



OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE REMOTE BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE RETREAT

December 12, 2020

The Boston School Committee held a remote retreat on December 12, 2020 at 9 a.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 Alexandra Oliver-Dávila; Vice Chairperson Michael O'Neill (joined one minute after roll call); Dr. Hardin Coleman; Dr. Lorna Rivera; and Jeri Robinson.

School Committee Member Absent: Quoc Tran; and Student Representative Khymani James.

BPS Staff Present: Superintendent Brenda Cassellius; Legal Advisor Catherine Lizotte; Chief of Staff Mary Dillman; Chief Equity and Strategy Officer Dr. Charles Grandson; Senior Advisor Rob Consalvo; Interim Executive Director, Office of Data and Accountability, Monica Hogan; Chief of Accountability Corey Harris; Chief of Student, Family and Community Advancement Monica Roberts; and Chief Financial Officer Nate Kuder.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Agenda

BPS HIPP Reopening Brief PowerPoint

Revisiting the Strategic Plan PowerPoint

Strategic Plan Update: Fall 2020 Student Measures PowerPoint

Budget and Enrollment Update PowerPoint

Imagine BPS 20/25 Strategic Plan

Racial Equity Planning Tool

July 2020 MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Review

March 2020 DESE MOU and MOU 2nd Amendment

BPS at a Glance

Reopening Guide

Fall 2019 Data Presentation

Video: How the BPS Budget Works

FY21 Budget Presentation on School Budgets

BPS Explore Budget Tool

2009 Report of the Strategic Support Team of the Council of Great City Schools (CGCS)
“Improving Special Education in the Boston Public Schools”

2019 Data Update to the 2009 CGCS Report

English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force December 10, 2020 presentation

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Oliver-Dávila called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance. Ms. Sullivan called the roll; Mr. Tran and Mr. James were absent. Mr. O’Neill joined the meeting one minute after roll call; all other members were present. Ms. Oliver-Dávila said that the retreat was being streamed live on Zoom. It will be rebroadcast on Boston City TV. It will also be posted at bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee and on YouTube. She announced that interpretation services were available Spanish, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin, and American Sign Language (ASL); the interpreters introduced themselves and gave instructions for accessing simultaneous interpretation. Meeting documents were publicly posted at www.bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee prior to the start of the meeting.

The Superintendent presented a brief update on school reopening for High In-Person Priority (HIPP) students. BPS shifted to all remote learning on October 22, 2020. On November 15, BPS signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Boston Teachers Union for four K-12 Specialized Schools (Carter, Henderson, Horace Mann, and McKinley) outlining new health and safety protocols and equipment to provide safe in-person learning for HIPP students. On December 14, 28 more schools are set to open, providing in-person learning for an additional 1700 students with complex disabilities and students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE). The Boston Public Health Commission signed off on all school plans. HVAC or portable air purifiers have been placed in all instructional spaces, medical waiting areas, and nurses offices. Weekly COVID testing is available for all staff and students (via a pilot program) at each school serving

9-12 students. Staff at K-8 schools will test at four locations throughout the city. The Superintendent reviewed health, contact tracing and communications protocols.

REORIENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Chief Equity and Strategy Officer Dr. Charles Grandson reviewed the district's progress on the Superintendent's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan. The plan consists of six main goals: 1) Eliminate Opportunity and Achievement Gaps (OAG), (2) Accelerate Learning, (3) Amplify All Voices, (4) Expand Opportunity, (5) Cultivate Trust; and (6) Activate Partnerships.

