OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE HYBRID BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

December 17, 2025

The Boston School Committee held a hybrid meeting on December 17, 2025, at 6.00 p.m. at the Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building, 2300 Washington Street, School Committee Chamber, Roxbury, Massachusetts. The meeting was also live-streamed on Boston City TV and Zoom. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit. bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee, email lparvex@bostonpublicschools.org, or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

ATTENDANCE

School Committee Members Present: Chairperson Jeri Robinson; Vice Chairperson Michael D. O'Neill; Stephen Alkins; Brandon Cardet-Hernandez; Rafaela Polanco Garcia; Rachel Skerritt; Quoc Tran; and Student Representative Mah Noor.

School Committee Members Absent: None.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Agenda

Meeting Minutes: December 3, 2025

Fall 2025 Enrollment Update Memo

Update on Cycle 3 recommendations for closures, mergers, and grade-reconfigurations

Grants for Approval

In-Kind Donations

Boston Association of School Administrators and Supervisors (BASAS) Memo

BASAS Memorandum of Agreement

BASAS FY26 Supplemental Appropriation Memo

Long-term Facilities Plan Memo

Long-term Facilities Plan Equity Impact Statement

Long-term Facilities Plan PowerPoint

Finance Update Memo

Finance Update Powerpoint

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Jeri Robinson called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance. She said it will be rebroadcast on Boston City TV and the video will be posted at bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee and on YouTube. She announced that simultaneous interpretation services were available virtually in Spanish, Haitian Creole, Cabo Verdean, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin and American Sign Language (ASL). Translated meeting documents were posted at www.bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee prior to the start of the meeting.

Dr. Alkins arrived after the meeting had begun. All members were present.

CHAIR'S COMMENTS

Chair Robinson congratulated Superintendent Mary Skipper on receiving the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce's 2026 Pinnacle Award for Achievement in Management in Government.

Chair Robinson said members received a SY25-26 Student Enrollment Trends update memo and a Cycle 3 recommendations for closures, mergers, and grade-reconfigurations update memo last week, which are also posted on the website.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Approved – The Committee approved by unanimous consent the minutes of the December 3, 2025, meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The following speakers testified regarding school closures:

- Solomon McDonnell, Dorchester resident, Lee Academy Pilot School student
- Seraphina Lambright, Dorchester resident, Boston Latin School (BLS) student
- Jasen Lambright, Dorchester resident, Community Advocate, BPS parent
- Lea Serena, Teacher, Boston Teachers Union
- Ilene Carver, Dorchester resident, Community Advocate, retired teacher
- Travis Marshall, Roslindale resident, Parent, Community Advocate, Quality Education for Every Student (QUEST)
- Ross Kochman, Jamaica Plain resident, BPS Parent, Henderson K-12 Inclusion School teacher
- Stephanie Warf, Jamaica Plain resident, Another Course to College (ACC) parent
- Douglas Peters, Brookline resident, Henderson K-12 Inclusion School teacher

- Joseph Burch, Brighton resident, Community Academy of Science and Health (CASH) paraprofessional and alum
- Krista Magnuson, Jamaica Plain resident, BPS Parent, Community Advocate, Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance (MEJA)
- Ricky Preston, Stoughton resident, CASH Community Field Coordinator
- Susan Asai, Malden resident, Community Advocate, NAACP Boston member
- Megan Moskun, South Boston resident, CASH parent
- Giovanna Tovar, Dorchester resident, Lee Academy Pilot School staff and former parent
- Alison Foster, Dorchester resident, Lee Academy Pilot School parent
- Genesis Moreta, Dorchester resident, Lee Academy Pilot School parent
- Keo McClay, Dorchester resident, Community Advocate, Boston education Justice alliance (BEJA)
- Tristen Grannum, Jamaica Plain resident, ACC alum
- Neil Beers, Newton resident, Henderson K-12 Inclusion School teacher
- Cheryl Buckman, South Boston resident, BPS Parent, Community Advocate, Save the Dever Movement, BEJA, FAMCOSA
- Hanh Le, Dorchester resident, Henderson K-12 Inclusion School parent
- Edith Bazile, Hyde Park resident, Community Advocate, SpEdPAC Chair
- Mike Heichman, Dorchester resident, Community Advocate
- Suleika Soto, South End resident, BPS Parent, Community Advocate, TechBoston, Madison Park

Robert Jenkins, Mattapan resident, Community Advocate, Madison Park alum, testified regarding school closings and athletics programs at Madison Park.

ACTION ITEMS

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez asked for the correct end date on grant FC0598. Chief Financial Officer David Bloom said the correct date should be 6/30/2026 instead of 06/30/2025.

