



## **OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**February 28, 2018**

The Boston School Committee held a meeting on February 28, 2018 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](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org), email [feedback@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto:feedback@bostonpublicschools.org) or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

### **ATTENDANCE**

School Committee Members Present: Chairperson Michael Loconto; Vice Chairperson Hardin Coleman; Michael O'Neill; Jeri Robinson; Regina Robinson; Dr. Miren Uriarte; and student representative Keondré McClay.

School Committee Member Absent: Alexandra Oliver-Dávila.

### **DOCUMENTS PRESENTED**

Agenda

Grants for Approval Totaling \$91,000

- Arts Opportunity Fund – Edwards Middle School - \$1,000
- STARTALK Arabic Summer Academy – Charlestown High School - \$90,000

International Travel Request: Boston Latin Academy – Japan – April 13-23, 2018

International Travel Request: Joseph Lee K-8 School – Lee K-8 School – Costa Rica – April 12-19, 2018

Drinking Water Access Power Point Presentation

Update on Drinking Water Access Equity Impact Statement

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Loconto led the pledge of allegiance and called the meeting to order. He announced that interpretation services are available in Spanish.

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## CITATIONS

The Committee and Superintendent presented citations to the following teachers who recently earned or renewed certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards:

- Suzanne Gill, Greater Egleston High School, Science/Adolescence and Young Adulthood
- Kimberly Frazier-Booth, Edward M. Kennedy Health Careers Academy, English Language Arts/Adolescence and Young Adulthood
- Wendy Welch, Excel High School, Exceptional Needs Specialist/ Early Childhood through Young Adulthood
- Carline Kelly Bowen, Brighton High School, English Language Arts/Adolescence and Young Adulthood
- Siabhan Doolin, Brighton High School, English Language Arts/Adolescence and Young Adulthood
- Silvia Gonzalez- Powers, Roosevelt K-8 School, English as a New Language/Early and Middle Childhood
- Margaret Arlauskas, Alighieri Montessori School, English as a New Language/Early and Middle Childhood
- Brian Leussler, Boston Latin Academy, English Language Arts/Adolescence and Young Adulthood
- Kristina Kelleher- Bianchi, Burke High School, Social Studies-History/Adolescence and Young Adulthood
- Amanda Minerva, Lyon K-8 School, Exceptional Needs Specialist/Early Childhood through Young Adulthood
- Carolyn Silva-Sanchez, Lee Academy, Generalist/Early Childhood
- Bridget Driscoll, Brighton High School, English as a New Language/Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood
- Teresa Johnson- Javaloyes, Curley K-8 School, Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/Early and Middle Childhood
- Wing Leung, Boston Latin School, Mathematics/Adolescence and Young Adulthood
- Nicole Secondi Giordani, Murphy K-8 School, English Language Arts/Early Adolescence
- Kerry O'Rourke, Edison K-8 School, Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/Early and Middle Childhood
- Leslye Auby, Edison K-8 School, Generalist/Early Childhood

## MEETING MINUTES

**Approved** – The Committee approved by unanimous consent the minutes of the February 7, 2018 School Committee meeting.

## SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

*\*As prepared for delivery.*

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I would like to begin tonight's report by addressing the horrific Valentine's Day shooting at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Once again, our hearts ache as we watched news reports showing yet another school — long a sanctuary for learning in this country — become the scene of a mass killing. We grieve for the loss of the 17 victims, including the 14 students whose hopes and dreams were extinguished by this senseless act of violence, and we were awed by the bravery of the football coach and geography teacher who lost their lives protecting students. And, once again, we asked ourselves: How do we stop this from happening?

It's been suggested that we should arm teachers with guns. I took a very strong stance against this idea. I believe the mere thought that teachers should be armed in order to ward off violence is utterly illogical and will only result in making our students and teachers less safe. The real issue at hand continues to be access to guns. Our role as educators is to nurture, uplift, inspire and teach our children, not to pack a weapon and serve as a de facto security guard or SWAT officer. We must come together as a nation and find ways to make our schools safer ... by preventing high-powered assault weapons from being used in mass killings, and by expanding important social, emotional and mental-health supports. That should be our primary focus.