Dr. Grandson shared examples of the district's progress to date in each of the goal areas:

Goal 1: Eliminate OAG Gaps

- Quality School Plans in every school aligned to Racial Equity Planning Tool (1.1)
- Diversity hiring benchmarks for educators of color (1.2)
- Dual language proposed programming expansion Cabo Verde and Vietnamese (1.4)
- Ethnic studies position and course (1.5)
My Brother's Keeper - Transformative SEL Mentoring (1.7)
- Focused intervention in 34 Transformation Schools (1.9)
- 1:1 devices provided to every student in need (1:11)

Goal 2: Accelerate Learning

- Transformation instructional coaches across 33 schools (34 including the Dever School) (2.2)
- Expanded UPK by over 200 more K1 seats (2.4)

Goal 3: Amplify All Voices

- Superintendent's Youth Cabinet and BSAC actively engaged during pandemic (3.1)
- Community Equity Roundtables convened consistently throughout the pandemic (3.2)
- 33 feedback sessions and engagement sessions with families on remote learning and reopening (3.2)
- Quarterly sessions with CPC, SpedPAC and DELAC (3.2)

Goal 4: Expand Opportunities

- FY22 Budget and use of the Racial Equity Planning Tool (REPT) (4.1)
- WiFi services provided to families in need during pandemic (4.6)

Goal 5: Cultivate Trust

- Staff diversity increase (5.1)
- Dashboards on Remote Learning and Strategic Vision implementation (5.6)

Goal 6: Activate Partnerships

- COVID Equity 2020 Summer Learning Expansion (6.1)
- Partnering with Boston After School and Beyond on 5th Quarter and Learning Pods (6.2)
- JP Morgan Chase Grant New Skills Ready to expand career pathways (6.4)

Ms. Robinson requested that the Committee receive school quality plans. Dr. Grandson agreed to follow up. She asked about the JP Morgan Grant grant, which Dr. Grandson said will provide students with transferable skills. She asked if hiring and retaining diverse leaders is a priority for the district. The Superintendent affirmed that it is a priority, noting that it is part of her performance evaluation. She also asked for an update on school equity roundtables. Dr. Grandson said that they are becoming stronger and more effective.

Dr. Coleman requested that the district present its reports to the Committee showing how they align with the Strategic Plan.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila asked which schools will benefit from the JP Morgan Chase grant. Dr. Grandson said that the schools are still being determined. Ms. Oliver-Dávila suggested that BPS collaborate with partners to expand the skills and support to as many students as possible. She expressed concern about a recent report by Latinos for Education stating that many Latinos still don't have access to broadband. The Superintendent said that BPS has unused vouchers for wifi hotspots and will work with partners to distribute them to families in need.

Mr. O'Neill said that the Committee can do a better job amplifying all voices and lifting up other areas of the Strategic Plan.

Ms. Roberts asked members to write down their thoughts about the retreat thus far for their own personal reflection.

DATA DIVE ON REMOTE LEARNING

Chief of Accountability Corey Harris explained that not all of the usual data is available to the district because of the COVID pandemic. Interim Executive Director for the Office of Data and Accountability Monica Hogan presented a data update on remote learning.

Expectations for learning during the spring 2020 school closure were outlined for the second phase of closure from May 4 - June 22.

During this time:

- Student daily attendance averaged from 83% and student daily online activity averaged 51%
- 33% of students overall responded favorably to the question, 'How excited are you about participating in your classes?'
- 19% of teachers surveyed responded favorably to the question, "For your students who need the most academic support, how confident are you that you can help those students in a distance learning setting?"

Key changes were made to improve the remote learning experience in the fall:

- Provide clear direction and training on a learning management system (LMS) for younger students → procured Seesaw for grades K0 - 6
- Provide clear guidance to teachers on attendance → clearly communicated attendance

- protocols and adjusted systems to differentiate in-person and remote attendance
- Provide data system and necessary training to monitor and log academic, attendance and SEL intervention plans → procured Panorama Student Success for all schools
- Provide professional development for teachers and school staff on successful remote learning practices → 9,480 trainings with over 15,593 attendees were held prior to 10/1

Commitment 1: Eliminate Opportunity and Achievement Gaps

The first quarter ended for grades 6-12 in November 2020; consistent with nationwide trends, there is an increase in course failures across all four core subjects and all racial groups.

