

**Dedham Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
February 15, 2023**

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Dr. Melissa Pearrow
Victor Hebert
Mayanne Briggs
Joshua Donati
Christopher Polito
Cailen McCormick
Tracey White
Tara Duncan (absent)

MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION PRESENT:

Dr. Ian Kelly, Interim Superintendent
Matthew Wells, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance
Dr. Sara Stetson, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services
Dr. Heather Smith, Interim Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum
Karen Hillman, Principal of Middle School
Jim Forrest, Principal of High School

Meeting Location:
Avery Elementary

School Committee Meeting commenced at 7:00 p.m.

Open Meeting
Dr. Melissa Pearrow called the meeting to order.

Pledge of Allegiance

PUBLIC COMMENTS

[NONE.]

Interim Superintendent Update

February 15, 2023

Dr. Kelly commented on the lockdown event at the High School yesterday. He said that the Police force responded quickly and thoroughly and the staff and faculty handled it as professionally as possible. The Administration took time to debrief at the end of the day and they are now analyzing the response and reevaluating their strategy to improve future responses.

Teaching and Learning

Early Bird Data. The District Data Team gathered to analyze the most recent Early Bird data. Principals and coaches met with the EB team to review the middle of year (MOY) results. The [presentation](#) can be accessed here. While there are several subtests in both K-1, Early Bird directed the team to focus on letter sounds and blending in Kindergarten and on the skills of deletion and non-word reading. An [explanation](#) of those skills can be found here.

	Kindergarten			
	Letter Sounds		Blending	
	Beginning of Year	Middle of Year	Beginning of Year	Middle of Year
Above 40th	36%	58%	23%	76%
Between 20th - 40th	46%	26%	14%	12%
Below 20th	42%	16%	64%	12%

	Grade 1			
	Deletion		Non Word Reading	
	Beginning of Year	Middle of Year	Beginning of Year	Middle of Year
Above 40th	72%	82%	61%	69%
Between 20th - 40th	37%	3%	16%	17%
Below 20th	11%	15%	23%	14%

Mental health and student services. Dr. Stetson and Dr. Dubé are pursuing grant funding via the [School Behavioral Health Workforce and Service Expansion Grants](#). This grant opportunity aims to bolster the work of school districts to ensure that all students have access to mental health clinicians, care, and programming in our schools. After many hours of work, Dr. Stetson and Dr. Dubé submitted the following application on behalf of the District on Friday the 10th. The grant submission can be accessed via the link [here](#).

Building Visits.



Interactive writing at Avery. Ms. Merritt's students using Google docs to write in a digital writer's notebook. Kids write, Ms. Merritt writes back an affirming message with feedback to help them grow as writers. Students write back and the cycle continues.

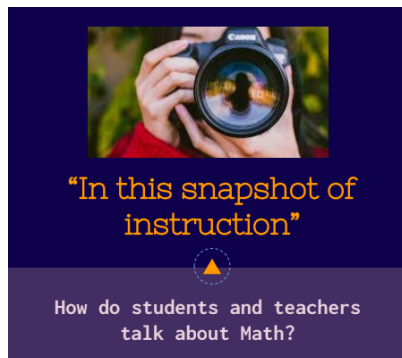


Morning meeting time at ECEC! Ms. DeLong's class prepares for a successful day of learning by building relationships and community within the classroom. Students and teachers greet one another and check in to see how everyone is doing.



DHS students enjoying the new flexible learning spaces in the recently renovated library.

Professional Development



Elementary Leadership Team. On Tuesday, February 7th the Elementary Leadership Team held instructional rounds at Greenlodge. Focus was on mathematics instruction with the guiding objective of “Listening to How Students and Teachers Talk about Math”. Slides are [linked here](#). An intended outcome of this work, facilitated by Dr. Kobierski, is for district leaders to build a common vision for academically productive talk in mathematics instruction. This is connected to professional work of our instructional coaches and teachers that is focused on elevating practices that engage students in mathematical discourse across the district.

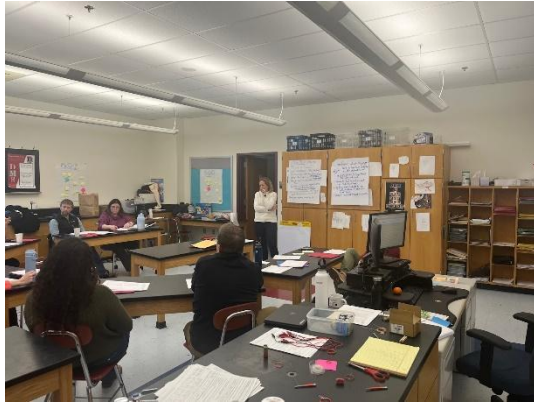


HSS Curriculum Pilot Update. The Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, elementary teachers and coaches met on February 7th to discuss how to pilot Inquiry Journeys this spring. [Notification](#) went out to families on February 8th and educators are planning to launch pilots after returning from break. The folks from Inquiry Journeys created a Dedham Community Page about Inquiry Journeys [which can be found here](#).

