

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**Monday, September 23, 2019 – Regular Meeting**

7:00 p.m. - City Council Chambers – Somerville City Hall

**Members present:** Ms. Palmer (7:04), Ms. Krepchin, President Ballantyne, Mayor Curtatone (8:20), Mr. Green, Ms. O'Sullivan, Ms. Pitone (7:13), Dr. Ackman, Ms. Normand

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Normand called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. with a moment of silence followed by a salute to the flag of the United States of America.

Ms. Normand asked the Superintendent to call the roll, results of which were as follows: PRESENT – 6 – Krepchin, Ballantyne, Green, O'Sullivan, Ackman, Normand and ABSENT – 3 – Palmer, Curtatone, Pitone.

**II. AWARDS AND CITATIONS**

Ms. Normand welcomed Ilana Krepchin who was voted in unanimously at the last meeting to fill in for Dan Futrell who has left. Ms. Krepchin thanked everyone for the warm welcome and is looking forward to working with you all.

**III. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES**

The Superintendent introduced the two new student reps Nathalya Castillo Salmeron and Ekaterina Hicks Magana.

The Superintendent stated that as part of the SHS student body, Kat believes SC reps are able to offer valuable insight and a unique perspective on what happens in Somerville, on issues that may arise and on what it means in general to attend the high school- the focuses, struggles and ambitions of students.

- ✓ Student mediator
- ✓ Part of the Choir and Highlander Theater Company,
- ✓ Worked with Teen Empowerment as a Youth Organizer to destigmatize mental health amongst youth and Cambridge Health Alliance to teach about Sexual and Reproductive Health to middle schoolers. Nominated by Ms. Mosby or Mr. Ens Dorf - Ms. Magana thanked everyone for having her here.

The Superintendent then read the following about Ms. Salmeron:

She has demonstrated that she is both a hard worker and determined to better her community.

- ✓ Works in the after school program at the East Somerville Community School.
- ✓ Participated in the Calculus Project
- ✓ Enrolled in our Dental Assistant Program
- ✓ Sophomore Class Officer: Secretary

Nominated by math teacher, Ms. Leary

Ms. Salmeron then thanked everyone for this amazing opportunity.

The Superintendent stated that she sat through some of the interviews and these two young ladies stood out with their passion and commitment. Ms. Normand stated that we value their time and never hesitate to weigh in. Ms. Palmer asked what the process was. The Superintendent said that Principal LaGambina and Ms. Kersten got the word out with a description of what a student rep did and teachers nominated students. 8-9 students were interested and were then asked to write on why they would be excited to do this. There were then short interviews and then the vote on who could fulfill duties. Ms. Palmer then asked for the description. Superintendent Skipper said that we will ask Ms. Kersten for that. Mr. Green said that he was glad to have them and that State Law does not give them the right to vote on full body. However, we have sub committees that we can put on whoever we want and give you a vote.

Ms. Magana and Ms. Salmeron then spoke:

- 1<sup>st</sup> day of school was different
- Had grade level assemblies with guest speakers
- No longer having advisory at end of the day every Wednesday

- Didn't touch on Highland Habits on the 1<sup>st</sup> day (set of school norms – physical expectations, college preparing)
- 1<sup>st</sup> Student Council meeting was last Tuesday. Students were allowed to sign up or teachers could nominate
- Discussed things we would like to get done over the year
- Question about why "sports" get front page, what about clubs, etc. Soccer is sponsored by Puma, Highlander Theater Company isn't
- School spirit, not a lot of participation
- Discussed having surveys, mixed feelings on that

Ms. Pitone welcomed the new student reps – Mass General Law says the School Committee is supposed to meet with the Advisory Committee, 5 students from the High School, every other month. Not in our policies, but it's in Mass General Law - The Superintendent stated that Attorney Long has looked into this and is not familiar with this practice, but will continue to research

President Ballantyne welcomed the two students and stated that she was happy they brought up equity as this they validated what the data shows. With Recreation, 30% are girl's programs and 70% are for boys.