I am encouraged to see that as the Stoneman Douglas students return to school today, they have sparked a nationwide movement that is pressuring politicians and even sporting goods stores to adopt gun control measures. In Massachusetts, we have some of the strictest gun laws in the country. Here in Boston, we have a Mayor and Police Commissioner who are fighting federal proposals that threaten to move us backward, such as the Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act. Just last year, we hosted the New England Regional Gun Summit right here at the Bolling Building to work with our neighboring cities and states on preventing the illegal flow of firearms into our city.

When it comes to school safety, we know that our focus should be on violence prevention and creating a culture of inclusion in all of our schools. That is why BPS is offering our school communities training in spotting the warning signs of violence through our partnership with the Sandy Hook Promise, which works with districts across the country to combat social isolation among students as a way to reduce school gun violence. As part of that effort, BPS schools have participated in "Start With Hello Week," an initiative that helps students connect with each other to build a more inclusive school environment. I encourage more BPS schools to get involved with this. Through Our Office of Social Emotional Learning and Wellness, we provide Safe and Welcoming Schools Specialists to help schools assess their culture in order to foster a more welcoming climate for all community members. We also continue to collaborate with the Boston Police Department and the City of Boston continue to make our schools safer.

Two years ago, we created the position of Executive Director of Safety Services to enhance safety protocols, better identify potential threats, and make our school buildings more secure. For the past three years, the Boston Police Department has conducted active-shooter presentations with BPS school staff on an ongoing basis, and all of our schools are required to conduct "safe mode/internal threat drills" at least twice a year. We know, as educational leaders, there is more we can do to help reduce school gun violence. But we must also demand that our elected officials find the political will to pass common sense gun laws to protect our young people. Our priority

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in Boston will always be the well-being of our school communities, and bringing guns into schools is simply not the answer.

On Monday, the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education released statewide high-school district graduation rates for the 2016-2017 school year. I am proud to say that the Boston Public Schools' high school graduation rate reached a historic high in 2017, continuing our decade-long rise in the number of students earning a diploma in four years. The district's 4-year graduation rate for the 2016-17 school year climbed to 72.7 percent, which represents a 14.8 point increase since the 2006-2007 school year. While the statewide graduation rate has increased over the past ten years, the BPS graduation rate has risen at a faster pace, helping the district close the gap with the state average by more than one third. That gap, which stood at 23 percentage points in 2007, narrowed to 15.6 percentage points by 2017, dropping 7.5 points in ten years. BPS also significantly increased the graduation rate of students who earned a diploma within five years. Altogether, 78.4 percent of all students who entered high school as freshmen in 2012 graduated within 5 years of entering high school, up from 76 percent the year before. This means that an additional 251 students, after receiving an extra year of high school, received diplomas in 2017.

In addition to improving the graduation rate, BPS has made considerable gains in reducing its annual dropout rate, which fell districtwide by nearly 1 percentage point from 2016 to 2017. The dropout rate also declined for all major racial subgroups: from 4.9 percent to 4.1 percent for Black students; from 3.8 percent to 2.5 percent for White students; from 1.2 percent to 0.7 percent for Asian students; and from 5.0 percent to 4.2 percent for Latino students. Overall, BPS has cut the dropout rate in half over the past ten years, lowering it from 7.9 percent in 2007 to 3.6 percent in 2017.

We also have a number of high schools that have not only achieved one-year gains from 2015-16 to 2016-17 that exceed our district's average, but have also shown greater long-term gains over the past decade than the district as a whole. One of them is East Boston High School, which continued to make impressive gains with a 7 percentage-point increase in its four-year graduation rate, from 67.7 percent in 2016 to 74.7 percent in 2017. The school's rate has risen by 27.1 percentage points over the past decade, climbing from 47.6 percent in 2007. Snowden International School demonstrated a 9.3 percentage point increase, rising from 70.7 percent in 2016 to 80.0 percent in 2017. The school's rate has risen by 20 points over the past decade, increasing from 60.4 percent in 2006-07. TechBoston Academy saw a 4.5 percentage point gain, rising from 84.3 percent in 2016 to 88.8 percent in 2017. The school's rate has risen by nearly 26 points over the past decade, climbing from 63.1 in 2007. Jeremiah E. Burke High School continued to improve its graduation rate, which increased from 74.0 percent in 2016 to 76.9 percent in 2017. The school's rate has shot up by nearly 45 points over the past ten years, soaring from 32.3 percent in 2007.

