



OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

February 15, 2017

The Boston School Committee held a meeting on February 15, 2017 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 D. O'Neill; Vice-Chair Dr. Hardin Coleman; Alexandra Oliver-Dávila; Jeri Robinson; Dr. Miren Uriarte; and student representative Keondre McClay.

School Committee Member Absent: Michael Loconto.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Memo: Superintendent's Performance Goals

Boston's Level 4 Schools: An Update

BPS Long-Term Financial Planning Update

CALL TO ORDER

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

MEETING MINUTES

The Committee approved by unanimous consent the minutes of the February 1, 2017 School Committee meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

**As prepared for delivery.*

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Good evening. I hope everyone enjoyed our first real significant snowfall over the past few days, and managed to stay safe and warm.

While we did not get hit with blizzards of the magnitude of those in the record-breaking winter of 2015, we still had to work hard to dig out our 125 schools from more than a foot of snow. I would like to thank the dedicated employees of the BPS Facilities and Transportation departments who did an incredible job clearing our school grounds and getting our buses ready to roll.

These individuals worked around the clock for several days to ensure that we were able to safely open our doors to our students as they returned yesterday morning, after being out for three snow days.

To give you a little understanding of what it took to get back our buildings and buses back in operation, here are some stats:

- A crew of 511 BPS custodians — operating 195 snow blowers and 130 salt spreaders, and using 255,000 pounds of salt — cleared 700 school exit doors and 750 exterior steps.
- With the help of a team of contractors equipped with 35 snowplows, they removed snow from 5 million square feet of sidewalks and school parking lots — *that's the equivalent of nearly 87 football fields.*
- Meanwhile, 95 employees working for our bus operator cleared snow off our fleet of 742 buses and from our four bus yards.

These crews had to do this over and over again with each consecutive snowstorm. We thank them for their service.

On Friday we announced the news that Makeeba McCreary, the BPS chief of staff and external affairs, is being promoted to the role of managing director and senior advisor of external affairs. I want to thank Dr. McCreary for the great work she has done as chief of staff, and helping BPS better serve our students. In her new role, she will focus exclusively on the vital work of expanding BPS's public and private partnerships and strategically exploring funding opportunities for BPS with the philanthropic community. In particular, she will be instrumental in overseeing the partnership with General Electric, which last year resulted in \$25 million being dedicated to Boston public school students to advance STEM education throughout the district. Another key initiative that she will promote is the "Adopt a School" program, which links businesses and their employees to individual schools.

I also want to welcome and introduce our new chief of staff, Rob Consalvo. Rob, or Robbie as he often called, has for the past two years served as the deputy director of the Boston Home Center at the city of Boston's Department of Neighborhood Development. The center, which has a \$12 million budget, is responsible for promoting and fostering homeownership in the city. Rob previously served on the Boston City Council for 12 years, representing the residents of Mattapan, Hyde Park, and Roslindale.

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During his six terms as the District 5 city councilor, he served as the chair of the Ways and Means Committee, and has a strong working knowledge of the city and BPS's budget. He has also served as a legislative aide for the late U.S. Senator Ted Kennedy, both in his Washington and Boston offices, and for State Rep. Angelo Scaccia. Rob lives with his wife in Hyde Park, and is the proud father of three BPS students: his daughter, Amanda, and son Anthony both attend Boston Latin Academy, and his youngest son, Austin, is a first grader at the Roosevelt. He is also a Little League coach, a Hyde Park youth basketball coach and serves on the board of WriteBoston and Ethos. Rob looks forward to joining the BPS leadership team on Feb. 27, and using his expert knowledge of Boston government to improve the lives of our students.

I am excited to be joining Mayor Martin Walsh and leaders from our district, charter and Catholic schools tomorrow evening for a recruiting event that's designed to help schools build a team of educators who reflect the racial, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds of Boston's students. The third annual Diversity Career Fair for Teachers, hosted by the **Boston Compact**, will be held from 5 - 7 p.m. here at the Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building.

