



OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

April 13, 2016

The Boston School Committee held a meeting on April 13, 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; Vice-Chair Dr. Hardin Coleman; Michael Loonto; Jeri Robinson; Regina Robinson; Dr. Miren Uriarte; and student representative Savina Tapia.

School Committee Member Absent: Alexandra Oliver-Dávila.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Grants for approval totaling \$232,192

- 21st Century Community Learning Centers Summer Enhancement Grant (FC 647-B4) - \$45,000
- Summer Food Service Program Expansion Grant for Existing Sponsors (FC 542) - \$50,000
- Summer Food Service Program Start-Up Grant for Existing or New Sponsors (FC 549) - \$83,500
- Title IIA - \$53,692

International Travel Request: John D. O’Bryant School of Mathematics and Science – Spain – April 16-23, 2016

Update on Home-Based Assignment Plan

Memo from Superintendent Chang to School Committee Members Re: Interim Salary and Non-Personnel Payments on External Funds, dated April 13, 2016

The District Capacity Project: A Collaboration between the Boston Teachers Union, Boston Public Schools and the Boston School Committee

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Drinking Water Access in BPS

CALL TO ORDER

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

MEETING MINUTES

The Committee approved by unanimous consent the minutes of the March 16, 2016 and March 23, 2016 School Committee meetings.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Advanced Work Class (AWC) serves fewer than 8 percent of students in grades 3-6. Of those enrolled, white and Asian students are overrepresented and Black and Latino students are underrepresented.

In February 2016, after receiving feedback from the School Committee and from the School Committee's Opportunity and Achievement Gaps task force, the AWC project team started the next phase of work on the Superintendent's 100 Day Plan, acting on the deep belief in the potential of all students to meet high expectations.

Over the last several weeks, several BPS school leaders have been working collaboratively with their school communities and central office to expand AWC programs at their schools or to pilot the "Excellence for All" program that mirrors AWC.

As part of the rollout of the Excellence for All initiative, the district has held 11 community meetings to help families understand the options available to them. In total, more than 200 family members were engaged in conversation about this exciting work. The district will continue to partner with families to provide professional development and to solicit feedback as this work goes forward.

In the majority of conversations, parents recognized the need to make changes to the current model and were very supportive of the equity focus of the initiative. Their concerns centered around the district's ability to provide the right level of supports in all classrooms so that all students can be successful. Most families appreciate the idea of not having to change schools after grade 3, but those in K-5 schools worry about the 6th grade year as an unnecessary transition.

The Superintendent acknowledged that this change may prompt some families who have already made AWC choices for their children to rethink their options. For example, a parent may elect to keep their child in their current non-AWC program school if the school is to offer a grade 4 curriculum that has the rigor of an AWC program.

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Parents who wish to change their school selections have two options to do so on or before April 15th: Online or by visiting a Welcome Center. Parents with valid email addresses received instructions for updating choices online. If parents do not enter new choices, the district will honor the rankings previously submitted. More information about Excellence for All is available at <http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/efa>. The Superintendent thanked Principal Leader Mary Driscoll who has spearheaded this important work to expand access to rigorous curriculum and enrichment experiences.

The district will add an additional 216 pre-kindergarten seats next school year, an important step toward reaching the Mayor's goal of providing universal pre-k. The new seats will mean that 76 of the district's 79 elementary schools will have some form of K1 education on site, serving about 2,800 students. The new seats will allow two BPS schools to offer pre-k for the first time: the Donald McKay K-8 School and the Mario Umana Academy, both in East Boston. The Umana will be offering instruction in its dual English-Spanish program. This expanded access to pre-k programming will improve children's math and literacy readiness, and help close opportunity and achievement gaps.

BPS students are currently participating in the UNICEF's Kid Power Program, sponsored by John Hancock. Today the Superintendent attended an event to celebrate the program at the Reggie Lewis Track and Athletic Center. Olympian and 2014 Boston Marathon winner Meb Keflezighi and John Hancock's Chief Administrative Officer James Gallagher also participated. UNICEF Kid Power provides students with devices similar to Fit Bits, which tracks their physical activity. The more a student engages in physical activity, the more points they receive. Those points raise money to provide nutritional packets to children who are malnourished around the world. BPS students took more than 1.3 billion steps over the past six weeks, which is the equivalent to walking around Fenway Park more than 6.4 million times or 9,500 Boston marathons. One student, Fabio from Orchard Gardens, has walked 1 million steps himself. Mrs. Pettit's third grade class at the Orchard Gardens K-8 School was recognized today for being the most active class in the district.

BPS will receive a \$25 million donation from General Electric (GE). The GE Foundation's commitment will help students explore college and career possibilities, and understand the skills necessary for future jobs. The district is also partnering with GE to use those resources to develop career pathways, provide STEM/STEAM professional development for staff, and a computer science for all initiative. This investment aligns with the district's belief of preparing all Boston young people for college, career and life.

