



OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

April 27, 2016

The Boston School Committee held a meeting on April 27, 2016 at 5:30 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; Alexandra Oliver-Dávila; Jeri Robinson; Dr. Miren Uriarte; and student representative Savina Tapia.

School Committee Members Absent: Chairperson Michael O'Neill and Regina Robinson.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Grants for approval totaling \$342,230.

- BPS Teaching Fellowship - \$136,680
- Choice Neighborhood Implementation Grant - \$180,000
- Quality Full-Day Kindergarten Grant (Increase through FC 701a) - \$25,550

International Travel Request: Charlestown High School - Iceland, May 27-June 1, 2016

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

Memo from Kim Rice, Assistant Superintendent of Operations to Superintendent Tommy Chang Re: School Committee Water Update and Immediate Recommended Next Steps, dated April 13, 2016

Draft Water Policy Circular

UTeach Program at UMass Boston

City of Boston Education Revenue and Assessments

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Office of Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Update

BPS Strategic Implementation Plan: Key Focus Areas & Initiatives

CALL TO ORDER

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Dr. Coleman announced that the Committee would adjourn to executive session to discuss collective bargaining strategies relative to the Boston Association of School Administrators and Supervisors, the Boston Teachers Union and the Administrative Guild. To have this discussion in an open meeting could have a detrimental effect on the Committee's bargaining position. Dr. Coleman said the Committee would return to public session at 6 p.m.

Approved – By roll call, the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn to executive session.

At approximately 6:15 p.m., the Committee returned to public session.

MEETING MINUTES

Approved – The Committee approved by unanimous consent the minutes of the April 13, 2016 School Committee meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

The Superintendent made comments about the value of coherence. Alongside equity and innovation, these three values will drive the district's work in the next three to five years.

There is strong research that without instructional coherence, school districts will fail to close achievement gaps and improve student achievement overall. If BPS does not strengthen its instructional support to schools in a coherent way, there will continue to be "success for some" but not "success for all." The research says that the various instructional initiatives and programs for students and staff must be guided by a common framework for curriculum, instruction, assessment, student support and learning climate.

The district must strengthen coherency in order to do best for all youth in Boston. Studies have shown that it is critical for schools to have a clear focus and shared values for student learning. This coherence can only occur with the shared belief in shared ownership, shared support, and shared accountability. This is what the "Culture of We" is about.

Since April 1st, principal leaders and administrators of operations have been engaged on Instructional Focus Reviews (IFR) at various school sites. These IFRs are opportunities for central office leaders, working alongside school site leaders, to gather information about the

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progress the district has made with its theory of action. Schools have volunteered to host a modified instructional rounds process during which observers gather evidence of the penetration of the school's instructional focus into teacher practice and student learning.

BPS also needs to develop a district curricular/instructional framework that builds upon the work of Dr. Thomas Payzant's Seven Essentials of Whole School Improvement and Dr. Johnson's Acceleration Agenda and brings together principles of inclusive practices and culturally-linguistically sustaining pedagogy to serve the whole child. The district still has much work to do to develop a deep knowledge of the rigorous standards that are in the Common Core and learn from the many bright spots of highly effective content-specific practices that are occurring in classrooms throughout BPS.

The Superintendent's strategic implementation plan will aim to do this through instructional initiatives that are not only coherent but high quality, rigorous, and equity-based.

Alongside instructional coherence, BPS also needs to bring more coherence in the design of its system. The Superintendent was shocked to find out that there are 21 different grade configurations in BPS. Many students and families have to navigate through many school transitions from pre-K to 12th grade.

Those with "know-how" and privilege find a way to navigate through the system to guarantee an incredible public education. BPS must design a system that ensures equity and guarantees that excellent education to every young person.

Current efforts to expand Advanced Work Class (AWC) and launch 10 Excellence for All pilots will raise the expectations for more 4th grade students at AWC schools, raise the bar at schools without AWC, and keep more students at their current schools rather than transitioning to a new school.

The district's goal is to raise expectations and opportunities for all young people in Boston Public Schools and to support families by providing access to high quality schools close to home. Everyone must work together to create the coherent system families deserve.

Spring Testing Season is in full swing.

- 86 total schools in BPS are administering PARCC assessments in Spring of 2016
- 38 of these schools are testing online
- 48 of these schools are testing on paper

Earlier this week, the Office of Data and Accountability (ODA) and the Office of Instructional and Information Technology (OIIT) teamed up to visit 22 total schools over the course of the three days to provide technical support for a successful start to online testing. In the weeks following, ODA and OIIT will be visiting and reaching to all other schools that will be starting testing. Principal Leaders and Administrators of Operations will also be visiting online and paper-based schools to make sure that they are successfully testing students on PARCC.

