

Dedham Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
Avery School
February 28, 2024

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE:

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

Naila Hernandez, student representative (absent)

MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION:

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

Meeting held at the Avery School at 7 pm.

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

Mr. Hebert, Chair of the School Committee, called the meeting to order.

Pledge of Allegiance

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

Superintendent Update

Supt. Murphy welcomed ECEC interim Principal Kristin Cannon. There will be a meet and greet for Ms. Cannon at the ECEC on Monday.

ECEC Principal position and the Asst. Superintendent of Teaching and Learning vacated by Dr. Kelly will be posted in the Spring. Supt Murphy would like to invite a School Committee member to be on each of the search teams.

Professional Development overview.

- Elementary teachers are working on constructing progress monitoring templates to assess curriculum.
- District coaches are guiding teachers through data analysis.

- Secondary schools development is being offered in AI. Grades 6-12 are working on curriculum mapping through alignment of teaching objectives and content.
- Feedback is being collected to inform training for future development ideas.

Building project updates are being hosted by the School Committee to help the community understand what is being considered vis a vis the new enrollment numbers. Supt. Murphy displayed the link for the Building Project survey. The survey will close on March 15th so the School Committee can vote on the issue on March 20th.

March is youth arts month and there will be many opportunities for students' work to be highlighted. K-12 student artwork will be displayed through social media.

The Middle and High School will be holding their theatrical performances this month.

Education Report

• Superintendent's Entry Plan Results

Supt. Murphy presented the entry plan she has been working on for the last six months. She is enrolled in the "New Superintendent Induction Program" for the next three years. Her primary focus this year has been to familiarize herself with the district's strengths and challenges. She has provided opportunities for parents, students and staff to meet and provide feedback on the Dedham Public Schools to determine growth potential.

The per pupil expenditure of \$23K includes all costs (academic, transportation, special needs, facilities, etc). Student/teacher ratio is 11:1 which means ratio of direct adult interaction per student.

Supt. Murphy showed data reflecting the state-established targets and MCAS results as matched against our peer towns and cities. She showed a list of all the meetings, surveys and forums in which she has scheduled and participated.

Four common themes have surfaced:

- Confidence in school leadership;
- Desire to increase academic quality;
- Concern for Aging facilities;
- Concern for Inequities across schools.

Consideration for Future Plans:

- Creating and communicating a district mission;
- Elevating academics and student opportunities;
- School building planning;
- Leverage legacy without limiting student opportunity.

She plans to develop a five-year strategic plan that includes key initiatives and creation of a faculty-superintendent and student-superintendent advisory.

Dr. Flynn Gallant said shared vision and values are important for accountability. The development of accountability action plans help to distribute responsibility across the spectrum.

Mr. Polito said the constructive criticism and accountability piece should be a big part of the plan.

Ms. Twomey said the plan is impressive and she admires the time that was spent to develop this plan. She feels instead of using the term "constructive criticism" we should go into it developmentally with a

growth mindset. Creating one standardized mission statement is important. She talked about adding some of these key aspirations in future improvement plans.

Mr. Acosta confirmed the importance of including facilities plans as a major goal.

Ms. McCormick appreciates the amount of data compiled including community data.

Ms. Briggs said this plan involved careful and intentional communication between many stakeholders.

Mr. Hebert asked about the timeline for the final plan. Supt. Murphy replied that she hopes to have a five-year strategic plan in place by October 2024.

- Elementary Literacy Curriculum and Assessment Update – Dr. Heather Smith

Dr. Heather Smith, interim ECEC Principal Kristin Cannon and reading specialist Nina Mancinelli came to the podium to discuss the elementary assessment update. Dr. Smith said they are currently conducting literacy screening in Dedham three times per year and reports are being sent home to families. She discussed the multi-tiered system of support in learning and assessments used to determine levels of student learning. She showed samples of various assessments used in Dedham to design curriculum. The focus is achieving better alignment between resources and materials.

Ms. Cannon and Ms. Mancilli discussed the pilots (CKLA and Wit and Wisdom) that were rolled out in grades K-5. After evaluation of pilots, Dr. Smith said they decided to adopt the Amplify CKLA curriculum. This decision has been years in the planning and involves input from diverse groups of educators, parents, students and ongoing studies.

Dr. Smith said they plan to start the program training in May with a district launch in Fall 2024. Dedham received a grant to perform field tests on materials.

