

Ipswich School Committee
MS/HS Ensemble Room
134 High Street, Ipswich
Thursday, November 16, 2023
7:00 PM

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

KE called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

Present: K. Eliot (KE) D. Freehan (DF)
 J. Donahue (JD) J. Connolly (JC)
 S. Sopic (SS) J. Poirier (JP)
 M. Perry (MP)

Also Present: Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools (BB)
 Tom Markham, Director of Finance and Operations (TM)

2. Reading of the District Mission Statement

JB read the mission statement.

3. Announcements

- The next School Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, December 7th at 7:00 PM in the MS/HS Ensemble Room.
- Students will be released from school early on Wednesday, November 22nd according to the following schedule:
 - Middle/High School: 11:20 AM
 - Elementary Schools: 11:50 AM
- All schools and district offices will be closed on Thursday, November 23rd and Friday, November 24th
- The following subcommittees will be meeting:
 - Budget Subcommittee on Wednesday, November 29th at 6:00 PM
 - Mutual Concerns Subcommittee on Tuesday, December 5th at 5:30 PM
 - Policy Subcommittee on Wednesday, December 6th at 5:30 PM

4. Special Acknowledgements

Both the cheerleading team and the volleyball team were heading to state championships. A production of The Little Mermaid will be performed this weekend at the middle school and a production of Willy Wonka Kids will be performed at Doyon.

5. Remarks from the Chair Regarding Incident on October 27th

KE shared a statement on behalf of the School Committee regarding underage drinking.

6. Public Comments¹

KE read the statement on public comment. There were no public comments.

7. High School Student Representative Report

¹ Public comment is not a discussion, debate, or dialogue between individuals and the School Committee. It is an individual's opportunity to express an opinion on issues within the School Committee's authority. While the Committee and/or administrators will not typically respond during Public Comment, the Chair, as presiding officer of the meeting, may choose to if s/he seems it expeditious. Further, should the Chair believe that an issue falls outside the purview of the School Committee, s/he may request that citizens direct it to the appropriate person or body so that the matter is given proper consideration. Public comment is limited to three (3) minutes per person and a total of 15 minutes, overall.

JB's report discussed Spirit Week at the high school, a weeklong event leading up to the homecoming dance. JB reviewed the schedule for Spirit Week, as well as the fundraising efforts that took place.

8. Presentations

A. IEA Snapshot: Foundations

Susan Moore (SM), a Doyon Reading Specialist, talked about the phonics program for grades K-2 called Foundations. This program is aligned with the Science of Reading. SM shared examples of how the program was used.

B. Strategy for District Improvement/School Improvement Plan Presentation

Tracy Wagner (TW), Director of Teaching and Learning, began the presentation with an overview of the Strategy for Student Success Framework and the Strategy for District Improvement document. TW also outlined the process for creating a School Improvement Plan which includes input from faculty and School Councils.

Winthrop School:

Principal Amy Sullivan (AS) thanked members of the School Council for their work on the School Improvement Plan. The plan is currently in year two of a two year cycle.

Goal 1:

Winthrop School will ensure that all students are provided supportive and rigorous educational experiences that meet their social, emotional, and academic needs.

Action Steps for 2023-2024:

- Create an Elementary Intervention Plan template and develop an intervention toolkit. Seek grant funding to support materials and resources.
- Provide professional development on de-escalation and behavior supports
- Plan and prepare for the implementation of a new English Language Arts curriculum
- Conduct a curriculum review cycle of our Science curriculum and unpack the new Comprehensive Health standards to refresh resources and student assessment data

Goal 2:

Winthrop School will ensure that all students are immersed in an engaging and challenging academic program built on authentic, profound learning experiences driven by the Successful Habits of Mind.

Action Steps for 2023-2024:

- Explore specialist programming to determine joint/collaborative innovative project planning
- Increase awareness of sustainability practices and integrate sustainability goals across grade levels
- Support teachers in the shift from a workshop model of literacy instruction to a research-based model aligned with Science of reading
- Investigate and begin to implement ways for students to have ownership of their learning.

