

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**Monday, October 06, 2025 - Regular Meeting**

7:00 p.m. – City Hall Chambers

**Members present:** Ms. Pitone, Dr. Ackman, Mr. Green, Mr. Biton, Ms. Barish, Dr. Phillips, and Ms. Krepchin.

**Members Absent:** President Davis and Mayor Ballantyne

## **I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 with a moment of silence, followed by a salute to the flag of the United States of America. Chair Krepchin asked Superintendent Carmona to call the roll, the results of which were as follows: PRESENT – 7 –Ms. Pitone, Dr. Ackman, Mr. Green, Mr. Biton, Ms. Barish, Dr. Phillips, and Ms. Krepchin **ABSENT** – President Davis and Mayor Ballantyne

## **II. SCHOOL COMMITTEE STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES**

Student Representatives Bhavika Kalia and Marlee Thrasher were present and reported the following:

- Homecoming Dance -October 25, 2025 theme is Rio
- College Fair-October 9, 2025 over 60 colleges in attendance this is an opportunity for student to scout
- Latinx/Hispanic Heritage Month celebration October 15, 2025
- Fundraising efforts are planned to support the senior prom.

Emphasis on inclusive student engagement activities.

## **III. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Krepchin read the public comment regulations and asked those who had signed up to comment at this time.

**Abby Hare- 13a Quincy St- Abby Hare, 13A Quincy St** – I have children at Capuano and East Somerville, and my older child has an IEP. I’m glad that you’re hearing from the Special Education Department this evening, and I sincerely hope the SEPAC report will be part of that discussion. As you can probably tell from the more than 60 emails you’ve received over the past few days, this is a significant issue for Somerville constituents. People both within and outside the special education community are deeply concerned. One of the reasons I love Somerville is our commitment to equitable educational opportunities for all students. But when I read the SEPAC report, I worry that our actions don’t always align with our ideals—especially for the students who need us most. We collect a great deal of data, which is important, but there’s often a disconnect between gathering information and taking meaningful action. For years, data has shown that students with disabilities are being left behind, and the most recent MCAS results show that the problem is only worsening. The shift toward a stronger inclusion model is a step in the right direction, and the programs Mr. Arellano will describe in his presentation sound promising—but we need more. We need robust tracking and an honest analysis of which programs and structures are truly working for our most vulnerable students, and which are not. As the School Committee, it’s your responsibility to ensure immediate oversight and to require district leadership to present a comprehensive, data-driven plan with clear goals and deadlines. I also urge you to examine the Child Find process and the hurdles families face when trying to have their child evaluated. Regardless of what’s on paper, even the most knowledgeable parents are told to “wait and see” for far too long while their child continues to struggle. Families with fewer resources or less experience advocating face even greater barriers, widening our already troubling achievement gap. Finally, I ask that you make what happens in our schools, especially within special education more transparent. Families want to be treated as respected partners in their children’s education, but too often we are left out of the process. Thank you for your attention. I hope you’ll take bold, concrete steps to ensure that every Somerville student receives the education they deserve.

**Samantha Steiner- 50 Whitfield St-** I'm a parent and a SEPAC member. The state has confirmed what families have known for years: SPS needs immediate assistance in special education. This is not just a departmental issue—it's a district-wide one. Most students with IEPs are in general education classrooms. When schools become truly inclusive, all learners benefit. For me, this isn't just about data or test scores—it's about my five-year-old son, who's now in his third year at Somerville Schools. He's bright, curious, and loves learning, yet he now cries nearly every morning because the lack of support and belonging has taught him that school isn't always safe. He comes home drained after spending his energy trying to survive a system not designed to meet his needs. Our family's fight for his basic services, understanding, dignity, and inclusion is exhausting and heartbreaking. This isn't about blaming staff—many are doing all they can—but about fixing a system that makes it impossible for them, and for children like mine, to thrive. Over the weekend, the School Committee responded to community emails by saying that "meaningful change is often slow." But after years of noncompliance, slow change is not neutral—it's harmful. You referenced the new working group to explore a true inclusion model. That work is important, but it cannot be an excuse for delay. The phrase itself is an admission: what we have now is not true inclusion. Meeting basic legal compliance is not a long-term goal—it's the first essential step toward improving students' daily lives right now. We need immediate, urgent action. That means writing IEPs based on student needs, not staffing; filling every vacancy; delivering every service owed on time; and being accountable to students and families with measurable goals, transparent processes, progress reporting, and shared power in decision-making through authentic collaboration. When the state mandates intervention and families organize out of desperation, responding with talking points instead of urgency is dismissive. As a member of the district's APPLE Institute team—a partnership with the Federation for Children with Special Needs I recently completed training in preparation for our first session this week. The Federation teaches the same principles that families have been advocating for: co-design with families that goes beyond listening sessions and working groups to shared power and a meaningful advisory role for SEPAC. "Nothing about us without us." It's validating but also frustrating—because these are the same ideas the district dismissed when they came from families. The 2025 MCAS data for students with disabilities makes the impact of inaction clear: advanced coursework participation dropped 18 points in one year. In Grade 10, only 12% of students with disabilities meet expectations in ELA, and just 4% in math. These aren't just numbers—they represent children losing access, opportunity, and hope. Our children cannot wait. We need urgent, concrete action now.

**Liz Eldridge, 3 Hawkins St** – I'm the Chair of the Somerville Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC). This evening, we'll hear an update regarding special education, and my comment relates to that topic. First, I want to thank everyone who read, contributed to, and shared this report. It certainly wasn't written overnight—it represents immense work and years of lived experience from families navigating a complex and often confusing system in an effort to secure the supports their children are legally and morally entitled to. This report has been shared widely with SEPACs and advocates across the state, and I'm proud to say that the work done here in Somerville is being recognized as a model for how parents' voices can drive systemic change. That's something we can all be proud of. But pride alone isn't progress—yet. For too long, special education in Somerville has taken a backseat. Too many families have felt invisible, unheard, or dismissed. Tonight is an opportunity to change that, to begin rebuilding. This is not a moment for criticism, but a call for collaboration. We are a group of determined parents who believe that when our most vulnerable learners are succeeding, it means the whole system is working for everyone. We are here for equity. And until that equity becomes a lived experience for all Somerville students, we will continue to be here. So I ask: please work with us, partner with us, and let's make Somerville a model—not just for special education, but for what happens when families and schools stand shoulder to shoulder for our children.

**Jessica Adams** – I'm doing something a little different tonight. I'm going to share a piece of creative writing titled "*I Am an SPS IEP*." You have no idea how hard it is to even bring me into existence in this district. Parents beg. Teachers document. Children drown in data that already proves they need help. By the time I'm written, hope is already gasping for air. Early and ongoing intervention was supposed to be the key, but the City of Somerville chose to lock the door on its children approving a level-service budget that was already out of compliance. That budget left classrooms without staff, therapists stretched beyond capacity, and families fighting exhaustion just to access rights that are not optional. Neurodivergent children are being diagnosed at higher rates nationally and statewide, yet families in SPS aren't told when their child is quietly placed into Tier 2 under MTSS. They aren't informed. They aren't invited. And when families finally do advocate for me—an SPS IEP—they're told to wait, or warned that "we can't be giving them out all willy-nilly." As if a child's documented struggle were a privilege. As if early—or any—intervention were generosity, and not law. That's not inclusion. That's coercion. Somerville calls itself a City of Inclusion—the city that raised the first American flag in defiance of tyranny. But what does inclusion mean when classrooms are

collapsing under impossible ratios and there's no transparent data? When teachers are asked to carry the weight of two jobs, with no co-teacher, no paraprofessional, and no true respite? What does inclusion mean when general education students lose instruction time because teachers are triaging crises that should have been supported by law? That's not inclusion, it's erasure. The rights of children with disabilities, their peers, and their teachers are bleeding out together in the very birthplace of American liberty. The birthplace of our flag has become the burial ground of Child Find and FAPE. I am an SPS IEP. I was written with trembling signatures and hope. I was promised counseling minutes, co-teachers, sensory supports, and transition help. But promises require people and our classrooms are running out of them. Only 12% of SPS students with disabilities can read at grade level. 10% can do math. 6,570 minutes of counseling were missed in one year. Teachers are forced to choose which child not to serve. This is not moderate progress toward targets—this is a system in collapse, minimally funded by choice. When SEPAC brought this data forward, the response was initially silence and deflection. Compliance delayed is compliance denied. We need to call it what it is—Somerville needs assistance. I am an SPS IEP. I was created by law to guarantee a free and appropriate public education. Don't let me die here not in the city that first raised the flag for freedom.

