



OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

January 30, 2019

The Boston School Committee held a meeting on January 30, 2019 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 Loconto; Vice Chairperson Alexandra Oliver-Dávila; Dr. Hardin Coleman; Quoc Tran; and student representative Evelyn Reyes.

School Committee Members Absent: Michael O'Neill; and Ms. Jeri Robinson.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Agenda

Boston School Committee Meeting Minutes: January 16, 2019

2019 Massachusetts School Building Authority Accelerated Repair Program PowerPoint

2019 Massachusetts School Building Authority Accelerated Repair Program Equity Impact Statement

Grant for Approval Totaling \$25,000

In-Kind Donations with a Total Estimated Value of \$208,675.83

22+ Age Maximum Update PowerPoint

22+ Age Maximum Update Equity Impact Statement

Food and Nutrition Services: My Way Café and Breakfast After the Bell Update PowerPoint

Food and Nutrition Services: My Way Café Update Equity Impact Statement

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Update on Turnaround and Transformation PowerPoint

Update on Turnaround and Transformation Equity Impact Statement

Winthrop Innovation Plan PowerPoint

Winthrop Innovation Plan Equity Impact Statement

John Winthrop Elementary School Innovation Plan

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Loconto led the pledge of allegiance and called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Approved – The Committee approved by unanimous consent the minutes of the January 16, 2019 School Committee meeting.

INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Good evening, everyone. Thank you for joining us tonight. I do want to start off by saying that the temperatures have really started to plummet over the last few hours. The forecast calls for bitterly cold temperatures tomorrow and Friday. I’m asking all our families to please make sure that students are dressed for the extremely cold conditions. Students should wear layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing, winter coats, gloves or mittens, and a hat. Students will not be marked for any weather-related tardiness. I also suggest visiting the City of Boston website at boston.gov/cold for other cold weather safety tips and resources.

We will be meeting next week to present our budget for Fiscal Year 2020. We are currently finalizing the budget, but it will likely represent the largest budget in the history of BPS, maintaining our proud status as a national leader in investing in our children and their future. This budget proposal includes major investments in our schools -- including our highest need students, our lower performing schools, our off-track youth, and our schools facing declining enrollment. These investments continue despite declines in overall district enrollment and with continued stagnant state aid, which is only possible through the Mayor’s sustained prioritization of education in the City budget. While the development and unveiling of the district’s operating budget is an opportunity to focus on the investments we are making to reaffirm the district’s commitment to increasing equity and eliminating opportunity gaps, we know that – in light of the enrollment fluctuations I just noted – it also represents significant challenges for some school communities.

A reduction in enrollment by over 1000 students in one year will inevitably cause hardship for some schools. The district staff is working diligently with school leaders to determine how best

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to mitigate any detrimental effects being experienced in schools. As with any budget, not every problem can be solved in its entirety. But we are committed to working together collaboratively in order to ensure budget allocations are equitable and fair, and that investments are made in order to better serve our students in each school community. I know that this can be a rather stressful time for school leaders and school communities. FY20 marks two consecutive years of enrollment decline. In addition, as is true every year, the movement of students between schools can impact the budgetary flexibility of schools losing students. We know that together these trends can put significant pressure on school budgets. As we are still finalizing the budget, this is the time for school leaders to reach out to Central Office staff to schedule some “problem-solving” meetings. We’ve held a number of these discussions over the past several weeks to contemplate strategies to mitigate negative impacts of budget changes on individual school communities. I’m hopeful that the full budget presentation next week will help to alleviate concerns within our school communities, as we continue focusing on operational efficiency to enable student success. With that, I’d like to continue with some highlights from around the district.

On Friday, January 18, the Josiah Quincy Elementary School hosted their fourth annual wheelchair basketball game. Every year Quincy staff invite the New England Blazers, an affiliate of the National Wheelchair Basketball Association to the school to face off against Quincy teachers, or the Quincy Dragons. Quincy Principal Cynthia Soo Hoo and Carter School Principal Mark O’Connor led the Dragons team, made up of staff from the schools. Carter students also got to enjoy a field trip to watch all the action. What a wonderful, inclusionary event for our students, and an opportunity to demonstrate to them that a physical impairment is not a barrier to exercise or fun competition.

