



# LOWELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

## REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

<b>Date:</b>	January 4, 2023
<b>Time:</b>	6:30PM
<b>Location:</b>	City Council Chamber, 375 Merrimack Street, 2nd Floor, Lowell, MA 01852

Members of the public may view the meeting via LTC and those wishing to speak regarding a specific agenda item shall register to speak in advance of the meeting by sending an email to the Superintendent indicating the agenda item, a phone number and email address so we can provide a zoom link to access the meeting. Email address is [mpalazzo@lowell.k12.ma.us](mailto:mpalazzo@lowell.k12.ma.us). If no access to email you may contact us at 978-674-4324. All requests must be submitted before 2:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting.

### 1. SALUTE TO FLAG

### 2. ROLL CALL

On a roll call at 6:38 p.m., members present were, namely: Mr. Lay, Ms. Martin, Ms. Thompson, Ms. Chhoun, Ms. Delrossi and Ms. Doherty. Mayor Chau was absent.

### 3. MINUTES

Ms. Delrossi asked for a point of personal privilege and read the following remarks:

“I would just like to clarify about the special meeting my present vote and clarify that I do stand with the staff but I also stand with the students of the city. In deciding to vote I held the fact that we just voted on hundreds of thousands of dollars for another HR audit after one was conducted in 2018. 2018 audit had great recommendations yet not one of them were implemented. I also thought, if we vote to bring outside law firm in, we are making our city a defendant in yet again another lawsuit and allowing outside firm to dig into our school system and our city. We as a school committee are not naive. We get emails, phone calls, texts, we know what is going on. As the administration knows what is going on. For it is not one issue several employment issues. I am scared honestly for what an outside law firm will find - This poor employment practice was highlighted in the last HR audit with limited to no corrective action. I have experienced this poor employment practices and feared my job when I knew I gave my heart and soul because I was not liked by a principal, I was so fearful to leave for my own uncle’s funeral because I knew if my substitute plans were not perfect that would only give this administrator a reason to fire me- A teacher or any type of employee in the district does not put their best effort into what they are hired for when they feel all they have worked for is threatened and this is all taken away from the children. I did not speak up, but it is embedded in my story, my journey as to why I left a job that I love in Lowell Public Schools to serve on the Lowell School Committee - I beg this administration to make right whatever they possibly can before an outside law firm walks into our school system. We are all



human beings, we are all here to serve our students and when we do not treat our own colleagues, and staff equally, fair, and just we inevitably take away from the students we are all here to serve. I beg of you all just to do better. Maybe if we did those exit interviews and really listened to the input and take into consideration the common issues then we could fix what is going on. Maybe we do not need to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on another HR audit or an outside investigation with lawyers to tear up our school system and city to give us corrective action, maybe we can just listen to those who have left and why and grow from there.”

**3.1.** Approval of the Minutes of the Regularly Scheduled School Committee Meeting of Wednesday, December 7, 2022

**Ms. Martin made a motion to accept and place on file the minutes of the Regularly Scheduled and Special School Committee Meetings that were held on Wednesday, December 7, 2022 and Wednesday, December 14, 2022; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mayor Chau) APPROVED**

**3.2.** Approval of the Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Lowell School Committee Meeting of Wednesday, December 14, 2022

**Ms. Martin made a motion to accept and place on file the minutes of the Regularly Scheduled and Special School Committee Meetings that were held on Wednesday, December 7, 2022 and Wednesday, December 14, 2022; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mayor Chau) APPROVED**

#### **4. PERMISSION TO ENTER**

**4.1.** Permission to Enter: January 4, 2023

**Ms. Thompson made a motion to approve the Permission to Enter: seconded by Mr. Lay. 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mayor Chau) APPROVED**

#### **5. MEMORIALS**

**5.1.** **Suwen Feng**, Mother-In-Law of Butler School Teacher, Kevin Freeman

**5.2.** **Latif Thomas**, Nephew of Morey School Teacher, Susan Uvanni

**5.3.** **John Sheehan**, Father of Lowell High School Head Custodian Michael Sheehan and Father of Sullivan School Teacher Kevin Sheehan.

**5.4.** **Joyce Ann Burgess**, Retired Murkland and Leblanc School Administrative Assistant and Mother of McAuliffe School Teacher Barbara Burgess



## 6. MOTIONS

**6.1. [By Connie Martin]:** Include on the agenda for the next Personnel Subcommittee an update from the City Law Department on the bid process for acquiring outside counsel to conduct the previously approved Internal Complaints Investigation.

Ms. Martin asked that it be communicated to the Law Department that she would like to have them in attendance to update the Committee on the status of the bid for acquiring outside counsel.

