

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

Monday, May 6, 2024 - Regular Meeting

7:00 p.m. – City Hall Chambers

Members present: Ms. Barish, , Mr. Green, Mr. Biton, Ms. Pitone, Dr. Ackman, Dr. Phillips and Chair Krepchin

Members Absent: Mayor Ballantyne and President Ewen-Campen

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00p.m. with a moment of silence, followed by a salute to the flag of the United States of America. Chair Krepchin asked Superintendent Curley to call the roll, results of which were as follows:

PRESENT – 7 – Ms. Barish, Mr. Green, Mr. Biton, Ms. Pitone, Dr. Ackman, Dr. Phillips and Chair Krepchin.

ABSENT – 2 - Mayor Ballantyne and President Ewen-Campen.

Chair Krepchin asked interpreters to introduce themselves:

Tracy Pichardo - Spanish

Sue DeCarney- Portuguese

Angie Surpris- Haitian Creole

II. REPORT OF STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Student Representatives Marcia Narh-Botchway, Anna Sophia Protopapas and Liam Vetti were both present and reported the following:

- One block starts at 7:00a.m. and the other at 11:30a.m. for tests and will continue to next week.
- Spring sports are well underway; and some track athletes qualified for the state.
- Last week class of 2024 prom tickets for "A Night on Cloud Nine" scheduled for Friday, May 17th.
- NHS is planning a luncheon on Wednesday for teacher appreciation.
- Commencement of class cup Olympics.
- Ice Cream Social this Friday at 2:00 to celebrate seniors who won class politics.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Krepchin read the public comment regulations and asked those who signed up to comment at this time.

Jamal Halala, a teacher at the high school- and child of the Palestinian diaspora, objected to Mr. Biton's censorship of student voices for calling for an end to the genocide in Gaza and threatening punishment and comparing the brave students to white supremacists....."and the rest of you accepted that." He added "to equate our students' call for our freedom with white supremacists is absolutely morally corrupt" and the same for the committee that remains silent. He stated that the slogan from the river to the sea calls for a single state with freedom for all.

Hala Jadallah, a graduate of SPS- praised the brave students who walked out in protest and urged the committee to "let them have freedom of speech" and do not censor them.

Samantha Caveny of Ward 5- also objected to Mr. Biton's statement. She and her husband supervised the students' walkout and joined them at the rally at Tufts and were deeply moved by their actions. Mr./ Biton's interpretation of the slogan "from the river to the sea" as a call for the eradication of all Jews is not only inaccurate but "ridiculous" as the slogan is rather a call for respect of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Nicholas Thompson of Highland Ave.- quoted author Toni Morrison's comment about the distraction of racism to the effect that it requires those oppressed to defend themselves again and again and there is no limit and that "there will always be one more thing" to defend. He likened that to racism against Palestinians that requires them to find the "perfect language to defend their cause and desire for liberation or will not be taken seriously." He claimed that the comments made by Mr. Biton were a distraction from the real issue of the committee's ties to Israel including the purchase of products made by HP. He added that Mr. Biton's reference to the students' face coverings as likened to those worn by white supremacists, he stated that they are in fact used to protect each other from the

continuing threat of an airborne virus. Mr. Biton, as “an air quality specialist, should understand this.” He asked that the committee not discipline students and to uphold the unexcused absences policy.

Jovanna Calvillo of Ward 7- stated that she too was “deeply upset” about the comments made “by one of the members here.” These are children and have been using “their voices to speak up against the current genocide and injustices occurring against Palestinians.” She stated that the threats to the students themselves, including sexual assault, “have not yet been addressed.” She is concerned that the students are being bullied “by adults.” They should be “lauded” for their brave actions “and not criticized.”

Ellayna Dietz, high school career counselor- objected to the “exploitative rhetoric” against protesting students by a member of the committee and using language as a weapon of suppression is not in line with the progressive values of the community. She is proud of the students for advocating against violence that will prepare the for life as an adult dealing with the realities of life.

Elana Bloomfield of West Somerville- is “really very grateful to Mr. Biton for his comments” and stands behind him. As a family physician and mother, in thinking about how to make communities safer, the words “intent and impact” come to mind. “What do we mean when we say something and how others experience what I say.” Phrases “from the river to the sea” create barriers to dialogue and can be harmful both in intent and in impact. She has chosen to be part of the SPS community that manifests these same values. We need to share the most devices to build bridges. She added that “all of us are grieving and must not lose ourselves in humanity and grief but find a way forward to pause to reflect and reach out to bring up and hold authentic complexities.”

Richard Miadman of Sterling Street- is an international lawyer. He pointed out that a bipartisan House of Congress declared the slogan “from the river to the sea as hate speech.” SPS has the legal responsibility to create and maintain a safe learning environment for *all* students. This obligation applies regardless of race, national origin or religion, to name a few protections. Conduct that breeches this obligation is not permissible. Parents chose to live in a richly diverse community where students are taught dialogue around differences, and not a community where people compete on who can be the loudest. Use of an offensive slogan endangers the safety of our schools.

Rami Bridge of Magoun Square- is speaking in direct response to the comment made by the committee member from Ward 7 last week the slogan “from the river to the sea” is a violent call for the eradication of Jews in the area from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean sea and a call for ethnic cleansing and genocide. The origins of the phrase actually goes back farther than he suggested and is “part of a larger call to see a democratic state in all of historic Palestine.” Mr. Bridge suggested that instead of determining what students mean, we could listen to them. He added “for a member of this committee to use their power to push for the district to silence is shocking and outrageous.” This is the first the committee has said anything about the horrors in Gaza when students came to you in February seeking your voices. Let’s keep in mind who “from the river to the sea” is facing genocide and consider how the impact of your words and your silence has on member of our community with family in Gaza or the West Bank.

Meredith Elbaum of Prospect Hill -is feeling the pain on all sides. She is fearful of her children’s safety leaving the house with anything on their clothing that identifies them as Jews. Insofar as different phrases mean different thing to her and her neighbors, she wants to come together to live in peace. She is support of Mr. Biton’s comments and is asking for more dialogue as opposed to “speech that is driving us apart” and educating our students to dialogue with each other. She asked that the committee consider the policy of leaving schools and not punish protestors for walking out of school.

Abubaker Alwahab – as a former Iraqi citizen and child of war expressed compassion for the children of Gaza “being bombed left and right.” He likened censorship of students from freedom of expression to practices of countries like North Korea and Russia.

IV. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

A. District Report

CTE Program Update (Mr. Hachey)

Dr. Carmona welcomed Mr. Hachey to give his presentation on the CTE program.

Mr. Hachey introduced Mr. Vendel, a teacher of drafting and engineering, and part of the Skills USA program for eleven years. Of the 86 students who competed in the program, 14 went to the state level. Three students placed one in gold, silver and bronze, with the gold student competing in the nationals in Atlanta in June.

Mr. McGilright introduced the winning students. In response to the committee's questions on how they prepared for the challenges of competition and their motivation to compete, the students gave a brief synopsis of their individual experiences.

Mr. Hachey then gave a report, including photos, on the fundraising activities that enabled students to participate in the program as follows:

Boston Bruins Foundation, Bosch Professional Power Tools and Accessories and our CTE Carpentry Program

The partnership kicked off at Somerville High School in February with donated tools and Bruins players' hockey sticks for the students to repurpose into an original project.

- Our skilled students were able to re-imagine the hockey sticks and build quality pieces
- On Tuesday, April 28, the resulting Adirondack chair, two drinks caddies, and a side table were put up for auction.
- When bids closed at the end of the second period, there were 44 bids and the furniture set ultimately sold for \$6549.

Carmona fund raising activities. Botn bris and bosch. Was a very success acution.

Chair Krepchin announced a five-minute recess in order for the committee to personally thank the students.

District Report (continued) – Dr. Carmona

We have an important agenda today that is focused on mental health, social emotional learning and highlights our commitment to student wellness and success. Later you will hear from our Director of Student Services, on the array of offerings that we provide to our students District wide to meet critical needs and promote wellness and academic success.

Before we get into today's agenda, I want to take a moment to highlight an important observance coming up in May: Mental Health Awareness Month. At Somerville Public Schools we firmly believe that mental health and wellness are foundational pillars for academic success. Therefore, nurturing mental health is a crucial aspect of our commitment to student well-being.

Throughout the month of May, our Student Services Department, along with dedicated staff across the district, will be leading initiatives to raise awareness about mental wellness. Here's what you can expect:

- Staff will be sharing daily wellness suggestions during morning announcements in our K-8 schools. These tips are designed to promote mental well-being and encourage positive habits.
- Also, keep an eye out for informative posters and materials posted around our school communities.
- Finally our staff will be wearing green ribbons throughout May to signify their support for mental wellness initiatives. We invite everyone to join us in wearing green on May 24th to show your support too!

We want all of our students to know that if you're experiencing mental health challenges, you're not alone. Our school counselors and administrators are here to provide support and guidance. Don't hesitate to reach out to your school-based counselors and leaders if you need help.

Thank you to our school-based district counseling staff, to the student services department and all of our educators and staff who support the social/emotional health of our students.

