

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**Monday, September 13, 2021 - Regular Meeting**

7:00 p.m. – Zoom

**Members present:** Ms. Krepchin, Dr. Ackman, Ms. Barish, Ms. Normand, Mr. Green, Ms. Pitone and Dr. Phillips.  
Mayor Curtatone

**Members Absent:** President McLaughlin,

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 with a moment of silence, followed by a salute to the flag of the United States of America. Superintendent Skipper call the roll, results of which were as follows: PRESENT – 8– Dr. Phillips, Ms. Krepchin, Mayor Curtatone (7:25 p.m.), Mr. Green, Ms. Barish, Ms. Pitone, Dr. Ackman, Ms. Normand ABSENT – 1 - Mr. McLaughlin

Chair Green asked Interpreters to introduce themselves:

Micaela Yang- Spanish

Elaine Metzker- Portuguese

Gina Miranda- Haitian Creole

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- August 30, 2021-  
Tabled.

**III. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair green read the public comment guidelines and asked constituents who signed up, to comment at this time.

**Michele Lippens** - 24 Thorpe Street, Co-Director of the Somerville SEPAC (Submitted comment to be included in these minutes)

Members of the school committee, Superintendent Skipper, and members of the city council, I am speaking tonight on behalf of the Somerville Special Education Parent Advisory Council. Our intent is to join the conversation about the *American Rescue Plan* Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) funds to safely reopen and sustain the safe operation of schools and equitably expand opportunity for students who need it most, particularly those most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The work of SEPACs directly targets the goals, purpose, and priorities of ARP, which specifically addresses ensuring that outreach and services delivery meets the needs of vulnerable subgroups and supporting learning recovery. Students with disabilities, particularly those who are students of color, as well as our English language learners and immigrant communities have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, and face widening opportunity and achievement gaps. Parent participation and linguistically and culturally appropriate support for parents are **essential** to ensure that they can overcome barriers, attend school more consistently, and make academic progress.

*Therefore*, the SEPAC asks that the district hire a designated staff member reflecting the diversity of the community dedicated to supporting the work of SEPAC. This position would ensure that outreach and service delivery meets the needs of students and their families during the recovery. This designated representative would facilitate the immense needs of the SEPAC to help us reach out to underrepresented community members. In addition, we ask the district to fund specific material supports, such as IT support for website development and maintenance; and a budget for hosting events, translator and interpreter services, and other miscellaneous expenses for promoting events/workshops. We REQUEST an investigation of the CTE Program at the high school to **assess access and equity** for our students with IEPs. This issue has been repeatedly brought up by our members. We REQUEST that SPS hire more special education teachers and therapists to meet the growing needs of our students. Finally, we want FULL ACCESS and OPPORTUNITY for Out of School Time programming for students with IEPs during the school year, school vacation weeks, and in the summer, including the EXPANSION of ESY. Somerville students with IEPs currently have less access to Out of School Time programs such as Aftercare and Summer camps than students in surrounding towns.

The SSEPAC conducted an end-of-the-year survey for parents of children with IEPs to comment on their experience during pandemic/remote learning. I will share a few statements tonight.

His disability did not allow him to attend for more than a few seconds.

My child did fine, but we were able to adjust our schedules to be with him during the school day. He did fine academically, but really missed the social-emotional aspects. He was definitely reaching burnout just before we went back to in-person learning.

My child did fine with remote learning because an adult was available to help them 1:1. *That is, my husband and I each had to step back from work this year and work part-time so that one of us would be available to keep track of when Zooms started, make sure materials were out and ready, cajole to get assignments done, negotiate about movement breaks/bathroom visits, etc.* Even with that, their social skills regressed...and the overall level of family stress was really, really high.

This is just a sample.

We look forward to engaging more deeply and partnering with the district and our members to further discuss the use of these critical funds.

**Leah Bloom** – 100 Belmont Street, Ms. Bloom took this time to publicly thank the School Committee and the district, in particular for the support of students and families at ESCS. Grateful for the support with math interventionist, the new assistant principal and the social worker 2 days a week among other changes.