Ms. Normand then stated that she was taking items out of order

## **VII. NEW BUSINESS ITEM A TAKEN OUT OF ORDER**

### **A. Somerville High School Shuttles and MBTA Stops**

Superintendent Skipper called Mr. Leo DeSimone, Assistant Principal, to the podium. Mr. DeSimone stated:

- Buses are much better now
- 438 students are being bussed Blocks 1 through 7
- We've added a 3<sup>rd</sup> bus
- 66 students arrived on their own this week
- Bus parking issues have been worked out
- When we knew this move would happen, we redesigned blocks
- 200 exploratory students – 100 at SHS, 100 at Edgerly

Ms. Normand stated these were huge details to work out and thank you

The Superintendent complimented Mr. DeSimone and all of the CTE staff for all of their work. There were wrinkles, but you all worked through it

- Not using MBTA stops although at lunch at SHS, our bus may overlap the MBTA stop
- Will still improve on communication

Student Representative Magana said that there were issues with some teachers stating that students not arriving to class on time, some even skipping – construction effecting arrival time

The Superintendent stated that we are all experiencing that (driving, biking, etc.) She suggested we take a look at attendance and to ask teachers if it's still a problem.

Dr. Ackman stated that she was expecting many complaints from residents, but it has not been a problem. I applaud you and I am blown away how successful this is.

- We now have it down to 5 minutes' travel time so not to miss class
- Friday was the 1<sup>st</sup> day that Cosmetology was open with 8 clients last week, 12 clients today
- Culinary is up and running
- Juniors and Seniors are helping out in soup kitchens
- We had breakfast for NW/FC which they all liked
- Students starting to get back to normalcy, they do see a light at the end of the tunnel

Ms. Salmeron said that sophomores and seniors overlap in some classes due to shortage of textbooks and supplies. Mr. DeSimone stated it was noted and new books have been ordered. Seniors should be doing internships in November and won't be in class

Ms. Normand called for a three-minute recess.

#### **IV. PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment tonight.

#### **V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- September 9, 2019

MOTION: Dr. Ackman made a motion, seconded by Mr. Green, to approve the minutes of the meeting of September 9, 2019.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

#### **VI. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT**

##### **A. District Report**

- Equity Policy Memo

Superintendent introduced Jessica Boston-Davis to speak on the Equity Policy Memo

- Last spring, I did some focus group which included small student groups organized by Teen Empowerment
- Did 2 educator groups, PK-8 and High School
- Was not able to have community members, but did connect with community groups and shared the memo
- Language did not change that much – added language to intersectionality – refined around the indicators at the end
- Overall, memo is to describe structure and what came out of the groups
- 2<sup>nd</sup> page of memo – feedback on my three questions – recommendation based on parents, current Principals and Counselors
- Every school has different needs – implementation will look different for every school
- What emerged from educators was that we have a lot of initiatives, a lot of programs – one way to support is school improvement plans – if schools aren't making progress, how can we use SIP, how can we collaborate
- Ms. Pitone asked what is in the packet is not a new draft, just change mode, to which Ms. Boston-Davis replied yes. Ms. Pitone then asked for the version to have strike changes – she also asked if the process was to include coming back to School Committee to refine, complete the policy and to vote it in
- Ms. Normand stated yes, she would like to get back to a very clear process – her recommendation is to have this go to Rules for more refinement before coming back to full committee
- Ms. Pitone supports that and asks what's our target? Do we want more feedback?
- Ms. Normand stated that there needs to be a consistent way to do policies
- The Superintendent congratulated Dr. Boston-Davis for the incredible work – we are so much further ahead than other districts – this is an essential body of work for SPS – all working towards the common goal
- Ms. O'Sullivan thanked Dr. Boston-Davis for the direct quotes – so helpful
- Mr. Green asked how do you want feedback given? Ms. Palmer replied in writing
- Ms. Normand stated that she suggested this policy go to Rules, not to squelch it but to refocus on good work habits – thank you for having the comments, makes it so clear
- Mr. Mazza stated that Dr. Boston-Davis has done a lot of work with the district leadership team and building Principals. She has been a Principal, which makes a difference – She gets it – People are taking accountability and taking a look at what they need to do better in order to make equity move into the fabric of what we do every day – Equity isn't just a thing, it's something that needs to be part of everything we do.
- Ms. Pitone asked was is opportunity to go through SHS Student Council necessary and did we get the best feedback back from teachers?
- Dr. Boston-Davis said yes, but there is an urgency to move policy forward - yes, would like student representative feedback, yes would like more feedback – very eager to move forward
- Ms. Normand asked Dr. Boston-Davis to explain who is the SHS graduate that is interning with her
- Dr. Boston-Davis stated that Nabila Anandira is working very closely with her, a pleasure to work with. She will be an amazing leader one day