Commitment 2: Accelerate Learning

The average attendance rate is currently 90%, which is slightly lower than a typical year. Student attendance is recorded on a daily basis by teachers. The average daily online activity rate is 86%, meaning on an average day, 86% of students used their BPS email to log into online learning tools. It does not include offline activities or other online activities not connected to a BPS email.

Commitment 3: Amplify All Voices

Families were asked in August to indicate their preference for a fully remote or hybrid learning model; approximately 44% of students are enrolled in a fully remote learning model currently. A BPS is offering a student survey to gather information on perceptions of remote learning, cultural awareness and action, and other respondent-specific topics. Surveys will remain open until December 23, 2020.

Commitment 4: Expand Opportunity

Approximately 76% of students have a BPS Chromebook, and an additional 10% of students have opted out of receiving a BPS Chromebook. Any students who need a Chromebook can contact their school.

Commitment 5: Cultivate Trust

- Improved Data Tools: The Office of Data and Accountability (ODA) launched new data tools for BPS staff in Fall 2020, including Panorama Student Success for school staff to access real-time, actionable and holistic student data and work together to log support notes and design and monitor Student Success Plans. Additionally, the Data Digest Dashboards were launched as a tool designed to support equity roundtables at the school and central office.
- Staff Attendance: All BPS staff members sign in and out each day, regardless of if they are reporting to a school or central administration building, or working remotely. The data provided here reports the percent of staff who have signed in each day. On average, 90% of staff are signing in each day.

Commitment 6: Activate Partnerships

- Summer Learning
 - Over 17,000 students in 160 programs served
 - Average attendance rate of 80%

- Students report a supportive social environment in both remote and hybrid opportunities
- Out of School Time (OST) Hubs
 - BPS is currently operating 9 OST Hubs with partner organizations. ▫ 10 additional OST Hubs are scheduled to open in January.
- Postsecondary Readiness
 - Among BPS graduates in the class of 2020, 53% enrolled in college in the fall immediately after high school - an 8 percentage point decrease from the class of 2019 (61%).
 - 20% of current seniors have a completed FAFSA application so far this year.

Assistant Superintendent of School Support Kelly Hung said that the district has hired 135 new staff to support the district's 33 Transformation Schools, including family liaisons, social workers, and transformation coaches. Ms. Hogan shared the district's data dashboard to monitor progress of the Strategic Plan.

Dr. Rivera requested that the Committee receive training on how to navigate the data dashboard. The Superintendent agreed. Dr. Rivera expressed concern about the increase in course failure rates. Superintendent said that high school superintendents are working with school leaders to address those concerns.

Dr. Coleman asked how school based equity roundtables are using a data dashboard. The Superintendent offered as an example the Tynan Elementary School which distributed Chromebooks to students last spring based on data.

Ms. Robinson asked how the 33 Transformation Schools, which are the lowest performing schools in BPS, are being supported. Mr. Harris said that Assistant Superintendent of Student and Community Impact Ilyitch Tabora is working to expand best practices and roll out the Hub Schools strategy, which provides students with comprehensive support services.

Ms. Robinson requested that the Committee engage in a fuller discussion in the near future on Hub Schools and student assignment.

Mr. O'Neill described the data presentation as enlightening. He spoke about balancing his role as a Committee member with giving the Superintendent the latitude to focus on operations and management.

The Committee took a brief break at 10:55 a.m.

REVIEW OF PROPOSED BUDGET: RETURN, RECOVER, REIMAGINE

The Committee reconvened at 11:05 a.m. The Superintendent said that she is working with Dr.

Coleman and A.J. Crabill, director of governance for the Council of Great City Schools, to refine her performance goals for SY20-21. She will present her goals to the Committee on December 16th, with a vote to follow in January. She is focusing on special education and ELL issues as part of her efforts to close achievement gaps.

