

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**Monday September 12, 2016 – Regular Meeting**

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

**Members present:** Ms. Palmer, Mr. Roix, Ms. Pitone, Mr. Futrell, Mr. Green, Ms. Normand, Mr. White and Mayor Curtatone.

**Members absent:** None

**ORDER OF BUSINESS**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Carrie Normand called a Regular Meeting of the School Committee to order in the Library of Somerville High School at 7:02 p.m., with a moment of silence and a salute to the flag of the United States of America. Ms. Normand asked for a roll call, the results of which are as follows: - Present – 8 – Palmer, White, Roix, Curtatone, Futrell, Green, Pitone, and Normand and ABSENT – 0.

**A. Introduction of new Somerville Public Schools administrators**

Ms. Normand announced that we have a house full of amazing guest this evening and that, as a result, item 5A will be taken out of order.

The Superintendent asked Special Education Director Christine Trevisone to step to the podium to introduce her new staff members.

Allyson Bell – our new Assistant Director of Special Education

Anne Cassavant – Special Education Department Chair at the East Somerville

Nancy Hanson-Amin – Special Education Department Chair at the Winter Hill

John Haverty – Special Education Department Chair at Next Wave/Full Circle

Rachel Ziulkowski – Special Education Department Chair at Somerville High School

Human Resources Director Mariana MacDonald introduced our new Assistant HR Director, Sharon Ellis.

Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Vince McKay introduced our new World Language Supervisor, Lisa Machnik

Mrs. Skipper introduced AFA Principal Lex Mathews and Innovation Coordinator Jason Behrens

Ms. Normand welcomed the new administrators to our community and assured them that we care about education and innovation.

*Mayor Curtatone departed the meeting at 7:13 p.m.*

*The School Committee recessed at 7:13 p.m. so that members could speak with our guests*

*The School Committee resumed at 7:26 p.m.*

**I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- August 29, 2016 Regular Meeting

MOTION: Mr. Green made a motion, seconded by Ms. Palmer, to approve the minutes.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

**II. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES**

**A. Educational Programs and Instruction Subcommittee: June 14, 2016 (Mr. Roix)**

The Educational Programs Subcommittee met on Tuesday, June 14, 2016 at 7:00 PM in the Central Office Conference Room at 8 Bonair St.

In attendance were Steve Roix, Andre Green and Laura Pitone

Also in attendance were Carrie Normand, Lee Palmer and Paul Bockelman, Superintendent Mary Skipper and Assistant Superintendent Dr. Vince McKay, Somerville High School Headmaster John Oteri and several department heads from High School, then Assistant Director of Special Education Christine Trevisone; ELL/SFLC Director Sarah Davila and Dr. Jack Schneider of Holy Cross.

- Our first item was an update provided by Somerville High School Headmaster John Oteri, along with several other members of the High School staff - including Social Studies Department Chair Alicia Kersten and English Department Chair Jodi Remington as well as then Assistant Director of Special Education Christine Trevisone. This discussion was accompanied by a memo from Mr. Oteri to the School Committee entitled "increasing access and rigor at Somerville High School" -dated June 8. Attached to this memo was a May 26 letter to students and families of Somerville High School explaining

the subject at hand - a pilot program starting in the 2016-2017 school year which will combine honors level and college preparatory courses to be taught as one unified course at the same time by the same teacher. For this year the courses affected will be 10th grade US History and 12th grade English. Students will still be enrolled in either honors or college preparatory - as they had before - but courses will be taught together.

