

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**Monday, March 18, 2019 – Regular Meeting**

7:00 p.m. – City Council Chambers – City Hall

**Members present:** Mr. Futrell, Ms. Palmer, Ms. O’Sullivan, Dr. Ackman, Ms. Normand, Mr. Green, Ms. Pitone, Councilor Ballantyne and Mayor Curtatone.

**Members absent:** None.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Normand called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. with a moment of silence followed by a salute to the flag of the United States of America.

Chair Normand asked Superintendent Skipper to call the roll, results of which were as follows: PRESENT – 9 – Mr. Futrell, Ms. O’Sullivan, Ms. Pitone, Dr. Ackman, Ms. Palmer, Mr. Green, Ms. Normand, Councilor Ballantyne and Mayor Curtatone. ABSENT – 0 –.

**II. REPORT OF STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES**

The Somerville High School student representatives Emily Nash and Aislinn Cannistraro were present but did not have a student report for this meeting.

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- JANUARY 28, 2019
- FEBRUARY 4, 2019

MOTION: Motion by Mr. Futrell to approve minutes from January 28, 2019 and February 4, 2019, seconded by Dr. Ackman. Motion approved via voice vote.

**IV. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Before the start of Public Comment, Chair Normand read the School Committee Public Comment policy, which may be found on our school website.

- Michelle Borne lives on 59 Curtis Street and she addressed concerns about discrimination and bias in the Somerville Public Schools. Through conversations with students and other parents she has heard of outward expressions of antisemitism, bias against Muslims and other religions, racism, homophobia and xenophobia. The need for addressing these issues is urgent and clear. In a recent letter, parents are requesting clear policies and guidelines for Somerville teachers, staff, and administrators to follow in response to acts of hate and bias. We are requesting more funding to support comprehensive anti-discrimination training for teachers, staff, students, and interested parents. Ms. Borne said she would like more clear communications from School Committee about about acts of discrimination and bias, as well as better communication of the district’s response. She would also like opportunities for students and the broader Somerville community to have meaningful conversations to heal, learn, and become leaders in fostering inclusivity.
- Marylou Sturniolo then spoke against the Powderhouse Studios proposal. Ms. Sturniolo said that she sees a lot of innovation already happening in our schools. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) recently presented many requests, dreams, and hopes to the School Committee. She said that it worries me that we would put our energies into another school. We are already doing great things, and this new small school would require significant energy, focus, and finances. Many parents Ms. Sturniolo has talked to are not aware of this proposal, and those who are, say the Powderhouse Studios website is very vague. She said she can’t imagine how someone who doesn’t speak English would understand this proposal. I hope School Committee will vote against this school authorization.
- Matthew Miller lives on 52 Madison St. and is a parent of two students. He is speaking in favor of the Powderhouse Studios authorization. It is really important that we have this proposal in Somerville. I know that we’re doing great things here, but my oldest doesn’t fit in well at Somerville High School. Scientific, research-based opportunities like Powderhouse will create more opportunities for students. We need more options in the district. I think this would be good for my kid, but also for Somerville as an innovative city.

- Max Nadeau of 5 Thorndike is a senior at Somerville High (SHS). On balance, his experience at SHS has been great: teacher and students have created a school culture which can be characterized with encouragement, connection, community. He is here tonight to stress the necessity for more college counseling support at SHS. Currently a single college counselor splits her time between assisting all 300 seniors and administering all the standardized tests. Our 6-year college persistence rate is at about 30% for SHS graduates; while at Prospect Hill Academy (PHA), the 6-year college completion is around 65%. This week, friends of his are receiving disappointing news leaving them wondering if they could have done more. To be clear, 1 or 2 counselors would be too little; PHA parity would be 11 new counselors hired.
- Matt Gray of 7 Oakland Ave is a small business owner speaking in support of Powderhouse Studios. He is in favor of public schools — equitable and democratic system of education. This is an important proposal, and a way to bring innovation to public schools. He understands the concerns about cost and diversity but thinks we should at least give it a try. It's worth trying and could reenergize the whole system.
- Greg Nadeau of 5 Thorndike has two children at SHS. The design of Powderhouse Studios is not just appropriate for a small group of students, it applies to students of all abilities and backgrounds. All students should benefit. The district is doing good work with grants from the Barr Foundation and Nellie Mae Foundation but must accelerate change. As XQ has shown no willingness for the award to support the school, this would be a \$7 million cut to the district. Three conditions should be met to approve the plan: 1. No net Somerville district funds used to operate the school for the first 3 years. 2. No commitment to the school beyond 3 years. 3. And insistence that the students and district staff rotate through the school so that it not be an isolated education experience for a few. If this plan isn't approved, the School Committee must commit to a concrete timeline to realize meaningful structural changes to the core systems of schedule, assessment, and student support.
- Matt Timmons of 96 Bartlett St. has two students at the Argenziano school. He is here in support of the recommendations of Mr. Silverman, assistant principal at the Argenziano school, to add more guidance counselors. Student to guidance counselor ratio has swelled to 550:1. Having 2-3 more colleagues would greatly benefit the school. I ask for the School Committee and administration to support this recommendation.
- Alex Pierre of 7 St. James Ave. is a parent of kids who went to public, private, and parochial schools. Children are not uniform; they need different forms of education. We need to build a new high school building but also change what happens in the school. Mr. Pierre supports Powderhouse Studios as a place to experiment.
- Ben Echeverria of 7 Gilman Terr. is a former pupil of SPS and here as Executive Director of The Welcome Project. We are in favor of this new school after talking with immigrant families for the past year. The Welcome Project will have its first advocate within the schools next year. We're for this because the school takes a lot of different approaches to education. I spend a lot of time at schools like Prospect Hill and Saint Catherine's – and see a lot of students of color. Some parents don't trust the district. We need a school with smaller class sizes that bridges the achievement gap. Longer school days and longer school year will help achieve this. Equity costs money, but we have to put skin in the game and spend money. Take a chance on Powderhouse; there are some things I'd like to see change, but let's take a chance because equity can't wait.
- Katie Gradowski of 202 Pearl St. I want to talk about the budget. I've looked at the budget a bunch of times and it pulls no money from the city based on the Per Pupil Average (PPA). There are two reasons I can think of for why the School Committee would vote no: XQ hasn't committed to pay or the district does not intend to pay the full PPA – that would be illegal. This is saying that Somerville is refusing to fund its students. I would ask the district to provide more budget figures. Somerville gains and loses students in any given year. This is an equity issue. The school was designed to serve high needs students. We deserve a full accounting of the financial implications from the district.

Superintendent Skipper then addressed the parents who came forward and gave a testimony, who had previously sent a petition to the Superintendent and School Committee. It is troubling that we are seeing the rise in hate speech in Massachusetts and nationally. We are taking steps in a positive direction. We appreciate meeting with Rabbi Jacobowitz. We have been working with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and New York City Leadership Academy (NYCLA), and the district has Facing History and Ourselves coming in to do a

districtwide leadership training on April 1<sup>st</sup>. These are only the beginning steps. We are working with the Mayor's office to tackle this as a community issue.

**V. ITEM OUT OF ORDER – FIELD TRIP TO PUERTO RICO**  
**April 16, 2020 – April 22, 2020**

SHS teacher Stephen Ens Dorf then spoke about the upcoming field trip to Puerto Rico. 25 Somerville High School students from grades 9 through 12 will visit Puerto Rico to learn about the culture, history, politics and environment. Transportation via air plane, bus and boat. Student cost \$2,700.

Stephen Ens Dorf and Alicia Kersten are proposing a trip to Puerto Rico in April 2020. This trip has many academic elements that include history, culture, science, service learning and politics. We plan to take about 20 - 25 students. We do not want money to be the reason a student couldn't go on this trip and plan to fundraise extensively for this as well as using the free spots the company allows to offset the cost for students who need it.

Chair Norman said this group would raise lots of money if Mr. Maloney would come back into the Fab Lab, that would be excellent.

Dr. Ackman asked which company and if they could speak to the service learning?

Mr. Ens Dorf said the company is Explorica and then spoke about the plans which aren't fully finalized just yet. They may visit La Perla, which is below San Juan or visit a rural school and work with some of their students. Additionally, one of the things they want to get on the plans is to visit with some of the political figures in San Juan to learn about the impacts of the hurricane and other environmental issues faced by Puerto Rico.

MOTION: Motion by Mr. Green to approve this field trip, seconded by Ms. Palmer.  
Motion approved via voice vote.

**VI. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT**  
**A. District Report**

- Powderhouse Studios (PHS) Deliberations and Vote

Ms. Normand turned to the topic of Powderhouse Studios. She thanked the team for bringing such a good idea to the city. This goes back to 2012 and involved many great educators. The first iteration of the innovation plan included John Oteri, Karen Woods, Tony Pierantozzi, Lisa Tatterson, Tony Ciccariello and the PHS staff. Also thanks to the second innovation committee, which included PHS staff, Superintendent Skipper, Steve Stephano, Ben Echeverria, Mario Souza, Jill Geiser and herself who all worked on the plan and voted to approve it March 9<sup>th</sup> 2017. In the past two years, hundreds of hours have been spent exploring, questioning and working together to strengthen this plan. Thank you to Mayor Curtatone, Mary Skipper, Jeff Curley and School Committee for continuing to push this idea. And thank you to School Committee members who kept telling the administration to keep pursuing this idea.

To be clear tonight, what we are voting on is the applicant's March 2017 Innovation Plan, which was received on January 14<sup>th</sup> this year. In the last two months, School Committee has held two public hearings, 15 office hour sessions, and foregrounded PHS in 5 School Committee meetings. We have really tried to be out there gathering information and thank you to all those constituents who have given public comment. The law says the after the submission of the innovation plan the School Committee shall on the basis of quality of the plan and in consideration of comments given by the public, undertake a final vote to authorize the innovation school for a period of not more than five years.

Chair Norman then called for a MOTION to take a final vote on whether to authorize the March 9, 2017 Powderhouse Studios Innovation plan.

MOTION: Motion by Mr. Green to take a final vote on the authorization of the Powderhouse Studios Innovation Plan of March 9, 2017, seconded by Ms. Palmer.

Chair Normand asked for any further discussion.

Mr. Futrell prepared a statement on the vote tonight.

- Tonight's vote is really important to me because it has both a tangible and symbolic effect - we can move forward with a specific proposal or not as well as communicate to our district, parents, and community that Somerville Public Schools is committed to innovation. As someone who spent my early years in foster care, and as someone who's served in the military with many incredibly smart people for whom traditional education didn't give them enough opportunities to show their strengths, I care deeply that we as a city are giving our kids the best opportunity to shine in Somerville.
- The Powderhouse proposal has resonated with me over the last 6 years that I've served on the School Committee because it proposes giving kids more agency in their own educational career. It's clearly resonated with the community as well since, by my rough estimate, 70% of the community outreach to me has been in support of the proposal. Powderhouse Studios proposes that we reimagine what school looks like for middle and high schoolers, and for our teachers as well. Ultimately, the Powderhouse Studios proposal is trying to do something that traditional public education struggles to do - offer distinctly different educational models within one system.
- - For example, our 8:07am - 2:35pm school day doesn't seem to serve anybody well, not least our high schoolers which science has shown do better with a later start, or working parents who must adjust their lives or give up a paycheck to ensure their kids are picked up or have supervision.
  - Or 3 months in the summer where low income families struggle to provide for their kids and avoid the 'summer slide' when higher income families invest financially in advancing their kids on math and English - these are foundational blocks to societal inequities that start right here in schools districts like ours.
  - The Powderhouse proposal is a big bet that a different model will yield different results, and that proposal has drawn me in for years now.
- There are critics that say that this proposal costs too much, but who also agree that paying teachers an average wage of \$60,000 in a city that requires at least \$75,000 to get by isn't right. Or they say that a cost per student of \$21,000 is too much in a district where we pay over twice that for some students who need that investment to grow and learn. Though it is NOT accurate to say that this proposal is fully funded - in years 4 and 5 there is a placeholder for \$1.6M annually of grant dollars that have not been allocated or awarded by any foundation and represents only an assumption that we will receive those funds - in my opinion it isn't the absolute amount we should be reacting to, but the IMPACT of that investment.
- There are critics of the proposal out there that say some class sections at the high school will need to shut down if Powderhouse is successful. If Powderhouse serves those students better, than it does not seem an unreasonable cost to shift resources toward a program that does what we're all aiming for. There are new problems that a section shift would create such as what to do with a new high school building that's designed for optimistically high enrollment, but we should be building programs that serve our kids and not driving kids to serve our buildings.
- All of this said, there are other criticisms of the Powderhouse Studios proposal that resonate with me. In short, while I recognize the immense amount of work that the PHS team has done as a team and in collaboration with Somerville Public Schools, there are many deep questions I have that will result in my 'no' vote this evening.
- - The length of time it has taken to get the educational plan to its current state, inclusive of all the extraneous negotiating we've done, hasn't convinced me that negotiating the remainder of the plan will be smooth enough to represent a good use of our district leadership's time over the next year. Though we often reference that this plan has been in the works for 7 years, there remain significant questions and part of what I've considered in my vote tonight is the strength of our collaboration to date as a yes vote and subsequent launch would lead to more collaboration.
  - We've seen financial estimates vary significantly over time, even at an accelerated rate over the last 3 months leading to this vote. In my professional life, if I see repeated wide variances in financial figures, it tells me that the team doesn't trust their own assumptions, or that those assumptions haven't yet been rigorously tested. The bar for approval here, in my view, is not only a strong belief in the guiding vision of the proposal but a trust that these details will work out smoothly going forward. The rigor that has been applied to assumptions, to include funding decisions controlled by a third party that has headlined with \$10M but who has not committed to spending \$10M on this school, isn't strong enough to for me approve this proposal.

- Another concern is the plan for enrollment. The PHS proposal is attempting to serve a representative slice of SPS kids while focusing a unique educational model for a group of kids who need something nontraditional. I don't see how these two things square against each other and the conceptual mismatch suggests an issue that's deeper than a year's worth of work will suss out.
- There's been a significant amount of time spent negotiating around the ownership of intellectual property, and I think that has largely escaped the public's attention - negotiation around what can students or teachers create while they're getting paid by Somerville tax dollars, how they own that creation, and how can they monetize it. In my eyes, this is a significant distraction from the educational plan. We've paid our lawyer and paid in district leadership time to negotiate on this point and I struggle to understand how this helps our kids learn better. Time that we've spent negotiating this point, when each day has no more than 24 hours, therefore takes away from time we could've spent talking about equity or curriculum or other things on which we still have questions. In my eyes, the inclusion of this element represents a sub-optimal use of all of our time, and causes me to question prioritization as we go forward.
- The Powderhouse Studios team is a team of great people - I've known them for quite some time and consider them friends, hopefully so after tonight - and I have and will continue to applaud them for their persistence. They have a bold idea that is seeking to serve kids in a way that a more bureaucratic, traditional, and highly regulated school district struggles to do. But I will vote no tonight because the PHS team and our district leadership have agreed that the proposal should NOT start in Fall of 2019 as this proposal in front of us states, and because I continue to have concerns. This isn't a vote against the idea of Powderhouse Studios and all that it represents, but this is a vote against the 61-page proposal in front of us tonight.
- Lastly, mine is not a vote against innovation. I hope that parents paying attention tonight continue to press the district for innovation. The data tells us that we are not serving all of our students equally, and we should be held accountable for this. When we're on the other side of this vote if the proposal should not pass, and as chair of the finance subcommittee, I will be pushing the district and my colleagues to think outside the box on how we can incorporate positive elements of this proposal in the upcoming school year, hopefully in collaboration with the PHS team. I hope that parents who are disappointed with my vote tonight will share that disappointment with me, and then will partner with me to grow innovation within Somerville Public Schools.
- Thank you for your time.

Mr. Green mentioned the innovation plan says the school would open in August 2019. He then asked, would the plan go back to the Innovation Planning Committee if there is a change on the opening date.

Mr. Mike Long, attorney for Somerville Public Schools stepped to the podium and responded, if there are reservations, the School Committee vote may be on the negative, but the plan could go back to the Innovation Planning Committee for further revision.

Superintendent Skipper then gave the following statement regarding her judgement of the Powderhouse Studio Innovation Plan.

Although I do not have a formal role in the vote here tonight, as the educational leader of Somerville Public Schools, I know that my opinion is important to your decision and so I have prepared a statement for School Committee.

I find tonight's decision on approving the Powderhouse Studios innovation plan, and whether to support the proposal, one of the most difficult decisions of my own career. At the heart of it lies two principles by which I have spent my entire career striving to achieve: equity of educational opportunity for ALL children and the responsible use of Innovation as a powerful vehicle for achieving equity.

I would like to begin with a brief history about the proposal before you tonight.

As I learned when I came into the district in 2015, the Powderhouse School or what was then called Somerville Steam Academy already had a history of controversy surrounding it. Questions swirled as to whether it was to be part of Somerville High School or a stand-alone school; how and at what cost would it be funded; what type

of student would be attracted to attending it; would the student body be truly representative of SPS; and what the path forward to an approved innovation plan looked like were all already on the table when I arrived.

The project was stuck. At that time there was no XQ grant for \$10 million and there was no approved agreement with the Somerville Teachers Association. There was a 270-page innovation plan that many stakeholders had trouble digesting and understanding in a way that they felt they could comfortably support. But as I read the plan, having designed and opened a new school multiple times in my career, I saw gems of design and educational vision that I felt deserved an opportunity. And so I and some of my staff began working with Alec Resnick to see what might be possible with Steam Academy and SPS.

From 2015 until now, I can say with confidence that as a district we have spent hundreds upon hundreds of hours, myself more than anyone, with the PHS team, primarily Alec and more recently with Shaunalynn. We have spent \$57,000 in legal fees with our district law firm negotiating a successful MOA with the Somerville Teachers Union which was ratified in January of this year. We have continually tried to move PHS to a point where making it part of SPS as an Innovation School would be possible while still satisfying the PHS team's desire for fidelity to their original design.

In 2016, both the district and PHS each submitted a separate application to XQ for funding. The district to fund the new innovative educational plan for the new Somerville High School building and Alec and his nonprofit Sprout for their PHS innovation plan. As it happened, the District proposal was not funded and XQ awarded a \$10 million grant to Sprouts to support a variety of activities such as the development of a learning management system, a path for digital literacy in collaboration with a graduate school of education as well as the development of the PHS innovation school that could be integrated into the district. Because Somerville Public Schools was not part of designing or submitting that application, the only piece we were aware of and have continually worked on supporting has been the Powderhouse Studios school.

There is no question in my mind nor from my experience that there are some beautiful, original, and valuable ideas in the PHS innovation plan that are of interest to the district in positively impacting all students, and worth continuing to pursue and implement. In fact, there are several initiatives within SPS right now that have similar missions and values to the PHS work.

- For instance, we are at work on project-based and expeditionary learning redesigns for both Somerville High and Full Circle/Next Wave -- supported by the Barr Foundation.
- Or the concept of performance-based assessment that the district has been working toward with the MCIEA consortium for the past 3 years.
- Or the use of inquiry, coding and makerspaces as they are being integrated into our pre-K to 5/8 schools as powerful tools for student motivation and agency.
- Or the development of programs such as our Path program for special education students or our GOAL program for our ELL students at SHS as deeply personalized support programs for students with the greatest need, programs that have lifted the graduation rate to an all-time high and the dropout rate to an all-time low at SHS.

However, the decision before School Committee tonight isn't the simple question of whether the creative ideas found throughout the PHS innovation plan are innovative or worth seeding and growing throughout the District. At least from my perspective I believe they resoundingly are and hope for the opportunity to continue to work with the PHS team in various ways to do so.

The question for me tonight that I need to give input on as the educational leader of SPS is twofold. First, whether the PHS Innovation plan which will lead to the formation of a standalone innovation school is complete, detailed and clear on how it will reach and serve a truly representative population of our district-students who are diverse in race, ethnicity, language, learning need, and income- using a financial model that is realistic and sustainable and through methods that are transferable enough to benefit students and staff in the rest of SPS. And secondly, through a lens of equity, whether launching this standalone school for a small number of yet to be identified students is the best investment of money and human capital to positively impact the broader system.

To the first question, the PHS innovation plan does a great job explaining high-level concepts such as project-based learning, flexible use of time and schedule, competency-based and portfolio assessment, and student agency. Frankly, it's these concepts that have kept many of us engaged in this process with PHS. However, at

this final stage of approval, the high-level ideas of the plan have to come to the ground and in a practical and concrete way detail the specifics for prospective students, parents, staff, and policy makers. Elements such as a legally vetted enrollment algorithm that will lead to the assignment of a student body representative of SPS; a detailed model of both how and what specialized services students on IEP's and English language learners will receive in the proposed project-based, flexible setting; a detailed plan with ample examples of curricula mapped back not just to Common Core but to the Massachusetts learning standards and the mechanism by which student progress toward those standards will be recorded and shared; a clear understanding of the lease terms and location along with an approved safety plan that meets the standards of the District in the yet to be built school location; and a number of yet to be developed MOA's in areas where PHS would vary from current district policy to ensure all stakeholders including students and parents know what is expected, are all examples of the details necessary to approve the plan.

All of this work can certainly be done in a design year when there are no students, working in partnership with the various District departments, but the Innovation Plan is only complete when it reflects the results of that collaboration. Even as a standalone charter school, PHS would need to provide this level of detail to seek state authorization. Given that the plan before us tonight does not have that level of detail and given that the Mass Innovation law requires any substantial changes to the plan be brought back to the Innovation Committee, it would make sense that School Committee would want and need the plan they are voting on to be as complete and coherent as possible in authorizing it. Only then would I as Superintendent, School Committee members, prospective parents, staff, and students of PHS, and the community know what they are actually saying yes to now and in the future.

To the second issue of equity, I have learned in my career that to start any school is expensive as you are creating something that does not yet exist, from resources that previously were allocated to some other set of priorities. In this case, there was a \$10 million grant that was given to the nonprofit Sprout to launch Powderhouse Studios. As we have come to understand it, opening the school was just one element of a plan that included several other big deliverables the PHS team would need to allocate resources to. We have labored over various budget scenarios of how much of the grant is actually available to operationalize the school and how as a district and City we might invest in a way that doesn't deeply cut into other schools or programs.

The current budget anticipates local revenues totaling around \$12.1 million over six years – and \$3.7 million each following year. Investing at this level would require cuts to existing district schools and programs. For example, a budget gap that large would mean the district would have to consider cutting at least 20 teacher or counselor positions; eliminating all out-of-school time programs except Community Schools which would impact more than 400 SPS students; and reducing embedded counseling services across all schools. This process would likely be difficult and painful – and felt particularly hard for students at Somerville High School and Full Circle. Alec and Shaunalynn have been creative with us and have put forward scenarios that offer extensive additional fundraising and applying for a variety of state grants. Unfortunately, as creative as all of the ideas are, in making the commitment to authorize a new school, we cannot base our decision on what-if scenarios. We have to have a concrete budget that assumes a realistic picture of our financial and legal obligations.

Here in Somerville, we are blessed to have a community, a Mayor, a City Council, and a School Committee that year-after-year put the needs of our schools at the forefront of each budget cycle. While most districts struggle with cuts, our district has benefited from steady, healthy budgets that have allowed us to have the resources we need to educate our children and provide them with the academics, social-emotional supports and access to opportunities they need to thrive. And yet, even with those steady, healthy budgets, the increased demand that we like other districts are seeing for more social emotional and mental health supports, universal access to quality birth-3 and pre-k education, more specialized instruction for our English Language learners and students on IEP's, and the demand for quality out of school time opportunities to name but a few, stretches those budgets as far as they will go. So when it comes to whatever additional dollars we have each year, the role of innovation to create and expand offerings in programming, design, STEM, and the arts has to be done with an intent and sense of equity to positively impact as many of our students as possible.

Therefore, unfortunately, in terms of the budget and PHS, there is no model to draw upon or realistic scenario I could give to you in which we could redirect the \$12 million needed without increasing class sizes dramatically, closing numerous classrooms especially at the high school, and eliminating programming that our current 5,000 students rely on not only to learn but in some cases to live. As someone who believes in and has championed the power of new ideas my whole career, it pains me deeply to not be able to solve this problem. In this case, the investment to create something that may only add an unknown amount of benefit to 2-3% of students at

the expense of the remaining 97-98% is one I cannot recommend making at this time. My hope is that we continue to innovate as we have been doing successfully and responsibly with an eye toward programming and design that impacts and transforms our schools broadly and use a lens of equity that Somerville has always embraced to continue to ensure that those students who need more can have it.

In closing, I commend Alec, Shaunalynn, and the PHS team for the tenacity and passion they have shown before I arrived and certainly since. I welcome continuing to work with them and to bring alive some of the ideas they have borne for the benefit of the whole system. However, at this point in time, given the lack of key details in the innovation plan and the vast amount of integration work that remains unresolved, and given the substantial district investment of time and dollars that would disproportionately impact the 5,000 students in addition to many of the staff who already work in the Somerville Public Schools, I cannot offer my support for the proposed plan.