**Dayshawn Simmons - Public Comments attached below**

## **IV. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT**

### **A. District Report**

**Notes- Superintendent Update:** *School Committee Meeting- Monday October 6, 2025*

Good evening everyone, Tonight's meeting is an important one, focused on one of the most critical pillars of our strategic plan: Academic Excellence

I want to begin by expressing appreciation for the engagement of our families and the broader community. Your investment in our students, particularly your advocacy around access to strong Special Education supports, reflects how deeply we all care about the success of every child. Thank you for being here and for lending your voices. As a District, our vision is to foster a student-centered learning community where every student – honoring their unique strengths and background – is empowered to thrive through tailored supports and equitable access to opportunity.

This evening, we will hear about the district's progress toward that vision in two important areas: Special Education and MCAS accountability.

We recognize that within any system, there are areas of strength and areas for growth. That is why we review data, including MCAS results, in context and with a commitment to evidence-based decisions—so that our next steps reflect both our progress and our responsibility to keep improving for the benefit of all students.

### **MCAS**

Our first presentation will begin with an overview of the recently released MCAS results.

Samantha Eligene, our Director of Data, Assessment, and Accountability, will walk us through the data, looking at overall performance and trends, and showing how we compare in some instances with neighboring districts and the state as a whole.

What you'll see is that we are still working to raise student achievement back to pre-pandemic levels. While the cumulative results are not where we want them to be, there are meaningful signs of progress.

At various grade levels and in specific subject areas, student performance is improving. These gains reflect the right investments in curriculum and instruction that we have been making.

We also recognize that change doesn't happen overnight. But when we look closely, school by school and grade by grade, we can see indicators that we are moving in the right direction, with upward trends beginning to take shape. It's also important to keep in mind that MCAS is just one way we measure student achievement. It provides valuable insights, but we also look at tools like i-Ready and DIBELS, which offer different perspectives on student learning. Taken together, these assessments give us a fuller picture of where students are excelling, and where we need to refine our strategies to support growth.

This is a lot of data to take in, and how we interpret and act on it is vital to advancing academic excellence across the district.

- **Assessment/ MCAS Presentation**

Ms. Eligene shared the Assessment/ MCAS Presentation (see presentation below)

**Comments/ Questions**

**Dr. Phillips:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you for the excellent presentation and comprehensive data analysis. Looking at the last slide, I want to ask, given what we're seeing in all of this data, what are we doing in response? I've noticed that nearly every one of the five instructional pillars is new since the current Superintendent's tenure began. We've made significant investments across multiple areas, and I'd like to get a sense from the administrative team: based on research and experience, when would we think they would really start to pay off?

**Dr. Carmona -** To provide some context, we often hear the Commissioner speak about districts striving to return to pre-pandemic levels of performance, and many districts across the state are still working toward that goal. In Somerville's case, however, we didn't have a strong pre-pandemic baseline of high-quality instructional materials in place to begin with. Over the past few years, we've worked to establish those foundations—implementing new literacy, math, and science curricula. The degree of implementation and familiarity varies by subject and grade level. As with any major instructional change, it takes time for buildings to develop consistent routines and for teachers to reach full mastery of the new materials. On average, it takes about three to five years for new instructional systems to become fully embedded and produce sustainable outcomes—assuming all supports and structures are in place. While that timeline may feel long in the life of a child, it reflects the time needed for teachers to deeply understand and effectively deliver the curriculum, leading to lasting improvements in student learning.

**Dr. Ackman:** Through the Chair, thank you. This was an excellent presentation, and I want to specifically commend the data visualization on the subgroup slides. Distilling complex information into a clear and meaningful visual format without losing substance is very challenging, and you did it exceptionally well. The use of color and layout provided an honest and transparent view of where we currently stand and how far we've come. It was very well done visually. I want to highlight those slides in particular they were impressive, and I hope they can be made available on the district website if they aren't already. They provide a strong example of how to clearly present MCAS data, especially for subgroups. Regarding the final slide still on display, I have a question—through the Chair to the Superintendent. As someone with experience applying for grants, I know it's rare to be fully confident about receiving one in advance. Given that, how confident are we in anticipating this significant grant award? And if our confidence level is only moderate, do we have a backup plan in place should we not receive it?

**Dr. Boston Davis:** Thank you, Chair. We are confident that we'll be receiving the grant. However, the foundation awarding it has a specific communications plan that they've asked us to follow. In working with Sam and our new Communications Officer, Daryl Nash, we agreed to rephrase our messaging to align with their guidelines. I can confirm that this grant supports work we've already discussed.

**Ms. Barish:** Thank you. I just wanted to follow up on Dr. Phillips' question about how long we might expect it to take to see results from all of the district's investments. I'm curious if you could share some of the ways the district is supporting teachers to help shorten that timeline hopefully closer to three years rather than five. For example, I'm thinking about common planning time and the professional development around the new curricula being implemented. If there are other strategies you can share, I'd love to hear about them.

**Dr. Carmona:** I want to highlight that we are beginning to see changes in student outcomes. Our K–2 data from DIBELS and iReady show steady improvement, and most grade levels are trending positively, with only a slight dip in fourth grade over three years of data. To address gaps, we've triangulated feedback from the Department of Education, TNTP, the AIRS report, and our own instructional rounds. We continuously ask how we can improve instruction and support for teachers. One key strategy has been increasing principal presence in classrooms to provide coaching and feedback, helping teachers accelerate their learning and implement new programs effectively. We intentionally use data to inform instruction and leadership, ensuring we monitor support across all grade levels

**Dr. Boston Davis:** I want to add that we're making strong investments in strengthening our school leaders as instructional leaders, which is critical for supporting teachers, guiding MTSS processes, and improving student outcomes. Under Sam's leadership, we've launched the new data system, Open Architects, which allows educators to visualize and use data more effectively. All educators received training to support common planning time and team collaboration. We are also working to build coherence across all initiatives—from school improvement plans and strategic goals to instructional rounds so that these systems work together effectively to support teachers and, ultimately, student learning.

**Mr. Green:** I want to make two points. First, regarding the philanthropic gift Dr. Ackman mentioned, I fully respect the desire to follow the foundation's communications plan to maintain strong relationships with donors. I will follow up with detailed questions by email, as I do each year. Second, I wanted to flag a data point that caught my attention: the dip in local and statewide ELA scores. Anecdotally, I've noticed that some students, especially in 10th grade appear less motivated by MCAS scores, which may affect results. I'm curious how we should interpret multi-year averages and whether future 10th-grade scores will better reflect students' actual learning, particularly as we establish new baselines and use MCAS more as a diagnostic tool than an exit exam.

**Dr. Carmona:** I view MCAS data as a useful reference point because it is criterion-referenced and allows us to compare our performance to other districts. From the feedback we've received at the high school, many ELA questions were left unanswered, and we are still working to understand the depth of this issue. Statewide, the trend is similar for 10th grade, but my initial hypothesis is that some students encountering very complex text may skip questions when they know there is little accountability. That said, students should be able to engage with complex language, as they will encounter it in college. We are actively analyzing this trend with the high school. While we don't yet have exact numbers of unanswered questions, it is a concerning pattern that warrants attention.

