

**Ipswich School Committee**  
MS/HS Ensemble Room  
134 High Street, Ipswich  
Thursday, October 21, 2021  
7:00 PM

**MINUTES**

**1. Call to Order**

Mr. Whitten called the meeting to order at 7:03PM.

Present: Chub Whitten, Greg Stevens, Pavica Kneedler, Kate Eliot, Hugh O’Flynn, and Emily Cannon.

Also Present: Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools; Cheryl Herrick-Stella, Director of Finance and Operations; and Caroline Jepsen, High School Student Representative

**2. Reading of the District Mission Statement**

Ms. Jepsen read the mission statement.

**3. Announcements**

- The next School Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, November 4th at 7:00pm in the MS/HS Ensemble Room.
- The School Facilities Working Group will meet on Wednesday, October 27th at 5:30pm in the MS/HS Guidance Conference Room.
- The Policy Subcommittee will meet remotely on Tuesday, November 2nd at 5:30pm.

**4. Special Acknowledgements**

There were none at this time.

**5. Citizens’ Queries**

There were none at this time.

**6. High School Representative Report**

Ms. Jepsen reported on happenings throughout the high school which included:

- Orchestra director, Michael Coelho, is one of 25 semi-finalists in the running for the Grammy’s Music Teacher of the Year award
- Fall sports continue
- The high school participated in School Spirit Week
- The volleyball team will be hosting a “Dig Pink” fundraiser for breast cancer research
- The senior class is hosting their annual fashion show fundraiser on October 26, 2021
- The sophomore class has been hosting a cider donut fundraiser at the school

**7. Presentations**

**A. Field Trip Request: Close up Washington, D.C.**

Mr. Kreiger presented his field trip request to Washington, D.C. from March 13 through March 18, 2021. The field trip, open to any interested high school student, would follow a detailed schedule of events, immersing students in discussion around real world topics and issues. Students would travel by bus to Logan Airport and fly directly to Washington. The

cost to students is \$1,825 and is all inclusive of meals, lodging, flights and ground transportation. Families will have the opportunity to purchase trip insurance at an additional cost. There are funds available for families that may need additional support in funding this trip. Mr. Keirger reviewed the itinerary each day and explained the COVID protocols in place both in Washington, D.C. and established by the tour group.

Mr. Krieger clarified the cancellation/refund policy for the trip, stating that should the trip be cancelled by the tour company, all students will receive a refund.

- *Motion to approve the overnight field trip to Washington, D.C. was made by Hugh O’Flynn and seconded by Greg Stevens. **Motion passed unanimously in favor***

## **B. MCAS Presentation**

Ms. Wagner, Director of Teaching and Learning, presented a slideshow outlining the MCAS results from the previous school year. She first highlighted what state standards the 2021 MCAS assessed. She shared that unlike years past, all students had shifted away from the legacy test and were now taking the newest version.

Differences from the Spring 2021 MCAS versus prior testing included:

- Grades 3 through 8 took one randomly selected session of each section instead of two.
- There were various testing location options including fully remote or in-person.
- Current seniors have only taken one MCAS test in biology instead of the four they typically take their sophomore year.
- The state issued changes in competency determinations meaning current seniors were not required to pass the ELA/Math MCAS for graduation, but rather pass a class equivalent.
- Current juniors have only taken the ELA/Math sections of the test and have not taken the biology portion.
- There was a significant change in the way the state measures Student Growth Percentiles (SGP).
- The state did not publish any accountability data.
- Because families could choose how their children were taking the test (i.e. in-person or remote), the state did not issue district comparison data.
- The format of the Parent/Guardian reports looked different

Ms. Wagner then showed the results for grades 3 through 8. Each of these grade level test results were lower overall, as were the state averages. Ms. Wagner addressed the need for additional support in evidence-based writing and is actively working with the principals to provide those supports.

Ms. Wagner went on to share the grade 7 and 8 test scores, noting the need for additional support in these grades for evidence-based writing.

Ms. Wagner then shared the grade 10 results, stating that overall, this grade did much better. She felt this was a direct result of the teaching and learning done in grades K-10.

