

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

Monday, January 12, 2026 - Regular Meeting

7:00 p.m. – City Hall Chambers

Members present: President Davis, Member. Pitone, Member. Lippens, Member. Eldridge, Member. Green, Dr. Stellman, Mayor Wilson, Member. Biton, and Dr. Ackman **Members Absent:**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 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 – 9 – President Davis, Mrs. Pitone, Member Lippens, Member. Eldridge, Member Green, Dr. Stellman, Mayor Wilson, Member Biton, and Dr. Ackman **ABSENT –**

II. SCHOOL COMMITTEE STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

Student Representatives Bhavika Kalia and Peyton Gates were both present and reported the following:

Purpose of the Proposal

- Highlight the importance of a structured 8th–9th grade transition
- Share a preliminary template inspired by other public school systems
- Focus on improving student engagement, belonging, and long-term success

Middle School Supports (Pre-High School)

- Existing supports include course selection guidance by counselors
- Proposed additions:
 - Pre-orientation events connecting middle schools and Somerville High
 - High school student volunteers sharing experiences and advice
 - Information sessions on extracurriculars, clubs, and sports
 - Clearer communication for families, especially those new to the system

Freshman Orientation Enhancements

- Current orientation is limited and largely presentation-based
- Proposal to expand orientation activities during the first few days of school
- Goal: build early community, peer connections, and student confidence
- Inspired by college-style orientation, adapted to the high school schedule

Freshman Advising & Mentorship

- Build on the current peer mentor pilot program
- Juniors and seniors serve as mentors to freshmen
- Mentors lead restorative justice circles and community-building activities
- Address challenges with student engagement and participation

Student Engagement & Community Building

- Emphasis on helping students feel involved and valued early on
- Stronger transition support can increase student voice and inclusion
- Early engagement helps prevent students from feeling disconnected later

Long-Term Student Success

- Better preparation for upperclassman years and post-secondary life
- Increased access to mentorship for internships, community service, and leadership
- Addresses gaps in readiness that many current students experience

Post-COVID Considerations

- Acknowledges learning loss and social disconnection after COVID
- Stronger relationships and supports are more important than ever

Alignment with School Goals

- Supports the Somerville High School Improvement Plan
- Reinforces priorities around wellness, joy, and community building
- Benefits academic excellence by fostering a positive school environment

Overall Benefits

- Improved student happiness and engagement
- Stronger family communication and involvement
- Clearer, more supportive transition into high school

Comments/Questions

Dr. Stellman: Thanked the Student Council for the thoughtful and well-developed recommendations, noting that they were grounded in both lived experience and empirical insight. Commended the compassion demonstrated and the careful consideration given to how the district's vision and commitments can be operationalized. Emphasized that the data and experiences shared align with significant research, particularly regarding the critical transition from middle school to high school. Highlighted that ineffective transitions into 9th grade can have long-term negative impacts on students' academic trajectories. Expressed strong support for targeted interventions at this stage and praised the proposed ideas, especially those focused on building connections and relationships between upper-level students and younger grades. Concluded by stating that the work was inspiring and shared enthusiasm for continued collaboration and support.

Member Biton: Expressed full agreement with Dr. Stellman's remarks and described the proposal as a thoughtful and exciting idea. Stated interest in seeing how the initiative could be structured and implemented, including an outline of the resources that would be required should the district move forward. Requested follow-up information and thanked the presenters for bringing the proposal forward.

Dr. Jessica Boston Davis: Thanked the students for their powerful presentation and noted that related work is already underway in the district. Highlighted that an educator named by students is currently pursuing leadership licensure through a district-sponsored PSI partnership and is actively working on this issue in collaboration with students and staff trained in restorative justice. Shared that the District Instructional Leadership Team previously studied middle-to-high school transitions and made recommendations, which have since led to the formation of a formal Middle Grades Transition Working Group led by the Chief of Staff. Affirmed that the district recognizes this as a priority area, values students' lived experiences, and expressed enthusiasm for continuing the work forward..

Superintendent Carmona: Thanked the students for their work and noted that a key gap is how existing transition efforts are communicated to students and families. Shared that the district's strategic plan includes developing a middle school learner profile, similar to the high school model, though this work will take time. Acknowledged ongoing efforts at the high school to support transitions and expressed interest in strengthening connections between middle and high

school students. Reflected on the need to better publicize current initiatives and thanked the students for elevating these issues.