District SEL Development Plan (Liz Doncaster)

Dr. Liz Doncaster, Director of Student Services, was accompanied by Larry Silverman, Assistant Director and

Nadia Curry, Manager of School-based social workers. They reviewed the PowerPoint presentation on the framework of the SEL development plan, attached hereto and made a part hereof.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

Discussion ensued including the following highlights:

- Peer leaders are recruited for the restorative justice program as both peer circle leaders and peer mediators, the former for creating relationships and the latter for restoring relationships; peer leaders are invited to fill both roles.
- SEL specialists are not budgeted at the staffing level but at the stipend level.
- In order to manage most equitable distribution of resources to individual student needs, mobile team of expert specialists devotes a few weeks in a classroom for the purpose of full observation and full assessment of behaviors and patterns of triggers.
- Assessment of the whole child, his/her background and story in order to address lagging skills in social-emotional area.
- Long-term plan to continue to invest appropriate funding to sustain program over time; onboarding new teachers on availability of materials and training critical for sustainability.
- Commitment of Ms. Doncaster that "restorative justice and second step is here to stay" with continuous training and refreshment every year.
- Program response must be data relevant to ensure change and adaptation to the district culture is made where needed.
- Present general data not specific to district: 80% of students need tier 1 intervention; 10-15% tier 1 and tier 2; and 3-5% need all three.
- Consultation and training is provided by social workers to both teachers and paraprofessionals in the management of the classroom to provide needed supports in accordance with the behavior plan.

Dr. Boston-Davis praised the program under the leadership of Ms. Doncaster and as a model for other districts. She and her team sit in on all the instructional leadership team and cabinet meetings in collaboration with district goals.

Ms. Doncaster shared that her "passion comes from every student's need to be seen and safe at school and we are here to support them to attain their best selves."

Dr. Carmona also thanked Ms. Doncaster for her leadership. He added that efforts to norm around data around racial dynamics and demographics are ongoing, and "we are gaining traction in that direction."

District Report (continued)

Dr. Carmona continued with his report. Today is a good time to appreciate our world-class teachers. This week is National Teacher Appreciation Week, which is from May 6 - May 10. Since joining the District I have had the great opportunity to see and hear from the community about the excellence of our teachers. Particularly through my Entry Planning process we gathered consistent data about our educators:

- students repeatedly expressed a joy in learning and a feeling that their teachers adapt to their needs
- And families celebrated the expertise and quality of educators teaching their children.
- We are lucky to have a group of dedicated and innovative educators teaching our students!

Dr. Boston-Davis continued with the report. Another key to the health and well-being of our students are our school-based nursing staff. They provide mental health supports, needed medical care, and guidance for our students. Wednesday, May 8 is National School Nurse Day. Thank you to our school nursing team for keeping our students safe!

Additionally, today is Digital Wellness Day. This is an opportunity for families to explore their approach to digital media consumption through a wellness lens. If you are looking for key pointers for ensuring safe digital use for your child, we've shared a full week of digital wellness practices on our website at: somerville.k12.ma.us/DigitalWellness.

Early Childhood Education (Ms. Bailer)

Ms. Bailer reviewed her PowerPoint presentation on making the transition to Kindergarten, attached hereto and made a part of these minutes.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

Discussion ensued including the following highlights:

- Concerted effort to publish information in all languages reflective of the population.
- A parenting workshop offered in Spanish was very well attended.
- Young minds crave repetition and gain comfort, especially neuro-divergent minds on the autism spectrum and the unique books developed for each school sharing the transition with children is an excellent model.
- With the emphasis on test scores, the district is served well by pausing and telling the many stories of excellent innovations like this one.
- When the needs of one population are served, all are served.

Ms. Krepchin asked to take the following agenda item out of order since Mr. Green has to leave the meeting early.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Reorganization (Recommended action: Approval)

Dr. Carmona referred to his reorganization chart, attached hereto and made a part of these minutes. He noted that, although he believes there is merit in having principal coaches to build capacity of principals and building the pipeline to career paths, after receiving feedback from the committee and principals he removed the position due to the significant costs and having a reorganization plan that protects student-facing positions.

MOTION: there was a motion made by Dr. Ackman, seconded by Dr. Phillips, to accept the Superintendent's reorganization plan and to eliminate the position of Assistant Superintendent for Operations upon the recommendation of the Superintendent.

Deliberation followed including the following highlights:

- Grants fall under the purview of the Finance Department.
- Exercising the goal to think in terms of positions rather than people is a difficult stance, especially in light of a well-loved person having been in the role and served well (Mr. Mazza); however, the district benefits from pursuing that goal.
- Insofar as Mr. Mazza had a strong record of "responding and showing up" and was known as one of the few who built "strong bridges between the city and the district," the floor of expectation for the person filling the role be built into the role of "being better clients to the City" and have it responsive to the needs of the district.

Dr. Carmona stated that a system is needed to be reliable and connected to the needs of the district. Although the City and district are not in the same place, that needs to be made a priority and he is a "very willing partner" to improve and make the system work. Collaborating with Amara, he will be doing a lot of work around communication and that resonates with him.

Following discussion, the motion was approved unanimously.

III. REPORTS OF SUBCOMMITTEES

A. School Committee meeting for Educational Programs and Instruction Subcommittee:

March 21, 2024 (Dr. Ackman)

Dr. Ackman called the meeting to order at 2:50 pm

In attendance were:

- Emily Ackman, Chair
- Ellenor Barish, Vice Chair

- Laura Pitone, Member
- Jessica Boston Davis, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction • Caeli Gallitano, Director of Equity & Excellence
- Brenda Le Blanc Jaster, High School Special Education & ELA Educator – lead on the BU Consortium grant curriculum equity review

Attendees:

- Leigha Charboneau

Dr. Ackman opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and then turned it over to Dr. Boston Davis. Dr. Boston Davis: This is interwoven with our curricular work. Equity is not extra, and inclusivity is not extra. It is throughout all the work that we're doing. Presenters today will show that equity and high expectations are one in the same.

Caeli Gallitano: Educational programs include academic and social emotional programs. This is how we bring equity to the classroom. We show how we partner internally and with outside agencies to create spaces of safety, bravery, and belonging.

1. Through Curriculum & Instruction

- Examining the curriculum that we present to students
- Rethinking and expanding the way we think about instruction

2. Through Hiring

- Why a diverse staff matters
- Recruitment
- Retention

3. Through Representation

- Supplementing curriculum with representation in the classrooms, schools, and the district

4. Through Coaching

- Providing support within the classroom to create spaces of safety, inclusion, belonging and learning

Curriculum & Instruction

SPS' Equity and Excellence Department is working hard to provide curriculum that provides students with a broad(er) community and world view

We are doing this through collaboration with the coordinators of curriculum instruction, and assessment:

Developing a culturally responsive 6th grade curriculum includes:

- Authentic representation of all cultures, races, neurodiversity, and social identities • Primary source materials
- First person - own voice narratives
- Resources created and authored by diverse people about their communities • Welcoming guests from the community

Working in collaboration with colleagues to carefully research and select materials - create an accountability group/partnership

Everything we're doing is research & evidence based

Brenda Le Blanc Jaster:

What are kids reading? What do they have access to? What do they put their hands on and how are they using it? We are Critically Examining Texts in the SPS Curriculum

Team that is grant-funded from BU consortium to review books. All members are paraeducators in our district – who are benefiting from the extra money and taking the time to work with teachers. **Team members:**

- Brenda Le Blanc Jaster-Equity Literacy Specialist and Special Education and English Teacher (SHS) • Magenta Jasinski, Library Aide (The Brown School)
- Lindsay MacDonald, Kindergarten Paraprofessional (The Healey School)
- Isaac Wilde, Special Education Paraprofessional (SHS)

TOPICS

1. BU Consortium Grant introduction
2. Considering the texts in 1-2
3. Considering independent reading for 6-8th grade.
4. Creating tools to evaluate texts
5. Recommendations we'll provide

OBJECTIVE

Our purpose is to increase student access to culturally responsive and representative texts that provide maximum engagement. The curriculum review is focused on identity, skills, intellectualism, and criticality. We are dedicated to deepening students' relationships with reading.

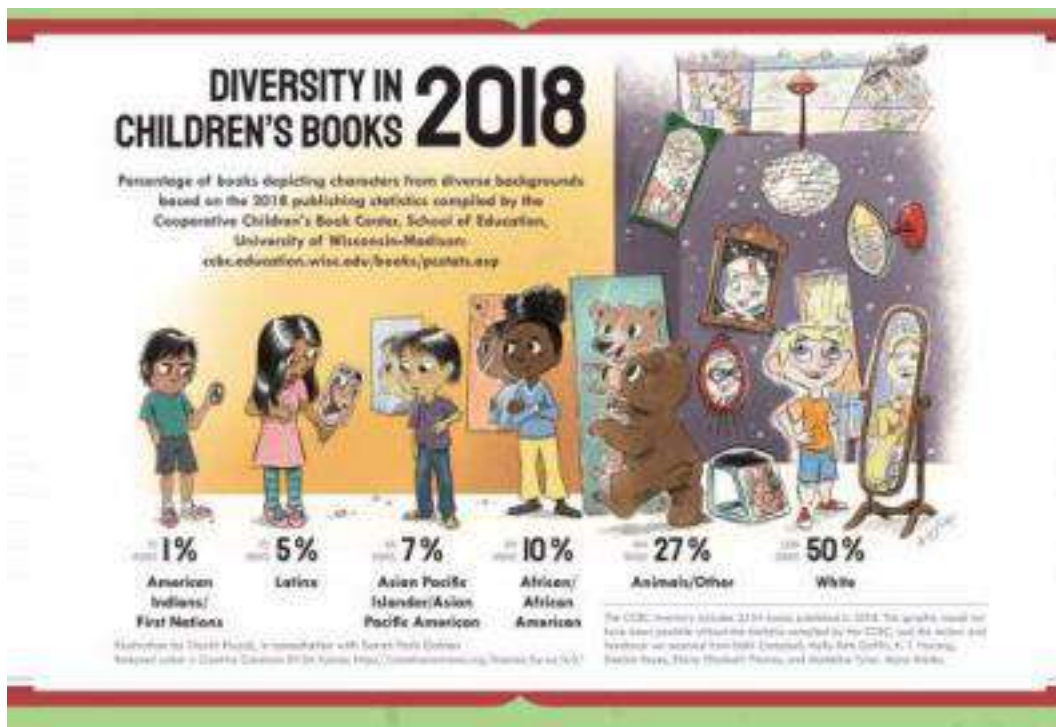
Current focus is on first and second grade curriculum and 6-8 independent reading Increasing productive struggle through language & literacy