**Erin Hemenway**- Ward 3 and parent to an 8<sup>th</sup> grader at ESCS and a 10<sup>th</sup> grader at SHS. Ms. Hemenway commented regarding communication from the district to parents. She is concerned with whether or not testing is truly happening for all students and mentioned that testing did not happen for high school students the previous week. Her 10<sup>th</sup> grade students was not tested. She respectfully requested that testing rates be shared in the COVID dashboard so parents could see percentage wise, how many students are being tested in their student's classroom and in their cohorts. She has heard that the district is not allowed to require vaccination for students to enter school and she would like to understand why the vaccine can't be a requirement for school. Lastly, she requested that the district obtain funds to provide kn95 masks for all students.

Aili Contini-Field- 215 Summer Street and parent to WHCIS students. Ms. Contini-Field commented regarding the COVID-19 dashboard and the fact that it has not been updated since June. She requested that the dashboard be updated moving forward.

#### **IV. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT**

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

- Welcome New Administrative Staff

Superintendent Skipper introduced Associate Principal Jodi Remington, welcoming her in her new role AS Associate Principal. She shared a few remarks and then asked Jodi to read the resolution offered to Sibby LaGambina in his retirement

- Retirement Recognition for Sebastian LaGambina

Jodi read the resolution for former principal LaGambina who retired at the end of last school year.

## ***Sebastian LaGambina***

***WHEREAS,*** *Sebastian LaGambina grew up on Albion Street, attended the Somerville Public Schools, was a member of the Chess Club and graduated from Somerville High School in 1980 and,*

***WHEREAS,*** *Mr. LaGambina has been a Somerville Public Schools employee since 1986 holding several positions in the district, including Boys Baseball Coach, Class Advisor, Chemistry Teacher, Mentor, Science Department Head, Assistant Principal, and Principal and,*

- WHEREAS,** *Mr. LaGambina was named "Exemplary Teacher of the Year" in 2005 by the North Shore Science Supervisors Association and,*
- WHEREAS,** *Mr. LaGambina's leadership was instrumental in ensuring that Somerville High School earned the Massachusetts Biotechnology Education Foundation's 2011 "Innovative School of the Year Award" and,*
- WHEREAS,** *Mr. LaGambina served as Chairman of the Region IV Science and Engineering Fair for eight years and was involved as an officer throughout his teaching career while the event was hosted at Somerville High School and,*
- WHEREAS,** *Mr. LaGambina supports special programs and initiatives like the Seal of Biliteracy, internships and co-op opportunities for all seniors, the Early College Program with Cambridge College and many more opportunities for dual enrollment and college level courses. His advocacy for the Fine Arts, Performing Arts, Media, Physical Education, and Health, is essential to the development of the whole child and,*
- WHEREAS,** *Mr. LaGambina's commitment to Career and Technical Education is highlighted in every detail in the new school including the expansion of many new programs. The building of our new school would not have been possible without his unwavering support, vision and,*
- WHEREAS,** *Mr. LaGambina has been a continuous supporter of Athletics at SHS. He was instrumental in the reforming of the Greater Boston League and the design of the new field house/gymnasium at the new high school. He has always understood the benefits of athletics from a mental and physical standpoint. He also served as our varsity baseball coach. The growth of our athletic program would not have happened if not for the support and leadership of Mr. LaGambina, and,*
- WHEREAS,** *Mr. LaGambina exemplifies a leader with deep empathy and compassion. His unwavering support for counseling services and support programming for our most vulnerable students was demonstrated daily in his decision-making and advocacy.*
- WHEREAS,** *Mr. LaGambina has demonstrated exceptional commitment to ensuring equitable access to programs, services, and rich and authentic learning experiences for all students as demonstrated through his leadership of school redesign and continuous improvement efforts as well as his commitment to building and strengthening partnerships and,*
- WHEREAS,** *Mr. LaGambina has always led with his heart, treated his colleagues and staff like family, warmed our hearts by sharing countless stories and pictures of his dogs with us all, encouraged us to take care of ourselves and our families, and supported us in all of our personal and professional goals and,*
- WHEREAS,** *Mr. LaGambina has demonstrated throughout his tenure the highest ethical standards and work ethic in his professional performance, earning the trust and respect of the entire district, and supporting the learning and growth of thousands of Somerville students, therefore be it*
- RESOLVED:** *That the Somerville School Committee, publicly and proudly, expresses its deepest gratitude for his leadership and vision in guiding the students and staff of Somerville High School, and wishes him a long, happy, and healthy retirement with his family; and be it further*
- RESOLVED:** *That this Resolution be recorded in the minutes of tonight's meeting, and that a framed copy be presented to Mr. LaGambina.*

