



OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE REMOTE BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

August 10, 2022

The Boston School Committee held a remote meeting on August 10, 2022 at 5 p.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 Jeri Robinson; Vice Chairperson Michael D. O'Neill; Stephen Alkins; Brandon Cardet-Hernandez; and Quoc Tran.

School Committee Member Absent: Lorena Lopera; and Rafaela Polanco Garcia.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Agenda

Grants for Approval: \$11,185,345

MIAA Membership Presentation

MIAA Membership Application

Memo: Systemic Improvement Plan Implementation Update

Systemic Improvement Plan Implementation Equity Impact Statement

Systemic Improvement Plan Implementation Presentation

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Jeri Robinson called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance. Ms. Sullivan called the roll. Ms. Lopera and Ms. Polanco Garcia were absent. Mr. O'Neill was absent at roll call but joined shortly thereafter. All other members were present.

**Boston School Committee Remote Meeting
Zoom**

August 10, 2022

Ms. Robinson said that tonight's meeting was being streamed live on Zoom. It will be rebroadcast on Boston City TV. It will also be posted at [bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee](https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee) and on YouTube. She announced that simultaneous interpretation services were available in Spanish, Haitian Creole, Cabo Verdean, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin and American Sign Language (ASL). The interpreters introduced themselves and gave instructions in their native language on how to access simultaneous interpretation by changing the Zoom channel. Translated meeting documents were posted at www.bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee prior to the start of the meeting.

Ms. Robinson announced that due to illness and travel, the Committee would not have a quorum for the entire duration of the meeting. In order to conduct the necessary business of the School Committee, she proposed that the Committee re-order the agenda, moving the votes to the beginning of the agenda. If and when members need to depart, the Committee would vote to adjourn the meeting, as there would no longer be a quorum. Given the urgency of the work being done by the District and the upcoming DESE Systemic Improvement Plan deadlines and the need to share this important information with stakeholders and community members, the remaining members will remain to hear the Acting Superintendent's report and the Update from the District on the Systemic Improvement Plan, the first part of which is due on August 15th. The Committee will maintain a livestream for the public to hear these important updates. Those signed up for public comment would still have the opportunity to be heard by the remaining members of the School Committee, or could choose to wait until the next regularly scheduled meeting on August 31, 2022.

ACTION ITEMS

Approved - On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved new Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) Memberships for the following schools, effective School Year 2022-2023: Boston Arts Academy; Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers; McCormack/BCLA 7-12; and the BPS Alternative Schools Network (Boston Adult Technical Academy; Boston Day & Evening; Boston Collaborative; Community Academy; and Greater Egleston).

Incoming Superintendent Mary Skipper provided remarks expressing enthusiasm for her new role and her sharing her commitment to serving all BPS students and families. While her official start date is September 26, 2022, she is already working closely with Acting Superintendent Drew Echelson to plan for a smooth transition and a strong start to the school year.

Ms. Robinson reviewed highlights of Superintendent Mary Skipper's employment contract:

- Superintendent Skipper will serve a four-year term, beginning on September 26th.
- Until then, she will be working per diem while she winds down her work with Somerville Public Schools.
- Superintendent Skipper will be compensated \$300K/year.

**Boston School Committee Remote Meeting
Zoom**

August 10, 2022

- Superintendent Skipper will also receive a yearly contribution to her retirement annuity.
- The Superintendent will receive annual performance reviews by the School Committee with eligibility for a 2.5% pay increase next year. After that, the District will conduct a review of the market rate of similar size urban district superintendent salaries to ensure a competitive salary.
- The contract includes language that allows the parties to mutually agree to separate which was not included in previous superintendent contracts.
- The Superintendent will have the option to utilize \$10,000 for professional coaching if she wishes.

Ms. Robinson reviewed highlights of Acting Superintendent Drew Echelson's employment contract. The Committee authorized Ms. Robinson to sign the agreement on June 29th. Consistent with past practice for interim superintendent contracts, the agreement did not require a full School Committee vote.

- Dr. Echelson will serve as Acting Superintendent until the effective date of the appointment of Superintendent Skipper, September 26th.
- He will be compensated at the rate of \$280,000 while acting superintendent and for the following four months while Superintendent Skipper transitions and organizes her leadership team.
- After his term as Acting Superintendent, Dr. Echelson will remain with the district in a leadership role.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez expressed his support for Superintendent Skipper's contract, which he described as fair and equitable.

Mr. O'Neill noted that nationwide, salaries for superintendents are rapidly increasing. He praised the contract's provisions regarding a market review and the mutual agreement to part ways.