Research notes the benefits of critical examination of our texts

- Purposeful consideration of what identities and perspectives are represented in our classrooms (Dahlen, 2018)
 - Increase access to representative texts (Sims Bishop, 1991)
 - Increase opportunities for students to engage in *productive struggle* (Hammond, 2015)
- Increase text sets cultivated to build skill, engagement, and students' identities/histories (Muhammad, 2020).
 - Increase engagement with classroom reads and choice books (Kittle, 2013)
- Lifting culturally responsive texts to the surface and elevating their value, centering culturally responsive literacy (Parker 2022).

Consider the pillars of #disrupt texts:

1. Continuously Inform our biases and how they inform our thinking
2. Center Black, Indigenous, and Voices of Color in Literature
3. Apply a Critical Literacy to our teaching practices
4. Work in community with other anti-racist educators. Especially Black, Indigenous educators of Color.



"When children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part"

-Rudine Sims Bishop Windows Mirrors and Sliding Glass Doors (1991)

I would add on, that they feel devalued, but also contributes to a non-reader identity. This project is the opposite. We're trying to grow readers.

Cataloging Texts

- What books do we have?
- How are the books being used?
- How are students engaging with the texts?
- How can the texts be used to increase engagement and learning?
- What do we need to add?

"Historically Responsive Literacy authentically draws upon and responds to histories, identities, and literacy and language practices of students for teaching and learning"

- Identity
- Skills
- Intellectualism
- Criticality

"For one, I have never met an unmotivated child in my years working with youth. I have however 'met' unmotivating curriculum and instruction"

-Dr. Ghodly Muhammad

Evaluating Texts

[Evaluating for Text Complexity](#)

Examining Texts

- 8 thematic units per year
- 3-4 focus areas per unit
- Essential Questions and Guiding Questions
- Mentor text and text sets
- Project based learning

We expect to see our youngest learners as scholars who can push their own learning and the learning of their peers. Learning beyond the words on the page. We are sending this out to teachers to get feedback.

QUESTION from Dr. Ackman: All grades?

ANSWER from Ms. Le Blanc Jaster: All teachers are invited to offer suggestions

Ms. Le Blanc Jaster:

"What might it mean to envision and enact humanizing, liberatory classrooms that are made especially for BIPOC students? Classroom libraries have an important role. We can create them to be sites of freedom, extending and deepening our intentional foundational work."

-Dr. Kimberly N. Parker

We keep this in mind as we build out classroom libraries.

6-8 Curriculum Selection Committee

Narrowed to:

- Arc Core
- EL
- Fishtank Plus

[Classroom Application Rubric](#)

Considerations

- Race/Gender representation of the author
- Under-represented, intersectional identities of the author
- Identity of the protagonist/narrator
- Publishing Date
- Content Warnings
 - o Prepare students ahead of time to know what they will be reading about

EXAMPLE: The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind

- Malawian inventor/engineer
- Grew up "impoverished"
- Narrative Memoir, non-fiction
- Published 2009
- Content Warning: Famine, violence (beating, home invasion, threatening women's safety)

Ms. Gallitano presents:

"We teach what we value."

-Gloria Ladson Billings

Hiring

- Helps in teaching, recognizing, and highlighting the contributions of people of color
- Increases the opportunity for cross-cultural collaboration and communication
- Aids in building strong, empathic, cross-cultural relationships that positively influence emotional and social growth and decreases likelihood for bias and prejudice
- Allowing students of color to see them reflected in the classroom and school community
- Encourages healthy cultural curiosity and multicultural learning

It is the belief of the Department of Equity and Excellence that having representation of staff of color helps students of color and students who are not of color alike to improve social emotional learning, improve academic and social learning, increase self-confidence, and empathy.

The Department of Equity & Excellence works to build a diverse workforce:

- Creating and hosting a Diversity Recruitment Fair
- Partnering with Massachusetts Partnership for Diversity in Education
- Partnering with the Association of Massachusetts School Equity Leaders

And to build upon the way in which we measure the experience of our staff of color

We are doing this through:

- Collaborating with Human Resources to improve exit interviews
- Working with Affinity Groups to use data and information collected in Affinity Group Meetings to improve district approaches and policies
- Working with the Data Department and Human Resources to examine trends in the experiences of staff of color
 - o Who is ascending? Who is leaving? Who is maintaining their role/position?

"A growing body of research has found that having a single teacher of color can boost academic achievement, high school graduation rates, college enrollment, and social-emotional well-being for students of color."

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/csi/diverse-workforce/>

Why Representation Matters

Representation of many social identities is necessary to:

- Foster a sense of belonging and inclusion
- Help to develop multicultural and cross-cultural skills
- Help in developing complex and flexible thinking; and elastic healthy brains
- Help in developing reasoning and lateral thinking skills, multiple perspectives and intersectionality, and analysis and critical thinking skills
- Help to develop problem-solving skills, planning, and action for justice
- Aid in developing empathy and the ability to build connections
- Aid in developing strong interpersonal skills and creating a strong sense of community

Representation helps mitigate bias.

Our education system tends to:

- Reflect white culture and white ways of being
- Put emphasis on individual contributions
- Maintain competitive grading and systems of assessment

In SPS we are working to:

- Integrate and assess collective, collaborative, and community ways of being
- Incorporate methods and practices that more accurately reflect the cultural way of being of our students
 - o Highlighting oral stories and practices, as well as the written word
- Create learning environments that are more comfortable and effective for academic and social growth
 - o Students working collaboratively, talking with a neighbor as they work, having small group tasks, inviting dynamic conversations in which spontaneous response is welcome, etc....

Who Should We Represent and Reflect?

- Everyone in the classroom - students, educators, and families
- Everyone in the school
- People in Somerville
- People in our country
- People in the world

We will take care to highlight the intersectional identities and complex stories that make us human beings, to see and to celebrate ALL components of who we are.

COMMENT from Dr. Ackman: One of the research-backed ways to achieve these inclusive goals that you are stating is to enact looping, specifically mixed-grade looping. It is disappointing that looping was eliminated from the Healey and the district as it would help achieve these goals.

Ms. Gallitano presents:

What Should We Represent?

- An array of whole intersectional identities
- Accurate whole portrayals of historically oppressed and disenfranchised people, their histories, contributions, languages, and ways of being
 - o Highlighting cross-cultural collaboration
 - o Taking care to celebrate accomplishments, resistance, and joy; not merely focus on oppression
- Highlight and explore diverse ways of being, thinking, learning and expressing/demonstrating knowledge
 - o various intelligences and abilities, and co-constructed (with students) assignments, projects, and assessments

How should we represent?

Through and beyond curricula and books that have been carefully and systematically review and, if necessary, supplemented

- Images on the walls
- Music, videos and media played in classrooms
- Materials, manipulatives, realia
- Discourse styles and groupings
- Assessments, projects, demonstrations of knowledge (beyond exams)
- Staffing and volunteers
- Visitors and performances
- School lunches and snacks
- Field trips
- Clubs and afterschool programming

Working to build community through representation

- Get to **really** know our students and families
 - o Through family questionnaires
 - o Family events
 - o Home visits or park visits
 - o Interviews at conferences
 - o Creating a support network for historically marginalized parents
 - Alzimara Oliveira at Healey has created "Parent Support Groups in Portuguese and Spanish in order to support parents to feel empowered and to advocate for their children's education."
- Get curious and connect with kids. What makes them tick?
 - o First 6 weeks of school
 - o Lunch Bunches
 - o Clubs and activities

- Be an active listener

What should we avoid in representation practice(s)?

- Avoiding tokenism and the danger of a single story
 - o Being thoughtful to represent throughout our lessons and instruction throughout the year
- Selecting or developing materials without taking the time to consider the representation
 - o This happens frequently with brain break videos and content videos.
 - o Think about which names, pronouns, locations, etc are used for the characters in word problems, etc...
- Allowing the dominance of some student voices
 - o Calling on the same active voices means hearing the same perspectives over and over again, rather than diverse views, ideas, and insights.
 - o Monitoring for whose voices are most commonly heard in the classroom leads to finding creative ways to invite and include all voices into discussions and group work, expands the thinking and perspective taking of all students.

Struggle isn't the only narrative we should hear of a subgroup.

