



## **OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**October 28, 2015**

The Boston School Committee held a meeting at 6 p.m. on October 28, 2015 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](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org), email [feedback@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto:feedback@bostonpublicschools.org) or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

### **ATTENDANCE**

School Committee Members Present: Chairperson Michael O’Neill; Vice-Chair Dr. Hardin Coleman; Meg Campbell; Michael Loconto; Jeri Robinson; Regina Robinson; Dr. Miren Uriarte; and student representative Savina Tapia.

School Committee Members Absent: None.

### **DOCUMENTS PRESENTED**

School Committee Meeting Minutes: October 14, 2015

Grants for Approval Totaling \$556,824:

- Academic Support PULSE Grant - \$347,800
- Expanded Learning Time – Young Achievers - \$36,800
- HSE Test Centers - \$5,195
- School Redesign Grant – Channing and Winthrop - \$1,120
- School Redesign Grant – Grew and Dorchester Academy - \$6,388
- Title I - \$159,521

School Quality Framework: Implementation Update

Student Supports and Services

Madison Park Technical Vocational High School Revised Admissions Policy

Spring 2015 Grade 10 MCAS Results Update

Spring 2015 MCAS Science Results Update

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## **CALL TO ORDER**

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

## **APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

The Committee approved by unanimous consent the minutes of the October 14, 2015 School Committee meeting.

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the "nation's report card" were released today. NAEP results serve as a common metric for all states and selected urban districts. The assessment stays essentially the same from year to year, with only carefully documented changes. This permits NAEP to provide a clear picture of student academic progress over time. Noting that a more detailed report will be forthcoming, the Superintendent highlighted the following bright spots and areas of concern:

- For the first time since 2003, 4th graders in BPS performed on par with students across all other school districts throughout the nation in reading.
- BPS is one of only four urban districts to demonstrate significant gains in 4th grade reading between 2013-15.
- African American, Latino youth as well as students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs) in BPS outperformed both the national average and other large cities in the US in 4th grade reading.
- BPS has successfully closed the 14-point gap between the district and the national average in 8th grade mathematics, sustaining performance on par with the nation since 2009.
- BPS has made the greatest long term gains in both 4th and 8th grade mathematics of any urban district since 2003.
- Similar trends for subgroups were found in mathematics as in 4th grade reading.
- While BPS is above the average of urban districts in 8th grade reading and 4th grade mathematics, the District is still significantly below the nation's average in those two subjects.
- And significant achievement gaps between subgroups of students continue to persist.

Last weekend, the Council of Great City Schools released the results of its survey of 66 school districts nationwide entitled: "Student Testing in America's Great City Schools: An Inventory and Preliminary Analysis." The Council's report closely examined the amount of instructional time devoted to standardized testing in what is considered to be one of the most comprehensive surveys ever undertaken to determine the true extent of mandatory and optional testing in the nation's schools. It found that the average student in a large U.S. public school takes eight standardized tests per school year, consuming between 20 and 25 hours of instructional time on multiple assessments that frequently produce overlapping results. BPS, a proud member of the

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Council and a participant in its survey, has responded to past concerns voiced about “over testing” and has begun reducing the number of its required tests. BPS leaders look forward to reviewing the Council’s recommendations on best practices and collaborating with it on this topic.

Over the last several months, representatives from the Boston Teachers Union and Boston Public Schools have been working collaboratively to provide supports and options for teachers assigned to Suitable Professional Capacity.

BPS leaders have been working collaboratively to design professional learning opportunities through a pathway program in which the District and Boston Teachers Union (BTU) co-fund programs for teachers seeking additional licenses in Special Education or English as a Second Language (ESL). This week, BTU and BPS also agreed on a voluntary severance option for those teachers who wish to transition out of the district. We do not know how many individuals will take this option. Currently there are approximately 117 teachers in the category of suitable professional capacity. This agreement does not require School Committee approval since it is under the purview of the superintendent. It works within the school department’s budget and is within the parameters of the current collective bargaining agreement.