**Ms. Pitone:** I was looking at the growth percentiles. Obviously, we spent a lot of energy trying to see. You know, obviously there's the raw data. Which, when you just look at it by itself, can be quite shocking and then there's also, where are we going? Have we made improvement? Are our kids getting into getting to a better place relative to where they were? The previous year. I saw, you know, you spoke briefly about the math Changes I don't want to make any assumptions I know we've made changes at the middle school level with our curriculum in math. Probably 3 to 5 years ago, I could be wrong. Because I don't memorize where things are I don't want to make the assumption that that was some kind of lift for our students, but I'm curious, what are you seeing as Maybe the source of this improvement, or maybe it could just be a. Piece of data that next year it could be in a different place.

**Ms. Eligene:** That's a great question. I think, as you suggested, there are several possible factors contributing to this. It could be changes in curriculum as students advance, differences in the math foundation they bring with them, or the way the high school math test differs from the 8th grade test. It could also relate to the specific courses students are taking in high school. It's difficult to pinpoint a single cause, but any of these factors or a combination could be contributing.

**Dr. Ackman:** Thank you, Chair. I'm very interested in how teachers have been using the system, particularly for common planning time. From research on best practices, it's also important to help students take ownership of their own data. I'd love to hear if the district is starting to pilot strategies for students to see and engage with their data. If that's not yet planned, I'd be interested in understanding the reasoning.

**Dr. Boston Davis:** Thank you for that feedback. I agree, and from my own experience as an educator, I've noticed that practices vary significantly from school to school and classroom to classroom. Currently, the district does not have a formal approach for students to track and own their data as you described, but it's something we will definitely explore moving forward.

**Dr. Carmona:** I can build on that. While there isn't a formal design for students to track and own their data, some schools, like East, are fully implementing the Sarita Hammond framework, which focuses not just on owning data but owning learning. The goal is for students to recognize what they don't know and seek help, a critical skill beyond

simply knowing their numbers. This is a higher-order skill we expect to develop further as implementation progresses. From classroom observations and conversations with principals and AEs, I've seen positive growth and increased student engagement overall. However, performance gaps remain, particularly for students in special education and multilingual learners. This trend mirrors statewide and national patterns, but it is an area of concern. Our focus on high-quality instructional materials aims to ensure that most students spend 70–80% of their time actively engaged in learning. Coupled with data assessment and structured collaboration during common planning time, these efforts help teams build a shared understanding of student needs and support consistent growth across all classrooms.

**Chair Krepchin:** Talking about our MLE students, the MCAS is entirely in English, is that correct? So are students who are still learning English. Taking the test in English, is that correct?

**Ms. Eligene:** Yes, that's correct, except for our first-year multilingual learners who don't take the ELA MCAS.

**Dr. Carmona:** To provide context for the community, we use a metric called ACCESS data, which allows us to correlate students' language development with their performance on standardized assessments. The ACCESS data shows that we need to continue developing language skills in the classroom. For students who are still acquiring language, performing at grade-level standards is very challenging, and MCAS alone does not fully capture their growth trajectory. ACCESS data helps us better understand this growth over time. When I review this data with principals, we sometimes see that it doesn't fully reflect the effort put in at the classroom level. Looking closer at grade-level improvements, some grades show 60–70% growth while others are at 10–20%. Aggregated data can obscure these nuances, so it's important to examine where gaps exist and which areas need targeted support.

**Mr. Green:** One benefit of these discussions is that we all understand both the value and the limitations of MCAS data. While it's important, it's nuanced, complicated, and not always effective at tracking meaningful year-to-year progress. My main question concerns accountability: standardized test scores are highly correlated with socioeconomic status, and Massachusetts is one of the most segregated states. Comparing our progress to districts like Wellesley or Concord isn't meaningful. I'm aware that some districts nationally, like in Louisiana and Mississippi, have raised test scores among low-income students, but often through approaches that don't improve broader outcomes. I'm curious if we know of any Massachusetts districts that are genuinely moving the needle—improving test scores while also supporting broader student success.

**Dr. Carmona:** The accountability data was just released, and I haven't had a chance to fully review it yet. I typically check to see which districts are showing strong outcomes. For example, I know Revere had some notable early literacy results last year, though those wouldn't be reflected in the MCAS. I plan to follow up on this, and I'm not sure if Sam has any additional insights at this time.

**Ms. Eligene:** I was looking at this earlier this week, and I agree with being mindful about which districts we compare ourselves to. I usually refer to districts identified by DESE as comparable using the DART tool. These districts have similar student enrollment, low-income populations, percentages of multilingual learners, and students with disabilities. Some of our comparable districts include Barnstable, Malden, Methuen, Milford, Peabody, Quincy, Stoughton, Waltham, West Springfield, and Woburn. Looking at this group, I noticed that Quincy outperformed the others, and I'm curious to understand what's working for their students, whether it's similar to what we're doing or something different. These comparable districts help us gauge how we're performing relative to similar contexts.

**Mr. Green:** Thank you for that. I'm really interested to hear more about this. I also appreciate Dr. Carmona pointing out that some of the most important learning gains don't show up on test scores, because we don't test for them. I worry that the quality of education, both here and nationally, has declined in areas we don't measure. For example, students are reading fewer long books since we don't test for that skill, even though following complex ideas over time is so important. That's why I want to be sure that when we look at districts improving test scores, we focus on those doing it the right way—even if progress takes longer to show.

**Dr. Boston Davis:** Thank you. I appreciate those comments. Two things come to mind first, during our curriculum

selection, we made a conscious decision to prioritize authentic texts for students, even though some more popular programs might yield faster results. We wanted real, meaningful reading experiences. Second, one limitation of relying on MCAS as our main assessment is that it only captures progress once a year. For instance, Malden, one of our comparable districts, has been piloting a new literacy approach. We won't see their full results until next year, but I'm interested in exploring other measures, like iReady, to track progress throughout the year rather than waiting for MCAS data alone.

**Ms. Pitone:** My question connects to what Mr. Green mentioned earlier. The superintendent referenced East Somerville's progress, and I'd like to better understand what that means. When I look at DESE data, I see accountability numbers year to year, but it's not always clear how to interpret them. Is there a better way—beyond MCAS—to show improvement or growth by school? I'd also like to find a way to present this information more clearly for families, so progress feels visible and meaningful.

**Dr. Carmona:** That's a great question. When I say a school is showing progress, part of it is what I see in classrooms—students actively engaged, discussing books, collaborating, and teachers facilitating learning. Instructional Leadership Teams are also conducting walkthroughs to look for specific indicators of strong performance based on DESE's recommendations. From a data perspective, I focus on student growth percentiles (SGP). Regardless of where a student starts, SGP shows how much progress they've made compared to peers. The state defines 40–60 as moderate growth, but ideally, we want students toward the higher end of that range. We also look at additional tools like i-Ready and DIBELS, which help us measure progress in more detail across subjects and grade levels.

**Ms. Elegine:** I want to reiterate some of Dr. Carmona's points about using multiple indicators to track progress. Along with accountability reports—like changes in criterion-referenced targets and school percentiles year over year—we also look closely at i-Ready growth data. Unlike MCAS, i-Ready measures whether students meet their individual growth targets based on scaled score improvements. We track both typical and stretch growth, since stretch growth shows whether students are on track to reach grade-level standards within a few years. These are key indicators we review each year to understand school progress more fully.

**Dr. Phillips:** I just want to take a moment to recognize my children's school, the Argenziano, which is leading the district in criterion-referenced target percentage. That's the result of a lot of hard work by the administration, instructional leadership team, educators, and the School Improvement Council. My question, as always, is: what are they doing right that the rest of the district can learn from?

**Dr. Carmona:** The Argenziano's success comes from strong, consistent leadership. Principal Glenda is very clear about instructional priorities she knows exactly what each teacher's area for growth is and how they're being supported. She's deeply data-driven, intentional, and connects academic goals with a strong sense of belonging in the school. When you walk into the building, there's a real sense of joy and engagement, and that positive climate directly supports student performance.