Coaching

Coaching supports educators to implement and enhance the use of equitable practices throughout the district in the areas of academics, social-emotional practices, and in the areas of representation in the classroom and schools by:

- Providing 1:1 Coaching Cycles and Consultation Sessions
- Providing the opportunity for teamwork across grade levels
- Utilizing the Coaching For Equity Rubric
- Offering tangible pedagogical practices and methods to enhance cultural and self-awareness
- Offering books and materials to enhance what our students see, learn, and experience

Coaching example: More equitable integration of diverse student perspectives

After identifying, with the teacher, the discussion portion of a lesson around which to collect data, the equity coach then collects data around whose voices were heard, or not heard, in the discussion. Or similarly which students are called on at higher frequency and which are not. Tools such as this example are designed specifically around the identified needs of the teacher.

Collecting data around student voice serves as a foundation through which to then coach for greater representation and inclusion of the ideas and brilliance of each of our students.

Coaching Example: Moving beyond the single story

3rd Grade Nonfiction Reading Unit

In this unit the 3rd graders read and deeply study (for text features) a book about the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. This book represents Haitian as poor, disorganized, having little agency, and needing to be rescued by others. It does not represent strength, resilience, power, or joy.

After coaching in a classroom using this book the coach and the teacher worked with a Haitian member of the staff to augment students learning (beyond this single story). The staff member read the students the book *Freedom Soup*, shared a video of themselves making soup joumou (freedom soup), and talked with the children about Haitian Independence Day and their own lives and family in Haiti. Sharing the resilience, joy, and strength of Haitian people served as a counter narrative to some of the imagery in the book.

Heidi Given, Equity Coach, is doing a wonderful job of coaching. Colleagues want to have a more inclusive lesson plan and style of teaching and Heidi will work to help the team build this out.

Student Voice, Status, Input

Date/Time: _____

Subject/Period: _____

Names (list all in attendance)	Student Initiated			Teacher Initiated			Notes (duration of utterance, on task, etc.)
	Voice Heard	Raised hand	Spoke out	Name called by teacher	Called on (+)	Called out (-)	

Coaching Example: Refining curriculum for connection

While supporting a math lesson, the coach worked together with the teacher to re-imagine the names and objects used in story problems to better connect with the students in the classroom. • Johnny likes pancakes. His mother cooked 2 pancakes in the frying pan. After he ate those, he was still hungry, so she gave him 3 more. How many pancakes did Johnny eat?

OR

- Maria Elena likes tortillas. Her abuela cooked 2 tortillas on the comal. After she ate those, she was still hungry so her abuela gave her 3 more. How many tortillas did Maria Elena eat?

Coaching Example: Connecting home to school

In the early years, students often play with playdough - sometimes to represent their learning and ideas, sometimes to represent their worlds, and sometimes to unwind and relax. We often give students rolling pin and cookie cutters, scissors, or stamping materials to use with playdough. In order to support students to more fully represent their worlds, and bring their whole selves to school, we could also be giving them tools from home (their families' funds of knowledge), such as dumpling rollers and dumpling mold, tortillas presses, mortar and pestles, pasta slicers, comals, and other tools that exist in their cultural worlds.

QUESTION from Member Barish: Thanks for this presentation.

The benefits of having a teacher who is a person of color. More likely to complete schooling, etc. Given these – is it more important for students to see teachers of color in early grades? ANSWER from Ms. Gallitano: Yes, studies show that is before 5th grade, it boosts communication skills. Helps boost if they can have additional students of color in the class as well. I am happy to share the articles. As far as hiring – there's only so much in our locus of control... we need individuals of color to want to go into education. We're partnering with The Teachers Lounge – a link for teachers of color.

QUESTION from Member Pitone: Thank you for the presentation. This has been helpful. How on the other side do we assess how well we are incorporating this great work into our classrooms and is infusing into the culture of our classrooms?

ANSWER from Ms. Le Blanc Jaster: Your question isn't lost on me. In order to do this well or maintain this work, we need to figure out who in the district will pilot this and what PD needs to be provided for it to consistently spread across the district. We are taking this into consideration.

ANSWER from Ms. Gallitano: We can hold ourselves accountable. Looking at test scores. Reexamining how we are assessing kids. How are kids showing their knowledge? We can also look at incidents/behaviors. We will hopefully see a drop in incident reports and increase in teacher attendance. ANSWER from Ms. Le Blanc Jaster: we can work with school librarians to see what is being taken out and get those into our school libraries.

ANSWER from Dr. Boston Davis: I agree with what has been said. What are the systems and structures that we have and that we can create that doesn't rely on the individual. That's how we build capacity. There's a moral imperative but we need to put systems in place to ensure that these books are included in the curriculum.

Pitone: it's a cultural change. It's a sea change in some ways for educators. We don't want your kid to be lucky "having *that* teacher". How do we make it part of the water that everyone gets? How do we keep folks accountable?

QUESTION from Dr. Ackman: Are your Rubrics public?

ANSWER from Ms. Le Blanc Jaster: Our plan is to present them as vetted documents by the end of the grant cycle. They will be part of a centralized resource to put on the district webpage that working on over the summer.

Dr. Boston Davis: I am grateful for these colleagues and thought partners.

Dr. Ackman closed the meeting at 3:43 pm

B. School Committee Meeting for the Joint School Building and Facilities and Maintenance Committee:

March 25, 2024 (Mr. Biton)

Report to School Commi/ee on the School Building Facili7es and Maintenance Commi/ee Mee7ng for March 25, 2024

To: Somerville School Commi/ee

From: Leiran Biton, Ward 7 School Commi/ee Member, Chair of School Commi/ee's Commi/ee on School Building Maintenance

Regarding: Summary Report on March 25, 2024 joint meeIng of the City Council and School Commi/ee School Building Facili7es and Maintenance Commi/ee

The School Commi/ee School Buildings Facili7es and Maintenance Commi/ee met jointly with the City Council's School Building Facili7es and Maintenance Special Commi/ee on March 25, 2024, via Zoom. Members present were: Leiran Biton, chair; Laura Pitone, vice chair; and Sarah Phillips. City Councilors present were: Lance Davis, chair; Jesse Clingan, vice chair; and Naima Sait.

Also a/ending the meeIng from the City were: Rubén Carmona, Superintendent of Somerville Public Schools (SPS); Chad Mazza, SPS Assistant Superintendent of OperaIons; Richard Raiche, Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management (IAM); Natasha Frazier, Assistant Clerk of Commi/ees; Kimberley Hu/er, Intergovernmental Affairs; Erik Larson, Energy Manager, Office of Sustainability and Environment (OSE); Melissa Woods, Director of Capital Projects; and Ma/hew Benne/, Superintendent of Buildings.

Mr. Davis called the meeIng to order at 6:00pm, and quorum was established for the City Council with all members present. Mr. Biton called the meeIng to order at 6:03pm and quorum was established for the School Commi/ee with all members present.

There were four items on the joint agenda.

- 1) That the City AdministraIon discuss with the Commi/ee whether the financial comparisons of various new school building scenarios have taken into consideraIon projected costs of creaIng new usages at the current Winter Hill and Brown School sites

Mr. Raiche stated that the financial comparisons of various new school building scenarios have not yet taken into consideraIon the projected costs of creaIng new usages at the current Winter Hill and Brown School sites. However, they have every intenIon of doing the work of taking these into consideraIon in the financial comparisons in the future.

Mr. Davis inquired about the projected timeline for doing this work. Mr. Raiche estimates they are 6 months out from doing this work, as they have a number of Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) items being worked on, including the feasibility study. The bulk of their efforts are going towards MSBA items at the moment.

Dr. Phillips asked about the timeline for providing these estimates to the mayor's Advisory Committee so that they have the numbers when they need to make their recommendations to the mayor regarding which alternative to commission. Mr. Raiche confirmed that the advisory group will have the updated numbers on the correct timeline and stated that his office is looking to align the advisory group efforts with milestones in the MSBA process. Additionally, he stated that his office is doing work in a progression to align efforts to milestones within the MSBA process and advisory group milestones.

Mr. Biton asked for additional context regarding the 6-month timeline estimate, and confirmation that the information would be available in approximately September or October. Mr. Raiche stated that he estimates a 6-month timeline for updated financial estimates for several reasons but did not put exact dates on the milestones. First, this time is required to finish up the scoping of the feasibility study to allow MSBA to concur with the study, after which work would begin on other pieces, namely, understanding what the disposition of other buildings might be. Thus, late 2024 is when Mr. Raiche anticipates community conversations could then begin regarding what to do with any leftover buildings. This would also give the City team (Economic Development, OSPCD, the Mayor's Office, and the Finance Department) time to pull together estimates of the cost to the City, or what the City could get from the return of the sale in an unlikely event they sell the property. Mr. Biton highlighted that a desire for a ballpark number remains among the community.

Mr. Davis indicated these meetings would be held approximately once per month. Mr. Davis indicated that a standing item for general updates remain as a standing item for this committee, and Mr. Raiche agreed with this.

- 2) That the Commissioner of Public Works and the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management report on leaks at the Benjamin Brown School and any exterior envelope damages in the past six months, and actions being taken to address such leaks and damages including the recently dislodged downspout.

