



LOWELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Date:	December 11, 2024
Time:	6:30PM
Location:	Mayor's Reception Room, 375 Merrimack Street, 2nd Floor, Lowell, MA 01852

Members of the public can view the meeting via LTC. Those wishing to speak about a specific agenda item must register in advance by emailing the Superintendent. Please include the agenda item, as well as your phone number and email address so we can provide a Zoom link for access. The email address is lbedoya@lowell.k12.ma.us. If you do not have access to email, you may contact us at 978-674-4324. All requests must be submitted by 2:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting.

1. SALUTE TO FLAG

2. ROLL CALL

On a roll call at 6:39 p.m., all members present were, namely: Mr. Conway, Ms. Delrossi, Ms. Doherty, Mr. Lay, Ms. Martin, Mayor Rourke and Mr. Bahou.

Surika S. Prak, LHS Student Advisory Council was also present.

3. MINUTES

3.1. The Approval of the Minutes of the Regularly Scheduled Lowell School Committee Meeting of November 20, 2024

Mr. Lay moved to accept and place on file the minutes of the Regularly Scheduled School Committee meetings that was held on November 20, 2024; the motion was seconded by Mr. Bahou. The motion passed with 7 yeas.

4. PERMISSION TO ENTER

4.1. Permission to Enter - December 11, 2024

Ms. Doherty moved to approve the Permission to Enter; the motion was seconded by Ms. Delrossi. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Ms. Martin).



5. MEMORIALS

5.1. **Maureen A. Souza**, Front Office Secretary at Robinson Middle School

5.2. **Thomas J. Canty**, Husband of Jane Mosher Canty and Father of Brendan Canty English Teacher at Bartlett Community Partnership School

6. MOTIONS

6.1. [By Eileen DelRossi]: Request the superintendent to report on the bus dismissal procedure for each middle school students throughout the district: Are they escorted to the bus by staff? How is each middle school bus dismissal procedure, is each school the same or different?

Ms. Delrossi moved to approve; the motion was seconded by Ms. Doherty. The motion passed with 7 yeas.

6.2. [By Eileen DelRossi]: Request the superintendent to report on two-way communication at the middle school level when it comes to a student being disciplined at school? How is the parent notified? phone call? email? talking points?

Ms. Delrossi moved to approve; the motion was seconded by Mr. Lay. The motion passed with 7 yeas.

7. SUBCOMMITTEES

7.1. The Approval of the Minutes of the Policy and Governance Subcommittee Meeting of November 26, 2024

Ms. Doherty, Chairperson of the Policy Subcommittee, informed the Committee that the subcommittee has thoroughly reviewed all policies in Section G. She noted that the first reading of Section G is included on the agenda for the Committee's review. Additionally, she announced that the next Policy Subcommittee meeting is scheduled for January 8, 2025.

Ms. Doherty moved to accept the following report as a report of progress; the motion was seconded by Mr. Bahou. The motion passed with 7 yeas.

8. REPORTS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

8.1. Strategic Planning Steering Committee Update

Ms. Crocker-Roberge, the Assistant Superintendent for Schools & Leadership, presented a report to the Committee that informed them that the process of developing a new strategic plan for Lowell Public Schools has been underway since July. In partnership with consultants Rachel Skerritt and Allie Wisialowski from Attuned Educational Partners, Inc., the process thus far has involved three major components:



- Performance Data Analysis: Review of key organizational data to identify areas of strength, weakness, and opportunity. Attuned reviewed data provided by Lowell Public Schools and publicly available performance data from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and other national publications.
- Instructional Quality Review: Quality and equity assessment of specific instructional practices and structures. Attuned reviewed instructional artifacts as well as conducted in-person visits to observe lessons in 76 classrooms in May 2023 and 56 classrooms in September/October 2024 which spanned grade levels and content areas.
- Constituent Perspectives: Surveys and interviews with community members, staff, and others to collect perspectives on the system's strengths and challenges. Attuned interviewed 8 system/school leaders and one school committee member and held five unique focus groups with students (2 high school groups), family members, teachers, and school leaders. Attuned also shared a survey with all stakeholders and received 2,125 responses including 422 from students, 998 from family members, and 649 from school staff and leaders. To date, we have completed three phases of the yearlong process and are currently beginning Phase 4.

