



# LOWELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

## REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

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**Date:** January 15, 2025

**Time:** 6:30PM

**Location:** City Council Chamber, 375 Merrimack Street, 2nd Floor, Lowell, MA 01852

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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 skeo@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.

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### 1. SALUTE TO FLAG

### 2. ROLL CALL

On a roll call at 6:36 p.m., members present were, namely: Ms. Doherty, Ms. Martin, Mayor Rourke, Mr. Bahou, Mr. Conway and Ms. Delrossi. Mr. Lay was absent.

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

### 3. SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS

#### 3.1. Spotlight On Excellence: Lincoln 4th Grade Baseball Club

The Spotlight on Excellence featured the Lincoln School 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Baseball club. Coach Jones and Assistant Coach Mead, led an after-school club which was made available to third graders in the spring of 2022. The players learned the fundamentals of the game. In the fall, when they returned as fourth graders, they continued to practice for the spring baseball game between the Lincoln teachers and staff. Coach Jones reported that it was a very rewarding experience for all involved.

### 4. MINUTES

4.1. The Approval of the Minutes of the Regularly Scheduled Lowell School Committee Meeting of December 11, 2024

Ms. Martin moved to accept and place on file the minutes of the Regularly Scheduled School Committee meeting that was held on December 11, 2024; the motion was seconded by Ms. Doherty. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).



## 5. PERMISSION TO ENTER

### 5.1. Permission to Enter - January 15, 2025

**Ms. Delrossi moved to approve the Permission to Enter; the motion was seconded by Mr. Conway. The motion passed with 5 yeas, 2 absent (Mr. Lay, Ms. Martin).**

## 6. MEMORIALS

### 6.1. Electra J. Parigian, Retired Teacher at Lowell High School

**Ms. Doherty moved to suspend the rules to take agenda item # 10.4. Approval to Update High School Graduation Requirements out of order; the motion was seconded by Ms. Delrossi. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

**Ms. Doherty moved to allow Ms. Yok to address the Committee; the motion was seconded by Ms. Martin. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

## 7. MOTIONS

**7.1. [By David Conway]:** Request the Superintendent prepares the detailed process, procedure, and plan that are currently in place for the safe and orderly end of school dismissal at Lowell High School. And furthermore, list any and all additional safety measures that are being discussed.

**Mr. Conway moved to approve; the motion was seconded by Mr. Bahou. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

**7.2. [By Fred Bahou]:** Request the Superintendent to have proper department explore using staff school identification cards to be used as a fob to access their respective schools & accessing LPS buildings.

**Mr. Bahou moved to approve; the motion was seconded by Ms. Delrossi. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

**7.3. [By Fred Bahou]:** Request the Superintendent to have monthly reports on the status of repairs that are taking place at the Riddick Athletic Complex & the Freshman Academy.

**Mr. Bahou moved to approve; the motion was seconded by Ms. Martin. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

**7.4. [By Eileen DelRossi]:** Request the superintendent to report on how the traffic pattern change has impacted the Greenhalge school?

**Ms. Delrossi moved to approve; the motion was seconded by Mr. Conway. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**



**7.5. [By Eileen DelRossi]:** Request the superintendent work with NRT and the transportation department to create an easy to access link on the Lowell Public Schools website to identify if a bus may be delayed and specify an estimated amount of time delayed. As well as to specify if the driver has a different bus number what bus number they should be expecting for both AM and PM routes. In order to provide staff, and parents to prepare.

**Ms. Delrossi moved to approve; the motion was seconded by Ms. Martin. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

**7.6. [By Eileen DelRossi]:** Request the superintendent to report on the incoming migrant students who receive English Language Learner support and provide an update of their progress from registration to present.

**Ms. Delrossi moved to approve; the motion was seconded by Mr. Conway. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

## **8. SUBCOMMITTEES**

**8.1.** The Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Subcommittee Meeting of December 5, 2024

Mr. Bahou, Chairperson of the Finance Subcommittee, informed the Committee that Policy DJB-R – Purchasing Procedures, which outlines a timeline based on the type of purchase order being requested, was discussed in detail. He explained that the subcommittee also reviewed how contractual services are handled based on cost thresholds. For contracts under \$5,000, quotes are required, and sound business practices must be followed when entering the requisition. For contracts between \$5,000 and \$9,999, the Committee must approve the purchase through the Permission to Enter (PTE) process, and no further action can be taken until the PTE is received. For contracts between \$25,000 and \$99,999, Committee approval for the PTE is required along with three quotes. For contracts over \$100,000, the request must go out to bid, and a scope of services must be prepared and shared with the City of Lowell's Procurement Officer, who will advertise the bid for two weeks prior to the open date.