**Mr. Biton:** I'll keep my comments to three points. First, I'd love to see the *Somerville Reads* program return it was a wonderful citywide effort to promote literacy and bring the community together. Second, I appreciate Dr. Carmona's point that aggregate test scores don't tell the full story. I'd like to learn more this year about how effective classroom and school practices are being identified and shared across the district, and how common planning time supports that work. Finally, I was glad to see in Ms. Elegine's presentation metrics beyond test scores like graduation rates, extended engagement, and advanced coursework completion and I'd like to explore how we can continue improving in those areas.

**Chair Krepchin:** I think I know the answer, but just to confirm the MCAS comparisons go back to 2019. Since we're now also looking at iReady and DIBELS, I assume we didn't have that data in 2019 for comparison, correct?

**Ms. Eligene:** That's right.

**Ms. Barish:** Thank you. I just want to echo Dr. Phillips' recognition of the Argenziano School and Principal Soto. She's likely one of the longest-serving principals in the district, along with Margaret Green. It's a small sample size, but it really highlights the importance of hiring and retaining excellent leaders something we discussed at our last meeting and continue to prioritize.

- **Special Education Update**

**Dr. Carmona:** Our second presentation this evening focuses on Special Education.

As many of you know, just over 1,030 students about 19% of our district are enrolled in Special Education programs. This is a significant portion of our student population, and we are deeply committed to continually strengthening these services so that every student receives the support they need to succeed.

We are fortunate to have Ildefonso Arellano, our Director of Special Education, here tonight to share his report. I also want to take a moment to recognize the families, SEPAC members, and others in the community joining us. Your investment in the programs we provide for our students is invaluable, and your voices are an important part of this conversation.

As Ildefonso will share, the report card we received from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education outlined various opportunities to address and enhance the 14 different programs we offer our Special Education students across the district. We openly accept this as positive and constructive feedback, and we continue to work alongside DESE to fulfill - if not exceed - expectations set by the State.

Throughout the past year, we've made significant strides in how we develop and implement Special Ed programming. We've done this in part by increasing our staff, implementing a structured workload for teachers, and launching a work group charged with reviewing current models and making recommendations for future expansion of our Special Ed services.

I'm also pleased to share that the district will host a Special Education Family Listening Session, hosted by SFLC and our Special Education Department. This will provide families the opportunity to share their perspectives directly with district leaders and School Committee members. It will be the first in a series of listening sessions across departments, and we look forward to these ongoing conversations.

As we reflect on both our progress and our areas for growth, I remain confident that we are moving in the right direction always with the best interests of our students and families at the center. With that, I will turn it over to Director Ildefonso.

Director Ildefonso Arellano along with Assistant Director Marisa MacDonald share the Special Ed. presentation which was as follows (presentation below)

### **Comment/ Questions**

**Chair Krepchin:** If I remember correctly, 60 out-of-district placements is fewer than we've had before, is that right?

**Director Arellano:** Yes, that's correct. We've always had under 70 students placed out of district, and this is the lowest number so far. A few students recently graduated or aged out of those programs.

**Chair Krepchin:** Do you have a sense of how that compares to similarly sized districts?

**Director Arellano:** I don't have the exact numbers, but our Next Wave/Full Circle program makes a big difference. It serves over 80 students with therapeutic needs who might otherwise require out-of-district placement. Because of that program, we're able to keep more students learning within our community. I can gather comparison data from other districts if you'd like.



**Chair Krepchin:** It would be helpful to have a sense of how we compare thank you.

**Dr. Phillips:** Thank you, Chair. I really appreciate this report and the work you and your team are doing. I've been hearing a lot about special education from community members and City Council colleagues. At a future meeting, could we get data on missed services—how many students missed services that haven't been made up—and our current compliance status? I want to ensure we can share accurate information with the community.

**Mr. Biton:** Thank you, Chair. Through you, Mr. Arellano, thank you for this helpful presentation. I also want to thank SEPAC for sharing their perspective. We can't address problems we don't fully understand, so having your data alongside theirs helps identify issues and growth areas. I'd also like to hear more about teacher referrals. I hear a lot about parent referrals but less about teacher referrals. How does that process work? Is it a form, an email, a conversation with the principal, or with the parent?

**Director Arellano:** Teacher referrals can come through several channels. Typically, concerns about a student not making progress are raised through Child Study Teams (CST) or Student Support Teams (SST) for social-emotional issues. These teams review the student's response to Tier 1 interventions and may add Tier 2 supports, monitoring progress over 6–8 weeks. If the student isn't making progress, the team discusses whether a disability might be involved. Sometimes, teachers may suspect a deeper issue and escalate a referral directly to CST. Referrals can also come from parents through ongoing conversations with teachers.

**Ms. Barish:** Thank you for the presentation and the data. Following up on Dr. Phillips' point, you mentioned 91% of IEPs were delivered within the 45-day requirement. I'm curious about the average timeline—are most near 42–44 days, or is there a wider range? Also, regarding the expanded ESY model, I'd like to know whether participation or attendance increased and what benchmarks were used to measure its success.

**Director Arellano:** I'm happy to provide that information. Last year was our model's first year, and while it was successful, some parents didn't fully access it. We need better outreach so families of eligible students understand extended school year options. One goal moving forward is to partner with organizations like Parks and Recreation to offer a full-day program. Currently, we provide three hours of IEP-required instruction, but adding programming would make it more accessible and beneficial.

**Ms. Pitone:** Thank you for the presentation. I'm encouraged by the progress, especially tracking caseloads, which will help identify needs earlier. I'm glad to hear about the CPAC Apple training. I'd like more transparency around special education data perhaps a public dashboard for families. I'm also curious about effective SEPAC collaboration, since expectations and experiences sometimes differ. Looking ahead, I hope we move beyond operational monitoring to measuring quality like evaluating IEP strength or the impact of professional development and hear more about those outcomes in the future or the impact of professional development. It would be great to hear more about those kinds of outcomes in the future.

**Director Arellano:** This year, we're focusing on our Sunday System reading intervention. We'll track student progress, for example through iReady data, to measure the program's effectiveness. Sande is also being used by our multilingual department for interventions, since it's evidence-based and effective for MLEs. Overall, we're looking at the impact of our programs, professional development, and intervention systems in special education.

**Ms. Barish:** I have a quick question about walk-in services. Is there one person providing all services, or are they spread across the district?

**Director Arellano:** Services are based on a student's home school. For example, if a student lives in the Kennedy area, they receive services there.

**Mr. Biton:** Thank you, Chair. I wanted to follow up on Mr. Arellano's response to Ms. Pitone. You spoke about evaluating programs and it reminded me of a comment from earlier about establishing a data-driven plan with clear goals and deadlines. I encourage you and district leadership to define what success looks like—what metrics indicate a program is working? Is a 1% improvement enough? 5%? We need a clear standard.

**Director Arellano:** We provide individualized educational plans, so each student's learning profile is unique. While we use evidence-based interventions, success must also account for individual progress. That said, I agree we need measurable markers to track student success.

**Chair Krepchin:** Do you have a sense of the timeline for the group evaluating the inclusion model?

**Director Arellano:** According to the MOA, we're taking this year to work on recommendations. I believe by May we need to finalize them, and in June provide a report to the superintendent and the SEU president. That said, I suggested to the working group we aim for March so we can offer preliminary recommendations before budget season, in case there are financial impacts.

**Ms. Barish:** Thank you, that's reassuring June would have been too late for funding decisions. I also wanted to flag accessibility concerns: programs like Child Find and the Apple Institute are all during work hours, which can be hard for families. Will the Apple Institute session be recorded so families can access it later? And is there any chance of offering Child Find screenings on evenings or weekends, perhaps alongside enrollment or open house events? This could make participation easier, and we'd be happy to help support off-hours access if possible.

**Dr. Ackman:** I'm curious about how incoming students—especially pre-K and kindergarteners new to the district—are assessed and how quickly they receive services. This isn't about kids coming from Capuano, but new arrivals. I know some schools, like this year's kindergarten class, have high levels of need. I understand we can't always anticipate that, but I'd like to know what percent of students are new, how quickly they're assessed, and how quickly services are provided.