District Leadership team. Our District Leadership Team met yesterday afternoon to continue its work focusing on supervision and evaluation. One of the primary goals of this effort is to ensure that all of Dedham's educators receive feedback and support that helps them grow and improve their practice. Yesterday's work focused on fostering effective dialog and framing feedback that is grounded in and based on student learning. [Slides can be viewed here](#).



Lindamood Phoneme Sequencing (LiPS) Training. On February 8th & 9th, elementary interventionists, Occupational Therapists, Special Education teachers and related service providers attended LiPS training. [LiPS](#) is an evidence-based curriculum by Lindamood-Bell that supports students' literacy learning. The LiPS program will supplement the District's existing intervention toolkit to support student acquisition of essential early literacy skills.



OpenSciEd Curriculum (Grades 6-8). DMS is in year 2 of implementing the OpenSciEd units of study in grades 6-8 science classes. OpenSciEd science units are designed to address Massachusetts curriculum frameworks and focus on student driven inquiry based units centered around the investigation of a natural phenomenon. DMS has partnered with the OpenSciEd Equitable Instruction Initiative (OEI) from Boston College to support implementation of this award winning curriculum. DMS was selected to work closely with OEI to identify implementation challenges and collaboratively build solutions. The curriculum adaptations may be used by other districts in the Commonwealth to support their implementation of OpenSciEd.

Community Engagement

Oakdale Visioning. The Oakdale visioning team met on Tuesday February 8th to continue identifying instructional and programmatic priorities for Dedham's next new elementary school. The visioning team is composed of 40 representatives from the community including District leaders, principals, faculty, and parents from the Riverdale, Oakdale, and Greenlodge schools.

DCA Communications Survey. On February 7th, the District Curriculum Advisory met for a preliminary discussion about the Communication Survey for which we received 314 responses. The DCA will spend more time analyzing the survey over the next month and intends to hold focus groups during the month of March in order to gain further insight into how we can support families. Information about the focus groups will go out this week; the district will provide child-care and dinner for families who attend the focus groups.

Panorama Surveys. The District is preparing to begin administration of Panorama surveys to students, families, and faculty. These surveys were used extensively in the years preceding

COVID to monitor the District's efforts focusing on school safety, climate, culture, teaching and learning.

Management and Operations

DHS Turf Field. This week I met with DHS Principal Jim Forrest, Athletic Director Steve Traister, Facilities Director Denise Moroney, and Assistant Superintendent Wells to review progress towards replacement of the turf field and track. In the weeks ahead I will have a timeline for the project prepared for the Committee's review and reference.

DMS Distance Learning Lab. On Sunday February 5th we learned that the extremely cold temperatures caused a sprinkler head to malfunction in the DLL. As a result there was significant water damage to the room that will require extensive remediation in the weeks and months ahead. Fortunately Facilities Director Denise Moroney and her facilities team were monitoring our buildings closely over the weekend and discovered this issue before more extensive damage was done. We will keep the Committee informed as this rehabilitation project proceeds.

School Safety. I want to take a moment to thank our crossing guards for their service. Every day they ensure that our students and families safely navigate their walks to and from our school buildings. On Friday February 3rd temperatures had dropped to approximately 16°F with winds gusting from 20 to 40 mph. The conditions were far from optimal and our crossing guards were there to ensure safety for our students and families.

COMMENTS on the Interim Superintendent's Report

Mr. Donati said the feedback he heard about the response during lockdown was that integration of services and timeliness of notifications could be improved.

Mr. Polito thanked Dr. Kelly for providing the Early Bird data. He asked comparisons about rates of improvement could be added?

Ms. White said the lockdown went well, but there may need to be procedural responses reviewed. Also she cautioned that the event may have triggered mental health issues with the students and it is important that we make students understand that they are protected. She added that it may be important to undertake lockdown exercises to refresh the memories of staff, faculty and administration.

Ms. White thanked school staff for their efforts in making sure practices are conducted during the field renovations.

Mr. Hebert said he was shaken by yesterday's lockdown event. He feels we need to develop protocols that reflect the needs of each unique school.

Dr. Pearrow thanked the support staff for helping to communicate and protect the students during the lockdown.