Last week, BPS suffered a dual tragedy: the fatal stabbing of one student and the arrest of another at the Jackson Square T station. The district’s crisis team joined school-based teams to support anyone who was struggling emotionally. The schools also distributed letters and an informational tip-sheet advising parents and teachers on how to talk to children about violence. Grief counselors will continue to be available for students on an ongoing basis. The Superintendent expressed his condolences to everyone affected by this tragedy.

Former first daughter and Vice Chair of the Clinton Foundation Chelsea Clinton visited the Curley K-8 School last Wednesday. Ms. Clinton, who has authored the book, *It’s Your World: Get Informed, Get Inspired & Get Going*, engaged the students about making an impact in their own communities and around the world.

Yesterday EdVestors presented their 10<sup>th</sup> annual Thomas W. Payzant “School on the Move” awards, which showcase rapidly improving schools that can serve as models for other schools in Boston. The top prize of \$100,000 went to the Jeremiah E. Burke High School, the only Massachusetts high school to have exited from Level 4 Turnaround status. While the two other finalists, the Joseph Hurley K-8 School and the John F. Kennedy STEM Innovation School, are usually each awarded a \$10,000 prize, EdVestors this year broke from tradition and awarded the Hurley a one-time “Sustained Improvement award” of \$25,000 in recognition of its extended track record of improvement. The Hurley has been a finalist for the School on the Move Prize three times since 2012. The Superintendent thanked Chairman O’Neill, Vice-Chair Coleman and Mr. Loconto for joining the celebration as well as former superintendents John McDonough and Michael Contompasis.

The John D. O’Bryant School of Mathematics & Science completed its accreditation evaluation today. Final results will be released in early March. The Superintendent thanked School

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Committee Members Jeri Robinson and Regina Robinson for their personal contributions of support and their many efforts to benefit the students of the O’Bryant.

BPS is truly embracing a “Culture of We.” The principals and teachers from four South Boston / North Dorchester schools – the Perry, Perkins, Roger Clap, and Russell - are engaged in frequent cross-school visits to identify best practices and work together to implement them.

While the country grapples with the testing issue, some BPS schools have just completed their first round of interim assessments. Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs) are already meeting to dig into the data and provide specific interventions. Teachers and administrators in BPS are demonstrating that data from effective formative assessments can be powerful tools to informing adult and student learning.

In East Boston, the Office of Engagement team officially recognized and presented the “Family Friendly School” banner to Principal Walter Henderson and the P.J. Kennedy School community for their work in strengthening partnerships between teachers and families, and connecting families to school improvement and student learning.

Regina Robinson will be the featured speaker at the Council for Youths with Chronic Conditions annual Childhood Chronic Conditions Awareness week conference in New Hampshire on November 17<sup>th</sup>.

The Superintendent made the following personnel announcements:

- Amalio Nieves will serve as assistant superintendent, Office of Social Emotional Learning and Wellness
- Liza Veto will serve as Director of Central Turnaround and Transformation
- Ryan Scallon will serve as Assistant Superintendent for High Schools

Dr. Uriarte asked for clarification about the agreements with the BTU. Mr. O’Neill explained that the agreements did not have to go before the Committee for approval because it was not an extension or new contract, and did not involve hiring or additional spending beyond the already approved budget, as per guidance received from the BPS legal department.

Mr. O’Neill thanked Mr. Loconto for serving as the lead School Committee member on matters related to collective bargaining.

Mr. Loconto asked about notification of BTU agreements, and requested Boston specific data from the CGCS report on testing. The Superintendent agreed to follow up. He also encouraged the District to formally recognize The English High School for their large gains in the recently released 10th grade MCAS scores.

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Ms. Regina Robinson said she was proud of the O'Bryant students who presented the school's accreditation.

Earlier today, Mr. O'Neill and the Superintendent visited the co-located Mission Hill K-8 School and Margarita Muniz Academy. Mr. O'Neill described the visit as a positive one featuring respectful discussions.