The Superintendent thanked Discover Financial Services for providing BPS with a \$180,000 grant for financial literacy. The funding will support 6,000 students across 30 BPS high schools. The grant is part of Discover's Pathway to Financial Success program, a five-year commitment to bring financial education curriculum into public high schools across the country.

The Superintendent joined Mayor Walsh at the 5th annual Boston Teachers Union Math Rocks competition on April 5th with more than 225 BPS students in grades 3-8. The purpose of the event was to show that competition in academics is as valuable as competition in athletics.

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The Superintendent congratulated a team of second graders from the Kilmer K-8 School for winning second place in the Odyssey of the Mind state competition. Odyssey of the Mind is an international educational program. It provides creative problem-solving opportunities for students from kindergarten through college. The Kilmer students are now eligible to attend the finals at Iowa State University next month. The school is currently raising money to bring students to the competition. A link to their fundraising page is posted on www.bostonpublicschools.org.

On April 11th, the Superintendent joined 200 educators, community leaders and philanthropists who meet with 9 schools that were presenting special programs at their schools as part of the School Solutions Seed Fund showcase. The showcase highlighted programs that focused on social emotional learning and support; post-secondary preparation and success; or new approaches to teaching and learning. The Superintendent congratulated this year's recipient of the \$50,000 Philip H. Gordon Legacy Award: Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD) at Dorchester Academy for its work related to restorative practices.

School Committee members asked about the timeframe for Excellence for All pilot program and its offerings for Black and Latino students. The Superintendent responded that he would provide the Committee with an update in school year 2016-17.

Ms. Regina Robinson suggested that the district involve the Boston Student Advisory Council (BSAC) in its planning efforts to invest the funds donated by GE. Mr. O'Neill thanked GE for collaborating with the district to invest in key BPS priorities. He noted that in addition to its generous donation, GE is also bringing intellectual capital and corporate volunteerism to BPS.

Ms. Jeri Robinson announced that she will participate in a rhyming flash mob at the Dudley Square Library tomorrow as part of the citywide Talk Read Play program.

Mr. O'Neill said that during a recent visit to the Taylor Elementary School, he was impressed with Principal Jennifer Marks' approach to increasing rigor by including non-Advanced Work Class (AWC) students in AWC classes where seats were available. The Superintendent noted that schools are encouraged to do flexible grouping.

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

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Lasheila Warren, former bus monitor, testified regarding the withdrawal of union dues.

Carolyn Kain, chair, Boston Special Education Parents Advisory Council (SpedPac), testified in favor of the expansion of universal design. She also noted that three and four year-old special education students have priority for pre-kindergarten seats.

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Sunny Pai, director, Diploma Plus program, Charlestown High School, thanked the district and Liberty Mutual for their support which led to the restoration of the program in the Fiscal Year 17 budget.

Megan Wolf, BPS parent, and member, Quality Education for Every Student (QUEST), testified regarding the home-based student assignment plan update and resubmitted questions about its implementation.

Jose Capó, program coordinator, Teen Empowerment, announced that the organization is hosting a Peace Conference on April 30 at 6:30 p.m. at the Paramount Theatre.

ACTION ITEMS

Approved – As part of the consent calendar, Committee unanimously approved grants totaling \$232,192.

Approved – As part of the consent calendar, the Committee unanimously approved an international field trip for students and chaperones from the John D. O’Bryant High School of Mathematics and Science to travel to Spain from April 16-23, 2016.

REPORTS

Update on Home-Based Assignment Plan – Two years into implementation of the Home-Based Student Assignment Plan (HBSAP), Assistant Superintendent of Operations Kim Rice presented an update on the plan, together with Peng Shi of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s School Effectiveness and Inequality Initiative. The data presented represents two years of Round One data for students who are new to BPS (not continuing student or siblings). The presenters emphasized that the findings are preliminary and should not be used to draw definitive conclusions. The district plans to issue a formal research proposal for year three and beyond.

Preliminary data suggests the following:

- Access to quality has improved for new K2 families with the least access to quality.
- Access to quality appears to be more evenly distributed across the city under the HBSAP than under the three-zone plan. In particular, access to quality has improved throughout the former East Zone, which previously had less access to quality than the rest of the city.
- Some neighborhoods still have more access to quality than others.
- Racial differences in the proportion of quality schools in students’ choice menus have decreased under the HBSAP.
- The HBSAP does not appear to have had an effect on students’ likelihood of being assigned to one of their top ranked choices.
- Students assigned under the HBSAP plan attend school closer to home, on average, than students assigned under the previous three-zone system.
- The average distance from home to school has decreased across all kindergarten levels, as has the proportion of students that are traveling more than two miles to attend school.

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Mr. Loconto asked about the proportion of new families compared to grandfathered families. The presenters agreed to follow up. Mr. Loconto suggested that the district inform families about Level 4 schools that are highly chosen. He also requested more information about the supply and demand of quality seats for four and five year-olds by neighborhood.

Dr. Uriarte encouraged the district to present the data in a more transparent manner that includes a data analysis of Round 2 and 3 registration, grades 6 and 9, income, race, English Language Learners and special education students.

