OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE HYBRID BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

April 15, 2026

The Boston School Committee held a hybrid meeting on April 15, 2026, 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 Rachel Skerritt; Stephen Alkins; Rafaela Polanco Garcia; Lydia Torres; Quoc Tran; and Student Representative Mah Noor.

School Committee Members Absent: Franklin Peralta.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Agenda

Meeting Minutes: March 25, 2026

Grants for Approval

In-Kind Donations

Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Core Program 2026 Statement of Interest: Melvin H. King South End Academy Memo

MSBACore Program 2026 Statement of Interest: Melvin H. King South End Academy Equity Impact Statement

MSBACore Program 2026 Statement of Interest: Melvin H. King South End Academy PowerPoint

MassCore Graduation Requirements Policy Amendment Memo

MassCore Graduation Requirements Policy Amendment Equity Impact Statement

MassCore Graduation Requirements Policy Amendment PowerPoint

2026 Policy to Advance Academic Excellence and Eliminate Opportunity and Achievement Gaps (OAG) Memo

2026 Policy to Advance Academic Excellence and Eliminate OAG Equity Impact Statement

2026 Policy to Advance Academic Excellence and Eliminate OAG Policy

2026 Policy to Advance Academic Excellence and Eliminate OAG PowerPoint

2026-2031 Strategic Roadmap Update Memo

2026-2031 Strategic Roadmap Update Equity Impact Statement

2026-2031 Strategic Roadmap Update PowerPoint

Private School Applications Memo

Private School Applications PowerPoint

Private School Application Alpha School BPS Review Team Report

Private School Application Alpha School PowerPoint

Private School Application Douglass Ridley School BPS Review Team Report

Private School Application Douglass Ridley School PowerPoint

FY26 Supplemental Appropriation Request Memo

FY26 Budget Update March

FY26 Supplemental Budget Request 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 and Ms. Noor arrived after the meeting had begun. Franklin Peralta was absent, all other members were present.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Approved – The Committee approved by unanimous consent the minutes of the March 25, 2026, meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

As prepared for delivery.

Thank you, Chair Robinson, and good evening School Committee members and to the public here tonight and watching remotely. It's great to see all of you who are here in person. It's been a long winter. We have a packed agenda so I will just take a few minutes to share an announcement from our BPS Office of College, Career, and Life Readiness and some recent 'bright spots' before we get to the presentations.

First, the BPS Office of College, Career, and Life Readiness invites Grade 12 students, parents and caregivers to join a support session on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid - or the FAFSA - and the Massachusetts Alternative Financial Aid Application - or the MASFA - on Wednesday, April 22 from 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m here at the Bolling Building. Parents of 12th graders will receive an electronic communication from us on Thursday (tomorrow), April 16th, with local and statewide resources, as well as information on school counselors and partners available at their home school for support. The Massachusetts financial aid priority deadline is May first, which maximizes students' eligibility for state aid for those entering college in the fall of 2026. Completing the FAFSA or MASFA by this date is very important and a key step students can take to access grants, scholarships, tuition-free opportunities, and other support. Please email the Office of College, Career, and Life Readiness at CCLR at bostonpublicschools.org with any questions.

I am proud to share the winners of this year's Aspen Challenge. You may remember that last year BPS began its participation in a two-year national education program that "challenges" high school students to design solutions to social justice issues. This year, teams of eight students from 13 BPS schools as well as students from Lawrence High School and Somerville High spent 10 weeks developing their ideas including how to address food insecurity, make resources available to immigrant communities, address the connection between academics and mental health, create more green space, and connect students to work training opportunities. Those ideas were presented to a panel of judges composed of community leaders, educators, and experts at the Solutions Showcase last week. Thank you, Chair Robinson, for being there to cheer our students on.

The Grand Prize winners are headed to the annual Aspen Ideas Festival in Colorado in June where they will have the opportunity to learn from global leaders confronting the most pressing issues of our time. Congratulations to Boston International Newcomers Academy - or BINcA and TechBoston Academy on this well deserved honor.

