

## FAQ Document

### School Committee Purview

#### **What is the School Committee responsible for?**

*The Southborough School Committee is composed of five members elected by the citizens of Southborough. These member positions include one chair, one vice-chair, one secretary, and two members.*

*The School Committee plays a critical role in assimilating the mission and vision statements to guide decision-making to support the District's goals. At the same time, the Superintendent is responsible for the administrative operation of the District.*

*The responsibilities of the School Committee include the following:*

*Appoint and evaluate the Superintendent*

*Review and approve budgets for public education*

*Establish educational goals and policies consistent with the requirements of Massachusetts General Law and statewide standards established by the Massachusetts Board of Education*

#### **What is the best method to communicate with the School Committee?**

*The School Committee allows for public comment at a minimum once during a regularly scheduled meeting. This is an opportunity for the public to share their thoughts with them and the public. However, the School Committee does not respond or deliberate during public comment. Although, the public comment could result in a future agenda item if the Committee so chooses. Emails to the School Committee are effective because it provides all members an opportunity to weigh their opinions or comments in their decisions. The School Committee has recently offered office hours and will continue to do so over the coming school year.*

#### **Who evaluates the Superintendent and what is the process for putting the Superintendent on leave/dismissal?**

*Superintendency Union # 3 consists of three members of the Northborough School Committee and three members of the Southborough School Committee. The members of Superintendency Union #3, together with members of the Northborough-Southborough Regional School Committee, are legally responsible for hiring a Superintendent of Schools, determining the scope of his or her duties, fixing an annual salary, and deciding whether to terminate or extend the Superintendent's contract. According to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71, Section 63, the Chair of the Northborough School Committee and the Chair of the Southborough School Committee are automatically members of the Union Committee. Two other members from the Northborough School Committee are appointed by the Northborough School Committee and two other members from the Southborough School Committee are appointed by the Southborough School Committee.*

*Good Cause must be established to place on leave or terminate the Superintendent. The Superintendency Union #3 would need to convene in an executive session to discuss together with members of the Northborough-Southborough Regional School Committee any personnel matter, including the Superintendent. The Superintendent would have the right to attend with legal counsel. The Superintendency Union #3 together with members of the Northborough-Southborough Regional School Committee would have to have a two-thirds affirmative vote to dismiss or place the Superintendent on leave.*

### Investigation Questions

#### **What can be released as part of an investigation?**

*The term investigation is a broad category ranging from investigating peer-to-peer conflict in a classroom or at recess to a complaint of bullying, harassment, or Title IX. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (“FERPA”) governs the disclosure of most educational information. FERPA generally forbids disclosure of information from a student’s “education record” without the consent of the student (or the student’s parent). Thus, confidentiality under FERPA will apply to investigations, including Title IX matters, because written information about the complaint, investigation, and outcome is part of the accused student’s education record. Further, the 2001 Title IX Guidance states in part, “A school should be aware of the confidentiality concerns of an accused employee or student. Publicized accusations of sexual harassment, if ultimately found to be false, may nevertheless irreparably damage the reputation of the accused.”*

#### **What is the trigger for an investigation to be initiated?**

*The context of the complaint or issue determines the level and type of investigation. Informal and formal investigations may be conducted, again determined by context. For example, an investigation will be conducted if a bullying report is submitted or a complaint is communicated. Specific complaints, such as harassment, are governed by School Committee policy and Massachusetts General Law.*

*Examples:*

[Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy A-150](#)

[Civil Rights Nondiscrimination Policy A-180](#)

[Title IX Sexual Harassment Policy A-190](#)

#### **What is a reasonable amount of time for an investigation?**

*The context of the investigation can determine the length of an investigation. The investigation and restoration can take days if it is a peer-to-peer conflict. However, a more complex investigation, such as a Title IX investigation, can take weeks or months.*