Reports/Updates/Requests

Discussion & Vote of 2023-2024 School Calendar

Option 1: includes December 22nd half day

Option 2: includes September 25, 2023 Yom Kippur holiday and December 22nd half day.

Ms. White asked about the YMCA after-school availability to provide services to families who don't have those days off? Dr. Kelly said he talked to the YMCA director and she said the YMCA would be available for child care.

Motion was made to adopt the calendar that includes Option 2. Motion was approved by a vote of 7-0.

School Building Project Education Plan Preview and Preliminary Draft

Dr. Kelly discussed the Education Plan requested by MSBA for the School Building Project. Final product is required by March 15, 2023. He said a more detailed plan will be available at the March 1st meeting. The Educational Plan will dictate the zoning for the building project. The School Committee will need to start looking through it and community feedback will need to be solicited.

Ms. White said she appreciated all the work that went into this preliminary draft. She said Ms. Briggs has been involved with the SBRC, Avery, and ECEC building projects and to date, she has been able to supply a history of building projects in Dedham. She thinks it will be challenging to explain to the community the need for this project and suggested developing a shorter version of the plan for easier understanding and consumption by the general public. Dr. Kelly replied that Sara Errickson will be working on developing a summary of the plan for dissemination to the community.

Ms. McCormick highlighted the monumental work that went into the educational plan draft. She thanked all the people who contributed.

Dr. Pearrow asked that the School Committee members share input on the plan.

Update from Vertex - Oakdale School Project Owner's Project Manager

[Chris Polito recused himself from the presentation and sat in the back of the room due to conflict of interest.]

Steve Theran, Project Manager from Vertex, presented an update on the Oakdale project. He said there was a sizable attendance at the SBRC hybrid meeting at Greenlodge. There will be a site tour of the remaining locations on Saturday for the public.

Mr. Theran reiterated what was presented at the last School Committee meeting. The Feasibility study and Schematic Design component have to be completed before vote at Town Meeting.

The next steps will be to evaluate options. He showed the key focus of the decision making process which includes play space and logistics for drop off and pick ups for students during renovation.

He reviewed the Responsibility Matrix and due dates for each step of the process.

He displayed the Upcoming Meetings for the project.

COMMENTS Oakdale Project update

Ms. White asked if there could be a visual overview of the sites? Ms. Briggs said that there are test fits available on the sites. Mr. Theran said that those visuals will be posted on the website.

Ms. McCormick thanked Vertex for providing a wealth of information to the public. She asked if there will be a community survey coming? Briggs said there will be a survey posted in the near future.

Mr. Donati thanked Mr. Theran for simplifying the plan for increased transparency.

Mr. Hebert requested that the materials being presented at the visioning sessions be provided in some form to the public.

Discussion and Vote of Contract with Cropper GIS Services LLC for Oakdale Project Demographic and Enrollment Planning

Mr. Donati reminded the group that the GIS part of the project has already been paid for in the original designer contract so that means there are sufficient funds in the initial appropriation.

Mr. Hebert said people get alarmed when they see redistricting but he said the goal of the redistricting is to gather data to be ready when decisions about enrollment are made.

Mr. Theran said the redistricting evaluation will take about six weeks and the completed evaluation will be presented to the School Committee.

Ms. White asked that acronyms be clarified in the information made public for the community.

Dr. Pearrow thanked Mr. Tocci from the SBRC for his attendance at this meeting.

Motion was made to approve the contract with Cropper GIS Services LLC for the Oakdale Project Demographic and Enrollment Planning. Motion was approved by a vote of 7-0.

Student Conduct and Support in Grades 6-12

Principals Forrest and Hillman and Dr. Stetson joined the meeting to present an update on student conduct support systems.

Dr. Kelly prefaced the presentation to explain the following key points:

- Data used in this report represents reportable offenses based on DESE 2021-22 student discipline data.
- Reportable offenses include any event that removes a student from their education.
- 95% of offenses are due to weapons, controlled substances, physical violence and substantial destruction.
- Student population is aggregated by need category, gender, and race and ethnicity.
- The percentages reflect the representation based on the full student body.
- The goal of all discipline efforts is to identify students who require additional support to help them thrive educationally.

Middle School report

Principal Hillman presented slides on the Middle School conduct and support systems.

She noted that the 2020-21 data is not valid data for comparison due to the skewed statistics from the Covid school year so comparisons were made to the 2018-19 year. Those comparisons showed that trends remained fairly constant. She said that a progressive discipline approach focuses on keeping students in the school environment.