Mr. LaGambina thanked everyone for the recognition and for all the support he has received throughout his tenure at Somerville High school, he said it has truly been a team effort.

Members of the school committee as well as the Assistant Superintendent Mazza and Superintendent Skipper shared a few congratulating remarks.

Superintendent Skipper then asked administrators to introduce the new administrative staff at the schools. They each took turns doing introductions by school and sharing a bit about each new person's background.

### **New Administrative Staff Attending School Committee Meeting on September 13, 2021**

**Jodi Remington** – *SHS Associate Principal* – Sup Skipper

**Matthew Buchanan** – *New SHS Principal* – Sup Skipper

**Eddie Rodriguez** – *AFAS Vice Principal* – Principal Soto

**Erick Pagan** – *ESCS Vice Principal* – Principal Morales

**Meaghan McDevitt** - Program Director of Community and Work-Based Learning – Principal Buchanan  
**Meagan Spinelli** – SHS English Department Chair – Principal Buchanan  
**Indira Evora** – Assistant Director of Athletics – Director Vieira  
**Paulina Mitropoulos** - Multilingual Learner Education Program Coordinator – Dr. Davila  
**Jose Mendez** - Operations and Extended Learning Director – Dr. Curley  
**Elizabeth Quaratiello** – School Health Services Director – Dr. Curley  
**Ashley Pennell** – Special Education Department Chair – Director Trevisone  
**Marisa MacDonald** – Special Education Assistant Director of Instruction and Programming – Director Trevisone  
**Will Verbits** – Special Education Assistant Director of Services and Supports – Director Trevisone  
**Samantha Eligene** – Data and Evaluation Specialist – Ms. Avant-Ransome  
**Kathleen Bailer** – Director of Early Education – Assistant Sup. Mazza  
**Allison Mann** – Assistant Director of Early Education – Assistant Sup. Mazza  
**May Chau** – K12 Supervisor of Art – Assistant Superintendent Mazza  
**Beverly Mosby** – K12 Supervisor of Music – Assistant Sup Mazza

- Acceleration Academy Memo (Mr. Mazza)

Superintended Skipper asked Assistant Superintendent Mazza to present the memo.

To: Honorable School Committee

RE: Acceleration Academies

September 13, 2021

The Acceleration Academy was a weeklong academic program designed to accelerate student learning through engaging, standards-aligned lessons that met the specific academic needs of students participating in the program. Each Acceleration Academy focused on a specific content area and students who attended an Academy received the equivalent of approximately one extra month of learning in one week. Acceleration Academy classes provided students with targeted supports to master grade-level standards.

### **Math Academies**

#### **Rising 10th Graders**

**Enrollment:** 14 students

**Daily attendance:** 97%

**Instructional Focus:** statistics & writing and modeling with equations

**Instructional Strategies:** exploratory learning, discussions, collaboration, multiple project-based learning opportunities, along with individualized attention and clarification

**Formal assessments:** Assessments were project based with presentations at the end of the week, which emphasized *Learning Targets* from the teaching guide as new skills the students were learning. The stats sections felt particularly new and by the end of the academy, students knew and could explain the difference between mean and median. Also, understanding the concept of a variable as a placeholder for a changing amount was key for several lessons and it felt like it was an “aha” sort of moment for students.

**Overall Analysis:** This was an amazing academy with a diverse group of students who were engaged and enthusiastic about the program. The teachers and paraprofessionals went above and beyond to make this a fun and engaging learning experience for these students. The week-long program included one hour each day of STEAM enrichment programming provided by DEILAB. The growth throughout the week in the students' skills to build these intricate Lego robots was truly incredible.

