



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
PUBLIC HEARING ON THE MASSACHUSETTS  
SCHOOL CHOICE PLAN AND MEETING**

**May 7, 2014**

The Boston School Committee held a meeting at 6 p.m. on May 7, 2014 at the Edward Winter Chamber, 26 Court Street, Boston, Massachusetts.

For more information about any of the items listed below, visit [www.bostonpublicschools.org](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org), email [feedback@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto:feedback@bostonpublicschools.org) or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

**DOCUMENTS PRESENTED**

Minutes of the April 30, 2014 School Committee Meeting

Grants for Approval Totaling \$20,000.

- Competitive Academic Support Services Work and Learning Programs (Summer Programs) - \$10,000
- Safe and Supportive Schools Action Plans - \$10,000

Superintendent's Memo: School Choice, 2014-2015 School Year

Report: Boston Public Schools Summer Programming 2014

Boston Public Schools Summer Program Offerings 2014 - Draft

Report: Study on School-Based Autonomy in BPS

**ATTENDANCE**

School Committee Members Present: Chairperson Michael O'Neill; Meg Campbell; Dr. Hardin Coleman; Rev. Dr. Gregory G. Groover; Michael Loconto; and Margaret McKenna.

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School Committee Members Absent: Vice-Chairperson Claudio Martinez; and student representative Ayomide Olumuyiwa.

## **MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL CHOICE PLAN PUBLIC HEARING**

The School Committee held a public hearing concerning Boston Public Schools' participation in the Massachusetts School Choice program for the 2014-2015 school year. There were no speakers.

On roll call, the Committee unanimously voted to adjourn the hearing and begin the regular School Committee meeting.

## **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 to the following members of the Boston Debate League (BDL) who recently won top honors for their skills:

- Brighton High School students Richard Davis and Sadiya Gurhan, finalists in the National Association of Urban Debate League's National Tournament.
- New Mission High School students, Elvis Alvarado and Fatah Adan, 2014 Boston Debate League City Champions.

Mr. O'Neill also thanked Executive Director Steve Stein who has successfully transformed the BDL from a small, volunteer-driven organization to a prominent education initiative that serves more than 900 students in 25 BPS middle schools and high schools.

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

The School Committee approved by unanimous consent the minutes of the April 30, 2014 School Committee meeting.

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Students across the District are celebrating Teacher Appreciation Week by creating video projects, hosting breakfasts and lunches, and writing personal thank you notes to teachers. The Superintendent thanked all teachers for their commitment to providing a quality education to every student.

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Two BPS team members have received the 2014 Excellence in Education Awards from the Goldin Foundation: Mark Longeran, High School STEAM Faculty/Center Fellow at Boston Arts Academy and Marlene Veldwisch, Director of Development at the Mario Umana Academy. In addition, three BPS dance teachers also won Outstanding Teachers of Dance awards with Arts/Learning: Erica Drew of the Irving Middle School and William McLaughlin and Sheryl Pollard Thomas of Boston Arts Academy.

May is Bus Driver & Monitor Appreciation Month in BPS, and it's also School Nurse Appreciation Week. April 26<sup>th</sup> was Administrative Professional's Day. The Superintendent thanked all BPS employees for the work they do every day on behalf of students.

Last week, Boston hosted the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative's national conference. The annual four-day meeting was the largest in the Collaborative's history, with 250 special education leaders from urban districts throughout the nation. School Committee Chairman O'Neill and Superintendent McDonough delivered greetings and BPS staff presented on the District's work to expand inclusion and behavioral health services.

The Boston City Council is holding hearings on the BPS Fiscal Year 2015 budget on topics ranging from equity and the achievement gap to transportation to the Common Core.

On May 6<sup>th</sup>, Mayor Walsh announced the creation of a Universal Pre-Kindergarten Advisory Committee to recommend a city-wide strategic plan to double the enrollment of four year olds in high-quality, full-day pre-kindergarten programs by 2018. BPS's nationally recognized K1 program demonstrates significant gains for all students in language, literacy, mathematics, and socio-emotional development, and reduces the achievement gap between students. Access to quality full-day pre-kindergarten is integral to the City's effort to improve achievement for all Boston students and close achievement and opportunity gaps. The committee will be co-chaired by Dr. Jason Sachs, BPS Director of Early Childhood, and Jeri Robinson, Vice President for Education and Family Learning, Boston Children's Museum. School Committee member Michael Loconto will serve on the advisory committee.

The Superintendent thanked Dr. Linda Nathan for leading the District's year-long study of school-based autonomy in BPS. The Superintendent will review the recommendations and determine which recommendations to bring forward to the School Committee for consideration.

Central office staff has been notified about the status of their positions for the next fiscal year. BPS has posted new and redefined positions online as part of the District's efforts to streamline central office. BPS is providing staff with career support and planning services to ensure that they are successful in competing for positions inside or outside of the district.

The Superintendent is in the process of finalizing principal and headmaster appointments for the 2014-15 school year.