Mr. Benne/ stated that there are ongoing problems with leaks here and there like with any New England building with a flat roof. He stated that the roofing company has been on the Brown roof two times in the past 3 months or so, and that the downspout problem was a result of weather and was repaired. Regarding the Winter Hill building, Mr. Benne/ stated that nothing new or out of the ordinary was done as far as roof leaks go. Mr. Mazza stated that they are in constant conversation with Mr. Benne/ and the Supervisor of Buildings, Michael Bowler, to address any needs that arise at the Brown School. Mr. Mazza stated that Department of Public Works (DPW) has been very active and responsive whenever there is an issue at the Brown school and other schools.

Councilor Jake Wilson spoke as a member of the public, and asked if there are any current leaks other than what has already been repaired. Mr. Benne/ stated that there are no new leaks and that when it comes to patched areas, the leak will find the lowest possible point to come through. This means that leaks and patching are ongoing maintenance issues unless a roof is replaced completely.

- 3) That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management and the Director of the Office of Sustainability and Environment update this Council on plans to decarbonize current school buildings and any future school buildings

Ms. Sait asked the Administration for any updates on work to advance the City's goal toward carbon neutrality by 2050 that is part of the Climate Forward Plan.

OSE Energy Manager Mr. Larson stated that Somerville is updating its Climate Action Plan and that it will be released at an upcoming launch event and that details are forthcoming for that event. Manager Larson stated that the City is committed to leading on climate and leading by example. The City plans to have interim targets, goals, and strategies for reducing greenhouse

gas emissions in local government operations, including City and school buildings. The goal is to eliminate GHG emissions in municipal operations completely by 2050. They are currently finalizing interim targets for 2030 and 2040. Draft language for these goals were open for public comment from Fall of 2023 through January 2024. Mr. Larson stated that the Office of Sustainability and Environment is leading interdepartmental efforts to coordinate with SPS administrative staff.

Ms. Sait sponsored speaker Sara Ross, co-founder of a national non-profit called Undaunted K12. The nonprofit is based in Massachusetts, but they help schools nationwide transition to zero carbon emissions.

Ms. Ross described Undaunted K12 as a national non-profit that helps schools transition rapidly and equitably to zero-carbon. She stated that healthy buildings make healthy students, and that school buildings are part of equity and justice work. Ms. Ross stated that State and Federal apparatuses can help school buildings do this work. Ms. Ross gave a presentation regarding federal funding opportunities available through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and stated that schools are eligible recipients of a key part of this 2022 law. She stated that there are clean energy tax credits available for the first time for schools under the IRA. Ms. Ross stated that clean energy tax credits are non-compellive, can be provided to schools as cash reimbursement, that the tax credits are available until 2032, and that there is no funding cap. She also stated that the heat pump retrofit program under the MSBA will begin in January 2025 and will continue to be available past 2032. There are additional opportunities at the state level provided in Ms. Ross' presentation. The bulk of Ms. Ross' presentation focused on the opportunities for schools under the IRA. Ms. Ross described how the IRA can provide funding for schools for heat pumps - especially ground source heat pumps—electric vehicles, solar energy, energy storage, and electric vehicle charging. These are the five most common uses found in schools, but funding is not limited to these five categories. Ms. Ross indicated a typical ground-source heat pump might cost about \$3 million. The full presentation has been made available to the public.

Ms. Sait asked Ms. Ross if there are any of the IRA tax credits that offset the cost of making the building envelope airtight and high performance, allowing for small electric, efficient heating and cooling like geothermal, for more operating savings for both new schools and renovation of existing buildings. Ms. Ross stated that there is a tax deduction that is claimed by the designer of the building for buildings that meet certain levels of energy efficiency. This gets claimed by the building designer. There might be a possibility for pre-negotiating with designers to share savings. Ms. Ross suggested looking at additional incentives available through the Mass Save program.

Mr. Clingan asked if the City has done assessments of our current school buildings and whether the City has energy efficiency goals for its school buildings. Mr. Raiche responded that for new buildings, the City will not settle for anything less than the highest environmental standards. Regarding retrofitting older buildings, Mr. Raiche stated that they are being methodically investigated and conceptual designs are being explored. Specifically, Mr. Raiche stated the last year the City looked at conceptual designs for retrofit of the West Somerville Neighborhood School and Healey School. Mr. Raiche stated that the City will next be looking at the Capuano and the Argenziano, looking at each school building in order of age. At present, the City is gathering data and identifying needs, working with the Finance Department for budgeting, and working with Mr. Larson on identifying funding opportunities. Mr. Larson stated that there is a

staff member focused on IRA and federal grant funding in OSE so the City can take advantage of available federal funding. Mr. Clingan stated that we owe it to the kids and stated that he is aware of parents mobilizing around these issues. Mr. Clingan suggested identifying community goals and setting benchmarks to meet those community goals to ensure schools meet the goals by a certain year.

Ms. Sait asked Ms. Ross about the 45L tax credit. Ms. Ross later confirmed that the 45L tax credit is for homes and not for schools, adding that the IRS sees the world in two buckets - businesses and individuals, and that the structure of the tax credits reflects that.

Dr. Phillips asked if Ms. Ross's presentation materials regarding tax credits and incentives were already on the Administration's radar, and if so, what is the Administration doing to ensure the City takes advantage of all these opportunities as quickly as possible. Mr. Larson stated that OSE was previously aware of the information in the presentation and is taking every opportunity to take advantage of federal and state funds. He stated that the City is also planning to expand its charging network in the City and for municipal fleet and is exploring all available funding.

Mr. Biton expressed support for carbon neutral and carbon negative investments and asked if higher upfront costs of technologies pose a special problem for their installation. Mr. Raiche stated that they prioritize long-term investments over upfront costs and doing the right thing in the long term rather than letting upfront costs dissuade them from investments, but everything is considered on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Davis directed a question to Mr. Raiche and/or Mr. Larson regarding the data gathering and systems work previously mentioned by Mr. Raiche. Mr. Davis asked if the SPS Mechanical Systems Master Plan is what Mr. Raiche was referring to. Mr. Raiche confirmed this is what being discussed.

Ms. Sait asked if there is a school buildings energy sustainability project manager at the City or plans for a position of this nature. Mr. Raiche stated there is not one position designated for this work, but rather, a team dedicated to doing this work, which includes OSE's Mr. Larson and the Deputy Director of Capital Projects, leads a team of three handling technical evaluation and planning as well as construction management. Mr. Raiche indicated the City would likely look to hire a project manager in a year or two to manage this process.

- 4) That the Administration and the Director of Capital Projects, in conjunction with the Somerville Public Schools, update this Committee on the scope and costs involved to renovate the basement of the Edgerly School to reunite the Winter Hill Community Innovation School community under one roof, the relevant state and federal laws triggering required compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the decision-making process around the timeline for proceeding with this work

Mr. Davis indicated that Mr. Raiche had provided a memo on the day of the meeting to the Committee. The attachment is filename "WHaE Ph2 Update 2024Mar25 r2.pdf." Mr. Raiche stated that the memo from March 25 is updated from the memo previously provided to the School Committee on Monday March 18. Mr. Raiche provided context about both memos. Mr. Raiche stated there was a pause with an alert sent out to parents expressing the possibility of not being able to fulfill the goal. There is a state law in Massachusetts chapter 521, Code of Massachusetts regulations. He stated this is the enabling legislation for the Massachusetts

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Architectural Access Board which is the body that administers both the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Massachusetts supplemental laws on ADA, so Massachusetts is a delegated State. Those regulations state that improvements to any building in which the total dollar value exceeds 30% of a building's assessed value, then the building needs to be made fully ADA compliant. Mr. Raiche stated the Edgerly is ADA compliant, but some aspects of it do not meet the full letter of the law under the 30% trigger. The City previously thought the assessed value would be high enough to not trigger the 30% threshold. The reassessment was roughly \$16 million total. 30% of that is \$4.7 million dollars, and they had already spent about \$2.3 million, leaving a budget of \$2.4 million dollars before upgrades. They were also considering this from the perspective of timeline—there would only have been 10 weeks over the summer for upgrades—as well as the physical footprint. One of the implications is that these upgrades would eat into classroom space. Ultimately, the answer was this work was not feasible unless the building was closed for many months or more than a year. According to Mr. Raiche, Capital Projects and Winter Hill administration began to look creatively to bring students into the building. They were successful in that, and a communication went out to parents on Friday, also included in the March 25 memo. Mr. Raiche provided a brief description of the planned work that will be done to consolidate the Pre-K and K classrooms into the

Edgerly. This plan entailed extensive expert consultation and coordination over the past 2 weeks, which is why this memo did not go out sooner.

Mr. Clingan expressed gratitude for being able to get students under one building. He stated that he has seen exceptions for private developers for non-ADA compliant buildings and wish the work could have been spread out over multiple summers. Mr. Clingan expressed concerns that in addition to the initial concern of everyone being under one roof, another issue is the roof is leaky. Mr. Raiche stated that some of the leaking in the building is not from the roof but is from the walls as well, and additional repairs (brick repointing) are being pursued. Mr. Clingan asked Mr. Raiche to elaborate on how the City is exploring fixing of soundproofing issues. Mr. Raiche stated that they are still working through how to incorporate a resolution into a contract to provide soundproofing. Mr. Raiche reaffirmed their complete determination to get this done. Mr. Clingan asked about identifying outdoor space and if new space in or around the building has been identified. Mr. Raiche stated he is less optimistic about this and understands it is a priority. They will continue advocacy but cannot promise a positive resolution on this. Mr. Clingan indicated that a property nearby had a structure collapse and could be used by the City to find a creative solution. Mr. Clingan also expressed a priority of more interactive equipment for teachers, and that he is hoping for all of this to be done by the start of school next year.