**Director Arellano:** For pre-K students coming from early intervention, assessments and recommendations must happen before their third birthday. Sometimes parents provide information late, but we work within that timeline to ensure services start on time. For other incoming students, we conduct kindergarten and pre-K screenings through our Child Find process ESSE for kindergarteners and PELI for preschoolers to identify students who may need evaluation. Once consent is received, assessments are completed within 30 days, followed by 15 days to finalize the IEP if the student qualifies.

**Dr. Boston Davis:** I'll add that for some pre-K and K classrooms with specific needs, we have additional supports beyond special education. Liz Doncaster and her Student Services team provide BCBA's and other service providers who collaborate closely with educators. I was on a call today supporting a classroom as a thought partner, so this is ongoing, collaborative support, not just limited to special education.

**Mr. Green:** As I mentioned, we're currently piloting an inclusion model at two schools, aiming to learn and eventually scale it. Around midyear, I'd love for teachers to share their experiences and insights. We're committing significant resources and staffing to this, so it's crucial we get it right. Beyond quantitative data, we need qualitative feedback because the small, everyday details are what make these grand visions work. I want to ensure we're capturing that on-the-ground experience as we move toward full inclusion.

**Director Arellano:** I've stopped using the word "pilot" because it implies uncertainty. That's not our vision in the Special Education Department. We're committed to expanding inclusive practices and co-teaching models. Data shows students succeed and gain skills when learning with peers, even while still receiving small-group support as needed. I just wanted to highlight that.

**Mr. Green:** Thank you for saying that, Ashley. Can I bring you to work tomorrow to repeat it? We often call things "pilots" as a way to slip them in, even when we know what we're really trying to do. I appreciate you saying out loud what many of us already know but rarely acknowledge. Thank you.

**Mr. Biton:** I want to echo Mr. Green's point about hearing from educators. I also think, in the spirit of "nothing about us without us," it's important to continue engaging SEPAC in these conversations. This is all very valuable, and we need to keep working and learning together in partnership.

**Dr. Ackman:** Thank you. I'd love to hear from SEPAC, since their data tends to focus on a few schools, but we have students on IEPs in every school. I also want to highlight the district's effort to bring students back from out-of-

district placements and maintain those placements, which I really appreciate. That said, I'd like to see long-term outcome data—how students do in state schools, community colleges, or job training programs. This would help confirm that educating students with their peers is effective. Ideally, Ms. Eligene could help visualize this in a dashboard, showing both the effort and the outcomes in a clear, impactful way.

**Director Arellano:** Director Arellano: I can comment our Department of Education actually tracks some of this information as part of the LEA determination. There are two relevant indicators: one for early childhood and one for post-secondary outcomes. We track things like whether students go on to a two-year or four-year college, and we notify parents or graduates accordingly. I can get the specific details and provide that information, since it's a required measure for our LEA determination.

**Mr. Green:** As an aside to Dr. Ackman, there's a group of organizations, including my own, working to push the legislature for better data tracking. Right now, Massachusetts' tracking systems are pretty bare-bones, so we've had to work offline with interested parties. The group, called First Longitudinal Data, is tackling this challenge. Regarding next year's budget, we've already begun discussions because we'll be handing it over to next year's city government. Realistically, our budget will need to increase at least 6–7% just to maintain current services. That's concerning because the city will face tough choices, and if we want to continue investing in education, we need to start preparing now. We should also anticipate potential federal cuts, and since new state taxes are unlikely, the city has limited options for new revenue. Education must remain a priority, and we need to communicate that to city officials now so that continued investment is possible.

**Dr. Carmona:** Thank you, Director Arellano and Assistant Director McDonald, for joining us tonight. Before closing, I want to share a few special education and community updates. This Thursday, October 9, we'll hold the first Child Find screening of the year for children ages 3–5 who aren't yet enrolled in our schools. These free screenings are a great opportunity for families to learn about special education services or assess early development. The first session starts at 8:30 a.m. at Capuano Early Childhood Center. You can register via the SPS special education page or contact our team directly. Three screenings will be offered throughout the year.

Additionally, the high school culinary program will be open to the community on Thursday from 11:00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. More information is on the SPS website. We look forward to expanding these services in the future.

**Chair Krepchin:** And just quickly, if somebody wants to go to the restaurant, do they go to the front door of the high school and ring the doorbell? How do they get there.

**Dr. Carmona:** I don't have all the skills. Yeah. I don't have all the details, but I will gather as much information as I can.

**Ms. Pitone:** is it just this Thursday, or every Thursday?

**Dr. Carmona:** The idea is every Thursday. Okay. But just this Thursday will be the first Thursday of this season.

**Chair Krepchin:** just quickly, since you mentioned the first child find being on Thursday, and we just had a presentation. Could you speak a little bit about how the district does outreach in general for the Child Find?

**Dr. Boston Davis:** it's certainly publicized through our newsletters and otherwise. Through, uh, forums such as this. I think... There is also signage and things of that sort, but I can... I think Ildefonso will know the More detailed answer.

**Dr. Carmona:** All I can tell you is that I know SFLC has been involved in the process because they have the keys to unlocking some of those communication services. I don't have the specific details of that, but I definitely. I'm interested now that you mention this, like, I know that we I spoke to SFLC to make sure that our practices in special ed get embedded with. The know-how of the group.

Chair Krepchin: And once you're going to talk to the SFLC about it, it'd be great to hear about Ms. Barish's suggestions about could it be done on a Saturday, or any of those.

## **V. REPORTS OF SUBCOMMITTEES**

### **A. School Committee Meeting for the Rule Management Subcommittee Meeting: September 25, 2025 (Dr. Phillips)**

**MOTION:** There was a motion by Ms. Barish, seconded by Dr. Ackman, to accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for the Rules Management Subcommittee Meeting for September 25, 2025

**Ms. Barish:** I just wanted to make sure that my colleagues are aware. We are hopefully, meeting on October 20th and at that meeting. We will be considering voting out some sections of the policy manual review to this body. It's a lot, so I'm just giving you a heads up now that, Hopefully those will be voted out of subcommittee on October 20th, and then I will get those to Ms. Garcia, ASAP, so that they can get into a packet and into your hands so that you will have time to review them before. Before we discuss them here. Like, ample time to review them. So I just wanted to give you a heads up that The packet may be a little thicker. For that meeting than you're used to.

**Dr. Ackman:** To that point, as someone who deeply trusts and appreciate the judgment of the chair of the Rules Subcommittee, If they're Our anecdotal notes or some sort of memo that you would like to Are willing to provide Like, with additional, you know, like, your take, your feedback, notes from the subcommittee any of that, I would say, welcome crib sheet. And if not, you can tell us. I mean

**Ms. Barish:** the easiest place to start is just the subcommittee notes, because I've been trying to sort of Keep just a brief synopsis of what's discussed. It's I think it's pretty obvious which ones there was actual discussion about, and which ones it was just, this is what's recommended, and that's great. Um, so that's a place to start, but I can sort of consolidate those, and maybe have Ms. Garcia put the reports that correspond to the sections that I will provide, hopefully just so that it's all in one place.

The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

## **VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **A. MSBA Finance Presentation to the CAG**

**Mr. Green:** So, at this point, I would just and I argue it, because I apparently have a couple weeks now. I've if you want to give it give me their thoughts in writing, or maybe later or now I'm happy to hear. People's thoughts, I think I laid out the problem last meeting, so I'm not gonna I put myself at slate, and we did this week ago so if people have things to add I'm all ears.

**Chair Krepchin:** When is the next CAG meeting? It was late.

**Mr. Green:** The last Monday of October

**Dr. Ackman:** I may be repeating myself, but thinking about the "Venn diagram" of two schools versus one, there seems to be a size overlap. If we proposed a 650-student school, could that represent either two buildings combined or just one?