Students yesterday at the Mary Lyon's K-8 School made personalized Valentine's Day cards for all 188 elderly residents who are experiencing homelessness and living at Hearth Inc. housing. The students' kind deeds were covered by several media outlets, and Channel 5 featured them live on this morning's Eye Opener.

I'd like to give a shout out to Samantha Basile, an ESL teacher at Boston International Newcomers Academy (BINcA). She is running the Boston Marathon to support her students, many of whom are refugees and come from impoverished countries. She is raising money for "Sole Train," which provides students the gear and coaching to help them run road races, and build esteem to feel like they belong to a community and want to stay in school. "Students genuinely feel if they can run a half marathon, they can achieve anything," she says in her YouTube video.

I want to congratulate all the 8th-grade students at the James W. Hennigan School who graduated from the Suffolk District Attorney's Overcoming Violence curriculum and received their certificates of completion last week. Thanks to Suffolk DA Daniel Conley, as well as all the prosecutors, police officers, corrections officials for sponsoring this program and supporting the students.

I also want to commend Anthony Hernandez, a fifth-grader at the Patrick J. Kennedy Elementary School, for winning America SCORES Boston's 2016 "Poet of the Year Award." Anthony performed his poem "I" at the group's Poets' Banquet held at the Microsoft NERD Center on February 4th. His coach Cynthia Grant-Carter described him as a "courageous and bold poet who always wants to make things better."

Diana Diaz, a senior, came to Excel High School as a freshman in ESL 1. As a junior in ESL 3, she was connected through the school with [Teen Voices Emerging](#), where she developed her passion for writing, illustrated by her award-winning poem "Dirty Rubies Are Signs of Yin Yang." Her poem has been awarded a Gold Key at the regional level of the [Scholastic Art and](#)

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[Writing Awards](#). Her work will be celebrated on March 11th at the MFA and is now in the running for a national award.

Following the traumatic incident in the lobby of this building two weeks ago, when a gun was discharged, members of our transportation department and welcome services staff on the second floor were left particularly shaken by the event. The next day, both departments were surprised by a goodwill visit by Greater Egleston High School headmaster Julie Coles and some of her students. They came bearing coffee, donuts, and support for these employees. It was a real heartwarming gesture — that the students who these departments strive to support each and every day returned the favor and showed amazing support of our teams. These BPS employees are forever grateful to Julie and her students for their kindness.

This year, Round 1 of 8th-grade student choice was offered online. At the conclusion of the first-round of applications on Feb. 3rd, 93 percent of our 2,438 8th graders who are transitioning had completed applications — and 312 of them, or 13 percent, did it online. We appreciate the support and active participation that school principals and staff members, students and families, and everyone from welcome services and engagement provided to this process. We will continue to reach out to the remaining students, but are encouraged by the response to this next step in our continuing effort to improve the enrollment and assignment process.

I want to provide a quick update on the school choice process for the Mattahunt students who will be transitioning to a new school next year:

- 96% of those 634 students have completed the school choice process by Feb. 3rd, when Round 1 closed.
- Our Welcome Services team is completing choice forms for the remaining 4% (or 25 students) and will rank their school choices in order of highest performance.
- They will be entered into the lottery and will also receive priority granted to Mattahunt students. This way we will ensure they are placed in a Level 1, Level 2 or high-performing Level 3 School.
- The Office of Engagement will work on reporting out the final results after assignments are completed.

As many of you are aware, last week Commissioner Mitchell Chester announced that he was appointing me to serve as the receiver of the Dever Elementary School, replacing the current operator, Blueprint, when its three-year contract expires at the end of June. We appreciate that Commissioner Chester has the confidence in our team to continue the critical turnaround work at the Dever. I also want to assure the Dever families that I am deeply committed to providing all the supports we have available to prepare students for success. The BPS team will work closely with Blueprint and the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to carry out an effective transition.