**Ms. Martin made a motion to approve; seconded by Ms. Chhoun. 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mayor Chau)**

**APPROVED**

**6.2. [By Jacqueline Doherty and Connie Martin]:** Request the City Law Office provide the committee with a report that cites when the Mayor, the Superintendent, or anyone has the authority to remove a member's motion from the School Committee Agenda prior to public notice and discussion of said motion.

Ms. Martin stated that this is to clarify exactly what the rules are regarding a motion that is placed on the agenda by a member of the body. She stated that she wanted to know what the actual rules are that allowed it be taken off the agenda without the opportunity for discussion. She also asked that the Law Department research the specific statutes that provide that right for the Mayor, and to have them present those findings to the Committee at the next meeting.

**Ms. Doherty made a motion to approve; seconded by Ms. Martin. 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mayor Chau)**

**APPROVED**

## 7. REPORTS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

### 7.1. Update on Universal Pre-K

Ms. Martin left the room during this presentation.

Ms. Van Thiel, Early Childhood Coordinator provided a PowerPoint presentation that included the following topics:

- What is Universal Pre-K?
- Why is Pre-K important?
- Lowell Pre-K landscape
- 2022-23 Pre-K expansion
  - Partnerships
  - CPPI
  - Shared Resources
  - Barriers
- Next Steps

Ms. Van Thiel stated that Universal Pre-K is a policy framework in which all families with preschool-aged children have the opportunity to voluntarily enroll their child in a publicly-funded pre-kindergarten education program within the community. She stated that in Lowell, the district is beginning to build a



universal preschool model across a mixed delivery system. She stated that a mixed-delivery system combines services to provide full working day services for children and their working parents and that the district goals are focused on serving all children four (4) years old by September 1st.

Ms. Lay asked about staffing.

Superintendent Boyd stated that staffing and space is a challenge.

Mr. Lay asked why the number of children attending increased.

Ms. Van Thiel stated that it could be due to birth rate changes or that people are more interested in early learning.

Ms. Thompson stated that she is concerned about the staffing issue and a student not being able to finish the year due to it not being able to be sustained. She asked what has been done in HR to sustain it and how are families finding out about it and is there language access.

Ms. Phillips stated that they're getting the word out online, surveys and using the institutions that the district trust. She stated that there will be a Pre-School Showcase on January 24, 2023 and January 26, 2023.

**Ms. Chhoun made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.11 as reports of progress; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mayor Chau) APPROVED**

## 7.2. Update On Inclusive Classroom Practices

Ms. Desmond, Chief Academic Officer provided a PowerPoint presentation to the Committee with the following agenda:

- EL Department Update
- Spring Evaluation Results
- Next Steps
- Special Education Department Update
- District Data ○ Inclusionary Practices
- Individual Education Plan Writing

Over the past 2 years, the number of English Learners (EL) in the Lowell Public Schools has increased substantially by 5%. During the course of the 2021-2022 school year alone, 66% of new students enrolling into the Lowell Schools were classified as English Learners (ELs), moving the district's total EL population from 26% to 29%. The presentation shared the following:

- Number of English Learners - Fall 2022 - 3,942
- Number of District Level Support Staff - 2 (EL Curriculum Coordinator & EL District Support Specialist) Number of EL Teachers - 97



Twenty (20) years ago, before the passage of Question 2 in Massachusetts, Lowell Public Schools maintained a Bilingual Education Director, facilitators, liaison specialists and a clerk. Over the years, due to budgetary constraints, the department has been reduced to two (2) staff positions (one (1) of the two (2) positions was reinstated last year). The following recommendations were made:

- Create an EL Director position.
- Add individuals at the district and/or school leadership level.
- Require that the new EL District Support coach and provide feedback to ESL teachers across the district. Hire additional ESL teachers for the schools.

Ms. Desmond then spoke about the inclusive practices and supports in the Special Education Department and the Massachusetts IEP Improvement Project.

Ms. Thompson asked if the new positions are proposed through career opportunities and if internal candidates are being prepared to move forward.

Superintendent Boyd stated that they're looking at teacher grants.

Ms. Thompson asked what we have been doing since the last time we had a Director.

Superintendent Boyd stated that it's been a challenge and that the Director position is in the current budget.

Ms. Thompson asked what we have been doing to bring the stakeholders to the table.

Ms. Desmond stated that this is state level project and that they work hard to engage our stakeholders and she believes that parents are our number one (1) stakeholders.

Ms. Delrossi asked about ETC's.

Ms. Desmond stated that she will bring information back. She stated that it can be better assessed after the roll out.

Mr. Lay asked how an EL student is identified.

