



OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE RETREAT

October 13, 2022

The Boston School Committee held an in-person retreat on October 13, 2022 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/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 (arrived while session was in progress); Lorena Lopera; Rafaela Polanco Garcia; Quoc Tran; and student representative Diego Meta.

School Committee Member Absent: Brandon Cardet-Hernandez.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

[Agenda](#)

[School District Governance Framework: An Integrated Approach PowerPoint](#)

[School Committee Retreat: Superintendent's Focus Areas for School Year 2022-2023 Power Point](#)

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Jeri Robinson called the retreat to order. She said that meeting documents were publicly available online at bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee under today's date: October 13, 2022.

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WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Robinson thanked Superintendent Skipper for helping to organize the retreat. She invited Committee members and members of the Superintendent's senior leadership team to introduce themselves.

Ms. Robinson said the purpose of the retreat was for the Committee and Superintendent to come together to organize themselves around some common priorities. Noting the impact of the COVID pandemic and leadership changes at the district and city level, she called for the retreat an opportunity to reconnect and start the school year strong.

Ms. Robinson introduced the facilitator for the evening, John Kim, Founder and CEO of District Management Group, a professor at Harvard Business School and Co-Chair of the Public Education Leadership Project (PELP). Mr. Kim briefly reviewed the agenda.

SCHOOL DISTRICT GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

Mr. Kim discussed the widespread impact of the COVID pandemic, presenting it as an opportunity for leaders to rethink how they operate.

Four Key Trends:

- Greater competition for students: Families have become better consumers of education
- Quickening pace of change, especially technology-driven change
- "Unbundling" of Teachers and Schools. Schools will need to rethink the role of the teacher...not just hire more teachers
- How we measure and/or define performance/success is changing rapidly

Future Implications:

- Parents will become even better consumers of education
- Schools will require focus on innovation and change
- Unbundling of education: changing role of teachers Changes to how we measure performance by expanding the definition of success

SUPERINTENDENT'S PRIORITIES FOR SY 2022-2023

Superintendent Mary Skipper expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve as Boston Public Schools Superintendent. She spoke about the collaborative work necessary to move the district forward and improve student outcomes. She called for a focus on the "whole child," providing academical, physical, and social-emotional support.

She laid out six focus areas for the SY 2022-23 School Year:

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Focus Area 1: Prioritizing and Accelerating Academic Performance

1. Increase access to culturally and linguistically responsive grade-level learning through Equitable Literacy, including multi-tiered systems of support
2. Expand Inclusion programming for all students in partnership with the Boston Teachers Union
3. Expand Bilingual Education to ensure the success of our multilingual learners
4. Increase secondary opportunities for MassCore/educational options

Focus Areas 2: Strengthening Access to Social-emotional Learning

1. Focus on dropout and chronic absenteeism to maximize student engagement
2. Fully implement student support teams in every school
3. Out of school time partnerships
4. Anti-bullying campaign and activation of intervention specialists

Focus Area 3: Streamlining Operations and Ensuring Student Safety

1. Partner closely with City agencies
2. Train and align school safety procedures and protocols across the district
3. Increase investments in restorative justice, mediation, and social emotional supports
4. Invest in security cameras and other safety technologies

Focus Area 4: Developing Authentic Family and Community Engagement Practices

1. Increase language access to enable broader parent and community participation
2. Develop authentic community engagement for Green New Deal
3. Empower parent voice, learning opportunities and agency
4. Leverage community and school-based Equity Roundtables in policy development as a throughline for the organization

Focus Area 5: Improving Internal and External Communication with Families and Staff

1. Increase open, transparent, and authentic communication with students and families
2. Prioritize internal communications with timely updates to students, family, and staff
3. Lift up positive stories across the district to amplify the experiences of our students, families, and staff
4. Provide schools with 24/7 communications support in response to incidents to keep students, families, and staff well-informed
5. Engage with members of the media 24/7

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Focus Area 6: Increasing Accountability for both the Central Office and our Schools

1. Regional support structure for schools to ensure timely supports and requisite accountability
2. Increase resources for schools to fully implement student supports and safety policies and procedures
3. Increase accountability for schools and central office to ensure fidelity of implementation
4. Comprehensive review of key system areas (e.g. transportation, school safety, special education) and implement clear benchmarks that result in material progress

Members asked clarifying questions about school safety and accountability, all of which were answered by the Superintendent. The Superintendent said that she favors taking an auditing approach to the work by going out into the field, doing due diligence, and insisting on continuous improvement. Dr. Alkins asked about evaluations of the district's restorative justice model. The Superintendent said that restorative justice practices in partnership with mediation and strong social emotional wellness support are a powerful combination. Ms. Lopera asked what metrics the Superintendent will use for measuring success. The Superintendent said that she wants to have further dialogue with the Committee about how it will hold her accountable.