It is our goal to ensure rapid academic improvement at the Dever. We look forward to supporting the students, families and educators of the Dever in the coming year. To answer any questions you might have about Commissioner Chester's decision and the transition, we've asked Russell

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Johnson, the senior associate commissioner for DESE, to join us tonight. Welcome, Associate Commissioner.

Mr. Johnston then talked about Superintendent Chang being named the receiver of the Dever School, a Level 5 school. He explained that the Boston School Committee will not have authority over the Dever, but will receive quarterly updates from DESE about the school's progress.

Committee members asked questions about the school's progress under Blueprint as well as family engagement strategies, and social-emotional supports, all of which were answered by Mr. Johnson. The Superintendent pledged to provide the Committee with data on enrollment patterns at the Dever.

Ms. Jeri Robinson suggested that the Committee invite student poets Diana Diaz and Anthony Hernandez to perform at a future Committee meeting. Mr. O'Neill also suggested having the BPS finalists of the August Wilson Monologues contest perform at an upcoming meeting.

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

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. O'Neill clarified that the School Committee does not have oversight of district personnel.

The following people testified regarding the turnaround plan for Excel High School:

- Diana Diaz, student, Excel High School
- Thi Ho, student, Excel High School
- Dang Nguyen, student, Excel High School
- Michael Jones, student, Boston Day and Evening Academy
- Dan Ordorica, former teacher, Excel High School
- Gina Nota, teacher, Excel High School
- Rajeeve Martyn, teacher, Excel High School
- Jennifer Garay, teacher Excel High School
- Ivana Perez, teacher, Excel High School
- Wendy Lam, teacher, Excel High School
- Ayele Shakur, member, Excel High School Local Stakeholder Group
- Marcus Walker, teacher, Excel High School
- Amina Mohamed, alumna, Excel High School
- Gabrielle Pereira, student, Excel High School
- Trinity Kelly, student, Excel High School

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The following people testified regarding the turnaround plan for Brighton High School:

- Ashot Gheridian, teacher, Brighton High School
- Kristen Leathers, teacher, Brighton High School

The following people testified regarding the impact of Extended Learning Time and school start times at the Perry K-8 School:

- Amy Frith, parent, Perry K-8 School
- Meghan Flaherty, parent, Perry K-8 School

The following people testified regarding the value of middle schools and the future of the McCormack Middle School:

- Alexis Sacco, speech language pathologist, McCormack Middle School
- Neema Avashia, teacher, McCormack Middle School
- Elyse Maziarz, teacher, McCormack Middle School
- Justice Grace-McCarthy, guidance counselor, McCormack Middle School
- Jonell Johnson, school nurse, McCormack Middle School

Jonathan Haines, BPS school nurse, testified regarding school nurse staffing levels.

Maura O'Toole, BPS parent, graduate and employee, testified regarding the state of high school libraries.

Latifa Ziyad, BPS parent, testified regarding play she wrote about Black history.

REPORTS

Superintendent's Performance Goals – Dean Regina Robinson presented the Superintendent's performance goals from his last evaluation cycle (school year 2015-16) and asked the Committee for feedback as to whether the goals should remain or be updated for school year 2016-17.

Dr. Uriarte requested more time to review the information and requested a copy of the Superintendent's final summative evaluation for SY 2015-16, as well the indicators used by the Committee. Ms. Sullivan agreed to follow up. The Superintendent explained that he will hold himself accountable to the goals of his Strategic Implementation Plan. Dr. Coleman suggested that the Committee set the Superintendent's performance goals for SY 2017-18 this summer. Dean Robinson agreed to bring the matter back to the Committee for further discussion in the near future.

Boston's Level 4 Schools: An Update – Liza Veto, director of Turnaround and Transformation, and Dr. Donna Muncey, deputy superintendent of strategy, reviewed data for the 10 BPS Level 4 schools. Throughout the fall, the Committee expressed interest in hearing more about what the

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district is doing to support its most struggling schools. Ms. Veto provided some background about how Level 4 schools are designated, how schools can exit Level 4 status, as six BPS schools have done and provided updates on the progress being made at Boston's 10 current Level 4 schools. The presenters discussed the additional supports the district provides to these schools to rapidly accelerate student growth, explaining that turning around Level 4 schools is a critical component of the district's work to eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps.