Next Monday, February 4th, we kick off our first-ever Career Technical Education Week, dedicated to highlighting career pathways in the district and student connections to high-skill, high-demand jobs. Last October, the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) granted Chapter 74 (vocational) approval for three additional Career Technical Education programs in Boston Public Schools:

- Boston Green Academy’s Environmental Science and Technology program — the first Chapter 74 program for the school
- Madison Park Technical Vocational High School’s Programming and Web Development program and
- Boston Arts Academy’s Fashion Technology Program.

Boston Green Academy’s program will hold an event at the school to celebrate their Chapter 74 status and demonstrate their work using laser thermal imaging cameras on Monday, February 4th at 11 a.m. Madison Park students will showcase their work in website and game development at an event at their school the following day, Tuesday, February 5th at 11 am. Numerous events will be held all week long at the 13 BPS schools offering CareerTechEd programs. I encourage

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members of the BPS community to attend these events and learn more about the CTE pathways available for our students.

Finally, this week we began the nominations process for BPS Educator of the Year 2019. Educator of the Year is a collaboration between BPS, the Boston Teachers Union and the City of Boston. The Educator of the Year awards annually recognize the exemplary educators who go above and beyond to impact the lives of Boston Public Schools students. We invite all members of the BPS community (teachers, administrators, students, families and community members and partners) to nominate exceptional educators to honor their work and dedication. Educators can be teachers, paraprofessionals, nurses, librarians, or guidance counselors. The nomination period ends March 4th. To nominate an educator, and for all the details about Educator of the Year, please visit bostonpublicschools.org/eoy.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

The following people testified regarding the Interim Superintendent's FY20 budget proposal, which will be presented to the Committee on February 6, 2019:

- Jessica Tang, president, Boston Teachers Union
- Larry Bowen, student, Blackstone K-8 School
- Aniyah Barros, student, Blackstone K-8 School
- Giorgia Eleza, student, Blackstone K-8 School
- Joshua Greenaway, student, Blackstone K-8 School
- Gabriella Deleon, student, Blackstone K-8 School
- Jabril Firdawsi, student, Blackstone K-8 School
- Milenne Levitt, student, Blackstone K-8 School
- Luis Medina, student, Blackstone K-8 School
- Crystal Collier, teacher, Blackstone K-8 School
- Sagrario Carrasco, parent, student, Blackstone K-8 School
- Iris Diaz, parent, parent, Blackstone K-8 School
- Yinettee Nunez, parent, Blackstone K-8 School
- Sonia Medina, parent, Blackstone K-8 School
- Rafaela Polanco, parent, Blackstone K-8 School
- Isabel Heredia, parent, Blackstone K-8 School
- Isaura Peguero, parent, Blackstone K-8 School
- Staff from MA State Representative Jon Santiago
- Monica Hall-Porter, co-chair, Hale Elementary School Parent Council
- Jen Rose-Wood, parent, Hale Elementary School
- Sahar Abdul-Adl, parent, Hale Elementary School
- Mark Schafer, parent, Hale Elementary Parent Council
- Ann Huang, parent, Hale Elementary School
- Teresa Pregizer, parent, Hale Elementary School

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- Carmen Torres, parent, Hale Elementary School
- Logan Keck, parent, Hale Elementary School
- Bill Wolff, team member, Generations Incorporated, and partner, Blackstone K-8 School
- Vero Navarro, teacher, Blackstone K-8 School
- Maria Lee, guardian, Blackstone K-8 School
- Michael Dower, teacher, Boston Teachers Union K-8 School
- Lisa Clarke, teacher, Blackstone K-8 School
- Ruby Reyes, director, Boston Education Justice Alliance
- Anne Greenwald, nurse, Blackstone K-8 School
- Roslyn Williams, parent, Blackstone K-8 School
- Alex Sullivan, teacher, Blackstone K-8 School
- Raul Garcia, parent, Hale Elementary School

The following people testified regarding the My Way Café:

- Leanna Lynch, student, Sarah Greenwood K-8 School
- Esther Louis-Jeudi, member, Holmes Innovation School Governing Board
- Soraya Powell, student, Holmes Innovation School
- Julia Hebert, parent, Perry K-8 School
- Benjamin Rockoff, principal, Ellison-Parks Early Education Center
- Kathleen Carney, employee, BPS Food and Nutrition Services Department
- Dale Feeney, employee, BPS Food and Nutrition Services Department
- Fantasia James, parent, Perry K-8 School

The following people testified regarding the district's maximum student age policy:

- Maxine Wigfall, teacher, Boston Adult Technical Academy
- Gina Gogan, teacher, Boston Adult Technical Academy

The following people testified regarding the BPS Superintendent Search Process Engagement Support Grant:

- Christine Langhoff, resident, Dorchester
- Peggy Wiesenber, education advocate

ACTION ITEMS

Dr. Coleman expressed support for the BPS Superintendent Search Process Engagement Support Grant. Chairperson Loconto noted that the district has accepted outside financial support for past superintendent searches in an effort to keep more dollars in the classroom. He thanked the Shah Foundation for providing resources to support robust, transparent and accessible community engagement during the superintendent search process.

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Approved – As part of the consent calendar, the Committee approved by unanimous consent a grant for approval in the amount of \$25,000.

Approved – As part of the consent calendar, the Committee approved by unanimous consent in-kind donations with a total estimated value of \$208,675.83

Approved – The Committee approved, by roll call, statements of interests for the Massachusetts School Building Authority’s Accelerated Repair Program: The English High School; McKinley K-12; Curley K-8; Mary Lyon 9-12; Josiah Quincy Elementary School; Dudley Street Neighborhood Charter School (Horace Mann).

REPORTS

Winthrop Innovation Plan – John Winthrop Elementary School Principal Leah Blake-McKetty presented a proposal for a three-year innovation plan. She was joined by second-grade teachers Kara Charochak and ToRena Webb-Thomas. The Winthrop School serves one of the district’s highest-need student populations, and has experienced rapid improvement, attributed to autonomies granted while in Turnaround status. The Dorchester elementary school was highlighted last fall by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) as eligible to exit its “underperforming” status. The Innovation Plan, if approved, would be implemented in the 2019-2020 school year, convert the Winthrop to an Innovation School, and preserve the scheduling, instruction, and assessment autonomies that have helped sustain the Winthrop’s improvement.

Dr. Coleman asked about the Winthrop’s staff diversity, which Ms. Blake-McKetty said she is working to increase in partnership with the Office of Human Capital. Mr. Tran asked about the thought-process behind a three-plan. Ms. Blake-McKetty explained that a three-year plan gives the school the opportunity to make adjustments if needed. Ms. Oliver-Dávila asked about the family engagement process. The presenters explained that the school held two family information sessions and that communication is ongoing.

The School Committee is scheduled to vote on the Winthrop Innovation Plan on February 6th.

Update on District’s Analysis of Current BPS Age Overage Policy – Academic Superintendent Tommy Welch, Assistant Superintendent for the Office of Special Education Cindie Neilson, and Assistant Superintendent for the Office of English Learners Priya Tahiliani provided an update to the district’s January 16th report analyzing the current BPS overage policy in which students are exited on their 22nd birthday. Following further analysis, the district is requesting School Committee authority to grant waivers to the maximum age policy through the end of the 2018-19 school year. This action would allow students past the age of 22 to complete this academic year while the district refines its proposal and come to a long-term, equitable solution.

Dr. Coleman and Ms. Oliver-Dávila asked clarifying questions about the waiver process, all of which were answered by the presenters. Chairperson Loconto thanked district staff for taking a

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thoughtful approach to the complex issue. The Committee is scheduled to vote waiver proposal on February 6th.