Key points from Principal Hillman's presentation:

- Vape cessation programs were established last year due to an increase in vaping issues. Dr. Heather Dube worked with families and offered programs that included a two day in-school suspension combined with a vaping cessation online program. Vaping numbers this year are down.
- Out-of-School suspensions focused on serious incidents. Ongoing work is needed to support these students.
- Transition work needs to begin in 5th grade. Counselors and Middle School student ambassadors visit 5th grade classes to help the transition to the Middle School. Family Night held at the end of the year is now being attended by students.
- There are plans to start a new student orientation focused on students with a history of poor conduct because those students tend to struggle more in Middle School.
- Structure of the school day was changed to include less free time because students needed more structure throughout the day. The new structure is communicated at every opportunity and informed by the key principles of respect, responsibility, resilience.
- Summer retreat held this year with team leaders helped to reinforce this plan.
- Cell phone use, headphones and hoodies are not allowed at the school and the clarity of expectations has made this endeavor successful.
- Using software through Chrome Books to monitor student's location helps to identify missed classes and info is used to limit passes and other enabling activities.
- Students are learning that their voices matter. Student-led activities include clubs, dances, and lunches and these events are the most popular and successful.
- Programs for improving cultures were established 5 to 6 years ago. The Strength program involves all types of students and faculty.
- Health Classes are grade specific based on needs of age group. Lunch groups with School Psychologists help students to learn to apply real life situations.
- "Think Kids" program partners with MGH for professional Development. Builds skills such as frustration tolerance and problem solving.
- Partnered with DESE on Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ+ students.

Principal Hillman said you can feel the overall change to the environment at the School from five to six years ago. These programs have contributed to that change.

High School report

Dr. Forrest reported that he managed to realize the dream of the trip to Costa Rica. He said currently 27 students and chaperones are in the air right now on their way to Costa Rica.

Dr. Forrest said the High School numbers show a significant increase in vaping in 2019-20, but they were able to turn those numbers around for the 2021-22 school year to below normal levels across all

subgroups. The programs addressing student conduct seek to reduce disparity and enhance success in the classroom and school/community involvement.

Key points of presentation by Mr. Forrest:

- Data on student conduct is reevaluated during the summer.
- First focus of discipline is parent conversations and then after-school and Saturday detentions. In-school detention is not possible due to lack of personnel.
- First step is removal from one class followed by remediation and teacher input.
- Vaping cessation online program is used in addition to THC Cessation program that partners with Boston Children's Hospital.
- Goal is to ensure that the curriculum reflects the needs of all types of learning levels and includes a new commitment to enhanced English programs.
- Greater support for non-college track students includes new job and trade fairs and providing broader support for students who did not get into Blue Hills.
- Students who struggle at school need a plan for after high school. Guidance counselors form relationships within a multi caseload structure. MetroWest data is used to identify students in need.
- Trauma Informed Teaching allows for screening of students for depression and includes counselor referral.
- Building inclusive culture uses an approach similar to the Middle School programs:
 - Team building starts in the summer for 9th graders with Link Crew full day orientation program led by 30 high school ambassadors. Students Ambassadors follow assigned students through the semester.
 - Various award ceremonies are held to recognize diverse students for their hard work and progress.
 - Challenge Day walks students through their experiences and the opportunity to share experiences in a non-threatening environment.
 - Student Lounge provides student voices around a variety of issues.
 - Student's mental health groups are formed by type of need and led by the School Psychologist.

Mr. Forrest noted that during the lockdown the new student monitoring system helped to ensure security by helping to locate students.

Mr. Forrest said that every day students are greeted by administrators and it's the little things that help build the relationships in addition to the hard work of dedicated staff and faculty.

District report

Key points of the presentation by Dr. Sara Stetson (update since December):

- The district focus is on mental and behavioral health and the feeling of belonging.
- Showed a schematic of the care concept including revamping Tier 3 programs for students with emotional and behavioral challenges. Some of these supports are alternatives to discipline.
- Nationwide 20% of students get mental health support. Those percentages are about the same in Dedham. Health disparities exist between race and ethnicity.

- Clinic in the Schools program helps students with access to services. Includes more parent involvement.
- Care coordination software is being explored. eCare system is a wrap-around system that supplies interagency capability.
- Considering starting a Children's Hospital partnership that provides ongoing professional development and support with ongoing consultation. They will also help with funding sources.
- Submitted a DPH grant to support the Clinic in Schools program.
- Relationship mapping is being done related to belonging and trust.
- Researching the City Connects model. Boston College has a model for assistance for mental health that includes individualization to fit our needs.
- RENEW Wrap Around model is for High School students at risk of dropping out. High School staff signed up for a documentary on the model and the next step will be to recruit facilitators.
- Focusing on enhancing the existing Dedham TBL program for students with emotional and educational needs. This program would involve mindfulness and distress tolerance. The development of this model will utilize different strategic partners.
- Ensuring core curricula through all grades and providing different levels of mental health intervention training for each type of staff.