We realize we have much more work to do to make sure all of our students remain on a path to earn a high school diploma. This is the cornerstone of our mission of closing opportunity and achievement gaps so that every student, in every classroom, in every BPS school can have the best possible shot at success, and can one day conquer college and compete for the high-skilled

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jobs in today's global economy. I want to congratulate our students and families, and thank our dedicated educators for all their hard work that's ensured more of our young people than ever are leaving our schools with a diploma.

Now onto some bright spots. While the eyes of the world have recently been on the Winter Games in PyeongChang, South Korea, students at the Michael J. Perkins Schools yesterday were focused on the Summer Olympics, or more specifically two of its past stars. Three-time world champion Olympic track athlete Lolo Jones, and 2012 U.S. Olympic wrestling gold medalist Jordan Burroughs visited the South Boston school, where they exercised with students and talked physical fitness. Principal Craig Martin explained that the school applied to host the event through the "Morning Mile" campaign because they saw it as an opportunity to stay healthy and use movement to energize their own learning. Craig said the students thought it was amazingly cool to run together with the Olympic stars, who pushed them to be their own superstars. In the words of a Perkins student named Jayda: "Jordan Burroughs told us, 'We can do hard things.' That inspired me to try harder and never give up." Principal Martin now plans to build a morning exercise into the school's routine so students can start their day off in a meaningful way. "This moment," he said, "will strengthen our scholars to work harder and persevere regardless of life's challenges."

On Monday, New England Patriots wide receiver Malcolm Mitchell joined Mayor Walsh for a "reading rally" with students from the Blackstone Elementary and Maurice J. Tobin K-8 schools, among others, to celebrate the release of Mitchell's newly-illustrated edition of Mitchell's book, the "Magician's Hat." The event, held at the Boston Public Library, as part of the athlete's youth literacy initiative, Read with Malcolm and non-profit, Share the Magic Foundation, which hosts event designed to boost reading skills and access to books for students in under-resourced communities. Children got to enjoy a magic show, ask the NFL star questions, and receive a hardback copy of The Magician's Hat.

SEI (Sheltered English Immersion) students at the McCormack Middle School got a lesson on illustrating children's books from award-winning, Mexican-American author Raul Gonzalez, aka Raul the 3rd. Gonzalez spoke in Spanish to about 20 students who are newcomers to the district, telling them about how his career path and how he came to illustrate SpongeBob comics and illustrate several books of his own. The students all lit up when he did live drawings to show them the process of illustration. "He identified with them on a cultural level," explained McCormack literacy coach Adina Schecter. "The students got to meet a famous published author who looks like them and speaks like them. It is so important for our students to meet and interact with adults doing great work in the world who also reflect their identities. It really engages them." The author — voted Boston's best visual artist in 2010 by readers of The Boston Phoenix — gave the kids signed copies of one of his book, "Lowriders in Space," and posed for pictures with them. The event was sponsored by WonderMore, a local non-profit that cultivates children's love of reading by bringing children's authors and illustrators into underserved K-8 schools in Boston for curriculum-aligned visits and writing workshops.

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Earlier this month, I joined Mayor Walsh and Chief of Staff Rob Consalvo to observe William E. Channing Elementary School K2 teacher Denise Lupianez' class put on its annual: "A Celebration of Peace: Our Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr." The students sang songs, such as "Sing about Martin" and "I'm on My Way," recited poems about Dr. King and peace, and read a line telling the story of MLK's life from birth to death. They also decorated their room with peace doves they made to serve as a reminder of Dr. King's message to choose peace, love and friendship. Denise said of the project: "We continue to use MLK as a model when we are in a challenging situation with a friend. The last words of our recitation are: "We are friends. We love one another. We believe in peace." Those are powerful words we can all live by.

