

**Dedham Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
April 5, 2023**

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENT:

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

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

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

The Chair held a moment of silence for Christine Stec, a fourth grade teacher at Oakdale. She was admired by her family, friends, and community for her dedication and devotion to the community and she will be missed by all who knew her.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

[NONE.]

**Dedham Public Schools
Interim Superintendent's Update**

Teaching and Learning

Student government day. On March 22, Dedham Town Hall welcomed a group of students from DHS as part of Town Government Day. This annual spring event, which was reinstated this year following a break due to the pandemic, has been a favorite part of the civics curriculum, introducing students to their local government processes, departments and operations. This year, the 26 students who participated are all working on Civic Action Projects, focused on addressing current issues from a civics perspective, understanding the community mindset and the role local government might play in the issue. As students spent the day at Town Hall, they were able to meet and learn from our local experts as they addressed their project issues. The students whose projects are focused on school start time changes and an open campus at Dedham High School, were able to “serve” on the Dedham School Committee and had the opportunity to interview Principal Jim Forrest, School Committee members Chris Polito and Victor Hebert, and Interim Superintendent Ian Kelly. Students working on an anti-vaping campaign met and learned from officials in the Dedham Health Department. Students were able to visit other departments during their visit and also got to tour the new Dedham Public Safety facility, as well as consult with Police Chief d'Entremont who helpfully addressed public safety issues related to the start



time and open campus projects.

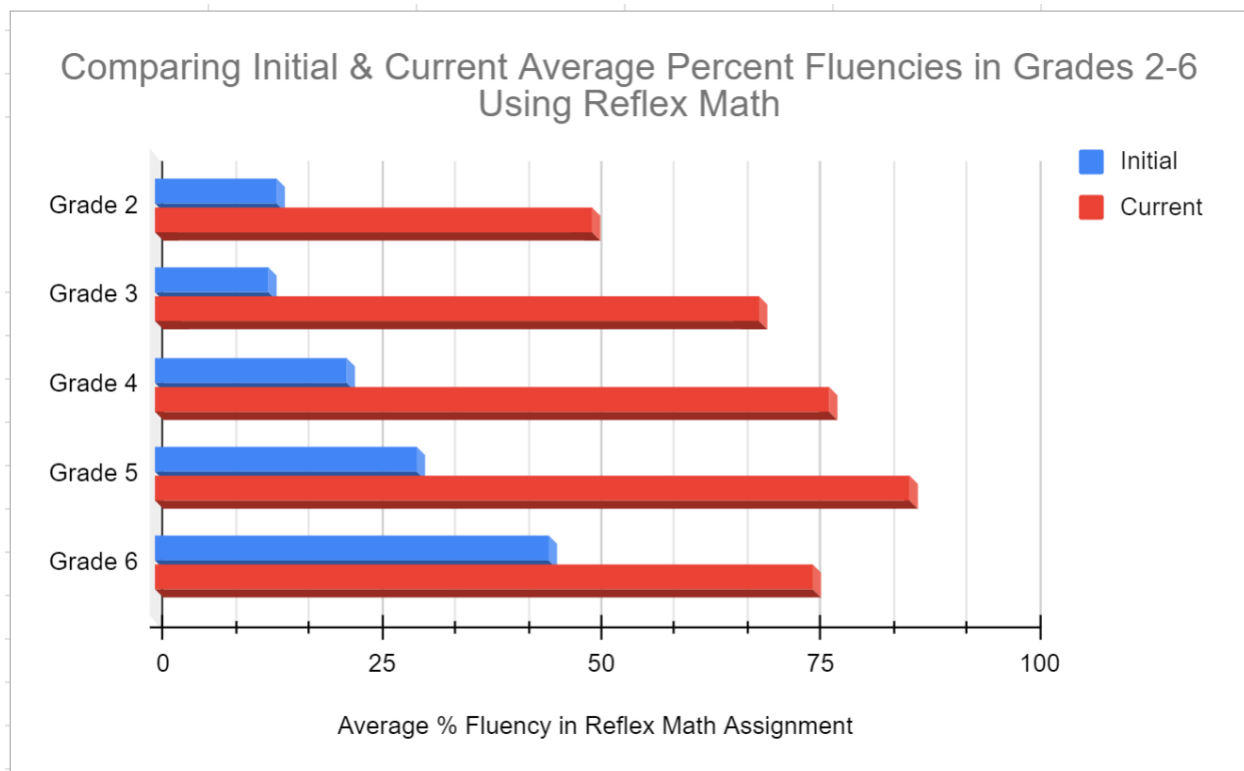
State Government Day. Jack Watson and Susie Plunkett represented Dedham High School at Government Day at the State House in Boston. They were elected by their classmates, and were each assigned a role in State Government. This year, our students had the honor of being named Sergeant at Arms for the day. In this role, they were responsible for escorting the Lieutenant Governor into the chamber for her speech, after announcing her to the assembly. Additionally, they escorted the Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court into the chamber for her speech. After these important duties were fulfilled, they joined their fellow elected officials to debate and vote on mock legislation.

