

**Wellesley Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
June 8, 2021
Remote Online Meeting**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm. Those present included Chair Linda Chow, Vice Chair Melissa Martin, Secretary Catherine Mirick, members Leda Eizenberg and Jim Roberti; Superintendent David Lussier, Interim Assistant Superintendent Mike LaCava; Assistant Superintendent Cynthia Mahr; Director of Student Services Sarah Orlov; Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Dr. Charmie Curry; Director of Nursing Linda Corridan; and Student Advisory representative Rachel White.

Ms. Chow announced that the meeting is being held remotely and recorded by local media and broadcast live by Wellesley Media.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Joelle Reidy, of 60 Prospect St., reiterated her and her husband's support around the teaching of DE&I in schools. She is proud that WPS has been doing that and thanked the Administration for providing a safe environment for students and staff. She added she is saddened by recent online activity and wants it known there are many more positive voices out there than negative ones.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ms. Chow stated she participated in the last session of the year for the Culturally Responsive Practice Leadership Academy (CRPLA) with Ms. Orlov and Dr. Curry. They spent quite a bit of time reviewing the comprehensive plan Ms. Orlov and her team put together around disproportionality. The District cited by DESE around the disproportionately larger number of Black and Latinx students being referred for special education. Additionally they reviewed the DE&I strategic plan.

Ms. Martin offered thanks to everyone who helped pull off graduation given last minute adjustments with evolving guidance. She stated it was a fabulous day and she was grateful the weather cooperated.

**SUPERINTENDENT REPORT
RECOGNITIONS**

From Schofield Principal Gerard Martinez:

Congratulations to elementary Spanish Teacher Ruth Ortiz who is being recognized by the Massachusetts Foreign Language Association for her excellence in teaching Spanish.

For years, WPS has labored to create a World Language program in our elementary schools rooted in the belief that all children should become bilingual, biliterate and bicultural. Ruth represents a finite cadre of excellent teachers who are making a difference in the development of second (or third) language acquisition. It was Gerardo's honor to nominate Ruth and to count her among the Schofield staff.

WHS Assistant Principal Sarah Matloff would like to recognize Laurie Owens, the WPS PowerSchool Data Manager, for her skills and persistence in working through a difficult issue. The High School has been struggling to get the PowerSchool scheduling engine to work for a number of weeks. After reaching out to PowerSchools' engineers for help and still not having

luck, our own Laurie Owens followed her instincts and put in the legwork to solve the problem. She is always willing to put in the extra miles to get the job done. Thank you, Laurie!

From Director of Early Childhood 'Becca Zieminski:

Thank you to Officer Kathy Poirier for bringing Winnie the service dog to PAWS to visit all of the children! Everyone at PAWS enjoyed learning about and visiting with Winnie!

Also thank you to the PAWS PTO for purchasing butterfly kits and caterpillars for the children to learn about the life cycle of butterflies!

Director of Technology Kathy Dooley would like to recognize the entire WPS Tech Department for demonstrating a deep commitment to our Wellesley students, families, and staff during a very difficult year. Everyone on the team pitched this year to ensure that students stayed connected and were able to learn either in person or remote or hybrid, and staff had the tools, training, and support to make it all work.

Finally, Dr. Lussier recognized all the staff members involved in the preparation and implementation of this year's MCAS testing.

He thanked the high school staff for pulling off the senior events, including prom at the high school and graduation, which included a one-hour delay due to weather. He noted that Cosmo Uttero, a 92-year-old graduate who missed his WHS graduation due to World War II, was quite moved watching the livestream ceremony from his home in Florida. Dr. Lussier thanked Stephanie Hawkinson for helping put the pieces together.

Regarding next year, he stated DESE has announced that all COVID restrictions are being waived and districts are being directed to plan for those not being in place. There is still uncertainty about mask-wearing at elementary schools and it's possible more won't be known about that until closer to the beginning of the year.

Finally, Dr. Lussier added that Tuesday June 15th is the second vaccination clinic being held at the high school in conjunction with Palmed Pharmacy.

STUDENT ADVISORY REPORT

Ms. White had nothing to report.