I want to encourage everyone to attend the Citywide and Mass Region VI Science Fair this Saturday, March 3rd, at Northeastern University. Students report at 8 a.m., and the public viewing begins at 1:30 p.m. The Science Fair, which is presented by the BPS Science Department and Northeastern's Center for STEM Education, provides an opportunity for students to "do" science and solve engineering problems. As the students prepare for this exhibition, they not only learn important science and engineering concepts but they also learn how scientists and engineers investigate and make sense of the world. Thousands of students from across the city participate in their school level fairs and the "best of the best" are invited to display their exhibits and compete at the BPS Citywide/MA Region VI Science Fair. We had just under 300 outstanding exhibits showcasing nearly 350 students at last year's Science Fair, representing many of our schools.

That concludes my report tonight.

Ms. Regina Robinson asked about safety protocols at schools and communication. The Superintendent explained that school leaders regularly conduct safety checks and safety drills.

Mr. O'Neill echoed Ms. Robinson's concerns about school safety. He also asked the Superintendent to find a permanent home for the mural painted by students at the Lila G. Frederick Middle School that currently sits in the lobby of the Bolling Building. He also praised the reduction in the district's dropout rate. Finally, Mr. O'Neill stated that he has taken steps to ensure that he is not investing in companies that produce assault weapons and encouraged others to do the same.

Mr. Loconto, a Broward County, FL native, offered support to the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School community.

Dr. Uriarte read a quote from journalist and conservationist Marjory Stoneman Douglas.

Mr. McClay read a statement from the Boston Student Advisory Council (BSAC) in support of the national student walkout on March 14. The Superintendent thanked the students for their advocacy, saying that he will issue a letter on Friday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, offering guidance on the events planned for March 14<sup>th</sup>.

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

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## GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Ariana Perez de Alderete, BPS alumna, proposed a ban on the dissection of animals in school.

Dolores Wood, teacher, West Roxbury Academy, testified regarding the school's future.

## ACTION ITEMS

*Approved* – As part of the consent calendar, the Committee unanimously approved grants for approval totaling \$91,000.

*Approved* – As part of the consent calendar, the Committee unanimously approved an international travel request for students and chaperones from the Boston Latin Academy to travel to Japan from April 13-23, 2018.

*Approved* – As part of the consent calendar, the Committee unanimously approved an international travel request for students and chaperones from the Joseph Lee K-8 School to travel to Costa Rica from April 12-19, 2018.

## REPORT

*Drinking Water Access* – Katherine Walsh, Sustainability and Environmental Resources Manager, and P.J. Preskenis, Assistant Director of Boston Public Schools Facilities Management, provided an update on steps that the District has taken since the School Committee's passage of a new BPS Water Policy in June 2016. The policy calls for improved drinking water access, testing procedures, and communications protocols.

Since June 2016, 11 BPS facilities have been turned online, bringing the total number to 24. Offline schools are provided with bottled water. The District has made investments in new drinking water infrastructure, including new water fountains and bottle refill stations and new filters. Annual water testing will be conducted in June 2018; the results will be publicly available at [www.bostonpublicschools.org/water](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/water) and through annual notices sent home to families in multiple languages.

Mr. O'Neill praised the District's national leading water policy and its implementation to date. He also asked about the Environmental Protection Agency's regulations on the use of water filters. Ms. Walsh agreed to follow up with more information.

Dr. Uriarte requested an update on the 16 schools that were found to have elevated lead levels back in 2016. Ms. Walsh agreed to follow up.

## PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORTS

None.

**School Committee Meeting**  
Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building  
School Committee Chamber

*February 28, 2018*

**NEW BUSINESS**

Dr. Uriarte expressed her support for the student walkout planned for March 14<sup>th</sup>.

**ADJOURN**

At approximately 7:40 p.m., the Committee voted by unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth Sullivan  
Executive Secretary