Additional awards included:

- Brighton High School for originality;
- Another Course to College for collaboration;
- Charlestown High School for community engagement; and
- New Mission High School was honored with the People's Choice Award.

- Lawrence High School was recognized with the resilience award.

The highlight of my role as superintendent is to see the talent and creativity of our students at work. I am so impressed with the quality of the projects and the students' presentations. The Aspen Challenge has been an incredible experience for our students and our city. Our students learned so much about themselves and what they are capable of through this process. I am so grateful that our students had this opportunity and I am so incredibly proud of what they accomplished. We are hoping to continue the Aspen Challenge model with local partners, and will share updates as the planning develops.

Last week I joined Mayor Wu, the Sarah Greenwood Dual Language School community, and several special guests for the annual Red Sox Hat Day celebration- marking the arrival of spring and the start of baseball season. These photos give you an idea of the joy and excitement of the event. It was especially fun autographing hats for our students! Thank you to Chair Robinson and member Peralta for helping to distribute Red Sox hats to the students. Thanks to Mayor Michelle Wu, Red Sox President and CEO Sam Kennedy, Red Sox Partner and Foundation Board Member Linda Henry - and of course Wally and Tessie - for spending time with our students. The Red Sox donated more than 40,000 hats for students and staff at 109 K-8 BPS schools. We are so grateful to the Red Sox organization and leadership as well as sponsor Jet Blue for their continued support and generosity.

Lastly, I was honored to attend the Dever Elementary School's recent Digitizing Day, a special opportunity for the school community to come together to contribute to an online archive that will hold many of the school's memories as their last year comes to a close. Thank you to committee members Polanco Garcia and Torres for attending the event. Attendees contributed photos, apparel, notes, and recorded interviews that will be uploaded to a new collection created in collaboration with UMass Boston's Healey Library University Archives and Special Collections. The Dever has been a cornerstone of the Columbia Point community for nearly 70 years. The event reflected the connections and memories it has created for so many people. It was incredibly meaningful to see former students, families and staff gather to share their stories and celebrate what this school has meant to them. By preserving these memories, we are honoring the legacy of the Dever and ensuring that its impact continues to be felt for years to come.

As part of the event, a commemorative City of Boston street sign reading "Dever School Drive - All Roads Lead Through the Dever" was installed to honor the legacy of the Dever's decades-long impact. I want to extend a heartfelt 'thank you' to those that came out to share memories, and preserve and make available the Dever Elementary's legacy for future generations, especially Senior Project Manager Meghan Schroeder, parent leader Cheryl Buckman, and principal Margaret Reardon.

Going forward, the BPS Capital Planning team will continue working with our merging and closing school communities to determine the best way to honor their legacies. Each school community is different and may have their own ideas on how to commemorate their story and their history. Later this spring we will share an update with the committee on where students from the closing schools are going next year and report on the progress of the long term facilities plan implementation.

Those are tonight's 'bright spots.' Back to you, Chair Robinson.

Dr. Alkins shared he attended the National School Boards Association Conference in San Antonio as BPS was honored with the Magna Award for its work on installing internal air quality monitors. This recognition reflects the long-term impact of early investments, including a data dashboard that helps families monitor air quality and informs building upgrades. He added that it was valuable to connect with peers nationwide and acknowledged Jake Lacey, Catherine Walsh, and the whole team from the Facilities Management Department. Finally, Dr. Alkins asked whether updates on where students from closed schools were going could also include faculty and staff, including social workers.

Vice Chair Skerritt said it was encouraging to hear about the Aspen Challenge and the value it brings to participants, adding that it would be interesting to use its model and structure to inform future graduation requirements. Superintendent Skipper said the Aspen Challenge reflects capstone-style work being considered for graduation requirements and that the district is exploring ways to expand similar experiences.

Chair Robinson said she was a big supporter of the Aspen Challenge, highlighting the diversity of students and strong student voice. She highlighted the student collaboration and encouraged sharing this work more broadly as an example of what students can do when well supported.

