

**DEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**School Committee Meeting**  
**October 18, 2023**

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE:

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

MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION:

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

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)

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Susan Butler followed up on the deteriorating conditions on the grounds around Dedham High School. She is asking that someone from the school side call the Town Manager to get the grounds cleaned up. She said the Town Procurement Director walked with her around the school. Ms. Butler said she was appalled to see trees planted in honor of people, partially dead and covered with mold. She is asking that School Committee members reach out to the Town Manager to remedy this problem.

Edward Dockham wants the Superintendent Update to include teachers hired due to the influx of new international students. He would like the administration to share information about the additional support needed for these new students. He said he also hopes that the redistricting report will also be addressed. He feels that the SBRC Traffic Study cannot be accurate until redistricting data is available.

Superintendent Update

- Naila Hernandez is the new high school student representative for the School Committee.
- International Student update:
  - 63 International Students have been enrolled to date
  - International Student PP Allocation: \$18,720
  - Standard Cost for a student new to DPS: \$5,000
  - \$13,720 above traditional expenses for per pupil costs

- Additional Funding: One time 344 Grant in the amount of \$25,000
- Dr. Stetson held the first Dedham Task Force meeting. The Task Force is partnering with the Human Rights Commission, Church leaders, principals, mental health providers, and Assistant Town Manager to leverage support for the new international students.
- MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey will be given to Grades 9-12 online on November 2, 2023. The survey is anonymous and completely voluntary.
- A self-report questionnaire that assesses symptoms of depression and anxiety in children and adolescents will be administered to Grades 4, 7, 9 in November and December.
- Budget process begins this week with district and school leaders. A new template has been created to connect financial request to either a school or district strategic initiative. Also working on collecting information for the Capital Budget needs.
- Developing grants for SEL and Literacy projects.

#### COMMENTS on SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

Dr. Flynn Gallant asked if there is a check-in process for the international students.

Supt. Murphy reported that was a topic of discussion when the commissioner visited last week. Plans are being made to conduct regular evaluations on the progress of the new students.

Dr. Stetson added the district has established a network of family liaisons. She and her teams are currently working on developing partnerships with William James College to support the mental health of the new students and a nurse case manager so they can close the gap on medical information. They are currently trying to get the medical info on the students from outside clinics. Dr. Stetson said they are also planning groups for the parents of the new students to teach them how to access student information systems. They will also be translating newsletters and teaching about the use of core applications. Translators will be on hand to assist the families as well. They are also developing early childhood tools for teaching English through play for new students joining the ECEC.

Mr. Polito asked about the costs associated with these support mechanisms.

Supt. Murphy said some of these support services are already in place to support the existing diverse student demographic population in the district.

Dr. Stetson said the district secured a DPH grant to support employment of a Nurse Case Manager and her primary role is to work with complex medical needs and health disparities.

Mr. Polito asked about the per pupil amount for the international students vs. other new students. He wanted to know how the \$18,720 per pupil is disbursed. Supt. Murphy replied that the funding is disbursed quarterly.

Mr. Wells said a database will be developed in December to track the disbursement. He said the amount that will be received from the state is \$104 per day per student. Those disbursements will not begin until January 2023 when the quarterly assessments are quantified and the money is received only if a student is actively attending schools.

Supt. Murphy said that 2.5 teachers have been hired to support the new international students, in addition to one paraprofessional.

Mr. Polito asked if those would be enough teachers to handle the support load. He reinforced the importance of using the funding solely for education.

Supt. Murphy will be using expenditures for new programs that target math programs for non-English speaking math programs.

Mr. Polito is excited that we have a student representative. Supt. Murphy said she is a senior and she will give an introduction at one of the upcoming meetings. Mr. Polito feels we need to hear more student voices. He would like the School Committee to find a way to invite more students to the meetings. Supt. Murphy said that the student representative will receive the principal's communications that go out to families so she can become more involved.

Ms. Twomey asked about the learning tools that are being developed for international students. Would those tools be used for other students besides international students? Supt. Murphy confirmed these tools will be relevant and useful for all students.

Ms. Twomey asked about the Metro West Mental Health Study and how the schools are using the data. Supt. Murphy said she met with the Director of Health and Wellness to understand the data from last year and the data is driving interventions and support.

### Education Reports

#### District Data Report, MCAS Results Spring 2023 – Dr. Ian Kelly

Dr. Kelly presented a report showing how Dedham is doing in comparison to other districts in the state. He showed a graph of all the tests taken in the district from Grades 3-10. The data in the graph showed that the district performs at or above the state except for two data points in Grades 5-8 Science, which performs below the state. Data showed that math results were elevated and EL rates were steady. He also showed a graph comparing Dedham to districts with similar student demographics for Grades 3-8 and Grades 10.

