



OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE MA SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAM HEARING AND BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

May 27, 2020

The Boston School Committee held a remote meeting on May 27, 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; Michael O’Neill; Dr. Lorna Rivera; Jeri Robinson; and Student Representative Evelyn Reyes.

School Committee Member Absent: Quoc Tran.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Agenda

Boston School Committee Meeting Minutes: May 13, 2020

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

Memo from Superintendent Cassellius to Boston School Committee Re: School Choice, 2020-2021 School Year, May 21, 2020

Remote Learning Phases I & 11 PowerPoint
MassCore Graduation Policy Proposal PowerPoint

Draft MassCore Graduation Requirement Policy
7-12 Redesign PowerPoint

MA SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAM HEARING: SCHOOL YEAR 2020-2021

The Committee held a public hearing on whether the Boston Public Schools should participate in the Massachusetts School Choice Program in School Year 2020-2021. There were no speakers.

Adjourn - On roll call, the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn the MA School Choice Program hearing.

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: MAY 13, 2020

Approved – On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the minutes of the May 13, 2020 School Committee meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

As prepared for delivery.

Thank you all for joining us tonight. I'd like to start off by recognizing the tremendous loss we are experiencing with yesterday's passing of TechBoston Academy Co-Headmaster Keith Love. Keith fought a brave battle with cancer and I was just heartbroken to receive this news. Keith dedicated 20 years of his life to BPS students and families and we will miss him so much. Just two weeks ago I participated in a car parade for Keith to show him how much he meant to so many people. I was honored to be there, with commendations in hand from Mayor Walsh and the School Committee, thanking Keith for his profound impact on the BPS community. I will never forget that moment and the joy he selflessly gave to me when he thanked me for coming and said he was still bringing the JUICE. We're swelling with #BearPride and sending so much love to Keith's family, Co-Headmaster Nora Vernazza and the entire TBA community. Please join me in a moment of silence for our dear friend Keith Love.

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. As of this afternoon, we have provided 646,650 meals across all distribution models. Of that figure, more than 235,000 meals have been delivered to students' homes. We are serving up to 20,000 meals a day. Last week was our biggest week yet, as we distributed nearly 90,000 meals in one week. Catie's Closet makes weekly deliveries of products to our meal sites and have provided over 180,000 personal hygiene products since schools closed. Information on emergency meal locations, including the dozens of other emergency meal sites throughout the City of Boston, is available at bostonpublicschools.org. Again, I want to 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 and worked this past Memorial Day Holiday to ensure our kids were fed.

We continue to distribute Chromebooks to any students who need one. As of today, we've distributed 32,000 Chromebooks since schools closed. 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 and families with WiFi hotspots, and we're providing other internet connectivity assistance.

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 reflect the languages and cultures of our families. We're available on the hotline Monday - Friday, 9am - 5pm.

Recently we have been providing assistance to families who are interested in the Pandemic EBT or P-EBT program, but believe their address may not be up to date in our system. We created a form that BPS staff members are helping families complete over the phone, with multilingual support. We are then providing our partners at Project Bread with updated home address information so that families can receive their cards in the mail. This address change is only for the P-EBT program. To permanently change your home address in our student information system, we ask that families contact Welcome Services. For more information on the P-EBT program, email food@boston.gov or call our Family Helpline. Again, that's 617-635-8873.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and as this is a very difficult time for all of us, I want to provide an update on some of the behavioral health services we are providing to students and families. BPS Behavioral Health Services has 85 mental health providers, who have made contact with more than 1,600 students since schools closed. We've also provided telehealth services to more than 1,000 students. Our coronavirus page also has mental health resources for parents and caregivers, including crisis support hotlines. In an effort to provide families with

helpful tips and resources, Behavioral Health Services has partnered with a number of community experts to provide brief training on everything from parenting tips to healthy technology habits. You can find a schedule of the spring workshops, and other mental health resources at [boston public schools DOT org forward slash coronavirus \(bostonpublicschools.org/coronavirus\)](https://bostonpublicschools.org/coronavirus), under “Taking Care of Your Health.”

Boston has long been a model of enriching, hands-on summer programming. We are committed to providing learning opportunities for youth this summer. We are finalizing plans to continue remote learning options throughout the summer and will share the details very soon once everything is finalized. All plans for summer will continue to keep the safety of our students and staff as a top priority while ensuring equitable access to engaging and enriching learning. We will also continue to provide meals for children over the summer, and are working through the logistics as to where our summer meal sites will be. We are working on developing programs, hiring teachers and identifying prioritized students and will have more information soon.