There are 5 phases and they are as follows: Kickoff and Planning, Data Review & Root Cause Analysis, Organizational Diagnostic Report, Drafting the Plan, Progress Monitoring and Early Intervention.

Ms. Doherty asked what this is costing the district.

Superintendent Skinner stated that there is no cost to the district.

She expressed that, overall, she found the report to be informative. However, she also mentioned that she still has concerns regarding the issue of equitable school climate.

Ms. Doherty moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 8.1 through 8.12 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Ms. Delrossi. The motion passed with 7 yeas.

8.2. Response to Motion (By David Conway, 11/20/2024) Regarding Presidential LHS Mock Election

Ms. Crocker-Roberge, the Assistant Superintendent for Schools & Leadership, presented a report to the Committee that informed them that Lowell High School Social Studies Department conducted a Mock Election on Monday, November 4th. After much deliberation on how to conduct this activity, we decided to have students "vote" in their Social Studies classes. A Google form was built to include all federal and state races as well as all five ballot questions. Candidates were listed on the ballot in alphabetical order by last name with their party affiliation at the end. For the ballot questions, descriptions of what a "YES" or "NO" vote meant were taken directly from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts official voter guide. We had 1,049 students participate which is short of what we were hoping for in terms of participation. We will be working to identify how to improve that next year. We also will be leveraging social studies classrooms throughout the Fall to reinforce the importance of



voting as many students felt that their opinion or voice didn't matter. We are also looking at ways to embed current events and tie them back to what students are currently studying if they are in a United States History class. The report also included the results.

Ms. Doherty moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 8.1 through 8.12 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Ms. Delrossi. The motion passed with 7 yeas.

8.3. Response To Motion (By Dominik Lay, 10/16/24) Regarding PA Systems

Ms. Crocker-Roberge, the Assistant Superintendent for Schools & Leadership, presented a comprehensive report to the Committee detailing the current status of public address (PA) systems across the district. She noted that new PA systems have been installed at Washington Elementary, Reilly Elementary, McAvinnue Elementary, Morey Elementary, the new LHS building, and a section of the 1980's LHS building still in use during ongoing construction. However, part of the 1922 building at LHS, which is also in use, still relies on an older PA system, though it is scheduled for an upgrade before the start of the next school year. Additionally, the STEM Academy's modular classrooms currently lack a PA system and are using walkie-talkies for communication. A purchase order has been issued for the PA system installation, with work set to begin in mid-December. Sixteen schools reported issues with "dead zones" where the PA system's coverage is insufficient. In these areas, walkie-talkies are being used as a workaround. The remaining schools have reported no such issues. Aside from the recently upgraded systems mentioned earlier, all other PA systems in use are over 10 years old. Some of the areas relying on walkie-talkies are classrooms that were not originally intended for instruction when the schools were built, resulting in inadequate coverage in these newer spaces. The report also included a chart with data collected in November, which highlighted the affected schools and the specific issues they are facing.

Mr. Conway stated that he would like to continue receiving updates on this.

Ms. Doherty moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 8.1 through 8.12 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Ms. Delrossi. The motion passed with 7 yeas.

8.4. Response To Motion (By Dominik Lay, 02/07/24) Regarding Maintenance Report

Ms. Doherty moved to send agenda item #8.4 Response To Motion (By Dominik Lay, 02/07/24) Regarding Maintenance Report and agenda item #8.8. Response To Motions (By Mayor Dan Rourke 08/21/24 and Eileen DelRossi, 11/05/24) Regarding Transportation Motions to a Facilities & Transportation subcommittee for further discussion; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. The motion passed with 7 yeas.

Ms. Doherty moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 8.1 through 8.12 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Ms. Delrossi. The motion passed with 7 yeas.



8.5. Response To Motion (By Connie Martin, David Conway, and Jackie Doherty, 11/20/24) Regarding renaming Jeanne D'Arc school to former Superintendent's name.

Dr. Hall, the Assistant Superintendent for Operations, informed the Committee that the facilities department is in the process of securing graphic designs for their review and approval. Additionally, the Law Department has been consulted to confirm that no further votes are required at this stage.

Ms. Doherty expressed her full support of this, but emphasized the importance of ensuring that Dr. Janice Adie, after whom the program is named, is not removed.

Ms. Doherty moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 8.1 through 8.12 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Ms. Delrossi. The motion passed with 7 yeas.