Dr. Kelly explained that the post-Covid focus was on literacy programs and that affected the implementation of Science programs developed pre-Covid. He plans to do a follow up evaluation to see if this may have affected the statistics on 9<sup>th</sup> graders on the MCAS Science. He displayed another graph with average growth percentile for MCAS. There was a dip in 2021 to moderately low, but then in 2023 we see a trend back to pre-Covid growth percentiles.

Dr. Kelly reported that the accountability metric that the state uses is complicated, but he says this data does give a holistic look at important indicators of general performance. It is a weighted system and it allows identification of lowest performing students. This percentile can compare districts based on two years of clean data. And this was interrupted due to Covid. The first accurate accountability is in 2023. 2019-2023 showed dramatic improvements in Greenlodge and Middle School. Dr. Kelly noted that these statistics show that focus should be placed on written language skills, general math problem solving, and making sure Science and Social Studies programs continue to be implemented. There is also a plan to leverage before and after school care to target areas that need support.

Ms. Twomey said she would like to see the gap between the four elementary schools be more balanced. She asked about the expectations for international students on the Spring MCAS and whether they will be included in the overall district outcomes. Dr. Kelly said that first-year EL students are exempt from the EL MCAS. However, they are required to take all the other MCAS modules. And those tests will be included in the overall Dedham data. Supt. Murphy and Dr. Kelly reported that they raised the MCAS issue with Commissioner Riley. They felt the commissioner showed concern that MCAS results would affect the international students' feelings of progress. Ms. Twomey thanked them for starting the conversation about this.

Ms. Twomey asked about enhancements to the Science program. Does our curriculum match the MCAS requirements? Dr. Kelly said it is a state mandated and developed curriculum and the district received support from the state for training so the Science program is MCAS focused.

Ms. Briggs asked how many new tenth grade students entered since the Spring? Mr. Kelly said he would get back to her on this. Ms. Briggs feels that MCAS scores should not prevent students from graduating. Dr. Kelly said that many of the new high school students have no formal education and the commissioner is aware of this situation. Ms. Briggs wanted to know the commissioner's feelings about post-Covid absenteeism. Dr. Kelly said they didn't ask him about that subject specifically, but they discussed interpretation of results. The state growth targets don't always reflect a broad spectrum of factors. Dr. Kelly said that district educators are making sure students are not absent and we are exceeding our attendance numbers from last year.

Mr. Polito asked about the 10<sup>th</sup> grade graduation requirements. Dr. Kelly said 31% of students did not meet or exceed state expectations on the MCAS, and they will retake the test. Underperforming students are also targeted for extra support. District graduation rates are above 90%, which shows that graduation statistics are driven by other factors than just the MCAS results.

Dr. Flynn Gallant said the Avery School gap does not reflect what is actually going on at that school. Supt. Murphy agreed that what is important is the growth that Avery has made, not just the comparison to state MCAS results.

#### Update on Literacy Pilot – Dr. Heather Smith (presented by Dr. Kelly)

Dr. Kelly provided a brief update on behalf of Dr. Smith. DESE has been working to establish a state-wide vetting system for core materials in order to achieve equity and standardization across the state. The state publishes rubrics to identify programs that have met expectations and they will support use of these vetted programs. Last year Dr. Smith worked with 25 districts to evaluate the state programs. CKLA and Wisdom were adopted this year in Grades K-5 in select classrooms. A final decision will be made in February 2024 about whether these programs are adopted. Educators are getting training and support from the Office of Teaching and Learning.

Mr. Hebert asked about the benefits of both programs. Dr. Kelly said he would defer that to Dr. Smith, but it may be too early on to determine that.

Ms. Briggs said she had a question about the process. Dr. Kelly described the literacy curriculum as a pendulum that swings back and forth. Curricula are based on decades of research. He said the district has made great strides in standardizing literacy programs. Now we are ready to adopt the next step for the best curriculum.

Supt. Murphy confirmed that the literacy programs in our district already uses phonic awareness in our programs and since our district has been implementing this prior to the new state requirements, we were way ahead of other districts.

### Business Report

#### Discussion of Solar Panel Project

Dr. Kelly reviewed the solar panel progress. Last Spring the concept of the project was discussed. The School committee signed a letter of intent to Solect Energy to start designing potential solar project that align with state mandates. Our goal was to start the process early so we could lock rates for 20 years. There is a lot of early work that needs to go on before we enter into a 20-year agreement. Over the summer, the Town and KP Law wrote the Article 15 language. This Article will have to be passed by Town Meeting. He said the warrant book on this article is in the School Committee package.

He raised the custody and control issue written into the article. This custody section of the article authorizes the Town to enter into a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) when authorized by the School Committee. It allows for transfer of property to the School Committee and Select Board for purposes of leasing for Solect to build the solar panels. Dr. Kelly said he discussed this issue with Leon Goodman and the Town attorney and confirmed that the PPA was non-binding. The School Committee should decide whether they want to discuss this further.