Ms. O'Sullivan prepared a statement for tonight as well.

Clearly there is real interest in this community for innovation. People have spoken passionately about the shortcomings of their own school experiences and/or those of their kids, or kids they care about, and see great potential in the idea of PHS to address those shortcomings. The ideals of project-based learning (PBL) and real-world connection resonate. Our teachers' union has expressed support, and our superintendent and staff have made it clear that they are not afraid to innovate. My SC colleagues, likewise, are eager to find new ways to break the mold in education. In my own experience as an educator in public schools, and as a parent of three school-age children, I see that many of the traditional ways of doing things may not be the most effective. Clearly the interest and need is there.

I have witnessed an incredible amount of progress in SPS in the 10+ years that my own kids have attended. That progress has come about from a targeted focus on high quality instruction and experiences for kids, supports for students and families, attention to recruiting, developing and retaining talented staff. The high school was in a different place then. Today, not only is the high school undergoing a physical renovation, but a programmatic renovation as well, through exciting work with the Barr Foundation. Our School Committee and district is focused on equity in an unprecedented way.

I want to acknowledge all the many, many hours that have gone into this proposal, by the applicants, district staff and counsel, the STA, community members, and my SC colleagues. In preparing for this vote, I have read, and reread, the Powderhouse Studios Innovation Plan (IP), multiple times, and much of the supporting documentation that we have received in the past two months. I have met with constituents, read and reread numerous emails. I have talked with a variety of educators, considered my own experience as an educator, and reviewed related research (e.g. Buck Institute for Education). In considering all of this, it has come down, for me, to three big questions:

1. Is the model proposed in the IP educationally sound?
2. Is the model in the IP fiscally viable?
3. What impact would the school have if implemented within our district?

### **1. Is the model proposed in the IP educationally sound?**

The proposed school model is very enticing, with many solid ideas in the design that are worth pursuing, such as the view of learning as active construction of mental models, the emphasis on PBL, the incorporation of student voice and choice, the interdisciplinary work and more planning time for teachers. In reviewing the materials, one question that kept coming up for me was the role of the state learning standards. The original IP stated that projects would be "retrospectively" back-mapped to traditional academic standards, including but not limited to Common Core ELA and Math (p.3). The graduation requirements had "coverage" of Common Core as one option to meet one of three criteria, not required for all students. In MA, public schools are expected to follow the MA Curriculum Frameworks, which in math and ELA are similar to Common Core, but include other content areas as well. In my opinion, the IP design treats the standards as an afterthought, something to be considered after the work is done. The math domain is narrowed to computation, or the "representing ideas for and with machines, primarily through programming". This does not reflect an understanding of the depth, breadth, and complexity of the content standards, nor the central role they should play in designing learning experiences. While subsequent documents gave the standards more weight and suggested there would be content that all students would experience, it's not clear how that would exist alongside a fundamental PHS principle of student voice/choice.



My second concern is the lack of any defined curriculum. If the standards define the learning goals, the curriculum would describe the activities, tasks and experiences that students would engage in to reach those goals. The idea of "project-based learning" describes the framework, but it doesn't tell us important underlying components. In the IP section devoted to curriculum (p.24-25), the applicant describes the Individualized Learning Plan system, a tool for managing documentation, and mentions partnerships, and cross-registration with other educational institutions. These all may be important pieces, but they are not curriculum. The applicant has provided a few project samples, but I would expect a much more fully developed curriculum model after so many years in development. The model calls for teachers to develop projects based on their interest. I absolutely agree that teachers should be involved in curriculum development and refinement, but given the amount of time and resources it takes to develop curriculum, it is unrealistic to start a school with a nearly blank slate.

Which brings me to my third concern regarding the educational model. Building curriculum from scratch not only takes a tremendous amount of resources and expertise, but also the understanding of how other people develop their understanding of the content. If teachers are to develop the curriculum, the learning experiences, they need to have not just content knowledge, but also what's known as pedagogical content knowledge, the integration of subject expertise and skilled teaching of that particular subject. The IP and more specifically the language around the curriculum and the staffing, doesn't have the recognition of the importance of pedagogical content knowledge that I would need to see. In addition, the staffing model includes two content specialists, one in ELA and one in Math, for 80 students overseeing many different projects. At full capacity, with 18 staff for 160 students, only four would be designated as content specialists.

And in addition to writing curriculum, staff will be, according to the IP,

- Participating in a wide-variety of specialized training (p.8),
- Mapping work onto a mixture of personal, professional, and academic goals (including traditional academic standards),
- Developing their own systems of evaluation at least annually (p.9),
- Regularly administering diagnostic academic tests based on the SAT suite and MCAS (p.12) and using results to provide small-group and one-on-one support.
- establishing an active outreach program by running in- and afterschool programs, summer and vacation camps (p.18),
- Developing extensive onboarding and professional development programming (p.19),
- Developing community partnerships, vetting, training, logistics, and liaison infrastructure (p.19),
- Researching, prototyping, and designing of novel tools, materials and approaches (p.19),
- Developing their own trauma-sensitive programming and professional development for staff, students and families (p.20), and
- Sharing administrative duties (p.21).

These are all worthy activities and included in the design with good intentions. But I have serious concerns about how PHS's staff, even with a longer workday and longer year calendar, could effectively do all that. This aspect of the design seems unrealistically ambitious.

All of these concerns around the educational model are, for me, not insignificant details to be worked out later. I believe they would have a real impact on student learning while at PHS and on student success post-PHS.

## **2. Is it financially sound? Would the proposed budget support the proposed model?**

The IP does not have budget specifics (p.23, p.30), so my assessment of this question comes from budget materials that we received about a month ago. I appreciate the applicant's efforts to work with our district staff to adjust the proposed model so that it is more inline, financially, with the district's allocation of the per pupil amount. Designing and launching a new school requires a lot of resources, and I'm not confident that those are reflected in the budget. Changes have been proposed to the model, such as the reduction of Youth Advocates from one per cohort to one shared across two cohorts. Putting aside the question of whether changes like this need to go back to the Innovation Committee per state regulation for approval, the impact on the design needs to be articulated and considered. In addition, the budget numbers are built on the assumption that the maximum number of students, 40, would enroll in each cohort. If fewer enrolled, the per pupil allocation would be reduced. How would the school accommodate that reduced budget? Small schools are expensive to operate, in part because of the fixed costs and the overhead costs split among a smaller number of students.

### **3. What impact would the school have if implemented within our district?**

Finally, this is not a proposal for an independent entity. It would become a Somerville public school, and as such would have an impact on the rest of the system, in potentially both positive and negative ways. It could be a force for change and allow SPS to develop a powerful new model that could be replicated, on a smaller scale, in other schools. But this possibility would come at a cost, to me a very significant cost. District staff have already put in an enormous amount of time to try to make this work, which I believe is indicative of the challenges faced to develop a sound, viable model that would integrate into our public district. All of the above concerns I raised on the educational model would require substantial support from district staff to develop, support that would need to be taken away from other initiatives. In addition, at capacity, the school would have 18 staff. Where will those positions come from? And finally, do we have confidence that we will be able to devise an enrollment algorithm that would yield a representative student population, in an equitable and legal way? These unanswered questions are again, significant to me and taken in consideration of my concerns about the educational model and financial questions, prevent me from voting in favor.

Our superintendent is one of the most, if not the most determined educator I have ever met, with an amazing balance of aspiration, perseverance and pragmatism. I know, if this were approved, she would do everything under the sun to ensure that the enrolled students get a shot at a good education, but at what cost? I believe the cost is too high.

This is not our path forward to innovation. We should be expanding authentic, project-based learning for all students, aligned with standards and with the work currently underway in the district. There are some very worthy ideas here, and hundreds, thousands of hours invested that should not be for naught. There are other schools in the region that offer models of programs within schools that we should explore (e.g. Brookline High School Within a School, Wellesley High Evolutions, Concord-Carlisle High Rivers-Revolutions). Some have argued that PHS needs to be a separate school, incubated, away from the institutional pull of a traditional school. While I can understand that argument, I am more persuaded by the importance of keeping it within the high school, an option for all kids, rather than a separate entity. We need options, different approaches AND those options can exist WITHIN our schools. We need to stay focused on increasing effective teaching and learning, including project-based learning. In short, we need innovation for all students.

Ms. Palmer then stated a question through the Chair to the administration. We have received quite a bit of constituent communication on this topic. We heard public testimony this evening which stated quite boldly that this project is fully funded, and also have received questions asking whether the school will have a significant budget impact – and what that impact would be. Is it possible to clarify the financial impact, because there seems to be a big disconnect? Is there any context that may be provided to help bridge that gap?

Superintendent Skipper explained what she believes to be the best way to understand this. There is a \$10 million XQ grant of which a portion of has been agreed upon in writing by XQ, not the full amount. Roughly \$1 million was already been spent by the Powderhouse Studios team. That leaves \$9 million of which XQ has only committed to \$7.7 million in writing. We use this as the basis to calculate out what the school would cost. There is no detailed budget or staffing plan within the innovation plan, so we had to go back and calculate everything with the Powderhouse Studios team. So of the approximate \$18 million total five-year cost and with the XQ portion, Somerville Public School district allocation would have to fill the rest. Because it's a new entity, this \$12.1 million is part of the existing budget already. The money is already in other district classrooms and programs and we have reallocate some of this to support the new entity because the money has to come from somewhere.

Mr. Green noted that the superintendent said in her remarks that if this were a charter school, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) likely wouldn't approve it. I would like to ask my colleagues who worked at DESE before to say whether or not they agree with this statement.

Both Dr. Ackman and Ms. O'Sullivan agreed that this proposal would likely not be approved by DESE.

Mayor Curtatone then made some comments as well.

Being here tonight I am reminded of what makes this city so special; families speaking against hate, students advocating for more supports in their schools. This is a painful and frustration decision to make. Alec and

Shaunallynn made me think about the trait of innovation, having a passion for curiosity and the ability to be abnormal, they made me think about this from an education perspective. I will not be voting to support the proposal. I want to thank Alec and Shaunallynn. Thank Superintendent Skipper and Dr. Curley for their countless hours to engage with the Powderhouse Studios team. Our superintendent has tried harder than anyone to make this work.

We are not afraid of being bold or abnormal or to do innovating things. We brought this proposal to the brink. I'm frustrated that we can't bring this forward tonight. This has changed my perspective. We want to embrace innovation but in a way that is sustainable. We will look at these ideas and support them financially. I am an advocate for education. We need to evaluate all investments through an equity lens. We are striving to close equity gaps, and I'm worried that this could inadvertently grow inequities. I want to thank the proponents of the proposal and those who advocated for it. You have my commitment as a member of this committee and as a chief executive. They inspire me and I hope we can continue to work with them. But tonight I have to vote no to authorization. Thank you Madame Chair.

Mr. Green said he did not do a prepared statement but shared his thoughts. 5% of English Language Learners (ELL) at the Healey school are meeting expectations on MCAS. As a district, we are still failing too many of our black and brown students. We are failing them well before high school. As much as we need innovation, this is not where Somerville is currently falling down. I struggle to justify how this proposal addresses deep equity issues. Equity costs money; it absolutely costs money. We have deep inequities in how we serve ELL students. This is my real problem. If I thought this proposal would address meaningful achievement gaps, I would support this proposal. The district's bandwidth is a challenge. Last year, the district rallied when the Superintendent was absent for medical reasons.

There is little capacity to do anything more than effectively run the current system. The biggest obstacle is time and energy. About 80% is spend running the district; about 13% is about putting out fires. This leaves about 2% of the enterprise being able to focus on strategic improvements. The plan is half-complete; this is what we would be spending more than half of our time on. I have to be convinced that this would address inequities in outcomes. I'm not convinced of that. This is personally painful for me. I left high school because it didn't work for me. One of my guiding principles is to do big things toward equity. I love those ideas, but I can't justify those things for 40 students. I have to do those things for the district's 5,000 students. We didn't get the results from the Powderhouse Studios team's work at the Healey school. I want to talk about really reinventing school, not creating a carve out. The work we've done to expand out-of-school time has been one of the more equitable thing — the idea of gutting that is painful for me. I have aunts and uncles who were issued high school diplomas but were illiterate until their 40s. The Powderhouse Studios enrollment algorithm seems like it's still a challenge. Even if we were to find an algorithm, I can't find a way of seeing the school serving 20 students of color. I can't find a way forward.

Dr. Ackman would like to thank the district and Powderhouse team for the hours of hard work on this proposal. I echo each of my colleagues well thought and eloquently stated points as well as the concerns brought up by Superintendent Skipper. I'm the Ward 1 School Committee member and all of my constituents asked me to vote against the plan, largely due to the concerns that have been outlined tonight.

At this time, Vice Chair Ackman will take to the podium so Chair Normand could give her statement.

Chair Normand made her statement.

I'm going to speak about my experience with the Powderhouse team. I met Alec Resnick in 2012 when he had a 260-page innovation plan. I loved it. This was clearly a group of people committed to scholarship and to learning. I went into the innovation committee fully expecting to vote yes, but I ended up voting no. It took a lot of soul searching and some tears. I voted no because the plan wasn't complete enough. I couldn't vote yes at that time. I still struggle with the same questions. I don't see a full plan. We have been given a lot, and I have read a lot. The Special Education plan is a literature review — not a plan to deliver services to special education students. When I read through the Powderhouse operations manual (last revised Sep 2017) and this is a direct quote "for Powderhouse to survive and evolve as our mission requires us to, our differences must survive and evolve the pressures of a public school district in Massachusetts in 2017. We believe these pressures are the most substantial and existential threat to our work". There is a deep conflict if the district is seen as an existential threat to our work. We have to think about this failure. I'm saddened that two years later we have the same questions I was asking back in 2017. The plans aren't there; the details aren't there. The lease has 12 redacted pages, which I can't sign on to in good faith as a fiduciary agent for the district. I have

spent a lot of time on this with the Powderhouse team; my child was at the Healey with the Powderhouse team. There is just not enough detail. I can't trust that this will help kids. It's disappointing that two years later, I still have the same list of questions.

President Ballantyne started off by stating she is a parent of two daughters. During this time, I have seen a lot of change in our schools. Many things have changed and many after school programs have grown. I've seen positive change and involvement. I thank the parents and community for their involvement - and advocacy for more educational options. I agree with some of my colleagues about the Intellectual Property, curriculum, etc. I value innovation, and I am excited about the innovations happening in Somerville Public Schools. The Career Technical Education (CTE) program is project-based learning and it's amazing. There are programs in advanced manufacturing and engineering, metal fabrications, dentistry, and many others. At the same time, our teachers at SHS are working on a new education model. These competencies can be developed in a wider learning ecosystem. This work puts students at the center of learning and creates career pathways. Ultimately, the administration and teachers would have to implement the Powderhouse Studios school. I have to respect Superintendent Skipper and her staff, and based on their opinion, I cannot support the plan as presented. I will support her recommendation and reasoning as to why this school is not ready to be a standalone school. The Innovation Law requires more from the applicant. The plan directs a large number of resources to a small number of students.

Ms. Pitone said thank you to my colleague and Superintendent and her staff. I will try to summarize. This is the most I've ever heard from the community. My heart was passionate about this idea, but my head could not resolve. I've seen the Superintendent's staff try to resolve this over the last few months. I appreciate the bravery and being frank about the district impact. It is absolutely wrong to say we don't support innovation — that is absolutely wrong. A million dollars have been spent and a learning management system has been developed. I've reread the Innovation Plan again this week and was excited but left with many questions. I follow the Superintendent's recommendation in not supporting the school.

Ms. Palmer asked a few more clarifying questions. There's a lot of information, but there are some important pieces that I want to make sure are clear. First, the school opening date, the plan that is being deliberated on tonight indicates August 2019, can the administration clarify whether this opening was agreed upon? Also, in terms of the commitment from XQ and the \$7.7 million that you had landed on, is that agreed upon?

Superintendent Skipper responded that at the last School Committee presentation, the Powderhouse Studios team indicated that they agreed that given all of the things we've talked about that are not yet complete, it would be irresponsible to enroll students this Fall. So it was agreed upon that 2019 would not be a year that we could have for student entrance. While the district agrees, we do not have that assurance from XQ at this time. In terms of the \$7.7 million, as of late February, that is the amount that has been agreed upon by XQ.

Ms. Palmer asked an additional question. We have been advised by counsel that the proposed enrollment algorithm is unconstitutional. Can you just explain this piece and where it would leave the school?

Mr. Long replied that the algorithm is driven by some mathematical assumptions that suggest that although the purpose is very careful and is intended to ensure a diverse student body, if you apply the algorithm you end up with what looks like a quota system. The way the courts are interpreting admissions, enrollment and employment policies these days when you have a result of a policy which is established mathematically, I think it is really difficult to avoid the conclusion that it is still a quota, no matter how well intended the policy is. In the memorandum that I distributed through Superintendent Skipper and Dr. Curley back in at the end of February talking about various Office of Civil Rights (OCR) Rulings, it made it clear that diversity is an acceptable and desirable element in enrollment. In crafting a formula, the OCR Rulings used terms like "a slight advantage" and those are soft terms, whereas the mathematical certainty of this particular algorithm is more concrete than a slight advantage or additional consideration that might result from a general reference to diversity as a desirable trait.

Mr. Futrell commented we have all gone around and weighed in. I expect community members who were supportive of this, will ask what's next. I am committed to innovation and want to make sure it is represented in our upcoming budget. There is a relation between XQ the funder and Powderhouse Studios nonprofit to open a school in Somerville. What is our relationship to XQ?

Superintendent Skipper said there was no direct relationship between XQ and the district. She had to reach out to the funder in the first place. XQ has visited Somerville for only one meeting, and the district has been party to only three phone calls with the funder. We have had nothing to do with the XQ grant funding, which again was given to the Powerhouse nonprofit organization.

Mr. Futrell wanted to add for community members who will be asking what happens next, the key point here is that there is no formal relationship with XQ and Somerville Public Schools. There is probably a role to play with your elected representatives in asking them, what now? This is a separate relationship from an amended proposal or anything similar that may take place.

Superintendent Skipper had two additional points: When the grant was originally given in 2016, we found out through the Powderhouse Studios team. XQ first did a surprise event for Powderhouse Studios. They then had a kickoff event shortly after which the Mayor and I were invited to. They had another event in 7 Hills Park, and our only role was to have people attend, that was the last meaningful communication with XQ. We would welcome the opportunity of a structured relationship with the funder but through our conference calls with XQ, they have expressed they don't want to have a governance roll. This is the only new district innovation school XQ has supported; other schools were charters, independents, or conversions.

Ms. Pitone wanted to close on what Mr. Futrell spoke about. My understanding with the innovation statute is that if through this process the approval is withheld or we choose not to approve it, the innovation planning committee may revise the plan and submit it to the School Committee for a subsequent vote.

Mr. Long then read Section M of the law, which states "If approval is not obtained, that is by the School Committee, an innovation planning committee may revise the innovation plan and submit the revised plan to the School Committee for a subsequent vote."

Ms. Palmer then read her prepared statement.

I'm feeling a little emotional, so I will read my comments. I want to highlight a few things. Ideas I really like in the Powderhouse Studios Innovation School Plan (ISP), and I really hope (and believe) we will implement over the long term in ALL our schools, particularly at the new high school:

- Concept of an Individualized learning plan for all students
- Project-based learning – that is "meaningful, hard, deep, real, honest"
- Student-centered learning
- Depth over breadth - large, unbroken blocks of time for learning
- Flex schedule – proposed day starts at 10am and that there's an hour for lunch - feels more humane and in line with the current brain science suggesting acute harm to teens due to lack of sleep
- Year round schooling/extended day, as an option

The weighted lottery design for enrollment that is included in the ISP as the mechanism to ensure that the student body enrolled is reflective of SPS as a whole in terms of race, socioeconomic and special education and English Language Learner status is unconstitutional. Without a replacement, this plan is not viable.

I understand there are those who have suggested this is worth risking a lawsuit over, to get the school started, but I don't think that's a sound use of our precious and limited district funds (nor do I think we'd prevail). And even if the school somehow were to enroll majority black and brown kids, there is also nothing inherent in the ISP that would suggest its opening would translate into our district doing a better job at serving those populations of students.

Yes, small class sizes and teacher student ratios are incredibly helpful to student and teachers alike but how is it equitable to offer this to 30-40 students (or even 140 if or when the school is fully enrolled) and not to all students in our district? What would we say to the waitlisted students who also want small class sizes and more individualized learning? Those are not concepts that need opportunities to be sand boxed, we all know we get better educational outcomes with smaller class sizes. And, if the consequence of opening PHS would likely lead to LARGER class sizes for the rest of the district, as our Superintendent has suggested it could, how do we reconcile that? Proponents of this new school have been essentially arguing that this new school is cost-neutral or would somehow SAVE the district money. That is just not the financial reality here. I wish it were, but it just is not.

The principle difference between being a mom and believing this proposed school might work for my own high needs special education student at some point in his future, and being a member of this School Committee is that we are charged with making hard decisions to do what's best for all students, while also remaining fiscally accountable to the taxpayers of our City.

Equity is a huge issue in our district and one we as a School Committee have collectively decided we must take steps to concretely address. Educational outcomes for our black and brown students are not equal to those of our white students. That is not okay. And it is not good enough to just about it not being okay. I agree, as one constituent commented this evening, equity can't wait and it costs money.

It is certainly seductive to be presented with a plan with good ideas and know that the applicant sincerely wishes to make equity one of the school's primary goals. But wishing something simply does not make it true. If it did, then our district would not be grappling with ongoing equity concerns, as I know my colleagues and I (and certainly district leadership) also care deeply about all children in our district and providing the best possible education for all. And yet, we continue to fall short, particularly for certain populations of students.

Our educational leader, Superintendent Skipper, has spent hundreds of hours one on one with the applicant trying to turn this ISP into one we could approve today. The fact that we have, as a district, invested these hours and funds, has demonstrated to me that we have district leadership willing to pull out all the stops to continue to improve our systems and create new opportunities that are best for kids and their learning. But this plan has big holes, a lot still to figure out. (See 14-point list of "PHS Concerns and Uncertainties" in comments below)

I also understand the instinct of families who are passionate about the ideas in the proposal to want to grant a leap of faith to the applicant that all can or will be worked out once the proposal is approved and before the school opens for kids. You want this opportunity for your kid, and you're willing to take the risk. You want this opportunity because you think it will be good for ALL kids and for public education in general. You're desperate for more innovation in our schools.

And, believe me, I hear you. I ran for School Committee because there is so much change I want to see happening. While we are doing so many great things, there is so much more we could or should be doing and change comes at such a snails' pace. But that's not actually the question before us tonight. This is not a problem of being risk-averse, or opposed to innovation, or not wanting to think outside the box.

According to the Innovation School Statute, (see <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71/Section92>) we on School Committee are required to deliberate and vote only on the substance included in the 61 page innovation plan as submitted to us. As much as we might want to, we simply can't substitute good will or best intentions for lack of concrete, fleshed out details.

And, like my colleagues who have spoken before me, if our Superintendent cannot recommend approval here, I also do not feel as though it's in the best interest of our families, or fiscally responsible to vote to approve.

Therefore, it is my intention to vote to withhold approval on the plan at this time.

As the innovation statute lays out: If appropriate, the applicant can, at a later date, request a reconvening of the Innovation Planning Committee, which can revise the plan and "submit the revised plan to the school committee for a subsequent vote".

I know this is deeply disappointing to many of you in the room, though also a big relief to many others.

Regardless of tonight's vote, I am sincerely impressed and inspired by everyone who came here tonight and who have reached out to us in all the ways over the last few months. I am also incredibly grateful to the applicant team who has worked tirelessly over the last many years to try to bring their ideas to life for our students, and to our district leadership who have really sunk their heart and soul into this process, while at the same time continuing to juggle the day to day operations of all our existing schools and creating a cohesive district vision as we move forward.

We have a vibrant community who cares deeply about the quality of education of our children here in Somerville, and I am honored to be a part of it.

MOTION: Motion by Mr. Green to take a final vote to authorize the March 9, 2017 Powderhouse Studios Innovation Plan, seconded by Ms. Palmer.

Chair Normand asked for a Roll call vote: all voted "no". The motion fails.

Superintendent concluded her report for the evening.

## **VII. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES**

### **A. School Committee Meeting for Education Programs and Instruction Committee of the**

**Whole:** January 28, 2019 (Ms. O'Sullivan)

Education Programs & Instruction - Meeting Minutes - January 28, 2019

The Education Programs & Instruction Committee of the Whole held a meeting on January 28, 2019. School committee members in attendance were Paula G. O'Sullivan, Emily Ackman, Laura Pitone, Andre Green, Dan Futrell, and Lee Palmer. Participating district staff included Superintendent Mary Skipper, Assistant Superintendent Almi Abeyta, Kenya Avant (Data Coordinator), and Brown School staff Shawn Maguire (principal), Kate Melillo (counselor), and Julie Jasper (4th grade teacher).