Superintendent Boyd stated that a survey is filled out and then an assessment is given to a student.

**Ms. Delrossi made a motion to request that the Mayor reinstate a Special Education Subcommittee as its own entity and make assignments for that Subcommittee as well as the other Subcommittees that are lacking a member; seconded by Ms. Martin. 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mayor Chau) APPROVED**

**Ms. Chhoun made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.11 as reports of progress; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mayor Chau) APPROVED**



### 7.3. Budget Update

Ms. Turner, Chief Financial Officer provided a PowerPoint presentation to the Committee that informed them of the following update:

- FY 23 Budget Update
- Budget to Actuals with Forecasted Flexibility
- ESSER Update
  
- Priorities for Leveraging Forecasted Savings
  - Fund Management
  - Strategic Investment in FY24 Priorities
  - Maximize SPED Stabilization
  - Accelerate Critical Facilities Improvements (HVAC & playgrounds)
  
- FY 24 Budget Introduction
  - Budget Calendar (Next Steps)
  - Governor's Budget Timeline

The report informed the Committee that per the YTD Budget Memo included in the School Committee packet, Ms. Turner continuously reviews year to date spending to identify areas of savings and shortages. She stated that after addressing areas of shortages, she then considers the districts needs that were not originally budgeted due to a constant state of needs exceeding resources. She stated that as noted in this memo, she restructured the report to make it more user friendly with decisions. The district as of today's date shows the vacancy savings at \$4.5 million and the fall reconciliation line is \$1.5 million.

Ms. Martin stated that there are opportunities for one (1) time funding for upgrades to the munis systems, payroll systems, etc. She stated that it might be a good time to make these investments.

Ms. Turner stated that the district is trying to do some of the things Ms. Martin mentioned (like the application specialist).

Ms. Martin stated that work on playgrounds and HVAC need to be in collaboration with the city.

Ms. Thompson stated that she agrees with Ms. Martin and that it is imperative to work with the city to get things done. She also stated that maybe something could be done around technology and signage for students with autism with these onetime monies.

Mr. Lay asked about the Acceleration Academy.

Superintendent Boyd stated that it's to help students with learning loss during COVID. It is an opportunity for enrichment.

Mr. Lay stated that it's nice to hear that we may money to hire staff for summer schools, clubs, etc.



Ms. Delrossi asked about the STEM modulars.

Superintendent Boyd stated that they have already been budgeted.

Ms. Turner stated that money has been put aside, but that money is only an estimate.

Ms. Doherty asked if we will be getting an update on the modulars at our next meeting.

Dr. Hall stated that the OPM is still processing the information from our last meeting.

Ms. Doherty stated that a whole school is severely cramped and that this should have been dealt with two (2) years ago and asked to please have something for the Committee at the next meeting.

Dr. Hall stated that the last meeting the Committee authorized the OPM to get an architect and that presently the OPM is working on the bids from the architects.

**Ms. Chhoun made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.11 as reports of progress; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. 6 years, 1 absent (Mayor Chau) APPROVED**

#### 7.4. Key Performance Indicators: Quarter One Report

Mr. Skinner, Chief Schools Officer provided a report to the Committee regarding Key Performance Indicators: Quarter 1. The KPI Highlights Areas of Strength are as follows:

- Academics and Student Achievement:
  - A slight increase of students who scored in Tier 1 on iReady assessments, for ELA and Math.
  - Pass rates for middle school core courses increased by 10% to 12% for ELA, Science and Social Studies, and Math saw an increase of 18%.
  - Pass rates for high school core courses have increased, the lowest being .08% in Math and the highest being 4.8% in Social Studies.
  - An increase of 8% of seniors on track to graduate based on their credits earned and students miss at least one (1) MCAS on the increase.
- Safe and Welcoming Environment:
  - Student average daily attendance at 92% has increased by 2%.
  - Student chronic absences at 25% has decreased by 2%.
  - DESSA ratings remain similar.
- Operational Efficiency, and Family:
  - Substitute fill rate increased by 32%.
  - Staff diversity hiring increased by 27%.
- Community Engagement:
  - Increase of participation and conferences by over 60%.
  - Community involvement in forums increased by 37%.
  - Language access usage increase by 90%.
  - The Community Satisfaction survey is not administered until January.

Ms. Thompson asked if KPI's are done locally or federally and if they're included in the dashboard.



Superintendent Boyd stated locally and we can adjust it.