Goal 3:

Winthrop School will ensure that all students will be prepared to face the challenges presented by an increasingly complex world that is more diverse than our immediate learning community.

Action Steps for 2023-2024:

- Continue to build our repertoire of resources and services to support our English Language Learner population.
- Integrate intentional instruction on social-emotional learning skills and conversations about identity, bullying, inclusivity, and diversity and explore into Responsive Classroom practices
- Audit policies, procedures, programs and school and district forms for gender, cultural, and family inclusivity

Resources/Supports

AS talked about the resources available that help support the goals in the School Improvement Plan.

Comments/Questions:

KE said she loved to see that data was driving decision making and to see the alignment of the two elementary schools. KE asked how the addition of the assistant principal has been. AS responded that it was a game-changer and allows her to be more responsive to teachers and to better implement goals. JP asked if the elementary schools were working collaboratively on the intervention toolkits. AS said that they were just starting to gather input, but imagined that the schools would be collaborating in the future.

Paul F. Doyon Memorial School:

Principal Peter Holtz (PH) shared that Doyon has adopted a nautical theme this year. He thanked the members of his School Council and stated that Doyon was in year one of a two year School Improvement Plan.

Goal 1:

The Paul F. Doyon Memorial School will ensure that all students are provided supportive and rigorous educational experiences that meet their social, emotional, and academic needs.

Action Steps for 2023-2024:

- Review and update all aspects for creating a safe and secure school community, and develop in collaboration with Ipswich first responders, timelines and procedures for reviewing and revising school safety plans and ensuring consistent implementation across schools.
- Utilize a variety of data sources, including screeners and benchmark assessments, to understand where students are in their learning, inform any needed interventions and support, and monitor student progress, and we will communicate these findings with families.
- In order to respond to screening data and work to refine our MTSS/SST procedures, we will focus on developing Tier 1 and Tier II supports, in collaboration with Winthrop, to develop a toolkit of scaffolds, supports, and instructional strategies for supporting different learners in tiered instruction.
- Evaluate our current schedule to assess existing time on learning in core academic subjects, specialist programming, and specialized instruction, and to assess how flexible learning blocks and teacher common planning time support our efforts to address students needs at each grade level.
- Continued Implementation of meaningful Professional Development opportunities for all staff conducive for professional growth, with a focus on deepening understanding of student academic and SEL needs.

Goal 2:

- The Paul F. Doyon School will ensure that all students are immersed in an engaging and challenging academic program built on authentic, profound learning experiences driven by the Successful Habits of Mind.

Action Steps for 2023-2024:

- Doyon staff will deepen Responsive Classroom practices to align common language and behavior expectations, and we will begin to explore restorative practices in alignment with work being done at IMS and IHS.
- Doyon teachers will build upon existing place-based and experiential learning opportunities to build student awareness of our local, regional and global impact.
- We will deepen existing structures that provide for student voice and agency and implement ways for students to have ownership of their learning, including goal setting and reflection on learning.
- Teachers will collaborate to align instructional practices across all classrooms at each grade level and engage in comprehensive professional development in the area of science of reading in preparation for the adoption of a new literacy curriculum in 2024-2025.

Goal 3:

The Paul F. Doyon School will ensure that all students will be prepared to face the challenges presented by an increasingly complex world that is more diverse than our immediate learning community. As a community, we will continue to embrace the cultural, ethnic, and gender identities of our students and families; honor identities and amplify marginalized voices within the school; integrate cultures, ethnicities, and other diverse backgrounds into the curriculum; and explore creative ways to build awareness of diversity.