As a reminder, Ms. Wagner shared that the MCAS were only one form of assessment in the district by which students show what they know and are able to do. Examples of other assessment tools included Lexia, DIBELS, Renaissance Star Math and AP exams.

Data from the MCAS is being used, along with the other assessment tools, in cross-district data reviews. Data is used to support interventions, extensions and “just in time” curriculum. The district will also use results from these assessments as they apply the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s (DESE) “Acceleration Roadmap” guidance.

The “Acceleration Roadmap”, as Ms. Wagner explained, is a focus on acceleration instead of remediation as a way to address student needs coming out of a pandemic year of schooling. Acceleration, as DESE describes, allows districts to provide access to grade level content with unit-by-unit, or lesson-by lesson scaffolds. Staff utilize diagnostic data to identify what a student needs and then aligns those needs with Tier 1 and Tier 2 supports. This new guidance replaces remediation which would assume that all students need reteaching.

Ms. Wagner went on to further discuss the need for acceleration and provided examples of what that looks like in terms of English Language Arts and Math curriculum.

The presentation ended with an overview of the district’s priorities and next steps going forward. The district will continue to adopt high-quality curriculum, ensure grade-level content is occurring, regularly use data to identify student needs, provide “just in time” supports for students to access content and support educator collaboration in order to identify and share effective strategies.

Ms. Wagner then answered questions from members of the committee. She addressed key takeaways about student learning during the pandemic, sharing that she was proud of the perseverance of the students and staff. She also shared that she was confident in the systems in place to support students moving forward.

Ms. Wagner addressed how the district uses their various assessment tools to identify students in jeopardy of passing the MCAS and how their needs are met through tiered supports and interventions.

Ms. Cannon spoke about the DESE acceleration guidance. She felt that there were students who missed critical building blocks through the pandemic that will require true remediation. With the new guidance, she felt that it would be an even larger uphill battle for some parents to get the support their children needed. Ms. Wagner agreed that the language that DESE used was not helpful and she ensured Ms. Cannon that students would not be “passed through”. Ms. Wagner highlighted the co-teaching model, specialists, additional TA’s in the classroom if needed and ongoing benchmark assessments as ways that the district works to support all students.

### **C. MASC Resolutions**

Ahead of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) Delegate Assembly on November 6th, the School Committee discussed and voted on their position for each of the nine resolutions being presented.

#### **RESOLUTION 1: DEDICATED FUNDING FOR SCHOOL BASED CLINICS AND SERVICES**

WHEREAS there are several overall benefits associated with a coordinated school health program including improved student performance, decreased risky behaviors, reduced drop-out rates, less absenteeism, and support teacher teamwork; and

WHEREAS school-based health centers represent cost-effective investments of public resources by reducing inappropriate emergency room use, reducing Medicaid expenditures, preventing mental health issues and suicide attempts, and reducing hospitalizations; and

WHEREAS there is a significant increase in healthcare access by students who used school-based health centers; THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC supports proposals that would establish dedicated funding for school-based physical health and mental health clinics and services.

RATIONALE: Maintaining physical, social, and emotional wellness in students translates into establishing an optimal learning environment and sets students up for future excellent health standards, in addition to decreasing absences and

school discipline referrals, reduction in Medicaid expenditures, reduced inappropriate emergency room use, decreased pregnancies, and increased overall physical and mental health.

- *Motion to support MASC Resolution 1 was made by Greg Stevens and seconded by Pavica Kneedler. **Motion passed unanimously***

## RESOLUTION 2: HOMEWORK GAP AND WIFI/INTERNET ACCESS

WHEREAS “the homework gap” is a widely known and documented aspect of the “digital divide” by which students without access to reliable high speed broadband internet at home fall behind their peers academically; and

WHEREAS remote and hybrid learning models exposed the homework gap phenomenon and compounded the deeper learning gap dilemma whereby students without reliable, high speed broadband internet access are unable to en-gage in meaningful digital learning activities; and

