

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

April 26, 2021

7:00p.m.– GoToWebinar

Members present: Ms. Krepchin, Dr. Ackman, Ms. Barish, Ms. Normand, Mr. Green, Ms. Pitone, President McLaughlin and Dr. Phillips.

Members absent: Mayor Curtatone

Chair Green introduced the interpreters:

Haitian Creole: Clark Jean Baptiste

Spanish: Michaela Yang

Portuguese: Elaine Metzger

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Green called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. with a moment of silence followed by a salute to the flag of the United States of America. Chair Green asked the Superintendent to call the roll, results of which were as follows:

PRESENT – 8 – Ms. Krepchin, Ms.Pitone, Ms.Barish, Mr.Green, Dr.Ackman, Ms.Normand, Dr.Phillips andPresident McLaughlin

ABSENT –1-MayorCurtatone

II. REPORT OF STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Student Representative Natalia was present and reported on the following topics:

- On April 14 a guest speaker came to meet with all tenth grade U.S. History. Students got to meet author Dolores Johnson. Dolores Johnson shared the story of her parents and their interracial marriage and growing up as a biracial child.
- Friday before April break report cards will be distributed.
- Congratulations to the boy's hockey team for winning the GBL championships.
- SHS is expanding summer school, students will be surveyed this week regarding summer school opportunities i.e.: CTE readiness, guidance, support and college & career readiness.
- CTE juniors returned today and were very happy to be there.
- Students who have remote seven asked how are students going to get home in time.

Superintendent Skipper said they will look into this and with the guidance from DESE, they will let students know what's going on.

III. MAYOR CURTATONE'S UPDATE (given by Superintendent Skipper)

A. Building Update

Superintendent Skipper spoke regarding the building reopening:

The district has been working with SEU and will move Brown School to its original location. Rich Raiche, Director of Infrastructure & Asset Management and his team have installed portable filters and the electrical is hooked up. That will happen this weekend with a half day on Friday then on Monday students will start at Trum for a couple of hours then after lunch return to the building. We knew we needed the MOD's for our high school students as we carve out our next plan.

Question:

Ms. Krepchin wanted to clarify that the half day will be just for the Brown School and Superintendent Skipper said yes, it will give the teachers time to get their classrooms set up.

Ms. Barish also wanted to clarify that it was Trum that the students will start from and Superintendent Skipper said yes, they will start at Trum it is closer for them to walk.

Ms. Pitone said her understanding is that all buildings will be available in the fall. There is a contingency for the WHCS, which should be updated. Superintendent Skipper said that yes, all buildings should be ready for the

Fall including the WHCS and that is why summer school is being held at SHS not WHCS. Ms. Pitone would like a statement from the city prepared reiterating that fact.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Kinga Borondy - Landers Street She would like to thank Asst. Superintendent Mazza for remembering the remote students and making sure they are connected to their other peers. She would like to ask the city again to provide high speed internet to all people in Somerville and make sure it is available to all remote students. The need has not diminished; it is not a luxury it is a necessity in the modern world.

Vika Zafrin - 16 Prospect Hill Avenue she is speaking in support of Flavia and the scope of influence the School Committee has on this matter. She supports the following request to the district and the city to have police out of the schools and counselors in. There should be an independent equity audit of our schools. There should be a restorative justice program in our schools that should be independently audited and fully funded. There should also be mandatory annual training on anti-racism and explicit bias.

Matthew Kennedy - Hudson Street was speaking out in the support of a mother and student who were involved with the police. He is in support of having police out of our schools and counselors in; he would like to see fully funded restorative justice programs and annual district wide anti-racist training. He is from an all-boys school in the Bronx in New York City where there were no police officers in the schools. If police had been in the building in his school, there would have been many students who would have been arrested or started on their way to a long life behind bars. Many families would have suffered through trying to get DCF out of their family's lives or even the possibility of losing their children. He is not yet a father but when he is, he will not send his children to a school system that has police in their buildings.

Sara Halawa - She is a member of the team of Justice for Flavia and wanted to speak in support of Flavia and her six-year-old son. Police were called on the child for an incident at the school and this team would like his record expunged and the child cleared of all charges. The mother has tried for the past year to clear his record and has had no luck in doing so. Over four hundred people have signed this petition. She wants restorative justice for this child. She said many white mothers had spoken out and said their child did the same thing as this boy and all they were told was "keep your hands to yourself". There is systemic racism throughout our school system and this action is white supremacy. She wants all police out of the schools and a fully funded restorative justice program brought in.