**Ms. Thompson made a motion to add racism, bullying and discrimination to the dashboard as part of the KPI's under safe and welcome environment; seconded by Ms. Martin. 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mayor Chau) APPROVED**

**Ms. Delrossi made a motion to send the Key Performance Indicators: Quarter One Report to the Family & Community Engagement Subcommittee for further discussion; seconded by Ms. Martin. 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mayor Chau) APPROVED**

**Ms. Chhoun made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.11 as reports of progress; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mayor Chau) APPROVED**

**7.5.** Response to Motion 10. CFO of 12/07/22 by Stacey Thompson & Connie Martin Regarding Bi-Weekly Payroll

Ms. Turner, Chief Financial Officer provided a report to the Committee informing them that due to the School Committee formally requesting the city delay the transition to a biweekly pay cycle, a letter was sent to the City Manager, City CFO and City Auditor requesting a delay due to anticipated fiscal hardship. The City Council authorized a delay of several weeks to help alleviate some of this concern.

**Ms. Chhoun made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.11 as reports of progress; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mayor Chau) APPROVED**

**7.6.** Response to Motion 09. CFO of 11/02/22 by Connie Martin Regarding Overtime Payments

Ms. Turner, Chief Financial Officer provide a report to the Committee per their request of the 650 Service code broken down.

Ms. Martin stated that the additional information that Ms. Doherty had requested was not included with an overtime comparison.

Ms. Turner stated that overtime has double and possibly even tripled. She stated she can and will go back four (4) or five (5) years for comparison purposes.

**Ms. Chhoun made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.11 as reports of progress; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mayor Chau) APPROVED**

**7.7.** Response to Motion 05. CAO of 10/19/22 by Jackie Doherty Regarding Mathematic and Literacy Interventions

Ms. Desmond, Chief Academic Officer provided a report to the Committee that informed them that in order to address the literacy learning needs of elementary students, Lowell Public School's Office of Teaching and Learning has taken several steps since the start of the pandemic in March of 2020. These include purchasing and implementing explicit and evidence-based phonics curriculum materials for students in grades K-2 (Foundations, Letterland, or TC Phonics Units of Study) for all elementary





schools. Also, an influx of decodable texts was purchased for every elementary school to support students reading both decodable texts and authentic texts each day to practice the skills learned in their phonics instruction. Additionally, phonemic awareness teaching tools and videos from Heggerty, were purchased for all students K-5. At the K-2 level, these tools serve as part of the core literacy block. In addition, LPS's Office of Teaching and Learning provides after school and summer school programming at all elementary schools. These programs are additional supports for elementary schools have been expanded due to the pandemic to support accelerating student learning. The Lowell Public Schools also provided summer school programming to more than 4,000 students in the summer of 2022 through 40 distinct programs. The majority of summer learning programs operated from July 5-29th; however, there were some programs that ran through August 12th.

**Ms. Thompson made a motion to send this report to a Curriculum Subcommittee for further discussion and to add Sex Education Curriculum and the Middle School Sex Education report to the agenda; seconded by Ms. Martin. 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mayor Chau) APPROVED**

**Ms. Chhoun made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.11 as reports of progress; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mayor Chau) APPROVED**

#### 7.8. Response to Motion 11. CEEQ of 10/05/22 by Susie Chhoun Regarding Legislative Agenda

Ms. Phillips, Chief Equity & Engagement Officer provided a report that stated as an urban school district with a Prek-12 enrollment of more than 14,000 students in the fifth largest, and one of the most diverse cities in the Commonwealth, our State House delegation, the elected and appointed leaders, staff, and faculty of Lowell Public Schools are uniquely positioned to recognize and advocate for legislative change. These changes further the goals and objectives of our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan. They are as follows:

- Equitable access to safe and welcoming schools.
- Improve fiscal stability for school districts. all sectors of the economy, resulting in extraordinary budget volatility for public schools.
- Ensure support for the recruitment and retention of school personnel.
- Ensure support for resources and funding that addresses the needs for student success.

Ms. Chhoun asked how we are going to move forward on this and are we going to allocate funds as well.

Superintendent Boyd stated that he looks forward to working with the local delegation.

**Ms. Chhoun made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.11 as reports of progress; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mayor Chau) APPROVED**

#### 7.9. Monthly Incident Report

Ms. Phillips, Chief Equity & Engagement Officer provided a report to the Committee that included the data for November 2022. The report states that during the month of November, seventy-seven (77) incidents were reported using the online reporting system and sixty (60) investigations were completed and uploaded into the database during this timeframe. A synopsis of the investigation findings and administered consequences were included as well in the report. For November, the completed investigations took an average of one (1) school day to launch an investigation and an average of two (2)



school days to complete it. The Equity Office met with school leaders this week, many of whom also serve as complaint investigators in their respective buildings, to gather feedback on their training needs as investigators. They're also working with community partners to develop trainings for investigators that address bias in addition to training in restorative practices as an option for resolution when incidents are determined to be substantiated and/or unsubstantiated and they continue to collaborate with community partners, members of our anti-racism Coalition and the Lowell Student Advisory Council in identifying strategies for continued improvement.