In addition to planning for summer, we are working on multiple contingencies to safely reopen school buildings in the fall. As you can imagine there are many things to account for in the event we are allowed to open schools in fall. Of course, as you know, this is both a local and state decision. Monica Roberts and her team in the Student, Family and Community Advancement Office, have worked with Tammy Pust on a plan to convene our stakeholders regarding summer and reopening in September. This process will include sharing information about our current knowledge and plans for summer, as well as our current thinking and the many factors being considered for reopening. Much of what we do will be informed by public health guidance, but there are areas where our efforts can be informed by our many teachers, students, families, and broader community members. We anticipate more information on this stakeholder engagement process early next week

Since the beginning of the school year, I have asked for a deep dive into our policies, practices and procedures as it pertains to the sharing of student information. It is our mission to provide safe and welcoming schools for all BPS students, particularly our immigrant students. We recognize that this work must be done in closer collaboration with the community and with advocates who have worked on issues of immigrant rights throughout the city. We have received feedback from the community and School Committee members on the proposed Privacy of Student Information policy. To better inform and build upon the district’s work this year strengthening policies in these areas, we will convene a school safety working group that will synthesize additional research and best practices, as well as solicit feedback from stakeholders and experts to make recommendations about the district’s school safety operations and practices. The working group will convene weekly throughout the summer with the goal of making policy recommendations to the School Committee in August. We are hopeful this continued

collaboration will bring us all closer to our shared goal of creating welcoming schools in which all students feel safe, secure and free to focus on their learning.

I'd like to thank the Chair of the Boston City Council Ways and Means Committee. This week, the BPS team participated in the 8th and final City Council hearing on the FY21 BPS Budget Proposal. Over the course of 6 weeks, BPS presented on the six commitments of the strategic plan, demonstrating the alignment between what we heard from the community and school committee, the strategic plan and our FY21 Budget. The impact of COVID-19 on our FY21 budget was a frequent line of inquiry from both the Council and the public. While we plan to provide a formal update to the School Committee in June, I want to share a few important points. As the City and District is responding to the immediate disruption of COVID-19, we are evaluating both our FY20 and FY21 budgets to create flexibility to respond to evolving educational realities and to best meet the needs of our students. Having said that, we built the FY21 budget priorities on equity at its core and our priorities in it are just as relevant today as they were 2 long months ago. Our budget is aligned to support our highest needs students and to invest in the transformation of our lowest performing schools to fulfil our promise of high quality throughout the city.

I am excited to have Dr. Macintyre and Dr. Bruggeman present on the framework for the high school redesign and Andrea Zayas on the MassCore policy. There has been a lot of work done to bring us this far, but tonight's recommendations is a commencement of even more planning and development over the next year as full implementation of HS redesign will be in the 21/22 school year and the phased in MassCore with the Class our 2025, our current 7th grade students.

The Boston Public Schools is committed to transparency and communicating with our community. Our core mission is reaching all students and ensuring they access the learning and support they need to be successful in school and in life. To reach that goal, we have to fully understand student needs and work collaboratively with educators, school leaders, families, and partners to address the opportunity gaps that we find. That is why we are developing a data dashboard so that all can see the district COVID response to date and the various community needs, so we can rally together to identify resources for students and their families. This dashboard will be accessible on our BPS website. This dashboard is organized into the main categories of our COVID response, from Chromebook and meal distribution to attendance reporting and online activity. We will review this data regularly in our district and school-based equity roundtables in order to hold ourselves publicly accountable and to ensure transparency of the efforts we are undertaking as a community.

Ms. Robsinon asked if students who receive free WiFi during remote learning will continue to receive it. The Superintendent said that the district hopes to continue connecting families with opportunities to receive free or low cost WiFi.

Mr. O'Neill asked about the district's efforts to engage virtual dropouts. The Superintendent said that the district has been unable to make contact with 124 students since the start of remote learning. Supervisors of attendance and teachers continue to reach out to those students. She said that the district is now collecting more data that will better capture student engagement during remote learning. Assistant Superintendents are checking data for every school. Mr. Loconto said BPS has an imperfect system for collecting the data on student engagement during this period of remote learning and expressed optimism the data collection is improving.

