

Dedham Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
Dedham Town Hall – O’Brien Meeting Room
March 6, 2024

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE:

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

Naila Hernandez, student representative

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 Town Hall at 7 pm.

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

Pledge of Allegiance

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

Recognitions

- Dedham High School Student Paul Yandrisevits

Principal Forrest presented an award to Paul Yandrisevits for his Commitment and Community Service. He said Paul is an excellent student and star soccer player and often gives back to Dedham Youth Soccer including donating equipment.

- Dedham High School Student Jared Sedlis

Principal Forrest said that Jared Sedlis is a special student who entered DHS in his senior year. He qualified for the 2024 US Jr. National figure skating championships. He came to Dedham in his senior year and he is an AP student. Certification of recognition was presented in honor of Outstanding Performance of Achievement.

- DEF Presentation of the Christine Stec Rockstar Award

The President of Dedham Education Foundation, April Wilmar, provided a history of the award. She said this award was created to carry on Christine Stec’s legacy. The award is given annually to teachers who

emulate Christine Stec’s characteristics. Maureen Blazejewski is the recipient of the award this year. She is a third grade teacher at Avery. The 38 nominations submitted for Maureen said her classroom provides a diverse culture with hands-on activities.

Dedham Education Foundation raises money for all the DPS schools and provides grants every fall and spring. \$500 will go to Maureen and her classroom.

Supt. Murphy said that the students in Ms. Blazejewski’s class were so proud of her receiving this award.

Ms. Blazejewski said she appreciates what the DEF does for Dedham.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

Student Representative Update

Naila Hernandez provided the update:

- On Saturday March 2, Evan Channa and Adam Lagere, juniors at Dedham High School, competed at the Region V level of the Massachusetts Science and Engineering Fair at Bridgewater State College. Evan and Adam presented their work on RNA Interference: A Post Transcriptional Process for Effective Gene Splicing. The implications of Evan and Adam's research extend to the development of protocols to help people that suffer from genetic disorders and diseases, like cancer, to silence the genes that cause disease. It is believed that Evan and Adam are the first students from DHS to present at MSEF. Their work was supported by many DHS staff as well as the DHS Alumni Association Grant Committee who awarded them a grant to fund the research.
- Special thanks to the Legion for providing the hall for the annual “Sophomore Semi” that took place on Friday night for the Class of 2026. It was a great night, with 80+ students attending.
- At the Greenlodge the 5th grade classrooms had a visit from the Neponset River Water Association last week. During their visit, students learned how they get their drinking water, ways to conserve water, reviewed the water cycle, discussed water pollution and participated in several activities.

UPCOMING NEWS & EVENTS

- The Elementary art team is bringing back a week-long Artist in Residence with Bren Bataclan for all 5th-grade students in the district the week of March 11th. Bren is a Filipino- American artist/muralist who lives and works in Cambridge MA. His school art program focuses on kindness and art making. Bren will spend a day in each Elementary building next week with the 5th graders, and on Friday split his time between all four buildings. The Friday follow-up activity included a writing component for students to explain how their painting could be given away to create joy in others’ lives.
- At the middle school, The Massachusetts Art Education Association (MAEA) is sponsoring a statewide (K-12) virtual art exhibit to celebrate Youth Art Month. Sixteen of our Middle school student artists have been selected to participate in this show. The virtual exhibit will open on March 18, 2024.
- Beginning on Monday, March 11th, DHS students will begin the course selection process with their school counselor. During Course Selection, all 11th graders will participate in a Career Interest Inventory through Naviance, facilitated by our Career Counselor, Ms. Ashley Mansfield. This inventory will also help to inform post-secondary planning and appropriate course selection.

- On Tuesday, March 12th, our DHS Counseling Department and college admission representatives will be hosting an in-person post-secondary planning workshop from 6:00-7:30pm in the DHS Library. This event is open to all 9th, 10th, and 11th grade students and families.
- DPS student artists are also exhibiting work in our second annual Art Voice Our Art show at the Mother Brook Arts and Community Center from March 6- March 28. This is our second annual High School exhibition sponsored by Dedham Fine Art Boosters. There will be a reception Thursday, March 21st from 5-6:30 p.m. to celebrate our student artists
- DHS will be hosting an On the Spot Admissions Day for seniors on Thursday, March 21. During this event, seniors will have the opportunity to meet with admissions counselors to review their applications and receive an admissions decision while in the meeting. The schools participating include: Bunker Hill Community College, Franklin Cummings Technical Institute, Mass Bay Community College, and Massasoit Community College
- Curtain goes up for our DHS production of Mean Girls this coming Friday! Over 75 students have participated, on stage and off. The shows are Friday and Saturday at 7pm and Sunday at 1pm, The link to purchase the tickets can be found on the DPS website.