- Because this was a pilot and hadn't been done before and because most parents were not aware of the change until the formal letter went out on May 26, of course the School Committee, and I'm guessing even more so the School and District offices received many questions on this change from concerned parents. Also, although the May 26 letter and the June 8th memo to the School Committee did explain the changes and the reasoning in some amount of detail, the Committee was grateful for Headmaster Oteri and staff coming to explain it in person; and give us some opportunity to ask questions. A good discussion ensued and my sense was that the subcommittee came away with the idea that the changes being proposed for next year were part of a well thought-out plan, enthusiastically supported by many of our teachers - which was noted by one of the department heads present. I felt that the concerns raised by parents, particularly those of honors students, who were concerned by the idea that combining the classes would result in the watering down of the rigor of the honors level courses, were addressed thoroughly by the staff and, clearly, they had been working on this for most of the year. In fact, one of the prompts for the implementation of this plan was the Special Education comprehensive review conducted last year. One of the findings of the review cited a disproportionate number of students were clustered in certain classes, particularly some of the classes designated CP-S
- This kind of tracking, as we know, impedes mobility between levels and really goes against the spirit of the true inclusion model we strive for. Additionally, flexibility for students is an added benefit of the change being implemented. Mr. Oteri pointed out that our students' schedules are really jam packed and, for all students, the opportunity to choose between four and five different sections instead of just two may open up opportunities that may have otherwise not been possible in their schedules. The teachers were apparently really excited. There was a well thought out plan that included professional development from the Landmark Institute - which specializes in differentiated instruction in particular - and also the staff plan to seek expertise from other schools that have successfully used this "heterogeneous grouping" model. In particular, the memo mentions the Boston Arts Academy and University Park Campus School in Worcester, both of which have similar demographics to Somerville High School.

Two other items on the agenda -

- The first was a presentation from Dr. Sarah Davila, Director of English Language Learning. Also present was Assistant Director Sunita Mehrotra.
  - The focus was on an annual report I believe that we received from the English Language Learner Task Force which consists of teachers, administrators, parents and community members who have been meeting since 2013. This group reviews the data that we have in the district related to how our English Language Learners are doing and to develop and implement strategies for improvement.

Essentially the focus areas right now are of course family engagement and the whole child, writing in the early grades and in sheltered English immersion classes, dually identified English learner special-education students and also unaccompanied minors and other older ELL students. Dr. Davila's whole presentation was very informative. English Language education continues to be a major focus of our district and Dr. Davila highlighted the creation of several new positions which included the Assistant Director of ELL, Assessment Specialist, and a Wraparound Coordinator, in partnership with the City's SomerPromise initiative. Other changes include the development of the new ELL common assessment, the pilot of a new Dually Identified case facilitator team to work with our dually-identified students, the New Start pathway for some of our older ELL students whose age impedes the amount time available to them to achieve credits towards graduation. These same students have to work while attending school so the development of a program that really specifically seeks to better meet the needs of those particular cases, along with all other initiative presented are important developments as we work to continue to really provide our ELL students with the best possible whole child education as they are learning English.

- The next and final item we discussed that evening was the report presented to the School Committee by Dr. Jack Schneider
  - Dr. Schneider was in attendance and provided a brief presentation and answered some questions. I want to thank Dr. Schneider for his patience because the first two items were fairly substantial discussions and he waited patiently until the end.

- Dr. Schneider's presentation was centered on the 2nd year report that he and his colleagues have completed for us regarding "measuring school quality beyond test scores"
- Dr. Schneider, of course, developed the School Quality Index that was featured in the Boston Globe a couple of years ago which got a lot of attention in Somerville because, of course, Somerville High School was named one of the top High Schools in the state based on the metrics used. The development of this metric sparked a discussion around the idea of whole child education and how we could get some real data and develop real metrics beyond the State's MCAS data because we obviously don't think that this data tells a whole story of what we do and what we want to do in our schools. The second year report provided contained the results of his study. One example of how the framework was refined was by the inclusion, through our community partners via focus groups with immigrant families and folks with limited English. I don't think this demographic had as much input in the initial round of interviews conducted in developing the original framework, but they are obviously a hugely important part of our district. Also Dr. Schneider talked in great detail about the sort of statistical findings collected in various sections in segments of the framework which correlated quite nicely with any school that he looked at.
- Dr. Schneider also introduced us to the web tool he's developing to collect the data for the framework, and a little bit about how the data collection has been designed - we look forward to hearing more about it in the future.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:30 PM.