Approved - The committee approved the Superintendent's Report by unanimous consent.

REPORT

Chair Robinson explained that due to the April 17 deadline, this report would be presented and voted on at the same meeting.

Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Core Program 2026 Statement of Interest: Melvin H. King South End Academy - Chief Delavern Stanislaus and Assistant Superintendent Dr. Harold Miller presented the proposal.

Chief Stanislaus explained that the MSBA funds school construction and renovation through a reimbursement program and noted Boston's long-standing participation, with 57 projects completed or underway. Dr. Miller described the Melvin H. King South End Academy as a specialized school serving students with complex needs that has seen declining enrollment as more inclusive supports expand. He said the school is in a rebuilding phase focused on equity, improved programming, partnerships, and facility upgrades, and is transitioning to a 5–12 model with long-term enrollment projected at about 100 students. Chief Stanislaus provided background on the school's facilities, noting the current building is in poor condition and not designed as a therapeutic school, and said that if this proposal is approved this will represent a long-term investment with construction not expected until 2031.

Ms. Noor asked how the students would be involved in the process. Chief Stanislaus said the

MSBA design process includes a dedicated team for community engagement, with students, staff, and the community involved throughout.

Mr. Tran asked why the construction wouldn't start until 2031 if it's approved. Chief Stanislaus explained that if selected, the project would enter the MSBA eligibility period, followed by a multi-year process involving procurement, designer selection, and extensive community engagement to develop the educational vision. Superintendent Skipper said that while the construction wouldn't start immediately, the engagement with students, staff and community would be an ongoing process.

Mr. Tran asked whether all of the funding came from the MSBA. Chief Stanislaus said the MSBA does not cover 100% of project costs and explained that the district would seek City Council approval at key stages. Brian McLaughlin, Project Manager with the City of Boston's Public Facilities Department, said MSBA reimbursement rates are set annually and will be just over 61% for 2025. Superintendent Skipper said the project would be funded through capital dollars and is a forward-looking effort.

Dr. Alkins asked whether there are plans for a specific staffing model for the school. Dr. Miller said that staffing has been reduced with the declining enrollment, but the school maintains about a 1:1 staffing ratio, providing a full high school experience aligned with MassCore. Superintendent Skipper said the school is moving toward a true therapeutic mode, supporting students grades 5–12.

Vice Chair Skerritt asked if the 100-student enrollment goal reflects grade changes, site consolidation, or student need, and why enrollment couldn't be higher, given the planned investment. Dr. Miller said the enrollment goal is based on long-term data and the Inclusive Education Plan, reframing the school as a "bridge" supporting students' transitions in and out of traditional settings, with length of stay determined through data and collaboration to avoid longer-than-necessary placements. Superintendent Skipper said clearer entrance criteria now ensure appropriate placement and added that the 100-student figure is flexible over time. She also confirmed the school will remain diploma-granting and may serve as a therapeutic day school for some out-of-district students, with rigorous academics supported by therapeutic services.

Vice Chair Skerritt asked where this project falls within the long-term facilities plan and whether the Melvin H. King South End Academy was already slated for modernization without MSBA support or if this opportunity came earlier than expected. Chief Stanislaus said the Melvin H. King South End School is part of the district's capital plan, with a 2022 commitment for a new building. She said this MSBA application is the next step, guided by facilities assessments and long-term planning.

Chair Robinson said she is excited to see the project move forward, given the prior commitment and the focus on strengthening programming for students. She said she hopes it can serve as a model for supporting some of the district's most vulnerable learners.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The following speakers testified in favor of the 2026 Opportunity and Achievement Gaps (OAG) Policy:

- John Mudd, Cambridge resident, Community Advocate, Multilingual Alliance (ML)
- Pete Mullin, Roslindale resident, Curley K-8 Educator
- Ari Branz, Mattapan resident, Community Advocate, ML
- Yrmaris Matias, South End resident, O'Bryant School parent
- Katie DeLaRosa, West Roxbury resident, Boston Teachers Union

The following speakers testified in support of school-based social workers and against proposed cuts to district social workers:

- Betsy Santana, a BPS social worker
- Anne Hernandez, Roslindale resident, BPS social worker
- Julie Valencia, West Roxbury resident, BPS social worker
- Councilor Julia Mejia, Dorchester resident, parent

Dora Sandoval, Roxbury resident, parent, BPS parent, St. Stephen's program, testified in favor of bilingual programs and the 2026 OAG Policy.