- Ms. Normand stated her connections with students will bring a lot to this work – thank you for the leadership you have shown – can't wait to keep moving forward
- Homework Policy Update

Mr. Mazza stated that they have started the process of creating focus groups – they will begin next month (3 in Oct, 2 in Nov, 2 in Dec, 3 in Jan) – those participating are teachers at each school as part of the Professional Development plan for the district – Dr. Boston-Davis or Ms. Karen Woods will represent our side and STA President Rami Bridge and VP Megan Brady will partake in facilitating – questions have been created (3 to 4 questions) – part of it is the research behind the homework – Mr. Bridge has the questions and when I get them back with his feedback, I will send them to you – part of it will be a survey – we will get from the focus groups and surveys, 2 sets of data – Mr. Bridge is helping to make sure we get a great turnout of responses – want 90% of teachers to respond – I will update you on the data we have each month – at the end, in January or beginning of February, I will update you with collective information data.

## B. Personnel Report

There are several educators I want to thank who have retired:

▲ Holly Hatch	14 years
▲ Maria Medeiros	23 years
▲ Joan Duffy	18 years
▲ Eithna Sweeney	32 years
▲ Ngaio Schiff	28 years
▲ Doreen Curreri	37 years
▲ Margaret Ghirarda	29 years
▲ Bridget Travers	18 years
▲ Catherine Ray	29 years
▲ Victoria Macrokanis	35 years

Appreciate your passion, dedication and time – thank you for your service

Over the last several weeks, we have had the pleasure of working with Chris Farzner from City Year as he coordinated with our school leaders at the Healey and Kennedy schools in preparation for two distinct **Biogen Care Deeply volunteer days of service**. The last two Fridays, City Year staff and about 100 Biogen volunteers at each site converged at these schools and spent the entire day working on a variety of school beautification projects to help enhance the climate and capture the pride of each school.

The results are transforming – for students and staff. Aside from creating teaching and learning spaces that reflect the proud spirit of each school, these events demonstrate to our students the incredible impact that volunteering can have on others. I say this often, but we are so thankful to have partners such as City Year and Biogen, and many others, who so willingly give of their time, talents, and resources to our kids. Our heartfelt thanks to Chris at City Year and his amazing team, and to all of the folks at Biogen for their support.

We are excited to have launched a new opportunity for English learners in partnership with Cambridge College this year. Somerville High School and Cambridge College staff worked last spring and over the summer to develop an **Early College dual enrollment program**. Earlier this month, 12 juniors started their college journeys as the first SHS cohort to participate in this program. Most of these students are the first generation in their families to attend college. They were each able to select from one of four college courses and are attending class at the Cambridge College campus in Charlestown twice a week during their final block. Students will be able to earn 3.0 college credits each semester. This is one of several initiatives under way this year at SHS in the first year of implementation of the educational redesign plan that they have been developing over the last two years in partnership with CCE and the Barr Foundation.

It's that time of year again. Mark your calendars for the annual **Corn Shucking** event. In celebration of National Farm to School Month, the Somerville Food & Nutrition Services Department will be hosting the event on Thursday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 7:00-7:30 a.m. at every one of our PK/K-8 schools including the Capuano. Students and volunteers will be shucking locally-sourced corn in the morning which will be served with school lunch at every school in the district that day. It's always a fun event and a great way to help students learn how produce gets from the farm to the table.

Believe it or not, **Winter Sports registration** will open next week on Tuesday, October 1<sup>st</sup>. Visit the Somerville High School Athletics website ([www.somerville.k12.ma.us/athletics](http://www.somerville.k12.ma.us/athletics)) and click on the Winter Sports & Registration link on the right for information and a list of winter sports. The winter season starts November 25<sup>th</sup>.

The **Somerville Family Learning Collaborative Clothing Closet** is open on Thursdays from 12-3. The SFLC clothing closet is located at the SFLC Center at the Cummings School building (42 Prescott St.), and is a free resource for Somerville families. Thanks to generous donations from many people, the SFLC Clothing Closet offers gently used or new clothing, shoes, toys, and other items to families in need. Please share the news about this great resource.