8.6. Response To Motion (By Fred Bahou and Eileen DelRossi, 11/06/24) Regarding Policies and procedures for injured staff members.

Dr. Hall, the Assistant Superintendent for Operations, informed the Committee that when an employee is injured, the school should immediately fill out an injury report and email it to the law department, the workers' compensation claims service, and HR. A new process was rolled out for workers' compensation claims last June by the Solicitor's office. School leaders have been following this process. We do not have separate procedures for when students with disabilities are involved. The report included a copy of the accident reporting procedure and the employee injury report form which is to be filled out when an injury occurs.

Ms. Doherty moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 8.1 through 8.12 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Ms. Delrossi. The motion passed with 7 yeas.

8.7. Response To Motion (By Jackie Doherty, 09/18/24) Regarding Exit Interview Data

Dr. Hall, the Assistant Superintendent for Operations, informed the Committee that the personnel office conducts exit interviews for employees leaving the district. These employees receive an email with a survey and checklist, offering them the option to either opt out or participate in completing a confidential questionnaire. Additionally, they are given the opportunity for a personal exit interview. The checklist reviews return items and other exit-related tasks. Dr. Hall noted that distributing this information has been valuable in identifying any remaining issues before out-processing and in updating the Superintendent on feedback or concerns raised by departing employees. A total of 222 exit survey invitations were sent out, and 92 exit interviews were conducted. Data has been continuously collected since the 2021-2022 school year, spanning the 2022-2023, 2023-2024, and 2024-2025 school years. The information gathered includes responses from retirees, those resigning, and employees transferring between schools. The questionnaire includes questions about whether employees would consider returning to Lowell Public Schools in the future.



Ms. Doherty stated that moving forward the Committee can receive this twice a year rather than quarterly.

Superintendent Skinner suggested doing this annually (July or August).

Ms. Martin suggested building this report into a year-end HR report.

Ms. Doherty moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 8.1 through 8.12 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Ms. Delrossi. The motion passed with 7 yeas.

8.8. Response To Motions (By Mayor Dan Rourke 08/21/24 and Eileen DelRossi, 11/05/24) Regarding Transportation Motions

Ms. Doherty moved to send agenda item #8.4 Response To Motion (By Dominik Lay, 02/07/24) Regarding Maintenance Report and agenda item #8.8. Response To Motions (By Mayor Dan Rourke 08/21/24 and Eileen DelRossi, 11/05/24) Regarding Transportation Motions to a Facilities & Transportation subcommittee for further discussion; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. The motion passed with 7 yeas.

Ms. Doherty moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 8.1 through 8.12 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Ms. Delrossi. The motion passed with 7 yeas.

8.9. Response To Motion (By Eileen DelRossi, 10/16/2024) Regarding Accountability for Central Office

Superintendent Skinner provided a report to the Committee that informed them that the focus of this motion aligns closely with his core values, particularly the importance of accountability and the necessity of respectful communication with parents. He stated that central office departments are held to the highest standards of accountability in their support of our schools and in advancing our district's mission. Clear goals and measurable outcomes have been established for each department, all aligned with our strategic priorities. Regular reviews with individual Assistant Superintendents allow us to assess progress, address challenges, and identify opportunities for improvement. An important aspect of accountability for central office departments, as it relates to the motion's call for a "plan", is the series of Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) developed this fall with the Assistant Superintendents. Moreover, the report stated that he recognizes the critical importance of building trust and fostering strong relationships with families and that he and his team are fully committed to addressing their inquiries and concerns with efficiency, professionalism, and empathy. The report stated that there are clear expectations for acknowledging and thoroughly addressing parent inquiries with respect and understanding. Regular training for central office staff reinforces these standards. In fact, the Superintendent personally led one such training session this fall for all central office staff, focusing on themes like respect, responsiveness, empathy, and persistence, which included role-playing scenarios. The Superintendent stated that he will continue to monitor responsiveness to ensure high standards are met that our families deserve.

Ms. Doherty moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 8.1 through 8.12 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Ms. Delrossi. The motion passed with 7 yeas.



8.10. Response To Motion (By Eileen DelRossi, 11/20/24) Regarding Supporting Grants

Dr. Pinto, the Assistant Superintendent for Finance, provided a report to the Committee that informed them of the following grants:

- **The Supporting Effective Instruction Grant (Title IIA):** Lowell Public Schools (LPS) has an FY25 award of \$611,595.
- **The Student Support and Academic Grant (Title IV):** LPS has an FY25 award of \$462,052
- **English Language Acquisition Grants (likely Title IIIA):** The grant descriptor attachment from the 11-20-2024 meeting did not include information on English Language Acquisition grants, but LPS's FY25 allocation for Title IIIA is \$659,016.