Molly Fraust- Wylie, 75 Concord Avenue she is a parent of a second grader at Argenziano School. She is with the Justice for Flavia group and wants to push the district leadership to expunge his record and apologize publicly for what happened to this child. She wants police out and counselors in because it has been proven that this works. She wants the district to fund and implement a restorative justice program. She wants the district to show transparency with what is being done in our district with equity training for our teachers and an independent equity audit for our schools. She wants to see Somerville Schools be a leader.

Alli Ross - has a second grader at Argenziano and is a member of the Justice of Flavia group. She wants to see the police out counselors in. She wants to see a fully funded restorative justice program in our schools and an independent audit of the schools and implicit bias training.

Erin Hemenway - is the mother of a seventh grader at ESCS and a ninth grader at SHS. The hybrid cohort was tested one out of every two days and it is unclear if the pool testing will continue twice a week through the end of the year. She pleads to do so since there were some positive cases before April vacation. Second, indoor dining is an issue at ESCS. 300 students would need to be put in hallways with windows that do not open because only half of the students can be in the classroom. She can get no information on air exchange in these spaces or ventilation. We know indoor dining brings the biggest risk of transmission and she begs the city to find alternate spaces for indoor dining on rainy days. In light of the survey on remote K-8 and the high school, the children would have to leave UNIDOS in order to stay remote and she wanted her kids to stay remote. Her son chose to go back to his classroom so she wanted to raise these safety issues.

Adrienne Lievens (*seebelow)

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- January 11, 2021
- January 25, 2021

MOTION: There was a motion by Ms. Barish, seconded by Dr. Phillips to approve the minutes listed above. The motion was approved via roll call vote.

VI. REPORT OF The SUPERINTENDENT

Superintendent Skipper wanted to share what a great day she had meeting the students and staff as they returned. Many thanks to all the support staff for making the day possible, not just the teachers but also the families and students. She had the opportunity to see the ESCS with Channel 5 to see the mitigation measures that were put in place and how happy the students were to be back. Big thanks to Jeff Curley, Chief of Staff and Doug Kress, Director of Health and Human Services for all the testing that went on. It went quickly and efficiently.

A. District Report

Asst. Superintendent Mazza said that we are off to a very good start; we have quality programming for everyone remote. They have full schedules every day including specialists and for students who take band and instrumentals. We have over 30-35 educators teaching remotely right now and over the past two weeks they have worked day and night to ensure that parents have full communication, the right Zoom links and are fully engaged with students and families. If there are any issues families can contact me or Mr. John Braga, Remote Administrator anytime.

• MCAS Update (Mr. Mazza)

There are a few changes to the MCAS schedule, for grades 3-5 the testing window is May 10-June 11, ELA, Math & Science for grade 5; grade 6-8 May 17th-June 11th ELA, Math & Science for Grade 8. MCAS have been moved back; the submission date is now May 20. Another important feature is administration is now offering remote administration of the ELA math and science assessments. This is for grades 3-8 to accommodate remote families. There is a webinar on Thursday April 29, all principals, Mr. Mazza and Uri Harel, Curriculum Coordinator so we can make sure we have updated information. School principals are working with Uri Harel and they have turned in their schedules today. In terms of the high school, according to DESE, we are required to test all tenth graders in person in both ELA and Math. The schedule for math is June 1 & June 2, for ELA June 3 and 4th. They are also testing ninth graders in Biology or another science test on June 9 and 10th. Students in 11th and 12th grades are eligible for the modified CD and therefore will not be required to test this year. Juniors and seniors can still participate in the spring for the Adams Scholarship or for the Copeland Certificate of Mastery. Juniors who do not participate this year will be able to test for scholarship purposes in the retest period in the fall of 2021.

The Copeland Certificate of Mastery recognizes academic achievement on the MCAS or other measures of academic achievement. Recognizes high school achievement by other outside forums including competitions, publications and awards and also provides an incentive for students to perform to the best of their abilities on MCAS and on the course studies beyond tenth grade and to recognize high academic achievements that are not included in the MCAS.

Question:

Ms. Krepchin mentioned that a student may opt out of MCAS if the families choose. Mr. Mazza answered that yes students can opt out and they need to contact the school principal if they choose to do so. Superintendent Skipper added that according to DESE there is no opt out. There is no official language to opt out and if the family chooses that, they need to contact the district. As far as the district goes, those students would not count toward participation and there needs to be a certain amount of participation according to DESE. If they see lower numbers, they would want to know why. They are still figuring it out especially with the remote access.