Mr. O'Neill noted that School Quality Working Group conducted extensive research and learned that families define quality in different ways. Dr. Uriarte encouraged the district to provide families with more information and guidance about school quality, adding that more translation is needed on the BPS website.

Ms. Regina Robinson requested an analysis of placements for special education K-0 students.

Dr. Coleman said more analysis is needed to learn if the district has reached its goal of providing more equitable access to quality schools closer to home. He requested additional demographic breakdowns and school-by-school data. He also requested a data report on access to quality for poor black students.

Mr. O'Neill noted that the Committee will not make policy decisions on the data presented this evening but rather on the full analysis.

The Superintendent agreed that the district needs to do more qualitative and quantitative analysis of the home based plan.

Interim Salary and Non-Personnel Payments on External Funds – Deputy Executive Director of Finance Nate Kuder and Director of Federal and State Grants Anuradha Medappa presented the Superintendent's request for the Committee to approve an interim salary payment order for personnel paid from external funds, as well as encumbrances for non-personnel. These grants are projected to be awarded for FY17 and will be submitted for approval at future School Committee meetings, as they are awarded. This order has been requested annually at this time of year due to the delay in receiving external fund award letters and finalized budgets from the various funding sources. The Committee is scheduled to vote on the request on April 27th.

The District Capacity Project: A Collaboration between the Boston Teachers Union, Boston Public Schools and the Boston School Committee – Committee member Michael Loconto joined representatives from the Boston Teachers Union and BPS to present a report on the District Capacity Project (DCP), a collaborative effort to raise student achievement by reshaping professional development for teachers.

By learning and mastering effective labor-management collaboration and teaming practices, DCP teams work together with facilitators to:

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- Co-design and implement initiatives to advance student learning and success;
- Increase teacher engagement in leadership of school and district innovation efforts;
- Improve problem solving, decision making and fidelity of implementation;
- Develop skills, structures, and policies that can sustain collaborative practice over time.

Each DCP team works to identify reform strategies that address local needs; draft a Memorandum of Understanding that establishes principles for guiding their work; engage in training sessions focused on relationship-building and collaborative planning; and develop an agreed upon work plan, timeline, and project goals. Third party facilitators help teams work through difficult issues, while transitioning responsibility for carrying work forward to team members. A priority of this carefully developed teaming process is to ensure DCP teams and projects build capacity.

Ms. Tapia encouraged the project leaders to incorporate student input, which they agreed to do.

Ms. Jeri Robinson asked about how the Tobin K-8 School is using professional development to close the achievement gap. Ms. Caitlin Gaffny, a teacher at the Tobin, responded that teachers have seen results by sharing data and conducting workshops.

Ms. Regina Robinson encouraged the DCP leaders to incorporate family engagement and cultural competence.

Dr. Coleman said the district needs to consider how this plan of action will improve student learning, calling for clear goals and metrics by school. He praised the DCP for empowering the people closest to students to lead the work and do what's best for students.

Mr. O'Neill said that students and parents should be part of the process in order to appreciate the value of professional development.

Drinking Water Access in BPS – Assistant Superintendent of Operations Kim Rice, Director of Facilities Management Khadijah Brown, and Executive Director of Health and Wellness Jill Carter presented the Superintendent's recommendation to update the district's drinking water policy with a goal that all students have access to quality potable drinking water in accordance with state and federal law. This includes developing an overarching strategic plan to provide increased access to tap water to as many schools as possible throughout the school day. The district will immediately begin testing the 38 schools that are currently online with the City of Boston's tap water. As part of a pilot project, the district will invest \$300,000 to bring six schools back online. The district will continue to conduct an assessment of drinking water infrastructure and access at offline schools to inform planning for capital improvements.

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Dr. Uriarte asked about lead levels in newly activated water fountains. Ms. Rice explained that some schools had varied results and said that the district needs to collect more information before a decision is made to turn on the water at those schools.

Committee members praised the district's efforts to provide free, safe drinking water, noting its benefits on health and learning.

Mr. O'Neill suggested that the district consider publicly posting water quality in schools using a grading system to make each school's water quality and accessibility clear to families.

Ms. Regina Robinson encouraged the district to publicly post in schools the health benefits of drinking water.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORTS

Megan Wolf, BPS parent, and member, Quality Education for Every Student, testified regarding the home-based student assignment update. She questioned the transparency and fidelity of the data presented and expressed support for an independent analysis.

Peggy Wiesenberg, former BPS parent, testified regarding the equity and access of the home-based student assignment plan.

Heshan Berents-Weeramuni, BPS parent, encouraged the district to incorporate parent voice in the District Capacity Project and drinking water expansion efforts and asked how the public can suggest School Committee agenda items.

NEW BUSINESS

Jeri Robinson encouraged the district to find additional ways to communicate with families about critical issues facing the district.

ADJOURN

At approximately 9:33 p.m., the Committee voted by unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth Sullivan
Executive Secretary