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On May 8<sup>th</sup>, the School Quality Working Group will host a public meeting about its school quality framework at the Shelbourne Community Center in Roxbury. A survey about school quality will be posted online at [www.bostonschoolquality.org](http://www.bostonschoolquality.org) until May 11<sup>th</sup>.

Mayor Walsh is inviting high school students to apply for the Youth Advisory Council by May 16<sup>th</sup>. An application is available at [www.cityofboston.gov](http://www.cityofboston.gov).

Boya Zhou, a junior at Boston Latin School, was one of 25 students nationwide selected to win the annual *Princeton Prize in Race Relations*. The prize is awarded to high school students who are leaders in increasing understanding and raising mutual respect among all communities.

Ashley Herbert, a junior at Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers, was named champion of the National Finals of the August Wilson Monologue Competition at Broadway's August Wilson Theatre in New York City on May 5<sup>th</sup>. She receives a \$3,000 scholarship from Delta Airlines as part of her award.

Seven BPS students are finalists in the Adobe Youth Voices digital media competition. BPS partners with Adobe to provide digital media learning opportunities to more than 900 BPS students. To vote, go to: <http://youthvoices.adobe.com/awards>.

Ms. Campbell congratulated Ashley Herbert and all of the BPS students who competed in the August Wilson Monologue Competition.

Mr. O'Neill thanked the Harvard Pilgrim Healthcare Foundation for providing a grant to expand recess in 15 BPS schools.

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

#### **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT**

Shannah Varon, chair, Boston Alliance of Charter Schools, testified regarding special education in charter schools.

Chris Smith, executive director, Boston After School and Beyond, testified regarding summer learning and the opportunity gap.

#### **ACTION ITEMS**

Mr. Loconto announced that he would abstain from voting on the grants to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest, explaining that his employer, Harvard University, is listed as an external partner on the Competitive Academic Support Services Work and Learning Programs (Summer Programs) grant.

**Approved** – On roll call, the School Committee approved grants in the amount of \$20,000. The order was approved by the following vote:

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Ms. Campbell – Yes  
Dr. Coleman – Yes  
Rev. Dr. Groover – Yes  
Mr. Loconto – Abstain  
Ms. McKenna – Yes  
Mr. O’Neill – Yes

**Approved** – On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved a motion for the District to withdraw from the Massachusetts School Choice Plan for the 2014-2015 school year.

## REPORTS

***Boston Public Schools Summer Programming 2014*** – Director of Extended Learning Melissa Partridge, accompanied by Executive Director of Expanded Learning, Advancement and Partnerships Klare Shaw and Deputy Superintendent of Academics Dr. Eileen de los Reyes, presented a report on the diverse portfolio of summer learning opportunities provided by the District. Summer programming minimizes learning loss, helping to eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps among students. BPS has redesigned summer programming to offer targeted services to more than 9,000 students in all grade levels who need additional support.

School Committee members praised the District’s decision to design summer programming around the needs of students. Ms. Campbell called for more arts and wellness programming, as well as more programming in the late afternoon when teens might not otherwise be occupied. Rev. Dr. Groover requested data on students who participate in the exam school initiative. Mr. O’Neill noted that the demand for summer programming far exceeds the availability, saying the District may need to rethink the school calendar.

***Study on School-Based Autonomy in BPS*** – Dr. Linda Nathan, Special Assistant to the Superintendent and an early leader in the development of Boston’s pilot schools, presented an overview of the District’s year-long study of the role and impact of autonomy for school leaders and their teams across the system. The District’s portfolio of schools includes schools with various levels of autonomy producing mixed results. A cross-functional working group conducted extensive interviews, analyzed data, surveyed principals and studied national research in an attempt to answer the question: what role should school-based autonomy, in its various forms, play in improving student outcomes? The research team will wrap up its work in the coming weeks and present its final report on June 3<sup>rd</sup> at a forum hosted by The Boston Foundation, which funded the study. The final report will include key findings, recommendations and specific next steps. Aaron Stone, a teacher at Boston Day and Evening Academy and a member of the working group, co-presented with Dr. Nathan.

School Committee members thanked Dr. Nathan and her team for their important work and expressed an eagerness to learn the findings in the final report. Rev. Dr. Groover urged the research team to incorporate input from parents. Mr. O’Neill noted that many school leaders cite teacher collaboration as a lever for driving student achievement.

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## **PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORTS**

Carolyn Kain, chair, Boston Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SpedPac), testified regarding special education issues and summer programming.

John Mudd, education advocate, testified regarding the study on school-based autonomy in BPS.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Ms. Campbell requested that the percentage of special education students be included in the high school report. She also requested information on the environmental and health benefits associated with the transition of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students from yellow school bus transportation to the MBTA.

Dr. Coleman requested information detailing the pain points or challenges related to the following areas: implementation of the Home Based School Choice Plan; the teacher evaluation system; and the teacher hiring initiative.

Rev. Dr. Groover requested information on how the District is commemorating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the landmark U.S. Supreme Court ruling *Brown v. Board of Education*, which declared state laws establishing separate public schools for black and white students unconstitutional.

## **ADJOURN**

At 8:11 p.m., the School Committee voted by unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth Sullivan  
Executive Secretary