



## **OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE HYBRID BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**November 6, 2024**

The Boston School Committee held a hybrid meeting on November 6, 2024, at 6 p.m. at the Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building, 2300 Washington Street, School Committee Chamber, Roxbury, Massachusetts. The meeting was also live-streamed on Boston City TV and Zoom. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit.

[bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee](https://bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee), email [lparvex@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto:lparvex@bostonpublicschools.org), or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

### **ATTENDANCE**

School Committee Members Present: Chairperson Jeri Robinson; Vice Chairperson Michael D. O'Neill; Stephen Alkins; Chantal Lima Barbosa; Rafaela Polanco Garcia; Quoc Tran; and Student Representative Omer Ismail.

School Committee Member Absent: Brandon Cardet-Hernandez.

### **DOCUMENTS PRESENTED**

[Agenda](#)

Meeting Minutes: [October 23, 2024](#) and [October 28, 2024 retreat](#)

[Grants for Approval](#)

[Memo MassCore Graduation Requirements Update](#)

[PowerPoint MassCore Graduation Requirements Update](#)

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Jeri Robinson called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance. Ms. Robinson said that tonight's meeting was being live-streamed on Boston City TV and Zoom. It will be rebroadcast and the video will be posted at [bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee](https://bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee) and on YouTube. She announced that simultaneous interpretation services were available virtually in Spanish, Haitian Creole, Cabo Verdean, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin, and American Sign Language (ASL). Translated meeting documents were posted at [bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee](https://bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee) prior to the start of the meeting.

Ms. Robinson started the meeting by acknowledging the election results and noting that the implications of Question 2, which eliminates the MCAS test, are still unclear. She assured the group that the district would work closely with the state on next steps. She also emphasized that the district's focus remains on preparing students for their future paths and providing equitable, culturally affirming education. She celebrated the district's diversity of students and staff, reaffirming the commitment to making decisions in students' best interests. Ms. Robinson encouraged everyone to take care of themselves and their loved ones before opening the floor for additional comments.

### **APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

***Approved*** – The Committee approved by unanimous consent the minutes of the October 23, 2024 meeting, and the October 28, 2024 retreat.

### **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

As prepared for delivery:

Thank you, Chair Robinson and good evening.

Yesterday was a historic day in our nation as we awaited the results of one of the most consequential elections of our lifetime. We acknowledge that many students, families, educators, and staff may have strong feelings regarding the results of yesterday's election. It is critical that our schools and district offices remain safe and respectful spaces for students and adults, particularly in unsettled times. We ask for every member of our BPS community's cooperation and understanding to ensure our schools and district offices are places where respect for one another is shown.

I also want to recognize that the weeks and days leading up to the election have been a time of heightened stress and anxiety for members of the community. BPS schools will continue to be safe and supportive places for all students, families, and staff. The district will have resources in place for any students or staff who may need support, including school and district social and emotional support staff who can assist students and schools as needed. Our mission will remain the same: to ensure that every student, in every school, has access to a high-quality, equitable education, inclusive of race, nationality, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or other identity or background.

I am glad to report that voting went smoothly at all 26 BPS schools that also served as polling sites around the city. I want to thank our school leaders, teachers, school-based staff and custodians who worked diligently to ensure that schools were ready and had the support and additional resources they needed to ensure that students' learning was not disrupted.

I am especially proud of the 90 students from 16 BPS high schools who spent the day as poll workers. Now in its 5th year, the Student Poll Worker Program is a collaboration between the BPS History and Social Science Department and the City of Boston Elections Department. Students must be 16 by election day to participate, and serve as greeters, inspectors or interpreters. This year, students supported voters with interpretation in 15 different languages including Haitian Creole, Spanish, Vietnamese, Somali and Chinese. Students worked the polls from 6:00 am to 2:00 pm, and were paid for attending training and for their election day service.

The BPS Humanities team visited students at their sites and heard comments like, "I am excited now to vote when I am able." One of the student's from English High School had a chance to talk with Representative Ayanna Pressley at their polling location at the Chittick Elementary School.

I want to thank participating students for their valuable contribution to our city and our democracy. I also want to thank our city partners for providing our students with this unique learning and civic engagement opportunity. And congratulations to our BPS students who voted for the first time! As you continue into adulthood, I hope you will continue to make your voice heard. Stay engaged, get involved and exercise your right to vote in every election.