**Mr. Green:** That makes sense. In theory, yes a 650-student school could still consolidate. I'm not a lawyer or planner, so the specifics would need to be decided through the proper process, but conceptually, it works.

**Ms. Barish:** I just want to point out that Those calculations would not based on current numbers would not accommodate rising 5th graders from the Brown School. So, we would have a capacity issue in the upper grades, potentially. I mean, obviously, we don't know exactly what enrollment will do, but just Something to keep in mind, that when we talk about the number of ground school students, we have to think about. People leaving 5th grade and what that does to the school capacity.

**Ms. Pitone:** A few weeks ago, someone asked me my position on a single versus combined school, and I couldn't answer because it's so complex. I've since written down my thoughts, and here's the framework I use: equity and access, safety, sufficient seats, cost, outcomes, school size, facilities, and flexibility/parent choice. These are all values I weigh when thinking about what's best for the district. I've seen how programmatic changes can deeply affect families I lived through the Choice Program change at Healy and I get how emotional it can be. But looking at the data, the Winter Hill structure with only two strands per grade limits inclusion and opportunities for students, particularly those in the autism spectrum program. That makes me consider the potential benefits of a larger, combined school. Cost is also unavoidable. A single combined school could save significant per-seat costs, while maintaining two schools would require major investments to ensure both facilities meet students' needs. I don't have a firm position yet, but I have facts, concerns, and opinions. I want the community to weigh in on equity, inclusion, outcomes, and costs so that these considerations guide the CAG as they model decisions for the district.

**Ms. Barish:** Thanks to Ms. Pitone for capturing much of what I've been thinking. I just want to add that the Brown building isn't accessible it has no elevator, which means some parents can't attend meetings, some students can't enroll, and some educators can't work there. That's not something we can overlook. If we don't combine schools, we can't just leave the building as it is. And while the outdoor space would be reduced at Sycamore, it's important to remember that the Brown's playground is also heavily used by the community losing that access matters. Finally, I want to stress that we shouldn't continue the current system where 5th graders have to be reassigned across the district each year. Families and staff have said for years how difficult that process is, and if this project gives us a chance to fix it, we should.

**Chair Krepchin:** So I just want to clarify in terms of numbers. There is there would be enough room to account for that in a 925-person school.

**Ms. Barish:** Even if we keep the two schools separate, I think all Brown 5th graders should automatically move on to Winter Hill or whatever that school is called. The 650-student option could accommodate that. I see this as an opportunity to finally fix a long-standing problem that's frustrated families ever since we stopped having middle schools.

**Mr. Biton:** This might be our only chance in decades to consider building a centralized middle school. It's a central location that could solve programming challenges and open up seats in our elementary schools, so we should keep that on the table. I also want to talk about transportation raising a family in Somerville can be hard. Getting around and accessing services isn't always easy. As we consider consolidating schools, I worry it could make things even harder for families. Every year, we see families leave for the suburbs, and that's painful. While safety measures like lower speed limits and reduced traffic are good, they also make it take longer to get across the city — something we should factor into our decisions.

**Chair Krepchin:** I also just want to quickly point out, we were talking about affordability in Somerville, we are going to be asking voters. To significantly increase their taxes. For this, um, and whether we did that for one school or two schools. Would be significantly more money that we would be asking taxpayers to beg the pardon that, so just another point about making Somerville less affordable.

**Ms. Barish:** I just was hoping that Mr. Biton might expand upon. What he was thinking about, this is our only opportunity to build, or to think about building a middle school. I'm just curious, are you suggesting that. The new building would be a middle school, and we would pull Grades something to 8 Out of all of the elementary schools, and maybe add a strand to each of those schools in order to Accommodate the students who would have been going to the Winter Hill Is that what you're envisioning?

**Mr. Biton:** yeah, at broad brush, That's an idea. We haven't talked about it.

**Dr. Phillips:** In response to Mr. Biton we actually discussed the idea of a centralized middle school with the MSBA, and they said no. We applied for two K–8 schools, and that's what they approved funding for. Maybe years down the line we could change programming, but we can't go into this project calling it a middle school. As for my position even though I'm leaving, I'll share it honestly. I'm not confident MSBA funding will be available again after this project, so I think we should build as large a school as we can now while we have the opportunity. Ward 3 is the only area without a K–8, and that's fine we're a small city but every student should have access to a great, equitable school. I believe combining schools helps us move toward greater integration by race and class. That's why I support a joint school, and personally, I lean toward Scenario E because students need outdoor space to play, and I can't support putting a large school on a lot that's too small for that.

**Mr. Green:** I'll share these thoughts with the CAG and Building Committee, but I want to say that I've consistently leaned toward rebuilding at Sycamore, and nothing I've heard has changed that — if anything, it's reinforced it. Trum is more expensive, and I doubt the state would approve the proposed land swap. Plus, construction there would likely reveal costly issues, and flattening the hill for a softball field doesn't make sense to me. For me, the real question is whether we build for 650 or 950 students. I've always said I can't justify spending over \$300,000 per seat for a school that doesn't serve the full diversity of our city. I want to invest in seats that serve everyone, in a central location, at the lowest cost possible more seats give us more flexibility and better meet district needs. While I understand the attachment to the Brown School, its footprint is too small to become a true 21st-century learning space, even with major investment. If I were to prioritize renovations, it would be at Cummings, not Brown. I also recognize our many other capital needs roofs, repairs, and upgrades across the district. So right now, I'm leaning toward the 950-seat option at Sycamore, but I remain open to new information as the process continues.

**Ms. Barish:** I wanted to respond to Dr. Phillips' concern about losing outdoor space at Winter Hill. I've raised similar concerns about the Brown School, but I think there are more potential remedies at the Sycamore site. For example, the Evergreen Annex could eventually become outdoor space once it's no longer needed, and there may be opportunities at St. Anne's or even rooftop options like in New York. Both sites have challenges, but Sycamore seems to have a clearer path to adding green space.

**Mr. Green:** I realized I had one more point about not building at Trum. Somerville is geographically and economically segregated the median income in our western zip code is about 20% higher than in the east. Given that, and the challenges of east-west access, I don't think it makes sense to move more school seats further west right now. Ideally, we'd add seats across the city, but that's not our current reality.

**Chair Krepchin:** I forgot I meant to look at a map. Does anyone know approximately what The distances between Trum and Sycamore?

**Mr. Green:** About .6 miles.

**Chair Krepchin:** So we're talking about approximately \$10 million to scope Half mile there are other pros, but we're just talking about distance.

**Dr. Ackman:** A neighbor of mine—who doesn't have kids or work in education—told me she took the community survey and asked my thoughts. Like Ms. Pitone, I said it's complicated. She mentioned she's against using Trum because, as a community member, she values that green space. She also felt many residents might not realize the impact until construction begins, which I think is a valid concern.

**Ms. Barish:** I've been thinking about Trum putting a school right on the city border doesn't work well for us. With Medford in its backyard, we can only draw students from one direction, so it doesn't really improve walkability. Sycamore, on the other hand, is more central and offers easier access for families across the city.

**Ms. Pitone:** I know green space is a big challenge, and honestly, if I were looking purely at the map, Trum would be a better location than Sycamore — it simply has more space. I know that field isn't always used as a softball field, but it is used regularly, so I understand the concerns there.

I also want to thank Ms. Barish for mentioning ADA compliance — that's a serious issue. If we keep two schools, we must invest in accessibility at the Brown. I've also heard that some special education services are being provided in hallways, which really troubles me. There's no dignity in that for students, and it's one reason some families may choose not to attend that school.

Every family should feel like any school in Somerville is an option for them. If we continue using that building, we may even need to consider removing a grade to make space for proper services. I deeply value that community, but we have to be honest about the inequities in access and facilities.

#### **B. FY27 State Budget Sign-on Letter**

**MOTION:** There was a motion by Mr. Green, seconded by Dr Phillips to authorize the chair to sign the FY27 State Budget Sign on Letter.