## **VII. NEW BUSINESS**

### **B. New DESE Evaluating Superintendents Rubric**

Ms. Normand stated that this is on the agenda for next week and should be in next week's packet also – highlighting tonight that there is a new rubric – any questions, contact me

Mr. Green commented that at first glance, this looks much better way of evaluating Superintendents – a rare kudos to DESE

Ms. Normand stated that this new rubric focuses on more relevant rubrics – hoping to be a more productive process

Ms. Pitone said that they don't have to evaluate everything – take a look and see what you find important this year

### **C. Somerville High School 2019 Summer Graduates**

MOTION: Mr. Green made a motion, seconded by Dr. Ackman to approve SHS Summer Graduates:

- Sylvia Hover
- Yolanda Monosiet
- Armany Villa
- Nisrine Elfatihi
- David Almeida
- Daniela Hurtado
- Jose Callejas Torres
- Kenneth Rodriguez
- Tayla Casey

The motion was approved by voice vote.

Superintendent Skipper thanked Joel Blackmer and the FC/NW Staff for running the Extended Learning Program. They work tirelessly and we never give up on our kids

### **D. Field Trips**

#### **October 28, 2019**

SHS Cosmetology students will visit the Next Level Hair Show in Providence, RI. Transportation via bus. Cost to students is \$30 each.

#### **November 18-20, 2019**

6<sup>th</sup> grade students from WSNS will visit Nature's Classroom for an overnight field trip. Transportation via bus. Cost to students is \$100 each.

#### **June 3-5, 2020**

8<sup>th</sup> grade students from WSNS will visit Washington DC. Transportation via coach bus. Cost to students is \$200 each.

MOTION: Mr. Green made a motion, seconded by Dr. Ackman, to approve the field trips.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

## **VIII. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS**

### **Ms. Pitone**

Received feedback that we may not do the Multicultural Fair or College Career Fair this year because of space issues. Is there an opportunity to plan ahead to do these for our students?

Superintendent Skipper stated that they are looking at alternative spaces and will check with Mr. LaGambina – CTE Fair will be at Edgerly – will also check with Tracy Small and report at the next meeting

**Mr. Green**

Releasing of an Education Funding bill that, if passes, would fully fund the education system – it's a good bill adding \$2,000,000 to Somerville's budget

**Ms. Palmer**

I commend the next generation on the Climate Change strike

**President Ballantyne**

To that point, one of the organizers is a SHS Senior, Amalia Hochman

**IX. CONDOLENCES**

Dr. Ackman expressed the School Committee's condolences for the following people who recently passed away:

- Helena Guedes De Oliveira, Mother of Simone Braga, School Registrar at SHS
- Stan Koty, DPW Commissioner and husband of Gay Koty, Nursing Director for Somerville Health and Human Services

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:21 p.m. via voice vote.

Maryann Coulombe  
Administrative Assistant

**Related documents:**

Agenda

Equity Policy Memo

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
REGULAR MEETING – SEPTEMBER 23, 2019 – 7:00 P.M.**

**Somerville Public Schools - School Committee Vision Statement/Goals**

We believe in developing the whole child - the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical potential of all students - by providing students with the skills, opportunities, and resources that will nurture innovative ideas, foster pride in diversity, inspire students to become lifelong learners and empower them to enrich their communities.

- Goal #1: Increase achievement and access for all students. Reduce all performance gaps by half.
- Goal #2: Develop and implement a comprehensive PreK-12 social-emotional learning framework that provides students with the skills they need for social and academic success.
- Goal #3: Increase engagement with the community to reflect the community in which we live.
- Goal #4: Continue to develop and implement innovative ways of measuring student academic performance and school quality such as formative assessment, performance-based tasks, and whole quality indicators.
- Goal #5: Develop a comprehensive plan for Universal Kindergarten Readiness that supports intellectual, physical, and social/emotional growth from birth to Pre-K.
- Goal #6: Develop and implement a strategy to recruit, develop, and retain a diverse and talented staff.

**ORDER OF BUSINESS**

**XI. CALL TO ORDER**

Call to order with a moment of silence and a salute to the flag of the United States of America.