Chair Green asked about participation also and how they determine sub groups? Superintendent Skipper said there has to be a certain amount of participation and then a sub group would require 20 participants or more. Your population of your school, race, gender, ethnicity all qualify for sub groups.

Ms. Norman wanted to know about the juniors who may not know about the Adams Scholarship if there could be some outreach to them to let them know that taking the MCAS could have some financial benefits for them. Mr. Mazza said they would speak with Mr. LaGambina, Principal SHS and Ms. Kessler, Director of College & Career readiness to communicate more with juniors.

Ms. Barish would like to know what happens when DESE says you did not have the participation you should have in MCAS. Superintendent Skipper said DESE takes an average of the last two years, she is not sure what will happen this year with the remote, and in person test, takers and they can get back to the School Committee once the numbers are in from DESE. Ms. Barish clarified that she wanted to know what would happen to the district in a normal year if they fell below the 95% percentile of participation. Superintendent Skipper then answered that if the district fell below, they would be considered not meeting the standards as far as participation goes. It is designed to make sure that school districts test and do not choose to opt out of the standardized testing for the state. Ms. Barish said she is sure that the improvement plan would take a lot of time and effort and pull away from other important work.

Chair Green said we have 500 students remote now and he wants to know what we are doing to make them feel part of the community with their home schools or with each other. Mr. Mazza said all remote students have their own cohorts now. He thinks it builds different relationships with their teachers and peers. They do not want students to feel isolated or disjointed. They are in touch with home school principals and counselors. Students are still getting their services and we try to make sure it is the same across the district.

• **Summer School Update (Mr. Mazza)**

Asst. Superintendent Mazza is excited to introduce The Summer of Transition programming to keep our students actively engaged coming out of a very challenging year. It is an enrichment and academic program where students can become fully engaged in their summer learning. The list he will talk about supports approximately 1865 students who started out full in person, then remote, then hybrid, then in person and now to summer programs and then into the fall. They have combined with Community Schools and have increased the number of sites for these programs to the Healey and ESCS. The following programs are being offered:

- Community Schools Adventure Program with Enrichment and Intervention
- Summer Band Fest
- Strings & Instrument Fest
- Summer of Yes
- Robotics Program
- Summer Explore Rising program (1st grade)
- Kindergarten readiness program
- Extended year program (Special Ed)
- Summer School
- Credit Recovery
- Social & Emotional
- College & Career Readiness
- Extracurriculars
- English Language Learners (SPELL)
- Calculus Program, TCP supporting Black & Latinx students/math
- Breakthrough Greater Boston/ Online Literature & Math Fully Remote
- Building Specific Grades 4-8 Math Program

ProgramsthroughtheCity

- Somerville Parks & Recreation
- Mayors Jobs Program
- Library Programs
- Artisans Innovation
- Brooklyn Boulders
- CHA Teen Health Advisory
- CHA Youth Lab Participatory Action
- Elizabeth Peabody House Academic support
- Everwood Day Camp
- Farrington Nature Link
- Nature Link Empowerment Teen Program
- Groundwork Somerville Green Team
- Kesher Steam Activities

- Mystic Learning Center
- Parkour Generation
- Science Club for Girls/Rocketry
- Teen Empowerment Youth Organizing
- Welcome Project
- YMCA
- Youth Rising

This is all on our website and it is a living document. It will be updated as we get more information and we will be promoting this week on social media.

Chair Green says we have a lot of work going on with community partners and he is wondering about the bandwidth and how we are going to manage all of this. Asst. Superintendent Mazza said that they have hired an out of school time coordinator, Heather McCormack, who worked for Somerville media, and with her help we will be able to streamline what goes out to the community and we can give more sustainable offerings for students to enhance and increase the programs we are offering to students and families. We will try to enhance the programs we offer to the students. Superintendent Skipper added that as we come out of the pandemic we want to do more joint activities where we can support all students, the SPELL students as an example where we are creatively blending them. Some students are able to take any of the programs offered and some students are recommended to certain programs so they can be supported in more than one way. Socially, emotionally, academically and community building are a big part of combining the programs.