Approved - On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved an employment contract between Superintendent Mary Skipper and the Boston School Committee commencing September 26, 2022 and ending June 30, 2026.

Approved - On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved grants for approval totaling \$11,185,345.

Approved - On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Ms. Robinson announced that the remaining members would stay to listen to the Acting Superintendent's Report and the Systemic Improvement Plan Implementation Update.

ACTING SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

**As prepared for delivery.*

**Boston School Committee Remote Meeting
Zoom**

August 10, 2022

Thank you, Madame Chair. Before I begin with this report, I want to acknowledge that over the past month, we have lost several of our BPS students. We are heartbroken and continue to stand with those who are in mourning. We remember the ways in which they brought light and laughter into our school communities. We have provided mental health support services to students, families and staff as needed. I would like to have a moment of silence for those whose lives have been lost. Thank you,

Next, we will have a more in depth report on our work on the Systemic Improvement Plan later this evening. This work couldn't happen without our partnership with the City and I want to thank the Mayor and her team for all their support on our agreement with the State. This work is so important to the Mayor so she is here this evening to provide some opening remarks on tonight's presentation.

It's my honor to introduce Mayor Michelle Wu. Mayor Wu, I would like to again thank you for being an ally as we do this work in service to our students.

[Mayor Wu delivered brief remarks thanking Dr. Echelson for his leadership, welcoming incoming Superintendent Skipper, highlighting the Boston Teachers Union agreement, and sharing contingency planning for the month-long Orange Line shutdown.]

Thank you, Mayor Wu, for your leadership and being a champion for BPS. I'll now transition to some updates from our work this summer. We have had a busy summer. I want to thank the team of teachers, administrators and team leaders who have worked hard to ensure that our students have had an enriching and safe summer experience. They have worked hard to make sure that programs run smoothly. As far as attendance goes, here is where we stand.

- We have served over 10,000 students during this summer.
- Our 5th Quarter programs had a 90% attendance rate and ESY, for students whose IEPs call for an extended year, are averaging 80% daily attendance.

Last week, Mayor Wu was joined by Incoming Superintendent Mary Skipper at the Mildred K-8 School to celebrate the successes of our summer programming. To date, we offered the largest number of opportunities to students, with 108 programs, all dedicated in one way or another to project based learning. I wanted to lift up a few for you:

- 7th and 8th grade students at the Mildred Ave K-8 School engaged in the IXL Math Program to build upon their math skills. They also enjoyed reading and analyzing the novel, "The Outsiders" in their literacy circles.
- Students from the Blackstone Elementary School took a photography course of Harriet Tubman Square.
- Students at Ellis Elementary School learned how to make a solar system out of gumdrops.
- 4th and 5th graders in Summer Learning Academies designed their own backpacks, while second graders developed lemonade stands and fliers to market their products
- Kindergarten students learned about life cycles, following the metamorphosis of caterpillars into butterflies, which of course were then set free to fly!
- It was such a fun summer for our students and I'm grateful to the dedicated team who made this work possible.

August 10, 2022

- The Bridge to Calculus Program, which took place at Northeastern University, is a clear example of how academic rigor was integrated into Experiential Learning. Sophomores and Juniors worked with Northeastern Professors and Mentors, many of whom were graduates of the program, and were involved in researching Mathematicians from their respective cultures and their impact on scientific models and design.

I am speaking with Incoming Superintendent Mary Skipper multiple times a day. She is being briefed on a variety of issues and has been weighing in on next steps and projects for the upcoming school year. I am working with the team to ensure she is ready to hit the ground running so she has a strong and successful beginning.

We are less than thirty days away from the first day of school. In order to ensure a smooth start to the school year, we will focus our attention on five critical areas: on-time transportation, school assignments, staffing, clear and well implemented Covid-19 protocols, and safe and clean facilities.

The Transportation Team is working to hire bus drivers and bus monitors. We have a hiring goal of bringing on 90 bus drivers by the start of the school year. To date, 78 drivers have been hired either with their Commercial Driver's License or who are in BPS and Transdev-led CDL training. As you know, the state's public transportation agency, the MBTA, will be shutting down all Orange Line service for four weeks (from Fri, Aug 19 at 9 PM through Sun, Sep 18). While the team is working around the clock to ensure that students and staff have a safe and reliable way to and from school, it's important to be realistic that this will have major impacts on our students, families and staff right at the beginning of the school year, specifically when it comes to on time performance and student attendance. It is our greatest hope that during this time, the MBTA will swiftly address the systemic issues that impact our students, staff, and all public transportation travelers. Please expect updates over the next several weeks. Thank you for your continued partnership as we navigate what lies ahead. Mayor Wu and her team are making this issue a priority and I appreciate the support. We will continue to communicate updates and changes to our BPS families every week. We have created a staff survey to solicit feedback and encourage all of our staff to respond to the survey by August 12th.