Trade & Post Secondary Fair. On April 4th, students had the chance to speak with professionals in the trades, cosmetology, real estate and behavioral health and learn about exciting opportunities for after high school graduation. A block of time during the fair was set aside for parents and families to come in and speak with the organizations about career opportunities for students. All of these options at the fair do not require a 4 year degree to enter the field, but provide opportunities for full-time meaningful work. Organizations included Children’s Hospital, Bunker Community College, Naval Aviation Academy, National Grid, Mass Hire, and more.

Grade 5 Human Growth & Development Curriculum. Starting the week of May 8th, 2023, Physical Education teachers, School Nurses, and School Counselors will collaborate to deliver a series of lessons addressing different stages of Human Growth and Development. Communication will go out to families when they return from April vacation and information about the lessons (along with an opt-out) will be available on the DPS website. The district will hold a “Family Q & A” event on May 2 at 6:00 P.M. in the DHS Library to review the content of the lessons and answer any questions interested families may have.

Reflex Math. Addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division form a basic foundation that all students need in order to advance and be successful with more complex math. Fast and accurate recall of basic math facts and a solid understanding of mathematical concepts helps students solve complex problems effectively and supports the development and mastery of new mathematical skills and concepts. Reflex Math uses [research-based methodologies](#) to take students through a [complete process of fact mastery](#). Students learn and practice facts in the context of fact families in addition and subtraction (1-10) and multiplication and division (1-12).

The data shared below shows strong growth in fact fluency at all grade levels while using Reflex Math. At the time of data collection (March 23, 2023) Grade 2 students were working in Addition/Subtraction 1-10 while the majority of Grade 3-6 students were working in Multiplication/Division 1-12.



Community Engagement

District Focus Groups. On March 30th, the District Curriculum Advisory held another round of focus groups for families. Babysitting was provided by high school student volunteers who work in our DELTA program and families had the chance to have dinner together before heading off to focus groups. On

April 4th, the District Curriculum Advisory (DCA) reviewed transcripts from focus groups and identified several themes ([which can be viewed here](#)). The DCA will spend more time analyzing this information throughout the months of May and June. This data will be used to develop new priorities for the DCA as well as goals for the 23-24 school year.

Dr. Smith reported that her team started to analyze the data collected from the focus groups. Common themes are being identified. She said that there was a good turnout from families, and they would like to continue these groups next year.

Management and Operations

School Safety and Security. Last Monday, March 27th, our country witnessed yet another act of senseless violence taking the lives of children and educators in our schools - this time in Nashville, Tennessee just ten months following the devastating violence in Uvalde, Texas in late May of 2022. Our minds and hearts continue to be with the families, children, and faculty of the Covenant School. Less than 24 hours following the news of this shooting, Dedham High School experienced its second SWATting incident since early February. Hoax threats of violence have rattled schools and communities across the Commonwealth recently. These false alarms are dangerous, disruptive, and damaging to schools and communities. As a District, we are extremely concerned about the ongoing violence perpetrated against children and educators across the country and alarmed by the clear lack of care or concern for the safety of others evidenced by those responsible for the recent rash of SWATting incidents in Massachusetts. Our collective frustration and concern for the safety of our students, faculty, and staff is at the center of our work and we are ramping up our efforts to ensure the security of our learning spaces throughout the District. Our collaborative partnerships with the Dedham Police and Fire Departments continue and are stronger than ever. We are incredibly grateful for the ongoing support and expertise of our public safety officials in Dedham. The District is currently pursuing a contract with an outside agency to redouble our training efforts and emergency response protocols. At the same time we are revamping our internal emergency communication mechanisms and ensuring that capital improvement requests for FY 24 reflect the need for increased security infrastructure. This capital request includes new exterior doors for many of our schools, a safety vestibule for controlled entrance at DMS, keyless entry/lock systems, updated communication infrastructure, and modern interior video surveillance for Dedham Middle School. While we are proud of these efforts and the work that we do each day to maintain safety, we are saddened by the fact that we live in a world where this must be a focus for educators, families, and communities.