The subcommittee also discussed compensation schedules for teachers involved in professional development and other activities outside regular work hours, which are governed by the collective bargaining agreements. Additionally, it was noted that there is currently no policy for reimbursing staff for purchasing materials outside of Student Activities. All purchases must be directly related to the club or activity that staff are sponsoring or participating in. Staff are encouraged to follow the established procurement procedures (Policy DJB-R). Unauthorized purchases that bypass the accepted procurement process can result in budgeting inaccuracies. The subcommittee also considered the use of DocuSign as a potential tool to expedite the process.

**Mr. Bahou moved to move forward with executing a contract with DocuSign; the motion was seconded by Ms. Martin. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

**Ms. Delrossi moved to accept the following report as a report of progress; the motion was seconded by Mr. Bahou. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**



## 9. REPORTS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

### 9.1. Strategic Goals Progress Update

Ms. Crocker-Roberge, the Assistant Superintendent for Schools & Leadership, presented a report to the Committee that included the following executive summary:

- **Inclusive and Engaging Environment:** Lowell Public Schools was recognized for fostering an inclusive atmosphere that supported students and families from all backgrounds and that staff affirmed district leaders' commitment to advancing equity across schools. Classroom culture also consistently supported learning, with three-quarters of students actively engaged in lessons.
- **Dedicated and Compassionate Staff:** LPS staff were celebrated for their skill, experience, and deep commitment to student success. Retention rates were strong, consistently surpassing state and peer averages. The new district leadership team was also appreciated for its inclusive approach, improved communication, and clear dedication to positive student outcomes.
- **Community, Opportunities, and Belonging:** High school students reported a strong sense of belonging, and families and students appreciated the wide range of extracurricular and athletic opportunities available across the district. Families, especially those of color, were likely to recommend LPS to others. **Academic Achievement Compared to Peer Districts:** in 23-24, Lowell Public Schools Grade 10 ELA and math proficiency rates were the highest among district peers, and LPS outperformed all district peers in Math and all but one in ELA proficiency for Grades 3-8
- **Improving Attendance and School Culture:** Chronic absenteeism has dropped by 15 points since 2021-22, with LPS rates now better than peers and within 5% of statewide rates. Suspension rates have also decreased, indicating positive strides toward a supportive school culture that prioritizes student well-being.
- **Performance Gaps and Support for Special Populations:** Wide disparities in academic outcomes persisted across student subgroups, with Latino, multilingual, high-needs students, and students with disabilities underperforming in key areas like SAT Math, MCAS proficiency, and advanced course participation. Stakeholders also seek enhanced resources for diverse learners, especially for multilingual learners and students with autism.
- **Declining Graduation and College Readiness:** On-time graduation rates declined by 7 points since 2019-20, falling behind state averages, while college matriculation rates dropped by 10 points. Large gaps in both metrics were evident between student subgroups.
- **Curriculum Consistency and Rigor:** High-quality curriculum has been adopted in some subjects, yet gaps remain in K-8 ELA, with stakeholders calling for alignment with the science of reading. Observations also revealed inconsistent instructional rigor, with many classrooms not meeting grade-level standards.
- **Equity and Strategic Focus Concerns:** Although LPS aimed to advance equity, some staff shared deficit-based perspectives on student potential, and many felt overwhelmed by numerous initiatives. There was also a desire for greater staff involvement in decision-making.
- **Significant Variability Across Schools:** Academic outcomes varied considerably across schools. Family perceptions of student belonging and feeling welcome, as well as staff experiences of belonging, also varied widely across schools, underscoring the need for more consistent, equitable school climates.



- **Staff Diversity:** With only 18% of staff identifying as people of color, compared to 79% of students, stakeholders emphasized the need for a workforce that better reflects the student body's diversity.
- **Operations, Systems, and Facilities:** Stakeholders sought improved communication between central office and schools, more reliable and affordable transportation, and significant facility upgrades, particularly in ventilation and air conditioning. There was also a call for more equitable and transparent school placement and registration processes.

**Ms. Delrossi moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 9.1 through 9.9 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Ms. Martin. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

#### 9.2. Response To Motion (By Eileen DelRossi, 12/11/24) Regarding Middle School Student Disciplinary Actions

Ms. Crocker-Roberge, the Assistant Superintendent for Schools & Leadership, presented a report to the Committee that informed them that when student behavior issues in middle school take place, several different interventions and responses can happen depending on the nature of the behavior issue and the frequency and severity of the infraction. Student discipline infractions are often highly contextual and are not treated with a one-size-fits-all approach. Schools have a variety of resources for communicating with parents/guardians when a student discipline issue warrants the outreach. These include: phone calls (via school phones or Google Voice numbers, with translation services such as Talking Points or Lionbridge as needed), emails, text messages (using applications such as Google Voice, Remind, Class Dojo, Schoology, or Talking Points), home visits (for serious or repeated discipline issues when other outreach methods are not effective), written notification (i.e. school-issued detention slips, writing reflections for parent/guardian. School personnel often use multiple communication methods to ensure the information is accurately relayed to the parent/guardian, such as a short text or Class Dojo message prompting parents/guardians to check their voicemail/email or to call school staff at their earliest convenience to discuss a situation. When a conduct referral to the administrative office is actioned and a consequence or other restorative practices are initiated, then written or verbal notice is provided to the parent/guardian using one of the methods outlined above.