As you know, ballot question 2 passed last night eliminating the MCAS test as a graduation requirement for the state's high school students. Like cities and towns across the Commonwealth, we are reviewing the impact of the vote. Today we received some initial guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) concerning students who need to retake the MCAS. We expect more information about how districts should adjust to this change going forward. We will keep you up-to-date as information and guidance become available.

Tonight's agenda presentation - an update on the district's adoption of MassCore graduation requirements - is especially timely given last night's MCAS vote. I want to reassure you that all BPS high schools are aligned to the MassCore and we continue to make great progress with the implementation of MassCore especially in academics - math, ELA, science and social studies. A little later, you will hear more on the district's work and some of the outstanding issues we continue to address.

Last Monday night I joined members of my executive team and School Committee members at a retreat here at the Bolling Building. It was a productive evening that gave us time to engage in team-building exercises and reflect on our mutual goals and expectations. I had the opportunity to review some of my priorities for the district and engage in thoughtful discussions with the members about our shared goals. I look forward to continuing the conversation on Wednesday, November 20th.

I am pleased to share that last week the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education - or DESE - announced its approval of seven of our proposals for expanded multilingual education for the 2025-2026 school year - marking the district's largest expansion of programming designed to serve Multilingual Learners in 40 years. Approval of the new programs is validation that we are moving in the right direction in our efforts to serve our Multilingual Learners. The new programs reflect our commitment to centering students' identities and leveraging their home languages to accelerate their learning in school.

The approvals follow a community engagement process that took place during the school year 2023-2024. After receiving specific feedback, the team in the Office of Multilingual and Multicultural Education - or OMME - developed proposals for schools around the city that will serve English Language Learners, and newcomers to the district in kindergarten to high school. OMME and our partners in the schools are excited to get to work implementing the new programs. We will provide each school with the support and resources they need to sustain and grow these programs. During the first year, more than 200 students will have access to the

programs which are expected to expand capacity by 30 percent in each subsequent year. BPS submitted a total of nine applications, and we are continuing to work with DESE on the approval of the remaining two.

A quick update on BPS Transportation: Last week we hit a new benchmark - morning On Time Performance was at 95 percent last Friday for the first time this year. Morning on time performance averaged 92 percent last week, 6 percentage points higher than the same week last year. And afternoon on time performance averaged 84 percent last year, compared to 85 percent during the same week last year. We will continue working to make progress each week to improve transportation service for our students.

Massachusetts Port Authority representatives visited Dorchester's Albert Holland School of Technology STEM Aviation Program last week and urged students to "keep flying high" during a special ceremony highlighting scholarship and career opportunities. Holland Tech senior and STEM Aviation Program standout Fahad Yasin received a special surprise: A flight simulator of his own that he can use to practice in pursuit of his dream of becoming a commercial-airline pilot. He also received a proclamation from District 4 Boston City Councilor Brian Worrell. You may remember last spring Fahad became the first student in the Holland's STEM Aviation Program to fly an airplane – a Cessna 172 – at Norwood Memorial Airport.

Students from the Blackstone School also got a special visit last week from Tessie thanks to the Red Sox Foundation and Playworks New England. Students had fun playing baseball and getting Tessie's autograph. Yesterday, the Blackstone hosted a visit from the New England Patriots Foundation. Patriots' quarterback Joe Milton and former player Max Lane read to students who were also given books during the school's Scholastic Book Fair.

We have some exciting news from BPS Athletics. First, nearly 300 student athletes competed in the Boston Athletic Association's annual Middle School Cross Country Championships last month at Franklin Park.

Eliot Innovation School student Mairin Goff won the girls' race and Boston Latin School student Nathan Bisio won the boys' race. The O'Bryant School of Math and Science prevailed in the co-ed relay over the McKay K-8 School. Thank you to our partners at the BAA for another great event for so many of our students.

East Boston High School senior Christopher Acosta was named as the MIAA (Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association) Student of the Month in September. A standout soccer player and student, Christopher is known for encouraging his teammates and fostering a positive environment on and off the field. He also volunteers as a translator at school events and as a team leader during the school's annual holiday toy drive. Christopher is one of 20 student athletes - 10 boys and 10 girls - who will be honored with this recognition during this school year. Congratulations to Christopher on this outstanding achievement and thank you to his coach Jayson Smith for nominating him.

