



OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE RETREAT

November 13, 2019

The Boston School Committee held a retreat on November 13, 2019 at 5:30 p.m. at the Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building, 2300 Washington Street, School Committee Chamber, Roxbury, Massachusetts. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit www.bostonpublicschools.org, email feedback@bostonpublicschools.org or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

ATTENDANCE

School Committee Members Present: Chairperson Michael Loconto; Vice Chairperson Alexandra Oliver-Dávila; Dr. Hardin Coleman; Michael O’Neill; Dr. Lorna Rivera, Jeri Robinson; Quoc Tran; and student representative Evelyn Reyes.

School Committee Members Absent: None.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Agenda

Developing a Strategic Vision for the Boston Public Schools (2015)

Memo to Boston School Committee and Superintendent Cassellius from Hardin Coleman re: BPS Theory of Action, November 7, 2019

Strategy Matters: Helping Those Who Do Great Work Do It Better PowerPoint

Strategic Planning Worksheet

BPS Core Values and Goals: JUICE

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Loconto called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance. He welcomed everyone to the retreat and said that the Spanish interpreter was enroute.

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DISCUSSION ON DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN PROGRESS

The Superintendent asked Committee members to view the three visual storyboards set up in the room and asked them to write down one theme that resonated with them personally. The boards were created by a visual note taker who captured the themes that emerged from the Superintendent's conversations with students, parents, and other BPS stakeholders during her community engagement tour this fall. Committee members noted that the boards convey similar themes: the complexity of diversity; and the desire for increased quality, equity, opportunity, and voice. Mr. Loconto noted that the structural barriers related to student assignment, facilities and transportation are reflected. Dr. Coleman said that he was struck by the societal nature of the themes conveyed and by how little pertained to the teaching and learning that takes place inside the classroom.

Liz O'Connor, founder & principal of Strategy Matters, introduced herself and explained that her agency is assisting the Superintendent with the development of her strategic plan. Ms. O'Connor and her team have taken notes at more than 90 meetings and distilled the information that will inform the Superintendent's strategic plan.

The draft Strategic Plan is comprised of three main components:

- Core identity statements: values, vision, mission
- Five-year statements: goals and strategy
- For daily use: key performance indicators and activities

Ms. O'Connor led the Committee in a review of the strategic planning worksheet, noting that the BPS has some agreed upon definitions and is lacking others. She explained that on page five of the PowerPoint presentation, the bold blue wording has been defined, but the black bold wording has not.

Ms. Robinson noted the aspirational nature of the goals, which Ms. O'Connor said is an important driver. Ms. Oliver-Dávila encouraged the Superintendent to take a K-16 approach that includes college and beyond. Dr. Coleman said that the term "exemplary teaching" is too limited and talked about innovation is a tool to drive student achievement. Mr. O'Neill said that the vision developed by the Opportunity and Achievements Gaps Task Forces should be viewed as a baseline for the district, and that BPS should be more aspirational.

Committee members discussed the definition of high quality schools, and agreed that there is currently no shared definition. The Superintendent said that the district needs clearer definition of quality.

Ms. O'Connor asked the Committee to compare and contrast the BPS Core Values (Joy, Unity, Inclusion, Collaboration and Equity – "JUICE") and Goals the overlapping and aligned goals on page five of the PowerPoint. Mr. Loconto cautioned that the Committee has not yet set performance goals for the Superintendent, and asked the Committee to perform the exercise in

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the context of setting goals for the district. Following a brief break-out session, Committee members shared their observations with the group. Ms. Reyes suggested that the goals be better defined. Dr. Coleman agreed that the language in blue font should be expanded upon or made clearer.

Mr. O'Neill applauded the Superintendent's effort to be pithy. He said that the Committee wrote a strong strategic in 2015 that is still relevant today, however, the Committee did not adequately track the plan's implementation. He pledged that the Committee will do a better job of tracking the district's progress against the goals of the next strategic plan. Ms. Oliver-Dávila suggested adding more explicit language about closing opportunity and achievement gaps. She said that the 2015 strategic plan is still a solid plan with appropriate goals that is in need of some minor updates. Mr. Tran applauded the Superintendent's core values and goals, and echoed other members' comments about the need for more explicit language. Ms. Oliver-Dávila suggested added an "S" to JUICE to represent students. The Superintendent responded that others have suggested adding an "S" and "T" for students and teachers, turning JUICE into JUSTICE. She said that she is open to suggestions.