MOTION: Mr. Roix made a motion, seconded by Mr. Green, to accept the report of the Chair of the Educational Programs and Instruction Subcommittee for the meeting of June 14, 2016.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

### III. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

#### A. District Report

- Earlier today, Mrs. Skipper joined Mayor Curtatone, and many staff, students and community members at the ribbon cutting ceremony at the new Argenziano Field. This process, which was facilitated by a group of community members, staff, the BOA and the Mayor, resulted in bringing so much joy to the faces of our students. Today's events included an Olympic relay with students, staff and members of the MacKay Construction group. The new field, playground and outdoor classroom are a great addition to the school and community.
- Back to School Nights are happening in our schools throughout September. The Brown School hosted their Back to School event last Thursday and East Somerville welcomed families back this evening. Check our website calendar for a complete list of Back to School Nights in the coming weeks:
  - Tuesday, Sept. 13, 6:00-7:30pm at **Next Wave/Full Circle**
  - Wednesday, Sept. 14, 6:30-8:00pm at **Somerville High School**
  - Thursday, Sept. 15, 6:00-7:30pm at the **Argenziano School**
  - Thursday, Sept. 15, 6:30-7:20pm at **West Somerville Neighborhood School**
  - Wednesday, Sept. 21, 6:00-7:30pm at **Healey School**
  - Wednesday, Sept. 21, 6:00-7:30pm at **Kennedy School**
  - Wednesday, Sept. 28, 6:00-7:30pm at **Capuano Early Childhood Center**
  - Thursday, Sept. 29, 6:00-7:30pm at **Winter Hill School**
- Chris Nowinski and members of the Concussion Legacy Foundation will be kicking off their nationwide event, **Team UP Speak Up against Concussions**, tomorrow morning in front of Somerville High School. Somerville High is the official Concussion Legacy Foundation "school of the day" for this important nationwide concussion awareness initiative. Our varsity boys' and girls' soccer teams and coaches will be present and will take the pledge tomorrow morning (Tuesday, September 13<sup>th</sup>) at 10:15 a.m. in front of the main entrance to Somerville High School. Other fall sports programs will take the pledge prior to their respective practices tomorrow. A special thanks to our athletic trainer Michelle Kelly for coordinating our involvement in this initiative, and for her outstanding work in promoting safety for our student-athletes throughout the year.
- As reflected in the vision and mission and goals that this school committee has embraced and under the guidance of Supervisor of Health and Physical Education, Steve Simolaris, and his team, starting this week all students in pre-K through grade 8 will receive instruction on social and emotional skills utilizing the **Second Step Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum**. Second Step is designed to teach students skills for social and academic success, utilizing developmentally-appropriate lessons that are supported by music and videos, take-home activities, and stories that kids relate to. Parents, guardians

and family members can also play a role in enhancing what students are learning in school through Second Step. Look for a "Skills for Life – Second Step" tip in the *Connections* newsletter.

- Providing students with a wide range of enrichment opportunities is another way in which we support the whole child, and help students develop the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills they need to succeed academically and in life. We have a rich and growing music program in our District. In preparation for a year of music-making, the Music department is holding their annual Instrument Rental and Instrument Loaner events this week.
  - Instrument rental opportunities will be available on Tuesday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, from 3:00-8:00pm.
  - Instrument loan opportunities will be available on Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup>, from 3:00-8:00pm. A limited supply of SPS instruments are available for loan, for a one-time payment, for families who qualify for free or reduced cost lunch and are not able to rent an instrument.
  - Information sessions about the SPS music program will be on the same day in the SHS Auditorium. Students may use any rental company to procure their instruments.
  - Visit the Instrument Instruction page on the music department website ([www.somerville.k12.ma.us/music](http://www.somerville.k12.ma.us/music)) for details.
- The **Somerville High School Building Project** committee will be holding its next committee meeting tomorrow, Tuesday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, starting at 5:30pm at the Somerville High School Library. Meetings are open to the public. You can learn more about the SHS Building project at: [www.somervillema.gov/highschool](http://www.somervillema.gov/highschool).
- We are very excited to have been invited to partner with Harvard University this year on their **Reimagining Integration: The Diverse and Equitable Schools Project**, under the direction of Lee Teitel, Lecturer and Director. Teams from the Argenziano School and the Healey School, as well as a team from SPS Central Administration will be working with Professor Teitel and a team of graduate students in Harvard's *Coaching for Equity and Diversity in Schools and Systems* course on this project. The initiative "investigates and identifies a common vision for growing equitable, diverse, and truly integrated schools" through deep work, research, and discussion between a diverse group of educators, advocacy groups, community organizations, and policymakers.