The Fall Regular Season concluded with our annual City Championship events. Congratulations to the following 2024 Fall City Champions:

- Volleyball - Boston Latin Academy

- Girls Soccer - Boston Latin Academy
- Boys Soccer - Boston International Newcomers Academy or BINCA

Best of luck to all the teams who qualified for the MIAA postseason tournaments. We will keep you up-to-date as our teams advance.

Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll, Massachusetts Secretary of Education Patrick Tutwiler and representatives of the Museum of Science visited East Boston's Bradley Elementary School during Mass STEM week last month where students worked in small groups to engineer plastic filters using everyday materials. Mass STEM week takes place each October to foster a lifelong interest in science, technology, engineering and math.

Russell and Kenny elementary school students celebrated the fall season recently with events at their schools. Superheroes, witches and skeletons collected goodies in their creative costumes at the Kenny School's "Trunk or Treat." Russell School students celebrated the Fall season by voting on the best decorated pumpkin, enjoyed apple cider and cider donuts, and participated in a dance party. Thank you to both school communities for creating fun, student and family-centered events.

On Tuesday, November 12, I will be participating in a youth-led Town Hall discussion with Mayor Wu and Boston high school students here at the Bolling Building from 4:30 to 6:00 pm. The event is being held in collaboration with youth organizations across Boston, the Mayor's Youth Council and the Boston Student Advisory Council - or BSAC. Students are invited to speak and testify to their lived experiences in BPS schools. Adults who would like to support are encouraged to tune in via the livestream link that will be available on the city's website at [boston.gov](https://boston.gov). If you are a BPS student and would like more information about testifying at the Town Hall please reach out directly to Dennisse Rorie, Director of the Office of Youth Leadership, at [drorie@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto:drorie@bostonpublicschools.org).

Before I close, I'd like to remind everyone that the BPS Office of Family and Community Advancement is hosting its second annual Open House tomorrow, Thursday, November 7th, here on the first and second floors of the Bolling Building from 5:00 to 7:00 pm. I hope you will be able to stop by. BPS representatives and community partners will provide valuable resources for students and families as well as hands-on activities, food and refreshments, music and raffle prizes. There will be something for every age group including information on internship opportunities. Interpretation services will be available as well as transportation from the following locations: Codman Square Library in Dorchester; Maverick MBTA Station in East Boston; and the Mattapan Library in Mattapan. It's going to be a fun evening!

And that is my Superintendent's Report. Back to you, Chair Robinson.

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Ms. Lima Barbosa thanked OMME for approving seven programs, expressed interest in learning more about their implementation and communication with families, and commended the Transportation Department for its progress.

Dr. Alkins asked if there are any upcoming meetings with BSAC or student groups to address their concerns and support needs related to the election. The superintendent said schools are providing space for student discussions, with more planned. BSAC meets regularly with Chief McCarthy, and principals are encouraged to support student concerns.

Mr. O'Neill thanked the superintendent for prioritizing student safety and supporting both students and staff. He noted the 95% improvement in transportation and asked about any remaining challenges. The superintendent outlined efforts to improve transportation, including consolidating routes, onboarding new drivers, and adjusting for ridership patterns. These measures aim to improve on-time performance (OTP) toward the 95% target. Executive Director of Transportation Mr. Rosengard confirmed the need to validate ridership data for better route efficiency and noted long-term challenges, including school assignments and services for students with disabilities.

Mr. O'Neill thanked the team for improvements and asked about challenges with late afternoon pick-ups affecting student-athletes and field trips, seeking an update on potential improvements. Mr. Rosengard discussed efforts to address a 4% bus availability shortfall for athletics and field trips, noting collaboration with athletics and MBTA alternatives. He also mentioned using Zum for proactive bus updates, with full implementation by fall.

***Approved*** - On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the Superintendent's Report.

The Committee took a brief pause due to technical issues.

#### GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- Rashell Castillo, Roslindale resident, Sociedad Latina, BPS student, testified regarding social media's effects on teens.
- Michael Maguire, West Roxbury resident, and BPS parent, regarding the pay for paraprofessionals and the inclusion plan.
- Jane Ichord, Jamaica Plain resident, Lilla G. Frederick Pilot Middle School librarian, testified in support of the BTU's plan of fully funding school libraries.
- Maya Jones, Brookline resident, and BPS teacher, testified regarding safety in the schools.
- Deirdre Manning, Dorchester resident, Parent, testified regarding the Exam school policy inequity.
- Councilor Brian Worrell, Dorchester resident, Boston City Council, testified regarding the FY26 Budget.
- Mike Heichman, Dorchester resident, Community Advocate, Boston Education Justice Alliance (BEJA), testified regarding the passage of Question 2 eliminating the MCAS.

- Travis Marshall, Roslindale resident, Community advocate, BPS parent, testified regarding inclusion education.
- Gabriela Hernandez, Jamaica Plain resident, BPS parent, testified regarding their experiences with Special Education.

## ACTION ITEMS

Ms. Lima Barbosa sought clarification on whether the Early College Support Grant would continue to support the existing college programs. The superintendent confirmed that it would.

Dr. Alkins inquired about tracking the growth of early college programs and whether there are plans for expansion to other high schools. The superintendent outlined efforts to have all high schools earn the early college designation, track student progress, and expand both early college and career pathways across the district.

Mr. O'Neill asked if the Food and Nutritional Services infrastructure grant was for the central kitchen serving schools without kitchens. The superintendent said that this grant will equip satellite kitchens to provide meals for schools without kitchens, including necessary upgrades to equipment and infrastructure.

Mr. Ismail asked how Early College classes are chosen and if students can select based on their interests. The superintendent explained that school leaders, teachers, and students work together to select Early College courses, partnering with local colleges to minimize travel time.

***Approved*** - The Committee approved by unanimous consent grants for approval totaling \$1,960,484.

## REPORT

***MassCore Update*** - Secondary Superintendent for College, Career, and Life Readiness Dr. Ted Lombardi, Chief of Teaching and Learning Leslie Ryan Miller, Head of School at the Margarita Muñiz Academy Ms. Dania Vasquez, and Head of school at the Boston Adult Technical Academy (BATA) Mr. Benjamin Helfat presented a report on the MassCore Graduation Requirements Update.

Dr. Lombardi explained that in May 2021, the school committee voted to adopt the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's MassCore Framework as the graduation requirement for Boston Public Schools students. This policy supports standardized graduation requirements across all schools grounded in the high-quality academic foundation and experience we believe all students should have upon graduation. The graduation requirements begin with the Class of 2026.

Ms. Ryan Miller and Dr. Lombardi shared that since the policy vote in 2021, the district has taken multiple steps to move forward with

implementation, including:

- the implementation of high-quality instructional materials and equitable literacy, raising the standards within each class taught toward graduation;
- a comprehensive review of the course catalog and providing school leaders with technical assistance related to course scheduling;
- the addition of over 50 FTEs across 30 schools to support the implementation of MassCore at the school level; and
- the expansion of early college, innovation, and CTE pathways across secondary schools.

Dr. Lombardi said MassCore completion has improved from 25% to 51%, with the class of 2024 showing a 10-15% increase over the class of 2022. However, achievement gaps remain, particularly between racial groups and among low-income students, students with disabilities, and English language learners. Efforts to close these gaps are ongoing.

Dr. Lombardi noted challenges, especially with six-period school days that limit students' ability to complete the required credits, especially for multilingual learners and students with disabilities.

The district is exploring different strategies:

- Working with schools to understand desire to shift to seven period day and mitigation strategies to support students to be able to complete MassCore
- Establish working groups with school leaders and other stakeholders to create an equitable and rigorous pathway to graduation, particularly for our multilingual learners and students who have resource room on their IEPs.

Dr. Lombardi discussed post-pandemic recovery, stressing the need for social-emotional support and balancing MassCore requirements with student well-being.

Ms. Vázquez discussed the challenges of implementing MassCore, particularly for dual language schools, where aligning curricula, course codes, and transcripts to meet the requirements proved to be a complex and time-intensive process. While acknowledging the progress made, she emphasized the need for flexibility in school schedules and the importance of considering the broader context and value of the 22-credit requirement to ensure it supports the diverse needs of all students. Ms. Vazquez also raised concerns about interpreting transcripts for older students from other countries or states, stressing the need for clearer guidance to ensure fair credit allocation.