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ODA and OIIT teams have observed relatively few challenges. School internet networks have not been a problem this year and schools that have run into technical challenges with PARCC testing in the online platform have found resolution with the help of the ODA and OIIT support persons. Schools that are testing online are very organized and seem to be generally familiar with how to coordinate online testing and administer online PARCC tests to students. Some general improvements have made the entire process of online testing much easier this year. Students also seem to be relatively confident using Chromebooks and other electronic devices for testing this year. ODA and OIIT have developed and maintained a set of mechanisms for schools to quickly reach out to us with their questions and needs. ODA and OIIT are keeping running lists of questions that are received from schools, as well as the resolutions that we are able to arrive at. Each night, ODA and OIIT send out a list of the top 5 lessons learned from the day prior.

The Superintendent addressed some concerns that have been raised by families about water quality in school water fountains.

Earlier this month, Mayor Walsh and the Superintendent made a decision to test for levels of lead in all 38 Boston Public Schools with active water fountains, exceeding the mandated requirements. If the water in any fountain was above the state-mandated action level (15 parts per billion), BPS would immediately turn off those fountains out of an abundance of caution.

Of those 38 schools, four had water that was above the acceptable limit: The Kenny School, the Hernandez K-8 School, the Murphy K-8 School, and Boston Latin Academy. The district notified the school communities about the water samples as soon as it received finalized results, and increased access to bottled water at those schools.

The health and wellbeing of students and staff is a top priority. The district has provided information to schools and families on how to get tested for lead. The BPS Health Services Department is available to speak with any parents who may want their children tested out of an abundance of caution.

The testing of BPS water fountains comes as part of a larger effort to improve access to clean tap water. BPS is working with the Boston Water and Sewer Commission in this effort. Research shows that students learn better and are healthier when they are hydrated and have access to clean, safe tap water.

At the April 13th School Committee meeting, district leaders made a presentation about this overall effort, which includes proposed improvements to our drinking water policy, and an overview on a plan to install hybrid water filling stations at six schools.

It includes plans to:

- Increase testing protocol to once per year for all of our online schools.
- Hire a mechanical engineer to standardize testing, communications, and manage water pilot roll out
- Create a district water access strategic plan in conjunction with the Facilities Master Plan.

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- Improve school-specific water policies, to help with the maintenance and oversight of water coolers, water jugs, signage around water stations, etc.

BPS will expand the number of seats in the Exam School Initiative from 450 to 750 due to the support from the Boston Latin School Association and a charitable foundation that Mayor Walsh helped to form. The Exam School Initiative is a free study program for students seeking admission to the district's three exam schools. This expansion will provide more equitable access to academic rigor for students from the district's traditionally underrepresented schools. In addition to more seats, the funding will help with communication and outreach.

The Exam School Initiative began in 2000 with a goal of helping students of color gain entrance into the exam schools, and to understand the benefits of an exam school education at the three exam schools, which are Boston Latin School, Boston Latin Academy, and the John D. O'Bryant School of Mathematics and Science. The Superintendent acknowledged that the percentage of Black and Hispanic students in the exam schools, and the Exam School Initiative, is not proportional with the demographics of Boston Public Schools

Operating through the lens of equity must be at the core of the district's work. An important aspect to closing the opportunity and achievement gaps is providing students of color access to programs with strong academic rigor like the Exam School Initiative. The Superintendent thanked Mayor Walsh and the Boston Latin School Association for their tremendous effort.

On April 25th, Boston Public Schools, in partnership with Attorney General Maura Healey, and the Massachusetts Office of Victim Assistance (MOVA) launched BPS CARES, a multi-tiered approach to trauma that focuses on creating awareness of respect, responsibility, and resilience among students. BPS received the \$1.6 million grant to support initiatives that address early symptoms of trauma in students, families, and faculty.

Experiencing trauma is an all-too-common occurrence for youth in Boston, as well as in most other school districts across America. According to a 2013 study by Boston Children's Hospital, 20 percent of students in Boston have witnessed or experienced two or more traumatic events, which could include neighborhood violence, domestic violence, or chronic poverty. The intent of BPS CARES is to build capacity of district staff to support schools through issues of trauma, promote the use of tiered interventions and strategic partnerships, and to foster a safe and welcoming school environment through professional development and assistance.

BPS CARES will also fund six program specialists to work with 10 BPS schools, which have been identified as having the highest need for this work based on factors such as exposure to violence, homelessness, poverty, family mobility and chronic absenteeism. It will also support 500 of the most highly impacted BPS families to help their cope with the impact of trauma on their children's ability to learn as well as support families through 21 parent forums at BPS Parent University.

