



## **OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**October 2, 2013**

The Boston School Committee held a meeting on October 2, 2013 at 6 p.m. at the Edward Winter Chambers, 26 Court Street, Boston, Massachusetts.

For more information about any of the items listed below, please contact the office of the Boston School Committee: [feedback@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto:feedback@bostonpublicschools.org) or 617-635-9014.

### **DOCUMENTS PRESENTED**

Superintendent's Memo: Boston Green Academy Charter Amendments  
Report: 2013 MCAS and Accountability Results  
Report: School Turnaround  
Report: High Schools Update

### **ATTENDANCE**

School Committee Members Present: Chairperson Michael O'Neill; Meg Campbell; Dr. Hardin Coleman; Mary Tamer; and student representative Ayomide Olumuyiwa.

School Committee Members Absent: Vice-Chairperson Claudio Martinez; and Rev. Gregory G. Groover.

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. O'Neill called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance. He announced that the meeting was being broadcast live by Boston City TV (Comcast Channel 24 and RCN Channel 13) in cooperation with BNN-TV and would be rebroadcast at a later date.

### **CITATIONS**

The School Committee and Superintendent presented citations and Paul Revere Bowls to the following recently retired school leaders:

- Carol Bradley Moore, former headmaster, Community Academy - 38 years of service

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- Louise Kuhlman, former principal, Lyman F. Winship Elementary School – 34 years of service
- Ronald Jackson, former principal, Henry Grew Elementary School - 34 years of service
- Valeria Lowe-Barehmi, former principal, James P. Timilty Middle School - 38 years of service
- Michael Rubin, former headmaster, East Boston High School - 35 years of service

Mr. O'Neill also recognized the following former school leaders who were unable to attend the meeting:

- Berta Berriz, former teacher leader, Boston Teachers Union K-8 School - 33 years of service
- Harolyn Bowden, former principal, Samuel W. Mason Elementary School - 39 years of service
- Barney Brawer, former principal, Michael J. Perkins Elementary School - 8 years of service
- Elie Jean-Louis, former Assistant Academic Superintendent for Elementary Schools and former principal of the Charles H. Taylor Elementary School - 31 years of service

## **APPROVAL OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

*Approved* – The School Committee approved by unanimous consent the minutes of the September 11, 2013 and September 17, 2013 School Committee Strategic Planning Workshops and the September 18, 2013 School Committee meeting.

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

October is National Principals Month. The Superintendent thanked all BPS school leaders – current and retired – for their hard work and dedication to students.

This morning the Massachusetts School Board Authority voted unanimously to proceed with schematic design proposals for the Dearborn Middle School as well as a combined Quincy Upper School and Boston Arts Academy project. BPS will hold community meetings in partnership with the City's facilities management division. More information is available at [www.bostonpublicschools.org/facilitiesplan](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/facilitiesplan).

Yesterday Governor Patrick announced a \$58,695 grant which will help BPS expand a pre-kindergarten mathematics program, Building Blocks. The grant will allow the district to offer the program to more than 6,500 low-income and at-risk three-and-four-year-olds across the community through non-profit and private providers.

October is also Success Boston College Month. College enrollment rates in BPS have risen in recent years and BPS graduates are taking fewer remedial classes once enrolled in college. The

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3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the BPS College and Career Guide is being distributed to 20,000 students this month.

Last weekend, hundreds of high school students attended BPS' annual college readiness event held in partnership with Success Boston and the Boston Scholar Athlete Program.

Also recently, City Year sponsored a cleanup at the Hennigan Elementary School as part of its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary project; the Philbrick Elementary School celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> birthday; and BPS participated in the Green Apple Day of Service featuring 17 projects at 15 schools with more than one thousand volunteers. BPS has pledged to reduce its energy usage by five percent through simple behavioral changes.

You may have seen a report last night on Channel 5 about some staff members from our Facilities Department who were caught on video picking up equipment from a former staff member's home in Dedham, then repairing it apparently using city resources and on city time. As both the Mayor and I told the TV station when they uncovered this – this is totally unacceptable. We contacted the Boston Police Department, which has launched an investigation. We have been able to take some internal steps and have already taken some corrective action. Now that we have seen the story it is an appropriate time to reassess, and potentially take additional steps. In any case, part of the opportunity that this transition period within BPS provides for me is the chance to re-set expectations for employees. We expect excellence every day and do not accept misuse of taxpayer resources. All of our systems, protocols and processes must be in place to ensure schools are well-supported and that our stewardship of public resources is effective and unquestioned.