Deirdre Manning, Dorchester resident, BPS and Boston Collegiate Charter School parent, testified on equitable treatment for charter school students in exam school admissions.

Hayden Chernow, Jamaica Plain resident, Community Advocate, BPS alum, Center for Law and Education, testified about concerns with MCAS-Alt placement and its impact on historically marginalized students, and urged stronger family support and understanding of the process.

ACTION ITEMS

Approved - The Committee approved, by unanimous consent, the grants for approval as amended, totaling $478,158.82

Approved - The Committee approved by unanimous consent the In-kind donations with a total estimated value of $1,500.

Approved - On roll call, the School Committee unanimously approved the MSBA Core Program 2026 Statement of Interest: Melvin H. King South End Academy.

Vice Chair. Skerritt said MassCore should remain the standard for most students and supported including the percent of students graduating with MassCore as an annual metric. Ms. Polanco Garcia spoke about the importance of considering the needs and vulnerabilities of English learners in implementing MassCore, emphasizing the need for appropriate supports and to ensure equity for multilingual students. Ms. Dickens said the policy's original intent is to prepare students for Massachusetts universities and emphasized multilingualism as an asset, with the goal of ensuring all students can thrive in their post-secondary pathways.

Chair Robinson thanked the district for their work on MassCore implementation since 2021, noting progress on addressing course disparities.

Approved - On roll call, the School Committee unanimously approved the MassCore Graduation Requirements Policy Amendment.

RECESS

At 7:40 the School Committee took a short recess. The Committee reconvened the meeting at around 7:50 p.m.

REPORT

2026 Policy to Advance Academic Excellence and Eliminate Opportunity and Achievement Gaps - Dr. Colin Rose, Senior Advisor for Strategy and Opportunity Gaps, Dr. Stephen Alkins, OAG Co-Chair and Ayele Shakur, OAG Co-Chair, presented the 2026 OAG Policy.

Ms. Shakur introduced the updated policy, describing it as the district's "North Star" for accountability and equity, centering BPS's majority student groups and noting it is being updated after 10 years instead of six due to COVID and leadership transitions, with urgency having grown.

Dr. Rose emphasized the urgency of addressing persistent achievement gaps, citing long-term MCAS data showing continued disparities despite some progress, and noted prior efforts such as culturally responsive practices and the opportunity index as important steps forward.

Ms. Shakur explained that the the policy is organized into six goals:

> Goal 1: Align And Sustain District-Wide Systems And Structures To Drive Accountability, Oversight, And Policy Implementation
>
> Goal 2: Provide District-Wide Professional Development In Culturally And Linguistically Affirming And Sustaining Practices (CLSP) For All Staff.
>
> Goal 3: Advance Academic Excellence
>
> Goal 4: Increase Educator And Leadership Diversity Across The District
>
> Goal 5: Ensure Equitable, Transparent, And Efficient Central Office Operations That Provide High-Quality Support To All Schools, Students, And Families
>
> Goal 6: Establish Equitable, Reciprocal Partnerships With Students, Families, And Community Partners To Advance Opportunity And Achievement

Major Updates from 2016 Policy

Structure:

- Goal #1 reorganized into three pillars: Leadership, Accountability, Alignment.
- Includes specific Task Force Recommendations for effective high-impact strategies
- Adds a new Glossary of Terms

Content:

- Stronger focus on academic excellence alongside equity.
- Reinforces literacy and core academics as the foundation of success.
- Promotes joyful learning and whole-child development.
- Centers schools as the "unit of change" and elevates effective school leadership.
- Expanded language on addressing the impacts of poverty and support for economically disadvantaged students.