CONSENT AGENDA

Meeting Minutes – May 21, 2021

Gift Acceptances

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

MOVED: Ms. Eizenberg; SECONDED: Ms. Martin; ROLL CALL: Ms. Eizenberg – Yes; Ms. Martin – Yes; Ms. Mirick – Yes; Mr. Roberti - Yes; Ms. Chow.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Meeting Minutes - May 11, 2021

MOVED: Ms. Eizenberg; SECONDED: Ms. Martin; ROLL CALL: Ms. Eizenberg – Yes; Ms. Martin – Yes; Ms. Mirick – Yes; Mr. Roberti - Yes.

MOTION CARRIED 4-0 WITH 1 ABSTENTION

GRADE 5 WOW EQUITY PROJECT RECOGNITION

Mr. LaCava stated over 80 entries had been received for the WOW Annual 5th Grade Equity Project. He introduced guests to help recognize the students: Toni Carlson, Director of Libraries and Innovation, Jenn Friedman, K-5 ELA and Social Studies Department Head, Nova Biro from WOW, and Dr. Curry. Together they read the names of the students who participated. Mr. LaCava stated the committee developed three prompts. Of those, about 60% of students wrote an essay, 20% produced a spoken entry, and 20% completed a visual artwork project such as a painting or sculpture. He hopes to have them posted somewhere, potentially the library. He offered congratulations to all families involved.

END-OF-YEAR DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION UPDATE

Dr. Curry began by summarizing the year in review. She shared student work from students at Bates and Fiske. She noted that students at all levels have been able to have conversations and shared learning around justice and Black Lives Matter issues. Students have been given the opportunity to be critical thinkers, develop empathy, and understand complex issues.

At the secondary level, a DE&I council was formed consisting of 33 students grades 7-12. This provides an institutional presence to have a constant place for student voices around DE&I. She added the students are excited to be part of the hiring process for the next cohort of equity facilitators and that they provided insightful questions to educators who applied for the role. She stated she was proud of the students for their passion and thoughtfulness.

Dr. Curry stated 85% of staff completed bias training this year. Additionally there was a jump in the participation rate for the second annual equity challenge and 45% of the participants were family members, parents, and members of the community. She discussed Equity Facilitators as an effort at distributive leadership. They facilitate professional learning, help colleagues who need resources and support, and inspire conviction.

Dr. Curry then discussed the mission and vision going forward, as linked to the five-year equity agenda. This includes growing a more diverse educator cohort, for which there has been coaching from DESE. Additionally they plan to review the curriculum and implement a framework for anti-bias, anti-racist curriculum. She added they will continue to amplify student voices and provide sustained opportunities for affinity spaces as they aim to deepen their sense of belonging across a variety of identities. The District is entering its second year of the CPRLA and will create a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) team. Regarding METCO, she discussed that the goal is for Wellesley to be a METCO school district, not just a district that has a METCO program, which will require true integration versus desegregation. She added they have been fortunate this year to get instruction from the Harvard RIDES program regarding reimagining integrative schools.

In discussion with the Committee, Mr. Roberti thanked Dr. Curry for allowing him to participate in Influence 100 and the CRPLA. Ms. Eizenberg noted she could see the work being done in the books her second grade daughter is bringing home from the Upham library and conversations they are having. Ms. Mirick added she was glad the work was able to continue during the pandemic. Ms. Chow stated she was interested in learning more about educating the

community, noting the Select Board will be bringing in a DE&I consultant and perhaps there will be an opportunity to work together.

After further discussion and questions, the Committee thanked Dr. Curry for all her great work this year.

2019-20 AND 2020-21 NURSING ACTIVITIES REPORT

Ms. Corridan began by noting that last year ended with staff and students in remote, this year opened remote and ended fully in-person, which was a remarkable accomplishment.

She stated that throughout the pandemic, their mission never waivered, that the goal was always to maintain health and safety in the buildings. She highlighted the tremendous work that had to be done to prepare the buildings, including setting up a medical waiting room equipped with assessment tools, installing air filtration systems in the nursing offices and waiting rooms, and distributing PPE throughout the buildings. She added the custodial staff was very responsive to the nurses' requests in cleaning and disinfecting the medical waiting room each and every time it was used.