Ms. O'Sullivan called the meeting to order at 6:07pm. There was one topic on the agenda, the Brown School Improvement Plan.

Brown school staff started the presentation by sharing several positive updates, including the DESE designation as a MA School of Recognition in 2018, the high percentages of students Meeting or Exceeding expectations on MCAS, and various curriculum activities taking place. However, although overall in mathematics 73% of students in grades 3-5 were Meeting or Exceeding expectations, gaps between subgroups exist. These gaps are the academic focus of the school's improvement plan. School staff presented strategies implemented so far to address these gaps, including providing targeted supports to individual students. Going forward, the school plans to take steps to understand the students' experience in school, by examining policies and practices from the student's point of view and developing success plans for each child.

In addition to the academic focus, the school's improvement plan also includes a student wellness focus, specifically on reducing the prevalence of student anxiety. School staff noticed an increase in the percentage of 504 and special education referrals for social-emotional concerns over the past three years and have developed preliminary next steps to support student wellness. These steps include using Student Insights to ensure classrooms have appropriate amounts of support, implementing mindfulness techniques, and making modifications to classrooms create more calming spaces.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:00pm.

MOTION: Motion by Dr. Ackman, seconded by Ms. O'Sullivan, to accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Education Programs and Instruction Committee of the Whole of January 28, 2019.

Motion approved via voice vote.

**B. School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities:** January 30, 2019 (Mr. Futrell)

**C. School Committee Meeting for Educational Program and Instruction Committee of the**

**Whole:** February 11, 2019 (Ms. O'Sullivan)

Tabled.

**D. School Committee Meeting for Education Programs and Instruction Committee of the**

**Whole:** February 25, 2019 (Ms. O'Sullivan)

Tabled.

**E. School Committee Meeting for Education Programs and Instruction Committee of the**

**Whole:** March 6, 2018 (Ms. O'Sullivan)

Tabled.

**F. School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities:** March 6, 2019 (Mr. Futrell)

**G. School Committee Meeting for Rules Management:** March 11, 2019 (Ms. Palmer)

Rules Subcommittee  
Meeting Minutes & Report 3.11.19  
Meeting called to order by Chair Palmer at 6pm.

Attendees:

Lee Erica Palmer, Chair,  
Laura Pitone, Vice Chair,  
Dan Futrell, Member,  
Dr. Jeff Curley, Chief of Staff SPS  
Resident Kristen Strezo

Items on agenda/review of policies:

1. Public Comment – File BEDH and BEDH-E (guidelines for same)

Committee wishes to remind all members and Chair of BEDH policy Paragraph 1:

“The length of Public Comment will ordinarily be 20 minutes in length, unless otherwise determined by the Chair or a majority of the School Committee.”

This time limit was intentionally included to balance our desire to hear from the public and best utilize our limited group meeting time for necessary business.

Based on recent experience with Public Comment, we then deliberated on two issues:

- a. Non-residents not permitted under current policy to present at public comment – came up recently when SPS teachers came with their Union leadership to speak but were told they could not because they were not Somerville residents.  
After discussion, the Committee agreed that
  - i. non-resident employees (both district and city) have appropriate channels to air grievances and share their comments, though existing chains of command and their unions/collective bargaining agreements, and the Committee does not wish to complicate or undermine those existing channels;
  - ii. residents appropriately get priority here because they are the tax-payers to whom we are accountable and we have limited meeting time to hear from the public;
  - iii. per our policy non-residents can submit written comment to the Committee at any time via email, fax or mail; and
  - iv. in extraordinary circumstances the Chair always has the discretion to put on the agenda to hear from any non-residents the Committee wishes to hear from you (not as Public Comment but as a separate agenda item)

Thus, no action taken to change this aspect of the policy, though the Committee agreed to discuss at a future meeting whether the residents-only requirement should also apply to our Public Hearing policy (it current does not).

- b. How best to promulgate guidelines at each meeting so procedure and expectations are clear, consistent and fair

After considering proposed amendments by Chair Palmer to the existing policy, Ms. Pitone and Dr. Curley agreed to meet to consolidate the language in the proposed amendments and the existing guidelines in BEDH-E to

- i. Create a short script for the Chair to read at the start of all Public Comment (that can also be included on the sign-in sheet and posted at the podium for speakers) – to make expectations clear and consistent for the public
- ii. Make it clear that applause is not appropriate during Public Comment (also need to change Public Hearing Policy to add this)

This new language will be proposed at April Rules meeting.

2. Sexual Harassment – JBAA

We received public comment that the current policy is inconsistent with other policies that exist (i.e. in student handbook and parent guide) and that students and staff may not be sufficiently aware of the policies and procedures to identify and report all forms of sexual and other harassment in our district.

We were asked to



- a. Clarify the definition we use for sexual harassment (also to include social media);
- b. have a better understanding of the current professional development provided on this for staff;
- c. do the current policies and complaint procedures reflect practice;
- d. are current procedures clear and effective;
- e. how are the policies currently are promulgated (and made visible) to our students.

Committee discussed the possibility of SPS creating a contract that students have to sign (similar to an acceptable use policy for use of SPS technology) to ensure students understand and are committed to community standards on this.

Action: Committee requested that the district

- a. report out at a future meeting on the above questions to understand current practices and efficacy;
- b. propose changes to current policy, if necessary; and
- c. provide some data so our Committee can understand the depth and breadth of the problem of harassment in our district.

### 3. Controlled Choice – File JCA

Despite several attempts to get updated language (or language to strike) to bring this policy into compliance under current law, district counsel again failed to provide said language in time for this (rescheduled) meeting. Committee agreed to table for next meeting with the hope that we will get those recommended changes soon to bring to the full body for swift approval.

Action: tabled

### 4. Online Fundraising – File GBEBD

This Committee deliberated and finalized an updated policy last fall but was waiting to get legal answer on reporting/announcing/approving of all donations by School Committee to appropriately incorporate that into this new policy. Hoping to have this for April meeting, along with any additional recommendations from the district.

Action: tabled

Motion to adjourn: LEP, seconded by DF and approved at 7:15pm

MOTION: Motion by Ms. Palmer, seconded by Dr. Ackman, to accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Education Programs and Instruction Committee of the Whole of March 11, 2019.

Motion approved via voice vote.

Mr. Futrell was not prepared to report out the two Finance meetings on the agenda. Mr. Futrell gave a brief update on the budget process.

Since our last meeting, we have met as a Finance Subcommittee of the Whole on March 6<sup>th</sup> and March 13<sup>th</sup>. We have reviewed preliminary projections provided by the district, as it has been the case in the last several years, there are mostly minor adjustments based on increased amounts of students in one grade vs. the next. We've also reviewed all of the requests from principals and department heads for the coming year, both operational and staffing request. On March 25<sup>th</sup> we'll meet again to discuss the preliminary budget and the School Committee members will be providing input on that budget. The following meeting after that will be on April 10<sup>th</sup>, but for the public the meeting you want on your calendars is on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. On May 2<sup>nd</sup> Superintendent Skipper will be presenting her Fiscal Year 2020 Budget to the School Committee at which time the School Committee will amend it as needed and then present it to City Council for approval.

## VIII. NEW BUSINESS

### A. Field Trips (Recommended action: approval) **June 3, 2019 – June 7, 2019**

Healey School grade 5 students will visit Nature's Classroom in Western Massachusetts. Transportation via bus. Student cost \$475.

### **April 12, 2019 – April 15, 2019**

16 East Somerville Community School 8th grade students will visit Washington D.C. to attend the Urban Debate League National Tournament.

Transportation via Amtrak. Student cost \$400-\$500.

**April 16, 2020 – April 23, 2020**

A group of Somerville High School Juniors and Seniors will visit Southern California to explore STEM fields and increase student engagement in Science. Transportation via airplane and charter bus. Student cost may vary from \$0 - \$2000.

MOTION: Motion by Dr. Ackman, seconded by Ms. Palmer to approve field trips.

Ms. Pitone asked about the field trip to Southern California, what is it and who is sponsoring it? How will it be affordable?

Dr. Abeyta responded, as you can see the date is for 2020, this is way in advance and it's being submitted now so they can get approval and move forward with planning and fundraising. The purpose is to explore Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM). At this time, we know a small group of student will be going but don't yet know who those students will be.

Ms. Pitone requested a presentation for this field trip.

MOTION: Amendment to the motion by Dr. Ackman, seconded by Ms. Palmer, to just approve the first two filed trips to Nature's Classroom and Washington D.C.  
Motion approved via voice vote.

**B. Acceptance of Donations** (recommended action: approval)

The Superintendent recommends the acceptance, with gratitude, of the following donations:

<b>Donation</b>	<b>Donor</b>	<b>City, State</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Program donated to</b>
Box of Crafting Materials/ Classroom Supplies	Daisy Sandoval	Cambridge, MA	\$100	CTE Child Development Program

MOTION: Motion by Ms. Palmer to accept the donation, with gratitude, seconded by Mr. Green.  
Motion was approved via voice vote.

**C. Somerville High School Diploma:** (recommended action: approval)

The following student has successfully completed all local and state requirements for a diploma from Somerville High school.

- Landy Valcourt

MOTION: Motion by Mr. Green, seconded by Ms. Palmer, to approve the Somerville High School Diploma for Landy Valcourt.

Motion approved via voice vote.

**IX. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS**

**Ms. O'Sullivan**

- Asked for district response to the parent letter about bias to be added to the agenda.

**X. CONDOLENCES**

Prior to adjournment, Dr. Ackman expressed the School Committee's condolences for the following people who recently passed away:

**February 4, 2019- Doris Marcinkus**, Mother of Lynne Chamallas, Nurse at Healey School.

**February 5, 2019- Pillot, Evelyn (Ramos/Rodriguez)** – Former Paraprofessional at AFAS

**February 14, 2019- Marvin Salazar**, Son of Nelson Salazar, ESOL Counselor at SCALE

**February 24, 2019- Catherine V. Black**, Mother of Ken Black, Educational Evaluator- Special Education

**March 8, 2019 – Susan Palter**, Somerville Public Schools Retired Vision Specialist

**XI. ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting was adjourned at 9:31 p.m. via voice vote.

## **Related Items**

Agenda  
Puerto Rico Presentation  
March Personnel Report  
Powderhouse Studios Innovation Plan

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
BOARD OF ALDERMEN CHAMBERS  
REGULAR MEETING – MARCH 18, 2019 – 7:00 P.M.**

**Somerville Public Schools - School Committee Vision Statement/Goals**

We believe in developing the whole child - the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical potential of all students - by providing students with the skills, opportunities, and resources that will nurture innovative ideas, foster pride in diversity, inspire students to become lifelong learners and empower them to enrich their communities.

- Goal #1: Increase achievement and access for all students. Reduce all performance gaps by half.
- Goal #2: Develop and implement a comprehensive PreK-12 social-emotional learning framework that provides students with the skills they need for social and academic success.
- Goal #3: Increase engagement with the community to reflect the community in which we live.
- Goal #4: Continue to develop and implement innovative ways of measuring student academic performance and school quality such as formative assessment, performance-based tasks, and whole quality indicators.
- Goal #5: Develop a comprehensive plan for Universal Kindergarten Readiness that supports intellectual, physical, and social/emotional growth from birth to Pre-K.
- Goal #6: Develop and implement a strategy to recruit, develop, and retain a diverse and talented staff.

## **ORDER OF BUSINESS**

### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

Call to order with a moment of silence and a salute to the flag of the United States of America.

### **II. REPORT OF STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES**

### **III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- January 28, 2019
- February 4, 2019

### **IV. PUBLIC COMMENT**

### **V. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT**

#### **A. District Report**

- Powderhouse Studios Deliberations and Vote

#### **B. Personnel Report**

### **VI. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES**

#### **A. School Committee Meeting for Education Programs and Instruction Committee of the Whole: January 28, 2019 (Ms. O'Sullivan)**

MOTION: To accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Education Programs and Instruction Committee of the Whole of January 28, 2019.

#### **B. School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities: January 30, 2019 (Mr. Futrell)**

MOTION: To accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities of January 30, 2019.

#### **C. School Committee Meeting for Education Programs and Instruction Committee of the Whole: February 11, 2019 (Ms. O'Sullivan)**

MOTION: To accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Education Programs and Instruction of the Whole of February 11, 2019.

**D. School Committee Meeting for Education Programs and Instruction Committee of the Whole:** February 25, 2019 (Ms. O’Sullivan)

MOTION: To accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Education Programs and Instruction Committee of the Whole of February 25, 2019.

**E. School Committee Meeting for Education Programs and Instruction Committee of the Whole:** March 6, 2019 (Ms. O’Sullivan)

MOTION: To accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Education Programs and Instruction Committee of the Whole of March 6, 2019.

**F. School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities:** March 6, 2019 (Mr. Futrell)

MOTION: To accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Education Programs and Instruction Committee of the Whole of March 6, 2019.

**G. School Committee Meeting for Rules Management:** March 11, 2019 (Ms. Palmer)

MOTION: To accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Education Programs and Instruction Committee of the Whole of March 11, 2019.

**VII. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Field Trips** (Recommended action: approval)  
**June 3, 2019 – June 7, 2019**

Healey School grade 5 students will visit Nature’s Classroom in Western Massachusetts. Transportation via bus. Student cost \$475.

**April 12, 2019 – April 15, 2019**

16 East Somerville Community School 8<sup>th</sup> grade students will visit Washington D.C. to attend the Urban Debate League National Tournament. Transportation via Amtrak. Student cost \$400-\$500.

**April 16, 2020 – April 22, 2020**

25 Somerville High School students from grades 9 through 12 will visit Puerto Rico to learn about the culture, history, politics and environment. Transportation via air plane, bus and boat. Student cost \$2700.

**April 16, 2020 – April 23, 2020**

A group of Somerville High School Juniors and Seniors will visit Southern California to explore STEM fields and increase student engagement in Science. Transportation via airplane and charter bus. Student cost may vary from \$0 - \$2000.

**B. Acceptance of Donations** (recommended action: approval)

The Superintendent recommends the acceptance, with gratitude, of the following donations:

<b>Donation</b>	<b>Donor</b>	<b>City, State</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Program Donated to</b>
Box of Crafting Materials/ Classroom Supplies	Daisy Sandoval	Cambridge, MA	\$100	CTE Child Development Program

**C. Somerville High School Diploma:** (recommended action: approval)

The following student has successfully completed all local and state requirements for a diploma from Somerville High school.

- Landy Valcourt

**VIII. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS**

**IX. CONDOLENCES**

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

**To :** Mary Skipper, Almi Abeyta, Sibby LaGambina  
**From :** Steve Ensdorf and Alicia Kersten, SHS Social Studies Department  
**Date :** February 2019  
**Re :** Proposed 2020 Puerto Rico Trip

We are proposing that Somerville High School run a trip to Puerto Rico during April vacation of the 2019-2020 school year. This trip will allow students to explore the history, culture, environment, and politics of Puerto Rico, as well as practice their Spanish. We have chosen Puerto Rico for many reasons: focus on the Caribbean (a region many of our students are from), ease of travel (no need for passports, making it accessible to more of our students), variety of learning experiences, and affordability. We have a proposal from Explorica, which is the travel company we have been working with for many years.

**What:** Somerville High School Puerto Rico Trip. The attached itinerary gives the outline for the trip. We are also working with Explorica to add an afternoon of community service in an area affected by Hurricane Maria, and adding a session where we can talk with a group or person about political issues facing Puerto Rico today. While the trip will be fun, it will also have an academic focus. Students will be required to give presentations about their trip to the school community upon their return.

**When :** Thursday, April 16-Wednesday, April 22 2020 Sign ups for the trip would begin in April 2019.

**Where :** Puerto Rico (see attached itinerary)

**Who :** No more than 25 SHS students and at least 3 chaperones from SHS. The trip will also be open to adults from the SHS community. We anticipate a lot of interest in the trip and will put together an application process. Students will be selected based on demonstrated interest in trip and a record of responsible conduct. We are committed to taking a group of students representative of the SHS community.

**Cost :** Cost to students is \$2512. All meals except lunches, lodging, and transportation are included. Explorica estimates students will need an additional \$150-\$200 for lunches and spending money. Cost to adults is an additional \$315.. A ten-month payment plan for students would be under \$200 per month.

**Financial Aid:** Explorica will give us a free spot for every five paying travelers. In addition, we are committed to making this trip need-blind and raising funds for all accepted travelers who need assistance.

# Puerto Rico

[explorica.com/Kersten-4482](http://explorica.com/Kersten-4482)

April 16 - April 22, 2020

**Day 1 San Juan** Meet your tour director and check into hotel San Juan city walk: Museo de Casa Blanca, La Muralla , La Fortaleza  
Dinner

**Day 2 Hola San Juan**  
Zipline Canopy Tour  
Dinner

**Day 3 San Juan landmarks**  
Breakfast  
San Juan - Volunteer activity at La Perla San Juan guided sightseeing tour: Antiguo Casino, Convento de Santo Tomás, Iglesia San Jose, Catedral de San Juan, El Castillo San Cristobal  
visit , El Castillo del Morro guided visit, San Juan Museum visit,  
El  
Capitolio visit  
San Juan Botanical Gardens visit  
Dinner *Optional Zipline Canopy Tour*

**Day 4 Fajardo**  
Breakfast  
El Yunque Caribbean National Forest visit  
Luquillo beach free time Dinner  
*Optional Bioluminescent Bay excursion*

**Day 5 San Juan** Breakfast Island excursion & snorkel trip  
Dinner

**Day 6 Start extension in Ponce**  
Breakfast  
Camuy Caves guided excursion  
Travel to Ponce  
Ponce tour director-led sightseeing: Parque de Bombas , Lions Fountain  
, Ponce Cathedral , Casa Alcaldia  
Taino Ceremonial Park visit  
Dinner

**Day 7 End tour**  
Breakfast  
Travel to San Juan  
Travel home

## Reserve your Spot!

Tour Center ID: Kersten-4482

Registration deadline: April 30, 2019

### What's included

We provide everything you need for a remarkable trip:

Round-trip transportation

4 overnight stays in hotels (5 with extension)

Breakfast daily (except arrival day)

Dinner daily (except departure day)

Full-time services of a professional Tour Director

Guided sightseeing tours and city walks as per itinerary

Visit to select attractions as per itinerary

Tour Diary™

Overnight security chaperone

Note: Tour cost does not include airline-imposed baggage fees, or

fees for any required passport or visa. Please visit our Fees FAQ

page for a full list of items that may not be included in the cost of your tour.

### Tour investment

Students (travelers under the age of 23):  
\$2,512

Adults (age 23 and over): \$2,827

### Automatic monthly payment plan

Pay just \$50 upon enrollment and the balance will be divided into equal monthly payments, charged automatically to your credit card or checking account. As of March 13, 2019, your monthly payment would be just \$216.18.

Manual plan also available; learn more on [explorica.com/paymentplans](http://explorica.com/paymentplans).

### Travel protection

Most Explorica travelers protect their investment with one of our trusted plans, starting from just \$12 per day. To learn more, visit [explorica.com/cfar](http://explorica.com/cfar).



**Somerville Public Schools**  
Education • Inspiration • Excellence  
**PERSONNEL REPORT**  
2018-2019 School Year  
March 2019

**RESIGNATION FOR PURPOSE OF RETIREMENT FOR SY 2018-2019:**

SCHOOL	POSITION	INCUMBENT	DATE OF RETIREMENT	YEARS OF SERVICE
SHS	History/Biology Teacher	Ana Nogueira	10/31/18	12
ESCS	Physical and Health Education Teacher	Timothy Cronin	03/09/19	18
SHS	Assistant Principal - Beacon House	Jane Cummings	06/30/19	31
SHS	Special Education Teacher	Joanne Dunn	06/30/19	39
SHS	Adjustment Counselor	Barry Friedman	06/30/19	28
WSNS/Food Services	Cafeteria Helper	Linda Russell	08/06/18	30
WHCIS	Grade 5 Teacher	Ana Potter	06/30/19	33
PIC	Principal Clerk	Rosie Federico	12/07/18	19 + 161 days
AFAS/ESCS	Academics Coach in Mathematics, Grade K-5	Donna Driscoll	06/30/19	20
WSNS	Kindergarten Teacher	Joan McGinty	06/30/19	30
AFAS	Grade 5 Teacher	Carol Murphy	06/30/19	33 + 74 days
ESCS	Reading Teacher	Valerie Kostandos	06/30/19	8
ESCS	Principal	Holly Hatch	09/01/19	14

**RESIGNATION NOTICES FOR SY 2018-2019:**

SCHOOL	POSITION	INCUMBENT	DATE OF RESIGNATION

**ASSIGNMENT ENDED SY 2018-2019:**

SCHOOL	POSITION	INCUMBENT	EFFECTIVE DATE

**LEAVES OF ABSENCES FOR SY 2018-2019:**

SCHOOL	POSITION	INCUMBENT	EFFECTIVE DATES
AFAS	Grades 7/8 Math Teacher	Johnathan Killeen	2/25/19-6/3/19 - Revised
AFAS	Grade 3 SEI Integrated Teacher	Reid Cargan	03/05/19-03/18/19
ESCS/Food Svcs	FT Cafeteria Helper	Gail Arensbach	03/28/19-TBD
ESCS/Food Svcs	FT Cafeteria Helper	Dalvir Singh	03/05/19-05/28/19
HLY	ELL Paraprofessional	Dania McIntire	02/26/19-04/18/19
HLY	Paraprofessional	Ana Costa	03/11/19-04/12/19 - Student Teaching
HLY	Inclusion Specialist	Emily O'Brien	03/06/19-04/03/19
SHS	English Teacher	Matthew Meservey	04/08/19-06/12/19 - Exchange Teacher
SHS	Social Studies Teacher	Sarah Eustus	08/26/19-06/30/20
WHCIS	Educator Counselor	Tara Stead	03/03/19-03/19/19
WHCIS	Grade 5 Teacher	Kristin Day	09/11/19-01/06/20

**INTRA-DISTRICT PERSONNEL TRANSACTIONS FOR SY 2018-2019:**

SCHOOL	POSITION	INCUMBENT	EFFECTIVE DATE
AFAS/Comm Schools	FT Lead Teacher	Joshua Leibovitz	03/11/19 - New Assignment
AFAS	Homebound Tutor	Lisa Lavoie-Gay	03/11/19 - Additional Assignment
ESCS	Site Coordinator	Emily Martin	02/28/19 - .30 FTE to 1.0 FTE
KEN/Comm Schools	Site Coordinator	Alison Gillis	03/25/19 - New Assignment
PIC	Temp PT Homeless Liaison	Erika Garcia	2/1/2019 0 Additional Assignment

**NEW HIRES FOR SY 2018-2019:**

SCHOOL	POSITION	INCUMBENT	VICE	EFFECTIVE DATE	Dual/SEI
AFAS	Long Term Substitute Teacher - Grades 7/8 Math	Steve Tai	Jonathan Killeen	03/08/19	NO/NO
AFAS	Temporary 1:1 Paraprofessional	Michael Munoz (current sub)	New Position	03/12/19	NA/NA
CAP	Temporary .80 ECIP Paraprofessional	Jennifer Adams-Leblanc	Yolanda Andrade	02/25/19	NA/NA
ESCS/IE Sistema	Violin/Viola Teaching Artist	Jesus Saenz	New Position	02/26/19	NA/NA
ESCS	Long Term Substitute Teacher - Library/Media	Deidre Bennett	Deborha Lewis	03/25/19	NO/NO
ESCS	Long Term Substitute Teacher - Physical Education	Tyler Kelleher	Timothy Cronin	03/25/19	NO/NO
HLY/Comm Schools	Therapeutic Specialist	Ramya Ramakrishna	New Position	03/25/19	NA/NA
SHS/Athletics	Freshmen Girls Softball Assistant Coach	Jamie Ricciardi	Sheila Freitas-Haley	03/18/19	NA/NA

**INTRA-DISTRICT 2019 Summer School Personnel**

SCHOOL	POSITION	INCUMBENT	EFFECTIVE DATE
SPELL Elementary	Director	Dolores Porziella	03/01/19 - Additional Assignment
SPELL Elementary	Assistant Director	Julia Allen	03/01/19 - Additional Assignment
SPELL Elementary	Counselor	Karen Murdock	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPELL Elementary	Door Monitor	Ann Marie Darocha	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPELL SHS	Director	Zachary Shufran	03/01/19 - Additional Assignment
Elementary	District Coordinator	Caelli Smith	02/15/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Paraprofessional	Christine Smith	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Paraprofessional	Philip Murray	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Paraprofessional	Caterina MacDonald	06/06/19 - Yearly Appointment
SPED ESY	Paraprofessional	Lisa Lavoie-Gay	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Paraprofessional	Mary Johnson	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Paraprofessional	Peter George	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Paraprofessional	Jacqueline Gaffney	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Paraprofessional	Deb Dirusso	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Paraprofessional	Sean McKenna	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Paraprofessional	Sara D'Amelio	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Paraprofessional	Kathy Sullivan	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Paraprofessional	Priya Plein	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Paraprofessional	Patricia Dipasquale	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Paraprofessional	Katelyn Dickson	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Paraprofessional	Lisa Capo	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Paraprofessional	Gisele Callagari	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Paraprofessional	Michelle Anzalone	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Director	Jennifer Zacharias	03/01/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Assistant Director	Marisa Macdonald	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Teacher of the Visually Impaired	Kerry McLean	03/01/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Counselor	Angelique Murillo	03/01/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Teacher	Kristen Spence	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Teacher	Wanda McLaren	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Teacher	Robert Legrand	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Teacher	Lauren Harris	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Teacher	Donna Filis-Aime	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Teacher	Miriam Donovan	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Teacher	Brittaney Courier	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Teacher	Emily Bruneault	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Teacher	Jane Ritchie	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Teacher	Ava Strezynski	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Teacher	Melissa Starr	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment
SPED ESY	Teacher	Karma Dingyon	06/06/19 - Additional Assignment

# Powderhouse Studios Innovation Plan

v3.1.1, last revised 9 March 2017

*This is [an Innovation Plan](#) for Powderhouse Studios (PHS). PHS will be a new, fully competency-based high school in Somerville. This Plan is organized in increasing levels of detail, beginning with a design brief. The brief aims to offer just enough detail and reasoning to explain our design and justify the autonomies we're seeking. To better understand the design, its history, and supporting research, refer to [the prospectus](#) and [2012 draft of the design](#).*

*Expanding on operational details as needed, the Plan moves on to lay out the autonomies at the local and state levels required by the design in the areas defined by the Innovation Schools statute. To secure state level autonomies, we received the included reliefs from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).*

*The Plan closes with nitty gritty operating agreements. These agreements target those areas where our design requires collaboration with another entity to effect our autonomies (e.g. the Finance Department or Somerville Teachers Association). If PHS discovers the need for additional reliefs in working out operating details with the District, PHS must present these to the School Committee with this Plan for approval. Unless otherwise noted, PHS will be subject to all District policies, statutes, and state regulations not conflicting with this plan.*

## *Pending revisions*

*The Innovation Plan Committee proposes these operating agreements understanding City and District partners must negotiate and finalize them. While the Plan's details may change after the Innovation Plan Committee's vote, the approved Plan may not change substantially without the Innovation Plan Committee's re-approval.*

*The Innovation Plan Committee understands these details are especially likely to shift in the areas of (i) staffing (reflecting conversations with the STA), (ii) finances (reflecting conversations with City Finance), liability (reflecting conversations with District counsel), facilities (reflecting conversations with the District, DPW, and pending a site selection), and enrollment lottery specifics (reflecting our work with the Superintendent).*

*The Innovation Plan Committee also understands the plan may be re-formatted, edited for clarity and presentation, or augmented with additional research and references (like an executive summary or FAQ).*

## *Feedback*

*Any questions, concerns, or feedback about the plan should be directed to [us@powderhouse.org](mailto:us@powderhouse.org)*



Powderhouse Studios (PHS) is best understood as an attempt to create a highly functional, creative workplace with youth. That workplace will start as in-district high school in Somerville, authorized under Massachusetts's Innovation Schools legislation, overseen by a Board of Trustees, and reporting to the Somerville Superintendent and School Committee.