Dr. Alkins explained that the updated policy is intended to better align with the strategic plan and strengthen accountability through a shared data and implementation framework. Previously, these worked separately, causing confusion and weak accountability. He concluded by saying that the elimination of OAGs aims to remove barriers for all students. The task force will partner with the district to ensure aligned goals, coordinated implementation, and transparent, ongoing monitoring.

2026-2031 Strategic Roadmap Update - Dr. Rose presented the update on the 2025-2030 Strategic Roadmap for the district, explaining that the team is developing a unified strategic plan aligned with the OEG policy, rather than maintaining separate implementation plans.

Vision for every student
Opportunity & Achievement Gap (OAG) Policy as our North Star: "*Every child, in every classroom, in every Boston school has the same opportunity to achieve greatness as anybody else, with the same unfettered access to excellent teaching, joyful learning, and every conceivable tool needed to unlock their brilliance*."

Dr. Rose explained that a high-quality student experience includes rigorous, culturally affirming learning; a supportive network of caring adults; and wellness and enrichment supported by strong physical spaces, and said that the closer the district gets to these conditions, the closer it comes to achieving its vision.

Dr. Rose said that the three focus areas to align and advance the work are high-quality instruction, holistic student support, and strong programming and facilities. These goals were shaped through data, community input, and a racial equity planning process. The district aims to align resources and collaboration across schools, central office, and community partners, supported by clear accountability, enabling conditions, and ongoing refinement of goals and metrics. He emphasized that the district's strategy is to better align resources and coordination across schools, central office, and community partners, supported by clear goals, enabling conditions, and ongoing accountability to improve outcomes for all students

Ms. Noor asked for clarification on how the learning can be more joyful while focusing on the academic goals. Ms. Shakur explained that "joyful learning" will be supported through professional development that helps teachers create engaging, interactive classrooms for all students, and involving student voices and leadership to inform what makes learning engaging and relevant.

Ms. Noor asked about increasing educator and leadership diversity and what students might notice in schools as a result of this, and if the district is collecting the data to track progress. Ms. Shakur said educator diversity remains a challenge and stressed the need for both recruitment and retention so students experience diverse educators. She said that due to different constraints, the district might lose more recently hired diverse teachers, something the OAG Task Force wanted to focus on. Dr. Alkins added the importance of using data to address barriers like licensure and better support underrepresented educators.

Ms. Torres asked for clarification on accountability and what information will be included on the dashboard. Ms. Shakur said the policy will be updated alongside the strategic plan and that the data dashboard with key performance indicators will be developed to track and share progress. Dr. Rose explained that the district, task force, and School Committee should align on a core set of key metrics to avoid multiple data sets and ensure focused, shared accountability.

Ms. Torres asked if the dashboard would include information about the schools. Superintendent Skipper explained that school-by-school data would be preferable but some information might need to be shown at a regional level to protect privacy, but the goal is to provide as much relevant data as possible.

Ms. Torres asked what classroom measures will show the impact of staff training in culturally and linguistically sustaining practices (CLSP). Dr. Rose said that CLSP should be part of classroom practice, climate and culture, and professional development.

Ms. Torres asked about the intent and the roll out of the tracker that is mentioned in the equity impact statement of the strategic plan. Dr. Rose explained that the 2017 strategic plan used a public tracker showing progress on goals and the team was hoping to have a tracker that promotes transparency and accountability, with regular updates on whether goals are being met. Superintendent Skipper added the work must be embedded across the entire district, with every department taking ownership, setting priorities, allocating resources, and measuring progress.

Mr. Tran expressed concern that student achievement has remained below 50% since 2006, despite past plans. He emphasized the need for strong professional development to drive real improvement, as the students' success depends on the teacher's effectiveness. Ms. Shakur said the persistent achievement gap stems from a lack of alignment in past efforts, where the policy, strategic plans, and priorities operated separately. This new approach aims to unify everything under one coherent strategy, with shared leadership and accountability across the district.