#### **Rising 8th Graders**

**Enrollment:** 8 students enrolled  
**Attendance:** 65%

**Instructional Focus:** mathematical fluency

**Instructional Strategies:** explicit teaching of math vocabulary, student developed glossary, think alouds, math talks, individualized and small group support, peer tutoring, daily spiraling of previously learned material and project-based learning

**Overall analysis:** Fluency support was provided to students with gaps in foundational skills such as multi-digit subtraction with regrouping and long division. As a result of these strategies, all students showed independent mastery of these foundational skills. The weeklong program also included an hour daily of enrichment programming between 2-hour academic sessions, provided by Parkour and JAE to keep students active and mentally engaged in their learning.

## Early Literacy Academy

### **Rising 2nd and 3rd Graders**

**Enrollment:** 18 multilingual learners  
**Attendance:** 88% attendance rate

**Instructional Focus:** literacy skills

**Instructional Strategies:** Wilson phonics lessons, guided reading groups, theme-based interactive read alouds, vocabulary development, comprehension, and interactive writing. The theme was FARMS:

- Literacy extension for additional practice on phonics skills
- Shared poetry with identifying trick words (phonetically irregular words that students need to memorize. Trick words are selected for their high frequency of use in English school-aged texts. These words are important for students to master for both reading and spelling. The mastery of these words allow students to achieve greater reading and writing fluency).

**Overall Analysis:** Strategic small groups with phonics practice and application provided students with lots of opportunities to practice their literacy skills and work towards reaching their reading goals. Students and teachers collaborated to create individual reading goals. The weeklong program included one hour each day of STEAM enrichment programming provided by DEILAB. The growth throughout the week in the students' skills to build Lego robots was amazing.

Assistant Superintendent Mazza read memo to the members, which was followed by question from the committee.

Ms. Krepchin asked if students were recommended by their teachers. She wondered if there were more students who could have benefited if more space allowed it. Mr. Mazza responded that teachers and principals recommended students. There were 12-15 students identified and only certain schools were targeted. He said that outreach needs to start sooner. Superintendent Skipper added that the timing was not the greatest; this played a huge challenge with the recruitments.

- COVID Testing/ Vaccine Update (Presentation slides attached below)

Superintendent Skipper asked Dr. Curley to share his update. Dr. Curley shared the following.

- Last year SPS COVID-19 Assurance testing Program 2020-2021 had a really quick turnaround time, and we ultimately saw a really low rate of community positivity
- This year the district is partnering with CIC Health which allows for considerable cost saving.
- CIC Health is the State partner for COVID Testing

- They Provide all supplies at no charge
- CIC has a paper based system
- Principals and SFLC staff are helping to get consent implemented.
- the district has 73% Participation so far
- Testing has happened the past two weeks; there were 7 positives week one and 3 positives week two

Dr. Curley Pause for questions.

Ms. Pitone asked how parents would know if their consent form is received. Dr. Curley responded that schools have received a list of student who have consented. The schools will reach out only to those families who have NOT consented.

Superintendent Skipper added that testing we had last spring set the bar high, what Jeff and his team are trying to do is bring back standards that we had before. She took this time to publicly give a huge thank you to the Mayor, Doug Kress, Tufts, Mr. Mendez, Dr. Curley, Mr. Durbin, and Ms. Quaratiello, for all their work to make this happen and to the city for continuing to support us in anywhere they can.

Dr. Curley continued with his presentation and reported that there is a vaccine Clinic scheduled for Wednesday, September 15 at Somerville High School. Schools will be looking similar to the spring with some key exemptions. All the nurses at the schools have Binax tests, for symptomatic testing. Students may no longer need to quarantine but rather be tested every morning.

Dr. Phillips requested that any testing/ vaccine information continue to be shared with families regularly.

Ms. Barish asked if students will be able to test on the weekend, for the 7 days of consecutive testing? Dr. Curley responded that home testing kits are available to families.

Ms. Pitone then asked several questions that came to her from constituents, regarding air quality and safety procedures.