DHS Turf Field and Graduation. Mr. Forrest sent an email communication to DHS families earlier today providing an update on the turf field project and graduation. Delays at the state Department of Labor Standards have slowed the bid process down. While this is unfortunate for the replacement of the field it was great news to share with the class of 2023 as we are confident that construction will not be able to begin until mid June.

Dr. Kelly announced that this would be the last meeting for Dr. Pearrow and Mr. Donati because their terms are expiring. He expressed his sincere gratitude for their service and noted that he has felt supported by all School Committee members in his interim and Assistant Superintendent role.

COMMENTS on the Interim Superintendent update

Mr. Donati commented that the community workshops on curriculum have been well received. He asked for more information about why Reflex Math was chosen. Drs. Kelly and Smith said they would consult Dr. Kobierski and get back to him.

Mr. Polito commented that he attended Student Government Day and reported that it was a great experience for all the students who participated. He also asked about the type of training and breadth of training that is in process for safety and security enhancements. Dr. Kelly said that the process would entail a joint effort with the Police and the schools.

Ms. McCormick asked if the School Administration could provide a report about the seniors' post graduation plans. She is happy that the graduation will be able to take place on the High School field and she thanked Dr. Kelly for his support in moving the project forward.

Ms. White appreciates the work being put into security and safety. She pointed out that teacher safety is important too. She thanked the administration for being proactive so that the High School field can be used for graduation. She also stated her appreciation for the efforts made by Mr. Forrest and Ms. Hermesch to help students and faculty cope with the loss of Christine Stec.

Ms. Briggs said that since the turf project will not start until the end of June and into July, she hopes that the community will be patient with the project timeline. She stressed the importance for all groups to work together to keep students safe.

Reports/Updates/Requests

- Discussion and Possible Vote on Out of Country Travel/Exchange Program

Mr. Forrest, Principal of Dedham High School and Alison Guifarro, World Language Department Chair came to the podium to talk about two travel programs scheduled for April 2024. Ms. Guifarro noted that Dedham High School has had a rich past of providing trips for students and there have been no trips since the pandemic. The recent Costa Rica trip was a great experience. Traveling to other countries is a good way to learn language and connect with cultures.

Two proposals:

Trip to Paris, Giverny and Versailles France, April 11-April 18, 2024 (7 days and 6 nights).

- Madame Hellman surveyed students to determine interests.
- Grand Classroom will manage the trip (same company who managed the Costa Rica trip)
- The trip cost based on the participation of three teachers and 25 students would be \$4,498. The price would go down if more than 25 students participate.
- Meals, transportation, hotels and guides, and airline costs are included.
- Trip insurance is highly suggested.

COMMENTS on trip to France:

Ms. White commented that due to the high costs, maybe some fundraising could take place? Ms. Guifarro said she's been trying to apply for grants for travel scholarships and families can pay through installments.

Mr. Forrest said the earlier we know about needs, the earlier we can fundraise and try to secure industry donations. He is open to ideas and connections.

Ms. Briggs asked if there was a minimum base number of students that needed to participate. Ms. Guifarro said the minimum would be 15 students. The group discussed the costs for different numbers of students.

Ms. McCormick asked if the France trip could be lowered to cost similar to the Spain trip. Mr. Forrest said the Spain trip is an exchange and they have worked with them before. The trip to France will not be an exchange trip so it is more expensive. It's cheaper because the students are staying with host families.

Exchange Program in Alicante, Spain, April 11-April 20, 2024 (10 days and 9 nights)

- Explore Madrid and then take a train to Alicante on the Mediterranean coast.
- The trip costs based on 10 students and two chaperones, would be about \$3000+. The more students who participate, the lower the cost.
- The costs are lower than the Paris trip because the students do not have to pay for accommodations and most meals.
- Students from Spain will come here in Fall and are hosted by Dedham families. Students will shadow the DHS classes.

Motion was made to approve the trip to Paris, Giverny and Versailles, France. Motion was approved by a vote of 7-0.

Motion was made to approve the Exchange program to Madrid and Alicante Spain. Motion was approved by a vote of 7-0.

Mr. Forrest thanked Ms. Guifarro and her department for providing students with cultural opportunities.

• ESSER III Update

Mr. Wells reported that the total amount of ESSER funds will be expended by the end of 2024. He said that the funds were directed towards COVID transitions and interventions, and after school programs. Some funds were also used for overruns in utility lines.