Chief Financial Officer Nate Kuder presented a budget and enrollment update. Total actual enrollment declined by 2,286 students (4.3%) between October 2019 and October 2020. This is the third consecutive year of significant declines; enrollment has dropped by 4,788 students (8.5%) over the last three years. The decline was most pronounced in elementary grades, which declined by about 1,800 students (6.8%). Enrollment in grades K0-5 has now dropped by about 3,500 students, or 12.4%, over the last three years. Declines in elementary enrollment may signal additional enrollment declines in future years.

Enrollment is down across all races/ethnicities, but Black and Latinx enrollment decreased more. Decreases in newly enrolled students had the largest impact on English learner programs. Supporting schools with enrollment declines is an explicit equity strategy.

There has been a decline in both the population and the BPS capture rate. Enrollment declined around 1,500 students more than projected in SY20-21. Future year projections are primarily driven by the number of students currently enrolled. BPS is forecasting a projections-to-projections decline of 2,200 students: enrollment declined 1,500 more than expected; Projecting 700 additional decline for next year.

Mayor Walsh has committed \$100 million over the next three years to invest in student supports over and above maintenance cost increases. The Superintendent's plan, *Return, Recover, Reimagine*, recognizes that COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on students of color, English learners, students with disabilities, and students and families experiencing poverty. Therefore, BPS is seeking to provide financial support to students beyond traditional mechanisms in a way that:

1. Protects school communities from the impact of enrollment decline
2. Provides added supports in the following areas to students most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - a. Academics
 - b. Health & Wellness
 - c. Family & Community
 - d. Added funding for schools for recovery
3. Make operational improvements to the way the district serves children

The goal is for every student, in every classroom to end SY21-22 with a greater opportunity to achieve the greatness within them than they had before the pandemic.

Dr. Rivera urged BPS to track students who have exited the system. She asked what investments the district is considering. Mr. Kuder responded that the district will continue investing in family liaison positions.

Ms. Robinson spoke about the importance of having a baseline foundation for quality for all schools. She asked if BPS expects to maintain its COVID-related investments. Mr. Kuder spoke about the district's large footprint and the possibility of having to make difficult tradeoffs. The Superintendent spoke about many of the technology and infrastructure investments that the district has made as part of its COVID response.

Mr. O'Neill described the data report as both encouraging and sobering. He thanked the City for its strong financial support and spoke about the financial challenges that other large school districts are facing. He noted that Boston is heavily dependent on property tax revenue which is being impacted by the COVID pandemic. He said that BPS has many small schools which create financial challenges.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila echoed Dr. Rivera's suggestion to track students who have exited the district. She asked that the Committee receive more information on the district's enrollment projection process. She thanked the presenters for the data on the impact of family liaisons and social workers and suggested connecting that data to academics and its impact on student achievement. She asked the district to think about how to measure student engagement and encouraged more project based learning and rethinking the city as a campus without walls. Ms. Oliver-Dávila commended the teachers and staff for strengthening student and family engagement during the pandemic and expressed optimism that those relationships will continue to grow when students return to the classroom.

The Committee took a break from approximately 12:15-12:35 p.m.

GOVERNANCE TRAINING

A.J. Crablll, director of governance for the Council of Great City Schools, asked members to engage in an exercise in which they envision the time when they leave the School Committee and reflect back on their proudest accomplishments in 10 words or less.

Dr. Coleman - adults of Boston collaborate, meeting the needs of students.

Dr. Rivera - ethnic studies, social workers, and staff diversity.

Ms. Robinson - a more equitable budget, diverse educators, and curriculum that meets student needs.

Mr. O'Neill - eliminating opportunity gaps by improving and transforming our schools and district.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila - every young person succeeds in post-secondary and has a fulfilling career.

The Superintendent - focus on children, eliminate barriers, create opportunities, and attend to race.

Mr. Crabill spoke about the need for governing bodies to distinguish between inputs and outputs; and intent vs. outcomes. He emphasized that school systems exist for only one reason: to improve student outcomes. Committee members discussed the need to strengthen its focus on outcomes. Dr. Coleman noted that the BPS has a large number of highly rated teachers, yet that is not reflected in student outcomes. The Superintendent said that she should be held accountable for student outcomes within two years.

