



OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

December 11, 2019

The Boston School Committee held a meeting on December 11, 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; Michael O’Neill (*arrived while meeting was in progress*); Dr. Lorna Rivera; Jeri Robinson; Quoc Tran; and Student Representative Evelyn Reyes.

School Committee Member Absent: None.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Agenda

Boston School Committee Meeting Minutes: December 4, 2019

Synthesizing School Performance Data PowerPoint

Synthesizing School Performance Equity Impact Statement

Boston School Committee Update: Strategic Planning 2019 PowerPoint

Strategic Vision Draft Presentation Equity Impact Statement

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Loconto called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance. He announced that interpretation services were available in Spanish and Vietnamese.

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APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: DECEMBER 4, 2019

Approved – The Committee approved by unanimous consent the minutes of the December 4, 2019 School Committee meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

**As prepared for delivery.*

On Friday, December 6th, 165 students and their music teachers surprised the audience at Symphony Hall by singing with the Boston Pops Orchestra! The students ranged all grade levels from Boston Arts Academy, Chittick Elementary, Hernández K-8, McKay K-8 and Orchard Gardens K-8. In November, the Boston Pops Orchestra film team visited each of the participating schools' choir rehearsals and filmed the students singing "Let There Be Peace on Earth." The video collage of the students singing is now projected at the end of each Holiday at the Pops performance, with the Boston Pops Orchestra performing in sync with the students' singing and video. Conductor Keith Lockhart even visited the students at the McKay K-8 and the Hernández K-8 school for their film sessions! What an amazing opportunity for our students! Thank you to Executive Director for the Arts Tony Beatrice for coordinating this partnership, and to all our arts educators for helping our students hone their incredible talents!

My Community Tour wrapped up over the last week. Even though there were some very long days, this tour was such a great way for me to really get to know the members of the BPS community. Yesterday I visited the last two schools on my list, and we also held our final community meeting last night in Dorchester at the Henderson Upper School. I want to thank everyone else I spoke to over the last few months -- the school leaders, school-based staff, central employees, parents/guardians and family members, partner organizations, faith-based leaders, the list goes on. Later this evening I will present the first draft of my strategic vision for the district, which was shaped by the invaluable feedback I've received from community members and stakeholders. We have a lot of work ahead of us, but I'm incredibly grateful to all the community members who were very much active participants in shaping this plan.

On Friday, I joined the info session for the BPS/HBCU (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) Board. The mission of the board is to build a partnership with HBCUs to increase access to educators of color, and create a pipeline for hiring HBCU students, alumni and members of the National Pan-Hellenic Council into the Boston Public Schools. In addition, the board is aiming to recruit HBCU students, alumni and members of the National Pan-Hellenic Council to teach and lead in the Boston Public Schools, and to expose current BPS students to the HBCU experience and recruit them to HBCUs. Having a diverse workforce reflective of the students we serve is a top priority of mine and also of many I spoke to on my community tour. I'm so excited to see this work progress!

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We also had our first meeting, an orientation and training, for the Superintendent Student Executive Cabinet (SSEC). The role of SSEC members is to advise on district priorities and support projects as they arise. Responsibilities of SSEC members include but are not limited to:

- Meeting monthly with the Superintendent
- Meeting with Executive Cabinet member quarterly
- Advising on district priorities
- Representing student voice
- Providing feedback on and supporting projects identified by the Superintendent
- And much more.

Youth voice is so critical and it will remain a key component of our decision-making as a district moving forward. I'm so excited to continue collaborating with our students!

I'd like to briefly touch on a recent news article regarding our facilities. Over the weekend, *The Boston Globe* published a story about the conditions of student restrooms throughout the district. First and foremost, I want to say that our students deserve to have clean, functioning, inviting schools. That includes classrooms, hallways, cafeterias, gyms, libraries and bathrooms. I know that our custodial staff works very hard to maintain cleanliness in our bathrooms and throughout our schools. We will continue to work on addressing facilities concerns through BuildBPS, with additional funding in next year's budget.

Just a reminder that this week is Computer Science Education Week. BPS Technology will host it's first-ever "Tech Talk," an evening to showcase successes, challenges, and best practices around technology and computer science. We'll hear inspiring stories from BPS teachers and students, sharing their passion for online safety, computer science, robotics, makerspaces, assistive technology, and using technology for creativity and student voice! The Tech Talk is in this room, tomorrow, December 12th, at 6 p.m. Please join us!

