

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

Monday, January 8, 2018 – Regular Meeting

7:00 p.m. - Board of Aldermen's Chambers – Somerville City Hall

Members present: Mr. Futrell (7:12 p.m.), Ms. Pitone, Ms. Palmer, Alderman Ballantyne, Ms. O'Sullivan, Ms. Ackman, Ms. Normand, and Mr. Green.

Members absent: Mayor Curtatone

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Green called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. with a moment of silence a salute to the flag of the United States of America.

Mr. Green asked the Superintendent to call the roll, results of which were as follows: PRESENT – 7 – Pitone, Palmer, Ballantyne, O'Sullivan, Ackman, Normand, and Green and ABSENT – 2 – Futrell and Curtatone.

Mr. Green announced that Mr. Futrell will be here as soon as he can. He is currently stuck in traffic. Mr. Green also welcome Ms. Ackman and Alderman Ballantyne to the Committee.

II. REPORT OF STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

The student representatives were not able to attend this evening's meeting.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment at tonight's meeting.

IV. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

A. DISTRICT REPORT

Nellie Mae Education Foundation "\$275,000 Building Teacher Leadership" Grant Award. Just before the December break, we received word from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation that our proposal in response to their "Building Teacher Leadership" RFP was selected for funding. We were awarded a \$275,000 18-month grant. We are excited to begin this planning process, working in partnership with EDC, the Education Development Center. We will be working with teachers and administrators to develop a teacher leadership model that offers multiple career pathways that leverage the strengths and passions of teachers, and one that creates a distributed leadership ecosystem that puts student-centered learning and equity front and center.

Biogen Foundation \$10 million STAR Initiative. Last week, the Biogen Foundation announced its launch of the STAR Initiative (**S**cience, **T**eacher support, **A**ccess, and **R**eadiness), a coordinated funding strategy in which the Biogen Foundation is investing \$10 million over four years, to strengthen and support local STEM ecosystems in Cambridge and Somerville. The focus of this initiative is to increase access to STEM resources and opportunities for underrepresented student populations in STEM college or career pathways. Through a Request for Proposals, Biogen Foundation will be selecting a few nonprofit organizations to partner in providing in or out of school STEM awareness, explorations and skill-building supports and activities, focusing on students in grades 6-12.

Biogen has been a wonderful partner of the Somerville Public Schools for many years, and we are incredibly grateful and excited to be partnering with them on the STAR Initiative. We look forward to sharing more as this initiative gets under way.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration. The city's annual Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration will take place on Monday, January 15th, from 10:00-11:30am at the East Somerville Community School. All Somerville residents are invited to attend this free special event that will include a keynote speaker, student essayists, and special musical performances by a variety of groups.

Debate Teams. Congratulations to the East Somerville Community School and Somerville High School debate teams for their great work at their first competitions. Under the guidance of Ms. Gouvea and Mr. Weaver, ESCS sent six student teams and four individual speakers to compete in a tournament at Suffolk University. Despite it being their first competition, five students received Novice Division Awards. Ms. Masillon and Mr. Jabour led three student teams and two individual members to a tournament at Boston Latin Academy, where one of our teams earned a Novice Division Award. The next high school tournament is January 20th at Suffolk University. Congratulations to our students and teachers on a job

well done!

Pre-K and Kindergarten Registration. As we kick off a new year, we're also ready to kick off Pre-K (SMILE) and K registration for the 2018-2019 school year! Online pre-K and Kindergarten registration begins Saturday, January 13th. (Please note that the online registration service will not be activated until January 13th.) Several online registration support sessions will be offered the week of January 22nd for families who need assistance. Families are also welcome to contact the Parent Information Center to schedule a time to go in for online registration support. Call (617) 625-6600, x6962 or visit the PIC website (www.somerville.k12.ma.us/registration) for more information.

Dr. Abeyta provided the following report this evening:

Homework Task Force

Survey is completed, translated and okay'd by Jackie with STA. It will be go out by beginning February.

MCAS

MCAS window for grades 3-8 is April 2nd – May 25th. During this timeframe, schools will be administering the ELA, Math and Science MCAS. Grade 10 MCAS window for ELA is March 27-29, for Math May 23 & 24th and Science is June 6 – 7.

All elementary grades will be testing online except for grades 3 and 10. Although, we will be piloting tests online for grade 10 with 25% of our grade 10 students: ELA, Math and Science will be piloted.