Mr. Tran thanked the team for taking into consideration English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

Ms. Polanco Garcia praised the team's work and emphasized the need for clear communication, and school-level monitoring of progress, and asked if a designated team will oversee

accountability and implementation across the district. Ms. Shakur said implementation will be led by the superintendent's team and school leaders, while the task force will monitor progress. Dr. Alkins added that the task force will use its diverse expertise to make recommendations and support the district collaboratively while implementation is led by the district.

Vice Chair Skerritt asked when a more detailed implementation roadmap will be completed, with timelines and success indicators for each initiative, so the work can be properly sequenced and monitored over time. Dr. Rose said they'll refine and sequence the work with district leaders over the spring and summer, share more detailed goals by summer, and have a full implementation plan by early fall. Ms. Shakur suggested the School Committee use the policy as a guide to select which areas to prioritize each year. Dr. Alkins said the task force still needs to define the process for prioritizing goals and how those decisions will be shared with the School Committee. Superintendent Skipper said work is already underway in several areas, and the next step is to organize and build on that progress. District leaders will map current work, set priorities with School Committee input, and build a phased year-one plan.

Ms. Skerritt asked where key priorities like inclusion rollout and multilingual learner support fit in the strategic plan as they are not explicitly listed. Dr. Rose said the objectives will contain more specific initiatives, such as bilingual and multilingual programs under different sections.

Ms. Skerritt suggested more alignment on terms, and gave the example of the word "goals" that can have different interpretations.

Ms. Skerritt said numeracy should be emphasized alongside literacy and urged that advanced coursework be treated as a K–12 priority, not just a high school focus.

Chair Robinson asked what is different about this work compared to the work done 20 years ago. Ms. Shakur said the main difference is stronger alignment between the OAG policy and strategic plan, with clearer leadership ownership. The policy serves as the "North Star," with implementation and planning now unified to improve coherence and accountability.

Chair Robinson said past barriers included limited disaggregated data and accountability, and asked what role the union will play in ensuring inclusion work is meaningfully implemented beyond compliance in the next six years. Ms. Shakur said the union has a representative on the task force, which strengthens collaboration on inclusion work. She emphasized the need for more transparency and disaggregated data. Superintendent Skipper said the district needs to turn data into usable information, improve disaggregation, and work collaboratively to better understand and address persistent achievement gaps. Dr. Alkins emphasized the importance of time-bound goals and KPIs (Key Performance Indicator) that measure realistic, incremental progress over time.

Chair Robinson thanked the team and said the Committee would vote on the OAG policy at a future meeting.

Private School Applications - Dr. Anne Clark outlined the private school approval process, explaining that under Massachusetts law (Massachusetts General Law c.76, § 1), School Committees must approve any private school serving students ages 6–16 within their district.

She said that the 2011 policy established a BPS review team to evaluate private school applications using Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education's (DESE) guidelines, through application review, site visits, interviews, and criteria-based evaluation, leading to recommendations. She concluded that two schools met the criteria and were being presented for consideration.

Alpha School - Dr. Tasha Arnold, Head of Alpha School and J.C. Fischer, Executive Vice President of Operations, introduced the school as a mastery-based program whose mission is to ensure students achieve academic mastery while also developing cognitive, social, and personal competencies. She explained that students progress based on demonstrated mastery, with personalized instruction, low student-teacher ratios, and alignment to Massachusetts standards. The school includes core academics, interdisciplinary projects, and life skills development, operates on a full school day schedule, and plans to open with 25 students, growing to 50, while engaging with the local community.

Ms. Torres asked about the selection process for the school. Dr. Arnold explained the process which is through family interest, assessment, and family interviews.

Mr. Tran asked about student diversity and accommodations for students with disabilities and the tuition cost. Dr. Arnold said they didn't have a breakdown but their model supports diverse learners with built-in accommodations, but some services like therapy would be provided through outside partners. The presenters said the tuition is $65,000 per year and the school aims to develop a scholarship program over time to expand access.

