

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

Monday, October 19, 2020 - Regular Meeting

7:00 p.m. – GoToWebinar

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

Members absent: Mayor Curtatone

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Normand called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with a moment of silence and a salute to the flag of the United States of America. Superintendent Skipper called the roll, results of which were as follows: PRESENT – 8 – Mr. Green, Ms. Normand, Ms. Krepchin, Ms. Barish, Dr. Phillips, Ms. Pitone, President McLaughlin Dr. Ackman - ABSENT – 1 - Mayor Curtatone

II. REPORT OF STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Brian Recinos and Natalia gave an update

- Sunrise Somerville Group did a march to Davis Sq., speakers spoke on Climate Change and the new Green Deal and had a great turnout. They meet every Wednesday @ 6pm.
- Progress Reports are coming out Wednesday and peers are working to get missed assignments turned in.
- Classes are going well for the remote setting, students are adapting will
- Schedules have been efficient, A & B weeks are better
- Mentoring – has been going well. It's usually a teacher in this role and has been a nice addition and they check in weekly on average.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- June 22,2020

Tabled.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Normand read the Public Guidelines and invited those who signed up to comment to do so in the order called and allotted each person 3 minutes.

Fredo Durand - 17 Kingston St, father of a first grader. (Submitted to be included in meeting minutes.)

I have two points. 1/ the city needs to prioritize school opening and
2/ the district must communicate so that families can organize their lives.

I am so frustrated and stressed about Somerville's approach. I agree that the safety of teachers, students and families is critical. But the education of our children should also be paramount. School closures impose incredible hardship upon children and families. Our children have been out of school for seven months. Seven months. And there appears to be no end in sight. Meanwhile the city has opened indoor dining and legoland. Where are Somerville's priorities? We hear that the city is pushing an HVAC overhaul that may add months of delay, and most public health experts suggest it's unnecessary. I hear that negotiations for hybrid haven't even started. This is insane. I thought we were going to go hybrid in September!

All the science we have suggests that sending young children back to school with basic precautions such as masks and hepa filters incurs little to no increase in transmission over baseline community spread. For example, there was another article in the New York Times today showing little transmission due to schools in New York. Keeping students away from school causes lifelong damage. Public health experts are urging us to reopen schools for young children, people like Joseph Allen who heads Harvard's Health Building Program or Ashish Jha who is the Dean of the Brown University School of Public Health.

Don't we believe in public education? The current situation is awful. Zoom school is just not a good way to learn for young kids, and it's terrible for parents who need to work.

Second, I am so angry with the lack of communication from the district. We have been told absolutely nothing about

the timeline. We found out super late that we would go back to online-only. We had to scramble to figure out childcare. Now I hear there is some December 1 date, but if you can't attend town halls, you get no communication from the district about it. This is not inconsequential nice-to-know information. This is crucial information we need to juggle childcare and our jobs.

Again, we need 1/ to prioritize education and school reopening, and 2/ communication from the district.

Annie March - 29 Berkeley St.

She wanted to address the guidelines regarding HVAC and schools and why there seems to be two sets. One from DESE, that most other Massachusetts districts are currently open and operating under and the Mayor's guidelines, which are more rigorous and invasive. She would like the School Committee to request the Mayor's Office publish a text document outlining the guidelines and also a timeline and budget for enacting the DESE guidelines, so that the School Committee can compare the two plans. She stated that it seems like the Mayor's Office has unilaterally decided to pursue their HVAC plan. She would like to see that decision rolled back so that School Committee, parents, teachers, and staff can be included in the decision. She spoke about the scientists and parents in the district who are knowledgeable about the disease and do not believe that the Mayor's plan is safer than the DESE plan. She stated that she would support the Mayor's HVAC plan but she's not seeing evidence that it makes students and teachers safer. She is concerned that the cost of keeping the schools closed will result in extreme symptoms of mental illness and stress. She ended with stating that she realizes that considering the DESE plan and including more people in the decision making could actually keep schools closed longer, so she is relying on the School Committee to be smart about it, and open our schools.

Lauren Handley – 80 Bay State Ave.

She has two children in the Somerville Public Schools. She's a physician at the Massachusetts General Hospital. She stated that she is disappointed in the process and planning for Somerville's return to in-person learning. She stated that she understands that people are afraid but we cannot let fear drive these decisions, particularly when we have the science to guide us. Policy should not be driven by emotions, anecdote or fear. Decisions to re-open schools should always be framed with the risks of not re-opening schools and how it will affect the children and society in the short and long term. She mentioned that there is a \$7 million building renovation in the future, yet no one has provided any data about why this strategy is more effective than the DESE strategy or the Harvard School of Public Health Healthy Building strategy. She referred to Emily Ostrid's data and her Covid tracker of schools that shows 200,000 students from across 47 states in the last two weeks of September yielded an overall Corona Virus infection rate of just 0.14% among students, and 0.24% among staff. In the Massachusetts data, the student rate is 0.06%, and the staff rate is 0.05% for these in person scenarios. Also, from this data, staff in the remote only setting had an increased positivity rate if Covid compared to full in person and hybrid plant showing that being at home was not protective to the staff in this dataset. With the proposed intervention against Covid, which is closing our schools, that has so far in every population level study been shown, not to be effective at mitigating Covid, and yet, we know that the effects of elementary and high school closures on children are absolutely devastating. She requested that our elected leaders collectively use the checks and balances of local government and encouraged them to ask questions, and advocate getting the children back into the classrooms. She ended with stating that she considers this a pediatric public health emergency and these kids' lives depend on it.

Beatrice Gomez – 17 Prichard Ave

She has a child at the Argenziano in eighth grade and another in fifth grade at the Brown School. She is an experienced Project Manager in construction and Real Estate and Planning and has been working in a major academic hospital for the past 12 years. First she is requesting transparency from the city. She said that it is not clear what the proposed upgrades for each ventilation system is and asked if the district is adding filtration systems or changing entire air handlers? Second, she is wondering if there is a schedule on what the steps are for forming these upgrades. What are the design processes, what is the pricing bidding process? What is the procurement? What is the duration of construction? And finally, how is the City training Facilities and Maintenance staff to oversee the systems? She stated that retrofitting building systems will perform as intended, and require serious maintenance from experienced people. She questioned if Somerville had a building management system that tells them when that system will fail. She ended with concern about the materials lead time not meeting the December 1st deadline.

Cassinia - 60 Irving St (Submitted to be included in meeting minutes.)

I have a second grader at the Brown School and a preschooler who is currently at home with a nanny. I can

continue to work full-time. We like it to be able to work from home and both of our kids are typically developing. Our second grader tolerates remote school ok, is even getting afterschool two hours, twice a week, weather permitting. So last week, he didn't have any of afterschool for some socialization. I'd like to make the following points to the committee and everyone else present.

