

DEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS
School Committee Meeting
September 20, 2023

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE:

Victor Hebert
Stephen Acosta
Mayanne Briggs (remote)
Dr. Leah Flynn Gallant
Cailen McCormick
Christopher Polito
Laurie Twomey

MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION:

Nan Murphy, Superintendent
Dr. Ian Kelly, Deputy Superintendent
Matthew Wells, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations
Dr. Sara Stetson, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services

Meeting held at Avery Elementary School at 7 pm.

Pledge of Allegiance

Open Meeting (Public Meeting is recorded and can be accessed via Dedham Television)

Recognition of Active Transportation Working Group

Chair Hebert introduced Bryan Plummer who is the Vice-Chair of the Active Transportation Working Group in Dedham who headed up the Riverdale mural project. Bryan came up to the podium to talk about the various groups who volunteered for the project and how the different groups worked together to produce a final project that is a work of art and also has successfully worked to calm the traffic in the Riverdale School area.

Mr. Polito thanked Bryan and the Collaborative for all their work. Mr. Hebert asked that the Active Transportation Working Group let the School Committee know when there are other projects that they can help with.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Edward Dockham, 75 Westchester Circle, said that at the last Select Board they changed public comments protocol. He wishes that the School Committee would adopt the same protocol as the Select Board. Mr. Dockham expressed that he would like to see the Superintendent's Update included with the meeting minutes. He also wants to know about the emergency housing that will affect the schools. He would like to see the emergency housing added to the agenda at the next School Committee meeting and he would also like information about what the new redistricting will look like. He wants to know what records will be required of the 60 new students announced at the September 14th meeting and which grades will be affected. He feels that Dedham is being forced to provide emergency housing by

the state and the federal government. He feels the public needs to know how resources are being used and the financial impact on the budget.

Brian Keane, 183 Grant Ave, thinks we don't have the votes for a combined Greenlodge/Oakdale school. He asked whether it's more important to build a new, perfect school or continue to search for a better solution that is more apt to receive a successful Town Meeting vote. He would like to see the School Committee continue to discuss other options. be added to the minutes.

Superintendent Update

Supt. Murphy reported that there are 166 additional students this year. She announced that information from the Superintendent Updates will be provided in the minutes moving forward. That number includes: 63 new international students (26 students in PreK-5, 24 students in Grade 6 to 12, and 13 new kindergartners. The new students have a higher per student allotment than the typical student and the district is using funding to hire additional ESL instructors and additional position for a mental health specialist to help to manage the increase in enrollments. She reports that the schools are looking to identify a task force headed up by Dr. Stetson that includes other stakeholders. There are many Community members who want to help and the task force will help identify volunteers.

Supt. Murphy also said that the district is looking for volunteers to help with open field play, open art classrooms, and open gym activities in the schools. The district is also currently hiring a Diversity, Equity and Belonging, Inclusion Leader and continuing to hire paraprofessionals, daily substitutes and crossing guards. Anyone can apply using the Dedham website.

Dr. Flynn Gallant appreciates what we are doing to welcome new students into the district.

Mr. Acosta said DESE may have some emergency grants available for resources for the new international students. He wanted to know if Dedham could apply for any of those grants. Supt. Murphy said we are already getting funding for the new students, and, therefore, may not qualify for that additional funding.

Mr. Polito asked about the capacity of the schools to accommodate the new students. Supt. Murphy said we are repurposing space. She said we are trying to maintain the class size that Dedham desires, however, we may have to increase class size later. She reinforced that adding new students to the district reflects positively on the desirability of our schools.

Mr. Polito thanked the administration for getting the High School field ready for the start of school. Mr. Wells said that safety nets still need to be installed, but the field can be used before nets are installed.

Mr. Polito asked if the field renovations were completed within budget. Mr. Wells said there is equipment that needs to be purchased, but the entire project should be close to within budget.

Education Report(s)

Superintendent Entry Plan and Goals

o Discussion and Vote on Superintendent Goals

The Superintendent Entry Plan will help guide Supt. Murphy in her first year as superintendent. She has identified three phases during her first year as superintendent: 1) Building relationships and knowledge,

2) July – October – meetings between administrators, 3) January – June -- prioritizing outcomes and using outcomes to develop a strategic plan and guide.