Ms. Briggs said the first time this was presented to us was in Sept. 2022. She was concerned about the Article language but now she feels better and she thanked Dr. Kelly for helping us get the agreement to the current point. Dr. Kelly said there are no plans to add solar panels on Greenlodge or Oakdale schools. Only solar ready buildings will be part of the solar panel project.

Dr. Kelly said that the School Committee will have to vote on whether to enter into the PPA.

#### Declaration of Surplus for Drama Prop

Mr. Wells said a Cinderella carriage was made for last year's production for the Drama Club. They would like to see this declared as surplus material for resale.

***Motion was made to approve the Cinderella carriage as surplus property. Motion was approved by a vote of 5-0. (Mr. Acosta and Ms. McCormick were absent).***

#### Subcommittees Updates

- Budget  
Meeting has been postponed to next week
- Curriculum Advisory  
First meeting is next week. Dr. Kelly said Dr. Smith will stay on this committee.
- Facilities  
Ms. Briggs said they had their first meeting of the year. They talked about the school grounds. They need to find the most recent MOA between Park and Rec and Schools. Mr. Polito said they reenacted the previous MOA last year.

Ms. Briggs said the Facilities Subcommittee also talked about the Greenlodge facility and field. They are currently checking with the Master Plan update from January 2022 before any options are discussed. They also discussed the Capen as well as imminent facility needs. Mr. Hebert said the new members on the Facilities Committee will be assigned to projects based on their expertise.

- Financial Policy Review  
Rescheduled meeting for next week.
- Negotiations  
Developing a small working group to expedite processes.
- Policy – First Reading of changes to Policy JKAA – Physical Restraint of Students SBRC

Dr. Flynn Gallant said the policy needed changes in order to respond to DESE new requirements. The new policies will be uploaded to the website tomorrow.

Dr. Stetson said that there are four main pieces that have been updated: 1) Physical restraint should be last resort, 2) annual trainings for personnel, 3) prohibition of types of physical management, and 4) de-escalation rooms need to be approved by Dr. Stetson's office in order to make sure they meet prescribed standards. DESE wanted us to refresh the policy because we didn't have the written procedures to go along with the policy and now parents have a right to see the policy.

- SBRC  
Ms. Briggs said there were all day meetings with Oakdale and Greenlodge staff about the new Greenlodge/Oakdale building. Due to feedback some decisions have been changed. Special Ed classes will be distributed across the schools not in clusters, nursing suites will be added, and they made a decision to include a gymnasium rather than a caféatorium. Principals think gymnasium is better for community use. They also voted to demolish the 1902 portion of the building in order to create more open space and safer egress. Use of the building for something other than education would be difficult and costs of renovation factored into the decision. Ex-officio members have been added to the committee. There will be a meeting next Monday and other public meetings will be held with PTOs, abutters, and the Junior Women's Club.

#### Donations

No Donations.

#### Review and Approval Vote of Previous Meeting Minutes

***Motion was made to accept the October 4, 2023 meeting minutes as presented by a roll call vote of 4-0. (Mr. Acosta and Ms. McCormick were absent from the meeting tonight and Mr. Hebert recused himself because he was absent from the October 4, 2023 meeting).***

#### Old/New Business

Re-affirmation of Vote taken on August 22, 2023 – PSR Submission to MSBA

Mr. Polito recused himself from this discussion due to a conflict of interest as an abutter to the Greenlodge/Oakdale project site.

Mr. Hebert reported that an Open Meeting Law complaint was lodged by Tom Polito about the vote on the PSR on August 22 saying it was invalid due to the manner of the vote. Since we want to make sure that our vote was valid, he would like the School Committee members to reaffirm the vote. On August 22, 2023, the School Committee voted 5-0 to accept the PSR Submission to MSBA. Prior to the vote, there were misconceptions however, it was confirmed that this vote only moves this document along. Mr. Hebert offered the opportunity for members to raise any issues before they reaffirm the vote tonight. No members raised any issues.

***Motion was made to validate, ratify and confirm the August 22, 2023 vote to approve the OPM Manager’s submission of the PSR to the MSBA detailing the 550 student enrollment at the Oakdale site utilizing design option D, and including any minor edits proposed by the SBRC through its Chair or the School Committee through its Chair or other project team members. Motion was made to approve this motion by a roll call vote of 5-0. (Mr. Acosta and Ms. McCormick were absent).***

Acknowledgements and Announcements

Mr. Hebert acknowledged the engagement of Commissioner Riley during their meeting last week. Commissioner Riley commended Dedham on the job they are doing in welcoming the new international students.

Mr. Polito commended the inroads the schools are making in mental health support. The strength of the support was evidenced by the successful intervention recently provided to a student in need.

Executive Session pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(1) to discuss Open Meeting Law complaint against Dedham School Committee and to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation.

***Motion was made to enter into Executive session and not return to public session. Motion was approved by a roll call vote of 5-0. (Mr. Acosta and Ms. McCormick were absent).***

*Submitted by*

*Virginia Quinn*

*Recording Secretary*