First, we as a community are pleading for outside of the box thinking and finding ways to get kids to some kind of in person learning. We've been waiting for school to begin and now being told that the new high school which meets the HVAC requirements might not work for small kids because of toilets.

Second, I would like to ask for the HVAC report to be released to the public. We should not need to wait until the contract is chosen for this work and designs picked. Please do not underestimate the ability of your constituents to be able to understand the document that was promised months ago.

Three, I see people leaving the district. Do we know why, which demographic is leaving, which demographic wished they could leave, but cannot, will this impact the school next year?

And another point: I don't think it's realistic to plan for school to stay open 100% of the time actually go back to actual hybrid, when most likely we'll need to go remote again, either because of transmission rates going up beyond a certain point, or because someone in the school will become infected.

One last point is that we keep hearing about differences in different demographics, with regard to why they will not return to in person, but we don't understand the reasons we don't have this information, I'd like to request that there be a survey or some way, some research to find out why people are reluctant to return and what can be done about that.

Mayor Curtatone took this time to share a slide show he prepared. He stated that there is community meetings as promised would be scheduled before the end of October and November on school re-opening.

In respect to what's happening around the country, more than 20 states are surging. Massachusetts has entered resurgence. Today confirmed cases well over 800 another believe 13 deaths. We've lost 42 people in Somerville. He stated that the City's approach has been, as we come out of flattening the curve at the beginning of the pandemic is to prepare for resurgence and to try to get schools re-opened.

Another important data point is last week alone; approximately 100 students in the Commonwealth were confirmed cases and another approximate 70 teachers.

He stated that we need to continue to interrupt the transmission of the virus. That is our main priority in terms of opening schools. He invited anyone with questions to email him. All the data is showing that in familial settings, transmission is occurring at a high rate. We have to interrupt that transmission if we're going to maintain the re-opening of the schools in a sustainable way.

An update on re-opening schools, right now the City is measuring the external factors intervening with protocols and mandates and guidelines to influence human behavior. He stated that we all have an individual responsibility, can continue to wear a face covering, maintain a safe social sense of six feet, to not participate in large gathering of more than 10 people, and any activity that increases the risk of transmission.

He stated that since his last update the City had walked through all the buildings and stated that as the plans are finalized, they will be public. The City is developing a sequence and prioritization of every building. This does not include the high school because if it finishes as projected should be ready by December one. The other buildings need to be adapted to the Covid world, the first group is Argenziano, Capuano and West Somerville to the East and the Mods in front of the High School, then Healey, Kennedy and Winter Hill.

We will receive bids in the next week and a half. There is now a renewed focus on HVAC systems and handling in schools and other buildings.

The other internal factor that he focused on was about developing the testing and contact tracing protocols and putting that to operation. The City has done an evaluation of all the possible vendors and most protocols that best meet our needs as a school district, and community in the mandates of The Board of Health. Logistics are being determined and what a testing schedule would be. That would also be influenced by what schools get opened when and what the student population will be and we're going to develop the specific testing locations based on that plan. They are working on school specific contact tracing on our locally developed plan, as well.

Dr. Phillips stated that she is concerned that we're not going to have buildings ready for our Priority 1 and 2 students by December first, because as a researcher, she's read the research, and there's one study estimated that the average student will lose about 70% of an entire school year if they are unable to return to in person learning before January. This study estimates that black and low-income students are expected to lose more than a year's worth of schooling and Latino students, nearly a year. These are estimates for the average student. She submits that Special Education students, English Language Learners, and Early Learners, will experience even greater

learning loss if we can't get them back to in person school before next year. Meeting this deadline is also critical because every day that our school buildings are closed is another day that we are putting many of our students at risk. There are young children doing remote learning by themselves, are under the care of older siblings because their parents have to work. There are students learning in unlicensed home daycares, or licensed facilities with HVAC systems nearly as old as the Brown. These learning environments aren't in our student's best interest either. She does not think it's unreasonable to expect the city to be able to open safe learning spaces for our Priority 1 and 2 students by December first. She asked the Mayor how confident he is that the City will meet the deadline of December 1st?

Mayor Curtatone answered we're not going to rush to meet a deadline. He's reasonably confident but if we feel we're not going to be safe, all bets are off. The city will not jeopardize anyone's health or potential risk of life to rush to any opening. But we will work with the contractors to get the buildings up and running by December 1st or before.

Dr. Ackman asked what the order of building re-openings will be and what grade spans will be first to be re-entering.

Mayor Curtatone spoke regarding the buildings saying that we will have a more specific timeline once we finalize the awarding of the bids and those particular project scopes.

Superintendent Skipper responded to the phasing sequencing of students, Special Education and ELL levels 1-3 would be in priority group and we're looking at where to put the programs.

Mr. Green asked what is the difference between low risk and moderate risk, and what is the cost benefit analysis that makes us confident that low risk is worth more time?

Mayor Curtatone stated the consultant that was brought on board is very experienced. We categorized the building's based on initial assessments in low, moderate, or high risk categories to determine what it would be to get down to low risk. We cannot get to a zero risk, it would be impossible. But the low risk between that score of one and two, which poses least amount of risk for transmission. In terms of cost benefit analysis, the way we look at it is, how much level of infection are we willing to risk?

Ms. Barish asked a couple questions, both related to the fact that we are in the red. Is there any circumstance under which some students will remain in buildings even in a red period? Do you foresee needing to suspend construction and remediation efforts the way construction was shut down last spring?

Mayor Curtone answered using North Andover as an example, they are in the red but they know that the outbreak was contained on the Merrimack College campus so the City continued moving forward. And the second part of the question we do not foresee having to shut down construction again unless that setting is a source of an outbreak.

Ms. Pitone stated that the community is frustrated because they don't have the information to justify what's going on. She asked in terms of what the plans are what is the timeline when can the School Committee and community members expect to have access to things like the building assessments and what the building plans are in terms of the scope of the changes to that HVAC.

Mayor Curtatone answered the he'd refer back to the first presentation made to the public which laid out the assessments as a starting point. Because that makes pretty clear how we score every building in the community against the backdrop achieving a score range between 1 and 2. Second, as the plans become final we are certainly going to leave that open for the public and School Committee for comment. As soon as we have the final bid we can go over all of the detail plans.

Ms. Pitone had a follow-up question for clarification because people are looking for a greater level of detail of the status of the buildings and the plans to improve them.

Mayor Curtatone referred to the initial assessment as a starting point to follow and compare back to it to make sure we're doing what we are supposed to be doing, and that will finalize the minute details.

Dr. Phillips formally requested that the Mayor's slide show gets added to the School Committee packets on the Thursday before the meetings.