Dr. Alkins asked how the school's funding is structured and managed. Dr. Fischer said the school is part of a nationally managed network with centralized finances, board oversight, and strong funding support.

Dr. Alkins asked whether the district tracks data on students who leave for private schools and later return. Superintendent Skipper said BPS serves as the "landing pad" for all students and asked for the school's total enrollment, including the percentage of multilingual learners and students with disabilities across sites. Dr. Arnold said the network serves about 500 students across multiple campuses, about 20% of students are neurodiverse and student demographics generally reflect the communities where each campus is located.

Superintendent Skipper asked about teacher and administrator certification requirements. Dr. Arnold said about 65% of teachers have traditional teaching backgrounds, all educators have degrees, and staff also include leaders with advanced education.

Dr. Alkins and Superintendent emphasized on the importance of having more data on the demographics and retention data. Dr. Arnold said the school has about 6% , mostly due to relocation. Most of their students come from private schools rather than public schools.

Superintendent Skipper asked about the business model and use of school vouchers. Dr. Arnold said vouchers are being used in Arizona, otherwise tuition is being paid privately.

Vice Chair Skerritt commented on the responsibility of approving private schools for which the Committee would have no oversight, with very limited guidance from DESE, especially academically. She asked how the Alpha School model, with only two hour academic classes, leads to mastery. Dr. Arnold said the two hour academic block focuses on mastery of core subjects with required 90% proficiency before advancement, while afternoons focus on applied, interdisciplinary learning and life skills.

Vice Chair Skerritt asked what distinguishes the Alpha School model from other schooling options, given the similarities in standards, assessments, and school days. Dr. Arnold explained their families value the "Time Back" model that focuses on mastery without homework, reduced tutoring, giving students more time outside school. They also emphasize strong engagement and a sense of belonging. Mr. Fischer added that operationally the schools provide families with flexibility as needed.

Vice Chair Skerritt recommended exploring ways to make tuition more affordable and to expand financial support opportunities. Dr. Arnold said Arizona is the only state that has approved vouchers and they are working on trailing it in other states.

Superintendent Skipper asked what the net value of the for-profit company and emphasized the importance of the company's financial stability to assess long-term viability. Mr. Fischer said they were all owned by one company and he didn't have a number for the net value. Mr. Fischer said the Boston model projects 25–30% EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization) margins and that once the school is financially sustainable, excess funds would be used to support scholarships and access. Dr. Arnold said the starting salary for a teacher was $120,000.

Vice Chair Skerritt asked about Dr. Arnold's role, who explained she serves as a superintendent that oversees multiple campuses, and on-site leadership is handled by deans and head teachers.

Vice Chair Skerritt asked about average MAP scores at non-voucher campuses. Dr. Arnold said the scores are, on average, about two grade levels below, but reach grade level within one year and the top 1–3% within two years.

Dr. Alkins asked about data on how the school was recruited to Boston by families. Dr. Arnold said it was Boston families in Austin seeking to return, followed by word-of-mouth and an online "interest map" used to track demand.

Dr. Alkins asked whether there is data on how students fare when transitioning to other schools, given the proposal is K–8. Dr. Arnold said there is limited formal data on students transitioning to other schools after K–8, but some anecdotal evidence referenced alumni college success and social adjustment as indicators, with more data expected as additional cohorts graduate.

Chair Robinson asked whether the two hour academics is device-based, what instruction looks like for younger students, and if there are any traditional classroom centers. Dr. Arnold said younger students receive individualized support through certified reading specialists in small groups, alongside structured break-based learning. She explained that while academic work is screen-based, younger students also engage in hands-on activities, play, and social-emotional learning through "check charts" and Montessori-style morning activities. Dr. Arnold said

students have libraries, books, reading instruction, and structured choice in texts aligned to standards, with emphasis on fostering a love of reading. Dr. Fischer added that students have flexible, play-based learning spaces.

Chair Robinson said growing research shows the need in reducing screen time for young children and wondered how families will consider this. Dr. Arnold said balance is important, noting students are not on screens all day and referencing research that traditional schools already include significant screen use.