PHS draws inspiration from two kinds of organizations with stellar track records for cultivating and sustaining creative work. The first are creative workplaces: places like marketing agencies, research labs, and architects' studios. The second are institutions devoted to a craft: places like vocational schools and masters of fine arts programs.

Like these organizations, we support small, tightly-knit teams working on real projects independently and collaboratively. We believe such work is core to human development and is essential to enable youth to tackle an uncertain future with confidence.

## Our mission

Our mission is to support people in becoming independent investigators. "Independent investigator" is just our way of naming the proper posture of a creative, self-determining person. *i.e.* an independent thinker and doer who can:

1. Identify a problem or question which really matters to them
2. Develop a project engaging (1)
3. Rustle up the resources—*e.g.* people, tools, and other ingredients—they need
4. Do the work iteratively, reflectively, and critically
5. And tell the story of their work, sharing it with people whose opinions matter to them, having established their own standards of performance and critique for the work

...all on longer and longer time scales.

Because learning involves the active construction of your own mental models, we believe people learn best when creating something outside of themselves, some sort of public artifact or project. Because projects are complex and interconnected and demand that you revisit and reuse the ideas underlying them from several points of view, we believe they offer an unusually rich opportunity to connect to powerful ideas deeply. And because real projects are always hard, they offer an opportunity to take pride in your work, developed through an authentic struggle for quality. Writers call it revision, engineers iteration, and computer scientists refactoring. Whatever you call it, we believe the iterative, reflective, and critical path is the only one leading to quality and understanding.

Most importantly, we believe people grow best through work they care about, and that deep work on long-term projects offers some of the best opportunities to understand yourself and prepare for a lifetime of creative, independent work.

## How will people do work?

Work at Powderhouse Studios is driven by projects, not subjects. And we believe powerful ideas and perspectives enable great projects.

For example, “Signs of Life” is an interdisciplinary, project-based seminar we’ve run in a wide variety of in- and afterschool settings. The program explores what it means for something to be alive. Participants build things which are alive in one way or another. That might mean a basic robot which responds to feedback. Or a simulation of predator-prey dynamics. But it could also mean reading and writing science fiction exploring the line between human/nonhuman. Or it could mean a pro-life/pro-choice debate. Or an urban nature walk. The point is that at the core of a program you find a set of big, powerful ideas and perspectives which can be explored by creating something concrete.

At PHS, those creations will be grounded by our focus on the perspectives, media, and tools offered by computation and storytelling. Through these, people will build fundamental fluencies—numeracy, literacy, analysis, and synthesis.

Even in seminars like “Signs of Life,” youth will work on projects of their own design rather than through a shared canon. When they first join PHS, most projects will grow out of staff-designed interdisciplinary seminars. Over time, these projects will be undertaken more and more independently. No matter the scale of project, youth are responsible for articulating each project’s standards of performance and connecting the project to their longer term goals.

This means youth will not be working on the same thing at the same time. Because people are working on different things at different times, no one is “ahead” or “behind.” On top of this, the environment and schedule are designed to address many of the issues those who struggle with attention issues, transitions, and other aspects of traditional classroom models. This means that beyond being good pedagogy, this environment is especially well suited to those who learn differently, including those with special education (SPED) and English language learner (ELL) needs.

But, this also means—generally—we will not know far ahead of time what someone will be doing on a given day. PHS’s scale and model has been chosen carefully to promote this divergence, and much of its design reflects the realities of managing such complexity. This management is the primary responsibility of their Core Team.

Over someone’s time at Powderhouse Studios, their Core Team guides them through an individualized series of projects, driven by their interests. Staff and youth document, critique, and analyze these projects. The materials this creates allows for mapping projects *retrospectively* back onto traditional academic standards, including but not limited to Common Core Math and English Language Arts (ELA). This all happens in parallel with diagnostic tests

highlighting areas needing additional support (which then inform small-group and one-on-one activities of content specialists).

This process—as well as the interests and postsecondary ambitions driving it—is managed through an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP). The ILP will be integral to the management and goal-setting of work for youth and staff. Each ILP will integrate short, mid-, and long term goals (including SPED, ELL, academic, and non-cognitive elements) into the scoping of projects. The ILP will be the basis of managing, documenting, and evaluating student work. At a minimum, the ILP will contain:

- a comprehensive portfolio of work,
- a retrospective mapping of that work back onto traditional academic standards,
- a collection of short, mid-, and long term objectives
- a calculation of the rate at which a student is covering standards and progressing toward graduation
- qualitative peer, staff, and partner evaluations of student work
- standardized test results, including but not limited to the MCAS
- family and student satisfaction surveys
- IEP, 504, and associated special education materials
- ELL diagnostics and associated materials

As the scope of projects youth can effectively tackle grows, at some point they may tackle projects more embedded in the community or at other schools. This will happen through cross-registration, mentorships, internships, co-ops, and other arrangements with community partners. But all such activities will eventually come back to the ILP.

## What do projects need?

But projects aren't easy. They are resource-intensive. If they are to matter to someone, they need deep (but professional and age-appropriate) relationships to surface individualized ideas and directions. If they are to engage powerful ideas, they need the careful attention of a supportive mentor. If they are to be done well, they need a *lot* of time. These ingredients—ideas, relationships, and time—organize Powderhouse Studios.

## Ideas

We believe powerful ideas matter. But some ideas are more powerful than others. Some ideas are powerful because of the depth or breadth of their applicability—ideas like evolution or energy. Others are powerful because they are immediately useful—ideas like active listening. And still others are powerful because they matter to you. And plenty of ideas aren't very powerful at all (like the quadratic formula or specifics of the APA citation style). Regardless, powerful ideas compellingly answer the question, "What can I *do* with it?" They offer leverage and perspective which let you do, think, and say things which matter to you.

Many places have a history of creating and exploring such ideas. We are inspired by such places which connect to deep ideas through a craft, places like the Iowa Writer's Workshop or Juilliard School or Wentworth Institute of Technology. But unlike them, we can't narrow our focus to a single craft. As a public school, we must accommodate as broad an array of backgrounds, interests, and aptitudes as possible.

So, we've chosen two perspectives (and accompanying toolsets) to ground our work: computation and storytelling. We believe immersion in these domains offers the opportunity for i) divergent creative and technical work ii) proximate to powerful ideas. We believe they are narrow enough to sustain rigor but expressive enough to support a wide range of interests. This means the activities of building things (especially with computers) and telling stories (across media and forms) will tie together projects at PHS.

By computation, we mean the tools and perspectives involved in representing ideas for machines. That is, modeling and representation in an executable medium (e.g. spreadsheets or computer programs). The integration of computation across PHS projects will integrate the numeracy and mathematical problem-solving skills typically found in math class across youth's days.

By storytelling, we mean the tools and perspectives involved in representing ideas for humans. This encompasses not only literal storytelling (*i.e.* narrative prose), but broader senses of the word—cinematography, presentations, journalism, marketing, and so on. The integration of storytelling across PHS projects will integrate fluency in reading, writing, and speaking alongside critical thinking and analysis typically found in humanities classes across youth's days.

These foundational fluencies will ground the interdisciplinary work young people do, *i.e.* the actual content or topic of a given project.

But ideas are not just lying around, waiting to be discovered through computation and storytelling...Much less ideas and projects which ensure coverage of traditional academic standards. Staff need to design such projects and programs to which they can invite youth and explore those ideas together. Moreover, staff need to get to know youth deeply so they can help identify new ideas and projects which matter to them, taking youth on their own paths.

## Relationships

To support a wide array of individualized, interdisciplinary projects with our unique curricular emphasis requires a novel staffing model and structure.

### Staff's relationship to youth

Each year, Powderhouse Studios will enroll a small, mixed-age cohort of 30–40 youth between the ages of 13–15. This cohort is not a grade level; it is a social and organizational unit.

# COHORT-DRIVEN ADVOCATE MODEL

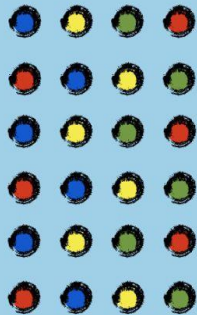
Curriculum Developer

Youth Advocate

Project Manager

PHS' project-based focus means staff will act more as **mentors** and **facilitators** than instructors. Every **~36** students will form a single cohort, overseen by a **trio of staff**, their advocates, and two content specialists, shared with another cohort.

1:12 STUDENT:STAFF



Inspired by Harlem Children's Zone's **academic case management model**, this setup offers high-touch, **individualized attention** and team teaching capacities, focusing on students' **whole development** as independent investigators while maintaining SPED and ESL support.

Computation & storytelling content specialists

Emulating successful case management models, each cohort will be managed by a Core Team of three adults: a project manager, curriculum developer, and youth advocate. Each team member will create systems supporting and developing their colleagues' capacity in their area of responsibility. Those adults are responsible for the experience of their cohort, integrating many responsibilities traditionally spread across separate jobs.

The project manager will ensure projects are effectively scoped, managed, and documented. The curriculum developer will ensure the depth and breadth of seminars and projects. The youth advocate will ensure all non-cognitive, non-academic factors affecting students are managed by the Core Team. Draft job descriptions for each of these roles can be found [here](#).

These are areas of responsibility, not comprehensive descriptions of staff's work. Beyond their defined role, every staff member will:

- work regularly with youth, whether supporting individual projects or developing seminars
- develop a program of study reflecting their interests, driving the seminars and projects to which they invite youth
- identify and coordinate the integration of community partners into PHS work
- develop their own Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) with the PHS Director, serving as the basis for their evaluation and professional development and structured to parallel youths' ILPs

Every two Core Teams will also be supported by two content specialists. One will specialize in computation, the other storytelling. These content specialists will support youth in their projects through one-on-one and small group tutoring. This individualized support will be informed by ongoing academic diagnostics.

### Staff's relationship to ideas

There is only so much a young person will walk into Powderhouse Studios knowing they care about. Part of staff's job is to enrich youth's intellectual environment. This means Powderhouse Studios will be a place people come to understand learning and human development. We believe working with beginners—especially youth—offers unique opportunities to engage a subject domain's fundamentals. And it's important our staff care about that, too—meaning they are interested in working with ideas, not just youth. Combined with PHS's emphasis on understanding through creation, this means our staff will develop their own tools and materials, acting as interdisciplinary researchers and designers.

This makes staff at Powderhouse Studios unusual. Not only must they have an authentic appreciation for adolescence, they must excel at doing something which might interest youth. And they must sign up for a role defined not by domain, but by their place in a creative community. And they must care about a set of ideas which ground their development of projects and seminars to which they can invite youth. These ideas must be coherent enough to define a program of study, powerful enough to matter to youth, and benefit enough from our focus on computation and storytelling to reinforce other projects and programs of study throughout PHS.

A staff member who is a musician, for example, might design a series of seminars, workshops, and performances introducing youth to the art of performance alongside the science of acoustics. A staff member who loves computer programming might work with a graphic designer to create a series of intensive workshops introducing web development alongside a longer-term seminar in which youth design websites for themselves and then client organizations throughout Somerville. Additional offerings will, of course, be designed in response to the interests and passions of youth. But all this calls for a diverse set of interests and backgrounds amongst staff.

### Staff's relationship to each other

We are working to develop a highly functional, creative workplace *with* youth—not just for them. Staff work to develop their program of study and to support their area of responsibility (e.g. project management) in their cohort. This happens through and alongside their work with youth in staff-designed seminars and youth-designed projects.

To the extent possible, we aim to create a community minimizing the distinctions between the creative work of staff and youth. Obviously, this distinction cannot be erased because staff

ultimately serve youth. But, this means that just as youth work on projects and programs, sometimes supporting others, so will staff.

Beyond developing their own program of study and supporting youth in projects, staff will be expected to responsively step in to support other staff. This may mean acting as a second set of hands in a seminar or collaborating on a project which is part of a staff member's program of study. In on-boarding in particular, staff may begin their time apprenticing to veteran staff, supporting their program of study, seminars, and youth projects.

Each Core Team acts like something of a lab group or strike team, exploring their own ideas and projects with as much autonomy as we can manage. Taken together, this makes Powderhouse Studios something of a research and design organization, learning from its different Teams developing new tools, materials, and practices and supporting one another over time.

Where will these staff come from?

There are no educator preparation programs for such teams or roles. The work we're asking staff to do is not only unusually interdisciplinary, it is also structured very differently than traditional pedagogy suggests. These differences, alongside the complexity of what we're asking staff to do requires specialized training.

To accomplish this and build PHS's culture, we will establish an extensive on-boarding program supporting staff in doing this during our first 3–5 years. staff will go through an extensive on-boarding developing their (i) program of study, (ii) fluency in computation and storytelling, (iii) in- and afterschool programs translating their program of study into deep, engaging, learning experiences, and (iv) team cohesion, all through a series of projects undertaken solo and in collaboration with the rest of their team.

Each staff member's program of study will drive the seminars and projects to which they invite youth, and therefore their ongoing professional development (as articulated in and aligned with their own ILPs). Staff will schedule such professional development with the rest of their team, coordinating to minimize the impact on day-to-day work.

As staff (and Powderhouse Studios) grow, the range of expertise available to youth will grow. Our focus on fully individualized projects means diversifying staff expertise to support a wide range of interests will be a primary consideration in hiring and professional development.

Beyond all this, as part of this on-boarding process, staff will also receive a wide variety of specialized training, including but not limited to special education design, services, and advocacy; facilitation, critique, and discussion techniques essential in project-based and seminar-driven work; project management; and school design.

The unique skills we're looking for in our staff—in concert with the fact that we believe teachers are not paid enough—mean we also need to establish a competitive pay structure and benefits program to ensure access to effective, qualified staff who will make this model work.

### Evaluating staff

In consultation with the PHS Director and Superintendent, staff will develop their own systems of evaluation at least annually, tied to an annual employment MOU staff execute documenting their professional goals conditions of evaluation for the year. The evaluation system will focus on capturing contributions to:

1. the mission of supporting people in becoming independent investigators
2. overall satisfaction of student and family with how PHS is supporting their growth and progress toward graduation
3. the fulfillment of staff's defined role and responsibilities
4. their capacity of their team and PHS overall to support (1–3)

These evaluation systems will embrace the fact that PHS's efficacy is more than the sum of its parts. Not only do staff work in tightly-knit, cross-functional teams, but their contributions are not simply direct support of youth's work. These contributions may involve refining programs of study, creating new tools and materials, or otherwise building organizational capacity. Properly documenting, incentivizing, and planning for this requires a novel system and infrastructure for evaluation.

### Time

We believe creative work needs large, unbroken blocks of attention. And we believe deep projects need such work over long periods of time. To secure this and make attendance sustainable for staff and youth, we have adopted a schedule drawn from creative professions and informed by research on creativity and adolescent development.



## Exemplary daily schedule for a 13-year old at PHS

	M	T	W	R	F
8-9A	Co-planning	Co-planning	Co-planning	Co-planning	Co-planning
9-10A					
10-11A	Signs of Life, a kinetic sculpture and multimedia seminar	Invisible Forces, a multimedia cybernetics seminar	Signs of Life, a kinetic sculpture and storytelling seminar	Invisible Forces, a seminar	Studio time
11A-12P					
12-1P	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch featuring a community expert
1-2P					
2-3P	Studio time; targeted content specialist support	Studio time; targeted content specialist support	Studio time; targeted content specialist support	Studio time; targeted content specialist support	Project documentation, critique, planning
3-4P					
4-5P					

## Exemplary daily schedule for a 15-year old at PHS

	M	T	W	R	F
8-9A					
9-10A	Co-planning	Co-planning	Co-planning	Co-planning	Co-planning
10-11A					
11A-12P	Computational art seminar	Independent project work	Computational art seminar	Independent project work	Studio time
12-1P					Lunch featuring a community expert
1-2P	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	
2-3P	Studio time, targeted content specialist support		Studio time, targeted content specialist support		Project documentation, critique, planning
3-4P		Soccer practice at SHS		Soccer practice at SHS	
4-5P					

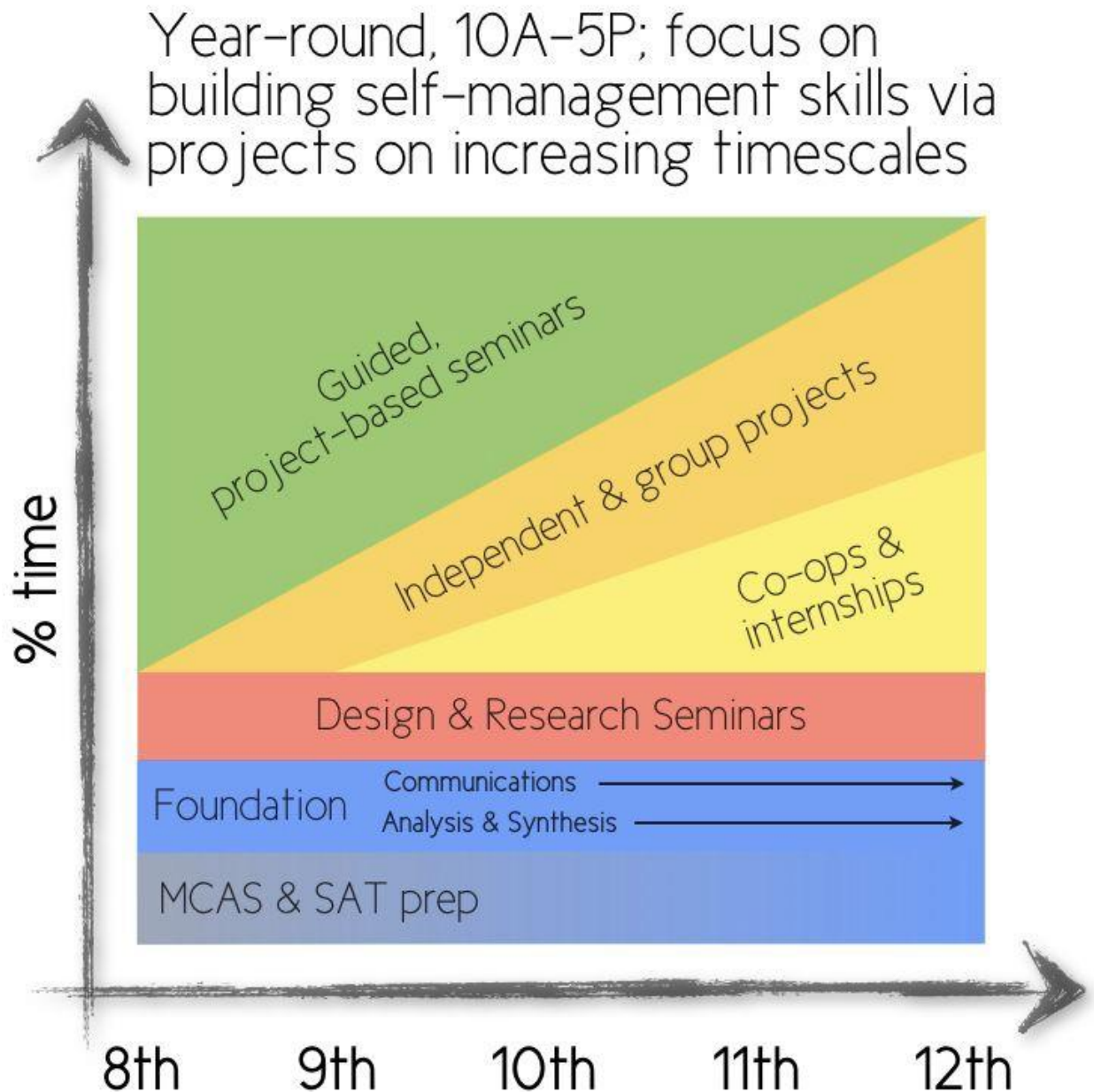
## Exemplary daily schedule for an 18-year old at PHS

	M	T	W	R	F
8–9A	Co-planning				
9–10A	Co-planning				
10–11A	Independent project	Independent project	Independent project	Independent project	Project documentation
11A–12P					
12–1P	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1–2P	SHS AP US Government	SHS AP US Government	SHS AP US Government	SHS AP US Government	SHS AP US Government
2–3P	Community internship	Soccer practice at SHS	Community internship	Soccer practice at SHS	College admissions prep
3–4P					
4–5P					

Powderhouse Studios will be open year-round. Staff will work 8AM–5PM, and youth will attend 10AM–5PM. There will be no traditional subjects or class periods. There will be morning, lunch, and afternoon. Structured studios will happen mostly in morning sessions, with afternoons devoted to studio time developing projects started earlier as well as small group work, tutoring, and advisory meetings. If someone needs to leave to pursue other activities (e.g. sports, piano lessons, cross-registered classes at Somerville High School) they can and PHS will support them in doing so. This schedule may change occasionally for intensive workshops and intersession programs, especially during the on-boarding process for youth.

Core Teams will regularly schedule time (at least weekly) when youth document projects, mapping them back onto traditional academic standards. Coordinating with in- and out-of-district experts (including Stanford's CREDO) PHS will regularly administer diagnostic academic tests based on the SAT Suite and MCAS. These diagnostics will drive a finely grained map of areas where content specialists may be able to provide additional small group or one-on-one support. This support will be responsively scheduled by their Core Team in coordination with their cohort's content specialists.

When youth first join us, they will spend much of their time in structured, interdisciplinary seminars. As they grow capable of larger projects requiring more independence, they will spend more time pursuing projects autonomously. As projects grow in scope, there will be more opportunities for collaboration, meaning youth will work together to pull off larger, interdisciplinary projects driven by their interests.



Facilitated by their Core Team, youth may seek to cross-register at other institutions (e.g. Bunker Hill Community College, Harvard Extension School, Somerville High School, *etc.*) or tackle community projects or internships. These may modify their schedule, which will be managed directly by their Core Team. In coordination with the PHS Director and youth's family, Core Teams may arrange for off-site learning experiences furthering youths' ILPs or progress toward graduation.