Mayor Curtatone responded that if they have the information in advance, they will do their best to be able to give the Committee the information in a timely manner.

Ms. Krepchin stated that one of the frustrations of constituents is feeling like they don't know where decisions are coming from. She asked if he could speak about who was in the room when decisions were being made about how things are going to get to where they need to be.

Mayor Curtatone answered that the city has a cohort of experts that engage with us, some who've had roles advising the CDC, WHO, and the State's Covid Team. Then we bring in consultants to work with us and make recommendations. The final request on spending on anything comes back to him, but it's filtered and delegated through a litany of people that work in the city and experts who are part of a cohort that engage that have been advising the community.

At 8:08 Chair Normand acknowledged that city councilors Scott and Ballantyne have joined the meeting.

Mr. Green asked about the timeline for making a proposal to City Council regarding the decision to spend the money on these buildings because it will have to be approved. How will that be done by December 1st?

Mayor Curtatone answers that we can go out to bid, but we cannot sign the final contract or monies appropriated but that doesn't slow down any project unless funds don't get approved.

Ms. Pitone asked a question to Counsel Long, what's the demarcation between the authority of the City and the School Committee regarding school district policies, things like mandating vaccines or mandating Covid testing? She wanted to understand the scope of the responsibilities of School Committee and the City so they can collaborate together.

Mr. Long the School Committee has the authority under provisions in Chapter 76, relative to vaccines, particularly for admission of students. There are religious and medical exemptions for that, but the School Committee can insist that students be vaccinated before they enter school. There are a couple of provisions in the general laws that, say, in effect, the School Committee retains authority over school buildings unless the town or the city council have specifically assumed authority for them. It is one of those policy determinations that also have a political dimension, depending on the reach of the town or the city by vote.

Ms. Barish stated there are a number of people in the community who have a certain level of expertise in these areas and have come to very different conclusions about when it's safe to return to school buildings. And what risk we're putting children at, and not returning to school buildings. Constituents would like to know who some of these experts are because all these other experts say something completely different

Mayor Curtatone answered we've engaged experts Sam Scarpino, Rachelle Wollensky, Paul Biddinger, other major epidemiologists and many more. He states he is happy to provide all that.

Mr. Green requested a list of the experts, in memo form. Then he asked how would mandating vaccines, including flu vaccines, for entry into buildings square with our legal and ethical responsibility to provide Special Education Services to all students?

Mayor Curtatone answered The Board of Health would put forth mandates in terms of how it believes we need to respond to a health crisis in the context of schools.

Mr. Long added last week the Boston Teachers' Union requested an injunction to prevent the schools from providing school services to high needs kids. The union was citing metrics saying we should be remote for everybody. A superior court judge refused to grant the injunction, which is an indication of the importance of providing services to students on IEPs. I'm not aware of a decision from either a Massachusetts court or elsewhere, that says, if a special

needs student refuses or vaccine, we still must provide services. The vaccination statute has been challenged and upheld in Massachusetts. We have a couple of cases that actually have gone to the United States Supreme Court, including one from Massachusetts, upholding Board of Health Authority in Health Crises. If a student with special needs refused to get a vaccine, we would be in a very defensible position if they chose to litigate the matter.

Mr. Green asked when the District can plan on hearing from the Board of Health what they are proposing in terms of the testing policy. There are only two more meetings before December 1st and The School Committee typically takes two meeting to pass a policy.

Mayor Curtatone answered that he believes he will have a final recommendation by October 26th and will share with the School Committee as soon as that's done.

Chair Normand stated that they may have to call a special meeting to pass policy if they do not get the information in time to allow presenting and voting.

President McGlaughlin requested that the City get information to the School Committee as soon as possible regarding the appropriation of money so they can make a quick and reasonable decision.

Mayor Curtatone stated that the City has to decide about funds, if they are using bonds, free cash or the CARES funds or a combination. If they use CARES funds then no approval is needed.

V. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

A. District Report

Assistant Superintendent Mazza gave an update on the Somerville Virtual Learning School, there are 21 enrolled. There are four kindergarten students, eight first grade students, three second grade students, two third grade students, one fourth grade student, one fifth grade, two eighth grade students. He is doing daily monitoring of student work and family support. Most of their assessments are auto graded but there are writing pieces to those that need to be graded manually, He is also having biweekly communication with families. Students are still members of the school communities that they belong to, and they also have access to daily specialists, so it still allows them to be part of the school community, to see their friends and participate in specialist activities. Students who are in the LMS, can transition back to the school at the end of each semester. Families that are participating in this are looking for a little bit more flexibility. But I do feel very confident to say that when we do go back to in person learning, the majority of our families in the LMS are going to join us back in our school buildings.

Superintendent Skipper goes over some enrollment numbers

October 1st, SIMS Report there's a big fluctuation in the numbers due to a lot of mobility due to the pandemic.

- Grades 1 – 4 has most volatile enrollment with an average difference between students leaving and enrolling of 21.
- Grade 5 levels off a bit with a difference of 14 students
- Grade 6, 15 students
- Grade 7, 4 students
- Grade 8, 9 students
- Grade 9, 5 students
- Grade 10, 4 students
- Grade 11, 3 students
- Grade 12, 2 students
- Kindergarten is done by a projection, the original projection was 454 and the actual enrollment was 394
- We believe this number will increase when we return to in person learning.

Chair Normand asked for a quick explanation of SIMS and what it could possibly mean for our budget next year.

Superintendent Skipper explained that this report is given four times a year. When there is a decrease in enrollment, there will be a monetary hit but hopefully when students return the following year, this will be countered. As we stand with the loss of 248 students, that equates to just under \$1 million. Director Gorski clarified and said the per pupil loss was just under \$4,000 per student

Dr. Ackman requested a copy of the power point Superintendent Skipper presented and also last year's actual numbers as opposed to the projections and how far off we are from the projections.

Superintendent Skipper answered with Kindergarten and Pre K we are full. So our projections are from the real numbers last year. So in general our PK & K numbers have gone up each year and actually added a section.

Mr. Green asked if Ms. Bertholdo could return in two weeks and give a snapshot of the spread sheet. He also asked how Somerville's numbers compares to the rest of the state.

Superintendent Skipper stated that there is not a public document available that would state those numbers but she will check with her Urban counterparts in their meeting.

Ms. Barish asked who we anticipate to come back in the remote versus hybrid format and do we anticipate doing another survey of parents.

Superintendent Skipper stated that we will do another survey, particularly, in our phase two A and B in phase three, in terms of how many students remain remote, versus how many will intend to come back. The survey will be done beginning the last week of October.