Last night we submitted our Race to the Top District proposal to the US Department of Education. Our proposal would implement a program that personalizes learning for students through technology that supports blended learning for students in middle school. This is part of our larger effort to use technology to help ensure all students have 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy skills. Now, because the government is shut down, we are not entirely sure who was there to receive our application – but we did send it and we met the deadline!

Tomorrow, we hope you'll be able to drop by the Tynan Elementary School in South Boston. At 10am we will cut the ribbon on our 5<sup>th</sup> Target Library Makeover, which is supported by the Heart of America Foundation and the Greater Boston Food Bank.

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At our last meeting we spoke of our progress in our Turnaround Schools and also the challenges we still face as the state considers Level 5 status for two of them, the Dever and the Holland. The Commissioner has scheduled times for him to meet with parent representatives and small groups of educators in these schools, which will help inform his decision. These meetings will be October 9 at the Dever and October 10 at the Holland. And of course tonight, we welcome your questions as we present an update on our overall MCAS performance, turnaround schools effort as well as an update on our high schools.

One of the issues I know many members have been asking about is the relationship between school autonomy, and the importance of welcoming all learners. This is an important conversation to have. Here in BPS we take pride in the fact that we educate anyone who comes to our doorstep. We turn no one away. And yet, some schools, because of their autonomies, have established admissions policies, protocols or procedures that are different than the one we use centrally.

I cannot think of a better time to be having this discussion. As we near the election of the new mayor and the selection of a new Superintendent, I think the very best thing we can do is “tee up” these issues so these leaders will be able to fully understand the numerous advantages, but also the tensions and difficulties that school autonomy provides. I think the very same conversation is critical to be had about the role that a central office plays. How can a high-functioning central office balance the importance of pushing more authority and decision-making to the school and parent level, while at the same time, maintain the ability to ensure all students are being served equitably and with excellence, regardless of the school they attend?

Finally, I would like to celebrate our successes.

At Latin Academy, last week senior football quarterback Kyle Dance became the first player in BPS history to reach 40 touchdown passes in his career – and he has already had nine just this year. He is now on the state’s all-time passing list and, in interviews last week, credited his team for the success.

Indeed, when we talk about our own successes, teamwork is the theme we see.

Last night US News and World Report named four of our high schools as among the top 50 in the state: Boston Latin School, the O’Bryant, Boston Latin Academy and Boston Community Leadership Academy. Congratulations to those school teams!

And, EdVestors looks for teamwork when selecting its annual “School on the Move,” and last year they selected New Mission High School. Then a few days ago U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan named New Mission High School as our fifth “National Blue Ribbon” school, one of just four in Massachusetts this year. They have some of the highest rates of student academic growth and serve a diverse range of learners. I know that Naia Wilson is here tonight and on behalf of all of us here, congratulations to you and your team!

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The Committee voted by unanimous consent to accept the Superintendent's Report.

## GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

The following BPS students and members of Sociedad Latina testified regarding the importance of healthy and appealing school meals:

- Rodney Perez
- Jennifer Then
- Jerson Familia

William Kelley, Boston School Police Sargent, testified in favor of a district policy permitting school police to carry OC (pepper) spray.

John St. Amand, Vice-Chair, Special Education Parent Advisory Council, testified regarding special education issues.

Carolyn Kain, Chair, Special Education Parent Advisory Council, testified regarding special education issues.

Nicole Bahman, headmaster, Boston International High School and Newcomers Academy, thanked the Superintendent for establishing a girls soccer team at the school and praised the Committee for their support.

Palma McLaughlin, parent, testified regarding professional development on domestic violence.

The following people testified about BPS high school admissions:

- Jess Madden Fuoco, administrator, BPS Countdown to High School
- Neema, Avashia, teacher, Dever-McCormack K-8 Pathway
- Laura Cennamo, teacher

Maura O'Toole, BPS parent, discussed the difficulty she experienced trying to transfer her child to another school.