Mr. Crabill explained that inputs must improve the quality or quantity of instruction that students are experiencing in order to have an impact. He said that the job of the Committee is to represent the vision and values of the community. He asked members to each create a list of 1-5 student outcomes that are most important and a list of 1-5 values that are essential. Mr. Crabill said that in his experience, students with an exceptional amount of privilege can endure, survive, and even thrive in the face of a school committee's lack of clarity around vision, but that the most vulnerable students will suffer due to a lack of leadership. Dr. Rivera spoke about the tension she sometimes feels between maintaining focus on the Committee's long-term vision and addressing the urgent concerns of the community. Mr. Crabill said that he will share research about behaviors from the school boards that yield better student outcomes, adding that the chief lever is having a clear vision and engaging in monthly monitoring. He said that the Committee can decide whether to address urgent issues or delegate its response to the Superintendent.

Committee members offered the following desired outcomes:

- Superintendent - kindergarten readiness, grade-level reading by third grade
- Dr. Coleman - increased graduation rates, college credit-oriented diploma
- Ms. Robinson - grade-level performance, on-time graduation for all students
- Mr. O'Neill - college/career readiness, all students feel welcome and supported resulting in higher student engagement
- Dr. Rivera - academic skills in reading and math are exceeding national averages, students earn Seal of Biliteracy
- Ms. Oliver-Dávila – on-time grade promotion, civic engagement (student should be able to identify a community problem and be actively engaged in solving it)

The Superintendent said that the district should explore updating its promotion policy. Committee members discussed the importance of focusing on grades 4-6 and 8th grade algebra. Mr. Crabill said that the group has reached consensus on one desired outcome: students must be college, career, and life ready.

Committee members offered the following values (i.e. non-negotiables):

- Ms. Oliver-Dávila - honor community voice; data driven decision making
- Mr. O'Neill - honor community voice equitable distribution of resources
- Superintendent - honor culture; integrity; highly effective teachers; equitable resources
- Dr. Rivera - highly qualified, diverse teachers; affirming multiculturalism; advancing racial equity
- Ms. Robinson - quality inclusion, equity, transparency, and diversity; grading equity
- Coleman - school choice

Mr. Crabill said that the group has reached consensus about the value of equitable distribution of resources, community voice in decision making, and staff diversity.

Mr. Crabill recommended using the notes from today's session to create SMART goals which can become the basis for organizing Committee meetings and evaluating the Superintendent. He offered to work with the Committee to create a plan for next 12-18 months. He asked members to sum up the day's conversation in one word. Members said focus, aligned, and outcomes. Ms. Oliver-Dávila suggested that the Committee take the ideas generated at today's session out to the community for input.

The Superintendent thanked Mr. Crabill for his facilitation and thanked the members for taking the time to focus on student outcomes. Mr. O'Neill noted that Mr. Crabill's services are included in the Committee's membership with the Council of Great City Schools. The Superintendent added that the professional development session provided to the Committee earlier this month by Dr. Ibram Kendi was also pro bono.

Dr. Rivera asked if a new MOU with the Boston Teachers Union is needed for the next phase of return in-person learning. The Superintendent said no, that the Boston Public Health Commission has reviewed all 28 school reopening plans and determined those schools are ready to reopen safely.

Ms. Robinson asked the Superintendent about her decision to return more HIPP students to school buildings a few days before winter break. The Superintendent said that every day of in-person learning matters.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- John Mudd, advocate, urged the district to have a laser focus on reducing opportunity and achievement gaps.

ADJOURN

At approximately 2:55 p.m., the Committee voted unanimously, by roll call, to adjourn the retreat.

Attest:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth Sullivan". The signature is contained within a thin black rectangular border.

Elizabeth Sullivan
Executive Secretary