Ms. Bertholdo stated that the students that are leaving, parents are stating that they will be returning when we return to in person learning. She talked about the mobility in the immigrant community stating that it is very high and they tend to leave and come back. But the high cost of housing is driving them out of Somerville. She also mentioned that the families appreciate the work and help of the liaisons.

Dr. Phillips requested to include in the spreadsheet the families that shared that they were planning to come back and to get this presentation again at the next SIMS report date.

Superintendent Skipper stated that Enrollment is generally presented at the Finance and Facilities so we can get that information and share it.

Dr. Phillips asked if there is any legislation at the State to help hold districts harmless for the mobility of the students.

Mr. Green answered that there is legislation filed but the Governor has made it clear that he is not interested.

Ms. Krepchin asked if the decrease in the enrollment was trending at specific schools or if it was consistent throughout the district.

Ms. Bertholdo answered that the Argenziano lost a lot but also enrolled a number. A lot of families from the Brown moved out with a lot of families intending to return. Also the West Somerville, for a couple of weeks, had a number of withdrawals but is starting to add enrollments. The schools in the 02145 area have held steady numbers. Capuano's numbers have been affected the most.

Mr. Green stated he would love to see the demographics of the new students versus the departing students.

Superintendent Skipper answered that she needs lead time to get that information.

Moving on, remote attendance rates have been in the mid to high nineties. The Outdoor Enrichment

Program is going well with about 230 PreK and K students attending the mid-day program and about 327 students in grades 1-8 attending the afterschool program. There are also about 383 PreK – Grade 5 students participating in the fee based after school program.

Dr. Ackman asked if it is possible to expand the successful Out of School Time Program.

Superintendent Skipper answered that it is weather based. They are looking at opening slots to get more students into the fresh air had have the social component.

Ms. Barish asked if there was any update from when they were looking at buildings other than school buildings that might be appropriate for in person learning.

Superintendent Skipper stated that generally the city buildings are in worse shape than the school building but she will check on the data and report back.

· Enrollment Report (Ms. Bertholdo)

Superintendent Skipper took this time to deliver the rest of her report.

Superintendent's Notes: *School Committee Meeting – Monday, October 19, 2020*

I would like to begin by acknowledging the incredible work that our students, staff, families, and partners have been doing this fall to support students and one another. **Student attendance** rates have been in the mid- 90 percent during this remote period. We will continue to make adjustments to keep students actively engaged in their learning, and to address concerns or recommendations as they arise.

Our **outdoor enrichment programming** has been going well, providing students with the opportunity to safely connect outdoors. Approximately 230 PK and K students are participating in the Community Schools free outdoor mid-day enrichment programming from 12:30-2:30, while an estimated 327 students in grades 1-8 are participating in the free afterschool enrichment programming offered by Somerville Parks & Recreation. In addition, 383 PK grade 5 students are also enrolled in Community Schools' fee-based regular afterschool program from 2:30-4:30pm, which is also taking place outdoors at each of our elementary schools.

Food & Nutrition Services is continuing to offer daily **Grab-and-Go breakfast and lunch meals** throughout the week. Meals are available for pickup daily, Mondays through Fridays, at all of our elementary schools. Students can pick up meals at any of the school sites; SHS and NWFC students can pick up meals at their neighborhood school. Pickup times are 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., with an additional morning pickup window from 7:30-9:00 a.m. at the East, Healey, and Winter Hill schools. We are currently averaging just over 4,000 meals/week (1,800 breakfasts and 2,250 lunches/week), and are seeing demand consistently rise. Thank you to Lauren Mancini, Pauline Ucello, and all of our Food & Nutrition Services team for their tireless work over the last 7 months.

The **Somerville Family Learning Collaborative** continues to support families with a variety of programs, including virtual Playgroups offered through Facebook Live, and parent support groups through Zoom. Visit the @SFLCPlaygroups Facebook page and the SFLC website (www.somerville.k12.ma.us/families) for Playgroup, Support Group, and other workshop information.

Congratulations to seven Somerville High School seniors for earning recognition from the **2021 National Merit® Scholarship Program**. **Silas Booth** is a semifinalist in this prestigious annual scholarship program. He joins approximately 16,000 semifinalists nation-wide who have the opportunity to advance in this year's competition for more than \$30 million in National Merit Scholarships which will be offered next spring. Six other SHS seniors – Henry Ayanna, Justin Booth, Brayden Goldstein-Gelb, Willow Klein, Justin Millette, Owen Thompson, and Kevin Wen – earned Commended Student recognition from the National Merit Scholarship Corporation. More than 1.5 million students across the U.S. entered the 2021 competition by taking the 2019 PSAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. Congratulations to all these students for their outstanding work, and best of luck to Silas Booth as he advances in this competition!

We are continuing to move forward on our **equity and anti-racism work**, and are excited to have a School Based Equity Specialist in every one of our schools helping to guide this work. Specialists will be working in

partnership with Dr. Jessica Boston-Davis, our Director for Equity and Excellence, as well as school leaders to support educators in their respective buildings and to advance this work. We are also offering a number of equity PD opportunities for staff across the district including, to name a few:

- Anti-Racist Action-Oriented Book Study for Educators of Color - *My Grandmother's Hands*
- Inclusive Anti-Bias Curriculum PLC
- English Learner Success Plan Implementation
- Supporting LGBTQ+ Students During Remote Learning
- Inclusive Anti-bias Curriculum for Young Children
- Transition 101: A Roadmap to the Transition Planning Process

Finally, a reminder that Somerville Health and Human Services will be offering **Flu Clinics** this fall and winter as they receive additional supplies of flu vaccines. Please visit www.somervillema.gov/flu for information and to schedule an appointment as flu clinics open.

VI. NEW BUSINESS (Taken out of order)

Acceptance of FY2021 Grant Funds (Recommended action: approval)

State Grants

DESE - FY21 Fund Code 336 - Supporting Students' Behavioral & Mental Health & Wellness COMP \$91,375 The district utilizes this grant to fund support for English learners with trauma and also therapeutic services and professional development.

Federal Grants

These are covered under IDEA, which stands for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention
Special Education Entitlement Grant \$1,602,269 – This 240 Grant funds Special Ed teachers, support staff, summer programming and PD
Early Childhood Special Education Grant \$60,959 – This 262 Grant funds coaching related to specialized instruction in support to special education preschool students in inclusive settings

MOTION: There was a motion by Mr. Green, seconded by Ms. Barish to accept all federal entitlement and continuation grants and all state continuation grants awarded to the Somerville Public Schools below.

The motion was accepted by a unanimous roll call vote.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual

The Following policy is being presented this evening for a second reading:

- File GBBA-R: Gender Identity Support for Staff

File: GBBA-R

GENDER IDENTITY SUPPORT FOR STAFF

The Somerville Public Schools strive to provide a safe, respectful, and supportive environment for all staff members.