Recently, 500 students observed an archaeological dig at the family home of civil rights leader Malcolm X on Dale Street in Roxbury, where he lived from 1940-1952. This was a great

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learning opportunity that rose from a collaboration between the BPS History Department and the City of Boston Archaeologist, Joe Bagley, and his team. Students in grades 1-12 from the Hale, Trotter, Higginson-Lewis, Madison Park, and O'Bryant schools all participated. They observed many fragments that were unearthed; and listened to experts about the importance of archaeological digs, as well as biographical information about Malcolm X. This is an example of what makes Boston such a great city. There is so much rich history right here, providing many great learning opportunities for students.

Students from the Timilty Middle School were honored by the Alpha Omega Council for their participation in the Marathon Education Essay Contest at the Boston Marathon Wreath Ceremony on April 14th. This event was held at the Hall of Flags at the Massachusetts State House. Greece's Consul General Ifegina Kanara presented the Timilty's four essay winners with a marble olive wreath trophy and a certificate from the Mayor of Marathon, Greece. The school's four essay winners were honored for writing about why an Athenian citizen would leave his home to fight the Persians at the Battle of Marathon in 490 BCE. Timilty students participating in the art component of the event were also honored. Prior to the wreath ceremony, students from both schools met Massachusetts State Senator Karen Spilka. She spoke with students, gave them a tour of the Senate Chambers, and answered their questions about the Senate. Students also enjoyed a tour of the State House, its art, and exhibitions.

Darlene Ratliff, principal of Higginson-Lewis K-8 will be recognized by the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing as the Outstanding Advocate of the Year Award tomorrow at the State House. This award is given in recognition of her accomplishments in teaching at the Horace Mann School for the Deaf, and her work as a foster parent to Deaf children.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila expressed concern that families from the Hernandez K-8 School received information about water quality via Connect-Ed call and encouraged the district to conduct more personal outreach.

Mr. Loconto asked about district outreach for the exam school initiative, most of which will come from the students home schools. Some teachers and administrators will receive stipends to personally call families. Mr. Loconto said that cities such as Buffalo and Chicago have had success with recruiting students from particular neighborhoods or socioeconomic backgrounds. He also suggested that the district consider whether it is best for exam schools to begin in grade 7.

Ms. Jeri Robinson was pleased to learn that the district will provide transportation for students participating in the exam school initiative.

Dr. Uriarte said the district must find a balance between autonomy and coherence. The Superintendent explained that his strategic implementation plan, which should be complete by the end of June, strives to find that balance.

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Dr. Coleman requested that the Committee receive reports from principal leaders annually or biannually. He also said that one approach to thinking about the exam schools would be to consider eliminating the entrance exam.

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

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Melanie Allen, BPS teacher and parent, testified regarding drinking water safety.

Tonya Tedesco, parent, Boston Arts Academy, testified regarding the Boston City Council hearings on the BPS budget and the McKinsey report.

Mary Battenfeld, member, Citywide Parents Council (CPC), presented a statement from the CPC on drinking water quality and asked district leaders to follow up on its concerns.

Patricia Kinsella, member, Quality Education for Every Student (QUEST), testified regarding the McKinsey Report.

ACTION ITEMS

Dr. Coleman praised the SMART goals presented in the grants package.

Approved – As part of the consent calendar, the Committee unanimously approved grants totaling \$342,230.

Approved – As part of the consent calendar, the Committee unanimously approved an international field trip for students and chaperones from Charlestown High School to travel to Iceland from May 27-June 1, 2016.

Mr. Loconto asked about the district's water quality testing schedule. Kim Rice, Assistant Superintendent for Operations, said the district will test every online fountain annually. The Superintendent said that district leaders will rewrite the policy to clearly reflect that provision. Ms. Oliver-Dávila said she would like to see the policy contain more information about protocols for communications with families. Ms. Jeri Robinson suggested that the district communicate with residents in neighborhoods where schools test positive for high levels of lead. She also encouraged the district to place signs near faucets to inform students that the water is for handwashing only, not drinking. Dr. Uriarte asked the district to seriously consider the water quality recommendations presented by the Citywide Parents Council during the public comment period earlier that evening. She also called for clear protocols for schools when water contamination is found and clear protocols for notification of the School Committee and BPS families. Ms. Rice said that the results of every water test will be made publicly available.

Approved – By roll call, the Committee voted unanimously to table the vote on an updated Quality Drinking Water Policy.

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Approved – By roll call, the Committee voted unanimously to appoint Ross Wilson, Managing Partner of Innovation, to serve on all Joint Resolution Committees related to a turnaround plan for Madison Park Technical Vocational High School.