Ms. O'Connor reviewed the remainder of the PowerPoint presentation. The strategic plan calls for the assessment, prioritization, and alignment of current policies, initiatives and strategies. Outstanding issues and questions remain, including the need for clear, shared definitions, and action-guiding key performance indicators. Committee members agreed that the district is rich with data containing lagging indicators, but needs more action steps and leading indicators. Next steps in the strategic planning process will include more community engagement through December 8, 2019; completion of the first draft of the strategic plan by December 18, 2019; a public comment period from December 18, 2019-January 22, 2020; and the release of the final strategic plan by February 1, 2020.

Dr. Coleman noted that there is no mention of teaching and learning on page six of the PowerPoint. Dr. Rivera agreed and suggested adding more explicit language about English Language Learners. Mr. Loconto summarized the Committee's feedback overall, stating that the goals of the 2015 strategic plan are still relevant but in need of some updated language, as well as an implementation plan that includes leading and lagging indicators. He said that the Superintendent plans to present a draft of the strategic plan at the December 11th School Committee meeting. Mr. O'Neill emphasized the importance of the Superintendent's implementation plan, calling it the most important piece. Mr. Reyes suggested adding language about the importance of student voice. Dr. Coleman asked the Committee to consider its position on school autonomy, suggesting that the current Committee may have a different view of autonomy than the Committee that approved the 2015 plan. Committee members encouraged the Superintendent to add specific goals related to English Language Learners, community partnerships, academics and family engagement. Dr. Coleman closed the conversation by saying that he is impressed with the Superintendent's depth of engagement and true joy and passion for this critical work.

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DISCUSSION ON SCHOOL COMMITTEE CALENDAR

Mr. Loconto led the Committee in an agenda setting-exercise for upcoming School Committee meetings through March 2020. He noted that the 2020 dates are tentative and subject to approval by the Committee at its annual organizational meeting on January 6, 2020. Following some discussion, the Committee set the following tentative schedule:

Nov. 20

Dudley Street Neighborhood Charter School Memorandum of Understanding
BuildBPS Update

Dec. 4

Budget Update
Superintendent's Engagement Tour Update

Dec. 11

Superintendent's Draft Strategic Plan
MCAS Results Analysis

Jan. 15

Superintendent Evaluation Goal Setting

Jan. 29

Office of Human Capital Update

Feb. 5

FY21 Preliminary Budget Recommendation

Feb. 26

Code of Conduct Update

March 18

March 25

Final FY21 Budget Vote

Ms. Oliver-Dávila requested that the Superintendent present the artifacts for her performance evaluation to the Committee electronically. She asked that the next English Language Learners Task Force Update include an update on the LOOK Bill. Mr. Loconto recommended that the Committee conduct a mid-year check-in with the Superintendent regarding her performance evaluation in April, following the budget process. Ms. Robinson and Ms. Oliver-Dávila expressed a desire for the district to present the Committee with more information containing analysis, strategy, and action steps, in addition to data. Mr. O'Neill reminded the Superintendent that while strategic planning is taking place, operational decisions directly impacting families

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need to be made and communicated. Mr. Loconto said that a comprehensive review of BPS by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is expected to be released in early part of 2020.

DISCUSSION ON SCHOOL COMMITTEE ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

Mr. Loconto said that he has engaged in discussions with Vice Chair Oliver-Davila and BPS safety officials about safety at School Committee meetings. The discussions are not related to any specific threat, but rather in response to heightened concerns about safety in public forums nationwide. BPS School Safety officers have slightly increased their presence at Committee meetings. After careful consideration, he and Ms. Oliver-Dávila are not recommending any further actions at this time. Committee members agreed.

Executive Secretary Liz Sullivan provided a brief update on other organizational matters. The City of Boston is in the process of drafting an RFP for an online legislative tracking system, which is expected to be made available to all City boards and commissions, including the Boston School Committee. The RFP is expected to be issued in the first quarter of 2020. School Committee staff are working with the Massachusetts Association of School Committees to develop an online policy manual.

Mr. Tran is drafting a written protocol for School Committee Task Force appointments. Dr. Coleman and Ms. Oliver-Dávila are each exploring the development of new School Committee task forces in the areas of partnerships and college and career readiness. Mr. O'Neill said that the Internal Audit Task Force will provide an update to the Committee following the hiring of a Chief Audit Executive. Mr. Loconto said that he believes the hiring process for that position is in its final stages. Mr. Loconto invited feedback on the use of an electronic timer that the Committee is using on a trial-basis in an effort to increase transparency with the timing of the public comment portion of the meetings.

PUBLIC COMMENT

John Mudd, advocate, testified regarding the importance of policy implementation, staff diversity, the LOOK Bill, and professional development.

ADJOURN

At approximately 7:42 p.m., the Committee voted by unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth Sullivan
Executive Secretary