Somerville Public Schools support and respect staff members' individual differences and privacy needs. For staff who identify as gender nonconforming and/or transgender, the district will support them in the use of their chosen name and gender pronouns in conversation, written communication and on school-issued identification and will follow their lead in changing their name and gender pronouns on legal documents.

Somerville Public Schools will ensure that staff restrooms without gender designations are available in all Somerville Public Schools buildings. Somerville Public School employees will use the facilities or restrooms that correspond to the gender with which they identify or may choose to use facilities or restrooms without gender designations.

Somerville Public Schools will provide all administrators and staff with professional development related to gender identity support and inclusionary language. Administrators and staff will follow the referenced procedures for supporting their colleagues.

Each employee of the Somerville Public Schools is personally responsible for supporting and affirming the gender identity of their colleagues.

Ms. Barish asked Superintendent Skipper if she believes it will be problematic in the implementation because the City has control over the school buildings.

Superintendent Skipper answers that when a policy is passed she would like to see language that there is a reasonable timeframe to implement so they are able to work with DPW. Given the pandemic, a reasonable timeframe now may be during the 2021-2022 school year.

MOTION: There was a motion by Ms. Barish, seconded by Mr. Green to accept the GBBA-R Policy as Amended.

The motion was accepted by a unanimous roll call vote.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. MASC Resolutions

At the last meeting, Mr. Green volunteered to be a Delegate and Ms. Krepchin volunteered to be an alternate.

Chair Normand stated that in the past they have instructed our Delegate to use his or her own judgment, especially as the resolutions might get amended from floor.

B. Legal Counsel Search

Ms. Krepchin gave an update that she has spoken to a number of law firms because at the last meeting it seems they were leaning towards hiring a firm but understands that a decision hasn't yet been made. She is assuming if decided to hire in house it will be like any employee search. But in the mean time she has spoken to some law firms that Glenn at the MASC recommended. They were all interested taking Somerville as a client. She thought they all had something to offer. She didn't go into details because she questioned if this is the time or place for that. She spoke with Glenn at the MSC about what our process should be. He recommended that if we are going to interview firms we should do it as a subcommittee or as a full committee and part of our full school committee meeting. Our next step would be to decide this. One of the law firms did send an unofficial proposal and she is sure the other three would do so if requested.

Chair Normand stated she would like to form a subcommittee and asked Ms. Krepchin to Chair and for colleagues to volunteer over the next few days.

C. Donations (Recommended action: approval)

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

Donation	Donor	City, State	Value	Program Donated to
Monetary	M.A.S.S and Kiss108	Wellesley, MA	\$7,298	Somerville Public Schools for Purchasing Student Technology
Monetary	Kevin Grannan	Cincinnati, MA	\$1,463.67	To support the purchase of Music Education books for the students of Phillip Grannan Music Teacher at SHS.

MOTION: Motion by Ms. Barish, seconded by Mr. Green to accept this donation with gratitude.

Motion was approved via a unanimous roll call vote.

IX. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

Ms. Pitone would like to make a motion of a request for information to the mayor's office, a list of the proposed upgrades to school buildings by building. To make improvements to HVAC and modification to reduce the risk associated with Covid, in the form of the current request for proposal or request for quote, or a list based on the building assessment, or a copy of what information is being requested from the contractors.

MOTION: Motion was made by Ms. Pitone, seconded by Mayor Curtatone for a request for request for more information.

Motion carried by a roll call vote. 8 – Yes Ms. Barish, Ms. Normand, Mr. Green, Ms. Pitone, Dr. Ackman, Dr. Phillips, President Mcglaughlin, Mayor Curtatone 1 – Abstain Ms. Krepchin

Mayor Curtatone commented that he is a phone call away available for any questions.

X. CONDOLENCES

The Somerville School Committee extends its deepest condolences to the family of ***Nossos Sentimentos***, Father to Regina Bertholdo, SFLC Enrollment Center Director.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 9:43 pm.

Related documents:

Agenda

Public Comment Submitted via Email

Superintendent's Notes

Report of the Resolutions Committee

Submitted by: S. Duggan

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE GoToWebinar
REGULAR MEETING – October 19, 2020 – 7:00 P.M.**

Amended 10-19-2020

Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. C. 30A, s. 18, and the Governor’s March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, as well as Mayor Curtatone’s Declaration of Emergency, dated March 15, 2020, this meeting of the Somerville School Committee will be conducted via remote participation. We will post an audio recording, audio-video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of these proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting on the City of Somerville website and local cable access government channels (SCAT).

Copy & paste the following link into your internet browser to preregister or on the date and time of this meeting to view it live:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/888479472834288909>

Somerville Public Schools - School Committee Goals 2019 - 2022

Through the following long-range goals, we commit to addressing deep-rooted systemic barriers that have prevented us from achieving our district vision of equity and excellence and ensuring that all students, regardless of race or ethnicity, have the supports and resources they need to achieve educational success in our district now and in the future. By 2022, we will ...:

...increase the percentage of support staff of color by 6 percentage points, teachers and counselors of color by 5 percentage points, and administrators of color by 4 percentage points through evaluating and strengthening all elements of our human capital system.

... 1) conduct a district enrollment study to understand the prospective future population of the district and 2) craft a vision for school assignment and programming aligned with the district’s equity policy.

... design, evaluate, and partially or fully implement student-based budgeting to ensure that every student has equitable access to rich learning opportunities that help them thrive.

... design a robust system of aligned developmental academic and social-emotional benchmarks which will be used to inform practices, policies, and resource allocation.

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

· June 22, 2020

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

V. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

A. District Report

· Enrollment Report (Ms. Bertholdo)

VI. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES

A. School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities: October 14, 2020 (Mr. Green) **MOTION:**
To accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities of October 14, 2020.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual

The Following policy is being presented this evening for a second reading:
· File GBBA-R: Gender Identity Support for Staff

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

ORDER OF BUSINESS 2 October 19, 2020

A. MASC Resolutions

B. Legal Counsel Search

C. Acceptance of FY2021 Grant Funds (Recommended action: approval)

MOTION: To accept all federal entitlement and continuation grants and all state continuation grants awarded to the Somerville Public Schools below.

State Grants

DESE - FY21 Fund Code 336 - Supporting Students' Behavioral & Mental Health & Wellness COMP \$91.375

Federal Grants

Special Education Entitlement Grant \$1,602,269.
Early Childhood Special Education Grant \$60,959.