In addition to these, LPS has several other grants for English Learners. We can provide further details on additional grants for multilingual students if requested.

- **The Promise Neighborhoods Grant:** LPS is not eligible to apply for this grant, as eligibility is limited to Institutes of Higher Education, Non-Profit Entities, or Indian Tribal Organizations. However, LPS would be a willing partner with any non-profit organization (NPO) or community coalition and would fully support the application process, though we cannot serve as the lead applicant. This is a federal grant opportunity, and funding for FY26 is uncertain.

Ms. Doherty moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 8.1 through 8.12 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Ms. Delrossi. The motion passed with 7 yeas.

8.11. Response To Motion (By Jackie Doherty, 06/14/24) Regarding Special Education Improvement Plan

Ms. Doherty moved to send agenda item #8.11 Response To Motion (By Jackie Doherty, 06/14/24) Regarding Special Education Improvement Plan to a Special Education subcommittee for further discussion; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. The motion passed with 7 yeas.

Ms. Doherty moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 8.1 through 8.12 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Ms. Delrossi. The motion passed with 7 yeas.

8.12. Report on Motions

Superintendent Skinner provided the Committee with an updated report on the status of outstanding motions and asked the Committee if they had any concerns or questions.

Mr. Conway stated that he has seen no progress on his motion concerning Park Ave East.

Superintendent Skinner stated that this report is listed as ongoing.



Mr. Conway stated that the report on the mock election is not completed and that the Athletic program motion should be left as ongoing.

Ms. Doherty stated that she will send the Superintendent a list of motions for removal.

Ms. Doherty moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 8.1 through 8.12 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Ms. Delrossi. The motion passed with 7 yeas.

9. NEW BUSINESS

9.1. Approval To Accept and Expend Allocated FY25 Awards

The grants funds provided in the report have been secured by the Lowell Public Schools through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Mosaic Lowell, and Mass Cultural Council.

Mr. Conway moved to approve, accept and expend the allocated FY25 awards; the motion was seconded by Ms. Martin. The motion passed with 7 yeas.

9.2. Approval to Accept Vavus Pocket Translation Kits

The Multilingual Learner Department (MLE) has recently generously donated 50 Vavus Pocket devices and two Enersound portable group simultaneous translation kits. These items were originally requested by the Brookline Center, which then forwarded the request to VinFen, a nonprofit organization based in Lowell that provides health and community services.

Ms. Doherty moved to accept the Vavus Pocket Translation Kits; the motion was seconded by Mr. Bahou. The motion passed with 7 yeas.

9.3. Request Approval of Mural Project at the Butler Middle School – MassCultural

Ms. Martin moved to approve the Mural Project at the Butler Middle School - MassCultural; the motion was seconded by Mr. Lay. The motion passed with 7 yeas.

9.4. Budget Modification Request

Ms. Delrossi moved to approve the budget modification in the amount of \$341,400; the motion was seconded by Ms. Doherty. The motion passed with 7 yeas.

9.5. First Reading of LPS Policies Drafted by MASC Section G

The Committee is still awaiting guidance from the law department before final approval.

Ms. Martin made a motion to approve the first reading of LPS Policies Drafted by MASC Section G; the motion was seconded by Ms. Doherty. The motion passed with 7 yeas.



9.6. Home Education

Superintendent Skinner recommended that the following parents/guardians be allowed to home educate their child:

Sheila Guevara

Mr. Bahou moved to approve home education; the motion was seconded by Ms. Doherty. The motion passed with 7 yeas.

10. PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL

10.1. The Members of the United Teachers of Lowell Hereby Donate fourteen [14] Sick Leave Days to Kathryn Brennan Daley Middle School Teacher.

Ms. Delrossi moved to approve the professional personnel; the motion was seconded by Mr. Lay. The motion passed with 7 yeas.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Doherty moved to adjourn at 7:45 p.m.; the motion was seconded by Mr. Lay. The motion passed with 7 yeas.

Respectfully submitted,

Liam Skinner, Superintendent and
Secretary to the Lowell School Committee

LS/mes