Mr. Helfat emphasized the challenges of meeting MassCore requirements for alternative education students, particularly those who start with limited credits. He expressed concern that the current framework may not be feasible for these students, especially given their time constraints. He suggested exploring more flexible, innovative approaches to support their success and ensure equitable opportunities for all students.

The superintendent acknowledged progress with MassCore but emphasized the need for flexible, alternative graduation pathways to support diverse student needs, praising school leaders for their innovation in addressing these challenges.



Ms. Lima Barbosa raised concerns about multilingual and disabled students meeting graduation requirements by 2026, particularly those arriving mid-year. She emphasized the importance of access to extracurricular and career programs without additional burdens and sought details on how these students will be supported. Dr. Lombardi highlighted the need to balance graduation requirements with personalized support and suggested forming working groups to explore solutions like adjusting schedules. The superintendent emphasized equal opportunities and ongoing efforts to support multilingual and special education students, with plans for alternative pathways and exemptions for late entrants by spring. Ms. Lima Barbosa offered to collaborate on solutions to ensure equitable preparation for these students to meet MCAS standards.

Dr. Alkins asked about how many schools are using the flexible third pathway and if there had been discussions with alternative education schools on required courses. Dr. Lombardi explained that few schools, mostly alternative ed, use pathway three, which allows flexibility in electives while core requirements remain the same. He noted meetings with alternative education leaders focused on expanding pathways to include college or career experiences. The superintendent emphasized that pathway three offers flexibility for schools with unique needs, and many are already meeting required standards, with a focus on documenting these practices.

Dr. Alkins asked how the 42% on-track rate for the class of 2026 compares to previous cohorts. The superintendent said it appears ahead of previous cohorts, though differences in school alignment make comparison challenging.

Ms. Polanco Garcia expressed concerns about the financial support and curriculum needs for multilingual students and those with disabilities. Ms. Vazquez emphasized the need for more resources and district collaboration to address these gaps. The superintendent highlighted the unique costs of dual language programs and the importance of careful resource management and collaboration with school leaders for successful implementation.

Mr. Tran shared his experience as an immigrant without formal education, recognizing the challenges of alternative education and offering support for addressing these issues.

Mr. O'Neill acknowledged the committee's diverse perspectives and the challenges of the MCAS graduation requirement, emphasizing the need for a system that supports all students. While praising progress with MassCore, he noted ongoing implementation challenges. The superintendent confirmed that the committee would receive further updates in the spring on solutions, including exemptions, alternative pathways, and funding for successful implementation, while maintaining high standards.

Dr. Alkins asked how to identify schools facing implementation challenges and better allocate resources. Dr. Lombardi shared that data on the class of 2026 has been collected and will expand. The superintendent stressed the need for detailed, student-level data to pinpoint struggling groups and tailor support.

Ms. Lima Barbosa asked how the inclusion education proposal supports multilingual students and those with disabilities, and how other districts are addressing these challenges. The superintendent highlighted the need for a creative team approach and noted that the district is working with DESE to gather data from other districts using MassCore to inform implementation.

Ms. Robinson thanked the team for their work, highlighted the need for a consistent graduation requirement in BPS, and emphasized the importance of meeting the diverse needs of students. She acknowledged progress and stressed continued investment in quality education to ensure student success.

Dr. Alkins asked why the policy was made a requirement in 2021 instead of a framework. Mr. O'Neill explained it was recommended by the superintendent for clarity, while noting the challenges of full implementation. Ms. Robinson stated the policy aimed to establish consistent achievement standards, acknowledging progress but emphasizing the need for further adjustments.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT (*CONTINUED*)**

None.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. O'Neill noted a parent's concern about a discrepancy on the district website and requested it be addressed before the Friday deadline. The Superintendent confirmed it was being looked into.


Mr. O'Neill announced and congratulated Chair Robinson for being named to the Allstate School Committee at the Mass Association of School Committees' annual conference. She was selected in recognition of her outstanding leadership in Division 10.

Mr. Tran asked for clarification on the outcome of an incident where a teacher was assaulted, requesting an update on the matter.

#### **ADJOURN**

***Approved*** - At approximately 8.39 p.m. the Committee unanimously approved a motion by roll call to adjourn to the meeting.

Attest:



Lena Parvex  
Executive Secretary