Dr. Phillips is very impressed with the list and asked how is this summer different from a normal summer? Are there things distinguishing this list from any other year? Mr. Mazza answered that they are going to be very intentional in the partnerships between certain programs based on the needs of the students. There are a lot more STEM initiatives than were held in the past because they positively affect a lot more students. The idea around partnering Community Schools with the academics is that we are creating a day long program with academic enrichment and with academic intervention during the same program. The combined work of Uri Harel and Rosanna Paribello from Community Schools has created a framework that keeps the students engaged in academics while giving them the playtime they need with their peers. Superintendent Skipper added that the Kindergarten Readiness Program is a new one since the students could not get the kindergarten experience they needed because of the pandemic. They have increased the capacity of programs by using the school spaces that are available. Students that would not typically get social and emotional support can now get that over a longer period of time. We are trying to leverage the district resources with the city resources. We know we want to build out the math component for grades 4-8 and the calculus project with help with that and we want to launch more specific programs. We are watching what the children like and need going forward into the fall.

Dr. Phillips wants to know if there are still slots open and how do parents get in? Superintendent Skipper answered they should reach out as before to Rosanna Paribello, Director of Community Schools and if there are wait lists the district will look to hire more staff to accommodate as many students as they can.

Ms. Krepchin asked about the high school interns working with the younger kids, she also asked if there were fees associated with the programs and what they might be. Mr. Mazza said yes, they would be working with the younger students and that he does not have any numbers in front of him this evening about fees but he will provide that information at another meeting. He also said that they are building a great team of interns that is a really positive and helpful thing. High school students who come back to tutor and mentor the younger students are very important in building the community.

Ms. Barish asked if some of the programs are by invitation, have the parents been informed of that and if not when will they be informed? If a parent thinks there is a program that their child needs, how would they get access to it? Mr. Mazza answered that invitations have been sent out to parents of students with IEP's and the SPELL students. It is really important that students work through the four domains and create a cohort of students who would stay together. For the kindergarten, readiness program it is Pre-K going into K and for first grade readiness it is kindergarten going into first grade. If parents are interested, they should reach out to the contact of the program to get more information or to see if they can become involved in the program. Ms. Barish asked if the readiness programs are for all students or is it only students who will be invited and when will parents be informed. Mr. Mazza said the parents would be notified by the end of this week and the latest next week. Parents can reach out to the program director if they think these programs would benefit their child

Ms. Pitone wanted to know if you would like your child to have academic enrichment and fun time as well, is it the Adventure Camp that she should be looking at for her child. Mr. Mazza said, yes, it is the Adventure Camp that would be the one to enroll in. Ms. Pitone asked who would be the best person to contact with questions regarding the offerings. Mr. Mazza said that parents can reach out to Lisa Kuh, Director of Early Education or the principals at their school, they can also reach out to individual teachers or their children's counselors to find out what is appropriate for their child and what they may need for enrichment. Ms. Pitone suggested they put that information on the website so people don't get overwhelmed with the process. Superintendent Skipper added that there are a lot of moving pieces with these programs. This is a framework for what we are going to flesh out as we see what the enrollment might be like and when we hear back from the teachers, counselors and principals the questions being asked by parents about the programs. This list will continue to grow but they wanted to give parents a list to start to choose from and have parents look and see what the new programs are and how their child could benefit from them. They will continue to support and grow the embedded counseling. They have so many students that are in it but it is not yet on the website. This is just a glimpse into all of the offerings.

For the high schoolers the opportunity to work in the programming is one thing but the other is how best to help the students who are dragging credits or who may have gone through a course and may be missing some skills. What can they do for them academically over the summer? Also, the eighth grade rising freshman, what can they do for transition programming for them. The high school piece is being built out actively, this is all happening now and over the next few weeks, we will look at it and see where we are going into the summer. Staff is tired and everyone is vying to hire the same staff. Between now and next week that list will grow as will the descriptors and the contact pieces and that is why they have Heather coming in to be a contact person to point parents in the right direction for resources.

Mr. Mazza added that for visibility purposes they would have the summer program come up immediately on the website.

Ms. Krepchin said in reference to her earlier question about the fees for the programs, would that would be something the district should include on the website as well, which programs are free and which are not. Superintendent Skipper stated that Community Schools are on a sliding scale and what they want to do with summer funding is offer more seats, some even with a fee can be offered at a nominal fee or on the lower end of the sliding scale.

Superintendent Skipper added that Kenia Avant and Asst. Superintendent Mazza put together the numbers in a memo for the remote school. They are doing the high levels; about 85% of families have elected to come back in person and about 15% stayed remote. There is a slight increase in some schools where the demographic is a higher concentration in multilingual or Latinx. We are seeing a slight increase but not as much as it is in other districts. It is a good sign because of the outreach and family engagement that has been done. The students asked at ESCS today felt they were very safe at school and they appreciate the protocols that have been put in place to keep them safe at school.