Action Steps for 2023-2024:

- Begin to examine district and school traditions through the lens of cultural sensitivity and inclusion and begin to audit policies, procedures, and school and district forms for gender and family inclusivity.
- Continue to explore ways to integrate our No Place for Hate designation throughout the school, including integrating intentional instruction on social-emotional learning skills and conversations about identity, bullying, inclusivity, and diversity into existing Responsive Classroom practices and other school structures.
- Build upon our World Language programming to increase exposure to the Spanish language and Hispanic culture throughout the year to enhance students' global awareness, to make connections and to build a better understanding of the world and the spectrum of cultures within it.
- Provide appropriate outreach and support to welcome and foster belonging and partnerships with our growing English Language Learner population in order to build an equity of support.

Resources/Supports

PH talked about the resources available that help support the goals in the School Improvement Plan.

Questions/Comments:

JB asked why students at Doyon took Spanish and not at Winthrop. PH shared that World Language at the elementary level is more about exposure. The four schools have an opportunity to look at the K-12 trajectory of the World Language program now that Winthrop is looking for a new World Language teacher. KE asked for clarification on how PH was creating additional learning time. PH explained that Doyon is evaluating the use of the finite time they have and aligning it with priorities- what fits into the schedule and when. PH then talked about the after school opportunities at Doyon, noting that a lot of work/help is done before school. Both Winthrop and Doyon offer enrichment opportunities after school to students. PH also discussed how both elementary schools, through a Compass Committee, are working on professional development for new curriculum.

Ipswich Middle School

Principal Peter Ginolfi (PG) thanked his School Council members.

Goal 1:

Ipswich Middle School will ensure that all students are provided supportive and rigorous educational experiences that meet their social, emotional, and academic needs.

Action Steps for 2023-2024:

- Expand iReady to Humanities teachers and provide them with Professional Development. Implement these reading and math baseline diagnostic assessments and share the results with caregivers to provide an accurate assessment of academic progress.
- Improve the transition between 8th grade 9th grades utilizing formative assessments to guide 9th grade scheduling.
- Continue to provide support for emotional health among students and staff. TAG class, Health class, and Social Emotional Learning Committee. Provide additional training for staff regarding alternative measures to suspension.

Goal 2:

Ipswich Middle School will ensure that all students are immersed in an engaging and challenging academic program built on authentic, profound learning experiences driven by the Successful Habits of Mind.

Action Steps for 2023-2024:

- Implement reading benchmark assessments in December and March in all three grades utilizing the Patterns of Power writing curriculum.
- Implement the new Civics MCAS in 8th grade, and provide Professional Development to staff.
- Encourage transdisciplinary and Project-based Learning experiences and provide professional learning time for planning.

Goal 3:

Ipswich Middle School will ensure that all students will be prepared to face the challenges presented by an increasingly complex world that is more diverse than our immediate learning community.

Action Steps for 2023-2024:

- Continue to train teachers and introduce students to restorative justice circles to build stronger interpersonal relationships, improve respect amongst peers and teachers, and reduce overall stress in the school community.
- Support World Language and cultural study offerings across grade levels. Examine opportunities to incorporate the teaching of French to more students in 2024-2025 and beyond.
- Provide time and space during the school day for the Multilingual Leaders Club to run two school wide events.
- Engage students in community service activities and environmental experiences beyond the classroom.

Questions/Comments:

PG clarified what a restorative justice circle was. KE said she appreciated seeing how things carry from one school to another, showing how well people are working together and aligning vertically.

Ipswich High School

Principal Jon Mitchell (JM) thanked his School Council members.

Goal 1:

Ensure that all students are provided supportive and rigorous educational experiences that meet their social, emotional, and academic needs.