WHEREAS the students who are most likely not to have access to reliable high speed broadband internet are already chronically and systemically underserved, such as low income, minority, and/or rural students making this a critical equity issue; and

WHEREAS Massachusetts Public School Districts continue to invest in digitally rich curriculum materials which provide students with authentic learning opportunities coupled with real work skill development which prepares our students for a digitally rich global economy, the need for reliable high speed broadband internet access will only become more necessary for the students of Massachusetts Public Schools to fully access their curriculum;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees file for and support legislation which seeks to provide free broadband internet to all K-12 students in Massachusetts.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that MASC support Federal initiatives and legislation to improve national high speed broadband internet infrastructure, expansion the FCCs

E-rate Program to include homes of K-12 students, or any other steps to expand free access to reliable high speed broadband to the students of our nation.

- *Motion to support MASC Resolution 2 was made by Hugh O’Flynn and seconded by Greg Stevens. **Motion passed unanimously***

## RESOLUTION 3: IDEA FULL FUNDING ACT

WHEREAS it is the legal responsibility for public schools to provide a free and appropriate education for all students in the least restrictive environment; and

WHEREAS the cost to educate students with disabilities who qualify for special education services can be an extraordinary burden on the finances of our public schools, impacting the resources available to all students; and  
WHEREAS federal funding through IDEA is currently only providing approximately 15% of the extra cost to educate students receiving special education services, far less than the 40% promised in IDEA; and

WHEREAS the IDEA Full Funding Act had been proposed to fully fund IDEA through an incremental, seven-year increase in funding which had both bipartisan and bicameral support;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees calls upon the Massachusetts Congressional delegation to reintroduce and promote the passage of the IDEA Full Funding Act.

- *Motion to support MASC Resolution 3 was made by Pavica Kneedler and seconded by Greg Stevens. **Motion passed unanimously***

#### RESOLUTION 4: RECESS

WHEREAS due to regulations promulgated by the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 which excluded recess from time on learning calculations and the federal No Child Left Behind Act which tied funding and local control of schools to standardized test scores, recess in many Massachusetts Elementary Schools has been diminished or eliminated to provide more time for academics; and

WHEREAS the CDC and the Society of Health and Physical Educators have jointly stated that all students should be given at least 20 minutes of recess daily; and

WHEREAS research provided by the US Department of Health and Human Services has shown the benefits of recess to include improved social and emotional development, improved memory, attention and concentration, reductions in disruptive behavior in class and increased levels of physical activity;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees support legislation (current bills: S.383, H.695) calling for at least 20 minutes of uninterrupted, supervised, safe, and unstructured free-play recess per day which cannot be excluded from structured learning time requirements and may not increase the total number of hours required in the school year for Massachusetts elementary school students.

- *Motion to support MASC Resolution 4 was made by Greg Stevens and seconded by Emily Cannon. **Motion passed unanimously***

#### RESOLUTION 5: ZERO-TOLERANCE POLICIES

WHEREAS “Zero-Tolerance” policies and harsh school discipline policies have been shown by the United States Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights to have a disproportionately negative impact on students of color, students with disabilities, and students who identify as LGBTQ+; and WHEREAS the US Department of Justice and the US Department of Education have jointly called for public elementary and secondary schools to meet their obligation under Federal law to administer student discipline without discrimination on the basis of race color or national origin and urged in guidance for public schools to find alternatives to “zero-tolerance” and harsh discipline policies; and

WHEREAS the majority of suspensions in Massachusetts public schools do not involve violent, criminal or drug related incidents; and

WHEREAS students who have been suspended are three times more likely to be “pushed out” or “drop out” of school and these students are 3.5 times more likely to be arrested than students who complete high school;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees call upon the Legislature to enact or amend legislation (current bills: S.344, H.664) to encourage the use of restorative, therapeutic and educational approaches to incidents whenever possible over the use of “zero-tolerance” policies in order to provide students the best chance to remain in the public school systems of the Commonwealth.