## ACTION ITEMS

**Approved** – On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the following charter amendments for Boston Green Academy: (1) amend the leadership structure from a single headmaster to a co-headmaster model; and (2) delay the addition of a 6<sup>th</sup> grade and the expansion of the school to September 2014.

## REPORTS

**2013 MCAS and Accountability Results** – Dr. Kamal Chavda, Assistant Superintendent for Data and Accountability, presented the results of 2013 MCAS exam and accountability determinations

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from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). BPS saw broad academic growth across all demographic groups in English Language Arts (ELA), with students in grades 3-7 and 10 outperforming state trends in this category. Over the last six years, ELA proficiency rates among 10<sup>th</sup> grade students have risen 21 points to an all-time high of 79 percent. Significant challenges remain, however. MCAS scores for third and fourth grade students have declined or stagnated over the past few years, while proficiency gaps persist in all grades.

School Committee members asked questions about the data, achievement gaps and trends, all of which were answered by Dr. Chavda and the Superintendent. Ms. Campbell expressed concerns about the increase in Level 3 schools. Ms. Tamer expressed concerns about third grade ELA scores and suggested that the district study the success of the Trotter Elementary School and Orchard Gardens K-8 School, which both moved from Level 4 to Level 1.

***School Turnaround*** – The Superintendent announced that next week DESE will hold roundtable discussions with stakeholders at the Dever Elementary and Holland Elementary Schools, both of which are Level 4 schools under consideration for Level 5. Massachusetts Commissioner of Education Mitchell Chester will make a decision on the schools' status within 30 days of those meetings.

After briefly reviewing the new designations of each turnaround school, the Superintendent invited two principals to share their perspectives on the challenges and opportunities of the turnaround process. Waleska Landing-Rivera, principal of the John F. Kennedy Elementary School, cited data tracking and professional development as key factors in her success leading the school from Level 4 to Level 3. Genteen Lacet Jean-Michel, principal of the Mattahunt Elementary School, described her efforts to accelerate achievement at the Level 4 school, including providing social and emotional support for students and extending the school day.

School Committee members thanked Ms. Landing-Rivera and Ms. Jean-Michel for their hard work and asked questions about lessons learned and continuity of education, all of which were answered by the presenters.

***High Schools Update*** – The Superintendent that BPS offers a diverse portfolio of schools – traditional, exam, pilot, innovation, in-district charter, etc. – with a range of autonomies and admissions practices. Recognizing that separate admissions policies may create unintended barriers for some students, the Superintendent stated that the district is exploring both short-term and long-term solutions to streamline the high school admissions process and ensure equitable access to all BPS schools.

Ms. Campbell and Ms. Tamer expressed concerns that some high schools request recommendations as part of their admissions process. Ms. Campbell called for more transparency around the exam school admissions process and suggested that the district explore new strategies encouraging BPS student to apply. Ms. Tamer questioned Naia Wilson, headmaster of New Mission High School, about the school's admissions process and the demographics of incoming students.

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Chief Operating Officer for Student Support Sam Depina then provided the Committee with an update on the current status of accreditation of BPS high Schools. Fourteen BPS high schools are currently accredited with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). The accreditation process identifies both the strengths and challenges of schools in a range of areas, including curriculum, instruction, assessment and resources. The BPS NEASC support team monitors ongoing accreditation requirements and analyzes the district's capacity to extend accreditation to additional schools.

School Committee members asked questions about the accreditation process, all of which were answered by Mr. Depina and the Superintendent. Dr. Coleman requested that more of the district's accreditation information be posted on the BPS web site.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORTS**

John Mudd, education advocate, requested more analysis and forward-thinking in the Superintendent's reports to the School Committee.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

Responding to earlier public testimony, Ms. Tamer requested that the Superintendent provide the Committee with more information on the potential use of OC (pepper) spray by school police. She also requested that the School Committee consider honoring women who have dropped out of Boston Public Schools due to extreme hardships.

#### **ADJOURN**

At 10:06 p.m., the School Committee voted by unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth A. Sullivan  
Executive Secretary