Greater Boston Breakthrough

We have 35 complete applications submitted as of the original deadline. A solid start! There are another 14 applications that we are expect to receive. The Breakthrough team is meeting at the Healey and has already scheduled family phone calls, student work sessions, and a parent information session for this month. The extended deadline is Friday January 26th.

Advanced Math Update

Somerville Public Schools just finished week 15 of our 8th grade Geometry pilot program called Mx2. We currently have 33 students enrolled from four out of five K-8 Schools from across the district. Our fifth K-8 School is involved in the final stages of a previous pilot in which 8th grade students attend 9th grade geometry class at Somerville High School. In an effort to offer accelerated math pathways equitably, our new pilot Mx2 is offered district-wide and gives students an opportunity to take an advanced math class in a blended learning environment

Blended Learning happens regularly in Somerville Public Schools, especially in grades 6-8 where the district is now fully 1:1—which means each student is assigned a Chromebook for the school year. Unlike the standard school day where students meet with teachers daily, Mx2 students only meet with teachers once-a-week.

To address the future needs of our advanced math students, we added an accelerated math course at the high school to be implemented next year: Advanced Placement BC Calculus.

V. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES

B. Educational Programs & Instruction Subcommittee: November 28, 2017 (Ms. Normand)

In Attendance: Carrie Normand, Paula O'Sullivan, Lee Palmer,

Also in Attendance: Laura Pitone, Superintendent Mary Skipper, Assistant Superintendent Abeyta, Director of Student Services Melillo, Assistant Director of Student Services Doncaster, Supervisor of Health Wellness, and Physical Education Simolaris, Director of Prevention Services Cory Mashburn, and three audience members.

Ms. Normand called the meeting to order at 6:36.

There were four items on the agenda.

1. Middle School Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results Update

Director of Prevention Services Cory Mashburn presented highlights of the survey showed a decline in almost all areas of risky behaviors in grades 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. Bullying is down. Of concern is a rise in female drug use and mental health issues and females are reporting suicidal thoughts at twice the rate at males. The full report will be presented on January 25th in the Highlander Café.

2. Social and Emotional Learning

Steve Simolaris presented an update on several initiatives including the district-wide implementation of Second Step, the mindfulness pilot program at the Kennedy School (with the intention of going district-wide), Responsive Classroom, Positive Behavior Interventions Systems (PBIS), Trauma Sensitive School training and implementation at ESCS, and the Holistic Student Assessment.

3. Recess Research Update

Steve Simolaris presented legislation on recess currently being considered at the State House including Bill H. 223 requiring all k-5 students receive at least 20 minutes of consecutive recess daily. The School Committee has passed a resolution in support of this legislation. Currently SPS average recess time is a minimum of 20 minutes k-5 and 17-18 minutes in grades 6-8. Schools vary in how much recess time is allotted. Mr. Simolaris is continuing to work with schools on how recess is delivered.

Ms. Palmer moved to "ask the Superintendent to draft a letter in support of Bill H. 235", seconded by Ms. O'Sullivan, passed unanimously.

4. Student Support Teams and Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

Director of Student Services Rich Melillo gave a thorough and enthusiastic presentation. Mr. Melillo gave a brief history of the development and expansion of student supports across the district. He emphasized the critical role student supports play in the health and success of students. Impossible to summarize this presentation and will make sure slides are available, it was that good. Highlights: SPS has developed a system to support kids starting with understanding a student's baseline and evaluating as needs escalate, SPS has embedded students supports across the district prek-12th grade. Currently 7.5 FTEs of embedded counseling. We are experiencing an uptick unregulated prek-3 graders and expanding services for our younger students. New programs also include the creation of Alateen at SHS. Mr. Melillo emphasized the importance of having a systematic approach to address student needs as they arise.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45

MOTION: Ms. Normand made a motion, seconded by Ms. Pitone, to accept the report of the Chair of the Educational Programs & Instruction Subcommittee meeting of November 24, 2017.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

C. Educational Programs & Instruction Subcommittee: December 19, 2017 (Ms. Normand)

In Attendance: Carrie Normand and Paula O'Sullivan

Also in Attendance: Laura Pitone, Assistant Superintendent Abeyta, SHS Interim Headmaster Sebastian LaGambina, Interim Associate Headmaster Leo DeSimone, Curriculum Committee Chair Marie Foreman, History and Social Studies Department Head Alicia Kersten, World Language Teacher Gino Colantuono, Math Department Head Patricia Murphy-Sheehy, Science Department Head Marianna Hosking, Curriculum Coordinator k-8 Uri Harel, Extended Learning Program Coordinator Joel Blackmer, NW/FC and Extended Learning Tim Dunphy, NW/FC and Extended Learning Maureen Robichaux, SPS Graduate Marita Caria, and SPS Graduate Emily Woodman.