- *Motion to support MASC Resolution 5 was made by Hugh O’Flynn and seconded by Greg Stevens. **Motion passed unanimously***

#### RESOLUTION 6: ALTERNATIVE TO MCAS

WHEREAS the Massachusetts Association of Schools has taken a firm position opposing high stakes testing; and

WHEREAS MCAS testing is considered a “high stakes” test because it is used to determine students’ eligibility to graduate from school regardless of their academic standing in school; and

WHEREAS other states, universities and colleges have shown that project based assessments, authentic assessments, portfolios and other tools can provide students with the opportunities to demonstrate academic achievement as an alternative to ‘high stakes’ testing;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees call upon the Legislature to establish a commission to research and analyze alternative means for students to demonstrate academic achievement which can be used to satisfy graduation requirements for individual students and accountability standards for Massachusetts Public Schools and School Districts.

- *Motion to support MASC Resolution 6 was made by Pavica Kneedler and seconded by Greg Stevens. **Motion passed 4-2 in favor***

#### RESOLUTION 7: SCHOOL COMMITTEES AND RECEIVERSHIP

WHEREAS state receivership includes all powers of the superintendent and school committee

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees file for and support legislation which seeks to preserve the authority of the elected body, the school committee, as provided in MGL Ch. 69, Sec. 1K by deleting the words “and school committee” as noted and by inserting the following: “Nothing in this section shall permit the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education or the Commissioner to remove the authority of the school committee.”

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that MASC support local initiatives and legislation to restore school committee oversight of the superintendent and/or receiver, including but not limited to goal setting, performance review, and the evaluation process.

- *Motion to support MASC Resolution 7 was made by Hugh O’Flynn and seconded by Greg Stevens. **Motion failed 0-6 in favor***

#### RESOLUTION 8: ELECTRIC SCHOOL BUSES

WHEREAS transitioning to electric-powered school buses would reduce the level of greenhouse gas emissions and limit the health risks from fumes; and

WHEREAS Congress has been deliberating on strategies to address global warming, including incentivizing low and zero-emission motor vehicles, including school buses; and

WHEREAS advocates for the environment across the country have called for the expenditure of \$30 billion dollars over two years to replace at least half of the nation's school bus fleets with zero-emission electric buses;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC petition Congress to appropriate \$30 billion dollars for improving the electrical supply infrastructure, and providing electric buses and charging stations.

- *Motion to support MASC Resolution 8 was made by Hugh O'Flynn and seconded by Kate Eliot. Motion passed unanimously*

#### RESOLUTION 9: PROHIBITING THE USE OF NATIVE AMERICAN MASCOTS

WHEREAS the Massachusetts Association of School Committees passed a resolution last year resolving that all school districts in the Commonwealth should guarantee that racist practices be eradicated, and diversity, equity and inclusion be embedded and practiced for our students, families, faculty and staff; and

WHEREAS the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights called for an end to the use of Native American images and team names by non-Native schools in 2001, stating that "the stereotyping of any racial, ethnic, religious or other groups when promoted by our public educational institutions, teach all students that stereotyping of minority groups is acceptable, a dangerous lesson in a diverse society;" and

WHEREAS the American Psychological Association called for the immediate retirement of Native American mascots, logos and nicknames back in 2005, citing research showing that the use of Native American mascots (a) undermines the educational experiences of members of all communities; (b) creates a racially hostile learning environment for all students; (c) has a negative impact on the self-esteem of American Indian children; and (d) undermines the ability of American Indian Nations to portray accurate and respectful images of their culture;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees support legislation calling for regulations prohibiting public schools from using an athletic team name, logo, or mascot which names, refers to, represents, or is associated with Native Americans, including aspects of Native American cultures and specific Native American tribes.\*

- *Motion to support MASC Resolution 9 was made by Hugh O'Flynn and seconded by Kate Eliot. Motion passed unanimously*

#### **D. Finance Update**

Ms. Herrick-Stella shared the current Revolving, Gift and Stabilization fund balances, as well as the overall year-to-date budget. She noted the budget and fund balances were in good shape and tracking as expected.