Supt. Murphy said that her goals were shared at the Retreat meetings this summer. Her three major goals are: 1) district improvement, academic achievement, excellence and rigor, culture and belonging, management and operations, and supporting work already in place; 2) Honing professional practice goals using guidelines from the Superintendent Induction Program; 3) Engaging in continuous interaction during live classroom time, to help ensure teachers have the resources needed.

Ms. Twomey appreciated that the Superintendent listened to the School Committee ideas.

Mr. Hebert announced that Ms. Briggs is attending via Zoom. They will be taking a roll call vote to approve the Superintendent goals as outlined tonight.

Motion was made to approve the Superintendent Goals for the 2023-24 school year. Motion was approved by a Roll call vote of 7-0. (Ms. Briggs participated remotely).

Special Programming Report (AP Classes, TBL Program)

Advanced Placement Program (AP)

Dr. Ashley Dubé, Director of Counseling Services presented an overview of the Advanced Placement (AP) Classes and TBL Program. She displayed a list of the current AP offerings for Dedham High School and presented five year statistics that showed the total number of students enrolled in the AP programs and the percent of total AP students with scores of 3+ (Scores equal 1-5).

Mr. Forrest explained that all students are evaluated for the AP program and all students are tested. Dedham uses an open enrollment program. Last year 385 exams were administered. He said the Town also offers financial support for needy students taking AP courses. This year, he said that 227 students are enrolled with 420 exams to be administered in the Spring. The 18 courses offered by Dedham are competitive with any school for our size.

Mr. Forrest said DHS may be adding more courses, but it would be difficult to schedule many more courses. Ms. Twomey asked the percentage of students who take AP courses. Dr. Forrest said it was a little less than 33% of students.

Ms. McCormick asked about the demographic breakdown of enrollment. Dr. Dubé said they could work on that for next year. Ms. Forrest said the PSAT data is used to determine AP potential.

Mr. Polito asked about open enrollment. Do you have to be asked into the AP? Mr. Forrest said with open enrollment, teacher recommendation is not required. Dr. Dubé said there is discussion about offering AP courses in the junior year and supplying one-on-one counseling to challenge students to attempt to take an AP course.

Ms. Briggs thinks open enrollment for AP better prepares students for college and the 3+ score is accepted at most colleges.

Principal Forrest said the High School's program is typical for other schools. The classes require higher expectations. There are certain courses that require progression and students are counseled when they are taking the progressive courses.

Mr. Acosta said AP provides an easier transition into college and can often reduce the cost of college and allow early graduation.

Team Based Learning (T.B.L.)

The TBL is a new program this year that offers a therapeutic model to students who have social/emotional/behavioral challenges that can interfere with academic progress. Mr. Forrest said TBL took the place of the ALT program, but since it has only been in operation since the beginning of the school year, there is not a lot of data to analyze yet. Students and parents commented on their concerns with the program on the first day of school. He reports that so far there have been no discipline issues and the students he has polled seem to think it's going well.

Dr. Dubé said she partnered with Lesley Institute for Trauma Sensitivity to support students and families towards the overall goal of building skills that will help to maintain classroom participation. Weekly TBL meetings will be held with stakeholders and there will be progress report meetings with each student. Four meetings are held with each student annually. Outside service providers of services will be utilized, if needed. Nine clinicians participated in a full week of training at Baker Center at Harvard Medical funded by a grant, and clinicians have been placed in six different schools in the district to support 6-17 year old students. Part of the training involves year long consultations via Zoom with trainers. Dr. Dubé said two children have been selected to go through all of the modules and they plan to expand the program after the pilot program completion.

Business Report

Discussion and Vote on Middle School Field Trip to Washington D.C.

Karen Hillman, Principal of the Middle School said 138 students participated in the Field Trip last year. Reese, a student who participated in last year's field trip, got up to the podium to talk about last year's trip. Reese discussed his perspective on the trip and the educational value it provided.