Ms. Sait stated that she has heard from teachers about soundproofing issues. She said it is difficult for teachers to teach and for students to hear, and that resolving this should be a top priority, along with roof leaking. Ms. Sait asked if there are plans for rodent mitigation, and described conditions of mice all over the school. She also asked how many parents changed their enrollment choice, and whether families will be given the option to switch back to schools in light of new information. Mr. Raiche referred to his previous answer regarding the roof and soundproofing issues. Regarding rodents, he said he must defer to DPW, and must defer to Dr. Carmona regarding enrollment issues. Mr. Clingan stated that every school has rodent problems and an aggressive, in-house approach is needed. Mr. Bennet stated that if food is left out in rooms, especially during winter months, rodents will find a way in. Ms. Sait asked about what the pest management company is doing in this specific school, and that food reduction is challenging when working with hundreds of students and no composting and that mitigation is

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also important. Ms. Sait asked what the plan is for September, particularly in light of the removal of rodenicide in the City of Somerville. Mr. Bennet/ stated that DPW can do snap traps and sticky traps throughout building, or non-lethal pesticide bait boxes. He said it appears the direction the City is headed in is smart traps, which are electrocution boxes and they are expensive, costing around \$400,000. Ms. Sait asked if DPW has enough staff to do the work of rodent mitigation and Mr. Bennet deferred questions to the DPW Commissioner or Mayor. Dr. Carmona emphasized the importance of the rodent question of the most effective approach. He mentioned a teacher whose breast pump and clothes were chewed up by rodents. Dr. Carmona said zero families had switched their school choices from the Winter Hill to another school after learning the pre-K and K would not be consolidated with the other grades.

Ms. Pitone expressed her excitement for the solution uniting Winter Hill and emphasized concerns about soundproofing and outdoor space. She stated that these families will be at the school for 5-7 years, and asked what the barriers are to dealing with soundproofing and upgrading to the outdoor space. She asked if the outdoor space is included in the 30% compliance threshold previously mentioned by Mr. Raiche. She asked if the outdoor space delays are due to time or money. She emphasized that Winter Hill serves some of the most vulnerable students, including students with sensory challenges. She would prioritize soundproofing over the outdoor space but hopes to see both invested in. She wants to understand the constraints. Mr. Raiche indicated that the time required to accomplish the outdoor work is 10 weeks, and that makes the work impossible to accomplish at a building where the outdoor space is used. Ms. Woods addressed Ms. Pitone's question about whether site improvements affect ADA thresholds. Ms. Woods stated it depends on whether they require a building permit. She said it is safe to say they won't require a building permit but that it always depends on final design.

Dr. Phillips stated that a lot of conflict could have been avoided through better messaging around principles. She emphasized the importance of communicating district deadlines to families in a way that promotes trust. Mr. Raiche stated that the focus has been on problem solving, and that communication occurred at the last possible minute once answers were found. He will have conversations with people in the communication departments. Dr. Carmona echoed Mr. Raiche's comment. He stated their intent is not to miscommunicate; their intent is to serve the community the best they can.

Mr. Biton said everyone makes mistakes and it is best to own up to them and not to make the same mistakes again. He then asked what the initial valuation was proceeding the project, since the updated valuation was \$16 million dollars. Similarly, what would the ADA trigger have been under that initial valuation? Mr. Raiche stated that the assumption they were operating under last year was the building would appraise north of \$30 million, but there has been a radical market adjustment.

There was substantial discussion led by City Councilors regarding how to ensure that materials attached to the agenda are easily accessible to the public and members of the Joint Committee, as well as ensuring that communication relevant to the Committee that is shared with parents also gets communicated to the Joint Committee. Intergovernmental Affairs and the City Clerk's office will coordinate regarding meeting attachments, while Dr. Carmona will check to see how information gets to the full committee, and either Ms. Davis or Ms. Sait will prepare a motion regarding improving communication around school building updates.

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Finally, Mr. Davis asked Mr. Raiche the extent to which renovation work in the basement of the Edgerly will add long-term value to district. Mr. Raiche stated that the Edgerly building in general is a valuable asset in the City's building portfolio. He said the bones of the building are very good and it is the long-term goal to operate that building for various uses after Winter Hill has moved out and into its new home. Investments into the Edgerly building are a good City investment. This summer, electric system will be updated to bring air conditioning into the gym and cafeteria. The City wants to hold onto this building for a long time. However, the boxing club can't be updated in a meaningful way because of what it triggers and the 10-week timeline.

Mr. Davis asked if the City is planning to hire a code consultant for this project. Mr. Raiche stated the consultant is on the team of architects, but because interpretation of codes can sometimes be an issue, some gray area items are shared with inspectional services to ensure they concur with design decisions for the certificate of occupancy. Ms. Sait asked if the Edgerly was valued as an office or a school. Mr. Raiche stated that it was zoned as civic use as school. It previously was used as offices and partially a school.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45pm.

Documents Used:

WHaE Ph2 Update 2024Mar25 r2
Sara Ross Somerville Presentation

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C. School Committee Meeting for Rules Management Subcommittee:

April 29, 2024 (Ms. Barish)

Rules Management Subcommittee

April 29, 2024

City Council Chambers

The meeting was called to order at 5:37 pm. Subcommittee members Ellenor Barish and Leiran Biton were present along with SPS Chief of Staff and Strategy, Amara Anosike. There were no audience members.

The first item on the agenda was to approve the March Rules Report.

Leiran Biton moved to approve the report with Ellenor Barish seconding. Laura Pitone had arrived and participated in the vote which was unanimously in favor of approving the report.

The next item on the agenda was COVID-related Policies: EBCFC, EBCFB, EBCFA, EBCE, JLCB-B, and JLCB-A.

Ms. Barish reviewed the content of these policies and district guidance as provided by Liz Quaratiello: JLCB-A, EBCFC, EBCFB, and EBCE are no longer relevant and should be removed; JLCB-B was voted out of the manual in August of 2022 and has now been removed. Ms. Quaratiello also noted that JLCB-E should be revised to say "All students attending SPS must have the school entry immunizations mandated by MDPH. Exceptions are made for students according to the provisions of state law." As that policy was not named on the agenda. Rules will take that up at a later date.

Ms. Quaratiello offered the following revision for EBCFA if the School Committee wishes to keep this policy in the manual: "Students and staff are required to follow MDPH and DESE guidance regarding masking after COVID-19 infection or exposure. In addition, any individual who wishes to continue to mask, including those who face higher risk from COVID-19, should be supported in that choice."

Subcommittee members discussed what, if anything, should remain in our manual in order to simplify policy-making in the event of another similar emergency. Ms. Barish suggested adding something to the effect of, "SPS follows DESE and MDPH guidelines in the event of any public health emergency," if that isn't already part of a policy.

Mr. Biton - Moved to remove policies JLCB-A, EBCFC, EBCFB, and EBCE from the manual with Ms. Barish seconding. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Biton would like EBCFA to be rewritten with specific attention to defining what face coverings are allowed and what purpose they serve.

Ms. Pitone wondered what aspects of the policy should be retained. Specifically, will masks continue to be made available at schools and will they be required in health offices? Ms. Anosike will connect Mr. Biton with Ms. Quaratiello to work on this language. Ms. Pitone suggested the following:

- Generic safe environment language
- Refer to MDPH, DESE, and/or CDC guidance in the event of communicable disease event
- Airborne illness recommendations
- Remove references to COVID
- Supporting for those who choose to wear masks for medical reasons • Reference the communicable diseases policy JLCC

Next, Ms. Barish invited Mr. Biton to share his recommended revisions to policy BGC - Policy Revision and Review. His revisions are based on the Arlington School Committee's manual which requires that policies be reviewed every five years. Subcommittee members discussed several additional revisions and wondered whether there is a need to maintain a paper manual as was past practice. Mr. Biton moved to pass the revisions out of Rules to the full committee, seconded by Laura Pitone. The motion passed unanimously.

The next item on the agenda was Policy IJNDB - Network Acceptable Use Policy for Staff and Related Policies. Ms. Barish invited Ms. Anosike to share district concerns regarding IJNDB. The administration has asked Rules to take this up due to reports of staff using district email for personal or political causes. The policy specifically prohibits the use of networks for personal or recreational activities. State ethics guidelines cover posters in classrooms and similar issues. Ms. Anosike wondered if our policy should be broadened

Ms. Pitone suggested getting input from the legal team and MASC. She noted that Berkshire Hills Regional School District's policy GBI might be a helpful resource.

Ms. Anosike will make a list of gaps in our existing policies and will review the online policy manuals for additional options.

Remaining agenda items were tabled, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:34 pm.