Ms. McCormick asked if the cost of the program was taken into consideration in the final decision. Dr. Smith said that costs were not integral to the decision and that they will be retaining the Hegarty materials. Ms. McCormick also asked about alignment across the district and the possibility of data showing a false sense of growth. Dr. Smith replied that they are talking about aligning ELA programs and that more frequent assessments can cut back on skewed data.

Ms. Twomey noted that the new ELA curriculum includes diverse subjects. She asked if there are further opportunities for students who are moving more quickly than others. Dr. Smith said that they chose CKLA because it allowed targeting to all levels of learning and growth. Ms. Twomey asked if the experience will be consistent across all elementary schools. Dr. Smith said the feedback from teachers about the CKLA program showed that they did not feel like they had to go outside of the materials to supplement so that it would ensure standardization.

Mr. Polito asked what drove the decision to change the curriculum. Ms. Mancilli said that students' performance levels after COVID instigated the need to streamline the ELA process.

Mr. Acosta asked how much grant money was received for this project and Dr. Smith said \$250K was received in grants to launch this new curriculum.

Ms. Briggs said that this literacy program should be used to advocate for the Chapter 70 state funding that we are earmarked to receive.

Business Report

- Review and Discussion of Student Opportunity Act Plan

Dr. Kelly said the Student Opportunity Act Plan that was launched in 2019 was established to supply extra funds for Chapter 70 to help low performing students. DESE is using the SOA plans to identify at-risk populations by using pre- and post-COVID data. Students are being identified using a cross-section of data. They will also be working with families and aligning interventions with the district improvement plan.

Dr. Kelly said he would be asking for an approval vote at the next meeting.

- Discussion and Vote on Statement of Interest submission to the MSBA for repairs to the Dedham High School building.

Dr. Kelly reported that this submission authorizes the superintendent to enter into a statement on behalf of the district.

Supt. Murphy read the letter being submitted to the MSBA.

Motion was made to accept the statement of interest letter, as presented, for submission to the MSBA. Motion was approved by a vote of 7-0.

- Discussion of LEAP Before and After School Fees for 2024-2025

Dr. Kelly said he will need a vote on the LEAP costs soon. The increases are driven predominantly by staff pay increases. Para-professionals are replacing some of the high school students and that change, plus general increase in operating expenses is affecting costs. The rate increase of 5% equates to an increase from \$6.94 to \$7.34 per hour.

Mr. Acosta asked about the rationale behind the rate of increases. Dr. Kelly said they are trying to mirror the YMCA fee structure. They will not be able to offer volume discounts until all of the programs are under LEAP jurisdiction.

The vote will be added to the agenda for the next School Committee meeting.

- Finance and Operations Update

FY25 Budget

Dr. Kelly reported that he and Supt. Murphy had their first budget meeting with DHS staff. They will be having similar meetings with all the schools. A budget review with the Finance and Warrant Committee will be held on March 12th. The FY24 deficit is the same at \$2.6M.

Other budget related issues:

- Vestibule is finished at the Middle School. The renovation will ensure enhanced safety to the school.
- The fence at the Middle School will be replaced by May. Matt Haffner, Facilities Director, is currently informing abutters about the work.
- Solar contract is awaiting final approval by the Town.

- Dr. Kelly and Matt Haffner will be visiting three schools per week to review for safety and functionality to determine capital needs.
- Food services is undergoing regular audits.
- Dr. Kelly is working closely with the Director of Procurement for the Town to submit a number of transportation bids. Hopefully, more competitive pricing will help to control transportation increases in 2025.

Subcommittees Updates

- Budget
No further updates.
- Curriculum Advisory
No further updates.
- Facilities
Tour of the High School will be held in late March.
- Financial Policy Review
No updates.
- Negotiations
No updates.
- Parks & Recreation
No updates.
- Policy
No updates.
- SBRC
Community forums on the building project are being held. MSBA voted to offer Dedham a vote on both feasibility and eligibility. Townwide vote on the project will hopefully happen during the November 2024 election.

Donations

None.

Review and Approval Vote of Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion was made to approve the minutes from the January 31, 2024 School Committee meeting as amended. Motion was approved by a vote of 6-0. (Mr. Hebert was absent from this meeting).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Polito reminded the group that Executive Session minutes need to be reviewed.

Executive Session – Exemption 3, to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining

Motion was made to go into Executive Session and not return to public session. Motion was approved by a vote of 7-0.

Submitted by Virginia Quinn

Recording Secretary