Action Steps for 2023-2024:

- Earn at least 3 out of 4 points in MCAS achievement targets for all students
- Evaluate success of peer mentoring program's impact on the 8th to 9th grade transition
- Maintain appropriate staffing levels in the student support department
- Develop local formative assessments to empower educators with timely data

Goal 2:

Ensure that all students are immersed in an engaging and challenging academic program built on authentic, profound learning experiences driven by the Successful Habits of Mind

Action Steps for 2023-2024:

- Leverage local partnerships to enhance the authenticity of the school-to-work program experiences
- Create student self-reflection strategies for reporting progress on the Successful Habits of Mind
- Empower content areas to identify professional learning needs and coordinate professional development to meet those needs
- Identify and implement research-based, job-embedded professional development on authentic assessment practices

Goal 3:

Ensure that all students will be prepared to face the challenges presented by an increasingly complex world that is more diverse than our immediate learning community.

Action Steps for 2023-2024:

- Participate in the No Place for Hate program through the ADL
- Examine curriculum, practices, and texts to ensure diverse and inclusive representation as well as age-appropriate social justice issues
- Explore inclusion of diversity-themed elective in the curriculum
- Refine new "Day of Service" community-based learning opportunity

Questions/Comments:

JM talked about what supports are in place to better support the district's lower performing students.

C. School Building Tour Recap/Discussion

JD began by discussing the two schools that were toured by members of the School Committee- Amesbury and Acton-Boxborough, highlighting their size and structure. The School Committee will also be touring a smaller school in Gloucester in the upcoming weeks. Both of the schools that were part of the tour were newly constructed and partially funded by the MSBA. JD added that Amesbury, similar to Ipswich, had a community that was split and the community had to overcome a lot

of obstacles. Amesbury changed the configuration of the elementary school and built a school on a campus, creating a beautiful educational space. The space felt new and modern. The Acton-Boxborough school was built for 990 students and combined schools. The combined schools were built on different floors and operated separately. JD noted that while the school was a good fit for the town and what the town had decided on, it was not a style she wanted to recreate for Ipswich.

DF echoed what JD stated. She felt Amesbury was lovely, bright, and exciting, but not overwhelming. They made decisions that made sense for their community. Acton-Boxborough was not what DF envisioned for Ipswich. The building was on a small site and students lost out on green space.

JP only visited Acton-Boxborough and said the building was not what he envisioned for Ipswich. He felt the building was missing the energy that should be in an elementary school, but acknowledged that could have been due to the time of day the tour was.

KE toured both buildings and spoke about how bright and clean everything was. It was nice to see the new schools regardless of the size or configuration. Amesbury had eight sections per grade and were designed with elements that helped students identify where they were in the building. The design included pods with bathrooms, creating a neighborhood feel. Acton-Boxborough was very different with two schools/cultures on two different floors. The floor plan did not seem intuitive, however, the sustainability features were phenomenal.

JC thought that Acton-Boxborough was interesting, but was confused with the configuration of two separate schools with separate identities within the same building. JC was surprised at how much she liked Amesbury's school and configuration.

JB asked what Amesbury's reasoning was for split configuration. KE said the current superintendent was not in her current position when those discussions took place.

MP was not able to visit either school, but was looking forward to participating in the tour in Gloucester.

SS added that it was nice to see how much the newly designed spaces contributed to each district's educational plan.

D. Finance Update

TM reviewed the YTD report, stating that the district is on target and spending is as planned. By the end of the 2nd quarter, all salaries will be encumbered for FY24. TM reviewed the revolving account and stabilization account balances, noting that all funds remain healthy. TM brought two recommendations forward- a request to establish a student DEI Club/activity account for that club and a check for the robotics club. Both recommendations can be voted on as part of the consent agenda. JP asked for future financial reports to include a rolling report or a report that highlights the percentage of change to account balances.

E. Tri-Board Meeting Recap

The biggest thing for School Committee purview is the Whittier Building Project discussion. Gary James, Ipswich's School Committee representative to Whittier, was present at the tri-board meeting to answer board questions. Ipswich has signed a letter with Amesbury that addresses concerns with the project. It was discussed whether each town board should write their own letter to Whittier. Committee members agreed that three letters were more powerful than one and that the School Committee has a different perspective than other boards. There was also a discussion about the School Committee taking an official position on the project, but it was decided to potentially hold off on that discussion/vote until after the holidays. KE noted that Gary James' term was up in 2024 and the School Committee would need to vote on a new School Committee representative and discuss the expectations they have for whomever takes on that role.