Over time, staff ensure youth's projects achieve curricular coverage supporting appropriate progress toward graduation, per their ILP. Throughout, youth's ILP will be maintained as the source of data which will drive the competency- and standards-based report cards and transcripts which will accompany them in their next steps after PHS (whether career or postsecondary education). Until those steps have been happily and successfully taken, staff will continue to support youth in developing themselves and their projects.

## How will we know we're doing our job?

By the time someone graduates from Powderhouse Studios, they will:

- Be capable of designing, executing, documenting, and critiquing daylong, weeklong, monthlong, and yearlong projects. This will include the ability to manage resources (including money and time) as needed.
- Be fluent with the building blocks of computation and storytelling.
- Be capable collaborators with significant experience working on small teams.
- Secure a job or admission to a postsecondary institution.
- Develop a portfolio of work covering traditional academic standards including but not limited to Common Core Math and ELA.
- Satisfy the requirements for the Massachusetts DESE's Competency Determination

## Great projects

We want people to focus on doing great projects aligned with the goals they set for themselves in their Individualized Learning Plans. We believe a project is great if it is:

- **meaningful** — Does the doing of the project actually matter to the person doing it? Is the project necessary, useful, or beautiful to them or someone they care about?
- **hard** — Does the project authentically stretch the person doing it in meaningful ways? Will they honestly say they've grown for their efforts? How much of the difficulty they encountered was gratuitous?
- **deep** — Does the project engage powerful ideas? Is the engagement itself deep? Do the people doing the project develop ownership over those ideas, leaving them in a position to independently use those ideas for their own ends?
- **real** — Is there an authentic standard of performance for the project? Does it actually engage with the real world? Could the project stand alone, independent of its context of having been done in a school?

- **honest** — Is the project coherent? Does the work have internal integrity of design? Is the person doing the project actually proud of it?

Inevitably, these involve subjective judgment. But that does not mean judgment cannot be rigorous. Like masters in fine arts programs or architecture studios, we believe ongoing processes of critical reflection offer ways of bringing rigor to projects. This means multimedia documentation of the process and critique of the products of each project are core to the work people do at Powderhouse Studios.

Like high-functioning, creative workplaces, there are no traditional grades (e.g. “A”, “B”, “C”) at Powderhouse Studios. This lets us focus on rigorous assessment project-by-project. For each project, youth and their

Core Team will assemble project advisory boards to help scope and execute projects, as well as rigorously critique and evaluate them. Evaluation will focus on three elements: (1) standards of performance the young person sets when they scope and describe their project, (2) alignment with/coverage of ILP goals (including standards coverage), and (3) the characteristics of great projects. On a project-by-project basis, advisory boards may also bring other, domain-specific dimensions of performance to the process as someone is scoping the project...e.g. in a playwriting projects, believability of dialogue might not be something a young person highlights initially, but that staff or an advisor might recommend as part of their evaluation framework. These boards may include staff, peers, or community members as the dimensions of performance and scale of the project demand. These qualitative assessments will drive evaluations of overall progress. Eventually, if a postsecondary pathway would benefit from a transcript with traditional grades, the Core Team will set aside time to generate such grades using the finely grained documentation and evaluation materials generated from their work over time.

## Great outcomes

Projects are great, but they aren't enough. Families and youth will come to PHS to grow in a wide variety of ways, and to move on to a wide variety of postsecondary options. Part of our duty is to ensure they have the support they need to understand, articulate, and accomplish their goals, regardless of our mission.

This means youth's engagement with and progress on the agenda set by their ILP will be core to our definition of success. We hope this will include not only progress toward their graduation requirements, but significant creative and developmental goals each youth articulates with PHS support.

Progress toward graduation will be defined by youth's ILP (rather than grade levels, which don't exist at PHS), including their progress covering traditional academic standards. At PHS, graduation is a gradual process. Someone will leave with a robust, effective transition plan and


supports in place, ensuring they have successfully and excitedly taken the next step that's right for them—whether that's enlisting, entering the workforce, or attending a postsecondary institution.



If someone is transferring to another school (likely with a more traditional credit and grade level system), staff will work closely with youth and their family to both:

- translate their portfolio of work into a traditional transcript, complete with grades, if needed
- and provide any targeted academic preparation which would be useful in smoothing that transition

Throughout and beyond someone's time at PHS, we will also track the overall satisfaction of youth and their family with their experience at Powderhouse Studios. This will be in addition to a variety of longitudinal measures (e.g. college completion, starting salary, rates of court involvement, *etc.*). All of these will be reported out to the School Committee.

articulation agreements & customizable transcripts emphasizing *fidelity & personalization*



	EXTERNAL	INTERNAL	REFLECTIVE
FORMATIVE	work summaries, support letters	peer, staff evaluations	journal, personal site
SUMMATIVE	 <p>MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY &amp; SECONDARY EDUCATION MCAS MASSACHUSETTS COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM</p>	 <p>COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS INITIATIVE PREPARING AMERICA'S STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE &amp; CAREER</p>	resume, portfolio

### Great preparation

But great projects and longitudinal outcomes aren't enough either. We must also attend to predictors of those outcomes. With the state and District, we will monitor a variety of proxies for and leading indicators of our performance. Some of these—like MCAS scores and absence rates—are statutorily defined in the Innovation Schools legislation. Others will be part of our ongoing, academic diagnostics (extending the MCAS and SAT Suite) and competency-based design. Collectively, these will tell us to what extent projects are pursued with depth and rigor to develop some of the numeracy, literacy, and inquiry skills core to effective work.



We believe self-efficacy—and the non-cognitive skills, executive function, and metacognition it requires—must be part of any reasonable definition of success. This means in addition to academic measures of performance, we will work with in- and out-of-district experts (including Stanford's CREDO) to develop our own measures and monitoring systems for whole-child development, social and emotional learning, executive function, and other non-cognitive skills. These will involve a mixture of formal and informal indicators, which will be reported out to the School Committee alongside academic measures.

## Great community impact

We are embedded in a web of relationships beyond our staff, youth, and their families. And these relationships come with commitments, which are part of how we define our mission. Our commitments to equity, research and development, and community partnership deserve special mention. We will report out on each of these dimensions to our Board of Trustees and the School Committee at least annually.

## Equity of access to PHS's highly individualized programming

Powderhouse Studios should be a force for integration—socioeconomically, ethnically, demographically, and academically. This means we can't work with a population which isn't representative of Somerville at large. To effect this, we will develop an active outreach enrollment process, a weighted lottery process to algorithmically guarantee that our enrollment reflects Somerville's youth, and governance structures to keep us honest.

### Active outreach

To generate broad and diverse interest amongst families in Somerville, PHS will establish an active outreach program by running in- and afterschool programs, summer and vacation camps, and a variety of information sessions, workshops, and other events. These outreach efforts will prioritize parent advocacy organizations and other community organizations which will reach a diverse set of families in Somerville. SPS Guidance will work with PHS and middle schools to ensure families and staff understand the PHS model and who might especially flourish there. These efforts will be complemented by a referral path allowing SPS staff to refer students to easily register in the enrollment lottery.

### Weighted enrollment lottery

Throughout the year, families will register to enter the Powderhouse Studios enrollment lottery. That lottery will be weighted, designed to algorithmically guarantee a student population representative of Somerville youth along the dimensions of (i) academic performance, (ii) socioeconomic status, (iii) race/ethnicity, (iv) special education needs, (v) English language learner status, and (vi) gender identity.

### Governance and oversight of our commitment to equity

The efficacy of our commitments to equity is core to our authorization. The School Committee will be responsible for oversight of our efforts through data on the enrollment, attrition, and

academic success across various socioeconomic, academic, and demographic subgroups at PHS.

### Research and design of tools and materials embodying the Powderhouse approach

Powderhouse Studios will be a place where novel approaches to organizing creative work with youth are explored. As we prototype new tools, materials, and approaches to our work, we also have a responsibility to share our work with the rest of Somerville. We will develop extensive on-boarding and professional development programming for our staff and coordinate with the District to document and open up that programming to staff throughout Somerville as appropriate. We will also develop in- and after-school programming as part of our enrollment outreach and onboarding process and work with the District to use these programs as opportunities for customized professional development for staff throughout Somerville to the extent partner schools are interested.

### Development of partnerships Somerville-wide

We believe the community and world at large house some of the most powerful resources for enabling and motivating youth's work. Cultivating community partnerships benefits all of Somerville schools. Whether through project advisors or mentorships or equipment access, the structure of PHS's staffing is designed to enable staff to steward community resources to support youth's work. These community partners will be integral to the scoping, execution, and evaluation of work throughout Powderhouse Studios. Bringing organizations in and sending youth out in tight integration with the community is hard. Powderhouse Studios' community-based model requires redesign to organize the school around the vetting, training, logistics, and liaison infrastructure required.

## Building a flexible organization

When you create a substantially new design, many of the assumptions and policies grounding practice up until that point change. For Powderhouse Studios, most of these changes ultimately derive from (i) our focus on projects, not subjects (and the various ramifications for individualization and autonomy that requires), (ii) our push of autonomy down to the staff, and (iii) and our commitment to the research, prototyping, and design of novel tools, materials, and approaches.

These changes require flexibility and redesign. But, it is worth taking a moment to acknowledge that although PHS is novel, it is by no means unprecedented. The flexibility and design elements we're proposing are a hybrid of proven models and best practices pulled from all over the country, backed by extensive research. For many of the citations and background research justifying this design in greater detail, refer to this collection of other design materials, including [the original prospectus](#) and [previous plan drafts](#).

Beyond that research, ten specific models deserve special mention here as having inspired us and informed our proposal. Collectively, they help persuade us PHS is possible. Each is worth further investigation to understand its history, relative success, and the details of its operations as they translate to PHS:

- [High Tech High](#) and its project-based work, enabled by team teaching
- [Generation Schools](#) and its year-round calendar, enabled by staggered staff schedules
- [The Boston Teachers Union school](#) and its model of shared administrative duties
- [Expeditionary Learning](#) and its emphasis on interdisciplinary projects featuring revision and critique
- [Citizen Schools](#) and its integration of community resources and expertise
- [The Harlem Children's Zone](#) and its academic case management model through individualized action plans
- Architecture and business schools and their respective practices of studio critique and case studies as models of qualitative rigor
- [The MET](#) and [Big Picture Learning](#) as models of individualized learning plans; small, long term cohorts; and a heavy emphasis on real world projects and internships
- [Olin College](#) and its practices of individualized, qualitative evaluation of projects on a case-by-case basis
- [826 Valencia](#) and its highly effective small group tutoring and support, in part supported by community members

All of these organizations share an emphasis on building a foundation of organizational capacity and structures in ways supporting their innovations. How decisions are made, how resources are allocated, how authority is distributed, and how norms are set are core elements of that foundation. Here we summarize our own approaches to school climate and wellness, administration, governance, and budgeting.

## School climate and wellness

People's health and safety—both physically and emotionally—are essential to (and more important than) cognitive growth. A safe and healthy environment is the stable foundation upon which a creative organization with youth can be built. Embracing this, we will develop a series of programs and community partnerships (some enabled by a system of student stipends) to provide fully individualized approaches to healthy cooking, eating, physical education, and social/emotional wellness.

Increasingly, best practices and research indicate that non-punitive approaches to discipline and dispute resolution are by far the most effective. Two of the approaches with some of the most promising results are [trauma-sensitive design](#) and [restorative justice](#) approaches. With help from in- and out-of-district experts (including Harvard's Trauma Learning & Policy Initiative) and community partners, PHS will take a whole-school tact to incorporating both of these approaches into our design and operation, consistent with the District's Code of Discipline unless otherwise negotiated. To do this, we will develop our own trauma-sensitive programming

and professional development for staff, students, and families. These programs will focus on developing people's capacity for empathy; strong relationships with adults and peers; the ability to self-regulate behaviors, emotions, and attention; and physical and emotional well-being.

## Administration

Emulating models like [Generation Schools](#) and the [Boston Teachers Union School](#), at PHS administrative duties will be shared, and staff will have the autonomy required to establish systems enabling that. At least one staff member will maintain principal licensure. A Director and a Director of Operations will be chosen by the Board of Trustees. These Directors will continue to work directly with youth through programs and projects. The Director must secure their principal licensure within their first year of employment. These Directors will continue to work directly with youth through programs and projects.

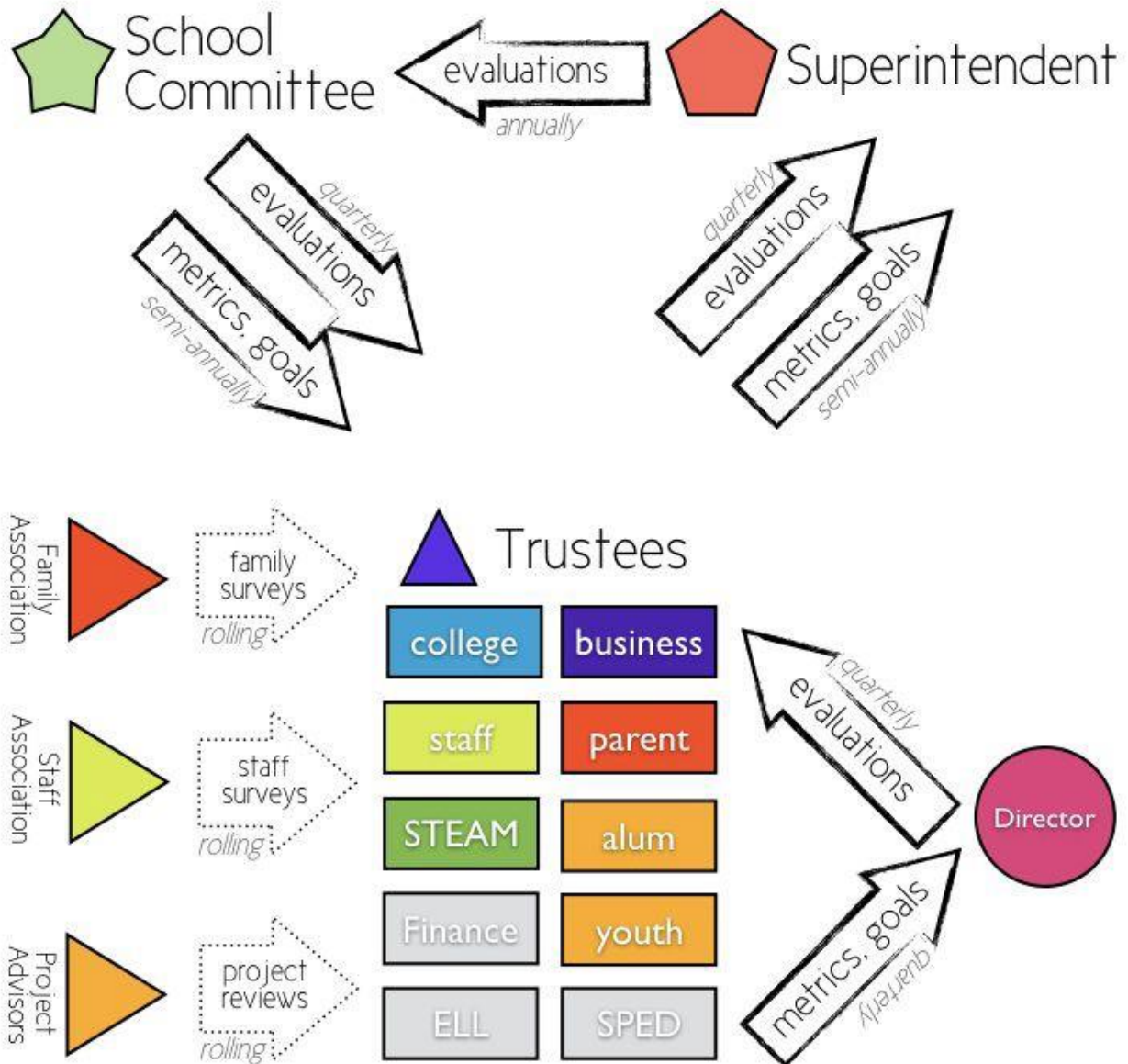
The priority of this administrative model is to push autonomy as far down to staff as possible and allow for as much divergence between cohorts as possible. This will enable Core Teams to explore and experiment with new approaches from which the organization overall can learn over time.

Among other things, the Director will be responsible for:

- thinking through, defining, and visibly establishing the mission
- setting the goals, priorities, and standards needed to effect that mission
- protecting the time and attention of staff and youth in pursuing that mission
- and ensuring the easy availability of all resources (especially community connections) required for that mission

The Director of Operations will be responsible for minimizing the staff time invested in the coordination and administration of time and resources at PHS (often by establishing systems and workflows).

## Governance



Powderhouse Studios is a district school. Therefore, the Superintendent and School Committee are ultimately accountable for the proper operation of Powderhouse Studios.

The governance of Powderhouse Studios will sit with a Board of Trustees which will supervise and control Powderhouse Studios. The Board will include include representatives from the District, PHS families, PHS youth, creative professionals, postsecondary institutions, and others.

Among other things, the Board of Trustees will be responsible for:

- forming Hiring Committees to recommend candidates from which the Superintendent fills the Director position.
- evaluating the Director and provide the results of such evaluation to the Superintendent and School Committee
- and overseeing the creation of PHS's School Improvement Plan

The Somerville School Committee is responsible for the authorization of Powderhouse Studios every five years. As part of that, the School Committee will oversee the performance of Powderhouse Studios toward its statutorily required goals and the integrity of the PHS enrollment lottery.

In the day-to-day operations of PHS, decision-making authority will be structured as flatly as possible, empowering staff, youth, and families as much as possible.

## Budget

Highly individualized projects and professional development requires highly individualized spending. PHS's site- and student-based budgeting system will prioritize transparency and agility. Anyone will be able to access complete, up-to-the-minute books online, and staff will be able to secure very timely access to supplies or services to support individualized projects.

In consultation with PHS, the District will implement a site-based, student-based budgeting system which complies fully with the Innovation School statute, namely:

*An Innovation School shall receive each school year from the school committee the same per pupil allocation as any other district school receives. An Innovation School may retain any unused funds and use the funds in subsequent school years. An Innovation School may establish a non-profit organization that may, among other things, assist the school with fundraising. A district shall not reduce its funding to an Innovation School as a result of the school's fundraising activities.*

## Autonomies required

Powderhouse Studios's design requires flexibility and autonomy in a variety of areas of operation. [The Innovation Schools statute](#) outlines those areas as (i) curriculum; (ii) budget; (iii) school schedule and calendar; (iv) staffing policies and procedures, including waivers from or modifications to, contracts or collective bargaining agreements; (v) school district policies and procedures; and (vi) professional development. This how we have organized these sections of the Innovation Plan.

All such flexibilities will remain subject to local, state, and federal statutes and regulations (and any future Memoranda of Agreement executed with the City, District, or Somerville Teachers Association) unless otherwise noted.

## Curriculum

To implement PHS's fully competency-based design, staff need autonomy in managing youth's daily work. This requires a centralized tool for managing all the information associated with a student. Subject to all applicable statutes and state regulations, PHS will have autonomy in designing, developing, and managing the Individualized Learning Plan system and associated tooling or materials. The ILP will at a minimum support the retrospective mapping process; accessory functions like transcript generation; and rendering accessible all materials associated with 504, IEP, or ELL services.

Because the individualization of the PHS experience means there are no traditional courses of study, the Superintendent will be exempt of their responsibility to prepare and submit such courses to the Committee on Educational Programs and Instruction for PHS, provided representative documentation of workshops, seminars, and student work is made accessible online.

As students' projects grow in scope and sophistication, they may involve cross-registration at other institutions, internships, co-ops, or other community settings. The ILP (and retrospective mapping process supporting it) will enable PHS to award credit for experiences outside PHS. PHS will develop policies governing such activities in consultation with the Superintendent, maintaining autonomy over the definition and documentation of credit-bearing activities.

PHS will also have the autonomy required to easily collaborate with community partners, subject to its own processes for evaluating partner quality insofar as those processes guarantee as or more rigorous vetting of candidates as compared with District practice. The autonomy enabling such collaboration includes oversight of the flexible budget, authorization, and logistics (e.g. transportation) to arrange for these partnerships. Policies governing these activities will be developed in coordination with the District to be consistent with all applicable School Committee policies, statutes, and state regulations.

The District will draft a policy providing necessary access and support to effect equitable cross-registration of PHS students into select programming at other schools in the District (and vice versa), subject to agreement with those schools. The School Committee counsel will be involved in the drafting of any policies relating to liability in such cross-registration activities.

Such activities will be subject to:

- agreement among the student's Core Team, the PHS Director, and the affected staff and principal at the other school,
- the negotiation of a fee agreement between PHS and the other school to cover any additional costs incurred
- and the execution of a safety agreement stating students are subject to the rules of the school where they are located. If there is an incident, immediate recourse will fall to the institution it occurs in; longer term follow-up will fall to the student's home institution. If

they are enroute, the rules of the institution whose staff is responsible for them at the time will prevail.

Much of PHS's design aims to embed youth and their work in authentic contexts and issues. To do this responsibly, PHS will have autonomy—in consultation with the Superintendent—to define its own policies, materials, and workflows regulating:

- **Gift exchanges** amongst students, families, and community partners, provided gifts may only be exchanged amongst students and staff only when proper measures have been taken to prevent the embarrassment and exclusion motivating the School Committee's policy on Student Gifts and Solicitations (File JP).
- **Controversial issues**, provided staff may select and engage controversial issues under the sole requirements that appropriate measures are taken to ensure (1) safe spaces are established for those not wishing to participate, (2) engagement is genuinely critical.
- **External speakers, events**, provided invitations of external speakers or establishment of fora (by students or staff) secure Director approval.
- **Academic integrity, plagiarism**, provided these definitions will acknowledge the norms of pertinent fields (e.g. it is very common to reuse work or code in software engineering in a way which is a professional breach journalistically).
- **Academic, creative freedom** for staff and youth, provided the full, First Amendment rights of youth and staff are protected in their creative work and that other students' full access to PHS support and services is not infringed upon.
- **Student publications, publication or documentation of student work**, provided every youth, family member, and staff member have an opportunity to redact or otherwise limit the exposure of their work or other, personally identifiable information.

All such policies, materials, and workflows must (1) be published online and transmitted to the School Committee and Superintendent upon revision, and (2) comply with all applicable statutes and state regulations.

## School climate and wellness

In consultation with the Superintendent and consistent with its trauma-sensitive design and restorative justice approach, PHS will have the autonomy to develop policies and professional development as or more rigorous than current District practices regarding:

- **Staff and student conduct and discipline codes, handbooks, and processes** for handling discipline, subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees, provided all such materials are (i) compatible with Somerville's Code of Discipline or negotiated to be so, (ii) made available online, (iii) and any action involving the filing of a criminal complaint, pressing of charges, or seeking of reimbursement from those acting against PHS property be taken in consultation with the PHS Director.
- **First aid and safety programs**, provided these include, but not be limited to: fire prevention, emergency procedures, traffic, bicycle, and pedestrian safety.



- **Proper handling of an injury to, or sudden illness of, a child or staff member**, provided these will be consistent with School Committee policies on First Aid (File EBB).
- **Emergency Medical Response Plan**, provided these are subject to the Superintendent's approval, this plan will be consistent with the School Committee policies on Emergency Plans (File EBC).
- **Healthy cooking and eating**, provided these are informed by the School Committee's policies on wellness (File EFD). This will require the autonomy to design and manage systems (including stipend systems enabling off-campus purchases, batch catering, and third-party contracting and professional volunteer consortia) providing food or access to wellness programming (including trying out for sports or registering for other extracurriculars at Somerville High School) to its students and staff. As part of these efforts, subject to pertinent statutes and state or federal regulations and in consultation with the Superintendent and School Committee counsel, PHS may establish itself as a school food authority for the purposes of participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

## Schedule and calendar

Powderhouse Studios is a fully competency-based design where progress is based on work completed, not time attended or invested. PHS is open year-round for students to do their work. This extended schedule and calendar means PHS is open nearly three weeks longer than traditional schools. Core Teams will be responsible for documenting hours of structured learning time, monitoring attendance, and coordinating attendance interventions when necessary. Core Teams will also coordinate excused time off with families, making appropriate progress on Individualized Learning Plan goals a priority in such consultations. PHS will have autonomy in designing systems to support these functions.

PHS will be open 235 days per year. For a full list of the days PHS will be closed, refer to the carve-out elsewhere in this plan. Each staff member will be expected to work a maximum of 225 days each year. Teams will be responsible for staggering scheduling—with written approval of the PHS Director—to ensure proper coverage. The PHS Director will ensure that schedules are staggered equitably within and across teams.

When PHS is open, it will be open at least 8AM–5PM, with students present 10AM–5PM and staff provided at least two hours co-planning daily. Breakfast and supervision will be provided in the morning for those arriving before 10AM through coordination amongst Directors and Core Teams. Core Teams may restructure their co-planning schedule in consultation with the PHS Director.