I want to remind everyone that our annual Showcase of Schools is this Saturday, December 14th at Boston Latin Academy, from 9am to 1pm. Each of our 125 schools is provided space to showcase its curriculum, after-school programs, athletics, school spirit, points of pride, etc. This provides families and prospective students an opportunity to meet principals, staff members, and current students and families. I would also like to remind families that, in addition to the showcase, there are other opportunities over the next several weeks for parents and guardians to gather information about the school registration process, including School Preview Times. School Preview Times for all of our schools, plus much more information about the school registration process, are available on our website at bostonpublicschools.org/register.

Finally, over the weekend I enjoyed my first trip on Mayor Walsh's Enchanted Trolley Tour. I spent most of Saturday riding the trolley with Mayor Walsh, greeting community members and spreading holiday cheer throughout the city. I was also able to join him on Sunday as the trolley rolled through East Boston. I'm so impressed with the amount of community-building activities available to our families, particularly during the holiday season. Next Thursday, December 19th,

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we will host our annual Holidays at Bolling concert, with music and dance performances by several BPS schools. I can't wait to see our students showcase their talents!

Finally, this is our final meeting before Winter Recess, so I want to wish everyone in the BPS community a wonderful break and Happy Holidays!

Dr. Coleman asked for more information on the district's new hiring initiative in partnership with Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The Superintendent explained that it's a pilot project aimed at building relationships with HBCUs. She hopes to expand the program if successful.

Ms. Robinson said that students share the responsibility to keep schools clean. The Superintendent agreed and suggested that the Superintendent's Student Executive Cabinet discuss the topic.

Dr. Rivera congratulated Boston City Councilor-Elect Julia Mejia, a member of the English Language Learners Task Force, on her recent election.

Mr. O'Neill thanked the Superintendent for regularly honoring custodians with outstanding performance awards, saying that the recognition has lifted the morale of custodial staff. He asked how students are selected for the sked how students were selected for the Superintendent's Student Executive Cabinet. The Superintendent explained that the Boston Student Advisory Council (BSAC) holds an application process. Mr. O'Neill discussed his recent visit to Boston Day and Evening Academy (BDEA). He praised the alternative education school, noting that BDEA is in the process of crafting its own strategic plan. The Superintendent said that she will address alternative education in her forthcoming strategic plan.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila praised the Superintendent's inclusion of youth voice. She encouraged the district to expand its high school-to-teacher pipeline, and to partner with the higher education community to make higher education and housing more affordable.

Mr. Loconto said that the conditions of some school bathrooms, as reported recently in *The Boston Globe*, is not acceptable. He said that BPS has made, and must continue to make additional facilities investments.

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

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

**As prepared for delivery by Ms. Reyes.*

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Last week was busy for BSAC. We hosted two separate town halls: the first one focused on the history of labor unions, organizing to fight climate change, and the Green New Deal; and the second one was a community meeting with the Superintendent that was focused on student voice. Both of these events brought out over 80 people - the majority of which were young people.

In particular, we were pleased with the turnout for the community meeting and we'd like to thank the organizations that came: (I'm sorry if I miss anyone):

- MassCOSH
- Project 350
- Hyde Square Task Force
- And a special thanks to our co-host: Sociedad Latina

I know that having a space to directly address the Superintendent was meaningful for everyone in the room. In the time we had young people discussed redesigning high schools, the challenges of transportation, opportunities for extracurricular activities, safety and wellness in schools, and cultural competency. We are excited to continue participating in the shaping of our education.

BSAC had another chance to interact with MassCOSH this week at our Monday meeting when they came to train us on heat stress in schools. We learned a lot about how temperature affects our learning. Also on Monday, our Student Rights subcommittee had the opportunity to strategize with Matthew Tibbits. He is the student member on the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and he has full voting rights.

Also this week, some members of BSAC went to the Edwards Middle School to give a training to 7th and 8th grade classes about climate change and its impact on young people.

As we approach the end of 2019, we have a few leadership meetings left; we are fundraising for a trip to Washington D.C. with the organization Close Up by wrapping gifts at Barnes & Nobles (we'll be there on Sunday if anyone needs gifts wrapped); and next Monday BSAC will have its annual holiday party - in case anyone wants to join. And last, but certainly not least, we are looking forward to our meeting with the Superintendent this coming Wednesday.

Mr. O'Neill noted that only two high schools, Boston Green Academy and Excel, have yet to identify BSAC representatives – all other school have representation.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila asked what topics emerged from BSAC's recent community meeting. Ms. Eyes said that students discussed transportation concerns, tardy policies, access to extracurricular activities, and course offerings.

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GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Susan Ou, member, Boston Chinese Parents and Community Alliance, and parent, Quincy Elementary School, testified regarding concerns about Chinese SEI programming.