D. Donations (Recommended action: approval)

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

Donation	Donor	City, State	Value	Programs Donated to
Monetary	M.A.S.S and Kiss108	Medford, MA	\$7,298	Somerville Public Schools for Purchasing Student Technology
Monetary	Kevin Grannan	Cincinnati, MA	\$1,463.67	To support the purchase of Music Education books for the students of Phillip Grannan Music Teacher at SHS.

IX. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

X. CONDOLENCES

XI. ADJOURNMENT

I'm submitting the following comments for inclusion in the minutes of tonight's meeting:

I'm writing as an advocate for LGBTQ+ policies within the city of Somerville concerning the policy revision on gender identity affirmation being considered at tonight's meeting. I think the revision here looks great. I'm very happy to see this section on professional development/training for staff:

Somerville Public Schools will provide all administrators and staff with professional development related to gender identity support and inclusionary language. Administrators and staff will follow the referenced procedures for supporting their colleagues.

I was also very happy to see this section about bathrooms:

Somerville Public Schools will ensure that staff restrooms without gender designations are available in all Somerville Public Schools buildings. Somerville Public School employees will use the facilities or restrooms that correspond to the gender with which they identify or may choose to use facilities or restrooms without gender designations.

I must say, however, that these policies are not yet a reality. The next step we need to take as a city is to put these policies in place. I'm currently working with the Equity Team at the high school and Jessica Boston Davis to make sure that professional development on these issues happens soon. As far as I know, and according to the many LGBTQ+ staff I know around the city, this professional development has not happened yet in other schools. We need it.

The bathrooms (and changing rooms related to gym/pools/vocational programs) are also not yet up to the standards of this policy, so again, moving forward we should make every effort to make this policy a reality in our schools and within all city buildings. I know that when it comes to buildings, there are logistics to consider because it's all connected to funding and construction, so I understand if we are not yet "there" with providing equitable spaces. However, I advocated for equitable bathrooms in the new SHS and was told "not yet." I'd like to continue to push for the new SHS building, and for all city buildings to make the changes we need to provide truly equitable bathrooms. We can do this!

This past March, I put together a presentation with the help of the Gender and Sexuality Awareness Alliance and in connection with the Access for All community group in which we compiled the voices and concerns of trans and non-binary students, staff, and community members surrounding access to equitable bathrooms and the creation of multi-stall genderless bathrooms in the new SHS building, which we presented to the Building Committee. We were told that our request would be considered, but during my last discussion with the architect I was told that the city would not be moving forward with this request. As I always say, if you want to know what a community needs, you need to ask that community. The community has been clear about what they need. I hope the city will reconsider and take this perfect opportunity to create equitable bathrooms in one of our newest city buildings.

Thank you,

Julia S. Post
English Language Arts
Somerville High School
(she/her/hers)

Superintendent's Notes: *School Committee Meeting – Monday, October 19, 2020*

I would like to begin by acknowledging the incredible work that our students, staff, families, and partners have been doing this fall to support students and one another. **Student attendance** rates have been in the mid- 90 percent during this remote period. We will continue to make adjustments to keep students actively engaged in their learning, and to address concerns or recommendations as they arise.

Our **outdoor enrichment programming** has been going well, providing students with the opportunity to safely connect outdoors. Approximately 230 PK and K students are participating in the Community Schools free outdoor mid-day enrichment programming from 12:30-2:30, while an estimated 327 students in grades 1-8 are participating in the free afterschool enrichment programming offered by Somerville Parks & Recreation. In addition, 383 PK grade 5 students are also enrolled in Community Schools' fee-based regular afterschool program from 2:30-4:30pm, which is also taking place outdoors at each of our elementary schools.

Food & Nutrition Services is continuing to offer daily **Grab-and-Go breakfast and lunch meals** throughout the week. Meals are available for pickup daily, Mondays through Fridays, at all of our elementary schools. Students can pick up meals at any of the school sites; SHS and NWFC students can pick up meals at their neighborhood school. Pickup times are 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., with an additional morning pickup window from 7:30-9:00 a.m. at the East, Healey, and Winter Hill schools. We are currently averaging just over 4,000 meals/week (1,800 breakfasts and 2,250 lunches/week), and are seeing demand consistently rise. Thank you to Lauren Mancini, Pauline Ucello, and all of our Food & Nutrition Services team for their tireless work over the last 7 months.

The **Somerville Family Learning Collaborative** continues to support families with a variety of programs, including virtual Playgroups offered through Facebook Live, and parent support groups through Zoom. Visit the @SFLCPlaygroups Facebook page and the SFLC website (www.somerville.k12.ma.us/families) for Playgroup, Support Group, and other workshop information.

Congratulations to seven Somerville High School seniors for earning recognition from the **2021 National Merit® Scholarship Program**. **Silas Booth** is a semifinalist in this prestigious annual scholarship program. He joins approximately 16,000 semifinalists nation-wide who have the opportunity to advance in this year's competition for more than \$30 million in National Merit Scholarships which will be offered next spring. Six other SHS seniors – Henry Ayanna, Justin Booth, Brayden Goldstein-Gelb, Willow

Klein, Justin Millette, Owen Thompson, and Kevin Wen – earned Commended Student recognition from the National Merit Scholarship Corporation. More than 1.5 million students across the U.S. entered the 2021 competition by taking the 2019 PSAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. Congratulations to all these students for their outstanding work, and best of luck to Silas Booth as he advances in this competition!

We are continuing to move forward on our **equity and anti-racism work**, and are excited to have a School Based Equity Specialist in every one of our schools helping to guide this work. Specialists will be working in partnership with Dr. Jessica Boston-Davis, our Director for Equity and Excellence, as well as school leaders to support educators in their respective buildings and to advance this work. We are also offering a number of equity PD opportunities for staff across the district including, to name a few:

- Anti-Racist Action-Oriented Book Study for Educators of Color - *My Grandmother's Hands*
- Inclusive Anti-Bias Curriculum PLC
- English Learner Success Plan Implementation
- Supporting LGBTQ+ Students During Remote Learning
- Inclusive Anti-bias Curriculum for Young Children
- Transition 101: A Roadmap to the Transition Planning Process

Finally, a reminder that Somerville Health and Human Services will be offering **Flu Clinics** this fall and winter as they receive additional supplies of flu vaccines. Please visit www.somervillema.gov/flu for information and to schedule an appointment as flu clinics open.

report of the resolutions committee

The members of the Resolutions Committee met virtually on June 25, 2020 to consider resolutions proposed by member districts and the MASC Board of Directors for consideration at the 2020 Annual Meeting of the Association. Members present were: Ellen Holmes, Chair, Ex-Officio, Ashburnham-Westminster Regional; Deborah Davis, Northeast Metropolitan Voc. Tech.; Barbara Davis, Holbrook; Margaret Hughes, Narragansett Regional; Laura Fallon, Northampton; Irene Feliciano-Sims, Holyoke; William Fonseca, East Longmeadow; Jason Fraser, Silver Lake Regional; Beverly Hugo, Framingham; Mildred Lefebvre, Holyoke; Stacey Rizzo, Revere; Wendy Rua, Agawam; Lynn Ryan Assabet Voc. Tech.; Paul Schlichtman, Arlington; and Robert Swartz, Gardner.