Approved - The Committee approved, by unanimous consent, the grants for approval as amended, totaling $592,990.00.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez asked if the donations align with the curriculum. Superintendent Skipper confirmed they are always reviewed by the relevant department.

Approved - The Committee approved by unanimous consent the In-kind donations with a total estimated value of $13,110.

Approved - On roll call, the School Committee unanimously approved a collective bargaining agreement between the Boston School Committee and the Boston Association of School Administrators and Supervisors (BASAS) covering the period from September 1, 2024 to August 31, 2027.

Approved - On roll call, the School Committee unanimously approved a FY26 supplemental appropriation request to the Mayor and the Boston City Council to support the collective

bargaining agreements between the Boston School Committee and the Boston Association of School Administrators and Supervisors (BASAS) in the amount of $1,307,901.

Before the vote on school closures for 2027, the Chair reflected on decades of change in Boston Public Schools, noting that while closures are difficult, they are part of a strategy to improve academic outcomes for students. She acknowledged the strong school communities and dedicated educators and emphasized that students deserve a challenging, high-quality education.

Superintendent Skipper acknowledged the difficulty and emotional impact of school closures, emphasizing the goal of improving student outcomes and program quality. She highlighted the extensive community engagement and careful transition planning in place to support students, families, and staff, explained why mergers were not feasible in this round, and stressed the district's commitment to providing strong academic, social-emotional, and specialized program options. She concluded by urging the Committee to vote in support of the recommendations.

Ms. Polanco Garcia recognized the reasons the district presented these closures, as she understood its challenges with declining enrollment and underutilized facilities. She highlighted the importance of considering impacted communities and ensuring careful, ongoing support for students, especially those with special needs, along with families and staff throughout transitions. She thanked families and students for sharing their perspectives and stated that her vote would be thoughtful, guided by both institutional responsibility and empathy, fairness, and care.

Ms. Skerritt acknowledged the challenges and emotional impact of the proposed school closures on students, families, staff, and community members. Drawing on her experience as a former headmaster at ACC, she highlighted the strong, close-knit school communities and the difficulty of communicating these decisions. She stressed the importance of ongoing communication, individualized support, and preserving community strengths, and urged the committee to monitor implementation through regular updates on student and staff support, specialized programming, and resources, while expressing appreciation for the dedication of school staff.

Dr. Alkins acknowledged the emotional impact of the proposed school closures on students, families, staff, and communities. He highlighted historic inequities and the challenges families face when district responses feel insufficient, stressing the importance of trust, transparency, and equity. He noted limited resources and ongoing efforts to improve inclusion while emphasizing the need for trust and clear communication with families. He called for earlier school engagement, involvement of trusted leaders, and thoughtful transition plans, reminding that true equity requires effort and often being inconvenient.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez acknowledged the emotional impact of school closures on students, families, staff, and communities. He thanked educators and community members for sharing their experiences and noted that the short engagement period makes it hard to address concerns. Highlighting the district's planning and fiscal challenges, he emphasized that doing nothing also perpetuates inequities. He said his main concern is ensuring students, especially those with disabilities, have adequate support and urged the district to clearly communicate transitions and resources, focusing on helping families and educators rather than just debating school closures.

Mr. Tran said his main concern with the proposed school closures is equity, not equality. His key

question is whether the closures will help students succeed educationally or make their outcomes worse.

Vice Chair O'Neill thanked everyone who participated in meetings, comments, and correspondence, acknowledging the difficulty of school closing decisions due to their impact on students, staff, and families. He emphasized understanding both the "why" and "how" of decisions, noting system-wide reasoning differs from individual school impacts. He praised the superintendent's thoughtful approach, recognized past challenges with trust, and highlighted efforts to ensure high-quality student experiences. He expressed support for the recommendation while stressing the importance of continuing sensitive work with affected communities.

Approved - On roll call, the School Committee approved the Closure Proposals for School Year 2027: Closure of Lee Academy Pilot School, Another Course to College, Community Academy of Science and Health. Merging of the Henderson Lower and Upper Inclusion School.
Ms. Polanco Garcia voted no. All other members voted yes.

REPORT

Finance Update - Chief of Finance David Bloom and Deputy Chief Financial Officer Blair Dawkins provided a Fiscal Year 2025, 2026, and 2027 Finance Update.

Mr. Bloom said his presentation provides a comprehensive overview of the district's financial position in FY25, FY26, and the outlook for FY27. He explained that the district's financial strategy is anchored in the BPS Opportunity and Achievement Gap Policy and a commitment to inclusive education.