**XII. AWARDS AND CITATIONS**

**A. Welcome New Ward 2 School Committee Member**

Ilana Krepchin

**XIII. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES**

**A. Introduce and Welcome New Student Representatives**

Nathalya Castillo Salmerón Ekaterina Hicks Magana

**XIV. PUBLIC COMMENT**

**XV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- September 9, 2019

**XVI. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT**

**A. District Report**

- Equity Policy Memo
- Homework Policy Update

**B. Personnel Report**

- September 2019

**XVII. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Somerville High School Shuttles and MBTA Stops**

**B. New DESE Evaluating Superintendents Rubric**

**C. Somerville High School 2019 Summer School Graduates – (Recommended Action: Approval)**

- Sylvia Hover
- Yolanda Monosiet
- Armany Villa
- Nisrine Elfatih
- David Almeida
- Daniela Hurtado
- Jose Callejas Torres
- Kenneth Rodriguez
- Tayla Casey

**D. Field Trips (Recommended action: approval)**

**October 28, 2019**

**November 18, 2019 – November 20, 2019**

**June 3, 2019 – June 5, 2019**

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**XVIII. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS**

**XIX. CONDOLENCES**

**XX. ADJOURNMENT**

**To:** Somerville School Committee

**From:** Jessica Boston Davis, Director for Equity and Excellence

**Date:** Thursday, September 19, 2019

**Re:** Equity Policy Focus Group Structures, Findings, and Recommendations

**Background:**

*Purpose*

The purpose of the focus groups was to solicit feedback from students and educators on the equity policy draft. For students, the focus group was publicized through Teen Empowerment. For educators, the focus groups were publicized through email, through STA school representatives, and through flyers posted in educator work spaces.

*Structure*

Each focus group began with participants reading the policy independently (the policy was read aloud for the students). After reading, there was an opportunity to ask clarifying questions. Participants were then asked to reflect on three focus questions:

- 1.) What looks good in the policy?
- 2.) What should change in the policy?
- 3.) What is missing or does not make sense in the policy?

Participants answered the three questions on post it notes; one comment per post it note. Participants then formed small groups of 3-4 and discussed their thoughts (recorded on post-its). Finally, each small group shared what they discussed with the other participants in a whole group discussion.

*The direct quotes from all post-its are transcribed in the attachment to this memo.*

*Additional Considerations*

While I was not able to conduct a focus group for family and community members, I was able to meet with various parent and community groups to gather their perspectives. I attended the following meetings to gather perspectives: IMPACT, ELPAC, AFA PTA, East School Site Council, and several other community events.

I also solicited feedback at a principals meeting in which all school principals and one member of each school's instructional leadership team were in attendance.

**Focus Group Details:**

*Student Focus Group*

The student focus group took place on Tuesday, May 21 at the Teen Empowerment office. There were ten students present. Six students attend Somerville High School, two are completing high school through the Extended Learning Program (online), one attends Full Circle, and one attends East Somerville Community School (8th grade).

*Pk-8 Educator Focus Group*

The pk-8 educator focus group took place on Wednesday, May 22. There were educators present from the following schools: Argenziano, Healey, East, Kennedy, Capuano, West, Winter Hill, and Central Office. There were 22 educators in total.

*High School Educator Focus Group*

The high school educator focus group took place on Thursday, May 23. All participants were educators at Somerville High School. There were 19 educators in total.

**Themes from Feedback**

This section describes the major themes that emerged in each focus group. There is an attachment to this memo which provides all specific feedback collected in the focus groups (on post-its).

**Question 1: What Looks Good?**



- Participants in all focus groups were glad to see the district express a strong position on increasing equity for all students. Overall, the policy was well received.

**Question 2: What Should Change?**

- Participants in all focus groups expressed concern about implementation, accountability, and measurement. Participants expressed that goals and implementation plans should be different based on school. Participants also expressed a deep concern about the district's response (or lack of response) if members of a staff/faculty do not adhere to the policy. Finally, participants wondered how certain aspects of the policy (for example, cultural proficiency) would be measured.

**Question 3: What Is Missing?**

- Participants in all focus groups noted that this policy focuses explicitly on race/ethnicity. Specifically, the educators mentioned that other identities (particularly gender identity) could also be mentioned, especially considering the intersectional identities of many students.
- Educators and students both expressed the need for a vehicle to continue to share their thoughts as it relates to the implementation of this policy and future policies. For example, co-creating curriculum to be more culturally responsive.

**Recommendations**

Specific recommendations on the policy are attached to this memo. In addition, I recommend the following actions be taken:

**a). Consider Accountability Measures**

What happens when schools are not meeting progress towards the policy? Name that this could be tied to already existing support for schools if needed to meet goals (such as School Improvement Plans, close consultation and collaboration with Director for Equity and Excellence, etc.).