REPORTS

UTeach Program at UMass Boston – Ceronne Daly, director of Diversity Programs Office of Human Capital, led the district's presentation of the UTeach program at UMass Boston, which aims to prepare qualified math and science K-12 instructors. Dean Michael Middleton, College of Education and Human Development, and Dean Andrew Grosovsky, College of Science and Mathematics (CSM), both spoke about the program on behalf of UMass Boston. They explained that UMass Boston's CSM implements a comprehensive STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) development strategy with an emphasis on addressing economic and social inequalities.

UMass UTeach student, Ms. X., spoke briefly about her positive experience student teaching at the Clap Innovation School.

City of Boston Education Revenue and Assessments – City of Boston Budget Director Katie Hammer presented an overview of the City's budget and education funding trends for Boston and the state. Ms. Hammer explained that reductions in state aid have increased the city's reliance on property tax, yet Proposition 2 ½ constrains Boston's property tax growth each year to 2 ½ percent over the previous year's levy limit. Forty percent of the City's budget is spent on education, significantly larger than any other area. The Governor's budget proposal includes a new charter school reimbursement formula that could benefit Boston, however, the formula is not fully fund. Mayor Walsh has proposed a direct funding model to ensure the Commonwealth's commitment to supporting charter schools. The Mayor is also advocating for a more moderate growth in lifting the charter school cap. Ms. Hammer said a ballot initiative would essentially nullify community caps on charter school growth.

Responded to questions from the Committee, Ms. Hammer explained that the current Chapter 70 education funding formula does not work for Boston because it takes into account property wealth and qualifies Boston for minimum aid rather than foundation aid. It also undercounts the amount BPS is spending to meet the diverse needs of students. In addition, the City is legally constrained on the taxes it can levy. Ms. Hammer also explained that the City has absorbed the decrease in the state's charter school assessment and that Boston is projected to lose \$17 million in Fiscal Year 17.

Noting that the funding formula is complex, Mr. Loconto requested talking points to help parents advocate their legislators for more education funding. He said the Mayor's gradual approach to lifting the charter school cap would be more fiscally responsible for the city of Boston, adding that the plans needs to be more understandable to the public.

Office of Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Update – Assistant Superintendent of the Office of Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Dr. Colin Rose said that significant opportunity and

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achievement gaps based on race and socio-economics persist in Boston as they do throughout the country. Dr. Rose is developing strategies that focus on the adult, the child, and the system. His work to date has focused on capacity building, programming and systematic oversight. Dr. Rose is working closely with the School Committee's Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force to develop a policy recommendation, which will be presented to School Committee this year. Dr. Rose will craft an implementation plan for the policy following School Committee approval. Committee members asked questions about curriculum, staffing, and family and community engagement, all of which were answered by Dr. Rose.

Ms. Tapia encouraged Dr. Rose to consider strategies that will serve girls and young women of color, noting the gender wage gap. She also requested that the achievement gap data presented be broken down by gender.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila requested that the data presented on Asian students be further disaggregated by ethnicity. Need further breakdown of Asian students.

Dr. Uriarte expressed concerned about a tendency by some to be color blind. Dr. Rose explained that that is not the goal, but rather the district must provide targeted supports.

Dr. Coleman requested that going forward, advanced and proficient data be separated.

BPS Strategic Implementation Plan: Key Focus Areas & Initiatives – Superintendent Chang explained that a strategic implementation plan should include milestones and initiatives. He highlighted the district's strengths, such as its diverse student body and its renowned early childhood programs, as well as its challenges, including significant achievement gaps and a structural financial deficit. The district currently has 55 different initiatives happening at BPS – too many to manage well. He proposed narrowing the district's focus to five key areas:

- 1) Implement an inclusive, rigorous, and culturally/linguistically sustaining K-12 instructional program that serves the development of the whole child.
- 2) Attract, develop, and retain a highly effective team that is responsive to the diverse racial, cultural, and linguistic needs of Boston youth.
- 3) Engage students, families and community organizations as advocates and partners for equity, access and results for all students.
- 4) Deliver a coordinated system of high-quality support, customer service, and communications centrally and at schools.
- 5) Build a sustainable financial system that invests resources equitably and strategically.

The next step in the development of the strategic implementation plan is identifying which high-level initiatives to prioritize in each of the five focus areas. The Superintendent said that BPS needs to build new schools and find central office efficiencies.

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Ms. Jeri Robinson suggested creating a checklist to help the Committee and district leaders better understand the grant money it is accepting.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORTS

Heshan Berents-Weermuni, BPS parent and staff person, Office of Boston City Councilor Tito Jackson, testified recommended the Mass Budget Center and a YouTube video by the Citywide Parents Council as good resources for those seeking a better understanding of the BPS budget process. He also urged the district to seek additional funding from non-profits institutions and suggested that the district explore non-regional transportation reimbursement.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURN

At approximately 9:43 p.m., the Committee voted by unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth Sullivan
Executive Secretary