Ms. Briggs thanked the Budget Subcommittee for their conservative approach in the use of ESSER funds. The funds were not used for one-time hires so it was not absorbed into operating costs. Mr. Wells said that other schools may experience a fiscal cliff when the funding period is over. Dedham spent the money cautiously.

• Discussion and Vote on Juul Lawsuit Settlement

Frantz Law Group has reached a settlement with JUUL. The settlement provides Dedham with a \$13,845 payment. Half of the payment would be absorbed by legal fees. Even though it is not a large sum, it is a win for anti vaping endeavors. Dr. Kelly said the School Committee will have to approve the settlement.

Ms. White said she is surprised that this was settled so quickly. She hopes the money can be used towards mental health issues directed towards addiction.

Motion was made to accept the settlement with JUUL. Motion was approved by a vote of 7-0.

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

Vertex update is not available tonight. Mr. Hebert said he would provide an update from the last community meeting during the SBRC Subcommittee update.

- o Discussion and Possible Vote of Extended School Day Program Fees for 23-24 School Year

Mr. Polito said the School Committee needs to vote to approve the fees for the new Dedham after-school program. The fees are the same as the current fee structure at the YMCA.

Ms. McCormick asked if the program will be able to accommodate all students who need the program. Dr. Kelly said the new program will accommodate all students and will allow them to open up new seats. Now that there is no contract, Kelly said there will be more flexibility in how they run the program.

Ms. White asked about whether we have the same schedule as the YMCA. Dr. Kelly said the goals when then take over the Avery and Greenlodge programs is to keep the same structure as the YMCA. As we take on the additional elementary schools the program will be modified to reflect the needs of the community and students.

Motion was made to accept the fees for the Extended Day Program for 2023-24 school year. Motion was approved by a vote of 7-0.

Subcommittee Updates

- Budget

Mr. Polito said the subcommittee is getting feedback from Fin Com about the overall budget.

- Communications

No updates.

- Curriculum Advisory

Ms. McCormick thanked the community for the rich participation in the Focus Groups.

- Policy

No updates.

- SBRC

Mr. Hebert reported that a successful meeting was held on March 25th with 60 community members. There was representation from the School Committee, SBRC, Vertex and designers. Exit surveys were conducted to garner more feedback and information from the exit survey was consolidated into the information that has been placed in the School Committee folders. The exit survey will provide helpful data to jumpstart the community online survey. The Communication Subcommittee will start developing the community survey and the hope is that the survey will be out before April school vacation week.

Mr. Hebert said that the next step is to hold a joint meeting. Potential topics for this discussion include results from community survey, discussion/elimination of sites, discussion of estimated costs for

enrollment. The group discussed holding the joint meeting before the April 26th School Committee meeting.

- Traffic Circulation

Ms. White said they are having a meeting next Wednesday.

- Negotiations

Ms. White said they had a meeting yesterday.

- Parks & Recreation

No update.

Donations

No donations.

Review and Approval Vote of Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion was made to approve the minutes from the March 15, 2023 School Committee meeting.

Motion was approved by a vote of 7-0.

Old/New Business

Ms. White said it's a busy time of the year. She would like to see the School Committee members have the opportunity to attend student events. She would like to see a one-page calendar developed for the on the School website home page.

Dr. Pearrow commented on the successful Science Fair. Dr. Smith reported that 115 students participated.

Mr. Hebert noted the increased participation at the Science Fair compared to previous years.

Acknowledgements and Announcements

Ms. McCormick applauded the number of events held recently where students have the opportunity to inspire one another.

Mr. Hebert noted the Spelling Bee was a wonderful event in which to participate. The students treated it like a sports event with cheering. Third graders were spelling Middle School words.

Mr. Donati announced that this is his last meeting as a School Committee member and stated that it was an honor to serve on the Committee for the past six years. He promises to continue to be a fierce advocate for the schools and the teachers. He talked about the importance of continuing to focus on our most vulnerable students.

Dr. Pearrow announced that this is also her last meeting as a School Committee member. She thanked everyone for supporting her during her tenure. She has enjoyed the friendships she has made and the work that has been accomplished. She passed out gifts to show her thanks to all the School Committee members.

Ms. Briggs said it was an honor to work with Josh and Melissa. She thanked them for their commitment to the Town and for challenging other members.

Ms. McCormick thanked them for their mentorship and collaboration.

Ms. White said she appreciated Dr. Pearrow's support as vice chair during her chairmanship.

Executive Session – Exemption 3 – To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation

Motion was made to move to Executive Session and not return to public meeting. Motion was approved by a roll-call vote of 7-0.

Submitted by

Virginia Quinn

Recording Secretary