Dr. Coleman commended the Superintendent and her team for building partnerships across the silos in Boston to support students during the COVID emergency. He asked how the district is working with the City to support students in low income housing. The Superintendent said that BPS is collaborating with other city agencies to better support students and families and plans to keep best practices from remote learning when school buildings reopen.

Dr. Rivera asked about the Superintendent's plans for summer learning. The Superintendent said that BPS will offer two low-stakes remote assessments, in ELA and two in math, that will serve as one indicator for invitations to summer school. Invitations will also be offered to students who were off track pre-COVID, were retained one or more times in their career, and/or are chronically absent. She said that every school leader has formed student support teams and developed success plans to support student achievement. Assessments will be given to English Learners (ELs) who are Level 3, 4, and 5.

Ms. Reyes said that she finds the advisory aspect of remote learning helpful and hopes it will remain when school reopens.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila thanked the Superintendent and her team for their tireless work around the COVID emergency. She encouraged district leaders to do whatever it takes to engage EL students. She suggested that the district carry forward best practices from remote learning such as a master schedule, online family engagement, and Chromebooks. She emphasized the importance of maintaining updated addresses and phone numbers for BPS families. She encouraged stronger collaboration with partners to engage families in summer learning and suggested that the district be creative in its approach to providing summer learning. The Superintendent said that she will discuss the matter with BSAC this week. Ms. Oliver-Dávila encouraged school leaders to connect students with summer learning opportunities.

Mr. Loconto said that he has asked the district's budget team to present a finance update to the Committee in June. He asked the Superintendent for an update on the development of a data dashboard. The Superintendent said that her team is still refining the data dashboard, and that it will be publicly available soon. She explained that the dashboard will produce parent-friendly reports. Mary Dillman, director of Data and Accountability, will assume the position of Chief of Staff on June 1. Mr. Loconto thanked outgoing Interim Chief of Staff Charlene Briner for her work.

Approved – On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the Superintendent's report.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

As prepared for delivery.

I want to start off by sharing that two of my fellow Boston Student Advisory Council (BSAC) members will be presenting with our Chief Academic Officer tonight. They were able to meet with her last week and discuss MassCore. We will hear more from them later.

I also wanted to announce that we will be hosting a town hall in conjunction with Boston City Councilor At-Large Essabbi-George about securing the student vote on the School Committee. We welcome folks to join us for that, young people in particular. Details regarding date and time will hopefully be confirmed tonight and sent out soon.

Every year, BSAC members have the opportunity to participate in our civics course and earn a half credit toward graduation. Typically the presentations are held at the Boston-area Educators for Social Justice Conference. Due to our global situation, the presentations were held virtually and they were a huge success. BSAC members presented their final projects for the BSAC Civic Course yesterday and were joined by several BPS leaders:

- Andrew Bott
- Dana Brown
- Robert Rametti
- Natacha Scott, Director of History & Social Studies
- Kelly Hung
- Monica Roberts, Office of Student Family and Community Advancement
- Nellie Mae Foundation

Students presented on:

- Student Rights and Student Voice Subcommittee will present on Bathroom Equity. Their presentation is titled Potty Time: Improving Bathrooms.
- Environmental Justice and Sustainability Subcommittee will present on the Green New Deal. Their presentation is titled Fighting For Our Future: Youth Justice and the Green New Deal
- School Climate, Culture and Improvement Subcommittee will present on Hub Schools. Their presentation is titled Community As A Campus: How To Be A Part Of The Community And Not Just In It.

I want to acknowledge that my time in this role is coming to a close. I will be presenting our recommendation for my successor at the BSAC meeting tomorrow and they will be voted through by Monday.