DISCUSSION OF HOW THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE CAN SUPPORT THE PRIORITIES

Mr. Kim asked Committee members to reflect on the following questions:

- What role can the School Committee play in creating the conditions for success?
- What motivated you to become a School Committee member?

Members shattered their personal reasons for joining the Committee, which included elevating marginalized voices and a commitment to social justice and equity.

Mr. Kim asked members to participate in an exercise in which they were asked to confidentially rate, on a scale of 1-10 (10 being the best), how well the Committee's current structure helps it achieve its goals. Most answers were under five. Mr. Kim said that the Committee has the power to make changes and drive improvement.

Mr. Kim reviewed the Harvard Graduate School of Education's Public Education Leadership Project (PELP) Governance Framework, PELP Coherence Framework, and the PELP Governance Model. He emphasized that the Theory of Change/Action must be understood and owned by all. The strategy must be aligned with the Theory of Change.

Mr. Kim asked Committee members to reflect on their roles and responsibilities and consider the following questions:

- How will the School Committee create conditions for success?

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- What is/are 1 or 2 most significant factors, if improved, in the governance structure/operations, would help you reach your goals(s)? What? How?

Mr. O'Neill noted that several of the newer Committee members were not part of the previous strategic planning process or the development of goals and values, so there is not a sense of shared ownership for those pieces of work. He spoke about the Committee's primary role as a policy making board in which decisions are made in collaboration with the community. He spoke about trying to find the right balance in which the Committee can focus on policy matters in addition to providing the district with a vehicle to communicate with families.

Ms. Robinson said that in some respects, Committee meetings have become a repository of all BPS business, serving as a "catch all" for all of the district's issues.

The Superintendent said that the district needs to leverage the expertise of Committee members in other ways, as the Committee's current structure does not afford that dialogue. She suggested restructuring meetings in a way that allows members to better inform the work.

Ms. Polanco Garcia spoke about the important role played by community organizations. She said that often families do not see the Committee as the governance body, but rather as a vehicle to solve their operational problems. She said that the Committee needs to clarify its role and focus on student outcomes.

Ms. Lopera said the perspectives and experiences of Committee members are drastically different.

Dr. Alkins said there is a shared understanding of the common goal of improving student outcomes and education equity. Current structure is not conducive to dialogue.

Mr. Kim wrapped up the session by posing the following key questions for future consideration:

How does a district:

- Create the conditions to build the capacity of the district to lead and enable high performance across all schools?
- Develop a tightly integrated Theory of Change and district-wide strategy for improvement? Build all elements of the organization as an integrated system – HR, resource allocation, performance measurement, etc.?
- Build leadership capabilities at all levels ?
- Establish a culture of high expectations?
- Focus on continuous improvement?
- Communicate the new vision and get everyone in the community – parents, teachers, unions, business, etc. on board?

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Mr. Kim closed by saying that he will follow up with the Committee with his thoughts about how to carry the work forward.

PUBLIC COMMENT

John Mudd, advocate, testified regarding the achievement gap, teacher diversity, and equity impact reports. He suggested that district reports to the School Committee be structured into thirds: one-third data, one-third lessons learned, and one-third recommended actions.

Marinelle Rousmainiere, CEO, EdVestors, spoke about the importance of accountability and implementation.


CLOSING COMMENTS

Chair Robinson offered closing comments, thanking Mr. Kim for facilitating the discussion. She expressed her gratitude to Superintendent Skipper and the Committee for coming together around shared priorities that put BPS in a stronger position for the important work ahead.

ADJOURN

At approximately 8:02 p.m., the Committee voted by unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth Sullivan
Executive Secretary