The trip is May 29 – 31. Scholarships will be provided.

Motion was made to approve the Field Trip to Washington D.C. Motion was approved by a roll call vote and approved with a vote of 7-0. (Ms. Briggs participated remotely).

Discussion of Seasonal Enrichment Program Fees

Mr. Wells said the new elementary enrichment fee will be \$70 and that reflects a 7.6% increase from last year. Fees are used for after-school enrichment programs. The fees will be voted on at the next meeting. The fees will allow the program to be self-sustaining and fees help pay the teachers. There are also scholarships available.

Dr. Kelly confirmed that the amount of time provided in after school activities is equal to about two days a week after school. Alyssa Freda is in charge of the after-school programming. The info for the program for each school is on the website.

Discussion and Vote on School Committee Goals

Mr. Hebert announced that the School Committee Goals are developed annually at the summer Retreats. The goals will be published on the district website.

The goals developed at this year's Retreats include:

- FY25 Budget development
- New school building
- Safe and Supportive environments
- Building structures for the new superintendent.

Goals will be posted on the website.

Motion was made to approve the School Committee Goals for 2024-25. Motion was approved by a roll call vote of 7-0. (Ms. Briggs participated remotely).

Subcommittees Updates

- Budget

Working on the budget calendar.

- Communications

No updates.

- Curriculum Advisory

No updates.

- Financial Policy Review

Combining the Town financial policies and developing a glossary for understanding.

- Negotiations

No updates

- Parks & Recreation

No updates.

- Policy

No Updates

- SBRC

Mr. Acosta provided the following updates from the most recent SBRC meeting:

- Building demolition of the existing Oakdale building will be on the next meeting agenda.
- Fields are part of the schematic design phase that will be finalized by December.
- Vertex will report back about whether it is a requirement that the Greenlodge School needs to be closed for future school use.
- Voted to create additional slots for ex-officio roles for the SBRC Subcommittee. Mr. Acosta said these are non voting positions and they are evaluating applications now.
- There will be a shared School Committee and SBRC tent during Dedham Day.

Mr. Polito said he appreciated the followup provided by Mr. Acosta.

Mr. Hebert provided a followup to the MSBA Facilities Assessment Subcommittee meeting. He reported that Superintendent Murphy, Vertex representatives and Jon Levi Architects spoke at that meeting. There was discussion about the space and the preliminary design. Supt. Murphy said the structure of the building and educational plan were well received.

Ms. Twomey asked how many non-voting roles they are planning on adding to the SBRC Subcommittee. Mr. Acosta said they will determine that number after applications have been evaluated.

o Facilities – Discussion and Vote on Committee Assignments

Mr. Acosta said the new Facilities Subcommittee will be a broad-based committee that will be involved with safety, community use and academics for buildings under the School Committee purview. Ms. Twomey, Mr. Acosta and Ms. Briggs are on the committee and the Chair will be chosen by Mr. Hebert.

Motion was made to create a new Facilities Subcommittee. Roll call vote was taken and approved by a vote of 7-0. (Ms. Briggs participated remotely).

Donations

No donations.

Review and Approval Vote of Previous Meeting Minutes

No meetings to approve this week.

Old/New Business

Mr. Polito said the Run for the Fallen was held last week and he was asked by SGM James Kelly, one of the organizers of the Town event, if there was interest in establishing a junior ROTC group at the Dedham High School. Mr. Hebert asked if Mr. Polito could provide more info on the program.

Acknowledgements and Announcements

Mr. Polito talked about the Dedham Boosters Club that supports High School athletics with scholarships and runs the Bingo program. He asked if School Committee members would be willing to run one of the Bingo programs some night.

Mr. Hebert reminded people that Dedham Day is this weekend. The School Committee is sponsoring a joint School Committee /SBRC table.

Supt. Murphy acknowledged Dr. Stetson for her work in deploying staff to work with the new students. Dr. Stetson said the children are excited to be attending school in Dedham.

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 open meeting. Motion was approved by a roll call vote of 7-0. (Ms. Briggs participated remotely).

Submitted by Virginia Quinn, Recording Secretary