The Goal is to make a shift from behavioral to therapeutic models by building more internal capacity. Need to build more internal psychology. School Psychologists will be undergoing training to refresh their practice and standardize their practice. Clinical rounds will be implemented to expose teachers to a variety of interventions.

Dr. Kelly reported that these efforts are in response to state legislature mandates and he said their interventions will far exceed what the state asks for.

COMMENTS on Student Conduct and Support

Mr. Donati asked if there are other reasons for suspension other than drugs and violence? Mr. Forrest said there are other more extreme repeated behaviors that are used after exhausting all other tools. Donati raised the topic of subjective conduct issues not included in the data. He is worried that the vulnerable populations may be subjected to less objective decisions about discipline. The unreported subgroups may contribute to the recurrence of negative conduct. He thinks including student voices is important and he likes the ePass system. He would like to see more data about the teacher's experiences.

Ms. Briggs thinks a lot has changed already. She would like to see scheduling that is aligned to increase the availability for additional courses and programs. Mr. Forrest replied that he is open to other possibilities. Logistics are important. They are looking to hire an experienced Cessation staff to increase the services.

Ms. White said it is positive that there is more student/administration communication. Hearing student voices allows students to become friends with someone outside their usual network. The Link Crew is important to keeping students involved. She feels the schools have come a long way in their health and behavioral programs.

Ms. McCormick would like to know what is being done for the more marginalized populations. She appreciates targeting the vulnerable groups, but there is so much work to do to get to the root cause of student conduct.

Mr. Polito asked if it is common for students to have multi-disciplinary actions? Mr. Forrest said that qualitative data is the best indicator of success and forming relationships is the key to successful outcomes. Polito asked if the source of disciplinary action is identified? The source of the complaint could help to tease out subjective vs. objective discipline decisions. Ms. Hillman said it is up to the discretion of the Assistant Principal and Principal whether disciplinary action is taken.

Dr. Pearrow asked whether increased resources could help with in-house suspensions at the High School? Dr. Forrest said that additional staff would definitely support the ability for the high school to include in-house suspensions.

Subcommittee Updates

- Budget

Mr. Polito said there was a budget meeting this week and they are trying to advocate for level services and advocating is important. Next meeting will discuss substitute teacher rates. The current rate of \$75/per day is below market value and they are discussing whether to increase to \$120/per day.

- Communications

Ms. Briggs said they want to create a joint information system with the SBRC and Communications Department. Dr. Kelly said he talked to Sara Errikson and they are planning a weekly update to families. The format for summarizing information needs to be streamlined and standardized.

- Curriculum Advisory

Ms. McCormick said they talked about the 315 survey responses. Dr. Smith said there will be focus groups with parents held in March. Press releases for the event will be disseminated and they will also be inviting people to apply for vacancies on the committee.

- Policy - Second Reading of Policies

- o File: JRA-R - Student Records

- o File: IJNDG - Student Data Privacy Policy

- o File: IJM - Written Information Security Policy

- o File: ECAE - Security Camera System Policy & Guidelines

Mr. Donati reviewed the changes to each of the above categories from the first reading that was done at the last meeting. At the request of Mr. Polito, Dr. Kelly said he would review the policy to make sure references to positions are consistent. Vote will be taken at the third reading at the next School Committee meeting.

- SBRC

Ms. Briggs said they voted on the non-consideration of the Oakdale/Riverdale combination at Striar or Capen.

- Traffic Circulation

No updates

- Negotiations

Ms. White said they met last week and will meet again in March.

- Parks & Recreation

No updates.

Donations

No donations.

Review and Approval Vote of Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion was made to approve meeting minutes from February 1, 2023. Motion was approved by a vote of 6-0 (Ms. White abstained due to non-attendance).

Mr. Polito asked if the Chair would consider adding a report that updates the public about any conferences, events or meetings she has attended in her role on the School Committee. Dr. Pearrow said she would consider that request.

Mr. Polito also asked if the two Assistant Superintendent contracts could be placed on a subsequent School Committee meeting.

Old/New Business*

Ms. White announced that:

- the Girls hockey team won the tri valley.
- Cinderella will be performed at the High School on March 17-19.
- Emily Kadehjian, Covid Coordinator raised money from baking cookies to sponsor teachers to participate in a marathon charity for Christine Stec.

Acknowledgements and Announcements

NONE.

Motion was made to adjourn and approved by a vote of 7-0.

Submitted by

Virginia Quinn

Recording Secretary