**b). Name Intersectionality**

Consider explicitly naming other identities (specifically LGBTQ+) and adding intersectionality (example given in suggested revision policy).

**c). Continue Using Input of Key Stakeholders**

Participants were eager to discuss implementation and the creation of other policies. Continue to create opportunities for key stakeholders to respond to policy.

**Attached:** Direct quotes and themes from focus groups; Revised Equity Policy

**Attachments**

**Student Focus Group**

*Findings (taken directly from participant's post-it notes)*

What Looks Good?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "A desired outcome that [names] the fact that Somerville High staff isn't diverse."</li> <li>• "At my current school they are great at contacting parents and giving feedback to help improve students' academic level."</li> <li>• "I like the pupil assignment ..."</li> <li>• The idea of giving more student needs is great due to the lack of success in my community."</li> </ul>
What Should Change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "We need concrete plans to enforce these policies. I fear with no plan this policy will be disregarded."</li> <li>• "This plan is beautiful in theory. Though there seems to be <u>no plan</u> on the how."</li> <li>• "I feel as if 4 is overly vague and needs to express explicitly [how] the needs of each student will be focused upon due to students tending to have a lot of self-discretion"</li> <li>• "At my current school staff needs to take the students overall mental health more serious."</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “My school should have a separate or regular hall with therapists or social workers to work with kids having a hard time throughout the day.”</li> </ul>
<i>What’s Missing/ Doesn’t Make Sense?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “You should focus on giving students more than alternative school if they have difficulty.”</li> <li>• “Why do schools need to connect with family and community?”</li> <li>• “What departments would be focused upon in terms of diversifying?”</li> </ul>
<i>Additional Thoughts</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I don’t think staff at each school are diverse or culturally competent.”</li> </ul>

#### *Themes*

- Overall, the students seemed excited that the policy was being created but concerned about its implementation. Many students questioned whether staff would adhere to the policy and wondered how schools would be held accountable.
- There was some discussion about diversifying staff and including a diverse group of family/community members. Students mentioned that there often is a cultural divide between the schools and their home.
- Students spoke about the need for a vehicle for student voice. They would like someone to talk to when they have a concern.
- There was some discussion about inequities across schools. Students particularly named that the “better schools” (the students perceived performance and resources) are made up of wealthier, predominantly white students.
- There was some discussion about allocating resources to support student’s mental health.