For the purposes of professional development, staff may coordinate with the PHS Director to secure relief from their duties. Up to twenty half days, ten professional development days, or any mix thereof may be scheduled each year wherein PHS will be closed to students. These will be communicated to the District and families by 1 August each year. In coordination with

the Superintendent, adjustments to this schedule may be made provided approval of sufficient notice of families by the Superintendent or the provision of appropriate supervision for students (e.g. *via* substitute staff).

## Staffing

Because Powderhouse Studios does not have traditional subjects, staff will be expected to have and develop an unusually deep and interdisciplinary set of skills, many of which are not targeted by traditional licensure pathways. As such, although PHS staff may not be required to be traditionally licensed, nothing about our plan or proposal changes licensure requirements for special education (SPED) and English language learner (ELL) support. Staff will be appropriately qualified to implement all such supports required by law and otherwise determined to be in students' best interests. Under the Innovation School legislation, Powderhouse Studios has secured the necessary reliefs from educator licensure requirements, included under Operating Agreements section of this document.

A proposed carve-out detailing what the Innovation Plan Committee believes Powderhouse's model requires can also be found in the Operating Agreements section. The final carve-out will be subject to negotiation and adoption by the STA and district. That carve-out should ensure all requirements mandated by PHS's licensure reliefs from DESE are met and that no individual staff position requires traditional licensure. For the purposes of compliance with School Committee policies, the PHS Director shall be considered the principal.

## Evaluation

PHS will maintain autonomy over the design and implementation of its evaluation system, so long as that system is consistent with applicable statutes and state regulations. The PHS Director will be responsible for the design of that system, in consultation with PHS staff and the Superintendent or their designees. That system will capture staff's contribution to the following dimensions of performance:

1. **...the Powderhouse Studios mission of supporting people in their transition from students to independent investigators**, to be evaluated through a collaboratively defined mix of Director oversight, expert panels, interviews, and peer staff reviews of:
  - a. the depth and quality of projects
  - b. the extent to which projects challenge students
  - c. the extent to which projects are meaningful to students
  - d. and projects' time scales
2. **...the fulfillment of staff's defined role and responsibilities**, to be evaluated through a collaboratively defined mix of Director oversight, interviews, and peer staff reviews of:
  - a. engage their program of study, partly indicated by the development of new tools and materials
  - b. effectively support their area of responsibility (e.g. project management, curriculum development, youth advocacy) cohort and school-wide

- c. staff contribute to the growth of individual students, their cohort overall, and their team members' efficacy
- 3. **...the articulation and satisfaction of the social contract with student and family, including their overall satisfaction with Powderhouse Studios.** Specifically,
  - a. Student and family satisfaction with their experience at Powderhouse Studios, assessed by survey, interview, and case study.
  - b. Individualized Learning Plan articulation and completion
  - c. Total time communicating with families, including relative proportion initiated by staff and families
  - d. Long term outcomes, including student and family satisfaction post-matriculation; college and workforce entrance, persistence, and success; various sociological proxies (e.g. starting salary, court- involvement)
- 4. **...and the satisfaction of the statutorily required goals governing District oversight of Powderhouse Studios.** Specifically,
  - a. non-uniform attrition
  - b. whole child growth
  - c. chronic absenteeism
  - d. student safety and discipline
  - e. student promotion, graduation, and dropout rates
  - f. student achievement on MCAS or equivalent
  - g. progress in areas of academic underperformance
  - h. progress among subgroups of students, including low-income students as defined by chapter 70, limited English-proficient students and students receiving special education
  - i. reduction of achievement gaps among different groups of students

Because staff work as a tightly knit team, they will also be evaluated as a team through a mixture of peer review, family and student surveys, personal portfolios, and the collective ILPs of their cohort. To the extent practical, the evaluation systems designed for and by staff will match those of students, emphasizing analogous dimensions of performance.

## Hiring and dismissal

PHS staff do not operate as individuals, but in tightly-knit, cross-functional teams. This means staffing decisions must be holistic, and acknowledge the need to balance capacities within and across teams. Upon a vacancy within PHS, the PHS Director will work with the affected Core Team to determine the qualities, role, responsibilities, and timing of how to fill the position in the remainder of the year.

PHS staff's roles are not commensurable to any in traditional settings. This means the licensure, job descriptions, and required professional development to ensure effective staff is very different from a traditional classroom. These unique roles and qualifications, in concert with the intensity of resources devoted to on-boarding and training PHS staff, mean PHS

staffing stability (e.g. protection from bumping into PHS) is essential. No staff will be involuntarily transferred in or out of PHS. Total years of service will define salary seniority. Total years of service in their seniority category will define bumping seniority.

The Superintendent will be exempt of their responsibility to maintain a record of PHS staff's Massachusetts State Teachers Certificate, instead bearing responsibility for maintaining documentation of appropriate training and/or licensure of PHS staff, under our Innovation Plan and associated reliefs.

## Substitutes

PHS's team-based staffing model, unusual curricular emphases, and project-based design mean the traditional pool of substitutes (and assumptions about the role of the substitute) are not a good fit for the Powderhouse Studios design. In collaboration with the District, PHS will have the autonomy to establish its own training program and pipeline to qualify substitutes to provide coverage. Qualification will be at the PHS Director's discretion in conjunction with the Human Resources department of the District. No degree will be required for substitute service at PHS. Staff, student, and family feedback about substitutes will be taken into consideration in determining whether a substitute remains in the substitute pool.

## Community partners

Because collaborations with the community are core to the PHS design, in coordination with the District, PHS will have autonomy to establish policies and workflows as or more rigorous than District practices required to vet, incentivize, and compensate community partnerships supporting PHS, including but not limited to:

- implementing CORI checks
- volunteers supporting one-off, operational, and educational functions
- mentors providing individual and/or project-based support
- liaisons for partners working with students in, e.g., a project or internship
- audiences or clients for student projects
- domain experts creating, vetting, or evaluating projects and curricula

## Professional development

PHS's unique staffing structure, curricular emphasis, and emphasis on highly individualized support requires the creation of our own professional development programming. This will include but not be limited to a one-year on-boarding program for incoming staff and up to ten days each year, which will be scheduled by 1 August each year.

Throughout their on-boarding and continuing through their time with PHS, staff will manage their own creative and professional development using an Individualized Learning Plan paralleling students'. In consultation with the PHS Director and the rest of their team members, staff will be

responsible for creating their professional development plans and collaboratively defining schedules for their (and their team's) professional development. These professional development opportunities will be aligned with staff's ILPs, focusing on their programs of study and roles at PHS.

PHS will have autonomy over the design and implementation of its professional development programs, and the PHS Director will be able to—at their discretion—award stipends to support and incentivize creative and scholarly work by staff.

PHS staff will have autonomy in scheduling, designing, developing such programming. The PHS Director—in consultation with the Superintendent or their designee—will have autonomy in incentivizing and compensating staff for the development of or participation in such programming.

## Budget

The Powderhouse Studios design requires significant financial flexibility and restructuring. To enable this, we petitioned for and received relief from MGL 30B from DESE, under the Innovation Schools legislation, in the Operational Agreements section of this document. In coordination with the City of Somerville, PHS will design its own procurement, financial controls, and budgeting processes with sufficient autonomy to enable the agile, just-in-time spending PHS's individualized model requires. A proposal for our MOA with the City can be found elsewhere. The final budgeting and financial controls policies for PHS will be subject to the negotiation and execution of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the City of Somerville adhering to [the Innovation School statute](#), "[PHS] shall receive each school year from the school committee the same per pupil allocation as any other district school receives. [PHS] may retain any unused funds and use the funds in subsequent school years. [PHS] may establish a non-profit organization that may, among other things, assist [PHS] with fundraising. [The] district shall not reduce its funding to [PHS] as a result of [PHS] fundraising activities."

To effect this, the MOA will be based on best practices in Horace Mann charter school procurement arrangements. The MOA will ensure PHS administers its budget in a manner consistent with applicable municipal finance statutes and regulations as modified by PHS's reliefs. The terms of the MOA will ensure the following:

**1. Regarding overall budget:**

- a. Annually, the district will allocate funds averaging at least the per capita charter contribution for Somerville (~\$16,100 in 2016). These funds will be disbursed by 1 August each year.
- b. PHS will be responsible for rolling, prorated reimbursement to the District based on enrollment.

- c. PHS will be able to effectively administer its funds as a consolidated sum. There will be no earmarking or other line-item limitations on spending beyond those required by applicable federal or state regulations and statutes.
- d. No funds will be transferred out of PHS accounts without the Director's approval.

**2. Regarding oversight:**

- a. PHS will be responsible for managing the acquisition of materials, equipment and services required for its proper operation. The PHS Director or their designee will be established as a purchasing agent for PHS, and will be required to undergo appropriate MCPPO certification. When it would limit the timeliness, cost-effectiveness, or quality of outcome, purchase orders will not be required for PHS purchases.
- b. For the purposes of expense reimbursements, the PHS Director will be the Superintendent's designee for prior authorization and record-keeping providing for consultation with the Director of Finance.
- c. In collaboration with the Director of Finance, the PHS Director will establish policies ensuring spending above a certain amount require at least one other staff member's review.
- d. The Superintendent will appoint the Director of Finance to the Board of Trustees to provide oversight of PHS's financial operations.

**3. Regarding accessibility of funds:**

- a. PHS will have complete, exclusive control over its spending insofar as those activities are consistent with all applicable municipal finance regulations and statutes.
- b. The District will maintain automated, machine-readable ACH access to PHS accounts for purposes of establishing systems reporting and managing PHS spending.
- c. PHS will be able—in a timely manner—to administer funds to support diverse, just-in-time supplies and support for projects and workshops.
- d. PHS will maintain instantaneous access to funds to support project supply purchases from any vendor.
- e. PHS will be able to easily effect same day payment for any service providers working with PHS to, e.g., provide workshops.
- f. PHS will be able to offer timely, agile prepayment for goods and services to enable cash-flow limited vendors (e.g. one-off community members or artists who cannot be expected to front capital for collaborations) to work with PHS.
- g. PHS will be able to offer same day reimbursements for approved purchases by staff or other partners.
- h. PHS will be able to administer timely, agile awards of stipends to support creative and scholarly work.
- i. PHS will be able to establish a digitally managed stipend system to pay for food, project supplies, and physical education. PHS will be able to establish digitally managed systems for batching such stipends when groups of students share an interest or need (e.g. to pay for a workshop provided by a community member

offering services which interest a subgroup of students). These stipends will be digitally managed by students' Core Team, and PHS staff will create the financial literacy and project management programs required to equip students to be responsible partners in the management of these stipends.

**4. Regarding outside funding:**

- a. For the purposes of any state, federal, or private programs, PHS may participate as though it were a charter school or district. These include but are not limited to special education reimbursement, pooled risk, and zero interest loan programs established by MGL Chapter 71B Sections [5A](#), [5B](#), and [5C](#).
- b. The PHS Director (in consultation with the Superintendent) will be responsible for coordinating the development of proposals for specially funded projects.
- c. PHS may raise additional, outside funds at the discretion of the PHS Director and in coordination with the Superintendent and in the spirit of being part of the District. The Board of Trustees will be kept apprised of all fundraising efforts and may request review or approval of such efforts by a majority vote.
- d. Gifts, grants, donations, and other revenues intended for the benefit of PHS students, staff, or families may be received by any 501(c)(3) entity established for the purposes of supporting PHS.

**5. Regarding transparency and auditing:**

- a. Quarterly, the District will provide machine-readable, itemized accounting of all district support or services provided to PHS beyond the per capita disbursement.
- b. At least semiannually, PHS will obtain a third-party audit of all PHS accounts and publish the results of all such audits online within thirty days of their conclusion. PHS will establish programming appropriately involving youth and their families in the review and management of the school-based budgeting process.
- c. PHS will maintain an online, itemized accounting of all PHS spending of its per capita disbursements.
- d. PHS will be able to establish an automated, machine-readable, finely grained accounting of its spending by use, on a per-pupil and per-cohort basis.

## District policies

In changing school as much as the PHS design does, many existing policies and assumptions are invalid not because their intent is wrong, but because the details of their implementation make assumptions not appropriate for our model. This section includes various autonomies and tweaks to School Committee policies, with particular sections set aside for enrollment and student promotion. Where appropriate, references to existing School Committee policies have been made by the policy's file locator from the policy index, e.g. "(File EA)."

## Governance

Powderhouse Studios will be a public school authorized by the Somerville School Committee to operate under Massachusetts Innovation Schools legislation. In keeping with the School

Committee's determination that, "the school is the key unit for educational improvement and change and that successful school improvement is best accomplished through a school-based decision-making process," authority over all such policies and decisions which do not materially affect other schools are not explicitly regulated by any statute or state regulation shall sit with PHS.

Much of this Innovation Plan works to push authority and autonomy down to staff and the PHS Director. In doing so, there are occasions when group-decision making is called for (e.g. in resolving disagreements among staff about lunch duty). Unless otherwise specified, the following will describe the voting method to be used:

1. A majority of the group involved will define a quorum, unless the body in question is a Core Team, in which case all team members must vote.
2. The group may define its own parliamentary procedures. In the event of a disagreement among the voting members, Robert's Rules of Order will be used.
3. Action shall be by voice vote; but any member may request the vote of each member upon any question be recorded—along with the identities of those voting—in writing.
4. Motions may be made at any time.
5. Any member may request actions be recorded in writing.

Institutionally, the Board of Trustees will sit at the center of its governance process. The Board of Trustees, upon approval of this Innovation Plan, shall be deemed to be public agents authorized by the Commonwealth to supervise and control Powderhouse Studios. The Board will have at least ten members comprising:

- District directors of Special Education, English Language Learner support, and Finance
- a current student
- an alumni (or student, for those years when no alumni are available or willing to serve)
- a current parent (not of the student Board member)
- a staff member
- a faculty member from a postsecondary institution
- an industry representative
- and a creative professional whose work embodies PHS's interdisciplinary approach

The Powderhouse Studios applicant, in consultation with the Superintendent, will be responsible for determining the initial membership of the Board of Trustees. In establishing Board bylaws and membership, reflecting the PHS and Somerville communities will be prioritized. This Board will be established at least six months before the first day of Powderhouse Studios' opening and adopt full and appropriate bylaws in at least ninety days' advance of Powderhouse Studios' opening.

The Directors of Special Education, English Learner Education, and Finance will be voting, *ex officio* members of the Board of Trustees, charged with providing to provide financial, SPED, and ELL oversight.



In recruiting Board Members, the PHS Director will emphasize representatives who reflect the Powderhouse Studios approach to creative work and who bring a particular expertise in PHS's core fluencies of computation and/or storytelling.

The Board of Trustees will be responsible for (1) recommending for hire and providing ongoing evaluations of the Director, (2) providing responsible fiscal oversight of the administration of any funds by Powderhouse Studios's associated 501(c)(3) or similar vehicles, (3) acting as an intermediate oversight level between the Superintendent, School Committee, and PHS Director, and (4) acting as PHS's School Improvement Council to establish and evaluate a School Improvement Plan in collaboration with the PHS Director.

PHS's School Improvement Plan shall be submitted by the Director to the Superintendent and School Committee for review during the District SIP process each year and will be drafted ensuring compatibility with existing District School Improvement Plan processes. The School Improvement Plan shall be approved by the Board of Trustees before such submission and made publicly available online.

The Somerville School Committee is responsible for the authorization of Powderhouse Studios under the Massachusetts Innovation Schools legislation every five years. As part of that authorization, the School Committee also oversees the performance of Powderhouse Studios under DESE accountability systems, as well as its statutorily required goals:

- **chronic absenteeism** — PHS's unexcused absence rate will remain below 10% (of open school days) for its authorization. Its absence rate will decrease an average of 1 percentage point per year or until it reaches [a target to be determined in coordination with MA DESE]%.
- **student safety and discipline** — PHS's in-school-suspension rate will remain below 15% for its authorization and will decrease an average of 1.75 percentage points per year or until it reaches [the average ISS rate for FCNW, SHS, and 8th-graders in the district]%. The PHS out-of-school suspension rate will remain below 8% for its authorization, and will decrease an average of 0.75 percentage points per year or until it reaches 4%.
- **student promotion and graduation and dropout rates** — PHS does not have grade levels or a presumed four-year graduation timeline. Instead, we will use the proportion of students in good standing—meaning they are making appropriate progress toward graduation per their ILP (*i.e.* the rate of Common Core coverage)—as our metric for student promotion and graduation. At a maximum, students' good standing will be updated quarterly. The proportion of PHS students in good standing will remain above 90% for its authorization, and will decrease by an 0.5 percentage points per year over its authorization or until it reaches 95%. Because our definition of good standing (as a minimum velocity) incorporates a projected graduation timeline, this is the only metric we need to track for graduation rates. The PHS dropout rate will remain below 4% for its authorization, and will decrease an average of 0.5 percentage points per year or until it reaches 2%.

- **student achievement on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System; progress in areas of academic underperformance; progress among subgroups of students, including low-income students as defined by chapter 70, limited English-proficient students and students receiving special education** — For Each year, PHS will select the highest performing school in the cohort of schools most similar to PHS in terms of grade span, total enrollment, and special populations (as determined by DESE in [its DART Analysis](#)). This will be the Target Performer. PHS will update its MCAS SGP (or CPI when SGP is not available) goals for each of these dimensions to close one half the gap to the Target Performer over the remainder of its authorization. Projected yearly targets assuming a linear increase will be generated and evaluated by PHS's ongoing diagnostic tests in years when MCAS testing does not occur. These goals and updates will be reported out to the School Committee at least annually.
- **reduction of achievement gaps among different groups of students** — PHS will track achievement gaps in the SPED, ELL, and high-needs students. We will then establish a stacked ranking of the intensity of students' needs along each of these dimensions. We will use this ranking to calculate [Gini coefficients](#) for total share of CPI and SGP performance on Math, ELA, and [STE](#) MCAS. The gap between these coefficients and those which you would obtain if every student in these subgroups were to shift one step in their stacked ranking will be the Gini Gap. Each year, PHS will update its goals to aim to close that Gini Gap over the remainder of its authorization. Projected yearly targets assuming a linear increase will be generated and evaluated by PHS's ongoing diagnostic tests in years when MCAS testing does not occur. Beyond all state accountability requirements and processes, these goals and updates will be reported out to the School Committee at least annually.

The Somerville School Committee is also responsible for monitoring the integrity of the enrollment lottery for Powderhouse Studios and ensuring our commitments to equitable enrollment are met. The details of this will be established in the MOA governing enrollment PHS will execute with the District.

The Somerville Superintendent is responsible for hiring and evaluating the PHS Director with the aid of the Board of Trustees, as well as putting the necessary operational interfaces in place to ensure Powderhouse Studios students maintain effective access to appropriate District-wide services and supports (including access to programming at Somerville High School).

Upon approval of the Innovation Plan by the School Committee, Powderhouse Studios will establish a 501(c)(3) entity that will be a body politic and corporate with the powers necessary or desirable for carrying out its program. Powers necessary or desirable for PHS's operation include but are not limited to the ability (as circumscribed by pertinent regulations, statutes, or agreements executed with the City of Somerville) to—for purposes furthering the PHS mission in ways consistent with the Innovation Schools legislation, this Innovation Plan, and any applicable reliefs, statutes, or state regulations:

- adopt a name, seal, and other effects of logo and brand identity (including .gov URLs, social media handles, and other such accounts), consistent with its role as a unique offering within SPS's broader menu
- establish marketing and communications efforts to promote awareness of PHS, including for the purposes of recruiting staff, families, or other partners
- sue and be sued, but only to the same extent and upon the same conditions that a municipality can be sued—the Somerville School Committee and district will be indemnified outside of any explicit responsibilities described in this Innovation Plan.
- acquire real property, from public or private sources, by lease, lease with an option to purchase or by gift
- receive and disburse funds for purposes aligned with our mission
- make contracts and leases for the procurement of services, equipment and supplies
- incur temporary debt in anticipation of receipt of funds; provided that notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the terms of repayment shall not exceed the duration of the Innovation Plan's term without the approval of the Board of Trustees
- solicit and accept grants or gifts
- establish policies regulating the creation, maintenance, and assignment of rights to intellectual property
- have such other powers available to an entity formed under [Chapter 156B](#) of the MGL

Individuals or groups may bring any questions or concerns about provisions in the Innovation Plan or the operation of PHS to the Board of Trustees concerning any claimed violations of the provisions of the Innovation Plan. Individuals or groups who believe their complaint has not been adequately addressed may at any time reach out to the School Committee, which shall make no formal response before the Board of Trustees and Superintendent have completed their investigations and made formal statements.

## Enrollment

For its first, five-year authorization, Powderhouse Studios will only be open to enrollment by students who would be between 13–15 years old at the time of their enrollment. After that, PHS will be open to enrollment by anyone having completed the 7th grade who does not have a high school diploma. Any student who doesn't meet these requirements may only enter the lottery through a District referral process.

In no year will PHS be required to enroll students, subject to a majority vote of the Board of Trustees, prompted by a motion by the PHS Director. In consultation with the District, the PHS Director may also arrange for enrollment into specialized programming at PHS for individual students. No students may be involuntarily transferred into or out of PHS without the written consent of the PHS Director, in consultation with the Superintendent. In years when PHS is enrolling students, it may never enroll more than forty students. If attrition, transfer, or matriculation open up seats from that year's forty, PHS may choose to re-open the enrollment lottery for those seats in the first three years of its authorization and must re-open the lottery

after the first three years, notifying those who have registered for enrollment in the past. The lottery for seats opening mid-year must ensure enrollment does *not* compromise the equity commitments laid out herein. Mid-year transfers into the school will be prohibited for the first three years of PHS's existence.

PHS will execute a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Somerville Public Schools implementing the guarantees articulated in this Innovation Plan and articulating a lottery which (1) algorithmically guarantees a representative student population and (2) ensures students and their families are happily electing to attend PHS with an adequate understanding of the model and experience.

As part of this process, the District will also provide all necessary support for PHS to:

- ...establish an active outreach program through in- and after-school programming (with those schools electing to participate), summer and vacation camps, and information sessions of various sorts. These will also function as a testbed and professional development context for the vetting and onboarding of staff.
- ...work with the District to develop a targeted outreach plan reaching appropriate families throughout Somerville
- ...establish an active guidance, referral, and advisory program reaching schools throughout the District about the PHS model.

These are the essential elements of our enrollment process; a detailed enrollment plan can be found elsewhere in this plan. The final enrollment procedure and enrollment policies will be subject to execution of a memorandum of agreement with the District.

PHS's student population will reflect their cohorts in Somerville along the following dimensions:

- Socioeconomic status, with at least the resolution of quarter-multiples of the poverty line.
- Gender, with provisions ensuring non-binary students are equitably handled.
- Proportion of English Language Learners (without regard for [WIDA](#) level)
- Proportion of students with special education needs (without regard for disability category or intensity)
- Race/ethnicity
- Academic performance as assessed by standardized test scores

PHS will administer an examination after the lottery serving as a diagnostic, academic baseline. Completion of this examination will be required for admission.

Siblings of PHS students may receive preference in the PHS lottery. Children of PHS staff may enter the enrollment lottery in accordance with District policies. The details of the lottery system and policy must be presented to the School Committee annually and upon any change.

Overseen by the Superintendent or their designee and in consultation with the SPS Parent Information Center (PIC) Director, PHS will retain autonomy over the design and administration

of the lottery system (subject to rendering the process fully transparent). PHS will also be responsible for managing of all public communications regarding PHS (including the lottery process).

In the event of a transfer into the school, the PHS Director will work with the Core Team into whose cohort the transfer student is being placed to translate the student's existing record and transcript into the PHS credit system. As part of the transfer process, the Director and family will meet to ensure a shared understanding of the PHS model and experience, as well as any potential effects on expected graduation timeline.

In the event of matriculation or transfer out of the school, the PHS Director will work with that student's Core Team to translate the student's existing record and Individualized Learning Plan into a transcript appropriate for the receiving institution. In the case of a transfer, the PHS Director and Core Team will work with the receiving school to align the student's work over their remaining time at PHS to ease their transition.

All district records and supporting materials (including historical materials) associated with PHS students—especially and including materials related to SPED and ELL services—will be provided to PHS in human-readable and electronic formats within thirty days of confirmation of their enrollment or complying with any applicable statutes or regulations. PHS will have the autonomy to establish an intake process soliciting input from students' previous teachers to better prepare for their transfer.

## Promotion and graduation

Powderhouse Studios will continue to work with people until they have successfully taken their next step—whether that is a job, admission to a postsecondary institution, or other age-appropriate placement developed in consultation with the District. While making appropriate progress toward graduation as articulated in their ILP, students may attend Powderhouse Studios until they receive a diploma or District funding supporting their enrollment ceases (e.g. in the case of a student with special needs who turns twenty-three). At PHS, graduation is a gradual process. There are no grade levels between which people will be promoted. For the purposes of administration (e.g. [SIMS](#)) state reporting, grade levels will be determined at the sole discretion of the PHS Director and students' Core Teams at least semi-annually and transmitted to the Superintendent, informed by MCAS readiness and Common Core coverage, pending future guidance from MA DESE. These determinations will be informed but at no point constrained by students' ILPs, including their velocity through standards coverage.