Food and Nutrition Services: My Way Café and Breakfast After the Bell Update – Chief of Operations John Hanlon and Executive Director of Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Laura Benavidez presented an update on the My Way Café (MWC) school meals program, and efforts to expand it across the district. The model replaces primarily prepackaged food at schools with dynamic menus offering students choice for breakfast and lunch and meeting the following goals: serve fresher food; achieve menu equity; improve the dining experience; and reduce packaging waste. The menu changes daily, and includes choices of hot and cold vegetables, fruit, proteins, grains and dairy. The program, with support from the Shah Family Foundation and the City of Boston, is currently in 21 schools, with plans to expand to 31 schools by the end of the current school year. The plan is to expand the model across the district. On average, the cost of the MWC program is below the cost of vended meals.

Earlier this month, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) sent a mandate to BPS and other districts in the state requiring that all schools offer “breakfast after the bell,” or after the instructional day has begun, by May 31st. Additionally, all BPS schools must have an accepted breakfast after the bell program selected by April 1st. BPS currently serves breakfast *before and after* the bell in 87% of its schools. FNS will work closely with school leaders and staff to comply with the state mandate.

Committee members praised the expansion of the My Way Café, noting the impact that nutrition has on learning. Ms. Oliver-Dávila asked about FNS finances, which Ms. Benavidez explained are running a small deficit. Chairperson Loconto clarified that all BPS schools offer breakfast; only 16 do not currently offer breakfast after the bell. He noted that he was impressed with his experience at the My Way Café at the Ellison/Parks Early Education School in Mattapan. The Interim Superintendent offered to have the district will report back to the Committee with another FNS update by the end of the school year. Members asked that the next report include student participation rates and strategies to increase them.

Update on Turnaround and Transformation – Shira DeCovnick, director of Turnaround and Transformation, and Mary Driscoll, associate superintendent for Elementary and Middle Schools, explained recent changes to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) accountability framework. Under the new system, DESE has moved away from levels to more descriptive designations for schools: Schools of Recognition (2); Meeting Targets (23); Partially Meeting Targets (29); Requiring Focused/Targeted Support (41); and Requiring Broad/Comprehensive Support (9). Schools in the last two categories serve some of the districts highest concentration of high needs students (based on the Opportunity Index), and a disproportionate number of the district’s black students. DESE’s intervention requirements and the district’s support strategies have implications for many of the district’s most marginalized students. Effective intervention in these schools could significantly improve access to quality education opportunities for these students.

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Focused/Targeted Support must create a plan to address the reason for their inclusion in this category e.g. improve graduation rate, assessment participation, or student outcomes. Schools with an existing plan will be monitored by DESE. Unlike former “Level 4” schools, Focused/Targeted Support Schools will not be reconstituted; schools creating plans are not granted autonomies by DESE and have limited access to the additional funding that former “Level 4” schools had as part of their planning.

All 28 BPS schools in the bottom 10% must create a plan (or implement an existing one) for school improvement; 17 schools in the bottom 5% would be required to create a DESE-specific plan; however, based on state funding, 10 schools are receiving state funds this year to develop a plan with a strong evidence base that is aligned to the MA Turnaround Practices for implementation in School Year 2019-2020.

The district offers a number of supports to schools, including:

- Network Support Structure: schools are supported by an Academic Superintendent and consistent department liaisons, in a community of practice
- Focus on a broader group of schools: by expanding structures and supports previously reserved for former Level 4 schools, we seek to reach schools prior to a designation of “Underperforming”
- Departmental differentiation: where possible, central office departments have created multiple tiers of service and support
- Anticipating school support needs: preparing to support high needs schools in future years (e.g. funding strategies, talent pipelines)

Ms. DeCovnick applauded the Channing Elementary School for its science instruction and the Grew Elementary School for its leadership, shared responsibility, and professional collaboration.

Dr. Coleman requested information detailing how the DESE designations will influence the BPS school quality framework and school choice. The presenters agreed to follow up.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila expressed concern about the reduction in state funding. Ms. Perille said that district officials are drafting a white paper for DESE on this topic.

Chairperson Loconto asked about family engagement. Ms. DeCovnick said that there are opportunities for engagement at every stage in the process, adding that many schools share best practices.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORTS

None.

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NEW BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURN

At approximately 11:15 p.m., the Committee voted by unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth Sullivan
Executive Secretary