F. MASC Annual Meeting Recap

JC discussed her time at the MASC/MASS Joint Conference from November 8th through November 10th and some of the

sessions she attended. JC was the voting delegate at the annual business meeting and shared with members the outcomes of the resolutions voted on by the group.

G. Review and Potential Vote on Revised School Committee Social Media Norms

DF shared the revised School Committee Social Media Norms with the committee. These were different than the School Committee norms reviewed early in the year. It was decided that these social media norms would be posted on the district website.

Social Media Norms for Ipswich School Committee Members

All school committees in the Commonwealth are expected to adhere to the Code of Ethics from the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC). This document states that a member stays “well informed concerning the duties of a Committee member on both a local and state level.” Recognizing that many of our constituents and community members utilize social media as a means to gather and discuss information about the school district, a School Committee presence on social media can be an important tool for carrying out this part of our positions as elected officials.

The Ipswich School Committee, in our role as advocates for The Public Schools of Ipswich, agrees to abide by the following social media norms:

Social Media Use by Individual Members of the School Committee

1. Use social media as a communication tool.

- *As well-informed School Committee members, we are constantly in communication about our district. We gather information to inform our decisions, and deliver information to inform our constituents.*

2. Be clear that we communicate on social media ONLY as an individual.

- *In Massachusetts, School Committee members individually have no authority to speak on behalf of the district or of the committee unless specifically designated to do so (for example, the School Committee Chair). Be sure that it is clear in statements online and elsewhere that we speak only as an individual.*
- *In acknowledgement that it can be difficult to separate our personal vs. elected roles in the public eye, it's important to remember that our individual online activity will ultimately reflect on the School Committee and District overall.*

3. Avoid violating the Open Meeting Law.

- *Open Meeting Law (M.G.L. Ch. 30A, 18-25) applies to any quorum of a body deliberating about any matter under their jurisdiction. Any discussion amongst School Committee members is considered a public meeting if (1) there is a quorum, (2) there is deliberation occurring, and (3) the discussion is about something that is under the purview of the School Committee.*
- *Online, this can be innocuous as a post from a single Committee member expressing a view regarding an upcoming decision which is then “liked” by a majority of other members of the Committee. While we may be connected through social media to other members of the Committee, be very cautious with these interactions.*
- *Consider regularly reminding the public that the Open Meeting Law affects member participation on social media.*

4. Keep deliberations and decisions within the meeting.

- *The MASC Code of Ethics for members states “a member should not make statements or promises of how they will vote on matters that will come before the Committee.” Our decisions should be made as a result of meeting deliberation. Avoid posting content that indicates that we have already formed an opinion ahead of a deliberation at a meeting.*

- *While we may use social media as one way of gathering input for upcoming decisions, we have a responsibility as a Committee member to make our decisions based on information given to us for deliberation. A Committee member should not make decisions based on social media popularity.*

5. Direct complaints or concerns to the appropriate channels.

- *Just as we would with a phone call or conversation in person, ensure that complaints and concerns are directed through the chain of command to the appropriate person in the administration.*

6. Be an effective online presence.

- *Share public information about our district. For example, invite the public to upcoming district events; share information about public hearings; link to the district budget. Let the community know about decisions the Committee has made. However, be clear that this sharing of information is being done by a singular member and not as an official keeper of records.*
- *Be timely and truthful. Should we see incorrect information in a post and have public district information that is correct, link it to the comments. Do not, however, get into an extended back-and-forth, as those rarely lead to any place productive.*
- *Be consistent in when and where we post information online.*
- *Keep messaging simple.*
- *Stay professional. Never post in anger or get personal with remarks, despite any provocation. The intent should be to factually de-escalate any combative messaging.*
- *Consider the permanence of posting, as nothing ever disappears online. Despite any privacy settings, postings can be cached or captured by screenshot and taken public. Do not post anything on social media that is not appropriate to have publicly shared.*