Ms. Normand called the meeting to order at 6:30.

There were three items on the agenda.

1. K-2 Science Curriculum and Implementation Update

K-8 Curriculum Coordinator Uri Harel presented changes to the new state elementary science standard. SPS teachers are developing curriculum with a strong emphasis on project based learning requiring students to define their own questions and create models to demonstrate what they know. There is also an emphasis on connecting science with other curriculum areas like ELA by expanding the amount of student writing through the science curriculum. Currently 25 teachers across the district are working on developing curriculum units. The new science curriculum is being piloted in some third and fourth grades and will expand across the district.

2. Alternative School Designation for Extended Learning Program (ELP)

Extended Learning Program Coordinator Joel Blackmer presented the history of this program, its current structure, and future plans. The ELP offers individualized and flexible course options, outside the school day, and dates back to 2010 and Somerville's credit recovery programs. It started in as a way to serve students excluded due to suspension, expulsion, or any social/emotional issue that prevented a student from attending school regularly. The program offers students flexible offsite learning opportunities and in

person instruction and assistance. The program started with 10 students and has serviced over 50 students. The staff includes four part-time staff: an ELP coordinator, two teachers, one counselor, and one tutor. Students can meet with staff 11:30-5:00 at the Cummings School or online evening, weekends, and vacations. Most of the staff are certified and have their special education certification. Staff stay in regular contact with students. The program currently costs approximately \$50,000/year.

Currently students officially remain on their sending school rosters. The program is looking to make a designation change to become a program unto itself to better monitor enrollments and formalize other important administrative functions like IEPs.

Two graduates of the ELP spoke. Each with a very different story and both with positive outcomes. The first student was excluded from SHS halfway through her senior year. Through ELP, she was able to graduate with a high school degree and had just successfully finished her first semester of college. The other student shared that she had left SHS three times "and without this program and these teachers, I would likely be dead." Instead, she graduated with her high school diploma and is currently working. The importance of having flexible options to serve the many and complex needs of our students cannot be overstated.

3. Somerville High School Approved Proposals for 2018-2019 Program of Studies and SHS Curriculum Proposals for 2018-2019.

Interim Headmaster Sebastian LaGambina and Curriculum Committee Chair Marie Foreman presented the process for selecting new courses and the new course proposals. Last spring all departments were asked to review their course offerings and consider additions, deletions, and modifications to the 2018-2019 Program of Studies. SHS administration reviewed the preliminary proposals in June and September and then voted on which proposals to forward to the Curriculum Committee. The Committee met in October and after much discussion and revision voted to approve 20 new course proposals and one new program.

The range of new courses include: Business classes in negotiations and International Business, expanded Audio/Visual production offerings, more advanced computer programming courses, yoga, women and gender studies, debate elective, Latin American and European culture courses exploring art, literature, cinema, and music to expand student knowledge beyond just the language, environmental history, expanded AP math and physics offerings, hardware engineering. New courses will be offered in every department.

2018-2019 will be the pilot year for the **Academic Support** program. Students will work in small-group settings with additional support and receive 2.5 credits per semester with a Pass/Fail grade. Enrollment will be based on defined academic triggers and risk factors.

The meeting adjourned at 8:06

MOTION: Ms. Normand made a motion, seconded by Ms. Ackman, to accept the report of the Chair of the Educational Programs & Instruction Subcommittee meeting of December 19, 2017. The motion was approved via voice vote.

Ms. Normand assumed the Chair so that Mr. Green could present his Rules Management Report.

D. Rules Management Subcommittee: December 4, 2017 (Mr. Green)

The Rules Management Subcommittee met on December 4, 2017 in the Committee Room at Somerville City Hall.