Mr. O'Neill praised Ms. Reyes for her work as student representative, saying that he was honored to work with her. Ms. Robinson echoed Mr. O'Neill. Ms. Oliver-Dávila encouraged BSAC to continue to recruit students from alternative education schools and thanked BSAC for its work on climate change. Dr. Rivera called Ms. Reyes a social justice warrior and wished her the best of luck in all future endeavors.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- Yrmaris Matias, parent, Orchard Gardens K-8 School, testified regarding the district's Memorandum of Understanding with the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).
- Marioska Medina, parent, Hurley Elementary School, testified regarding strengthening family engagement with Latinx families.
- Denise Mercedes, parent, Blackstone Elementary School, testified regarding the district's Memorandum of Understanding with the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).
- Sonia Medina, parent, Blackstone Elementary School, testified regarding preparations for the reopening of school buildings and the status of installing new doors and windows at the Blackstone School.
- Jennifer Rios, parent, head staff assistant, Boston Green Academy (BGA), testified in favor of BGA's charter renewal application.
- Marta Bausemer, parent, school nurse, Boston Green Academy, testified in favor of BGA's charter renewal application.
- Sharon Harrison, BPS school nurse, and member, Nurse Faculty Senate, testified regarding preparing school facilities for reopening.
- Clara Ruiz, student, Bunker Hill Community College, testified regarding the student privacy policy.
- Robert Jenkins, Madison Park Technical Vocational High School Alumni Association, testified regarding high school redesign.
- Mike Heichman, member, Boston Education Justice Alliance, testified regarding standardized testing, student privacy, and the district's MOU with DESE.
- Ann Malone, BPS parent, testified regarding student health and wellness.
- John Mudd, education advocate, testified regarding student participation in remote

learning.

- Ruby Reyes, executive director, Boston Education Justice Alliance, testified regarding the budget.

ACTION ITEMS

Mr. Loconto said that, consistent with past practice, the Superintendent had presented the Committee with a memo recommending that the Boston School Committee withdraw from the Massachusetts School Choice Program for School Year 2020-2021 based on (1) student assignment issues, (2) space limitations, (3) cost implications, and (4) decisions of school committees in neighboring communities. He noted that the Committee had held a public hearing on the issue earlier that evening in accordance with state law.

MA School Choice Program - On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved a motion withdrawing the Boston Public Schools from the MA School Choice Program for SY 2020-21.

Mr. Loconto invited members to offer final questions or comments related to Boston Green Academy's request for approval of its charter renewal. Mr. O'Neill encouraged BGA to continue striving for improvement. BGA Headmaster Matt Holzer confirmed that the Boston Teachers Union has signed the application.

Approved – On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved Boston Green Academy's Horace Mann In-District Charter School Renewal Application for the period 2021-2026, as recommended by the Superintendent.

Mr. Loconto invited members to offer final questions or comments related to the Superintendent's request to suspend the district's promotion/retention and graduation policies for the 2019-2020 School Year. Mr. O'Neill suggested adding language specifying that the Committee hereby grants the Superintendent temporary authority to determine graduation standards.

Approved – On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved, as amended, the Superintendent's recommendation to temporarily suspend the Promotion/Retention Policy and Graduation Policy for the remainder of 2019-2020 School Year in response to district-wide school building closures due to the COVID-19 health emergency. The School Committee hereby grants the Superintendent the authority in this interim period to determine the appropriate standards for graduation.

REPORTS

MassCore - Chief Academic Officer Andrea Zayas and Assistant Superintendent of Academics and Professional Learning Christine Landry presented the Superintendent's recommendation to adopt the MassCore Recommended Course of Study as the graduation requirement for all BPS students. Dearborn STEM Academy Headmaster Dana Brown and BSAC students Simon Chernow and Graciela Berman Reinhardt co-presented in support of the proposal.

MassCore is a recommended course of study Massachusetts high school students need to excel in college, career, and civic life. Specifically, the following credits, in various content categories, would be required for graduation:

- Four units of English Language Arts
- Four units of Mathematics
- Three units of laboratory-based Science
- Three units of History and Social Studies
- Two units of World Language
- One unit of Physical Education
- One unit of Arts
- Five units of Core Electives

The Class of 2025 would be the first to graduate with aligned requirements across the district.

Ms. Zayas explained that the adoption of MassCore would advance the district's goal to prepare every student to be college, career and life ready. She said that it's imperative that BPS adopt standards aligned graduation requirements across the district that will promote and ensure rigor and excellence in schools. In addition, consistent graduation requirements are needed to provide families and students with a clear understanding of what courses need to be completed in order for a student to receive a BPS diploma.

Dr. Coleman discussed the complexities of BPS high schools having different graduation requirements. He praised the inclusion of professional development in the plan to transition to MassCore. He asked how the MassCore curriculum will close achievement gaps. The Superintendent said that MassCore raises expectations, creates more opportunities, provides alignment, and has the potential to increase attendance. Ms. Zayas said that black and brown students will have more access to rigorous coursework. The Superintendent said MassCore is just one aspect of how the district will close achievement gaps and referenced her strategic plan.