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

## GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Anna Suranyi, High School Start Time Group, testified in favor of later high school start times.

John St. Amand, vice-chair, Boston Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SpedPac), testified regarding creative ways that the District could potentially save money, including solar panels, enterprise licensing, sharing of digital software and budget planning.

David Lopes, Massachusetts Minority Contractors Association, testified in favor of Madison Park Technical Vocational High School's proposed admissions policy.

Anne Minichino, school nurse, The English High School, testified regarding the school's turnaround status.

Maria Gonzalez-Baugh, student success team coordinator, The English High School, testified regarding the school's turnaround status.

Tim Tudor, Madison Park Technical Vocational High School Advisory Board, testified regarding the school's proposed admissions policy.

Crystal Gorman, parent, testified regarding her son's IEP and transportation issues.

Valentina Fernandes, student, The English High School, praised the school's headmaster and staff for their efforts to raise student achievement and advocated for the school to exit turnaround status.

## ACTION ITEMS

Ms. Campbell asked the District to conduct an audit of grants to determine if schools most in need of support are applying for and receiving grants. Dr. Donna Muncy, deputy superintendent of strategy, encouraged Committee members to submit questions. Dr. Makeeba McCreary, the Superintendent's chief of staff, said that the District is exploring how schools can build capacity to do this work.

**Approved** – The Committee approved by unanimous consent grants in the amount of \$556,824.

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Ms. Campbell requested a scatterplot graph of K-8s and high schools including data on demographics, demand and capacity. Dr. Uriarte requested an update and Committee discussion of the home-based assignment implementation, as called for by the External Advisory Committee on School Choice (EAC).

**Approved** – By roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the Superintendent’s recommendation to postpone the implementation of the School Quality Framework and Quality Tiers until School Year 2017-2018.

## REPORTS

**Student Support Services** – Dr. Karla Estrada, deputy superintendent of Student Support Services, introduced her team: Dr. Frances Esparza, assistant superintendent, Office of English Language Learners (ELLs); Amalio Nieves, assistant superintendent, Office of Social Emotional Learning and Wellness; and Cindie Neilson, interim assistant superintendent, Office of Special Education Supports and Services (OSESS).

The Office of Social Emotional Learning and Wellness consists of Behavioral Health Services, the Counseling and Intervention Center, Health and Wellness and Health Services. The Office provides multi-tiered systems of supports to foster collaboration and empower students.

The Office of English Language Learners is working to improve instruction and accountability while expanding translations and interpretations. Additionally, the Superintendent has established a District ELL Advisory Committee made up of parents and community members.

Mr. Nieves, who has not yet officially started his new position, expressed enthusiasm at the commitment that BPS leaders have demonstrated to collectively focus on social emotional learning.

OSESS is building inclusive practices through five strategies: quality instructional supports and services, identification and placement; student, family and community engagement equity and accountability, and building transition services.

Ms. Campbell applauded Assistant Director of Behavioral Health Services Andria Amador who coordinates trauma response for the District. She also asked the District to see if guidance counselors who provide college counseling are spread equitably across the District.

Dr. Uriarte said she welcomes the District striking a balance between compliance and instruction. At Dr. Uriarte’s request, Dr. Esparza presented a brief update on the District’s settlement agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice. BPS submitted more than 500 pages of reports to the DOJ on Oct. 14<sup>th</sup>. The District is providing support for the Sarah Greenwood K-8 as dual language school and hoped to open dual language programs in other languages, including Mandarin and Haitian Creole. The District would also like to open more dual language programs in East Boston.

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Committee members also asked questions about health services, partnerships, and family and student engagement, all of which were answered by the presenters. Dr. Coleman asked for more information about the top tier of students who need support services, as well as the college and career counseling provided by the District. Dr. Estrada said that social emotional competence among school leaders and staff is essential. Mr. O’Neill stressed that the success of the Student Supports and Services team is critical to BPS’s success as a district.