**Ms. Delrossi moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 9.1 through 9.9 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Ms. Martin. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

#### 9.3. Response To Motion (By Eileen DelRossi, 12/11/24) Regarding middle school bus dismissal

Ms. Crocker-Roberge, the Assistant Superintendent for Schools & Leadership, presented a report to the Committee that informed them that the bus dismissal procedures follow relative similarity throughout the middle and PK-8 schools, but allow for the unique circumstances dictated by the school's dismissal time, the likelihood of late buses, traffic congestion in the area, and the availability of a large space to house students during dismissal. Students in middle school move independently under staff monitoring



their large school buses as there are multiple bus routes within each classroom and grade level. Students with small bus transportation are escorted according to IEP/504 accommodations if specified.

**Ms. Delrossi moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 9.1 through 9.9 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Ms. Martin. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

9.4. Response To Motion (By Eileen DelRossi, 8/21/24) Regarding Reading and Math Performance

Ms. Roye, the Assistant Superintendent for Academics & Instruction, presented a report to the Committee that informed them that reading levels are determined through a combination of factors that assess both the difficulty of the text and the reader's ability to comprehend it. The report stated that there are many methods used and the report provided multiple recommendations based on several criteria's.

**Ms. Delrossi moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 9.1 through 9.9 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Ms. Martin. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

9.5. Response To Motion (By Eileen DelRossi, 10/16/24) Regarding Sports Programs at Middle Schools

Ms. Roye, the Assistant Superintendent for Academics & Instruction, presented a report to the Committee that informed them that our middle school intramural programs are as follows:

- **Cross Country:** The season culminated in a successful championship race at Shedd Park on October 16th, with Lowell teams securing victory in all four races.
- **Wrestling:** The program recently concluded its citywide championship meet, awarding team championships and individual medals. Notably, Lowell HS athletes and coaches played a key role in leading this program.
- **Basketball:** The season is underway with full boys' and girls' teams from all nine schools. The championship games are scheduled for February 10th at Lowell HS.
- **Volleyball:** The spring season promises high engagement, with all nine schools fielding full boys' and girls' teams. The championship matches will be held on May 19th at Lowell HS.
- **Soccer:** Utilizing a citywide model to maximize participation, the program utilizes UML recreation fields for clinics and games. Lowell HS soccer program and the Lowell Police community services have provided valuable leadership and support.

The report stated that sustained success and growth of the middle school sports program relies heavily on several key factors like staffing, site management, security, transportation, referees, and venues.

**Ms. Delrossi moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 9.1 through 9.9 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Ms. Martin. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**



#### 9.6. Response To Motion (By Eileen DelRossi, 11/06/24) Regarding ELL Services within the District

Ms. Roye, the Assistant Superintendent for Academics & Instruction, presented a report to the Committee that informed them that the Lowell Public Schools is serving 4,429 English Language Learners (ELLs) across various grade levels and schools. These students are assessed and classified based on their performance on the ACCESS for ELLs (English Language Learners) test, categorizing them into different proficiency levels. The district follows guidelines set by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to determine the type and amount of English Language Development (ELD) services required for each student. The required amount of ELD services for MLs depends on their most recent ACCESS for ELLs test scores:

- Level 1 or 2: Requires 90 minutes of ELD per day.
- Level 3 or 4: Requires 45 minutes of ELD per day.

Lowell Public Schools provides a variety of instructional approaches to meet the diverse needs of Multilingual English Learners across the district. Pull-out, push-in, self-contained, and coteaching models ensure that students receive tailored support based on their proficiency levels. Staffing is adequate, with ESL teachers, paraprofessionals, and tutors working together to support student success across all grade levels.