*Dr. McKay provided the following quick updates:*

- At the June Executive Session, the School Committee voted to approve the new contract for our paraprofessionals. Working closely with Jackie Lawrence and Joe Tringale, the district is now working to provide professional development opportunities for our paraprofessionals in accordance with the new contract language. We have close to 200 para's in the district who often advance into other positions. Our goal is to assist them in achieving career advancement, which is exciting work.
- A more comprehensive update on the Community Schools Program will be provided at a later date, but Dr. McKay spoke about current staffing and the limits it places on the number of students served. We are also careful of the ratios of students to staff and it has been a bit of a challenge to get all staff on board for the start of the year. Within the next week or so, we hope to have all positions filled and be "up to snuff".

Following the District Report, discussion ensued relative to Community Schools staffing vs. space, the status of hiring across the district, and the implementation of the Second Step Program, both during the day and in the after school program.

Mrs. Skipper also reported that some previous staff have left their positions at Community Schools and that has resulted in a waitlist situation. 30 new substitute teachers have just been hired and we will recruit them to do double duty, when possible. Outreach has also been made to colleges and para's.

#### **IV. NEW BUSINESS**

##### **B. Somerville High School 2016 Summer School Graduates** – (Recommended Action: Approval)

- Claudson Saint-Fleur
- Taylor Sutherland West

MOTION: Ms. Pitone made a motion, seconded by Mr. Green, to approve the two graduates, with congratulations.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

Ms. Normand announced that, in the packet this week are a copy of the resolutions for November's MASC conference and also a form to designate a voting delegate and alternative to represent Somerville at the conference. We will elect the delegates and discuss the resolutions at our next meeting.

**V. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS****Ms. Palmer**

1. Reported on the wonderful Curriculum Night earlier this evening at the East Somerville Community School. This event included lively parent/teacher discussions and information on Question 2 being shared with attendees.

**Mr. Futrell**

1. Inquired on what action can/has been taken to support and communicate information on Question 2. Ms. Skipper responded that we cannot use our position, resources or facilities to promote for or against. We can only provide information. Mr. Futrell also inquired about data on what would happen here in Somerville if the charter cap were lifted? Mrs. Skipper answered that theorizing is very difficult depending on how many students, grade levels, etc. Finance Director David Gordon is doing research now through MASBO and other sources to try to find out the potential impact.

**Ms. Normand**

1. Referred members to the letter to the Board of Aldermen relative to the above issue and also informed members that she has reached out to Jim Hardy from the MASC for additional guidance.

An announcement was also made that Mr. Futrell and Ms. Palmer will be participating in a community meeting on September 28<sup>th</sup> at the Aeronaut Brewery regarding the renovation of Somerville High School and Question 5.

**VI. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 p.m. via voice vote.

**RELATED DOCUMENTS:**

1. Agenda
2. Minutes of August 29, 2016 Regular Meeting for approval
3. Two (4) SHS Summer School diploma approvals
4. MASC Conference Delegate and Resolutions information
5. Duhamel Education Initiative Fall Fundraiser Information
6. Five (5) Letters of condolence