Present; A. Green, L. Palmer, (Joined by S. Roix at 6:20),
Also in attendance, C. Normand, J. Curley, A. Abeyta. M. Skipper

The meeting was called to order 6:09

Reviewed Gender Identity Support (File: JBD) policy. Changes made after Gay Straight Alliance conversation. Amendment by L. Palmer to add "at a minimum" to this team passed unanimously

Motion to adopt passed unanimously

Motion to change date for the budget timeline in Budget Deadlines policy (File: DBC) from Oct 15 to Dec 15 in keeping with actual practice passed unanimously

Discussion of need for clarity on Clarendon Hill. Draft policy was shown to committee. There was general agreement that the rights of students to enrollment in SPS should be protected, even as there remain

questions about how said rights would be balanced against the district's financial obligation. Given a 12/17 tenants meeting that would be attended by Ms. Normand, Rules directed Mr. Curley to draft a letter explaining the process and the sense of the Rules Committee that we wanted to keep SPS students in the district throughout the renovation

Discussion of passing chart of upcoming policies for review. I will pass to new rules committee chair.

Adjourned at 6:50pm

MOTION: To draft and deliver a letter to the Tenants Association of Clarendon and North Street.

MOTION: Mr. Green made a motion, seconded by Ms. Ackman, to accept the report of the Chair of Rules for the meeting of December 4, 2017.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Resolution to Support Senate Bill 308 and House Bill 235

MOTION: Ms. Pitone made a motion, seconded by Ms. Palmer to approve the resolution.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

B. Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual

The following policies are being submitted for second reading this evening, for inclusion in the Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual:

- File: JBD-Gender Identity Support

MOTION: Ms. Palmer made a motion, seconded by Ms. Normand, to approve File JBD – Gender Identity Support for inclusion in the Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

- File: DBC – Budget Deadlines and Schedules, as amended

MOTION: Ms. Palmer made a motion, seconded by Ms. Pitone, to approve File DBC – Budget Deadlines and Schedules, as amended, for inclusion in the Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

C. 2018-2019 School Calendar - *tabled to our next meeting*

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Acceptance of Donations (recommended action: approval)

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

Donation	Donor	City, State	Value	Program donated to
Monetary	Pamela Goldstein & Michael Gefers	Somerville, MA	\$250	Capuano School
Projector and sound equipment	Don Hughes	Somerville, MA	\$1,081.26	Somerville High School Library & Media Dept.

MOTION: Ms. Palmer made a motion, seconded by Ms. Pitone, to accept the donations, with gratitude. The motion was approved via voice vote.

VIII. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

Mr. Futrell

1. Community Preservation Act FY18 Applicant Presentations will take place on January 16 and January 24 at the Somerville VNA on Lowell Street at 7:00 p.m.

Mrs. Skipper

1. Issued thanks and praise to/for DPW for their efforts during the recent storm.
2. Also too a moment to publicly thank the School Committee for the honor of being granted a contract extension.

Ms. Pitone

1. Requested that an update on the Master Planning Working Group be added to a future agenda and gave an overview of what, exactly, the group does. It is a review of current city properties to determine space, etc.

Ms. Palmer

1. Requested that the amended Student Assignment Policy be on the agenda for first reading at our next meeting.

Mr. Green

1. Thanked the DPW for their work.
2. Announced that he is thrilled with the Superintendent's contract extension.
3. Read into the record additional School Committee responsibilities that some members currently have.

The list is as follows:

- Shore Collaborative: Carrie Normand
- SHS Building Committee: Carrie Normand
- Innovation Committee (Powderhouse Studios): Carrie Normand
- Master Planning Committee (City): Laura Pitone
- "By All Means" Initiative: Laura Pitone and Carrie Normand
- Rides Initiative: Andre Green
- Clarendon/North Street Community Support: Carrie Normand
- Wellness Committee Rep: Lee Palmer
- SC Sick Bank Approval Rep: Lee Palmer
- Legislative Liaison: Lee Palmer
- Systemic Race Conversation efforts: Andre Green and Lee Palmer

Mr. Futrell asked if the MCIEA has a slot for School Committee representation and expressed his interest, if they did. Mrs. Skipper responded that there was not currently a slot for School Committee given the nature of their work, but she would keep Mr. Futrell in mind if something opened up.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Prior to adjourning, Ms. Normand offered condolences from the School Committee to staff members who have recently lost family members.

- Luis Fernando Dantes da Silva, father of Fernanda Villar, Director of the Parent Child Home Program.
- Dolores Skipper, mother-in-law of Superintendent Mary Skipper.
- Richard "Dick" Terry, husband of Jaan Terry, retired secretary from the Argenziano School.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:04 p.m. via voice vote.