The following resolutions were moved forward by the Resolutions Committee and approved by the Board of Directors.

RESOLUTION 1: MCAS AND HIGH STAKES TESTING *(Submitted by the MASC Board of Directors)*

WHEREAS the MASC Membership and MASC Board of Directors have previously and repeatedly taken the position of opposing high stakes testing including the MCAS; and

WHEREAS the COVID-19 Remote Learning Model has negatively and disproportionately affected students with learning disabilities, students of lower socioeconomic status, ELL students and students who identify as minorities; and

WHEREAS the social and emotional trauma both individually and collectively has yet to be truly realized in the students who have experienced the shutdown of their local school buildings and separations from their peers and supportive adults; and

WHEREAS the students of the Commonwealth have already missed valuable face to face instructional opportunities with their teachers and would benefit from focusing on those important instructional opportunities and social emotional supports;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC rejects the calls for the students of 2022 who missed their tenth grade MCAS testing to be required to make it up during the 2020-2021 school year or ever. We demand those students be held harmless for not taking the MCAS and that their graduation requirements shall be determined by locally controlled voices of the School Committee and School Administration within the remaining graduation requirements of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Additionally, we reiterate our call for a moratorium on all high stakes testing for the 2020-2021 school year so all students can benefit from their time being focused on direct instruction and we urge the legislature to enact a moratorium on high stakes testing of three years.

RESOLUTION 2: COVID-19 STATE FUNDING

(Submitted by the MASC Board of Directors)

WHEREAS if schools are to re-open this fall in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is the responsibility of each school district to do so safely and responsibly; and

WHEREAS it is the responsibility of the state to ensure that each school district is able to pay for the enormous additional staffing, transportation and material expenses required to do this; and

WHEREAS the state cannot expect mandatory COVID-19 safety guidelines to be followed without also ensuring that each school district has the funds required to implement these guidelines;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the state must guarantee every school district full reimbursement for whatever COVID-19 expenses are required to follow state mandates. We must ensure a statewide school re-opening that is safe, responsible and equitable. There can be no unfunded mandates for COVID-19.

RESOLUTION 3: SCHOOL COMMITTEE ANTI-RACISM RESOLUTION

(Submitted by the MASC Board of Directors)

WHEREAS as schools have the responsibility to equip students with their civil right of obtaining a free and appropriate public education, it is the responsibility of each school to ensure we create a welcoming community for ALL students; and

WHEREAS it is the responsibility that every district provide to all district staff, including School Committee members, annual professional development on diversity, equity and inclusion; and

WHEREAS every district will commit to recruiting and retaining a diverse and culturally responsive teaching workforce; and

WHEREAS every district will examine their policies for institutional and systemic racialized practices and implement change with sustainable policies that are evidence based; and

WHEREAS every district will incorporate into their curriculum the history of racial oppression and works by black authors and works from diverse perspectives; and

WHEREAS we as school district leaders can no longer remain silent to the issues of racism and hate that continue to plague our public and private institutions;

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THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that all the school districts in the Commonwealth should guarantee that racist practices are eradicated, and diversity, equity and inclusion is embedded and practiced for our students, families, faculty and staff.

School Committee members should ensure our that school culture and that of every district in the Commonwealth is anti-racist, and that acknowledges that all lives cannot matter until black lives matter.

RESOLUTION 4: LOWERING THE VOTING AGE FOR MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

(Submitted by the MASC Board of Directors)

WHEREAS the right to vote is elemental to democracy and that right should be protected and guaranteed to all qualified citizen; and

WHEREAS sixteen and seventeen-year-olds possess the same critical analytic intelligence as eighteen-year-olds; and

WHEREAS in Massachusetts, sixteen-year-olds have been deemed able to consent to sexual intercourse, obtain a learner's permit and driver's license, get married with parental consent, work a full-time job and pay taxes, and be tried as an adult in a court of law; and

WHEREAS the 2018 Act to Promote Civics Engagement mandated an increased emphasis on civics education in Massachusetts Public Schools; and

WHEREAS studies conducted in places with a voting age of 16 have demonstrated that, when partnered with a strong civics education, a lowered voting age results in higher over all civic engagement and voter turnout and higher propensity to develop a lifelong voting habit; and

WHEREAS early voter engagement increases civic participation later in life, which is vital to a democracy; and

WHEREAS turnout among all voters in the United States is decreasing, and a push to vote is much needed for younger citizens; and

WHEREAS 16-year-olds may now pre-register to vote in Massachusetts, which may provide a logistical framework for their local participation; and

WHEREAS the rules of local voting should be a local issue; and

WHEREAS Representative Andy Vargas and Senator Harriet Chandler have introduced the EMPOWER Act (H.720/S.389), which would give municipalities the ability to lower their municipal voting age on local authority;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the sponsors call upon the Massachusetts Legislature to pass the EMPOWER Act and take other means necessary to allow cities and towns to establish a minimum voting age of sixteen years for all municipal elections.

RESOLUTION 5: SUPPORTING INCREASED FEDERAL SUPPORT AND STIMULUS FUNDING FOR PUBLIC K-12 EDUCATION

(Submitted by the MASC Board of Directors)

WHEREAS the COVID-19 pandemic is a monumental and unprecedented challenge, emerging quickly and demanding an immediate overhaul of the instructional plans and strategies of school systems across the country; and

WHEREAS the nation's public schools remain committed to delivering high-quality instruction while ensuring the health and safety of our students and staff; and

WHEREAS to date, the employees of the Massachusetts Public Schools have worked around the clock to continue to provide our students and families with access to educational needs such as Chromebooks; and

WHEREAS the Massachusetts Public Schools has maintained payroll for full and part-time district employees, providing stability to our community during economic uncertainty; and

WHEREAS Massachusetts Public Schools have continued to provide daily lunches to students despite a projected short fall of revenue from the Federal Meals Program; and

WHEREAS these challenges will persist and likely grow as COVID-19 affects our economy and destabilizes funding for public school; and

WHEREAS revenue shortfalls may result in budget cuts and personnel reductions; and

WHEREAS federal legislation has been approved to provide urgently needed funding to underwrite the recovery of the American economy and to support critical public programs, including public education with such examples as American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, additional funding for the Education Jobs Fund to help school districts retain existing employees, recall former employees, and hire new ones, and the recent Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) and other measures to stabilize public education and other public programs; and

WHEREAS public education is one of the largest employment bases of any field or industry; and

WHEREAS research has repeatedly found a strong causal relationship between levels of schooling and wages that individuals earn over a lifetime; and

WHEREAS for public schools to thrive and for our students to realize a bright and productive future, the federal government needs to make a substantial new investment in our well-being; and

WHEREAS it is likely that further emergency legislation will be required to underwrite the cost of public safety supplies, technology, and personnel to maintain the status of public schools; and

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WHEREAS this level of funding is the minimum needed by the nation's public schools to sustain and accelerate their academic achievement trends over the past decade, including gains in reading and math achievement that outpace the national average; and

WHEREAS the governor and General Court may be able to access additional state revenues through use of accumulated reserves or through the implementation of progressive tax legislation;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC align with state superintendents of schools and urge the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation and state legislators to advocate for and approve additional education funding for our nation's public schools through the enactment of progressive tax legislation.