He outlined three main themes:

- Fiscal Year 2025: BPS ended the year within budget, but needed to offset cost overruns with temporary funding
- Fiscal Year 2026: BPS projecting significant cost overruns in certain areas that will require active management
- Fiscal Year 2027 (SY26-2027): Full budget proposal February 4, 2026

He noted that in FY25, higher-than-expected health insurance and transportation costs drove overruns, while special education and food service costs aligned with expectations, with temporary funding coming from ESSER carryover, circuit breaker revenue, and underspending in other areas.

Ms. Dawkins explained that over the years the district has used various mitigation strategies to manage the budget, and that the FY26 budget faces challenges due to the end of federal COVID relief funds and rising costs. She noted that the district is working with the City on cost-management strategies, including pausing central office spending and adjusting operations, with the goal of minimizing the impact on students.

Mr. Bloom explained the FY27 budget challenges, noting declining enrollment due to smaller cohorts and federal immigration impacts, alongside continued cost increases in health insurance, transportation, and special education. He highlighted three key considerations: uneven

enrollment decline across the district, the shift to a new, more equitable school funding formula, and the transition from past funding practices. Central budgets were streamlined for about a 4% overall reduction. The new funding formula for schools will begin FY27 and will take a few years to be fully implemented.

Key things to know:

- It is still rules-based, we are giving all stakeholders the information they need to calculate every school budget
- We are moving from a weighted student funding model to a model that allocates:
    - Specific positions that are required in budgets
    - Differentiated per pupil funding in places with flexibility
- As a system, compliance is funded first, then flexible dollars are allocated
- Flexible funding is differentiated by need

For the February budget presentation, Mr. Bloom said the Committee should expect FTE reductions due to lower enrollment, along with continued prioritization of inclusive education, bilingual program expansion, alternative education, and high school pathways, with budget revisions reflecting the long-term facilities plan vote. He outlined the budget timeline, from school feedback in January to a full proposal in February, public engagement through the March vote, and City Council review by June.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez stressed aligning the budget with student outcomes and equity, and asked about the transportation costs for special education and how they will be managed while maintaining IEP compliance. Mr. Bloom explained that door-to-door and out-of-district transportation, especially for special education, is the largest cost driver, totaling around $150 million. Mitigation strategies include improving route efficiency and on-time performance, reviewing students' actual transportation needs, and assigning students to closer schools to reduce travel. These efforts aim to stabilize FY27 costs and potentially reduce them in future years.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez said he would like more clarity on the roughly $3,000 per-student transportation cost. Superintendent Skipper explained that high transportation costs are deeply embedded in the student assignment process, tied to long-term goals of inclusive programs and quality seats closer to home, with efforts to revisit assignments, encourage independent travel, and align door-to-door busing with IEP goals to reduce unnecessary trips.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez asked which staff are essential and where cuts may occur under the new funding system. Mr. Bloom said the district is prioritizing direct service and support staff who enable inclusive education, while FTE reductions, mainly teachers, paraprofessionals, and some support staff, will total 300–400 positions, primarily due to declining enrollment and school closures.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez asked what guardrails prevent destabilizing swings during the funding formula transition. Mr. Bloom said guardrails vary by school, with reductions tied to clear goals or transitions.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez asked what drove the $16.5 million in transportation and food service savings and the $12 million in central office savings, and whether they are one-time or recurring.

Mr. Bloom said the $16.5 million savings come from bus route efficiencies, facilities contract reviews, and the new central kitchen, while central office savings come from freezing or restructuring positions.

Dr. Alkins asked if shifting students from substantially separate settings to full inclusion could save costs. Mr. Bloom said inclusive education will cost more short-term but may reduce long-term expenses.

Dr. Alkins asked if this year's school mergers and closures are also expected to generate net savings for reinvestment. Mr. Bloom said the district has limited capacity to reinvest this year but will provide a full briefing on long-term facilities plan savings in February.

Ms. Polanco Garcia asked how the new funding formula will differ from the current one. Mr. Bloom explained that the previous funding formula relied on schools meeting a certain enrollment threshold, which left many under-enrolled schools, especially those serving marginalized communities, structurally underfunded. The new formula prioritizes fully funding classrooms and required positions first, then allocates supplemental per-student discretionary funding to better support all schools equitably.

Ms. Polanco Garcia asked for details on training school leaders and family liaisons on the new funding formula. Mr. Bloom explained that the Budget team will equip school leaders and family liaisons with talking points on classroom-and section-based funding, supplemental staff, and per-student allocations. They will also provide a transition narrative showing how each school's budget changes relate to the formula, enrollment, or other factors, with feedback collected through school councils.