She asked what the air quality is at the high school and what the air exchanges per hour are. Dr. Curley responded that the district is committed to maintaining 4 air exchanges per hour at all schools.

Ms. Pitone asked if band and chorus are being held outside and what the protocols are. Assistant Superintendent Mazza said that protocols have not change from last year. Supervisor Mosby bought bells to cover instruments. Chorus is going to be outside if weather permits, and students will be wearing masks when singing.

She then asked what the safety measures are for swimming class and if staff will be unmasked. Dr. Curley said that this year the District has partnered with the Recreation department, who runs the Kennedy pool, to make sure third grade and fourth grade students would have the opportunity to participate in the swimming program. Their department has the same mitigation protocols as the school department.

Lastly, Ms. Pitone asked - what happens if a student test positive or if a student chooses not to test. Mr. Mazza said that students would be provided with a tutor. Each school has a tutor assigned and the school principal will reach out to the tutor once the student has been identified.

## **V. NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. Consideration of Release of July 30, 2021 Legal Opinion from Murphy, Lamere & Murphy, P.C. regarding COVID-19 Vaccinations for Students.**

Chair Green asked attorney McNulty to explain the purpose of this Item. She explained that this opinion was given by the attorney's office to the district pertaining to vaccination. In order to share this opinion with the public the School Committee must vote to waive the attorney/client privilege.

MOTION: There was a motion by Ms. Normand seconded by Dr. Ackman to waive the attorney/ client privilege and to release the July 30, 2021 legal opinion from Murphy, Lamere and Murphy. P.C. regarding COVID-19 vaccination for students.

The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

**B. Donations (Recommended action: approval)**

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

<b>Donation</b>	<b>Donor</b>	<b>City, State</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Programs Donated to</b>
Office Supplies	Jeremy Rosenblatt	Cambridge, MA	\$350	Somerville Public Schools

MOTION: There was a motion by Ms. Normand, seconded by Dr. Ackman, to accept the donation of office supplies from Jeremy Rosenblatt for a total value of \$350.

The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

**VI. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS**

**CNormand**- Constituent in ward 7 who is an active mother out front from has asked to support limiting the pesticides in schoolyard. More information will be given on the next school committee meeting.

**VII. Condolences**

Superintendent Skipper and School committee would like to extend their sincere condolences to the family of **Mary Hayes Murphy**, Former secretary in the Superintendent’s Office, Western Junior High School, Kennedy School and retired from the Healey School and also mother to Maryann Coulombe, retired Administrative Assistant to the Assistant Superintendent and Director of Student Services.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned 9:02p.m.

**Related documents:**

- Agenda
- COVID Testing/ Vaccine Presentation
- July 30, 2021 Legal Opinion from Murphy, Lamere & Murphy, P.C.

Submitted by: E. Garcia

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE,  
MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL  
COMMITTEE GoToWEBINAR  
REGULAR MEETING – SEPTEMBER 13, 2021 – 7:00  
P.M.**

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, this meeting of the 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.

**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://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_PoNeyUI9QKWBy6Ziuen3Dg](https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_PoNeyUI9QKWBy6Ziuen3Dg)

**Webinar ID:** 814 2373 5390

**Password:** SPSSC21

**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. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- August 30, 2021

**III. PUBLIC COMMENT**

**IV. REPORT OF  
SUPERINTENDENT A.**

**District Report**

- Welcome New Administrative Staff
- Retirement Recognition for Sebastian LaGambina (Ms. Remington)
- COVID Testing/ Vaccine Update (Dr. Curley)
- Acceleration Academy Memo (Mr. Mazza)

**V. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Consideration of Release of July 30, 2021 Legal Opinion from Murphy, Lamere & Murphy, P.C. regarding COVID-19 Vaccinations for Students.**

**B. Donations** (Recommended action: approval)

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

<b>Donation</b>	<b>Donor</b>	<b>City, State</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Programs Donated to</b>
Office Supplies	Jeremy Rosenblatt	Cambridge, MA	\$350	Somerville Public Schools

**VI. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS**

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**