We are contacting families on multiple waitlists. The deadline for families to choose one waitlist is Friday, August 12. Dropping to one waitlist helps families move up in rank and operationalizes the process of making assignments from those lists. Families can call or email Welcome Services to share their decision, or enter this information on their own, by visiting bostonpublicschools.org/rsvp and entering in their Student ID and RSVP code (both found on the letter they received).

We are working to ensure that all positions will be fully staffed for the first day of school. We have the following in place:

- All School Leaders are currently seated.
- To date, we have hired 996 teachers. We have 116 teacher hires in progress and 248 vacancies.
- We have also hired 134 paraprofessionals, have 25 hires in progress and 97 vacancies.

**Boston School Committee Remote Meeting
Zoom**

August 10, 2022

- We have hired 21 nurses, have 6 nurse hires in progress and 6 vacancies.

We are working with the Boston Public Health Commission around our COVID-19 and Monkeypox planning. We are finalizing the COVID-19 protocols this week and expect to be able to begin communicating expectations with families and staff next week.

Our Facilities and Operations teams have been working to patch the parking lots throughout the district and have had ongoing conversations around water filling stations in schools.

- The AC installation initiative continues across the district.
- The Facilities Condition Assessment is ongoing.
- Our team continues to keep track of the work orders for monitoring processes for school improvement and maintenance.

There will be a robust update at the August 31st report. We are also scheduling a number of Welcome Back community meetings in late August to communicate our readiness for Day 1.

That's my Superintendent Report. I am now happy to answer any questions you may have.

Ms. Robinson asked if summer learning attendance was impacted by the recent severe heat. Dr. Echelson said that this year's summer learning programs had some of the highest attendance rates the district has ever seen.

Ms. Robinson requested clarification about the waitlist process for exam schools admissions. Acting Chief of Family and Community Advancement Denise Snyder explained that the waitlist process for the exam schools operates under a different timeline than the process for non-exam schools because it comprises such a small pool of students.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez spoke about the national education staffing crisis and asked about the district's efforts to fill existing vacancies. Chief Equity and Strategy Officer Charles Grandson discussed the district's diversity recruitment strategy. Mr. Cardet-Hernandez requested data on current vacancies. Dr. Echelson agreed to follow up, noting that BPS posted more positions than usual this year.

Mr. Tran asked about the district's efforts to hire and retain hard-to-reach groups such as disabled veterans and Native Americans. Dr. Echelson said that while he was not aware of any specific outreach to those two groups, he would follow up with more information at the next meeting. Mr. Tran requested an update on the hiring of highly qualified English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers. Dr. Echelson said that BPS is supporting current educators with naive language proficiency to become licensed in ESL as it pivots towards native language instruction.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez asked when families will receive transportation assignments for the upcoming school year. Dr. Echelson said the precise date is not yet known. Mr. Cardet-Hernandez emphasized the importance of providing families with timely, accurate information. He encouraged the district to think creatively when making contingency plans to prepare for the Orange Line shutdown, such as adjusting school hours. Dr. Echelson pledged

August 10, 2022

that BPS will communicate regularly with families about transportation issues and respond to feedback.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- Lisa Jeanne Graf, Fenway resident and BPS parent, testified regarding Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and special education.
- John Mudd, Cambridge resident and advocate, testified regarding the Systemic Improvement Plan Implementation Update.
- Mike Heichman, Dorchester resident and Boston Education Justice Alliance (BEJA) member, testified regarding a number of education-related issues.
- Roseann Tung, Jamaica Plain resident and English Language Learners Task Force member, testified regarding the Systemic Improvement Plan Implementation Update.

REPORT

Systemic Improvement Plan Implementation Update: Data; English Learners; Facilities; Special Education; Student Safety; Transformation Schools; and Transportation - Assistant Superintendent of Data Strategy and Implementation Monica Hogan presented an update on the implementation of the Systemic Improvement Plan (SIP). In June 2022, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the City of Boston, and Boston Public Schools, together, outlined an agreement to strengthen District-wide processes by identifying systems and practices that will lead to positive results for students. While BPS has made a lot of progress, persistent challenges remain. The City of Boston and BPS agree that urgent action must be taken to address the long-standing challenges facing BPS.

The SIP includes seven focus areas:

- English Learners
- Special Education
- Transformation Schools
- Facilities
- Student Safety
- Transportation
- Data

All projects are either completed or are on track to be completed for the August 15th deadline.