#### **E. School Committee Self-Evaluation**

Mr. Whitten asked each member to complete a School Committee Self-Evaluation ahead of the next meeting. The evaluation is the same one used last year. Results of the evaluation will be compiled and discussed at the November 4th meeting.

#### **F. Town Meeting Debrief**

Mr. Whitten noted the good turnout at the Special Town Meeting (STM). Members of the Committee emphasized the need for the community to vote on October 26th for the Public Safety building.

Ms. Cannon noted comments on social media regarding children in attendance at the STM and encouraged all families with children to attend public Town events.

### **8. Superintendent's Administrative Report**

Dr. Blake reported on his work throughout the district in weeks since that last School Committee meeting. His report included several subcommittee meetings, meetings with the building principals, an Administrative Team meeting, participation in the district-wide professional development day, ongoing negotiations, a meeting to discuss a personnel matter, participation in a meeting to discuss the McAdams Wishing Well Fund, and a monthly meeting with the Ipswich Educators' Association president.

### **9. Subcommittee, Working Group and Liaison Reports**

- A. Budget Subcommittee:** The discussion at their last meeting centered around furthering the override movement. The group is working to organize a community meeting for late November/early December.
- B. Communications Subcommittee:** The next newsletter will be distributed on November 16th. This edition will highlight some of the Traverso-Weatherall Innovation Grants and discuss the history of the override. There will be a section outlining the work of the Strategic Planning Group. Dr. Blake will discuss the role of public comment at School Committee meetings. A School Committee "Meet and Greet" is scheduled for Thursday, November 4th from 8:30-9:30 AM at Sandpiper Bakery.
- C. Athletic Subcommittee:** This group has not met.
- D. Mutual Concerns Subcommittee:** A meeting needs to be scheduled.
- E. Negotiations Subcommittee:** Negotiations with all collective bargaining units are ongoing.
- F. Policy Subcommittee:** A meeting is scheduled for November 2nd at 5:30 PM.
- G. Climate Resiliency Committee:** At their most recent meeting, the group discussed the Boiler Feasibility Study. It was also noted that a discussion occurred around meeting the Zero Carbon Emissions goals when considering any municipal building project.
- H. Traverso-Weatherall Innovation Grant Committee:** Applications for the Fall Cycle have been submitted. The committee is now looking to schedule a time to meet and review each application.
- I. STEAM Team:** The first meeting has been scheduled for next week.
- J. SEPAC:** The group hosted the Basic Rights workshop for the school community. Members of SEPAC are interested in learning about the results of the recently completed Special Education audits. Ms. Cannon also stated that she was looking forward to learning more about the IEP process for incoming middle school students.

### **10. New Business**

Dr. O'Flynn notified the committee of two area school districts that have recently completed elementary school building projects with one combined school for the community.

Dr. Blake reviewed the percentage of students and staff who have reported receiving the COVID vaccination. At this time, 99% of teachers and staff have been vaccinated and roughly 56% of eligible students have received. Dr. Blake said he anticipated hearing more information about masking going forward from the Commissioner of Education in the upcoming week. He also clarified that the nursing staff has been working with families to gather vaccination information; however, families are not mandated to tell the district their COVID vaccination status.

Dr. Blake shared that a letter from Food Services will be attached to his weekly messaging on Friday. There is a nationwide supply chain shortage that is affecting menu offerings and availability in the food services department. \

### **11. Vouchers and Bills**

All were reviewed and signed.



## 12. Consent Agenda

### Consent Items:

- Move the Ipswich School Committee to accept the Open Session meeting minutes from Thursday, October 7, 2021.
  - Move the Ipswich School Committee to approve a check in the amount of \$1,798.99 to be deposited into the Winthrop Gift Account from the Winthrop FRIES to be used for the purchase of a cold laminator for the math program.
- *Motion to accept the Consent Agenda as presented was made by Chub. Whitten and seconded by Mr. Stevens. Motion passed unanimously.*

## 13. Adjournment

- *Motion to adjourn was made by Pavica Kneedler and seconded by Greg Stevens. Motion passed unanimously.*

**Meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM**