



OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

May 13, 2020

The Boston School Committee held a remote meeting on May 13, 2020 at 5 p.m. on Zoom. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit www.bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee, email feedback@bostonpublicschools.org or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

ATTENDANCE

School Committee Members Present: Chairperson Michael Loconto; Vice Chairperson Alexandra Oliver-Dávila; Dr. Hardin Coleman (joined while meeting was in progress); Michael O'Neill; Dr. Lorna Rivera; Jeri Robinson; Quoc Tran, and Student Representative Evelyn Reyes.

School Committee Members Absent: None.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Agenda

Boston School Committee Meeting Minutes: April 29, 2020

Croft School Private School Application PowerPoint

Memo from Chief of Accountability Corey Harris to Boston School Committee Re: Recommendation of Croft School Application, April 29, 2020

Croft School Private School Application

Boston Green Academy Horace Mann In-District Charter School Charter Renewal PowerPoint

Boston Green Academy Charter Renewal Application

Boston Green Academy Charter Renewal Equity Impact Statement

Superintendent's Memo: Boston Green Academy Charter Renewal Application Recommendation, May 13, 2020

Academic Remote Learning Plan Update PowerPoint

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Loconto called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance. Ms. Sullivan called the roll. All members were present.

Mr. Loconto said that tonight's meeting was being shared live on Zoom. It will be rebroadcast on Boston City TV and YouTube. It will also be posted at www.bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee. He announced that Spanish interpretation was available; the interpreter introduced himself in Spanish. Meeting documents were publicly posted at www.bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee prior to the start of the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: APRIL 15, 2020

Approved – On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the minutes of the April 29, 2020 School Committee meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

As prepared for delivery.

Thank you all for joining us tonight. Last week we celebrated Teacher Appreciation Week, and National Nurses Week just wrapped up. I just want to take a moment to again thank our educators, our school nurses, our school leaders, and all of our invaluable staff for their incredible collaboration during this truly unprecedented time in all of our lives. Thank you!

Last week, we enacted the second phase of our remote learning plan. Later this evening, we will provide an update on the implementation of the plan, which will lead us through the end of the school year and provides school leaders and teachers with expectations for our shared work as a community moving forward, with equity at the forefront of that work. The plan provides clear guidance on grading, attendance, and personalized student success plans. We have also outlined expectations for our Equity Roundtables, master schedules, and supports for our English Learners and students with disabilities. We will go into more detail about the first week of Phase 2 in our presentation later.

We remain focused on meeting the needs of our students and families, particularly those most vulnerable. I'd like to give some updates on our efforts to continue to provide resources and support for our families, which has included some tremendous collaboration with our City and community partners.

We continue to provide students and families with free breakfast and lunch across 17 BPS sites, every weekday from 8:30 to 11:30 am. We are also delivering meals to families of students who

regularly received door-to-door transportation. Totalling meals delivered and served at meal sites, yesterday we passed 450,000 meals served and we are on track to hit 500,000 meals in the next few days. Our exact total as of today is 475,623. Of that figure, more than 150,000 meals have been delivered to students' homes. We are serving up to 15,000 meals a day, including around 4,500-5,000 meal deliveries a day.

We also have free personal hygiene products available at BPS emergency meal sites, thanks to our partner Catie's Closet. These products include toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, deodorant, shampoo, and menstrual products. Catie's Closet makes weekly deliveries of products to our meal sites. Just last week they delivered 12,500 products. In total, over 160,000 personal hygiene products have been delivered to our sites. Information on locations, including the dozens of other emergency meal sites throughout the City of Boston, is available at bostonpublicschools.org. In another partnership, the YMCA and Red Cross began delivery of several hundred packages of groceries to BPS families throughout Boston every weekday. Thank you again to our Food and Nutrition Services staff, our bus drivers and bus monitors, and the volunteers who have all worked so well, collaboratively, to get our families what they need.

In other food access news, beginning this month, every BPS family will receive financial assistance for food due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These funds are available under a new federal program called Pandemic EBT or P-EBT. Earlier today, we sent a letter home detailing this new program that will provide additional food security to our families. Families will receive \$5.70 for each student, for every day school is closed due to the pandemic. This is retroactive as well, and will date back to March 17. If families do not currently have an EBT card, they will receive a P-EBT card in the mail at the address on file with their child's school. Each enrolled BPS child in the household will receive a unique P-EBT card. Families already with an EBT card will have funds added to their account. The money can be used to buy food items at stores where SNAP benefits are accepted. Please email food@boston.gov or call 3-1-1 for more information.

We continue to distribute Chromebooks to any students who need one. As of today, we've distributed 31,379 Chromebooks since schools closed. Access to adequate technology is essential for our students to continue learning at home, and in addition to providing Chromebooks, we are also providing support for malfunctioning or damaged Chromebooks. Families still in need of a Chromebook or in need of Chromebook support should visit bostonpublicschools.org/laptop. We're also working to provide students with hotspots. So far we've issued 2,500 hotspots.

During this difficult period, the district has received several requests to support families at risk for homelessness. Very often these were families who were doubled up with family members and friends that did not constitute an eviction.

The Homeless Education Resource Network worked collaboratively with the City's Office of Human Services to address needs. Four hundred families have been referred to the Boston Housing Authority for housing vouchers. Ongoing case management to meet this population's needs is being conducted by Homeless Education Resource Network staff. We are following up with families that indicated a need for support or resources on the Family Needs Survey.

Additionally, we are working on securing gift cards and school supplies for families to meet ongoing needs. These will complement other resources available to families including more than 4,000 art kits generously provided by EdVestors, more than 2,000 packages of face masks and hand sanitizer donated by New England Blacks in Philanthropy, and school supplies generously donated by Staples.

The district has established a BPS Parent Hotline at (617) 635-8873, to ensure that families are regularly able to contact the district regarding their needs. Staff supporting the hotline reflects the languages and cultures of our families. We're available on the hotline Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Mr. Loconto expressed his gratitude to Catie's Closet for providing BPS students with toiletries during the district-wide school closure; he thanked the Boston Student Advisory Council for advocating for those services. He said that he enjoyed participating in a virtual student forum about the impact of school closure hosted by *The Boston Globe* earlier today. He thanked Dr. Rivera and Mr. O'Neill for taking part in the forum.

Mr. Loconto asked Mr. O'Neill to provide a brief update on federal funding. Mr. O'Neill said that the U.S House of Representatives last night passed the HEROES Act, which includes \$100 billion for education, of which \$58 billion would support K-12 education. He expressed concerns that the bill includes specific guidance on how money should be distributed to schools, including private schools. The Council of Great City Schools is advocating against this guidance.

Ms. Reyes asked how students who are doubled up, or living with other families, will be able to receive P-EBT cards. The Superintendent said that she will follow up with more information.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila asked if families are accessing the Boston Emergency Services Team (BEST). Chief of Accountability Corey Harris said that the BPS Helpline is receiving about 200 calls per day from families and the number is rising. He agreed to follow up with Andria Amador, Senior Director of Behavioral Health Services, to collect the data on the BEST team.

Mr. O'Neill called *The Boston Globe's* remote student forum enlightening. He said that students raised concerns about a variety of issues including guidance support, lack of access to textbooks at home, and the possibility of starting SY20-21 remotely. He encouraged the district to continue its momentum with providing students with fresh, healthy food options.

Ms. Robinson asked if there are any problems or abuses with free meals. The Superintendent said that she was not aware of any abuses here in Boston.

Dr. Coleman offered to help connect BPS juniors in need of college counseling services with students from local colleges and universities who are training to be counselors.

Mr. Loconto said that his own children who are students in BPS have found it beneficial to connect with friends and classmates remotely for homework help and socializing.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- Boston City Councilor At-Large Annissa Essaibi-George testified in support of BGA's charter renewal application.
- Khymani James, student, Boston Latin Academy, testified regarding the proposed student privacy policy.
- William Oppenheimer, student, Boston Green Academy, testified in favor of BGA's charter renewal application.
- Mike Heichman, member, Boston Education Justice Alliance, testified regarding the proposed student privacy policy.
- Brian Gonsalves, school counselor, Boston Green Academy, testified in favor of BGA's charter renewal application.
- Estefany Pineda, community advocate, Student Immigration Movement, testified regarding the proposed student privacy policy.
- Ann Malone, BPS parent and community advocate, testified regarding the district's MOU with DESE.
- Catherine Gyewu, parent, Boston Green Academy, testified in favor of BGA's charter renewal application.
- Sharon Hinton, Black Teachers Matter, testified regarding the district's MOU with DESE.
- Yordania Paulino, parent, Blackstone Elementary School, testified regarding the district's MOU with DESE.
- David Lopez, parent, Boston Green Academy, testified in favor of BGA's charter renewal application.
- Estephany Almanzar, parent, Blackstone Elementary School, testified regarding the district's MOU with DESE.
- David Lopez, parent, Boston Green Academy, testified in favor of BGA's charter renewal application.
- Nayeli Gonzalez, community advocate and member, Student Immigrant Movement, testified regarding the proposed student privacy policy.

- Ruby Reyes, executive director, Boston Education Justice Alliance, testified regarding the district's MOU with DESE and the budget.

Mr. Loconto requested an update on the district's outreach with community organizations regarding the revised student privacy policy recommendation. Interim Chief of Staff Charlene Briner said that district leadership is meeting with the Student Immigration Movement and Unafraid Educators later this month. Mr. Loconto thanked all parties for working together on behalf of students' best interests, and said the Committee looks forward to future updates.

ACTION ITEM

Mr. Loconto explained that MA General Laws require that prospective private schools receive approval from their local school committee before they can open. On April 29th, Chief Accountability Officer Corey Harris and Croft School Founder Scott Given presented an overview of the Croft School's application to open a private school in Roslindale serving students in grades K1-6 beginning in SY 2020-21. Mr. Loconto explained that the law limits the School Committee's review to alignment between the proposed school's curriculum and that of the district. The Committee takes action based on the Superintendent's staff review and recommendation. Superintendent Cassellius has recommended approval of the Croft School. Mr. Loconto invited the Committee to offer final comments and questions.

Dr. Coleman suggested creating a theory of collaboration among schools in the community. He urged state legislators to remove the district's responsibility of transporting non-BPS students.

Dr. Rivera expressed concerns about the Croft School related to supports for ELs and special education students, as well as its potential impact on BPS enrollment and transportation costs. Mr. Given said that he is pleased to see the diversity of families who have been attracted to the school. He stated that he intends to utilize a multi-lingual SEI approach that is modeled on the one used by BPS. He said that the Croft School would be one of the few private schools in the area that pays for special education services.

Mr. Tran asked how the Croft School plans to award financial support to families. Mr. Given said that the school will use a needs-based formula.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila said that she has reservations about the Croft School's support for ELs and special education students. She said that the Roslindale community is in greater need of an early learning center. She stated that she will support the application under the Committee's limited purview.

Approved – On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the Croft School's application to open as a private school in Roslindale serving students in grades K1-6 beginning in SY 2020-21.

REPORTS

Boston Green Academy Charter Renewal Application - Alex Chu, chair of Boston Green Academy (BGA)'s Board of Trustees, and BGA Headmaster Matt Holzer presented a request for the Committee's approval of BGA's charter renewal application as a Horace Mann In-District Charter School, BGA received its initial charter in 2011, and was approved for a five-year renewal in 2016. If approved, BGA's charter would be renewed for the period 2021-2026.

BGA is a successful and frequently chosen 6-12 school and is a Tier 2 school according to the BPS School Quality Framework. It aligns with the high school redesign, grade configuration, career and technical education, and college preparatory priorities in the district's Strategic Plan. BGA has an open admissions policy, enrolls a representative population of Boston students, and advances academic outcomes for Black students and students with special needs.

The goal of BGA's charter renewal application is to continue to provide a strong college and career preparatory education to our highly racially and ethnically diverse student population. Results for our students have been positive relative to the rest of the BPS, and have improved over several years. Enrollment is by lottery, is open to all City of Boston residents, and current enrollment is 91% are students of Color.

Noting BGA's progress over the past five-year charter period, the Superintendent recommends approval of BGA's charter renewal application to DESE for the period of 2021-2026. Despite BGA continuing to fall among the lowest performing 10% of schools in the state, BGA has seen increases in its graduation rates and a lowering of its dropout rates. Although BGA has average growth on academic statewide tests, BGA should continue to implement strategies to improve achievement and close opportunity gaps. BGA should also continue to seek ways to meet the needs of its students with disabilities and to increase its school diversity, especially for African American students. Finally, BGA will continue its focus on green and sustainable education, including its Career and Technical Education program in Environmental Science and Technology.

Mr. Holzer said that the Boston Teachers Union is currently reviewing BGA's application, and is expected to vote on it prior to the May 27th School Committee meeting.

Dr. Coleman said that DESE should try to recognize the high-needs population that BGA serves in order to make appropriate assessments. He asked Mr. Holzer if BGA should consider specializing around race and ethnicity. Mr. Holzer said that he believes that BGA has something to offer everyone. Dr. Coleman expressed concern about BGA's struggling 9th grade cohort. Mr. Holzer explained that his team is providing additional supports for those students.

Ms. Robinson asked about BGA being placed on probation by DESE. Mr. Holzer described the gains that BGA has made in recent years, acknowledging that more work remains to improve academic outcomes in middle school.

Mr. O'Neill asked if BGA students are choosing green fields of study and green professions. Mr. Holzer said that many are. He said that BGA would consider converting to a 7-12 model to align with the district's grade configuration strategy.

Mr. Tran noted BGA's significant increase in the graduation rate. He requested BGA's college matriculation rates disaggregated by race, ELs, and special education.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila asked about low EL enrollment at BGA. Mr. Holzer said that he has recruited Level 1 and 2 English Learners and is increasing cultural and academic supports. Ms. Oliver-Dávila said that BGA's project-based learning approach is well suited to EL students. Mr. Holzer said that BGA is close to meeting MassCore requirements, and said that a flexible approach is helpful to implementing MassCore.

Dr. Rivera expressed support for BGA's charter renewal application.

Mr. Loconto expressed an interest in visiting BGA when the schools reopen from the COVID emergency. He asked about strategies to address BGA's chronic absenteeism and out-of-school suspensions which are higher than district average. Mr. Holzer explained that his team is carefully tracking and analyzing data and making home visits to families. He said that BGA is working with the BPS Code of Conduct Advisory Council (COCAC) to reduce suspensions, which are on a downward trend.

Remote Learning Plan Update - Chief Academic Officer Andrea Zayas presented an update on Phase I (March 15- May 3) and Phase II (May 3 – June 26) of the Superintendent's Remote Learning Plan. The district transitioned to remote learning in mid-March following the statewide closure of school buildings due to the COVID health emergency. The Superintendent's Plan is based on the following guiding principles: connection; academic acceleration; do no harm; and continuous improvement through feedback loops.

The Plan outlines expectations in the following areas:

- School Based Equity Roundtables
- DESE Guidance with Learning Expectations
- Multi Tiered System of Support
 - Student Support Team
 - Student Success Plans

- Master Schedules
- English Learners
- Students with Disabilities
- Attendance
- Assessments
- Grading

Phase II will include low stakes-to-no stakes assessments to measure learning. The district is offering a variety of resources to assist students and families during this period of remote

learning, including a Learning at Home website, <https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/learning>, Family Helpline (617-635-8873) Multilingual Family Workshops on Technology “How-to,” and a feedback and support email: remoteteaching@bostonpublicschools.org.

The Superintendent is requesting a temporary suspension of the district's promotion/retention policy, which includes attendance, and the graduation policy. Mr. Loconto said that the Committee would vote on the Superintendent's request at its next meeting and clarified that the suspension would be for the remainder of the 2019-2020 School Year.

Dr. Coleman said that the district's transition to remote learning provides an opportunity to re-think its approach to mastery and competency. He asked if the district should consider suspending grade levels. The Superintendent said that she is using focus groups to share best practices.

Dr. Rivera asked what strategies the district is using to engage students in remote learning. Director of Technology Mark Racine said that the district is monitoring usage. The district will do a deeper analysis around engagement.

Mr. O'Neill discussed the distinction between remote learning and online learning, saying that BPS might need to explore a blended approach in the future. He asked about assessment. The Superintendent said that teachers will use several measures to assess learning, including engagement and projects. She said that the district will reflect on the data and make adjustments in the fall if necessary.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila praised the remote learning plan and suggested that the district keep a portion of the plan, such as the master schedule and weekly updates, after this period of remote learning is over. She lauded the plan's flexible attendance protocol and encouraged the district to utilize partners to align training opportunities for parents to access online learning.

Ms. Robinson asked about remote instruction for ELs. Ms. Zayas said that BPS is prioritizing ESL instruction. She emphasized the importance of participation.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Loconto noted for the record that at the April 29th remote School Committee meeting, he stepped away from the proceedings from approximately 7:46 - 7:52 p.m., during which time Vice Chair Oliver-Dávila presided over the meeting. He said that he should have noted this brief absence at the time and pledged to do so in the future.

Boston School Committee Remote Meeting

Zoom

May 13, 2020


Ms. Robinson recalled that it has been one year since the Committee voted to hire Dr. Cassellius and thanked her for her tremendous leadership. The Superintendent thanked the Committee and Mayor Walsh for their support. Ms. Oliver-Dávila thanked the City of Boston for its incredible response to the COVID emergency.

Dr. Coleman requested an update on the district's obligations related to the Memorandum of Understanding with the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

ADJOURN

At approximately 9:33 p.m., the Committee voted unanimously, by roll call, to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth Sullivan
Executive Secretary