RESOLUTION 6: RETENTION OF MEDICAID REVENUE *(Submitted by the MASC Board of Directors)*

Whereas the Affordable Care Act expanded access for health care to millions of Americans, including thousands of Massachusetts families who have been without health insurance; and

Whereas through the expansion of the Medicaid program, more families in economic distress gained access to health insurance and, subsequently, affordable health care; and

Whereas the Medicaid program reimburses public school districts for certain clinical services provided to students who may be clients of special education or who experience disabilities, and this revenue provides critical support to the districts and municipalities where they are based; and

Whereas the restriction of Medicaid eligibility and reduction of funding would require the Commonwealth to choose between extraordinary state budget increases to fill the gap or absorb the cost of caring for families who could lose health insurance;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC urges the General Court to require that 100% of Medicaid reimbursements to cities and towns be provided in full amount to the public schools of each municipality, through a school district revolving account, to underwrite the cost of providing an adequate education.

RESOLUTION 7: ATTEMPTS BY US DOE TO DIRECT FUNDING TO PRIVATE SCHOOLS

(Submitted by the MASC Board of Directors)

WHEREAS a recent “advisory” issued by the United States Secretary of Education has inappropriately interpreted language in the recently enacted COVID-19 relief legislation to benefit private schools disproportionately in the distribution of federal funding for economically disadvantaged students; and

WHEREAS in recognition of this executive branch attempt to overreach in the interpretation of a federal statute in devising a formula for the distribution of funds under Title I and other provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as revised and reauthorized; and

WHEREAS the commissioner of Education in Connecticut, in citing the Secretary for such a misrepresentation of the law, has advised officials of that state to follow the language of the law rather than the interpretation issued in the “advisory,” and thus save thousands of dollars for economically disadvantaged students in the public schools of that state

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC petition the Attorney General of Massachusetts to review and recommend to the Executive Office of Education and the MA Department of Elementary Education to review the formal language of such statutes that determine the distribution of federal funds to benefit economically disadvantaged students and, further that the Attorney General provide legal guidance to state agencies in Massachusetts to implement such formulas based on the actual language and legislative intent of the statute should that be in variance with any “advisory” issued by the United States Secretary of Education.

RESOLUTION 8: MEMBERSHIP OF A SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER ON THE BOARD OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

(Submitted by the MASC Board of Directors)

WHEREAS the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) is established to oversee and implement policy related to public education; and

WHEREAS most boards and commissions in Massachusetts appropriately include representatives of constituent groups subject to the jurisdiction of those boards and commission; and

WHEREAS a glaring omission among members of the BESE is a representative of the people elected to oversee public policy making among the many city, town and regional school district school committees;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC submit to the General Court proposed legislation that MGL Chapter 15, Section 1E be revised as follows:

Section 1E. There shall be in the department a board of elementary and secondary education, in this chapter called the board, which shall consist of the chairman of the student advisory council established under this section, the secretary

of education, in this chapter called the secretary, or her designee, and 9 members appointed by the governor. The 9 members appointed by the governor shall consist of 1 representative of a labor organization selected by the governor from a list of 3 nominees provided by the Massachusetts State Labor Council, AFL-CIO; 1 representative of business or industry selected by the governor with a demonstrated

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commitment to education; 1 representative of parents of school children selected by the governor from a list of 3 nominees provided by the Massachusetts Parent Teachers Association; 1 representative from a school committee from a list of three nominees provided by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees and 5 additional members.

RESOLUTION 9: PROVIDING EQUITY FOR SEXUAL ORIENTATION - LGBTQ+ STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND STAFF *(Submitted by the MASC Board of Directors)*

WHEREAS gender identity is not listed as a protected class in federal laws; and

WHEREAS LGBTQ+ students, teachers and staff are victims of discrimination, harassment, and at-risk behaviors at rates alarmingly higher than non-LGBTQ+ persons;

WHEREAS the social and emotional wellness of our students has a direct relationship with their academic and future success and that schools have the moral and ethical responsibility to address the whole child so that they may experience success in school and in society; and

WHEREAS school districts that respect and support their teachers and staff by providing an inclusive culture where all can thrive, irrespective of gender identity, are more successful and in turn, are supporting a thriving school climate; and

WHEREAS the Commonwealth of Massachusetts currently recognizes in state law LGBTQ+ as a protected class;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC file legislation and petition our federal legislative delegation to also file legislation which would have the effect of adding sexual orientation and gender identity to the list of protected classes in order to provide equity and support to our LGBTQ+ students, teachers and staff and petition our legislative delegation.

RESOLUTION 10: RELATIVE TO THE MONITORING OF ATTENDANCE OF STUDENTS DURING THE PANDEMIC *(Submitted by the MASC Board of Directors)*

WHEREAS districts are required to have special but comprehensive plans for educating students during the pandemic crisis; and

WHEREAS student attendance is an important element of a district plan for returning-to-school, and school committees apply local policies for student attendance; and

WHEREAS the emergency nature of the pandemic requires that students may need to be educated in such venues as schools, home, institutions or other remote locations; and

WHEREAS circumstances may require that students be absent from school for reasons that may include extended illness, exposure to illness including COVID-19, or the judgment of parents or guardians determining that it is not safe for their children to return to a school building or other learning venue;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC advocate for legislation and regulation that protect the rights of parents to withhold their children from school for reasons of their health status or health risk and, further,

- That MASC advocate for regulations that hold districts accountable for the attendance of students provide appropriate exemptions for students who experience or require extended absences from school due to health-related issues or concerns due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and further,

- That MASC petition the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to waive all accountability requirements regarding attendance for the 2020-2021 school year, and
- That such regulations exempt districts from sanction status on the basis of attendance when such absences are related to a public health crisis, including COVID-19.

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