#### **What are the expectations for employees on leave?**

*An employee may be placed on administrative leave, with or without notice, to permit the District to review or investigate circumstances including dishonesty, theft or misappropriation of funds or property, violence on the job, gross safety, negligence, or acts endangering others, insubordination or any other conduct that warrants removing the employee from the worksite. Administrative leave could be precautionary or investigatory. It can be paid or unpaid but is typically paid to allow time for an investigatory process.*

*What an employee may be asked to do while on administrative leave:*

*Be available to do any task that is needed by the District.*

*Not to communicate with families or other staff unless requested.*

*Keep the leave and investigation confidential, the District may need to communicate the administrative leave to the community depending upon the circumstances.*

*May remain in contact with their union representative (the confidentiality clause does not apply to those communications).*

*Are required to remain available for normal business/school hours to answer questions or meet (sometimes on short notice).*

*May be asked to work remotely for some or all of the administrative leave period (this could be for a specific project or reason).*

*May be asked to attend meetings if attendance does not conflict with the investigation.*

*May be asked to return a District-issued laptop, keys, and ID/building badge.*

### **Explain the process of who knows what during an investigation.**

*Specific information about an investigation is not shared with District leaders or employees when an investigation does impact their primary roles. The District Leadership Team is made aware of general details regarding investigations; however, no specific details are provided. When an educator is placed on leave, it is shared with the appropriate school and District leaders to ensure the continuity of student learning and service delivery.*

### **Why is the recommendation to do an external audit versus an external investigation?**

*After hearing concerns about the integrity of the internal investigation, the School Committee decided to review the processes and procedures followed. The corroboration of the events was not questioned but rather the timeline, administrative leaves, and the District's response to the incidents. Therefore, it made sense to have an external firm audit and assess those items rather than repeat the investigation.*

### **What actions/policies are taken/used to resolve issues?**

*When an issue is reported regarding an educator's actions toward a student, the issue should be reported to the principal. The principal evaluates the nature and seriousness of the action and determines the next steps, which may include reporting it to the Superintendent. Regardless of the next steps, the caregiver should receive a notification communicating the situation.*

### **What does the school district use legal counsel for?**

*District legal counsel is used for a variety of purposes. Here's a list of examples:*

*Review key contracts*

*Review and provide updates to School Committee policy*

*Review student handbooks*

*Support collective bargaining with associations*

*Keep District leaders abreast with changes to laws*

*Provide Special Education leaders counsel on student cases*

*Provide District leaders with training*

*Support challenging cases that require a legal lens*

### **What should have happened after the first incident in January?**

*When a significant issue happens in a school that involves violence, racism, hate, or threats, District and school-based leaders are required to report the issue to the Superintendent of Schools. In this specific situation, the incident in January should have been reported by the principal to the Superintendent.*

### Data Questions

### **What demographic data is available to the public? What Special Education data is available to the public? Where can it be found and/or requested?**

*The public can access Special Education data on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's website. The data available are disaggregated by school, disability category, and various additional categories. However, much of the data available to the public is suppressed as student data is protected to maintain confidentiality. Specific classroom data around the numbers of students on Individualized Education Plans, 504 Plans, and Multilingual Learner Success Plans is not released to the public due to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).*

[DESE Special Education Data](#)

[DESE District Profile](#)

### **What is [Public Records Law](#)? What information can be made available to the public?**

*The Public Records Law broadly defines "public records" to include "all books, papers, maps, photographs, recorded tapes, financial statements, statistical tabulations, or other documentary materials or data, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by any officer or employee" of any Massachusetts governmental entity. There are strictly and narrowly construed exemptions and common law privileges to the broad definition of "public records." To submit a public records request, please contact The Public Schools of Southborough's Records Officer, Keith Lavoie, by Email: [recordsofficer@nsboro.k12.ma.us](mailto:recordsofficer@nsboro.k12.ma.us)*

### Family Resources

### **What supports exist in dealing with students making racial remarks?**

*There are several levels of support. The first level is proactive measures to educate students about racial slurs, stereotypes, and bias, which is part of the District's comprehensive approach to teaching social-emotional learning (SEL). In the event of a student making an identity-based remark, other supports might include providing conflict resolution or restorative practices to repair the harm that was done. Furthermore, educators sometimes create safety plans for individual students and may provide individualized learning opportunities for students involved in the incident, in partnership with the students' caregivers.*

### **Explain the current roll-out of Say Something.**

*The District began a partnership with Sandy Hook Promise in the spring of 2019. As part of the partnership, the District launched the Sandy Hook Promise reporting tool, Say Something in grades 6-12. The implementation included whole-school meetings with students, frequent reminders, and marketing (E.g., Signs, email reminders, etc.). This process has continued each year since its implementation. The Say Something reporting tool is monitored by professional staff, includes an intake call center, and involves principals, a core team dedicated to supporting reports, and the Northborough and Southborough Police Departments. The plan will expand its use in 2024-2025 to include fourth and fifth-graders, and all District caregivers, PreK-12.*

### **Describe the process for filing a complaint (general education vs. Special Education)**

*If a person has a Special Education complaint, it should be directed to the Special Education liaison, principal, or Director of Student Support Services. Complaints should be addressed within the team meeting process unless specific to an employee.*

*If an individual has an employee complaint, they are encouraged to speak directly with the individual involved. If the complainant is uncomfortable reporting it to the individual, they should file the complaint with the principal, Superintendent, or Executive Director of Human Resources.*

*If a complainant feels uncomfortable reporting the complaint within the District systems and structures, the complainant can file it through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) Problem, Resolution, Systems (PRS). PRS is not limited to Special Education.*

### **What is the process for class placements? And how does Special Education factor in?**

*The class placement process begins in late winter and continues through early May and involves key stakeholders: Classroom teachers, specialists (art, music, PE, library/media), student support staff (Special Education, Speech & Language, English Language Development), reading specialists, school psychologists, behavioral specialists, nurses, and administrators.*

*The placement process takes into account the cohort of students being placed and includes the following data sources: Teachers' knowledge of students (qualitative data), Social Emotional*

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*Learning (SEL) screening tools, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), math assessments, ELA assessments, classroom observations. English language arts, mathematics, social-emotional learning, and peer dynamic domains are considered.*

*School staff work together in a collaborative effort to create draft placements that best meet the needs of our students. The process includes 1) Building-based support teams to examine service delivery needs (in-class and pull-out), including SEL, ELD, Special Education, and reading support; 2) Based on student needs, Special Education services, and English language development support, students are assigned to specific classes, 3) Specialists and school support staff provide insight from special area classes including art, PE, music, and library/media, 4) Ongoing transition conversations regarding student placement between sending and receiving schools throughout the placement process, 5) School visits by school teams and administrators, and 6) Upon completion of the placement structure, it is then shared with receiving school/grade.*

### **Do we have a bilingual agency to help families navigate their child(ren)'s education?**

*The District has a Multilingual Learner Department, which includes a Director and English Language Development educators to support students and families. The Department meets with all new families to support their success in the District. This is a launching point for continued partnerships and support. Furthermore, the District has an English Language Parent Advisory Committee (ELPAC), which is sixty members strong. The ELPAC meets monthly throughout the year, and each meeting is focused on a topic selected by the ELPAC. Furthermore, the District ensures translation and interpretation services are available for all families.*

### **Why don't we have a sub-separate program in Southborough?**

*There are [sub-separate programs](#) in Southborough. However, when there is a very small number of students (one or two) that require a specific type of sub-separate program, it is not educationally sound and/or fiscally responsible to create an entire sub-separate program for the one or two students. Furthermore, the grade configuration of The Public Schools of Southborough requires sub-separate programs to be established at each school. Suppose the District does not have a sub-separate program that meets a student's Individualized Education Plan. In that case, they are placed in an out-of-district program specifically designed to do so. Next year, the CASTLE Program will be at Finn, Woodward, and Trottier.*

*The CASTLE Program is designed for students who require intensive specialized instruction across the school day to support their learning challenges. The CASTLE Program is individualized to meet the individual student's specific needs. The program is based on Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) principles. Instruction may be provided in the general or sub-separate classroom for small group and/or one-to-one instruction. One-to-one instruction is heavily based on the principles and procedures of ABA with embedded systematic teaching to help students generalize learned skills across settings.*

*An individualized curriculum is also developed and implemented for each student as needed using the highly specialized web-based ACE Curriculum. The program's focus areas include functional communication, activities of daily living, academics, Augmentative Assistive Communication (AAC), vocational communication skills, and social pragmatic skills. The program uses a team approach to deliver services. Staff include a lead Special Education teacher, educational support professionals, a speech and language therapist, a physical therapist, and an occupational therapist. The program is also supported by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), Assistive Technology Specialist, AAC consultant, and School Psychologist.*

### **Explain the Special Education audit.**

*The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) reviews The Southborough Public Schools every three years through Tiered Focused Monitoring. This comprehensive review process emphasizes elements most tied to student outcomes and alternates the focus of each review on either Group A Universal Standards or Group B Universal Standards.*

#### Group A Universal Standards address:

*Student identification*

*IEP development*

*Programming and support services*

*Equal opportunity*

#### Group B Universal Standards address:

*Licensure and professional development*

*Parent/student/community engagement*

*Facilities and classroom observations*

*Oversight*

*Time and learning*

*Equal access*

*In addition, DESE has reserved a specific set of criteria, collectively known as Targeted Standards, employed when LEA or school-level risk assessment data indicate that there is a potential issue. Identified Targeted Standards are assessed in addition to the Universal Standards. The Public Schools of Southborough completed a three-year review this spring, 2024.*

### Education

### **Explain the different types of professional development opportunities for faculty and staff?**

*Professional learning is the broader category for all professional learning. Within the broad category, there are subcategories of focused professional learning. For example, when implementing a new curriculum resource, professional learning focuses on understanding the curriculum resources, research, methodology, and content. Another example of professional*

*learning around teaching and learning frameworks, such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Specific UDL professional learning focuses on the framework, which spans equity, access, methodology, and approaches across disciplines.*

### **What is the process for selecting books?**

*The school librarian is responsible for selecting and evaluating library materials. Individual learning styles, the curriculum and the existing collection are considered in determining the needs for library materials in individual schools. The library collection will include materials in print, non-print, and electronic formats.*

*Materials considered for purchase are judged on the basis of the following criteria:*

*Purpose – educational value and its direct relationship to instructional objectives and/or the curriculum*

*Reliability – accurate, authentic, up-to-date*

*Quality of literary or artistic style, technically well-crafted*

*Treatment – clear, comprehensible, well-organized*

*Suitability for grade and/or interest level*

*Reputation and significance of the author, producer, and/or publisher*

*Value commensurate with cost and need*

*Materials are evaluated as whole works. Reputable, unbiased, professionally prepared selection aids will be used for evaluation. Examples of such aids are:*

*Booklist*

*Horn Book*

*Outstanding Science Trade Books for Children*

*Outstanding Social Studies Trade Books for Children*

*School Library Journal*

*VOYA (Voice of Youth Advocates)*

*Coretta Scott King Book Awards*

### **What are the criteria for a buddy class to join a different grade level?**

*At Neary, each fourth-grade class is assigned a fifth-grade buddy class for an academic year. The focus is on cross-grade connections. There are no specific criteria for assigning buddy classes. More clear and specific information about buddy classes will be communicated to fourth and fifth-grade families at the start of the school year.*

### **How do teachers report concerns? And what support are they provided?**

*Employees are asked to report their concerns to their immediate supervisors. If they are not comfortable reporting the concern to their supervisor, they can also contact the Human Resources Department. Additionally, educators can anonymously report concerns to the Say*



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*Something tipline, Bullying Reporting Form, or union representative. The supports provided are individualized and context-based.*