Douglass Ridley School - Courtney Swartz, founder of Douglas Ridley School, described a Reggio Emilia -inspired, inquiry-based elementary school focused on curiosity, relationships, and academic rigor aligned with state standards.

She said students would learn through small-group instruction and interdisciplinary projects, supported by social-emotional learning and research on inquiry-based education. The school would open with one kindergarten class and grow gradually, with tiered tuition for access, board oversight, and community partnerships.

Ms. Torres asked about the selection process for the school and the tuition. Ms. Swartz said enrollment is designed to be low-barrier and accessible, with a simple application process and info sessions, and that the school prioritizes families committed to the model. They will use a tiered tuition model, up to $35,000, based on family income and dependents to ensure affordability.

Dr. Alkins asked what kind of special education support they will provide.
Ms. Swartz said the school will use BPS equitable services, allow families to keep existing providers, and also provide in-school OT, speech, and self-regulation support.
Superintendent Skipper asked about financial sustainability, including funding needs if enrollment falls short and any contingency plans. Ms. Swartz said the school will be a nonprofit funded through a mix of tiered tuition and fundraising, with support from board members and grants, and will grow cautiously based on enrollment.

Vice Chair Skerritt asked what distinguishes the Douglass Ridley School model from other schooling options. Ms. Swartz described the Reggio Emilia philosophy, where teachers build curriculum around students' interests while integrating grade-level standards across subjects, giving teachers flexibility and students greater agency and engagement.

Vice Chair Skerritt reflected on concerns about consistency and the challenge of assessing alignment with state expectations in teacher-created models. Ms. Swartz said she hopes the model shows an alternative to standardized instruction by integrating student curiosity while still meeting grade-level standards and documenting outcomes through research.

Chair Robinson asked how the Reggio Emilia model will be implemented past pre-school level, and if there have been other elementary schools using this model.

Ms. Swartz said she wants to extend preschool-style, curiosity-driven learning into elementary grades by integrating student interests into standards-based instruction, and said that a few schools in Boston currently use inquiry-based approaches inspired by this model.

Chair Robinson thanked the presenters and said the Committee would vote on the approvals at a future meeting.

FY26 Supplemental Appropriation Request for $22,845,672 to Boston Public Schools in support of a balanced budget - Chief of Finance David Bloom explained that BPS is facing a projected $28.3M budget overage driven mainly by health insurance, full-time employees, transportation, special education, and higher-than-expected utility costs due to a cold winter. He said the district has already identified about $20M in savings through spending freezes, operational cuts, and grant adjustments, and is continuing efforts to reduce the remaining gap. He said they are coming before the School Committee for approval to request a FY26 Supplemental Appropriation from the Boston City Council for a total of $22.8M dollars to cover the deficits in health insurance and utility projections.

Superintendent Skipper clarified that the FY26 supplemental corrects a prior shortfall in health benefits that was later addressed in FY27, and said utility costs are weather-dependent. She said the request would go to the City Council if approved.

Vice Chair Skerritt asked whether high utility costs should become the new baseline for future budgets, and whether that approach was reflected in the FY27 budget.

Chief Bloom said projections often lag by a year and utilities are a concern for FY27 due to geopolitical factors, but typical overruns are usually offset by savings elsewhere. He said FY27 adjusts for vacancies, health insurance, and transportation.

Chair Robinson said the Committee would vote on the supplemental appropriation at the May 6 meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT *(CONTINUED)*

None.

NEW BUSINESS

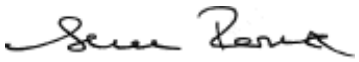
Chair Robinson asked if the team could look at the issue the social workers had brought forth. Superintendent Skipper responded that they would look into it and discuss the matter.

ADJOURN

Chair Robinson announced that the Committee will meet in person on Wednesday, May 6 at 6:00 p.m.

Approved - At approximately 10:45 p.m. the Committee unanimously approved a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Lena Parvex
Executive Secretary