Graduation will require:

1. Meeting [the Competency Determination standard](#) (e.g. by completing MCAS testing requirements)

2. Presentation of a portfolio and personal statement, along with an in-person interview with the PHS Director, Core Team, and a Project Advisory Board convened by the youth specifically to consider their portfolio and graduation.
3. One of the following:
  - a. Covering the Common Core Math and ELA standards to the satisfaction of the youth's Core Team and documented by PHS's retrospective mapping process.
  - b. Admission to a postsecondary institution.
  - c. A majority vote of the PHS Director, Core Team, and at least three members of the Board of Trustees approving a portfolio and personal statement after an in-person interview.

## Equipment and facilities

This section lays out some areas in which PHS will work with the District to establish PHS-specific policies. PHS will have autonomy in the design, management, and build out of PHS's facilities (subject to appropriate statutes, regulation, and building codes). Notes below are issues which are important to the design of PHS and will be taken into consideration in developing policies with the District. PHS will have autonomy—in consultation with the Superintendent and School Committee—to design, draft, and promulgate all policies, materials, and workflows for the following, subject to the requirements that all such materials (1) be published online and transmitted to the School Committee and Superintendent (including notice of revision), and (2) comply with all applicable statutes, state regulations, and School Committee policies:

- **Evacuation plan**, provided the PHS Director will be provided with a machine readable copy of the district Evacuation Plan whenever that plan changes and ensure constant access to that plan by the Superintendent and School Committee.
- **Compensation for damages or loss**, provided charges for damages or loss will be levied at the sole discretion of the PHS Director.
- **Access to PHS space or equipment**, provided access may be granted to other City departments or community organizations at the discretion of the PHS Director (in coordination with Somerville Public Schools and/or the City of Somerville) and that PHS have autonomy in establishing any required training programs to ensure responsible use of facilities or equipment.
- **Facilities design and layout**, provided the PHS Director and staff be responsible for consulting with the Superintendent, Department of Public Works, or other appropriate designee on such question.
- **Animals**, provided that service animals are permitted and that fur-bearing animals may be brought on-premises after taking all necessary precautions to ensure the health of the animal and the safety (e.g. with respect to allergies) of students, staff, or others who will be on premises.
- **Maintenance**, provided the District execute a Memorandum of Agreement with Powderhouse Studios ensuring proper maintenance support and services, including performance agreements and cost agreements.

- **Advertising of commercial products or services on premises or through any communication with youth or families**, (File KHB) provided approval of the PHS Director and transmission of notice of such postings to the Superintendent is required. This will enable, for example, a variety of sponsorships, internships, and other forms of collaboration with institutional and corporate partners.
- **Visitors**, provided such policies ensure only authorized persons enter the school and that it is known who is on premises at all times
- **Security plan, including placement and management of ambient recording devices for educational purposes**, provided any feeds or data generated by such systems will not be copied, retained, or transmitted to third-parties without the written consent of the PHS Director and that all recorded parties are made aware of the recording process. For the purposes of privacy and data retention, the PHS Director shall be the custodian of any such data and shall be responsible for ensuring access by the Superintendent or their designee.

## Data and technical infrastructure

For the purposes of record keeping, forms, and other paperwork, consistent with [MGL Chapter 110G](#), the Massachusetts Uniform Electronic Transactions Act, PHS shall be permitted to use electronic records and communications. PHS will have autonomy—in consultation with the Superintendent—to design, draft, and promulgate all policies, materials, and workflows for the following, provided all such materials (1) be published online and transmitted to the School Committee and Superintendent (including notice of revision), and (2) comply with all applicable statutes and state regulations:

- **Personnel data**, provided PHS may maintain such records (or copies thereof) electronically, ensuring access by District personnel and that each staff member maintain access to their own records.
- **Data retention**, provided data (including video) may be retained for the purposes of documentation, professional development, or marketing with the written consent of the recorded parties.
- **Data sharing**, provided for the purposes of sharing student and family data and records, any tax-exempt entities set up by PHS to further the mission of Powderhouse Studios shall be considered authorized third-party users, and will be solely responsible for ensuring compliance with COPPA, FERPA, and similar statutes and regulations.
- **Data auditing**, provided PHS coordinates with District technology department to establish systems rendering public all records of PHS's operations (including but not limited to its finances and enrollment) and the District be required to provide PHS any necessary data to contextualize this reporting.
- **Information technology**, provided PHS have autonomy in funding, designing, and managing its technological infrastructure (including provisioning of software, hardware, and associated services) and assume responsibility for ensuring proper compliance with COPPA, FERPA, E-Rate, and other such regulations.



- **Programmatic data access**, provided the District technology department provide support allowing PHS to expose all data and records associated with its operation, without limitation, via an appropriately authenticated [Application Programming Interface \(API\)](#) and that PHS have autonomy in establishing these APIs.
- **Publication of legal agreements**, provided all PHS policies, contracts, MOAs and related paperwork (and a full history of the previous versions of such paperwork) be published online in human- and machine-readable formats.
- **Identification system**, provided such system serves the purposes outlined in the School Committee's policies on Photo Identification Badges (File EBC-R2).
- **Social Networking, Acceptable Network Use and Acceptable Personal Electronic Device Use for students and staff**, provided such policies are consistent with all applicable statutes and state regulations.

## Intellectual property

Given that students will be working on projects that may generate intellectual property, PHS will need to establish a policy in collaboration with the District governing ownership and transfer of such intellectual property. The aim of the PHS's policy on patents, copyrights, and other Intellectual Property is to secure the rights for students, staff, and collaborators to ensure first the maximum benefit to those individuals, and second maximum public benefit while providing recognition to individual creators and encouraging the prompt and open dissemination of work.

## Community support

Powderhouse Studios is designed from the ground up to be permeable to the community. The breadth of resources available in the community is an essential part of PHS's approach to individualization. To support the responsible development and management of such relationships and resources, in coordination with the Superintendent, PHS will have autonomy to define its own operating policies regarding the solicitation of outside support or partnerships, provided solicitation of funds or other forms of support for charitable purposes from or by PHS youth, staff, or families may be authorized by the PHS Director. For the purposes of the School Committee's policies regarding gifts and solicitations, a "personal gift" shall be defined as one bearing or offering no discernible educational or professional benefit for staff. Charitable causes or efforts which will directly benefit PHS youth, families, or staff will be exempt from the School Committee's policies on Gifts To and Solicitations By Staff (File GBEBEC).

## Operating agreements

These operating agreements detail the implementation of PHS's autonomies to the extent they require coordination with other District, City, or union parties. The details of these agreements may change as further negotiations those parties require. Such changes must be consistent with the design and intent of this Innovation Plan. Substantive changes to the design will require restarting the Innovation School approval process.



Some of these agreements reference School Committee policies or procedures by their File identifier in parentheses, e.g. (File JBDC).

## Reliefs requested and granted by DESE

In the final draft of the plan published online and presented to the School Committee, the letters from DESE will be included. These reliefs describe what MA DESE has decided PHS *may* do. Ultimately, operationalizing these reliefs will involve negotiations and MOAs with a variety of City and District entities, including the School Committee, Superintendent, STA, *et al.*

## Enrollment process

*The Innovation Plan Committee proposes this operating agreement understanding City and District partners must negotiate and finalize them. While the Plan's details may change after the Innovation Plan Committee's vote, the approved Plan may not change substantially without the Innovation Plan Committee's re-approval.*

*The Innovation Plan Committee understands these details are especially likely to shift in the areas of (i) staffing (reflecting conversations with the STA), (ii) finances (reflecting conversations with City Finance), liability (reflecting conversations with District counsel), facilities (reflecting conversations with the District, DPW, and pending a site selection), and enrollment lottery specifics (reflecting our work with the Superintendent).*

## Purpose

Powderhouse Studios should be a force for integration and equity. This begins with our enrollment lottery. This system represents our best efforts to:

- ensure our enrollment reflects the youth of Somerville socioeconomically, demographically, and academically, including English Language learners and those with special needs,
- mitigate the forces of selection bias, gentrification, and exclusion that can dominate blind lotteries and other school enrollment mechanisms
- render the enrollment process as transparent and accessible as possible

## Enrollment

For Powderhouse Studios' first five years, the decision to accept students mid-year will be at the discretion of the PHS Director. After that, PHS's re-authorization by the School Committee will be contingent on PHS having established processes for integrating mid-year enrollees.

Annually, the PHS Director will be responsible for reporting out to the Board of Trustees and School Committee the composition of registered families as compared with the final enrollment

generated by this lottery. As part of that report, the PHS Director will include recommendations for school- and district-wide efforts which would promote equal interest from and registration among Somerville families.

In no twelve-month period may Powderhouse Studios enroll more than forty students. In the first three years of PHS's authorization, the PHS Director--in consultation with the Superintendent/School Committee--may choose to not enroll additional students in order to stabilize and make program adjustments.

Modification of the enrollment lottery in any way will require a written explanation to be submitted by the PHS Director to the Board of Trustees and Superintendent, along with the approval of the Somerville School Committee.

PHS will work with the district and guidance staff throughout Somerville to develop a program ensuring staff are prepared to inform families as to how PHS fits into Somerville's menu of options.

## Eligibility

For the first five years' of Powderhouse Studios' existence, any student who will be age 13–15 and reside in Somerville as of their admission may register to enroll in Powderhouse Studios.

As part of enrollment, people must:

- complete an academic diagnostic test (which will not affect their chances of admission)
- provide an estimate of their household income
- and complete a form detailing their demographic, SPED, and ELL status

...and all of these records must be collected and retained (or disposed of) in a manner protecting their confidentiality and anonymity.

Up to 20% of PHS's total enrollment may come from out of district sources (assuming the necessary agreements have been reached with the sending district). Students residing outside the District will only be eligible for admission after negotiations with the sending District and a vote of the School Committee.

Up to 20% of PHS's total enrollment may be selected by the PHS Director in consultation with the Superintendent, provided those students (a) have an IEP or 504, (b) are an ELL student, (c) or were in the bottom 50% of their cohort's standardized test scores.

Both of these groups (out-of-district and Director-selected students) may only enroll provided those enrollees (a) entered the lottery, and (b) do not substantively change the socioeconomic, demographic, or academic profile of the cohort which would have otherwise enrolled.

Each year in which out-of-district or Director-selected enrollees enter PHS, an anonymized report comparing the socioeconomic, demographic, or academic profile of the cohort relative to the default cohort will be submitted to the School Committee by 15 March in that year.

## Lottery algorithm

This is a proposed algorithm aiming to implement these eligibility requirements which must be vetted by appropriate technical and legal experts and established through an MOA with the District.

1. Randomly select forty students from all registered students.
2. If there are not equal numbers of boys and girls in (1), generate all possible combinations of students which have equal numbers of male and female students. Those identifying as non-binary will be counted as both male and female.
3. Randomly select a combination from (2).
4. If at least 50% of students in (3) are not in the bottom 50% of their MCAS and/or attendance rate, filter (2) for all combinations where at least 50% of students are in the bottom of their MCAS and/or attendance rate. Those without MCAS and/or attendance rate data will be counted as being both in the bottom 50% and top 50% of both MCAS scores and attendance rate.
5. Randomly select a combination from (4).
6. If at the proportion of students with disabilities in (5) is not at least one half that of Somerville High School, filter (4) for all combinations where the proportion of students with disabilities is at least as large as Somerville High School's.
7. Randomly select a combination from (6).
8. If the proportion of ELL students in (7) is not at least one half that of Somerville High School, filter (6) for all combinations where the proportion of ELL students is at least as large as Somerville High School's.
9. Randomly select a combination from (8).
10. If the proportion of High Needs students in (9) is not at least that of Somerville High School's, filter (8) for all combinations where the proportion of High Needs students is at least as large as Somerville High School's.
11. Compute a goodness of fit for the socioeconomic status of each combination in (9) as follows:
  - a. For each student, compute their household income as a multiple of the poverty line for their household.
  - b. For each combination of students, count the number of students in each quarter-multiple of the poverty line. (*i.e.* Count the number of students in a combination who fall between 1–1.25 the poverty line, 1.25–1.5, *etc.*)
  - c. Compute the total difference between each combination's household income distribution in (11.b) and Somerville families.
12. Compute a goodness of fit for the distribution of race/ethnicity of each combination in (9)
13. Rank all combinations of students by the product of (11.c) and (12), from least to greatest. In the case of a tie, choose a random ordering.

14. Filter (13) for all those combinations with the lowest score computed by (11.c).
15. Filter (14) for all combinations where students are double-counted, removing those combinations where double-counted students appear multiply.
16. Randomly select a combination from (15), inversely weighted by the number of double counted students in each combination.

## Schedule

If by 1 October, the group of students registered to enroll at PHS is not sufficiently broad or diverse to allow for the lottery described, PHS will begin targeted outreach, working with the district to identify and reach out to students and families who would bridge gaps in the pool of registered families.

By 1 January, the Superintendent will inform the PHS Director of the number of slots available for enrollment by out-of-district students and under what terms for the sending district.

By 1 March, any out-of-district students interested in registering for enrollment at PHS the following academic year must have secured an agreement by their School Committee.

By 15 March, PHS's enrollment lottery will end and its results will be communicated to all participating families. Families will have thirty calendar days to confirm enrollment. If the number of families confirming enrollment falls below twenty-five after 15 March, PHS will re-run the enrollment lottery, keeping those confirmed families and using the lottery to fill in remaining slots and finalizing its rolls by 1 April.

By 1 April, the full, anonymized results of the lottery will be posted online (along with materials sufficient to audit its operation) and communicated to the Superintendent, Somerville School Committee, Board of Trustees, and all staff.

Students will be considered enrolled at PHS beginning the day after their last day in their previous school. Students and their families will be expected, but not required, to participate in a summer on-boarding process and associated programming.

## Carve-out governing Powderhouse Studios staff

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*The Innovation Plan Committee understands these details are especially likely to shift in the areas of (i) staffing (reflecting conversations with the STA), (ii) finances (reflecting conversations with City Finance), liability (reflecting conversations with District counsel), facilities (reflecting*

*conversations with the District, DPW, and pending a site selection), and enrollment lottery specifics (reflecting our work with the Superintendent).*

## Staffing

For each cohort of no more than forty students, there will be at least three, core staff (“Core Team”) managing that cohort. For every two cohorts totaling no more than eighty students, there may be at least two content specialists working with those cohorts. These staff will execute yearly commitments of service. We will begin with at least one licensed ESL teacher and one licensed SPED staff member. A preliminary draft of job descriptions for core staff and content specialists can be found [here](#). Job descriptions will be adjusted per PHS Director’s discretion and may be adjusted to acknowledge the mix of needs of the team in which a given position will be situated.

There will be no administrative positions at PHS. A Director and Director of Operations position will be defined at PHS, but to the extent practical, staff will work collegially to share administrative duties. The Director and Director of Operations will be placed at whatever lane and step their qualifications would indicate as staff. The Director will be hired by the Board of Trustees, in consultation with the Superintendent and School Committee.

## Qualifications

As long as Powderhouse Studios is operating under its licensure relief from DESE, PHS will maintain an appropriate number of qualified staff and publish data regarding all staff’s background and licensure status. This requires at a minimum:

- At least 1 ESL certified staff member
- At least 1 SPED certified staff member
- All staff must pass the Communications and Literacy Skills MTEL within their first year of employment.
- Each staff member working primarily in a discipline must pass—if one exists—the associated MTEL within their first year of employment.
- All staff must secure their RETELL/SEI Endorsement within their first year of employment.

No staff member will be hired at Powderhouse Studios without written approval from the PHS Director—in discussion with District Human Resources (HR) after a review of relevant data, including but not limited to a [CORI](#) report and fingerprinting—and a majority of staff approving the hire by a majority vote. Powderhouse Studios’ on-boarding will feature an apprenticeship program, culminating in Faculty Status, through which all staff must proceed in their first three years at PHS. At the end of this three-year program, upon a nomination by the PHS Director, staff will present their body of work to their colleagues (including the PHS Director). This body of work will document or otherwise demonstrate their contribution to PHS: both via direct support of youth and in broader contributions to PHS’s organizational capacity. Their colleagues will provide input—including a written, recorded vote—as to whether they

recommend awarding Faculty Status. The Director will take such input under consideration and will make the final decision as to Faculty Status. Regardless of outcome, the Director will document their thinking in and justification of their decision. Staff may re-apply for Faculty Status twice yearly after their first three years if they are denied Faculty Status.

The design and progression of this apprenticeship program must be presented to the School Committee annually by the PHS Director.

## Schedule

Every staff member is expected to be at PHS no more than 220 days per year. Staff will not be expected to work:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Washington's Birthday
- Patriots' Day
- Memorial Day
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Veterans Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Thanksgiving Friday
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day
- Days between Christmas and New Year's days.
- PHS may also be closed for maintenance ten, additional days each year (coordinated with facilities maintenance by the PHS Director). Staff will be notified by 1 August of that year's maintenance schedule.

Staff's work day will begin at 8AM and end at 5PM. Staff will have the option of scheduling different arrival and departure teams within and across their teams. A majority vote by affected staff will determine scheduling in the case of disagreement. This does not include occasional, additional duties (including attendance at exhibitions of student work, after- and out-of-school parent meetings, field trips, etc.) There will be no stipends for running extracurricular programming.

Staff will be guaranteed a one hour lunch each day. For each cohort, teams will be responsible for designing and choosing a system by majority vote within the team which guarantees at least two adults for every forty students supervise lunch and provides for satisfactory access to duty-free lunch for staff.

## Salary and compensation

The STA and PHS will agree to a process for computing a percentage capturing the excess time PHS staff work, the Worked Time Excess. We propose a Worked Time Ratio of 29.1%, given the following:

1. The average, middle school teacher in the United States works [44.8 hours per week](#).
2. Of those, 26.8 hours—or 59.8%—are direct instructional hours. The remainder are administrative duties, extracurricular activities, grading work at home, *etc.*
3. PHS is open longer each day and more days per year than Somerville High School, for a total of 1.74 times as many minutes per year.
4. Discounting lunch, that's 1.656 times as many minutes per year.
5. Incorporating the average non-instructional time worked by SHS staff (extrapolated from (1)), PHS staff will work 1.29 times as many minutes per year.

A premium percentage capturing the average cost of a fully-burdened staff member will be agreed upon by PHS and the City of Somerville. We propose 26.2%, based on the existing ratio for District personnel. This will be the Fully Burdened Premium.

Annually, Somerville Public School's Director of Finance and all PHS staff will be notified of pay scales at PHS by 1 August, which will be calculated as follows:

1. The Target Base Salary will be defined as the STA Unit A lane and step salary scaled by the Worked Time Ratio.
2. Any projected costs of paying all fully-burdened staff their Target Base Salaries plus their Fully Burdened Premiums exceeding 58% of the product of PHS's per capita allotment and enrollment will be the Working Overage in a given year.
3. If the Working Overage is greater than zero in a given year, the Director may—after seeking and receiving a two-thirds, anonymous vote of staff—reduce staff salaries by the minimum possible to offset the Working Overage. Per staff salary reductions will be weighted by their salary.

Any staff transferring from another SPS position will enter at their step and lane. When hired from outside of SPS, the PHS Director will determine—in consultation with District HR—the appropriate lane on the basis of the relevance of their training and professional experience to the position and work into which they are hired. Any additional credits or degrees staff would like to have recognized by their lane placement will require approval by the PHS Director. In consultation with PHS staff and the Superintendent, the PHS Director will be responsible for documenting guidelines informing such placement.

The salary resulting from this process (below) will be disbursed in fifty-two, weekly checks throughout the year. Staff may receive a stipend under the PHS Director's discretion and majority votes of the staff and Board of Trustees.

The PHS Director may, at their discretion, disburse stipends or set up other incentive programs to promote and compensate staff for creative or scholarly work which builds PHS's organizational capacity.

### 2017 STA Unit A Pay Matrix

STEP	BA	BA+15	MA	MA+15	MA+30	MA+45	CAGS/60
1	\$47,944	\$49,891	\$52,014	\$53,629	\$55,759	\$57,328	\$58,680
2	\$50,956	\$52,952	\$55,266	\$56,927	\$59,150	\$60,791	\$62,143
3	\$53,965	\$56,006	\$58,517	\$60,220	\$62,543	\$64,253	\$65,606
4	\$56,977	\$59,027	\$61,769	\$63,484	\$65,934	\$67,717	\$69,070
5	\$59,987	\$62,043	\$65,020	\$66,748	\$69,326	\$71,180	\$72,533
6	\$62,999	\$65,045	\$68,272	\$70,000	\$72,718	\$74,644	\$75,997
7	\$66,010	\$68,032	\$71,522	\$73,214	\$76,110	\$78,107	\$79,460
8	\$69,019	\$70,973	\$74,774	\$76,397	\$79,500	\$81,571	\$82,924
9	\$72,504	\$74,361	\$78,570	\$80,126	\$83,047	\$85,035	\$86,388
10	\$76,211	\$78,036	\$82,437	\$83,971	\$87,379	\$89,297	\$90,649
11	\$82,104	\$84,015	\$88,325	\$89,930	\$93,089	\$94,642	\$95,994

### Proposed PHS Pay Matrix

STEP	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	\$61,822	\$64,332	\$67,070	\$69,152	\$71,899	\$73,922	\$75,665
2	\$65,706	\$68,279	\$71,263	\$73,405	\$76,271	\$78,387	\$80,131
3	\$69,586	\$72,217	\$75,455	\$77,651	\$80,647	\$82,851	\$84,596
4	\$73,469	\$76,113	\$79,648	\$81,860	\$85,019	\$87,318	\$89,063
5	\$77,351	\$80,002	\$83,841	\$86,069	\$89,393	\$91,784	\$93,528
6	\$81,235	\$83,873	\$88,034	\$90,262	\$93,767	\$96,250	\$97,995
7	\$85,117	\$87,724	\$92,225	\$94,406	\$98,141	\$100,716	\$102,460
8	\$88,997	\$91,517	\$96,418	\$98,511	\$102,512	\$105,182	\$106,927
9	\$93,491	\$95,885	\$101,313	\$103,319	\$107,086	\$109,649	\$111,394
10	\$98,271	\$100,624	\$106,299	\$108,277	\$112,671	\$115,145	\$116,888
11	\$105,870	\$108,334	\$113,891	\$115,961	\$120,034	\$122,037	\$123,780

### Leave

All forms and reasons for leave are combined at PHS in a paid time off bank; *i.e.* there is no difference between sick or personal leave. Somerville High School staff currently work 184 days. PHS's working year is 220 days, longer by a factor of 1.2. This ratio will determine the



number of guaranteed working days per year by scaling (and rounded) the number of days guaranteed sick and personal leave days offered Somerville High School staff. As of this writing, that is 17 days, meaning PHS staff are guaranteed at least 20 days paid leave each year. Paid leave will roll over yearly without limitation.

As with other staff in Somerville, participation in the existing Sick Leave Bank is voluntary. A staff member may deposit one day of their PHS leave per year into the Sick Bank and secure the same rights and access as any other STA member.

In the interests of promoting a healthy work culture, PHS staff *must* take at least 10 days of paid leave yearly. Except in the case of emergency, staff must submit their request for leave in writing at least 72 hours in advance, and that request must be approved by a majority of their Core Team and the PHS Director.

Staff transferring into PHS from another Somerville Public School will keep any sick or personal leave accrued.

### Transfers, layoffs, and reductions in force

Because PHS staff require unique backgrounds and skills, given the nature of programming at PHS, it is important that when staffing the school, staff are appropriately qualified for their positions. Pending a determination of the PHS Director and Superintendent of such appropriate qualification, involuntary transfers into PHS may occur. Voluntary transfers into PHS require a majority vote approval by staff and the consent of the PHS Director.

Any staff member who has not attained Faculty Status at Powderhouse Studios may be laid off regardless of prior, Professional Teacher Status. Any faculty attaining Faculty Status—for the purposes of reductions in force—shall be considered to have Professional Teacher Status. Regardless of Faculty Status or licensure status, staff continue to accrue seniority.

### Seniority

Powderhouse Studios will establish a new seniority category, “Computation and Storytelling”. If a staff member is transferring in from another seniority category, they will retain seniority within their seniority category immediately prior to their transfer until they attain Faculty Status at Powderhouse Studios.

A staff member's total years of service will determine salary seniority. A staff member's total years of service in their seniority category will determine bumping seniority in that seniority category.

Any staff member facing layoff from a position at Powderhouse Studios will be eligible to transfer into another seniority category if they are qualified to teach in that category.