**Ms. Delrossi moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 9.1 through 9.9 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Ms. Martin. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

#### 9.7. Response To Motion (By Fred Bahou, 11/06/24) Regarding K-4 Students not taking chromebooks home

Ms. Roye, the Assistant Superintendent for Academics & Instruction, presented a report to the Committee that informed them that the Chromebook and iPad usage policies in the Lowell Public Schools for Grades K-4 have been reviewed, focusing on whether students should take devices home. A key distinction is made between Chromebooks (for general use) and iPads (primarily for special education in K-2, requiring home access). After reviewing the current recommendations and taking into account the feedback from the Technology Department, and given the current data, the recommendation for Grades K-4 to not allow Chromebooks to go home seems to be the most prudent decision. This policy would help ensure the protection of district devices and reduce the need for costly storage solutions. However, the success of this policy should be regularly reviewed, especially considering the concerns related to middle school Chromebooks and breakages.

**Ms. Delrossi moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 9.1 through 9.9 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Ms. Martin. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

#### 9.8. FY26 Budget Development Calendar Draft

Dr. Pinto, Assistant Superintendent of Finance, provided a draft calendar to provide a timeline for the district's budgeting process, ensuring that it is transparent, efficient and compliant with Massachusetts' state laws and local requirements. The tentative dates provided are as follows:



- April 5, 2025
- April 16, 2025

**Ms. Delrossi moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 9.1 through 9.9 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Ms. Martin. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

#### 9.9. Personnel Report

The Personnel Report officially informs the Committee of all retirements, resignations, promotions and new hires.

**Ms. Delrossi moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 9.1 through 9.9 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Ms. Martin. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

#### 9.10. Home Education

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

Sheila Montanez

**Mr. Bahou moved to approve home education; the motion was seconded by Ms. Martin. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

### 10. NEW BUSINESS

#### 10.1. 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.

**Mr. Bahou moved to approve, accept and expend the allocated FY25 awards; the motion was seconded by Mr. Conway. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

#### 10.2. Budget Modification Request

**Mr. Bahou moved to approve the budget modification in the amount of \$149,709; the motion was seconded by Ms. Doherty. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

#### 10.3. First Reading Chapter 74 CTE Admission Policy Draft

**Ms. Delrossi made a motion to waive the first reading of Chapter 74 CTE Admission Policy and to send it to the next School Committee meeting for approval; the motion was seconded by Ms. Doherty. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**



#### 10.4. Approval to Update High School Graduation Requirements

Ms. Yok spoke on this agenda items and spoke about the issues she had around passing the MCAS test and asked for her transcript to be reviewed for her to possibly be allowed to graduate.

On November 5, 2024, the state of Massachusetts passed a ballot measure to remove MCAS as a graduation requirement. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has provided the guidance below for districts that all districts serving high school students should develop a process that is:

- Aligned with the new language of the statute in a way that allows districts to demonstrate students have met the new requirements.
- Approved by the governing board of the district (e.g., school committee, board of trustees, etc.).
- Shared with all students, families/guardians, and district stakeholders.
- Publicly available in multiple languages.

**Ms. Doherty moved to approve updated high school graduation requirements; the motion was seconded by Ms. Martin. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

#### 11. CONVENTION/CONFERENCE REQUESTS

11.1. Overnight Request - PoG School Visit Springfield, MA

**Ms. Doherty moved to bundle and approve the convention/conference requests; the motion was seconded by Mr. Conway. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

11.2. Overnight Request: LHS - AFJROTC - Daytona Beach, FL

**Ms. Doherty moved to bundle and approve the convention/conference requests; the motion was seconded by Mr. Conway. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

11.3. Overnight Request: LHS to Outdoor Adventure Club in Russell, MA

**Ms. Doherty moved to bundle and approve the convention/conference requests; the motion was seconded by Mr. Conway. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

11.4. Overnight Request - Conference in Indianapolis, IN

**Ms. Doherty moved to bundle and approve the convention/conference requests; the motion was seconded by Mr. Conway. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

11.5. Overnight Request: OpenSciEd Professional Development Workshop Norwood, MA

**Ms. Doherty moved to bundle and approve the convention/conference requests; the motion was seconded by Mr. Conway. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**



11.6. Overnight Request: Parent Child Plus Conference Washington DC

**Ms. Doherty moved to bundle and approve the convention/conference requests; the motion was seconded by Mr. Conway. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

## **12. PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL**

12.1. The Members of the United Teachers of Lowell Hereby Donate sixty [60] Sick Leave Days to Amy Morris Bartlett Community Partnership School Teacher.

**Mr. Bahou moved to approve the professional personnel; the motion was seconded by Ms. Martin. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

**Mr. Conway made a motion to cancel the February 19, 2025, School Committee meeting due to school vacation; seconded by Mr. Bahou. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

## **13. ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr. Conway moved to adjourn at 8:42 p.m.; the motion was seconded by Mr. Bahou. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mr. Lay).**

Respectfully submitted,

Liam Skinner, Superintendent and  
Secretary to the Lowell School Committee

LS/mes