7. Remember Public Document Law and the Public's Right to Reach You.

- *Recent federal court rulings have found that social media is a “designated public forum”; therefore, any online communication we as School Committee members have in our public capacity is subject to public document request. Private messages should be redirected to our School Committee accounts.*
- *There have also been several recent rulings in federal court that elected officials may not within a public forum block, or delete comments from, those with whom they disagree politically. However, it is acceptable to turn off notifications from a post, or “untag” ourselves from or “mute” a conversation.*

8. Keep privileged information private.

- *Information shared within executive sessions needs to be kept private unless and until it is reviewed and released as part of the minutes of the session, per M.G.L. Ch. 30A, 22f.*
- *Respect the negotiations process and remember that collective bargaining should not be discussed outside of our executive sessions for negotiations. Avoid direct negotiation-related questions from teachers online which could be a violation of labor laws.*
- *Be certain to observe all other applicable privacy laws, such as those surrounding student privacy. This applies not only to information about students, but also to their images. Be sure that public sharing of photos of students are covered by District release.*

Collective School Committee Social Media Presence

Should the The Ipswich School Committee implement or maintain a collective social media presence, the following guidelines will also apply:

- *The School Committee Chair and/or designee shall be the administrator of the social media account*
- *All social media content shall be related to School Committee business only*

- *Social media content will be directed to the Communications Subcommittee for creation; all content shall then be approved through the entire School Committee before being posted*
 - *Standing approval may be granted for the following content: meeting agendas, budget presentations, notice for presentations and/or forums*
 - *Information delivered through social media shall also be available on the district website*
 - *All public commenting shall be turned "off"; a disclaimer shall note the appropriate means for two-way communication with the School Committee (School Committee email or Citizen Comment at meetings)*
 - *Posting by the School Committee profile outside of the School Committee's own account shall be limited to the purpose of recruitment of followers.*
- *Motion to support the adoption of the revised School Committee Social Media Norms as presented was made by MP and seconded by JC. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

9. Superintendent's Administrative Report

BB's report included:

- Participation in the two school tours
- A Field House Committee meeting
- An Administrative team meeting
- A roof/boiler project update with the Facilities Director
- An Ipswich Aware meeting
- A school safety conference through Massachusetts Partnership for Youth
- A meeting with Police Chief Nikas to discuss school security/recent event in town
- A meeting with the IEA president
- Time spent in the schools
- An update with the Director of Technology
- A North Shore Superintendent Roundtable meeting

10. Subcommittee, Working Group and Liaison Reports

- **Communications Subcommittee:** Newsletter and social media content was reviewed. The newsletter will be released on Tuesday, November 28th. The group discussed outreach beyond social media and the newsletter. Brian was going to schedule a meet and greet with Rotary and Kate was going to schedule other meet and greet opportunities.
- **Facilities Working Group:** The group discussed the school tours, as well as smaller facilities issues that have a big impact.
- **Student Advisory Council:** The Student Advisory Council discussed the fairness of the chemical health policy. The High School has purchased vape detectors for two bathrooms.

11. New Business*

No new business was presented.

12. Vouchers and Bills

All were reviewed and signed.

13. Consent Agenda- motion to approve consent agenda as presente KE/DF. Unanimous.

- *Motion to approve the consent agenda as presented was made by KE and seconded by DF. **Motion passed unanimously in favor.***

14. Adjournment- motion to adjourn JP/DF/ Unanimous 9:59 PM

- *Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by JP and seconded by DF. **Motion passed unanimously in favor.***

Meeting adjourned at 9:59 PM