The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

### **VII. NEW BUSINESS**

#### **A. MASC Conference Delegate and Resolutions**

Ms. Krepchin- Share that this the first reading and it will be on the next agenda

## **B. Superintendent Summative Evaluation**

**Dr. Phillips:** I know it's late, but I want to review the process for the superintendent's summative evaluation. This is one of our key responsibilities as a School Committee. We'll discuss the evaluation at our next meeting on October 20, 2025, so please email me your completed forms by Thursday, October 16. Start by reviewing the superintendent's goals and his goals update both are in your packet. Then, on page 3, rate progress on his performance goals. On pages 4–7, score only the focus indicators highlighted in yellow using the rubric provided. Average those scores at the bottom of each page, then transfer them to page 1 the scores should match exactly. Dr. Carmona's memo includes detailed evidence for each goal and indicator to support your ratings. Let me know if you have any questions before submitting.

Superintendent Carmona highlighted his goals Presentation below

### **Question/ Comments**

**Chair Krepchin:** this will be brought to our next meeting. If you have any questions please reach out to Dr. Phillips or Dr. Carmona.

**Ms. Pitone:** Thanks to Dr. Phillips for compiling all this work, and to the superintendent for providing such detailed information to support our evaluation. What's the timeline for the next cycle?

**Chair Krepchin:** Didn't we say we basically start the next cycle as soon as this one is finished?

**Dr. Phillips:** Essentially, yes, though there's still one more year on the current superintendent's goals.

**Dr. Carmona:** Many of these goals are finite in scope some will eventually shift to monitoring rather than active work. I think it would be valuable to discuss how we can align school improvement goals at each building with our broader district goals to ensure we're moving in the right direction. I'd like your feedback on identifying our current needs and next steps. While the strategic plan spans three to five years, there are elements we can narrow down and focus on more immediately.

**Ms. Pitone:** I might not be using the exact terms, but we evaluate both the goals and the competencies in the rubrics. Do we typically revise those every year or every two years? I can't quite remember the model. If we are creating new ones, do we have a timeline for that process? Maybe we can set one next week to plan out that work.

**Dr. Phillips:** Each goal includes its own focus indicators, which are selected at the same time as the goals. We'll continue working on them until they're completed. Once we finish the summative evaluation, we'll review the goals for the next cycle and decide whether to keep or change the focus indicators.

**Ms. Pitone:** We have one more year in this cycle, so we'll review and make adjustments after we finish on the 20th. I just want to know the timeline and schedule for those updates—thank you.

## **C. SEU Unit A, C and E Integrated Contract**

**MOTION:** there was a motion by Dr. Ackman, seconded by Ms. Pitone to authorize the chair to sign the Integrated Contracts for SEU Unit A, C, and E

The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

## **D. School Committee Fall Office Hours**



**Chair Krepchin:** That brings us to School Committee-coordinated Fall Office Hours. A few people have already shared theirs, so I thought we could coordinate. I'm thinking the last week of October into the first week of November. Does that work? It doesn't need to be complicated just keeping a running list of what's scheduled. Is anyone willing to coordinate that?

**Ms. Barish:** In order to get them posted on the website I will send them to Ms. Garcia

**Ms. Pitone:** I think we usually put them in whatever newsletter we put out, and That would be great.

#### **E. Field Trip** (Recommended Action: Approval) Table

**MOTION:** There was a motion by Ms. Barish, seconded by Mr. Biton to approve a field trip for April 9th, 2026 to April 11th, 2026. For 150 students from Somerville High School Music and theater departments to travel to Chicago, Illinois to perform in, observe, and experience the arts in Chicago. Travel via plane, student costs \$900 to \$1,000.

**Mr. Green:** I went back and forth on this, but the reality is the trip would cost between \$135,000 and \$150,000 per student, which means serious fundraising. We want to honor our pledge that any student can go regardless of ability to pay. The trip sounds amazing, but I need to know how it will be funded. At a time when some students are losing basic needs, is raising \$150,000 the best use of our fundraising? Could we create a similar experience for less? I'm not saying we shouldn't do it I just think we have a moral obligation to ask these questions and ensure we're using resources wisely.

**Dr. Phillips:** I want to raise a safety concern about this field trip. I'm happy to approve it, but given what's happening in Chicago right now, I'd be terrified if one of our students were hurt. My question is, what review process does the district have in place to ensure that when we give the go-ahead, we can be confident our students will be safe? This isn't a criticism of Chicago it's about making sure we've assessed safety thoroughly.

**Dr. Ackman:** I'd like to expand on this. From what I've seen—and I'm just one perspective families, especially those from religious minorities, sometimes have to speak up if a field trip conflicts with an important holiday. The district or school may acknowledge it afterward, but it's not always handled proactively. I'd like a clearer picture whether a memo or another format of how our systems work to prevent these conflicts, so we can feel confident our processes are strong.

**Mr. Green:** I also want to echo Dr. Phillips' point. I'm not sure I would send my child to Chicago right now. I just visited and love the city, but I'd want a detailed safety plan in place before considering it.

**Ms. Barish:** I'm curious about the urgency here. Is it necessary to approve this now, or could we address some of the concerns first and vote at the next meeting? Do the organizers need immediate approval to begin the significant fundraising required?

**Dr. Boston Davis:** Thank you, Chair. My sense is the sooner, the better. The educators organizing the trip want to move forward with their students, but I need to follow up on some of the questions raised. I can connect with Beverly Mosby and others, compile the information into a memo, and bring it to the next meeting. Still, I think the organizers would prefer approval soon so they can continue planning.

**Ms. Pitone:** Thank you. I don't want to extend the meeting too long, but I'd like to note that for past large trips—like the high school trip to Cuba educators presented how they planned to fundraise and took responsibility for ensuring no student was excluded due to cost. I think it's reasonable, especially for a trip this expensive, to have clarity on fundraising plans. I don't want to minimize the work involved, and I'd be grateful to see that included alongside the thoughtful comments already shared.

**Chair Krepchin:** Okay, so with that, are we comfortable voting tonight, or would we like to wait until our next meeting?

**MOTION:** There was a motion by Ms. Pitone, seconded by Dr. Ackman to table field trip approval until next meeting

The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

**F. Donation:** (Recommended action: Approval)

The Superintendent recommends acceptance, with gratitude, of the following donations:

**MOTION:** There was a motion by Dr. Ackman, seconded by Ms. Barish, acceptance, with gratitude, of the following donations recommended by the Superintendent.

Donation	Donor	City, State	Value	Program
Beauty Supplies	The Salon at 10 Newbury	Boston, MA	\$840.00	CTE Cosmetology Shop

The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

**VIII. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS**

**IX. CONDOLENCES**

The Somerville School Committee extends its deepest condolences to the families of

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 p.m.

**Related documents:**

Agenda

[Assessment/ MCAS Presentation](#)

[Special Education Update](#)

Public Comment

Submitted by: E Garcia

**Attach Documents Starting on the next page**

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
**CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS – CITY HALL**  
**REGULAR MEETING – OCTOBER 06, 2025 – 7:00 P.M.**

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2025, this meeting of the School Committee will be conducted via hybrid participation.

We will post an audio recording, audio-video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of these proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting on the City of Somerville website and local cable access government channels.

To watch this Regular School Committee meeting live from home please visit the following link:  
[somervillema.gov/GovTVLive](https://somervillema.gov/GovTVLive)

Somerville Public Schools provides simultaneous interpretation of this meeting in Spanish, Portuguese, or Haitian Creole. **You must register 48 hours in advance and indicate your preferred language:**

[https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_u8Awy93fR6OhvC37Xib1zg](https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_u8Awy93fR6OhvC37Xib1zg)

Meeting ID: 810 5048 0087

Password: SPSSC25

**Somerville Public Schools - School Committee Goals 2023 - 2025**

In order to address the root causes of systemic inequity in our schools, the Somerville School Committee and SPS commit to the following goals, knowing that these can only be achieved through ensuring meaningful partnerships with Somerville families, district staff, city government, and community partners. Our goals attempt to address deep-rooted systemic barriers that have prevented us from achieving our district vision of equity and excellence and ensure that all students, regardless of race or ethnicity, have the supports and resources they need to achieve educational success in our district now and in the future.