Andy Lesser-Gonzalez, parent, Sumner Elementary School, testified in favor of adding a 6th grade to the school.

Rachel Nenner-Payton, parent, Sumner Elementary School, testified in favor of adding a 6th grade to the school.

Michael Boyaj, student, Sumner Elementary School, testified in favor of adding a 6th grade to the school.

Maya Friedmann, student, Sumner Elementary School, testified in favor of adding a 6th grade to the school.

Roslyn Neves, student, Sumner Elementary School testified in favor of adding a 6th grade to the school.

Allison Friedmann, parent, Sumner Elementary School, testified in favor of adding a 6th grade to the school.

Annie Le, president, Networking Organization for Vietnamese Americans, testified in support of creating a Vietnamese Dual Language program.

Van Pervaiz, parent, Dearborn STEM Academy, testified in support of creating a Vietnamese Dual Language program.

Lieu Nguyen, Vietnamese Youth Liaison, Boston Police Department, testified in support of creating a Vietnamese Dual Language program.

Chenetha Lockett testified in support of creating a Vietnamese Dual Language program.

Mike Heichman, former BPS parent, and education advocate, testified regarding the Youth Climate Strike and the Superintendent's Draft Strategic Plan.

Ruby Reyes, director, Boston Education Justice Alliance, testified regarding the BPS school budget development process.

Ann Malone, BPS parent, testified regarding the need for more comprehensive health education and the expansion of restorative justice practices.

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Mr. Tran thanked the Vietnamese community for its advocacy.

REPORTS

Update on School Quality Framework Tiers and MCAS Results – Corey Harris, Chief Accountability Officer, Kelly Hung, Assistant Superintendent of Accountability, Mary Dillman, Executive Director of Data and Accountability, and Shira Decovnik, Director of School Transformation, presented a recap of student accountability data from SY 2018-19, including MCAS results and School Quality Framework (SQF) information. The School Committee requested the presentation at its fall retreat, seeking a deeper analysis of school performance data that includes trends and action steps to address those trends.

Key data insights from 2019 MCAS results include:

- More grade 3-8 students are Meeting Expectations since transitioning to Next Gen MCAS in 2017
- 10th graders struggled with the transition to Next Gen MCAS in 2019
- Typical growth (40-59) broadly observed
- Roughly a third of students are Meeting or Exceeding Expectations
- Significant achievement gaps persist and have widened in some areas
- Science remains an area of concern
- 65% of schools improved relative to 2018 performance, as indicated by having a target percentage of 50%+
- 47 of 110 schools receiving an accountability designation require assistance and intervention
- 38 schools in the bottom 10% statewide
- Historically marginalized groups made less progress against targets than the district
- Increase in the annual dropout rate
- Worsening chronic absenteeism

Key data insights from 2019 School Quality Framework data include:

- In 2019, 55 Schools are Tier 1 or 2
- Compared to 2018:
 - 35 schools have the same tier
 - 25 schools improved
 - 40 schools declined
 - 22 schools have no tier designation
- Major implementation changes:
 - Tier 4 override removed
 - Science proficiency metric added

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- Former attendance metric is now chronic absenteeism
- Reduced penalty for low climate survey participation

The Opportunity Index is an innovative, equity-based tool that uses individual and place-based factors to quantify the opportunities students have and the challenges they may face, which have been shown to impact student achievement. Key data insights about BPS students from the 2020 Opportunity Index include the following:

- 10% reside in public housing
- 73% are economically disadvantaged
- 9% are recent immigrants
- 23% experienced at least one housing move in the past five years
- 6% were suspended in the past few years

In the past few years, the typical BPS student:

- failed 25% of ELA and 32% of Math courses
- failed 24% of ELA and 31% of Math MCAS exams

Thirty-three BPS schools are in the process of Transformation: six are underperforming; 27 are in focused-targeted support; and two schools are chronically underperforming and currently in state receivership. Transformation schools have greater proportion of Black and Latinx, students with disabilities, English learners, and economically disadvantaged students.

Mr. Harris discussed how the data presented informs the district's strategies for interventions and supports. He said that BPS central office must increase its supports to schools, focusing on good instruction, as well as more analysis and utilization. He compared the relationship between autonomy and accountability to a marriage.

Ms. Robinson praised the analysis and expressed appreciation for the directness of the presentation. She expressed concern about instruction and accountability. Mr. Harris said that the district must provide educators with high quality professional development, coaching, and monitoring, adding that accountability is also important. He said that the district is working to improve professional development.

Ms. Reyes requested further explanation for the decrease in tier level experienced by some schools. The presenters explained that some schools experienced a drop in tiers due to a variety of factors including parent perception, graduate rate, and ELA targets. The BPS dropout rate has increased, as has chronic absenteeism.