In addition, she is expecting some guidance from DESE regarding the high school and the events that they hope to have before the end of the school year. Graduation, eighth grade moving up ceremony and honor societies are all things we are waiting for some direction on and as soon as we do, we will share that information with the community. They have been doing a lot of planning and have met with SEU hoping that these events will be able to take place. They want to make sure people stay safe but also want to enjoy these ceremonies.

Ms. Pitone asked if the data on families who decided to return to in person learning and if they have the data broken down by race. Superintendent Skipper said they do have the data and will provide and present it at the next School Committee meeting.

B. Personnel Report

Superintendent Skipper wanted to thank Michelle Buckley, Principal Accountant for her 31 years of service on her retirement. Marilyn Vrontas, Special Education Assistant Director, for her 2 years of service. Paula Keymont, Guidance Counselor at SHS for 25 years of service. And Miriam Donovan, Teacher Capuano for 30 years of service.

Ms. Krepchin asked if there were more retirements this year than last and how has it impacted the district? Superintendent Skipper said the retirements go back and forth some years more than others do. The pandemic caused people to think and re-evaluate what they wanted. We will never back fill veteran educators but we will hire educators who are passionate about teaching in Somerville.

VII. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES

A. School Committee Meeting for Educational Programs and Instruction: March 22, 2021 (Dr. Phillips)

MOTION: To accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Educational Programs and Instruction of March 22, 2021.

B. School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities of the Whole: March 24, 2021 (Ms. Krepchin)

MOTION: To accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities of the Whole of March 24, 2021. (Motion carries by roll call)

C. School Committee Meeting for Rules Management: April 5, 2021 (Ms. Barish)

MOTION: To accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Rules Management of April 5, 2021. (Motion carries by roll call)

D. School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities of the Whole: April 7, 2021 (Ms. Krepchin)

MOTION: To accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities of the Whole of April 7, 2021. (Motion carries by roll call)

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. School Opening Advisory Group April Report and March and April Recommendations (Dr. Phillips)

B. Donations (Recommended action: Approval)

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

Donation	Donor	City, State	Value	Programs Donated to
Black Violin–School Assembly	Rebecca Didier & Family	Somerville, MA	\$300	Music Department at East Somerville Community School

MOTION: There was a motion by Dr. Ackman, second by Dr. Phillips, to approve the donations, with gratitude. The motion was approved via roll call.

IX. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

Ms. Barish attended her first meeting of the Children's Cabinet at which there was an update on a sustainable quality early childcare plan for the city. Followed by a presentation from Eastern Bank Foundations with business leaders showing how they support early childhood education and care. Both presentations were very informative and dovetails well with Somerville's public schools initiative in supporting Somerville's early childhood plans. She also mentioned she serves on the Memorialization Committee for the city and at the next meeting, they will be considering a long list of spaces in the new high school that need names. If any of her colleagues or community members, PTA members, students and anyone who would be interested in honoring these spaces you can email Ms. Barish at

memorial@somervillema.gov or mbarish@k12.somerville.ma.us Please include information when you email about the person you are honoring.

Ms. Pitone said that today at her high school meeting, she did not know who was on the Memorialization Committee and would like those names included on the website and if they could put the list of names put forth on there as well. Ms. Barish said she will pass along the request and input from the school community would be very important.

Ms. Krephchin asked if people are looking for specific areas to be named or just in general naming just the space. Ms. Barish said they have not got to those specifics yet but they would like to see some connection from the person named to the space being named.

Ms. Phillips wantedtoknowthestarttimeforMonday ismeetingandChairGreenanswered7:00p.m.

Ms. Pitone wanted Chair Green to repeat what he said earlier when he could not be heard. Last February the policing policy was revisited and after the repeated altercations in the news the committee is looking at the policies in place based on the changes in the law. It has made changes in how the police are perceived and what the police presence means and how it should change within Somerville Schools. He looks forward to the discussions ahead.

X. CONDOLENCES

Superintendent Skipper and the Somerville School Committee would like to express their sincere condolences to the families of **Patricia Davenport**, Retired SHS ESL teacher and **Lori Manzelli**- Daughter of Linda Manzelli, Retired Cummings & AFA teacher

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned via roll call vote at 8:45 p.m.

Related documents:

Personnel Report

Submitted by: C. White

