latin School and Mendell Elementary School

ACTION ITEMS

Ms. Jeri Robinson suggested that the district create more opportunities for student leaning outside the classroom and throughout the city, in addition to international travel experiences. Ms. Regina Robinson requested that the Committee receive feedback from students who have traveled abroad.

Approved – As part of the consent calendar, the Committee unanimously approved a grant in the amount of \$90,000.

Approved – As part of the consent calendar, the Committee unanimously approved an international travel request for students and chaperones from Boston Green Academy to travel to Spain from April 7-20, 2016.

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Approved – As part of the consent calendar, the Committee unanimously approved an international travel request for students and chaperones from Boston Latin School to travel to France and England from April 14-23, 2016.

Approved – As part of the consent calendar, the Committee unanimously approved an international travel request for students and chaperones from the Jeremiah E. Burke High School to travel to Romania from April 9-17, 2016.

Approved – As part of the consent calendar, the Committee unanimously approved an international travel request for students and chaperones from The English High School to travel to Czech Republic and Germany from April 13-23, 2016.

REPORTS

Superintendent's Performance Goals – The School Committee previously identified 10 indicators and 18 elements that will serve as the rubric for the Superintendent's evaluation for school year 2015-16. This evening, Superintendent Chang presented seven specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) goals in the areas of professional practice, student learning, and district improvement. The Superintendent elected to add one additional goal to develop an "anti-racism" statement that ensures every student, regardless of race or ethnicity, is educated in a safe and inclusive learning environment.

The Committee thanked the Superintendent for his proposed and offered feedback. Ms. Oliver-Dávila asked the Superintendent and the Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force to develop cultural proficiency standards for the district. Ms. Jeri Robinson asked the Superintendent to explicitly add closing the achievement gap to Goal 4. Mr. Loconto thanked the Superintendent for being bold.

Mr. O'Neill expressed concern about the Superintendent's goal to submit a strategic implementation plan to the Committee by June 30, given that some factors are not within his control. The Superintendent assured the Committee that he is comfortable with the goals submitted, emphasizing that it's important to have a plan. The Superintendent will work with Ms. Regina Robinson to incorporate the Committee's feedback and finalize the goals.

Strategic Priorities Related to FY 17 Budget Proposal – The Superintendent highlighted the district's work that's underway related to School Committee's priorities. He then explained how each of the values of the 100-Day Plan are reflected in the FY17 budget. The Superintendent is proposing efficiencies in central office and in transportation and limiting school budget reductions. The district is also making strategic investments in early education, expanded learning time and summer programming, as well as supporting long-term innovation in instruction and equity.

Mr. Loconto asked the district to provide more information about reductions and investments that were considered but forgone.

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Dr. Uriarte requested more clarity around the impact of the proposed reductions in areas such as reducing opportunity and achievement gaps. She also asked the district to integrate the Mayor's Education Transition Team report, School Committee's strategic plan and the Superintendent's 100-Day Plan.

Mr. O'Neill noted that the Superintendent drafted the district's initial budget proposal based on many financial uncertainties. He said that he is cautiously optimistic that BPS may receive additional city and state funding.

Ms. Jeri Robinson expressed concern about the impact of cuts on high school students. The Superintendent explained that elementary and middle schools did not have room for cuts in the same way that high schools did. BPS provided soft landings and sustainability allocations to schools that were eligible.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila questioned the district's decision to expand K-1 while making reductions at the high school level. The Superintendent said that research demonstrates that investments in early education close achievement gaps. Ms. Oliver-Dávila cautioned that communication with students and families around this issue is key.

Mr. O'Neill noted that significant cuts are being made in several areas and are not just limited to high schools. At the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)'s board meeting yesterday, Mr. O'Neill testified against adding new charter school seats, citing their fiscal impact on public school districts. He added that he was disheartened that DESE board members said it is not in their purview to consider the financial impact on school districts.

Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force Update – Ms. Jeri Robinson, co-chair of the OAG Task Force, recounted recent conversations between the co-chairs and national advisors Dr. Pedro Noguera and Dr. John Jackson. She presented an article by Dr. Noguera entitled "Essential Supports" which identifies key components to turning schools around, and suggested that schools begin to do their own self-study. She relayed a comment from Dr. Jackson saying that Boston is well-positioned to close the gaps. She also asked if Boston could explore ways to offer college scholarships to all graduates, which other districts are doing.

Mr. O'Neill noted that, in his experience, BPS's finances have long been hindered by a great structural imbalance.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORTS

John Mudd, advocate, testified regarding the superintendent's performance goals.

NEW BUSINESS

Dr. Uriarte said that the English Language Learners Task Force discussed unified enrollment at its meeting last week and requested more information on the impact of the home-based student

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assignment plan. The Superintendent said he will return to the Committee with a date when that analysis will be presented.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. O'Neill announced that the Committee would adjourn to executive session to discuss collective bargaining strategy with United Steel Workers of America Local 8751 (School Bus Drivers). He explained that having such a discussion in open session could have a detrimental effect on the Committee's bargaining decision.

At approximately 9:37 p.m., the Committee unanimously approved, by roll call, a motion to adjourn to executive session. The Committee did not return to public session.

Attest:



Elizabeth A. Sullivan
Executive Secretary