Ms. Corridan discussed the mitigation strategies that worked well, including hand sanitizing stations everywhere in all the buildings and signs everywhere to remind people to stay distanced. She added the District should be very proud about its masking compliance, even among the youngest learners. She acknowledged the tremendous work of the nursing team undertaking illness management and the significant time spent doing illness investigation and education for staff and families. She also acknowledged the tremendous work of the teachers in keeping seating charts up to date.

She then discussed numbers across the District. In total, the District has conducted over 70,000 baseline and surveillance COVID tests since September. By the end of February, the entire nursing staff was fully vaccinated. As of today, 852 staff have been fully vaccinated, which is just about 88% of the staff population. In terms of positive cases, there have been a total of 197 cases in the District between students, staff, and families. Of the, 49 have been staff and 148 students. There was 1 in-school transmission, there were 3 hospitalizations, and thankfully zero deaths.

Ms. Corridan closed by stating it had been a privilege to sit at the table with the School Committee, Administration, staff, parents, students, and community leaders to work together reopening and keeping the schools open and safe and healthy. She added it had been an honor to be the Director of Nursing Services for the District for the past ten years.

Dr. Lussier thanked Ms. Corridan for her expertise and patience throughout the pandemic. He stated he could not have asked for a better thought partner. He added he spoke for the entire staff in thanking her, acknowledging it had been a pleasure working with her.

FACILITY PROJECTS UPDATES

Ms. Mirick stated there will be a community update for Hardy and Hunnewell on June 9 from 7:00-9:00 pm and that an invitation went out last week. She asked the public to register to attend, stating it will be in webinar format for a presentation then will open to a live Q&A session. The update will be live streamed on Wellesley Media. She stated the Hunnewell project is working towards 90% construction documents so the project can go out to bid. She added the community is welcome to watch PBC meetings and participate in Public Comment there as well.

Ms. Martin stated there was a joint meeting the previous week with PBC and the Select Board to receive scope on the Hardy project. There was also an abutters meeting the previous week attended by a few dozen abutters. Feedback and questions were referenced at the PBC meeting. She echoed Ms. Mirick, encouraging people to attend the community update. She stated an email invitation went out to the WPS community and Town Meeting members. People can also go to wellesleyhhu.org to preregister.

Regarding the middle school, Ms. Martin stated workers will be in the moment teachers leave the building on June 18th and it will be an exciting summer of activity.

Ms. Chow offered an update on the Hunnewell Track & Field projects. She stated a neighbors meeting was held May 27th and a community forum on June 2nd. The forum is available to view through Wellesley Media. She added the next step is to put together a proposal to bring back to committee then to NRC. They received suggestions from the forums' attendees and will issue a survey to gauge attitude and disposition of the neighborhood towards the idea of lighting and to identify neighborhood representatives.

RETURN TO IN-PERSON MEETINGS

Ms. Chow offered an update to the conversation from the previous meeting. Governor Baker and the state legislature are considering extending the current provision to allow for remote meetings through September 1st. Beyond that date, the Select Board is considering a provision that would allow for continued remote participation. In order to comply with their provisions, a quorum must meet in the physical meeting space; if the Chair is not in person, the Vice Chair must preside over the meeting; and all votes must be by roll call. In discussion with the Committee, the consensus was that they would want that option and flexibility.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 8:57 pm, Ms. Chow entertained a motion to enter into Executive Session under Massachusetts G.L. c 30A, §21(A), exemption #3 to discuss strategy with respect to litigation by a former employee, and exemption #2 to discuss strategy with respect to non-union salaries and approval of executive session minutes because, as Chair, she declared that to discuss these in Open Session would have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the Committee; and to invite into the Executive Session: Superintendent David Lussier; Assistant Superintendent Cindy Mahr; Interim Director of Human Resources Candace Hall-Nourse; and Town Labor Counsel Jim Pender of Morgan, Brown & Joy, and to not return to Open Session at the conclusion of the Executive Session.

MOVED: Mr. Roberti; **SECONDED:** Ms. Martin; **ROLL CALL:** Ms. Mirick – Yes; Ms. Eizenberg – Yes; Ms. Chow – Yes; Ms. Martin – Yes.; Mr. Roberti - Yes.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Mirick
Secretary

Documents and Exhibits Used:

WOW Grade 5 Equity Project 2021

DE&I Presentation

Department of Nursing School Committee Presentation

Department of Nursing Activity Report 2019-2020

Department of Nursing Activity Report 2020-2021