Ms. Robinson asked how the district will prepare younger students to be successful with MassCore in high school. Ms. Zayas spoke about the district's investments in Transformation School, providing high quality instruction and materials. Ms. Robinson spoke about the importance of family engagement to successfully implement MassCore.

Ms. Reyes asked how school facilities will physically accommodate MassCore requirements. The Superintendent said that the district's five-year implementation will help with planning, putting a focus on competency and mastery. She explained that the district will take a "schools without walls" approach to find creative opportunities for learning. Various locations around the city could present opportunities for lab based science learning, for example. Mr. Brown spoke about the waiver process and creating opportunities for students to earn credit for creative projects.

Dr. Rivera expressed concern that adopting MassCore could lead to an increase in the dropout rate. She questioned whether BuildBPS and high school redesign should be further along before

the district adopts MassCore graduation requirements. She asked for clarification about vote and timeline requested by the Superintendent.

Ms. Zayas offered to reshare the draft policy with the Committee. She said that most BPS schools are already close to being aligned with MassCore. She said that the BPS Core course of study proposed by high school working groups last spring differs with MassCore in terms of core academics. She offered to reshare the report by the high school working groups from 2019.

Mr. O'Neill spoke about the importance of preparing students for college, career, and life. He expressed concern about unintended consequences.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila requested more specific information about onramping and scaffolding. She expressed concerns about having the budget to support MassCore as well as about a potential rise in the dropout rate.

Mr. Loconto said that the Committee will not schedule a vote on adopting the MassCore graduation requirement for its next meeting. He said the additional time will provide the district and Committee with more time for reflection and information gathering.

7-12 Redesign - High School Superintendents Dr. Elia Bruggeman and Dr. Lindsa McIntyre presented a high-level overview of the district's high school redesign work. The 7-12 redesign is aligned with the commitments in the Superintendent's strategic plan.

The purpose of the redesign is to:

- Increase rigor through MassCore adoption
- Increase access and opportunity for students
- Improve access to high-quality seats (district wide)
- Provide career pathway alignments (district wide)
- Create Hub School Communities
- Rebrand schools through a positive marketing campaign
- Utilize an equity lens for decision-making around school design and implementation

The following large, comprehensive high schools have been chosen to expand from grades 9-12 to 7-12 beginning in SY21-22: Burke; Brighton; Community Academy for Science and Health (CASH); Charlestown; East Boston; English; and Madison Park. The district's alternative education programs would be paired with specific high schools to improve connections and improve chronic absenteeism. The redesign includes a focus on increasing rigor through the expansion of International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement programs.

Dr. Rivera asked how the seven schools selected for 7-12 expansion in School Year 2021-22 were chosen. Dr. Bruggeman said that space and capacity were factors in the selection process, adding that there will be three phases of expansion opportunities. Dr. Rivera asked about engagement with school communities. Dr. Bruggeman said that engagement efforts have been hampered by the COVID pandemic and that the district has to do more work to engage students and families.

Ms. Robinson asked what the student experience will look like, and how the 7-12 redesign ties in with MassCore. The Superintendent said that the district will dedicate another year to planning.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila expressed concern that some of the schools selected for 7-12 expansion are low performing and are being asked to take on a lot of additional work. She spoke about the importance of alternative education which she said the district should focus on and invest in. She talked about the need for an alternative education point person within the district pairing. She expressed concern that pairing high schools with alternative education programs could be limiting for students. The Superintendent said that efforts to reduce chronic absenteeism will be a focus of her budget proposal next year. She spoke about the value of offering families competitive options such as International Baccalaureate programs and Advanced Placement courses.

Mr. O'Neill requested data on completion rates for BPS students in IB programs. He spoke about the importance of offering alternative education students a portfolio of options and expressed concern about limiting those options by pairing schools.

Mr. Loconto summarized the Committee's feedback and concerns about how the MassCore and 7-12 redesign presentations tie together. He requested that the Committee hear from headmasters who will oversee the expansion, as well as from schools that have already done so. The Superintendent suggested that the Committee schedule a retreat to further discuss the connections between the initiatives, including an update on BuildBPS. Mr. Loconto supported the Superintendent's suggestion.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

The Superintendent clarified that BPS provides every student with a Chromebook.

ADJOURN

At approximately 9:58 p.m., the Committee voted unanimously, by roll call, to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth Sullivan
Executive Secretary