Mr. O'Neill said that he's deeply concerned about rise in the dropout rate from 4.4 to 5.5 percent. He requested a data on the dropout rate by school. Mr. Harris said that the increase in the dropout rate may be linked to a better accounting of active students at Greater Egleston High School. Mr. O'Neill said that he was encouraged by Mr. Harris' comments. The Superintendent

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expressed concern about retention rates at the high school level, emphasizing the importance of early warning indicators.

Dr. Coleman discussed the importance of teacher training and encouraged the Committee's Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force to focus on driving improvements to professional development. He noted that the data presented is student-centric, and encouraged the district to use observed data on racial and ethnic matching and teacher experience.

Dr. Rivera expressed concern about racially segregated schools. She questioned whether schools that serve high populations of ELLs have lost partnership funding since the district's implementation of the Opportunity Index. She requested data showing the impact of the Opportunity Index has made in providing partnerships for schools that are racially segregated.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila suggested that all teachers be certified in both ELL and SPED. She encouraged the district to provide students with more opportunities for experiential learning and out-of-school experiences. She called for better alignment and asked the district to examine how Hub Schools relate to alternative education.

Mr. Loconto praised the district for focusing on distributing students as equitably as possible.

Superintendent's Draft Strategic Plan – Mr. Loconto explained that the Superintendent and her team have been hard at work for months updating the School Committee's 2015 strategic plan. Tonight, the Superintendent will share her broader goals tonight, followed by the presentation of measurable goals in January.

Chief of Student, Family, and Community Advancement Monica Roberts and Chief Equity and Strategy Officer Charles Grandson reviewed the themes that have emerged from the Superintendent's community tour, then presented a theory of action, mission, vision, and values.

The Superintendent is proposing five commitments:

1. Elevate Equity
Equitable and excellent student outcomes
2. Accelerate Learning
High quality schools and joyful classrooms in all parts of the district
3. Expand Opportunity
Fair and equitable funding
4. Cultivate Trust
Caring and competent staff that reflects the students we serve

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5. Amplify All Voices

Shared decision-making and mutual accountability

The Superintendent plans to present a revised strategic plan to the Committee in January that includes leading and lagging indicators, followed by a month-long public comment period. The plan will be posted on the BPS webpage and translated into the nine major BPS languages.

Dr. Coleman said that he's impressed with the coherence of the Superintendent's strategic vision, adding that he looks forward to receiving the action plan.

Mr. O'Neill praised the Superintendent's vision and made the following suggestions: add aligning standards and curriculum; add language to commitment 3 about expanding funding sources; calling out improving the BPS customer experience; rephrase the language in commitment 4 to read that the district will continue to "*recruit and* retain talent that is culturally proficient...." He asked the Superintendent to explain her rationale for providing a liberal arts education, as described in her vision statement. The Superintendent explained that students need a comprehensive, well rounded education, adding that the BPS needs to provide more arts education.

Dr. Rivera suggested adding language about students being life-long learners, global citizens, (e.g. seal of bi-literacy) and promoting civic engagement.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila suggested adding the word quality to professional development, and including culturally and linguistically sustaining practices. She also asked that more explicit language be added regarding partnerships.

Ms. Robinson said that many parents are concerned about college affordability. She suggested that the district provide students with more guidance and counseling regarding higher education. The Superintendent suggested adding life skills and financial literacy.

Dr. Coleman shared the vision statement of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Learning Framework 2030 for the Committee's information. The OECD is a group of 34 member countries that discuss and develop economic and social policy.

Mr. Loconto praised the plan and discussed the value of a liberal arts education with its focus on analysis and application.

Mr. O'Neill expressed support for the Superintendent's use of the term commitments. He discussed BPS being a portfolio district that provides families with a range of choices. The Superintendent has received community feedback that choice is secondary to high quality. Ms. Robinson said that BPS needs to offer meaningful choice. Ms. Oliver-Dávila talked about having multiple models of teacher development.

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PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORTS

John Mudd, education advocate, testified regarding the Superintendent's strategic plan and achievement gaps.

Rev. Willie Bodrick, chair, Boston Network for Black Student Achievement, and member, Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force, testified about the importance of closing opportunity and achievement gaps, and clear communication.


NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Robinson requested that the Committee receive more information on the district's planning to convert more schools to 7-12. The Superintendent said that there will be more details about grade expansions in her the next version of her strategic plan.

ADJOURN

At approximately 9:30 p.m., the Committee voted by unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth Sullivan
Executive Secretary