#### **PK- 8 Educator Focus Group**

*Findings (taken directly from participant’s post-it notes)*

<i>What Looks Good?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “This policy is a necessary and good first step.”</li> <li>• “The distinction between equality and equity”</li> <li>• “The distinction between equality and equity”</li> <li>• The distinction between equality and equity”</li> <li>• “Defining equity”</li> <li>• “Goals and implementation cycle”</li> <li>• “The accountability -- the plan and the yearly progress.”</li> <li>• “Mention of institutional and systemic racism as background.”</li> <li>• “I like the acknowledgement of institutional racism.”</li> <li>• “Students have the right to learn in environments that values their <del>white</del> identity.”</li> <li>• “I like the point, ‘When other variables are held constant...’”</li> <li>• “Reallocation of resources. More money to students who need it.”</li> <li>• “It is great that we are about student access and creating a more equitable school system.”</li> <li>• “Pupil assignment as #1”</li> <li>• “The quote ‘demands intensive focus’ I like naming the need for this. And can we include softer language about less intensive (but also super necessary) relationship building that has to happen slowly?”</li> <li>• “I like ‘actual and perceived identity.’ It reminds me that one’s identity is defined from multiple perspectives.</li> </ul>
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<p><i>What Should Change?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I think desired outcomes should be school based. The needs are so different across each school.”</li> <li>• “There should be an equity audit”</li> <li>• “The goals include educational success. How are we defining educational success? Maybe include some wording on that.”</li> <li>• “Concrete steps: What exactly do supports look like? I would like to see specifics”</li> <li>• “What do we mean by resources? Adequate resources? Material resources? Can we define these?”</li> <li>• “Add more about curriculum.”</li> <li>• “I think desired outcomes should be school based. The needs are so different across each school.”</li> <li>• “Can we add factors like class size and caseload (SPED, ELL)?”</li> <li>• “Gender and religious identity are not mentioned.”</li> <li>• “Consider out of school time”</li> <li>• “I feel that more aspects student identity are mentioned but not consistently. And they should be.”</li> <li>• “If this policy is about racial/ethnic identity (as it should be!) can that be reflected in the title?”</li> <li>• “We need more qualitative measures that can be acted on with more immediacy.”</li> <li>• “Sounds like shirking responsibility when we only ‘support advocacy.’”</li> <li>• “We need a transparent system for reporting inequity, racism, microaggressions that is accessible to families, students, and staff.”</li> <li>• “Are there other metrics besides ‘achievement gaps’, test scores, and attendance?”</li> </ul>
<p><i>What’s Missing/ Doesn’t Make Sense?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “How can we make sure that this policy gets off the paper and becomes a SPS common practice?”</li> <li>• “How do we make the policy visible and accessible to staff in every level and all students pk-12?”</li> <li>• “How will pupil assignment be addressed?”</li> <li>• “Beyond the policy -- what other actions does the district plan on taking to address the achievement gap?”</li> <li>• “How do we assess that the staff is culturally competent?”</li> <li>• “When/how would additional specifics be added into the plan? When/how would input be taken on these specifics?”</li> <li>• “What length of time is the implementation cycle?”</li> <li>• “How would we implement/ensure desired outcome #5 is about staff?”</li> <li>• “What does ‘equitably allocated resources’ look like? Who advocates for this at schools where parents are less involved.”</li> <li>• “Who decides who takes advanced classes?”</li> <li>• “Who decides who is taught in the curriculum? Will teachers have autonomy to develop or is curriculum assigned?”</li> <li>• “What will be the role of the PIC?”</li> <li>• “What does a respectful learning environment look like?”</li> <li>• “What does balanced representation look like?”</li> <li>• “How is educational success defined?”</li> <li>• “How will the district ensure there is accurate reporting of suspensions?”</li> <li>• “How does the district plan on making sure dfamilies are equal partners?”</li> <li>• “How will hiring practices change to achieve #5”</li> <li>• “Add training and PD for faculty and staff”</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Curriculum pieces: Anti-Biased, decolonized, inclusive. Also, curriculum materials.”</li> <li>• “The policy needs to be more specific to hold the district accountable.”</li> <li>• “Outcome #4 -- We need more counselors!”</li> <li>• “The policy says nothing about gender identity.”</li> <li>• “Desired outcomes need to be more specific to keep accountable.”</li> <li>• “Definitions are confusingly written.”</li> <li>• “Spanish is still based on MCAS. How is that equitable?”</li> <li>• “Most children in PATH and white and SEEK/NW are mostly Black and Brown.”</li> <li>• “Steps to ensure equity? Are there plans to evaluate the current state of equity?”</li> <li>• “Medford is doing a lottery/random assignment. Is this the planned strategy?”</li> <li>• “Does the environment or condition of the actual building fall under school assignment?”</li> <li>• “Would you agree that trauma may be greater with a certain school group?”</li> <li>• “How will desired outcomes of #4, #5, #6 be achieved? Public action steps?”</li> <li>• “What metrics will the SC set up?”</li> <li>• “What is the channel for holding educators and all SPS accountable for being ‘culturally competent’”</li> <li>• “How can we ensure a diverse staff?”</li> <li>• “What does supporting advocacy mean?”</li> <li>• “Accountability: How do we ensure that schools will follow through with this?”</li> <li>• “How do we hold the district accountable?”</li> <li>• “Curriculum/content: Perhaps we need to review these areas to make sure student identities are being explored, valued, incorporated? We need to co-create curriculum with students.”</li> <li>• “How do we hold the district accountable?”</li> </ul>
<i>Additional Thoughts</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “There are no leaders/principals of color in my school. In my staff of approx. 50 people, there are only 5 people of color and out of that 5, only 1 is in a classroom.”</li> <li>• “We are not equitable in how we treat children of color w/ emotional disabilities. White children are ‘anxious’ or ‘depressed,’ Black and Brown children are ‘defiant,’ ‘oppositional,’ and ‘disruptive.’”</li> <li>• “I have experienced students in preschool on IEPs who end up at NW/FC. What does not happen in elementary?”</li> <li>• “The NEA offers cultural competence training.”</li> <li>• “MCAS is a system of oppression. If equity matters, it should matter for our sake, not just to improve test scores.”</li> <li>• “What would a school district that focused on equity and student well-being as opposed to test scores actually look like?”</li> <li>• “Equitable access to information -- the district needs interpreters/ translation for less common languages (eg. Mandarin, Arabic, etc.)”</li> <li>• “School choice policy -- how to make it equitable and transparent.”</li> </ul>

#### *Themes*

- Educators discussed the desire to contribute in the planning, creation, and decision making of

programs and curriculum-- specially to ensure new programs advance equity (a math program at middle school was referenced, that in the perspective of many educators, leads to inequities. One participant said, "If I were asked, I could have told you this was going to be a bad idea. I teach math.")