Documents Used

File BGC - Policy Revision and Review.pdf

File EBCE-CREATION OF A GENERAL (INTERIM) POLICY ON COVID-RELATED ISSUES.pdf

File EBCFA- Face Coverings.pdf

File EBCFB-Emergency 1-Year Leave of Absence and School Placement Hold Policy.pdf File EBCFC-Somerville Public School COVID-19 Testing Policy.pdf

File IJNDB-Network Acceptable use Policy for Staff.pdf

File JLCBA- Seasonal Flu Vaccine Requirement Policy.pdf

D. School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities Meeting of the Whole:

May 1, 2024 (Dr. Phillips)

Report of The Finance and Facilities Subcommittee, May 1, 2024, submitted by Sarah Phillips

The Finance and Facilities Subcommittee met on May 1, 2024, via Zoom. Members present were Emily Ackman, Ilana Krepchin, Sarah Phillips, Andre Green, Ellenor Barish, Laura Pitone, and Leiran Biton. Also in attendance were Neha Singh, Legislative Liaison in the Mayor's Office; Chief Financial Officer, Fran Gorski, Director of Special Education, Ildelfonso Arellano, Assistant Superintendents Chad Mazza and Jessica Boston-Davis; Superintendent Rubén Carmona.

Sarah Phillips called the meeting to order at 7:05pm. City Council President, Ben Ewen-Campen, joined at 7:28. There were 16 attendees in the audience. There was one item on the agenda.

1) The Draft Superintendent FY25 Budget

Sarah Phillips described the budget process to-date and reviewed upcoming meeting times and opportunities for the public to weigh in.

Neha Singh summarized the FY25 Budget Memo submitted by the Mayor's Office and responded to comments/answered questions from committee members.

Rubén Carmona offered a big picture of the investments to staff and programming in the FY25 Superintendent's Budget

Fran Gorski described the Superintendent's Budget in detail and answered questions from committee members.

The meeting adjourned at 9:36 pm.

Documents Used:

STAFFING PLAN as of 4.19.24.pdf
SPED Subs and Academic Evaluators.pdf
SPED conversions.pdf
FY25 Superintendent's Proposed Budget 05-01-24.pdf
FY25 Staffing Additions – ESSER.pdf
FY25 Proposed Staffing Reductions.pdf
FY25 Proposed GF Staffing Adds 05-01-24.pdf
FY25 Preliminary Budget % increase.xlsx
FY25 NON PAYROLL DETAILS 05-01-24.pdf
FY25 Budget Memo.pdf

MOTION: there was a motion by Mr. Green, seconded by Dr. Phillips, to approve all the reports above. The motion passed unanimously.

In response to Ms. Pitone's question on the next meeting of the joint school building and facilities committee, Mr. Biton expressed frustration that he has not been able to schedule a date with President Ewen-Campen.

Ms. Pitone asked the Chair to reach out to President Ewen-Campen in order that a meeting be held before the end

of the school year. Chair Krepchin responded that “she will do her best.”

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. MSBA Update

Dr. Carmona reported that the Mayor’s team submitted a brief memo providing an update on the status of the School Building Committee for the Winter Hill and potentially, the Brown school building projects. As it states, the members of the SBC have been selected by the Mayor and the roster has been submitted to the MSBA. Throughout this process, my team and I have worked collaboratively with the City and the Mayor’s team to interview and select volunteers on the School Building Committee that are representative of our community.

I am deeply grateful to all who have volunteered their time and expertise to building our school communities for the next generation. I’m particularly grateful to the two caregiver representatives from the Winter Hill and the Brown schools who stepped up to join a team that will design a building that will meet the needs of our students for decades to come.



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS KATJANA
BALLANTYNE
MAYOR**

MEMO

To: Honorable Somerville School Committee

From: Office of Mayor Ballantyne

Re: School Building Committee Update

Date: 5/3/24

Attachment: SBC Member Composition Form Submitted to MSBA on 5/3/24

Dear Honorable School Committee:

In accordance with Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) requirements and timelines, we have completed the assembly of the School Building Committee and submitted all required materials to the MSBA.

Attached please find the School Building Committee membership form submitted to the MSBA today, May 3, 2024, for Somerville’s new MSBA pre-K-8 school project to replace the Winter Hill Community Innovation School.

Our call for community member volunteers yielded an outstanding pool of well-qualified candidates, and we are very excited about the broad range of perspectives and expertise these members will bring to the process. You may also recognize many of the names of City and Somerville Public Schools officials from the SHS SBC who will bring their experience from our last, successful MSBA project.

Please note that our intention will be for Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management Rich Raiche to serve as Interim Chair to convene the Committee for organization, at which point we will select a Chair going forward. We will, of course, send an update once that occurs.

This information along with more details on members and next steps will be shared with the School Committee, school community, and broader community next week. But as we have just filed, we wanted to swiftly apprise you of the completion of this step of the MSBA process.

Please let us know if you have any questions or need anything else from us for this milestone. Thank you.



CITY HALL • 93 HIGHLAND AVENUE • SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS 02143
(617) 625-6600, EXT. 2100 • TTY: (866) 808-4851 • FAX: (617) 625- 3434 • E-MAIL: mayor@somervillema.gov
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The following questions from members at this time and Chair Krepchin will follow up with the Mayor.

- When will a high school student be assigned to the building committee as a non-voting member?
- When is the next school building committee meeting scheduled?
- When Mr. McGuire retires as principal of Brown school, does his replacement, interim or permanent, replace him?
- A former superintendent was hired as the chair of the building committee for the high school as a consultant. What is the plan for this committee?
- Is the Mayor's filling three roles on the committee consistent with the high school committee or different?

Ms. Pitone congratulated the Mayor and her team for choosing representatives from the community with real talent and experience to lend to the committee.

B. School Committee Office Hours

Mr. Biton reviewed the school committee office hours schedule (attached hereto and made a part of these minutes) and summarized the issues discussed.

April 2024 School Committee Office Hours Summary

Somerville School Committee members held office hours throughout April 2024 to hear from constituents about matters they are concerned about, and in particular, to solicit feedback relevant to the preparation of the FY25 budget. Below is a deidentified summary of topics discussed during the office hours, arranged by School Committee Member.

Emily Ackman, Ward 1	Office hours: - April 27 @10am-12pm with State Representative Mike Connolly (East Branch Library) People attending (kids and adults) were looking for more lunch, more recess, and better communication about middle school programming. Parents think Winter Hill School families should be given whatever they want to be made hole for having to move to a new building and that communication could be improved around out of school time programming.
Ilana Krepchin, Ward 2	Office hours: - April 11 @8:10-9:10am with Sarah Phillips (outside the Argenziano) Three people attended. Main topics addressed included: - Desire to see composting happening inside our school lunchrooms - A thank you for you the increased funding for field trips this year and the hope that that will continue to increase in the future.
Sarah Phillips, Ward 3	Office hours: - April 6 @9-10:30am with Ward 3 Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen (Central Library Children's Room) Three people attended. One wanted to learn more about the budget and how to get involved in any advocacy going on. Two wanted to follow up on their public comment a few weeks ago and advocate for the elimination of any contracts with Hewlett Packard.
Andre Green, Ward 4	Office hours: - April 13 @10-11:30am (virtual) - April 7 @9-10:30am (Winter Hill Brewing) Over the course of two office hours held, people advocated for more and improved dyslexia services, maintenance of a third evaluator position in SPED, and fighting for a 7% floor in funding increase.

Laura Pitone,
Ward 5

Office hours:

- April 27 @10am-12pm with Ward 5 Councilor Naima Sait (Zaruma Coffee)

The following opinions were expressed:

Recess and Lunch. Request that recess longer than 15 minutes, lunch should be longer than 15 minutes. Please resolve this issue. It is not enough time for social learning, social emotional development or to support the healthiest eating.

The High School Field. What is the barrier for use and how can it be resolved quickly? The ribbon cutting was in October and the understanding is it is not open for official use. Questions from parents of high school students as well as parents involved with youth soccer.

Air quality in school buildings. How will air quality be addressed and prioritized in both the new school and schools currently in use? How do we evaluate and make public air quality information for our schools? This is a general health concern as well as for those immunocompromised.

After School. Clarity in the afterschool programming assignment process, specifically how the "weighted lottery" works and how the parent survey information is and was used. How can parents advocate for more afterschool spots, and equitable communication? Wish that all parents learn if they have a spot or not at the same time and as early as possible.

New Elementary Math Curriculum implementation. SPS parent (also teacher in another district) excited about adoption of Illustrative Mathematics for the elementary curriculum, but also making a recommendation regarding the value of implementing Imagine Learning platform over Kendall Hunt. Imagine learning more money but better experience and resources for staff, resulting in better implementation in their experience. Professional development, having coach lead unit planning and expertise in each school (stipend?).

Math Night for Parents. Parents interested in resuscitating math night for parents to prepare parents to help students.

World Languages. Interest in elementary and expanded middle school world language instruction for all students. One idea was teaching specialists in other languages. Also interest in revisiting the languages offered at the high school level. How would the district assess adding additional languages (Mandarin, Arabic) or replacing current languages?