Ms. Thompson stated that this was concerning and that the bullying reports are concerning as well. She stated that there was a significant jump in October. She asked how much of it is because of more accessibility, because she doesn't want to see the numbers going up. She asked what the Committee can do to help/ support and to bring these numbers down and get to the cause.

Ms. Phillips stated that they're really pushing for awareness of this reporting protocol. She stated that she anticipates more reporting will come.

Ms. Martin stated that this is difficult information to quantify and asked if we are moving in the right direction. She asked if the people involved were satisfied with the investigation and was the investigation managed properly.

**Ms. Chhoun made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.11 as reports of progress; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mayor Chau) APPROVED**

#### 7.10. Monthly Enrollment Report

Ms. Phillips, Chief Equity & Engagement Officer provided a report that informed the Committee that as of November 30, 2022, there are 14,296 students enrolled with the Lowell Public Schools. Since March 2022, families completed the registration process online using the Aspen online registration portal (OLR). Families create an Aspen account, enter their child's information required for registration, and upload the required registration documents directly to their online registration. The required registration documents are: child's birth certificate, child's vaccination, parent photo identification, proof of being a Lowell Resident. Additionally, high school students will need to provide transcripts and Special Education students the current, signed IEP.

**Ms. Chhoun made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.11 as reports of progress; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mayor Chau) APPROVED**

#### 7.11. Personnel Report

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

**Ms. Chhoun made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.11 as reports of progress; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mayor Chau) APPROVED**



## **8. NEW BUSINESS**

### **8.1. Budget Transfer**

**Ms. Thompson made a motion to approve the budget transfer of \$3,126,676.67; seconded by Mr. Lay. 6 years, 1 absent (Mayor Chau) APPROVED**

### **8.2. Approval to Accept and Expend Allocated FY23 Awards**

Ms. Turner asked the Committee to approve, accept and expend the allocate the FY23 awards. The report states that these funds include Federal and State entitlement, continuation, competitive and private funding awards that have been secured by the Lowell Public Schools through the Department of Secondary and Elementary Education, The Barr Foundation, The Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism, The Wellington Foundation, 3M Corporation, New England Biolabs, The Executive Office of Health and Human Services Office for Refugees and Immigrants, The Frederick Weber Foundation, The Laura Bush Foundation and The Massachusetts Clean Water Trust.

**Ms. Martin made a motion to approve, accept and allocate the FY23 awards; seconded by Mr. Lay. 6 years, 1 absent (Mayor Chau) APPROVED**

## **9. CONVENTION/CONFERENCE REQUESTS**

### **9.1. Out of State & Overnight Travel Request: Wang School Students Traveling to Washington D.C.**

**Ms. Delrossi made a motion to bundle and approve the convention/conference requests; seconded by Ms. Thompson. 6 years, 1 absent (Mayor Chau) APPROVED**

### **9.2. Out of State & Overnight Travel Request: For LHS JRROTC**

**Ms. Delrossi made a motion to bundle and approve the convention/conference requests; seconded by Ms. Thompson. 6 years, 1 absent (Mayor Chau) APPROVED**

### **9.3. Out of State & Overnight Travel Request: For Sullivan School Students & Staff to Washington, DC**

**Ms. Delrossi made a motion to bundle and approve the convention/conference requests; seconded by Ms. Thompson. 6 years, 1 absent (Mayor Chau) APPROVED**

## **10. COMMUNICATIONS**

### **10.1. Communication Regarding the American Association of School Administrators' National Conference on Education to be Held in San Antonio, Texas**

**Ms. Thompson made a motion to accept the communication and to place it on file; seconded by Mr. Lay. 6 years, 1 absent (Mayor Chau) APPROVED**



## **11. PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL**

**11.1.** The Members of the United Teachers of Lowell Hereby Donate Sixteen [16] Sick Leave Days to Devon Mello, Lincoln School Teacher

**Mr. Lay made a motion to approve; seconded by Ms. Thompson. 6 yeas, 1 absent (Mayor Chau)  
APPROVED**

## **12. ADJOURNMENT**

**Ms. Thompson made a motion to adjourn at 8:44 p.m.; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. 6 yeas, 1 absent  
(Mayor Chau) APPROVED**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Joel D. Boyd, Ed.D., Superintendent and  
Secretary to the Lowell School Committee**

**JDB/mes**