- Educators wondered what incentives and accountability systems would be in place to ensure this policy is enacted. Moreover, educators wondered how the implementation could leverage systems already in place like school ILTs.
- Educators discussed the idea that "equity is not extra." The implementation of the policy should be the lens in which our schools consider every decision, not a separate discussion.

### **High School Educator Focus Group**

*Findings (taken directly from participant's post-it notes)*

<i>What Looks Good?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Recognizing institutional racism and inequity"</li> <li>• "Focus on staff being #5"</li> <li>• "There's a drafted policy that explains and defines our goals as a district"</li> <li>• "There's a good acknowledgment of gaps and issues (not trying to sugarcoat)"</li> <li>• "Yearly reporting"</li> <li>• "'Schools shall receive equitably allocated resources' -- Somerville is diverse in so many ways, especially socioeconomically. This is great!"</li> <li>• "The purpose is good and the goals look great!"</li> <li>• "Emphasis on the whole child including mental health -- we have a lot of students in crisis but not enough resources."</li> <li>• "I like the distinction between equity and equality."</li> <li>• "Most of it!!"</li> <li>• "Great changes!"</li> </ul>
<i>What Should Change?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "There's a difference with meeting current students need and preparing them for future needs."</li> <li>• "What steps will be taken if not?" And who do I go to when problems occur?"</li> <li>• "Increasing the load on teachers without any relief. Burnout will be happening if this is not addressed."</li> <li>• "Every student can learn is missing from the language"</li> <li>• "Student should have input"</li> <li>• "Where does gender/sexuality fit in? Intersectionality?"</li> <li>• "Not enough translators/interpreters"</li> </ul>
<i>What's Missing/ Doesn't Make Sense?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "How is this different than School Improvement Plans, ILT, or other existing structures."</li> <li>• "Who will be responsible for creating the goals at individual schools?"</li> <li>• "What are the systems structures to address when policies are not being followed?"</li> <li>• "What happens with the equity reports? How is the data used and what happens if school is not closing gaps/improving?"</li> <li>• "How will schools ensure that all staff are culturally competent? Including cafeteria workers and security?"</li> <li>• "How would cultural competence be measured?"</li> <li>• "The desired outcomes look good but what steps are proposed in place to ensure staff/ teachers are prepared?"</li> <li>• "Who would be in charge of policy?"</li> <li>• "Who would be responsible for choosing culturally responsible</li> </ul>

	<p>curriculum?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “How will SPS ensure students have access to resources? Computers at home? Supplies for teachers?”</li> <li>• “How is this measured?”</li> <li>• “Do material resources include linguistic resources? Translators, etc.”</li> <li>• “How are you defining diverse?”</li> <li>• “What does a culturally competent staff look like?”</li> <li>• “The implementation is very vague”</li> <li>• “How will this be implemented?”</li> <li>• “Other identity factors are missing (gender, sexual orientation, ability)”</li> <li>• “Is equity only about race/racism or other inequities as well?”</li> <li>• “Teachers and staff that represent linguistic diversity?”</li> <li>• “How will you plan to build relationships with families and communities?”</li> <li>• “Why the technical language about prediction variables. Is that how students and families will feel progress towards justice?”</li> <li>• “How would this work within or augment existing approaches to teacher coaching and growth.”</li> <li>• “What would the first step towards balanced representation at the k-8s look like?”</li> </ul>
<i>Additional Thoughts</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “K-8 and k-5 neighborhood choice may lead to unbalanced rep of populations.</li> <li>• “Real implementation from students and families throughout the implementation → not token meetings”</li> <li>• “Representation in focus groups -- who picks the students? Are they linguistically diverse? Representative of variety of experiences?”</li> </ul>

### *Themes*

- Similarly, to the other focus groups, there was a great deal of discussion on the accountability/ implementation of the policy. While educators were glad the policy was being created, there was some skepticism around it being upheld.
- Educators discussed intersectional identities and the need for an equity policy to recognize intersectionality.