Ellenor Barish,
Ward 6

Office hours:

- April 4 @5-6pm (Brown School outside benches)
- April 6 @10-11:30am (Lexington Park)
- April 10 @8:10-9:10am with Laura Pitone (Kennedy School main entrance)

The following topics were discussed:

Community Schools:

- Ensure that there are spots for every family that wants their students to attend
- Make the program more robust so that families can anticipate having care year to year

After School Clubs/Activities

- Offer more opportunities for older students who have aged out of Community Schools
- Plan and announce clubs/activities well in advance and start them when school starts or when a new semester starts
- Ensure that offerings are available to students at every school

Academic Opportunities

- Improve differentiation so that every student feels both challenged and successful
- Do not cancel programing because it is inequitable - change the programing so that it will be more equitable. If that means you need more money, get more money.
- Reconsider the reduction in access to AP classes for high school students; ensure that every course is engaging and rigorous
- Begin offering world languages in the lower grades and offer more/different languages

School Lunch

- Gratitude for free meals but disappointment in the perceived nutritional content of the meals (too much sugar)
- Students want and need longer lunch periods

Recess

- Students want and need more/longer recesses

Winter Hill/Brown

- Don't combine the schools; Brown School can wait

Leiran Biton,
Ward 7

Office hours:

- April 7 @10-11:30am (Yego Coffee)
- April 9 @8:10-9:10am West Somerville Neighborhood School (front picnic tables)

Office hours were attended by three people, who expressed the following:

- Desire for improved safety at the crosswalk at SHS at Vinal and Highland (including repainting the crosswalk and adding a crossing guard);
- Need for improving the process for replacing lost MBTA cards;
- Concern about literacy special education programs and services for students with severe dyslexia and dysgraphia; and
- Gratitude for and desire for continuing the increased funding for field trips.

Ms. Pitone stated that some parents were questioning why they had to fill out a survey on providing demographic information for the afterschool program. While she applauds the effort to be as inclusive as possible in placements to ensure students that need services he most will be accommodated, she stated that clear and transparent information must be shared with families. More slots are needed in the program.

She also added that there is a community group working on pursuing decarbonization of school buildings. Mr. Biton will present the resolution at the next meeting for approval of carbon neutral schools and advice to the City to make efforts in that direction as soon as possible.

B. Field Trips: (Recommended action: approval)

MOTION: There was a motion by Dr. Ackman, seconded by Ms. Pitone, to approve the following fields trips to **June 13, 2024** Fifty 8th grade Students from Argenziano School will be travel to Canobie Lake Park, in Salem, NH. travel via bus, Student cost \$30 .

June 24, 2024-June 29,20204 One SHS student will travel to Atlanta, Georgia to compete in the Skills USA National Competition. Travel via airplane, student cost \$0.
The motion was approved unanimously.

VII. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

Dr. Phillips added that, to avoid misunderstanding, that parents be notified of afterschool program placements all at the same time. Dr. Carmona stated he would share feedback with the SFLC team. An agenda item on enrollment numbers will be presented at the next meeting.

VIII. CONDOLENCES

The Somerville School Committee extends its deepest condolences to the families of

Nina Romano, retired SPS special education teacher for almost forty years.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 9:12p.m.

Related documents:

Agenda

[District SEL Development Plan](#)

[Reorganization Chart](#)

Submitted by: C. Barraford

ATTACH DOCUMENTS STARTING ON THE NEXT PAGE

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS – CITY HALL
REGULAR MEETING – MAY 6, 2024 – 7:00 P.M.**

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2024, this meeting of the School Committee will be conducted via hybrid participation.

We will post an audio recording, audio-video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of these proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting on the City of Somerville website and local cable access government channels.

To **watch** this Regular School Committee meeting live from home please visit the following link:
somervillema.gov/GovTVLive

To **listen** live to the simultaneous interpretation of this meeting in **Spanish, Portuguese or Haitian Creole**, or to participate in Public Comment, please join this Zoom Webinar and choose your desired language by clicking the interpretation globe on the Zoom:
https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_5Qd-wwwSTTWWhGcBlbxdpQ

Meeting ID: 828 3714 1335

Password: SPSSC24

Somerville Public Schools - School Committee Goals 2023 - 2025

In order to address the root causes of systemic inequity in our schools, the Somerville School Committee and SPS commit to the following goals, knowing that these can only be achieved through ensuring meaningful partnerships with Somerville families, district staff, city government, and community partners. Our goals attempt to address deep-rooted systemic barriers that have prevented us from achieving our district vision of equity and excellence and ensure that all students, regardless of race or ethnicity, have the supports and resources they need to achieve educational success in our district now and in the future.

1. Whole Child Teaching and Learning... we will:

- prepare students to demonstrate strong literacy and mathematics foundation by grade 3, grade 6, and grade 10
- provide all students with integrated classroom lessons from a high quality social-emotional learning curriculum that helps students value and develop their ability to build relationships with other students, to be self aware and socially aware, to self regulate, and to make responsible decisions
- expand access to real-world learning experiences through students' participation in Early College, Advanced Placement courses, CTE, and/or other learning experiences that help students build critical 21st century skills, meeting with their college and career counselor in their junior and senior year, and students graduating with a defined post-secondary plan.

2. Equitable Access to Programming... we will conduct a district enrollment study to understand the prospective future population of the district and create and begin implementing a strategy for school building development, school assignment, and programming that aligns with the district's equity policy, and which is based on results of the enrollment study and the projected 10+ year plan for school facilities.

3. Workforce Diversity... we will increase the percentage of support staff of color, teachers and counselors of color, and administrators of color by 6% per group compared to 5Y22 rates through evaluating and strengthening all elements of our personnel system – recruitment, processes, training, retention, development, advancement, and staff data collection systems on which we base and measure our improvement efforts.

4. Equitable Resource Allocation... we will design, evaluate, and partially or fully implement student-based budgeting by 2025, or identify alternative mechanisms to more equitably allocate district resources.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. SCHOOL COMMITTEE STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

III. PUBLIC COMMENT – In person or via Zoom

To participate in Public Comment remotely please use the following Zoom link:

https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_5Qd-wwwSTTWWhGcBlbxdpQ

Meeting ID: 828 3714 1335

Password: SPSSC24

IV. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT**A. District Report**

- District SEL Development Plan (Ms. Doncaster)

V. Report of Subcommittees**A. School Committee meeting for Educational Programs and Instruction Subcommittee:**

March 21, 2024 (Dr. Ackman)

MOTION: To accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Educational Programs and Instruction Subcommittee of March 21, 2024

B. School Committee Meeting for the Joint School Building and Facilities and Maintenance Committee:

March 25, 2024 (Mr. Biton)

MOTION: To accept the report of the Joint school Building and Facilities and Maintenance Committee of March 25, 2024

C. School Committee Meeting for Rules Management Subcommittee:

April 29, 2024 (Ms. Barish)
MOTION: To accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Rules Management Subcommittee of April 29, 2024

D. School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities Meeting of the Whole:

May 1, 2024 (Dr. Phillips)
MOTION: To accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities Meeting of the Whole Meeting: of May 1, 2024.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**A. MSBA Update****VII. NEW BUSINESS****A. Report Out of Coordinated Office Hours****B. Reorganization** (Dr. Carmona)

MOTION: to accept the Superintendent's reorganization plan and to eliminate the position of Assistant Superintendent for Operations upon the recommendation of the Superintendent.

C. Field Trips (Recommended action: approval)**June 13, 2024**

Fifty 8th grade Students from Argenziano School will be travel to Canobie Lake Park, in Salem, NH. Travel via bus, Student cost \$30

June 24, 2024-June 29, 2024

One SHS student will travel to Atlanta Georgia to compete in the SkillsUSA National Competition. Travel via airplane, student cost \$0.

VIII. FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS**IX. CONDOLENCES****X. ADJOURNMENT**

For Simultaneous Interpretation in Spanish, Portuguese and Haitian Creole See below:

Español - Para Interpretación

Para **ver** la Reunión Regular del Comité Escolar el 6 de mayo a las 7:00, en vivo desde casa, visite el siguiente enlace y elija **GovTV**: <https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/communications-and-community-engagement/somerville-city-tv>

The items listed are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair to be discussed at the meeting. Not all items may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.

Para **escuchar en vivo la interpretación simultánea de la Reunión Regular en español, portugués o criollo haitiano**, únase a este Zoom y elija el idioma que desee haciendo clic al globo de interpretación:

https://k12somer ville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ZMsQspQ1SSCIsQXOKcunug

Identificación de la reunión: 828 3714 1335

Contraseña: SPSSC24

Português - Para Interpretação

Para **assistir** à Reunião Regular do Comitê Escolar 6 de maio o às 7:00, ao vivo de casa, visite o seguinte link e selecione

GovTV: <https://www.somer villema.gov/departments/communications-and-community-engagement/somer ville-city-tv>

Para **ouvir ao vivo a tradução simultânea da Assembleia Ordinária em espanhol, português ou crioulo haitiano**, entre neste Zoom e escolha o idioma desejado clicando no balão de interpretação:

https://k12somer ville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ZMsQspQ1SSCIsQXOKcunug

ID da reunião: 828 3714 1335

Senha: SPSC24

Kreyòl ayisyen - Pou entèpretasyon

Pou **gade** reyinyon regilye Komite Lekòl la 6 Me a 7:00, an dirèk nan kay la, vizite lyen sa a epi chwazi **GovTV:**

<https://www.somer villema.gov/departments/communications-and-community-engagement/somer ville-city-tv>

Pou **w tande entèpretasyon similtane Reyinyon Regilye a an panyòl, pòtigè oswa kreyòl ayisyen an**, rantre nan Zoom sa a epi chwazi lang ou vle a lè w klike sou balon entèpretasyon an:

https://k12somer ville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ZMsQspQ1SSCIsQXOKcunug

Reyinyon ID: 828 3714 1335

Modpas: SPSSC24

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