August 15 Deadlines (BPS)

Item from Agreement	Status
Student Safety	
Begin using an improved, robust system for managing, responding to and resolving complaints from	On Track

**Boston School Committee Remote Meeting
Zoom**

August 10, 2022

parents and guardians.	
Commission an independent student and staff safety audit	Complete
Special Education	
Engage an entity or team of individuals who have a proven track record of success working in urban school districts and who will work with a sense of urgency on improving special education services.	Complete
Form McKinley Working Group	Complete
BPS will provide DESE its plan for how the district will accomplish the work described in this section until the senior leadership positions are filled.	On Track
Develop an updated policy and procedure manual on special education.	On Track
Transportation	
Launch a diagnostic evaluation of the current BPS transportation system	Complete
Facilities	
Review all school bathroom facilities and implement a district-wide plan for necessary renovations.	On Track
English Learners	
Develop a system to ensure that all English learners, including English learners with disabilities, receive all appropriate instruction, access to grade level content instruction and a system for monitoring instruction.	On Track
Complete a BPS Strategic Plan for Multilingual Learners to include native language instruction	On Track

Upcoming Deadlines (BPS)

Item from Agreement	Deadline	Status
Student Safety		
Hire a Coordinator of Problem Resolution to address PRS complaints	September 8	On Track
Transportation		
Implement operational reforms negotiated between BPS and the school bus drivers' union	Ongoing	On Track
Data		
Publish revised student withdrawal procedures that outline specific controls	September 8	On Track
Transformation Schools		
Consolidate the number of plans required for Transformation Schools into one clearly articulated, robust, evidence-based Quality School Plan for Improvement at each school.	October 1	On Track

All documents submitted to DESE are available online at bostonpublicschools.org/strategicprogress. The district will continue providing updates in the Superintendent's Report at School Committee meetings and additional presentations throughout the fall.

August 10, 2022

Mr. O'Neill asked if BPS has received feedback from DESE about its work on the SIP thus far. Dr. Echelson said that all of the feedback that DESE has provided today has been positive and helpful, noting that Chair Robinson has been very involved in the process. Ms. Robinson echoed Dr. Echelson's comments, describing the partnership as extraordinarily collaborative.

Ms. Robinson asked how BPS will partner with task forces and working groups to implement the SIP. Dr. Echelson explained how BPS will conduct a robust engagement process with the ELL Task Force, District English Learner Advisory Committee (DELAC), and US Department of Justice before presenting a policy document to the School Committee for consideration in mid-October. Similarly, the Office of Special Education will conduct robust engagement before presenting its strategic plan document to the School Committee later this fall. Dr. Echelson said that the plans will address the intersection between students with disabilities and multilingual learners with disabilities

Mr. O'Neill encouraged the district to solicit broad feedback from stakeholders before presenting the policy proposals to the Committee, citing the Code of Conduct Advisory Council (COCAC) as an example. Dr. Echelson confirmed for Mr. O'Neill that DESE is on-track to meet its commitments on deadline. Mr. O'Neill noted that in its strategic plan, the School Committee intentionally added language about BPS to adopt a customer service mentality that goes beyond problem resolution. Dr. Echelson agreed that customer feedback is critical, adding that BPS must change its systems to be more proactive and responsive. He confirmed that BPS is engaged in conversations with DESE regarding the impact of Orange Line shutdown and affirmed the district's commitment to providing students with safe and reliable transportation.

Mr. O'Neill said that the Council of Great City Schools (CGCS) has been commissioned to conduct reviews in three key areas: student safety, transportation and special education. Noting that CGCS prepares thorough reports that often contain numerous recommendations, Mr. O'Neill encouraged district leadership to develop a process to review the reports and address each recommendation. Dr. Echelson agreed to follow through with the recommendation, adding that the issues are not siloed but cross-functional.

Ms. Robinson thanked Transportation Director Delavern Stanislaus for her leadership. She asked Dr. Echelson about his transportation concerns. He responded that BPS is partnering with city and state leaders to mitigate the impact of the Orange Line shutdown. He pledged to share details with families in the coming days. Dr. Echelson cautioned that BPS cannot fall into old patterns of working in silos. Staff must work cross-functionally, solicit feedback, have accountability and increase support to better serve schools and families.

CLOSING

With the School Committee having already voted to adjourn the meeting earlier in the evening, Chair Robinson closed the session at approximately 7:25 p.m.

Attest:

**Boston School Committee Remote Meeting
Zoom**

August 10, 2022

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth Sullivan".

Elizabeth Sullivan
Executive Secretary