Ms. Skerritt asked for clarity on continued academic priorities amid budget challenges, noting that future presentations should clearly link new bilingual programs to community requests and citywide access. Superintendent Skipper said that three bilingual programs have already received DESE approval, with startup funds included in the budget. Future expansion will depend on school demand and enrollment, especially for secondary students.

Ms. Skerritt asked how arts and world language programs fit into the budget's rules-based budget, given their importance to student experience and multilingual goals. The Superintendent said EdVestors has made a deep investment in arts expansion, and that both arts and world language are core priorities tied to MassCore and graduation requirements, with a goal of expanding arts access to all high school students rather than cutting these programs.

Mr. O'Neill asked how the district will ensure fairness for schools that used ESSER funds for facilities or equipment rather than adding staff, as budgets tighten. Mr. Bloom said the new formula will balance past ESSER differences, using clear, time-limited transition funding over 2–3 years, avoiding permanent soft landings, with school-specific supports documented and reviewed by the Committee.

Mr. O'Neill said the weighted funding formula exposed past inequities, and soft landings helped small schools sustain themselves. He also said that school leaders appreciated being able to see exactly what funding they should receive and expected the new rules-based system to offer the same clarity. Mr. Bloom said they are reviewing budgets, clarifying documentation, and using

school feedback so every school clearly understands its formula-based funding and can plan the transition.

Mr. O'Neill asked how the district can clearly communicate healthcare costs and benefits so staff understand total compensation. Mr. Bloom said the district is improving communication on benefits, noting health insurance costs nearly $16K per FTE. Health insurance will total about $175 million next year, and schools need to understand that hiring an FTE includes both salary and benefits.

Mr. Tran requested a breakdown of the expected 300–400 school-based reductions by staff category, including all civil rights–protected groups. Superintendent Skipper said the district will provide the breakdown after planning, with reductions driven by enrollment and school budgeting, while ensuring civil rights compliance. Mr. Bloom added that 160 positions at three schools scheduled to close at the end of SY2026 account for a significant portion of the reductions.

Chair Robinson asked how "bumping" and related staffing shifts might ripple across the district and affect maintaining quality educators in classrooms. Superintendent Skipper said staffing decisions will first consider provisional or uncertified teachers before teachers with seniority. They'll focus on high-impact subjects, support teacher certification, use the regional model to reassign educators, and aim to preserve workforce diversity while school budgets are finalized.

PUBLIC COMMENT *(CONTINUED)*

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Recognition of Service: Michael O'Neill - Chair Robinson recognized Michael O'Neill for his years of service on the Boston School Committee, highlighting his leadership, accountability, deep institutional knowledge, business experience, and dedication to student success. She noted his work with the Council of the Great City Schools, his love for Boston, and his commitment to preparing students for college and life. She thanked him for his lasting impact, presented him with a proclamation, and invited the Superintendent and members to comment.

The Superintendent and members expressed deep appreciation for Mr. O'Neill's 17 years on the Boston School Committee, highlighting his leadership, mentorship, dedication to students, and local and national impact. They praised his professionalism, kindness, and guidance through difficult decisions, sharing personal stories of learning from him and witnessing his lasting influence. Superintendent Skipper presented him with a Paul Revere bowl replica in recognition of his civic leadership, and members thanked him for his service and wished him well in his next chapter.

Mr. O'Neill thanked the Chair, Superintendent, colleagues, school leaders, staff, and his family

for their support during his 17 years on the Boston School Committee. He reflected on visiting schools, supporting students, and improving opportunities across the district. While acknowledging challenges, he emphasized his focus on Boston's youth. Looking ahead, he expressed excitement to continue his work with the Boston Private Industry Council and closed by celebrating the value of striving for worthy causes and serving the community.

Dr. Alkins thanked everyone, especially Chief of Capital Planning Delavern Stanislaus, for consistently supporting families at community meetings despite the emotional challenges.

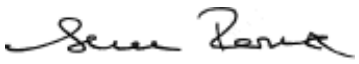
Ms. Polanco Garcia asked to continue the discussion, raised by students and families, especially at the Josiah Quincy School, about bilingual programs. Superintendent Skipper said the Committee would discuss this in January.

ADJOURN

Chair Robinson announced that the Committee would meet virtually on Zoom from January through March, with the annual organization meeting on Monday, January 5 at 5:30 p.m., and the next regular meeting on Wednesday, January 21 at 5:30 p.m. The full 2026 schedule will be posted on the committee's website after formal approval.

Approved - At approximately 10:00 p.m. the Committee unanimously approved a motion by roll call to adjourn to the meeting.

Attest:



Lena Parvex
Executive Secretary