## Reduction in force due to budget cuts

PHS will operate on a site-based budget. In the case of a budget cut, the PHS Director will work with the Superintendent to identify and implement cost-cutting measures. In the event that these cost-cutting measures are insufficient to cover the budget cut, staff will have the option--by a majority, anonymous vote--to implement a Temporary Reduction, reducing the Minimum Base Salary by the minimum amount required to close the budget gap, as long the Temporary Reduction does not lower staff's salary below 110% of the STA Unit A pay matrix. If staff vote not to reduce the Minimum Base Salary, the PHS Director will be in charge of implementing the reduction in force. The Temporary Reduction must be re-voted each year by 1 August.

PHS reductions in force must be consistent with [Acts 2012, Chapter 131](#) (see page 8, "Reductions in Force" of the [MTA'S Road Map for Beginning Teachers](#) for a summary). Namely, the PHS Director must use performance as their primary consideration among those staff with Faculty Status. To bring context and compassion to the process, the PHS Director must use future, projected performance (as informed by past performance, emphasizing recent evaluation materials) as the primary consideration. The PHS Director must write up such considerations and submit these to the PHS Board of Trustees and Superintendent. During a reduction in force due to budget cuts, no staff member with Faculty Status may be laid off before a staff member without Faculty Status. Seniority (as measured by years of service at Powderhouse Studios) will be used as a tiebreaker.

In implementing a reduction in force due to budget cuts, the PHS Director must comprehensively document the reasons for the ordering of layoffs in the reduction of force and present such justifications to the Board of Trustees, School Committee, and Superintendent.

## Termination and dismissal

Dismissal will require just cause, *viz.* a documented pattern of inefficiency, incompetence, incapacity, failure to meet performance standards, conduct unbecoming a teacher, and insubordination—*only* insofar as they observably affect our mission, other staff's capacity to perform their duties, or concrete, developmental outcomes for youth. Suspension with pay may be effected at any time by the PHS Director provided reasonable evidence of misconduct.

The PHS Director will be solely responsible for suspensions and dismissals. Cohort stability will be prioritized in timing of all dismissals. The PHS Director may dismiss any staff member, subject to the review and majority approval of the PHS Board of Trustees with final approval of the Superintendent.

Before seeking the Board's approval, the PHS Director must notify the staff member of their intent to dismiss in writing. The PHS Director is responsible for soliciting appropriate staff input to inform the determination.

Beyond this due process, a staff member who has been employed in a full-time position working with students on a daily basis for at least ninety calendar days shall not be dismissed unless they have been furnished with:

1. at least six months' probationary period during which the grounds for probation have been articulated in sufficient detail to allow the staff member to address the issues at hand
2. written notice of intent to dismiss
3. an explanation of the grounds for the dismissal in sufficient detail to permit the staff member to respond. These grounds must be substantively similar to those in (1).
4. documents relating to the grounds for dismissal
5. documentation of their rights in the dismissal process, including at least their right to representation (by an attorney or other representative) throughout the process

...and the effect of the timing of such dismissal on staff's cohort has been duly considered by the PHS Director and Core Team.

The staff member shall have thirty calendar days after receiving such notice to review the decision with the PHS Director and to present information pertaining to the basis for the decision. Staff without Faculty Status who have not been working full time with youth for at least ninety calendar days shall otherwise be deemed employees at will.

All dismissals at PHS will be fully consistent with [MGL Part I, Title XII, Chapter 71§42](#); to wit:

- A staff member with Faculty Status may seek review of a dismissal decision within thirty days after receiving notice of their dismissal by filing a petition with the PHS Director, Superintendent, and School Committee.
- The PHS Director, Superintendent, and staff member will seek to agree on an arbitrator. If an arbitrator has not been agreed upon in writing within ten business days of their dismissal, any party may submit a petition for arbitration with the commissioner.
- The commissioner shall forward to the parties a list of three arbitrators provided by the American Arbitration Association. Each person on the list shall be accredited by the National Academy of Arbitrators. The parties each shall have the right to strike one of the three arbitrators' names if they are unable to agree upon a single arbitrator from amongst the three. The arbitration shall be conducted in accordance with the rules of the American Arbitration Association. The fee for the arbitration will be the responsibility of Powderhouse Studios.

## Evaluation

Our staffing structure calls for an alternative, primarily qualitative evaluation system driven by three factors: our mission, our social contract with families, and district priorities. Here we lay out how we plan to evaluate these factors.

In collaboration with the PHS Director, PHS staff will be responsible for developing a portfolio-based evaluation system consistent with the Innovation Plan and associated regulations, as well as any associated protocols for collecting data consistent with documenting and evaluating these dimensions of performance and any others explicitly laid out in PHS's authorized Innovation Plan.

The specific protocols of this evaluation system must be documented publicly, and any changes must be approved by a majority vote of staff and must be presented to the School Committee within 90 days of change. Specifically, the dimensions of evaluation here will all be subject to review as part of dismissal proceedings. Staff's design of the portfolio-based evaluation system will clearly identify materials subject to/accessible to review by the Director.

Consistent with the STA Unit A collective bargaining agreement (Article XIV.A), the private life of staff is not within the purview of the School Committee, Central Office, or other PHS staff. Only issues which directly, materially, and observably compromise our mission or staff's capacity to perform their duties will be construed as interference. Staff will be guaranteed the full rights of citizenship. Religious, political, or creative activities (regardless of when or where they occur)—or lack thereof—will never be grounds for official action. Insubordination will not be grounds for official action unless such insubordination directly, materially, and observably affects other staff's capacity to perform their duties, student safety, or concrete, developmental outcomes for youth.

### Our mission

Our mission is to transform students into independent investigators. We define this through five dimensions of performance, to be assessed through an appropriate mix (collegially defined) of Director oversight, expert panels, interviews and surveys, and peer staff reviews of:

1. ...the **depth and quality** of student work
2. ...the extent to which projects **challenge** students
3. ...the extent to which projects are **meaningful** to students
4. ...projects' **time scales** of execution
5. ...the extent to which projects are designed and executed **independently**

### Family social contract

Many issues and outcomes which matter to students and families are unrelated to independent investigation. This makes student and family satisfaction central to defining success. We will measure this *via* three dimensions of performance through an appropriate mix (collegially defined) of Director oversight, expert panels, interviews and surveys, and peer staff reviews.

1. **Student and family feedback**
2. **Individualized Learning Plan articulation and completion**
3. **Long term outcomes, viz.**
  - student and family satisfaction post-matriculation
  - college entrance, persistence, and success

- workforce entrance, persistence, and success
- various sociological proxies (e.g. starting salary, court-involvement, etc.)

### District priorities

The District also has its own constraints and priorities. These three dimensions of performance will be built into the SSA's Innovation Plan and regular re-authorization conditions:

- **Standardized test scores** will be measured by minimum CPI and SGP targets we must meet or risk losing our authorization by School Committee vote.
- **Whole child growth** will be assessed by our own, qualitative survey program.
- **Non-uniform attrition** will be assessed through data on the socioeconomic and demographic (including gender, SPED, and ELL background) status of students leaving.

### Director reviews

The PHS Director and Board of Trustees will establish a protocol for annual Director Reviews, defining objectives and key results for the Director. Staff will draft full reviews of the Director's performance which will be submitted to the Board of Trustees. Among its other duties, the Board of Trustees will be responsible for:

- ...appropriately redacting and summarizing staff feedback to share with the PHS Director upon prior review and approval by those staff
- ...evaluating the Director's efforts toward their annual objectives
- ...evaluating the Director's efforts with regard to school quality as defined by the dimensions of performance laid out in this section
- ...evaluating the Director's professional leadership, including hiring and layoff decisions
- ...transmitting the entirety of these review's results semi-annually to the Superintendent and annually to the Somerville School Committee

### Negotiation, revision, and grievance

Recognizing that especially during PHS's first five years there may be some areas of labor change which need to be negotiated, PHS will work with the STA to develop a thoughtful and expedient process to incorporate such changes. To the extent proposals do not materially affect staff outside PHS, re-negotiation of this document may be initiated annually by a two-thirds vote among PHS staff. For proposals which could materially affect those outside PHS, staff shall be able to request revision and re-negotiation at any time with a 20% vote.

If staff feel this Agreement is incomplete or inadequately implemented in a way materially compromising student experience, they may engage the STA Unit A's 2015–16 Grievance Procedure as articulated in [Article III](#), with the following modifications:

1. Professional Rights and Responsibilities Chairperson (PR&RC) cannot escalate a grievance without written consent from aggrieved. (via III.C)
2. Until a grievance is registered in writing, its resolution needn't be in writing. (via III.C)
3. PHS personnel control what records associated with the grievance are or are not included in their file(s). (via III.E3)

4. For the PR&RC to submit a group grievance, the PR&RC must first solicit an anonymous vote from the aggrieved group in which at least 50% of the aggrieved group assent to have the group grievance raised. (via III.E1)
5. Any public record will be admissible to arbitration. (via III.C4(e))
6. In the case of an arbitrator hearing, the length of the hearing will be limited to thirty days. The aggrieved will be guaranteed up to twenty hours leave weekly to work on the grievance beyond the time involved in administering the grievance itself. (via III.C4(f))
7. Arbitration results cannot contravene the Innovation Plan in effect. (via III.C4(f))

## Sample job descriptions

Seeking adventurous, founding staff for a new, project-based high school in Somerville. 8AM–5PM, ~220 days a year. Work in a tight team with a small cohort of ~36 13–15 year olds. Average salary \$80K. 18 weeks leave. Health, dental, and vision benefits for you and your family.

### Project Manager

Your job is to make young people's projects happen. Because you are only one person amidst forty young people, this means you must also be responsible for building the capacity of your colleagues and students to effectively manage projects.

The activities that comprise project management emerge from the mission of the SSA: to support people in their transition from students to independent investigators. To us, that involves shedding many of the bad habits people develop as passive recipients of information and building their capacity to (1) identify problems and questions which matter to them; (2) design projects or experiments to engage (1); (2) rustle up all the necessary resources; (3) manage themselves and those resources to iterate on and successfully execute the project; and document and share the project with an authentic audience, reflecting deeply on its success.

You'll be:

- designing project management systems and workflows to help young people articulate, specify, scope, and manage projects
- growing the capacity of young people to manage projects from one- and two-day projects up to 1,000-hour projects over the course of five years
- managing the mapping of student work back onto academic standards
- teaching in a tightly-knit team, co-teaching and co-developing interdisciplinary programs
- developing workshops, curricula, and materials to grow the capacity of your colleagues for project- and product-management

We're looking for someone who:

- has significant experience—or a talent for—managing people under open-ended, ambiguous, and uncertain conditions
- has mastered the trick of reducing scope to hit a deadline

- has experience with the design process—surfacing requirements, articulating dimensions of performance, defining and measuring (both qualitative and quantitative) results, *etc.*

Further reading on our angle

- PHS primer for potential staff, including summary of “What makes a good project?”
- Readings from Peter Drucker *et al* on management and the design process
- [An Ethic of Excellence](#), [Making Things Happen](#), [The Art Spirit](#), *etc.*

## Curriculum Developer

Your job is to enrich the intellectual waters in which staff and students live and work, ensuring that big ideas which resonate with people are always at the core of what they are working on. Because you are only one staff member among forty people, you will also be charged with developing your colleagues’ and students’ capacities to seek out and cultivate their own big ideas as well as designing and developing systems which support this.

PHS is a deeply interdisciplinary place. Our programs—through an intense, project-based focus and an emphasis on computation, modeling, and representation—aim to reveal ways of thinking about and looking at the world that unify it. Our mission—to support people in their transformation from student to independent investigator—requires that we cultivate people’s intellectual appetite, fearlessness, and taste. Programs at PHS will be the starting point for this, but the goal with every student is to get to the point that they are sufficiently plugged into other intellectual communities and approaches which resonate with them that they become active, self-starting investigators freely articulating their own projects and interests.

You’ll be:

- managing the design and development of interdisciplinary programs using computation, modeling, and representation to open up traditionally academic domains to more vocational and artistic approaches
- developing workflows and systems to build out staff and student capacity to brainstorm deep projects
- curating textbooks, topics, and inspirations for programs and individuals’ projects
- working with staff to deepen and enrich their own intellectual interests and background

We’re looking for someone who:

- be a voracious reader and explorer of projects, approaches, fields, and communities far afield from your academic background
- have a strong capacity to riff and associatively brainstorm, connecting disparate ideas through a change in perspective
- have deep, technical experience
- have significant experience with designing for an audience

Further reading on our angle

- PHS primer for potential staff, including sample program designs and cases and discussion of “What makes a good program?”
- Evocative textbooks, subfields
- [Mindstorms](#), [“An Exploration in the Space of Mathematics Education”](#), [“Computer as Material: Messing about with Time”](#), *etc.*

## Social Worker

Your job is to ensure all of the ingredients fundamental to full human development are abundantly available to students. Because you are only one staff member among forty people, you will also be charged with developing your colleagues’ and students’ capacities to engage the social and emotional dimensions of human development as well designing and developing systems implementing wraparound services for students and their families.

The factors which most deeply affect and determine young people’s growth aren’t academic. At the core of the SSA’s design is the hypothesis that a small, vertically integrated team caring for a small number of young people can transform lives by responding to these factors in a coordinated, one-off way. Our mission—to support people in a transformation from student to independent investigator—requires young people to take on significant creative risks. That can only happen with a strong foundation: *i.e.* if the more fundamental levels of Maslow’s hierarchy are taken care of.

You’ll be:

- managing your team’s awareness of and capacity to respond to all the non-academic factors essential to students’ development
- designing systems and workflows to implement wraparound support services for families
- developing staff and student capacity to engage social and emotional skills and building out the SSA’s design as a trauma-sensitive school
- advocating for students and their families, knitting together disparate sets of social and support services to address one-off needs
- pre-empting and intervening in crisis situations

We’re looking for someone who also:

- has significant experience with—or a talent for—working with young people in vulnerable situations
- easily connects with people from a wide variety of backgrounds in a wide variety of situations
- is a relentlessly resourceful, bulldog advocate—especially in the face of bureaucratic obstacles



Further readings on our angle

- PHS primer for potential staff
- [\*A Cord of Three Strands, The Essential Conversation\*](#)
- [\*Effective Inclusive Schools\*](#)
- [\*Helping Traumatized Children Learn\*](#)

## Content Specialist

Your job is to set the bar for the depth and quality of engagement with your domain, ensuring that . Because you are one staff member among forty people, this means you are also responsible for developing the depth of your colleagues' and students' capacities in your domain and creating materials and workflows which do the same.

PHS is a deeply interdisciplinary place. Commonly, when work is made more interdisciplinary, domain depth and project quality suffers. We believe that depth is more important than breadth, and that often there is a big difference between someone's exposure to a domain in a class and the actual practice of that domain. Because addressing both of these requires a responsive, active process in a project-based environment, the SSA's design features a team of domain experts floating across every two cohorts providing customized support.

You will be:

- working as part of an academic strike team providing one-off, targeted, individual and small-group support
- critiquing and refining program design to ensure domain depth and pedagogical quality to our interdisciplinary offerings
- curating and creating tools and materials offering deep, standalone dives into fundamental ideas in your domain
- developing staff and student capacity to design around and teach your domain (and designing resources and systems which do the same)

We're looking for someone who also:

- has significant experience with—or a talent for—research in and use of their domain
- has significant experience with—or a talent for—shepherding novices into fluency in their domain (especially those who have struggled or anti-identify with it)
- will pursue a research program furthering their own engagement with the domain
- are keen to pursue a research program designing and creating tools and materials which make their domain more learnable and see this as a natural complement to their personal research

Further readings on our angle

- PHS primer for potential staff
- Sample program designs and cases with specific analyses of domain depth deficits
- Evocative, domain-specific readings (e.g. [Turtle Geometry](#) for math, [Structure and Interpretation of Classical Mechanics](#) for physics, [Others in Mind](#) for psychology, [Connections](#) for history, [Impro](#) for theater, etc.)

### Additional references and resources

- The [Boston Teachers Union School](#) and [Generation Schools](#) are two, successful examples of schools where distributed administrative work reduces/removes the need for administrators.
- [Paid Time Off: The Elements and Prevalence of Consolidated Leave Plans](#) is a good overview of the how and why PTO banks are often implemented.
- [Draft PHS Carve-Out Ingredients](#) is a slightly outdated slide deck summarizing the broad strokes of PHS's conversations with the STA.

## Budgeting and Financial Controls Memorandum of Agreement

*The Innovation Plan Committee proposes this operating agreement understanding City and District partners must negotiate and finalize them. While the Plan's details may change after the Innovation Plan Committee's vote, the approved Plan may not change substantially without the Innovation Plan Committee's re-approval.*

*The Innovation Plan Committee understands these details are especially likely to shift in the areas of (i) staffing (reflecting conversations with the STA), (ii) finances (reflecting conversations with City Finance), liability (reflecting conversations with District counsel), facilities (reflecting conversations with the District, DPW, and pending a site selection), and enrollment lottery specifics (reflecting our work with the Superintendent).*

Powderhouse Studios (PHS)—if approved by the Somerville School Committee—will be a new high school operating as a district Innovation School under [MGL Chapter 71, Section 92](#). Among other things, this means that the Superintendent and School Committee retain ultimate, governing responsibility for the school alongside the school's Board of Trustees.

This document represents the first steps toward a draft of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to be executed between Powderhouse Studios, Limited (PHS, the 501(c)(3) which will be the incorporated entity representing the school) and the City of Somerville. That MOA's term of agreement will be for the duration of the currently authorized Innovation Plan, and will include reasonable provisions for revision and termination upon agreement in writing of the parties.

Please refer to [these notes](#) for a more informal overview, including references to some of the supporting services and partners we're considering.

This MOA will aim to parallel the best practices of Horace Mann Charter Schools operating under a Lump Sum Budget arrangement with their district. To those practices, our setup will add much more extensive auditing and transparency practices. For reference, refer to [this exemplary MOA](#) of the Dudley Square Neighborhood Community School and [this exemplary MOA](#) for the Young Achievers Pilot School. Additional resources regarding financial controls for site-based budgeting in a district environment are included at [the end of this memorandum](#).

## Budgeting

Somerville Public Schools (SPS) will agree to provide a Lump Sum Budget on an annual basis so long as PHS operates as a public school in Somerville.

This Lump Sum Budget will be calculated on an annual basis via a formula yet to be agreed-upon.

By 1 July of each year, the Director of Finance will establish an operating account for PHS in the amount of the Lump Sum Budget. Only PHS's principal and/or their designees shall authorize expenditures from that operating account. This budget will roll over from year-to-year, regardless of PHS's spending that year.

This budget will be available for transfer into a separate bank account to be established and maintained under the exclusive control of PHS. This account will exclusively contain funds from the City of Somerville for the purposes of easy auditing and transparency. At least one separate account will be established and maintained by PHS for the proceeds from any other (e.g. fundraising) activities.

The Lump Sum Budget will be disbursed annually by 1 July. The Lump Sum Budget will never be reduced as a consequence of the receipt of outside funds of any sort (including fundraising). If and when students leave PHS (e.g. *via* transfer), PHS will reimburse the City of Somerville an amount prorated by the number of days that student was enrolled that year since 1 September within fifteen days of that student's departure.

Benefits for full-time PHS teaching staff will be administered by the City in accordance with Massachusetts municipal finance laws and generally accepted accounting principles for government. At an interval no less frequent than annually, the City will invoice PHS for the costs associated with benefits for PHS staff. These costs will be capped at 27% of PHS's total spending on payroll.

## Auditing and transparency

A full history and accounting of *all* PHS bank accounts will be maintained online and made publicly available. A weekly accounting of spending that week will be published online and shared with the Director of Finance. At least semi-annually, PHS will retain (at its own expense) a third-party auditor to review its spending and systems of financial control and release all reports resulting from that process to the School Committee and PHS Board of Overseers.

## Governance

Among other responsibilities, PHS's Board of Trustees will oversee the creation of a Financial Controls and Procedures Handbook which will govern spending and oversight at PHS. PHS's Board of Trustees will work closely with City and District staff to outline and draft that handbook. The Director and Operator's insurance that PHS's Board of Trustees will obtain *must* indemnify and hold harmless the District and City from all claims resulting from financial control and oversight within PHS.

## Additional references and resources

- [MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING: TYPE A BETWEEN DUDLEY STREET NEIGHBORHOOD CHARTER SCHOOL'S BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND BPS](#)
- [MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT FOR THE YOUNG ACHIEVERS SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS PILOT SCHOOL](#)
- [MA DESE Charter School Recommended Fiscal Policies and Procedures Guide](#)
- [ExEd Fiscal Policies and Procedures Handbook](#)
- [A Blueprint for Effective and Adaptable School District Procurement](#)

## PHS Concerns and Uncertainties

1. *School expense and tradeoffs* — There was no detailed budget included in the March 2017 innovation plan or available from the Powderhouse team until February 13. The applicants continues to claim on their website that “[PHS will be a net positive financially for Somerville.](#)” despite the fact that the estimated expense of PHS over six years has ranged dramatically. Originally the applicant claimed that the school was designed to operate at a cost of \$14,000 per student (this claim remains on their website), which would make the total 6-year cost \$7.8 million. The [detailed budget](#) shared on February 13, and agreed to by all parties, has the total school cost at \$18.1 million and approximately \$3.5 million annually thereafter. The total city/district contribution expected over that time is \$12.1 million.
2. *XQ financing* — The district was not party to Powderhouse’s XQ application or grant award (and in fact put in its own separate application). The grant award was given to the applicant with conditions unknown to the district or city of Somerville, and district administration have had only a few brief conversations with the XQ team. It was not until February 26th, that the district and applicant received an email [commitment from XQ](#) that \$7.7 million of the award could be spent in support of the school. This revenue represents approximately 42% of the school’s estimated cost.
3. *Research and development* — XQ was unwilling to fund the school to the full extent of the grant because the private foundation is also interested in other research and development efforts. These efforts include the development of a school of education, learning management system, and new teacher certification, and were part of the XQ application that the district did not see in full until February 22.
4. *School opening date* — The district and applicants agree that Powderhouse Studios is not ready to open in August 2019, only a few months after potential authorization. The building is under construction and unlikely to be complete; additionally there are many operational details to resolve to ensure a safe school opening. On multiple occasions, the district has requested written assurance that the funder agrees with an August 2020 opening. The district has never received that assurance verbally or in writing.
5. *City and district bandwidth* — We will need to create a number of new MOAs in areas such as enrollment, intellectual property, and purchasing controls. The current budget provides \$900,000, funded by XQ, for city and district integration support. The district estimates the actual cost to be between \$3-4 million over six years. This would result in tradeoffs of district staff’s time and attention.
6. *Enrollment* — The applicant still needs to determine an enrollment process which is legally sound and supports representative school enrollment. To date, the applicant has only provided one legal memo that says some elements of their proposed enrollment algorithm may be legal. The current enrollment algorithm outlined in the 2017 innovation plan would likely be ruled illegal according to district counsel. PHS has not modified their enrollment algorithm in response to specific concerns raised during the authorization process.

7. *Staffing* — Powderhouse has separately hired six nonprofit staff and it remains unclear which of those staff would work (and in which roles) at the school if authorized. Some PHS staff appear to have been hired into roles which would be part of the Somerville Teachers Union (STA) unit.
8. *Lease* — The applicant wants separate rented space that they are able to design and modify annually, which is estimated to cost \$3.1 million over six years. The developer of the leased property will not allow the applicant to release a fully unredacted copy of the lease agreement at this time. It is impossible for the school committee and public to weigh the full terms of the lease and understand its liability without seeing a fully redacted agreement.
9. *Specialized service delivery* — The district's Special Education and English Language directors have expressed written concerns about the school's proposed specialized service plans. These would need to be resolved in the District Integration Working Group; some amount of their time is covered in the budget but not nearly to the extent needed.
10. *Intellectual property (IP)* — The applicant would like a policy which guarantees (a) the district would retain complete license to IP in perpetuity for free, and (b) the creators own it (whether youth, staff, or partners). School committee and district administration have expressed strong concern about public funding supporting Intellectual Property that the creators ultimately own and could commercialize. We do not have a resolution to this impasse at this time.
11. *Purchasing and procurement* — The applicant would like PHS staff to be able to purchase project supplies and partner with third party providers (workshops, tutors, *etc.*) through a faster process than traditional district procurement. We do not yet have agreement on how to do this effectively and responsibly within the current financial processes and controls of the City.
12. *Curriculum and assessment* — The applicant has requested autonomy to cover graduation requirements in any way they would like, as long as the school can demonstrate that PHS students are making reasonable progress toward those requirements. The district does not have a mechanism for guaranteeing Massachusetts standards coverage under this proposed autonomy.
13. *Transcripts and transfers* — We do not yet have a written process to explain how curriculum from Powderhouse Studios would be back-mapped to a more traditional school transcript should a student want or need to transfer to another school. The process for successfully supporting transferring students is unknown at this time.
14. *Student safety, wellness, food, and technology* — The innovation plan spells out numerous autonomies sought in these areas, but does not speak to their implementation. This is normal, but it does mean that an authorization would commit the district to a process of negotiating and implementing these things with the Powderhouse team. The district does not feel that it has yet received adequate plans for the effective assurance of student safety and wellness, nor plans that would ensure the effective implementation of technology and food service.