***Madison Park Technical Vocational High School (MPTVHS) Admissions Policy*** – Kevin McCaskill, executive director of Madison Park Technical Vocational High School, and headmaster Shawn Shackelford, presented a revised admissions policy proposal that reflects the concerns raised by the Committee on September 9<sup>th</sup>. The proposed admissions policy would only be applied after the school’s enrollment cap (currently 375 students) is reached. The admissions criteria calls for embracing students with special needs and English language learners, aggressive citywide recruitment and information sessions, a review of academic and attendance history and support from a caring adult. Mr. McCaskill also announced the “Madison Park Promise”: All MPTVHS students that successfully complete their academic and career technical education requirements will be guaranteed access to college and/or a career pathway in their field of study.

Ms. Campbell applauded the District’s responsiveness and thoughtfulness to Committee feedback regarding the admissions policy. Dr. Coleman expressed concerns about the attendance criteria and asked the District to track attendance history. Committee members also asked questions about partnerships and recruitment, all of which were answered by the presenters. Mr. O’Neill encouraged the school leaders to focus on providing opportunities for students with disabilities.

The Committee will take action on this proposal at a future meeting.

***MCAS Updates: Spring 2015 Grade 10 and Science Results*** – Nicole Wagner Lam, executive director of Data and Accountability, presented spring 2015 Grade 10 MCAS results, responding to questions raised by Committee members at her last presentation. While English Language Learners demonstrated gains in 10<sup>th</sup> grade ELA across almost all ELD levels, 10<sup>th</sup> grade math proficiency rates for ELLS and former ELLs remained fairly flat across all levels. In addition, the District has seen increases in the number of first time 10<sup>th</sup> graders passing elements of the competency determination (CD) requirements over time.

Dania Vasquez, headmaster of Margarita Muniz Academy and Ligia Noriega Murphy, headmaster of The English High School, discussed how they were able to significantly raise their schools MCAS scores. Ms. Noriega Murphy provided students at English with wrap around services and built relationships between school staff and families with a focus on attendance. Ms. Vasquez credited her school’s success with creating a shared sense of ownership, aligning the curriculum to standards, staff collaboration, focusing on attendance, providing targeted interventions and test preparation.

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Dr. Uriarte and Ms. Campbell asked Ms. Wagner Lam to disaggregate data for ELLs and former ELLs in all future presentations.

Citing the low percentage of students on IEPs passing the math portion of MCAS, Ms. Campbell requested more information on the District's use of portfolio preparation. The Superintendent said he would follow up with the information. Ms. Campbell also applauded headmasters and encouraged the District to create opportunities for headmasters to share their success stories.

Ms. Jeri Robinson requested that the graphs presented to the Committee include numbers.

Ms. Regina Robinson asked about partnerships. English HS has 98 partners, including faith based organizations. Muniz Academy is growing partnerships.

Ms. Wagner Lam then presented the spring 2015 MCAS science results. In both 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade, BPS gains on MCAS Science assessments exceeded those made by the state overall. Yet, a significant achievement gap persists between White and Asian students and their Black and Latino peers.

Ms. Campbell encouraged partnerships around science education.

Dr. Coleman requested data on MCAS science results for students enrolled in Advanced Work Class (AWC) compared with other students.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORTS**

Megan Wolf, member, Quality Education for Every Student (QUEST), testified regarding student assignment and the recommendations of the EAC in 2013.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Ms. Campbell asked the Superintendent to provide the Committee with a realistic timeline for home-based report at the next School Committee meeting. She also raised questions about a high school design meeting being hosted by the Mission Hill K-8 School later this month. Mr. O'Neill echoed Ms. Campbell's concerns, saying that the District has an excess capacity of high school seats, and is in the early stages of its high school redesign and facilities master plan efforts.

## **ADJOURN**

At 9:51 p.m., the Committee voted by unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth A. Sullivan  
Executive Secretary