**1. Whole Child Teaching and Learning... we will:**

- prepare students to demonstrate strong literacy and mathematics foundation by grade 3, grade 6, and grade 10
- provide all students with integrated classroom lessons from a high quality social-emotional learning curriculum that helps students value and develop their ability to build relationships with other students, to be self aware and socially aware, to self regulate, and to make responsible decisions
- expand access to real-world learning experiences through students' participation in Early College, Advanced Placement courses, CTE, and/or other learning experiences that help students build critical 21st century skills, meeting with their college and career counselor in their junior and senior year, and students graduating with a defined post-secondary plan.

**2. Equitable Access to Programming... we will** conduct a district enrollment study to understand the prospective future population of the district and create and begin implementing a strategy for school building development, school assignment, and programming that aligns with the district's equity policy, and which is based on results of the enrollment study and the projected 10+ year plan for school facilities.

**3. Workforce Diversity... we will** increase the percentage of support staff of color, teachers and counselors of color, and administrators of color by 6% per group compared to SY22 rates through evaluating and strengthening all elements of our personnel system – recruitment, processes, training, retention, development, advancement, and staff data collection systems on which we base and measure our improvement efforts.

**4. Equitable Resource Allocation... we will** design, evaluate, and partially or fully implement student-based budgeting by 2025, or identify alternative mechanisms to more equitably allocate district resources.

**ORDER OF BUSINESS**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Call to order with a moment of silence and a salute to the flag of the United States of America.

**II. SCHOOL COMMITTEE STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES**

**III. PUBLIC COMMENT – In person**

To participate in Public Comment remotely please use the following Zoom link:

[https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_u8Awy93fR6OhvC37Xib1zg](https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_u8Awy93fR6OhvC37Xib1zg)

Meeting ID: 810 5048 0087

Password: SPSSC25

**IV. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT****A. District Report**

- Assessment/ MCAS Presentation (Ms. Eligene)
- Special Education Update (Mr. Arellano)

**V. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES****A. School Committee Meeting for the Rules Management Subcommittee Meeting: September 25, 2025 (Ms. Barish)**

**MOTION:** To accept the report of the Rules Management Subcommittee Meeting for September 25, 2025

**VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- A. MSBA Finance Presentation to the CAG
- B. FY27 State Budget Sign-on Letter

**VII. NEW BUSINESS****A. MASC Conference Delegate and Resolutions (Chair Krepchin)****B. Superintendent Summative Evaluation****C. SEU Unit A, C, and E-Integrated Contract**

**MOTION:** Motion to authorize the chair to sign the Integrated Contracts for SEU Unit A, C, and E

**D. School Committee Fall Office Hours****E. Field Trip: (Recommended actions: Approval)**

April 9, 2026- April 11, 2026      150 students from Somerville High School Music/Theatre Dept. will travel to Chicago, IL to perform in, Observe & Experience the Arts in Chicago. Travel via plane, student cost \$900-\$1,000

**F. Donation: (Recommended action: Approval)**

The Superintendent recommends acceptance, with gratitude, of the following

Donation	Donor	City, State	Value	Program
Beauty Supplies	The Salon at 10 Newbury	Boston, MA	\$840.00	CTE Cosmetology Shop

**VIII. ITEMS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS****IX. CONDOLENCE****X. ADJOURNMENT**

**For Simultaneous Interpretation in Spanish, Portuguese and Haitian Creole See below:**

**Español - Para Interpretación**

Para ver la reunión regular del Comité Escolar el 6 de octubre a las 7:00pm, en vivo desde su casa, visite el siguiente Enlace y seleccione GovTV:

<https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/communications-and-community-engagement/somerville-city-tv>

Para poder escuchar en vivo la interpretación en simultaneo de esta reunión en español, portugués o criollo haitiano, debe registrarse y solicitar el servicio con 48 horas de anticipación e indicar su idioma de preferencia. Para registrarse haga clic en el enlace a continuación

[https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_u8Awy93fR6OhvC37Xib1zg](https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_u8Awy93fR6OhvC37Xib1zg)

ID de la reunion: 810 5048 0087

Contraseña: SPSSC25

The items listed are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair to be discussed at the meeting. Not all items may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law

**Português - Para Interpretação**

Para assistir à Reunião Regular do Comitê Escolar 6 de Outubro às 19h, ao vivo de casa, visite o seguinte link e selecione GovTV:

<https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/communications-and-community-engagement/somerville-city-tv>

Para ouvir ao vivo a interpretação simultânea da Reunião Regular em espanhol, português ou crioulo haitiano, é necessário fazer sua inscrição com 48 horas de antecedência e indicar o idioma de sua preferência. Para se inscrever, clique no link abaixo:

[https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_u8Awy93fR6OhvC37Xib1zq](https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_u8Awy93fR6OhvC37Xib1zq)

Meeting ID: 810 5048 0087

Password: SPSSC25

**Kreyòl ayisyen - Pou entèpretasyon**

Pou gade reyinyon regilye Komite Lekòl la, 6 Oktòb a 7:00PM an dirèk lakay ou, vizite lyen sa a epi chwazi GovTV: <https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/communications-and-community-engagement/somerville-city-tv>

Pou w tande entèpretasyon similtane Reyinyon Regilye a an panyòl, pòtiqè oswa kreyòl ayisyen, ou dwe enskri 48 èdtan davans epi endike lang ou prefere a. Pou enskri, klike sou lyen ki anba a:

[https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_u8Awy93fR6OhvC37Xib1zq](https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_u8Awy93fR6OhvC37Xib1zq)

Meeting ID: 810 5048 0087

Password: SPSSC25



## SOMERVILLE EDUCATORS UNION

Good Evening.

My name is Dayshawn Simmons, I am a resident of Ward 7, a middle grades educator, and the proud President of the Somerville Educators Union. This evening I wanted to highlight the partnership between the district and the SEU in addressing student needs in our district. I want to start by saying that not everything is perfect and some pieces haven't been perfect for a while. Our educators work tirelessly and they are tired. That said, what we've found to be true is that the district is willing to listen and make moves to be responsive to address the issues.

This was evident during the budget process last year as district leadership, school committee members, and the SEU advocated fiercely for a budget that saw additional millions of dollars added which begins to correct the decades of under-investment in education to put in place the supports Somerville students deserve.

This year, we are seeing more manageable workloads for special education providers and social emotional educators which means more protections for student service delivery. The district also met the SEU with codifying the best practices for reading and math intervention to maximize the success of those programs while attempting to avoid educator burnout in the process. These were important priorities to the SEU during the bargaining process and we are thankful that the district made some real commitments

---





## **SOMERVILLE EDUCATORS UNION**

in these areas. Admittedly, this progress is not as fast as we proposed, but we fully accept it is a step in the right direction.

Perhaps one of our biggest priorities during the bargaining process last spring was to find a way to work together to implement a true co-teaching model in the district to better meet the needs of each student in front of our educators. We understand that such an initiative costs more than the budget allocated to implement district-wide, and we appreciate the district naming it as priority for them as well as. This year we have East Somerville and Winter Hill piloting a co-teaching model with a working group of educators, administrators and family behind them documenting the best practices and procedures as we work to scale up the co-teaching model in future years. Again, not as fast as we hoped, but we know it's coming.

In talking with my union colleagues in other districts, this is not the typical partnership. Somerville Public Schools in recent years has continually made an effort to maintain a solid working relationship with the SEU so that we can produce the best outcomes for students. That doesn't mean we always agree - we sometimes don't. What I appreciate is that we are still able to have the conversation and move past disagreements to do what is best for our students. So, on behalf of the SEU - thank you. There is a great deal of work ahead and we appreciate the commitments to going in a better direction.