Ashland School Committee Minutes
January 14, 2026

Ashland Town Hall
101 Main Street
Select Board Meeting Room

Hybrid meeting: recorded on Zoom

Present: Laurie Tosti, Chair: *attended remotely*
Marc Terry, Vice Chair
Paul Kendall, Member
Marcy Culverwell, Member
Tina Fitanides, Secretary
James Adams, Superintendent
Michael Caira, Assistant Superintendent
Chris Mathieu, Director of Finance
Abhishek Karthik, student representative, Ashland High School

Agenda Review and adoption
Mr. Terry opened the meeting, took attendance and reviewed the agenda.
Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: Present and AYE
Ms. Fitanides: Present and AYE
Mr. Kendall: Present and AYE
Ms. Tosti: Attended remotely and AYE
Mr. Terry: Present and AYE

Public Comment
None.

Mindess School Third Grade Gardeners
Ms. Altman, Principal of Mindess School, invited a couple of third grade students to present to the School Committee. As part of the School Improvement Plan at Mindess, Grade 3 students have been empowered to be gardeners, stewards of the land. Fifth grade students can participate in Student Council, Fourth Grade students can be greeters and do other jobs around the building. Third grade students have been tasked to clean up the courtyard, do some weeding and harvest beans, carrots and radishes. Some children found spiders, larvae and worms in the soil. Others harvested mint, thinking it was a weed. For next steps, Ms. Gillis, an Occupational Therapist at Mindess School would like to include the RISE students to do some planting and gardening at Mindess and at the raised beds at the high school, too.

Assistant Superintendent's Report - Dr. Michael Caira
Dr. Caira presented the 2024-2025 school year Assessment and Accountability data. This report is typically shared with the School Committee during their Summer Retreat, however scheduling conflicts pushed this topic to be presented in January instead.

MCAS, iReady and DIBELS data

MA Assessment trends – Need for improvement in English/Language Arts.

District-wide MCAS data – ELA, Math and Science

Writing is our lowest area of performance. Grade 4 and Grade 5 Math – geometry and fractions are also an area of concern. Grade 5 math is a specific area that we want to target going forward.

Mr. Terry asked about the different categories of achievement, “Meeting Expectations” vs. “Exceeding Expectations”. Dr. Caira noted that he tends to view the Meeting and Exceeding students in one group, and is prioritizing the students that score in the “Partially Meets Expectations” category, to get them to “Meets Expectations”.

Student Growth Percentile, SGP. The goal is to have a student growth percentile at 50% or higher. MCAS Science is taken by students in Grade 5 and Grade 8 only. There is no student growth percentile statistic available for Science, from one year to the next. The next step for Science teachers is to do a deep dive into item analysis and look how students fared on specific questions.

MCAS results broken down by school

Mindess MCAS Data: ELA and Math (Grades 3, 4 and 5)
Overall scores are above the state average. Writing is an area that needs improvement. Ms. Fitanides asked how the addition of the Data Teams at Warren has impacted the MCAS scores at Mindess? Longitudinal data?

Writing has been an area of concern with the MCAS state-wide. In response to this, Ashland has made specific changes to courses and curriculum at the middle-school level by adding a writing course in sixth grade.

AMS MCAS Data: ELA and Math (Grades 6, 7 and 8)
Solid SGP in both ELA and Math, great news here and something to celebrate. Grade 7 student performance increased 10% in ELA.

AHS MCAS Data: ELA and Math (Grade 10)
Ashland High School students scored 29% above state average in Meets/Exceeds Expectations in ELA, however there was a decrease in achievement in all ELA areas from last year.
Ashland High School students scored 30% above state average in Meets/Exceeds Expectations in Math.

Science MCAS
Grades 5, 8 and 10. We see a downward trend in achievement in Science.

MCAS results broken down by Sub-groups

Subgroup data for MCAS > English language learners, students on an IEP, Low-income students.
“High Needs” subgroup encompasses three subgroups: low-income students, English learners and students with disabilities (on an IEP or a 504 accommodation plan).

English language learners scored below the state average on MCAS for ELA.

Mr. Kendall asked if there is a correlation between the growth of the WIDA Access scores and MCAS ELA scores.
Dr. Caira presented a longitudinal data snapshot for the Class of 2029 (current ninth graders). He looked at MCAS data from Grades 5-8 for the past 4 years in both ELA and Math.

Progress monitoring is important. We have begun looking at whether we need to make a change with our Literacy program at the K-5 level.

Accountability data: Are metrics developed by the state of Massachusetts. Ashland Public Schools does not need assistance from the state. Our goal was 56, we hit 54. Sample achievement markers are "Recovery Path", "Typical Growth", Exceeded Typical Growth", "Path Forward".

Assessment Results DIBELS (K-3)
Early literacy data
Mr. Terry noted that MCAS data helps us inform changes we need to make. It helps us to understand how kids are learning. These assessments provide us with important information, helping us to be a better District and helps to drive our instructional practices.

Next Steps:
Continue to improve services for English language learners and students with disabilities.

Warrant Approvals
Between December 11, 2025, and January 14, 2026, Paul Kendall authorized payables in the amount of $930,089.55. This includes General Fund expenses of $532,223.93, Revolving expenses of $386,713.38, Grants expenses of $11,088.37, and Meals Tax expenses of $63.87.

Superintendent's Report
Mr. Adams reports that there are a couple of important scheduled meetings coming up. The next Tri-Board Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 21. The FY 2027 Budget process is still on-going and is challenging. The School Committee has a Budget Workshop scheduled for Wednesday, February 4.
Mr. Adams will present AP score data from the high school at a future meeting.

Consent Agenda
Mr. Terry moves to approve the Consent Agenda. Ms. Fitanides seconds. Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Ms. Fitanides: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Ms. Tosti: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE

Report of School Committee Members
Abhishek Karthik reported that mid-term exams are coming up next week at Ashland High School, and Term 2 will be ending.

Ms. Fitanides attended an ASHPAC meeting last week. Brittany Hawkins was unable to attend, but Katie Bent, Special Education Coordinator from Warren School attended on her behalf. Many parents had questions about the Competency Determination guidelines.
Mr. Terry reported that the scheduled High School Site Council meeting was postponed.

At 8:01pm, Mr. Terry moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Fitanides seconded the motion. Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Ms. Fitanides: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Ms. Tosti: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE

Respectfully submitted,

Gretchen King
Executive Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent

Documents used during the meeting
MCAS/Accountability/Data Presentation: 1.14.26
FY 26 01.14.26 School Committee G&D Acceptance Log
Grade 3 Gardeners
Minutes - December 10, 2025
School Committee Agenda January 14, 2026
Warrant Approvals 01_14_26