Superintendent Update

- Supt. Murphy talked about the Dedham Storytellers activity at the High School. Graduates and current students are being matched to archive their stories at the Dedham Historical Society museum.
- Supt Murphy talked about the improvements in therapeutic programming. She said that therapeutic instruction is being integrated into regular classrooms. Guidance systems now provide equal access to all students. New training is contributing to this success. Student data based on comparisons to last year shows that this integration has helped to lower absenteeism and suspensions have decreased.
- The Science Fair will be held for 3-5 graders at Avery School on March 26th.
- Post secondary planning night for 9-11 grades will allow students and parents to find out about college and career options. She provided a list of acceptances to colleges.
- Dr. Kelly and Supt. Murphy are holding FY25 budget forums for educators and a separate forum for parents and residents on April 4th at DMS.
- A Community Survey on School Building project shows that the majority of the community favors a stand alone school at Oakdale.

Dr. Flynn Gallant asked how many students were in the therapeutic programs. Dr. Stetson replied that there are 14 students in the program and the plan is to continue to develop the program so that it can be built for expansion and diverse interventions.

Mr. Polito asked about the dropouts. Dr. Stetson said she is looking to expand the model to limit out-of-District placements and school dropouts. The best way to reduce out-of-district placements is to build excellent programs.

Education Report

- Superintendent's Progress toward Goals

Supt. Murphy discussed her evaluation and outlined the Massachusetts model for Educator evaluations and rating protocol. She outlined three goals that she focused on this year: 1) District Improvement, 2) Professional Practice, 3) Student Learning.

Some of the highlights of her evaluation summary:

- held leadership team meetings that she has with Principals, Assistant Superintendent and Department Chairs,
- conducted community forums/events and created enhanced communication between all stakeholders from which she has garnered feedback.,
- building important relationships with Town leaders on the budget.
- ensured that the MSBA building project was a priority,
- focus on buildings and facilities will continue in the next year,
- managed all Level 1 and 2 grievances,
- streamlined district leadership meetings to make them more interactive and collaborative.

The School Committee thanked her for her comprehensive review of this year's activities.

Ms. Twomey said she appreciated that in spite of all Supt. Murphy's accomplishments this year that she is still focused on looking at the future to activities she did not get to this year.

- Continued Discussion & Vote of Student Opportunity Act Plan

Dr. Kelly the SOA is currently under review because it needs to be submitted every 3 years. The focus of the act is on needy populations. At-risk students are identified by assessing student outcomes based on DESE categories. The plan reflects the Superintendent's Improvement goals. SOA is embedded in Chapter 70 funding, but targets additional funding. The funding goes directly to the general fund for the Town.

Motion was made to approve the Student Opportunity Act Plan as presented. Motion was approved by a vote of 6-0. (Ms. McCormick was not in attendance at this meeting).

Business Report

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

Dr. Kelly said they are requesting a flat 5% increase to the LEAP fees for 2024-25. The fees are still a great value for families.

Motion was made to approve the LEAP fees for 2024-25 at a 5% flat increase. Motion was approved by a vote of 6-0. (Ms. McCormick was not in attendance at this meeting).

- Update on FY25 Budget

Dr. Kelly recapped the budget process to date.

- Level service was a 12% increase from FY24.
- Dedham is only one of four communities with high enrollment increases. 145 new students are reflected in the enrollment increase and 60 international students are included in this number.
- Out-of-district enrollments increased.
- Proposed budget reflected an 8.06% increase from the previous year.
- Increased tuition and transportation costs are contributing to the deficit.
- DPS is in a good position with bargaining agreements.
- There's not much more that can be cut in goods and services.

- Finance and Warrant meeting will be adding their recommendations.
- The \$2.7M relief earmarked for Dedham from the state should remain in effect. With this relief funding, we will need 3% more to reach level services.

Dr. Flynn Gallant reminded the group that we are not going over budget, we are operating at under level services.

Mr. Polito pointed out that the budget is being affected by unforeseen costs that are not controllable. 8% increases are commonplace this year in the majority of school districts.

Subcommittees Updates

- Budget

No further info.

- Curriculum Advisory

No updates.

- Facilities

Tentative meeting for March 23rd.

- Financial Policy Review

Will be on the agenda for vote for next meeting

- Negotiations

Meeting on Monday via Zoom

- Parks & Recreation

No updates.

- Policy

Form has been sent out to School Committee members for feedback.

- SBRC

Next meeting is March 25th at 6:30 at Town Hall.

Donations

Donation from the Dedham Junior Women's League of \$1000 to support the Grade 8 trip to Washington DC for purchasing t-shirts.

Motion was made to accept the \$1000 donation from the Dedham Junior Women's League by a vote of 6-0. (Ms. McCormick was not in attendance at this meeting).

Review and Approval Vote of Previous Meeting Minutes

None.

Acknowledgements and Announcements

The Annual Spelling Bee will be held at the Middle School on March 14th at 6 pm.

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

Motion was made to move to Executive Session and not return to public session. Motion was approved with a roll call vote of 6-0. (Ms. McCormick was not in attendance at this meeting).

Submitted by

Virginia Quinn

Recording Secretary