Dr. Uriarte asked BPS Level 4 schools are faring overall. Ms. Vero sited the Grew, Dearborn and English as bright spots. She also expressed concern about math scores at the Dearborn School and expressed confusion around the state's designation of Brighton High School as a Level school. The Superintendent said that he has not yet decided which turnaround model he will use at Brighton High School or how many of the current teachers will be rehired.

Mr. McClay praised the students who testified so passionately and encouraged strong student voice on the local stakeholder groups for Level 4 schools. A meeting for students at Brighton and Excel high schools will be held at the Bolling building on March 2nd. The Superintendent said that strong leadership for those schools will be identified shortly. He also pledged to strengthen supports for Level 3 schools.

Dean Robinson encouraged school leaders to share best practices and asked about the effectiveness of school site monitoring visits. Ms. Veto said the visits provide valuable information. Dean Robinson encouraged the Superintendent to give each school's situation careful consideration before making decisions about excessing teachers.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila requested breakout data for lowest performing Level 3 schools and asked whether additional funding should be made available to support Level 3 schools. Mary Wall, member of the district's Academic and Student Support for Equity Team (ASSET) BPS discussed the feedback that that BPS has offered to the US Department of Education regarding the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Ms. Oliver-Dávila asked Ms. Wall to provide the Committee with a copy of the comments. She also encouraged people to take ESSA online survey.

Ms. Jeri Robinson requested student performance data as well as the demographics of commendation schools. She encouraged the district to provide schools with supports earlier, before they are deemed underperforming, emphasizing the need to close opportunity and achievement gaps. She also suggested providing additional supports for schools exiting Level 4 status to help ease the transition. Mr. O'Neill commented that Ms. Robinson has pointed out the weaknesses of state's turnaround law. The Superintendent said the district must unlock additional resources to support schools.

Dr. Coleman requested state comparisons in the Level 4 school data. He also asked the district to measure the opportunity index for each school and to gather data on teacher effectiveness.

Mr. O'Neill thanked the Turnaround Office for providing an excellent report and requested a follow up report this spring focused on the district's lowest performing Level 3 schools. He also encouraged Supt to ask state for an exemption to using the prescribed turnaround models.

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Finally, he requested disaggregated student performance data for Excel High School and Monument High School just prior to their merger.

Dr. Coleman, who also serves as Chair of the School Quality Working Group, said he would like to the Group to conduct school site visits similar to the state's school monitoring visits.

BPS Long-Term Financial Planning Update – Erika Giampietro, special assistant to the Superintendent, and Eleanor Laurans, chief financial officer, provided an update on the district's long term financial planning effort. At the February 1st Committee meeting, the district shared high-level feedback the plan has received in community engagement events, and tonight the presenters went into greater depth on two areas they have further developed based on that feedback, specifically transportation and special education. This work is integral and connected to FY18 budget discussions as the district continues to evolving its approach to the annual budget process and taking multi-year steps that will impact its budget process ongoing.

The district is looking to make targeted investments and unlocking resources to increase school budgets using an equity lens. Ms. Laurans explained that the district wants to create a more nuanced measure of student need such as creating an opportunity index.

Committee members asked questions about pre-kindergarten investments, transportation efficiencies and multilingual supports, all of which were answered by the presenters.

Mr. O'Neill called the presentation encouraging, saying it uncovered valuable data.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORTS

John Mudd, advocate, said encouraged district leaders to learn from history. He also requested to see a program budget and suggested that district leaders provide more narrative in their presentations to the Committee, in addition to data.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURN

At approximately 10:28 p.m., the Committee voted by unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth Sullivan
Executive Secretary