Member Green: Echoed strong support for the proposal and noted that, if resources are required, it should be considered as part of the budget process. Emphasized the importance of student voice and encouraged students to continue bringing forward issues, ideas, and potential solutions, expressing hope that this would be the first of many future proposals.

Member Pitone: Commended the students for growing confidence in the School Committee space and encouraged continued engagement. Raised a question for the administration regarding how student leadership groups are structured and connected, and how student voices can be systematically included in working groups without overburdening the same students. Requested that the administration consider this more formally and report back to the School Committee.

Mayor Wilson: Thanked the students for raising an important issue and emphasized that middle-to-high school transitions are a key equity concern. Shared a personal perspective as a parent of a new high school freshman, noting how access to networks and connections can significantly impact a family's ability to navigate the transition. Stated that strengthening these supports is an important way to advance equity across the city.

Chair Ackman: Thanked the students and their peers for their thoughtful engagement, referencing the recent Student Advisory Committee meeting where students presented both challenges and proposed solutions. Expressed appreciation for the students' leadership and problem-solving approach. Encouraged the Student Advisory Committee representatives to continue elevating student voices across all grade levels and schools, particularly in the middle grades, and emphasized the importance of representing the experiences of students citywide.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

Ryan Williams: Good evening. My name is Ryan Williams, 47 Kingston Street, and I am the President of the Somerville Council of PTAs. I want to begin by welcoming and congratulating our new and returning School Committee members. Later this evening, you will be discussing out-of-school time, a topic I was asked to speak to and one we continue to hear about frequently from PTAs and families across Somerville. OST and afterschool programs are essential for many families who are balancing the high cost of childcare and the rising cost of living. In Somerville, these programs are a critical pillar of family and student stability. They support the whole child through social engagement and participation, and for some families, they are the only viable childcare option. I want to thank Superintendent Carmona and his team for making this a priority within SPS. Since the start of this administration, we have seen steady growth and expansion in programming and options for families, and that effort is both noted and appreciated. I also want to specifically thank Ruth Santos and the SFLC and OST teams for their community outreach and for being engaged and collaborative partners. That said, there is still more work to do. We have families at East Somerville and likely elsewhere relying on GoFundMe campaigns to cover afterschool fees and struggling to maintain their spots. We often say that GoFundMe is not a healthcare plan; it should not be a childcare plan either. I want to emphasize to the new School Committee that OST and afterschool programs remain essential for SPS families, and barriers to access still exist. We need to work together to identify gaps in engagement and communication, address logistical challenges around space and staffing, and create a system that is clear, accessible, and easy to navigate. I recognize there is hesitation about the district being in the childcare business. However, regardless of where we believe this function should ultimately sit, it currently sits within the district. Because of that, we have an obligation to make it work for all Somerville families. Please keep this context in mind as you discuss this topic later tonight. On behalf of the Council of PTAs, we offer ourselves as willing partners. We appreciate the upcoming listening sessions and hope they are the beginning of even deeper collaboration. Let's continue improving the current system while also working toward a more sustainable model for the future.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- November 17, 2025
- December 1, 2025
- December 15, 2025

MOTION: There was a motion by Mr. Biton, seconded by Mr. Green, to approve the minutes from November 17, 2025, December 1, 2025 and December 15, 2025

The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

V. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

A. District Report

Notes- Superintendent Update: School Committee Meeting- Monday January 12, 2026

Good evening Dr. Ackman and members of the Committee.

I am pleased to be back here with you to begin 2026 with our three new Committee members, as well as Council president Lance Davis, and of course, Mayor Wilson. Welcome to you all.

This Wednesday marks the halfway point of the school calendar. As we begin this calendar year, I want to pause and reflect on the progress we've made together and share my excitement for what's ahead.

Over the past year, we've seen meaningful growth across our district - through the hard work of our staff, the resilience of our students, and the strength of our partnerships with families. While there is always more work to do, I'm energized by the momentum we've built through our strategic planning, and I'm grateful for this Committee's continued leadership as we look ahead to another year of learning and opportunity.

This includes our ongoing collaborative efforts with our families and community members.

Over the next few weeks and months, the district will be hosting a number of workshops and collaborative sessions to bring families and staff together for feedback and conversation.

These are opportunities for us to listen, learn from one another, and continue building strong relationships across our school community.

I encourage you to check out the new **"Happenings"** page on our website for upcoming sessions on topics such as academic curriculum, the new school building project, multilingualism, and more.

We truly value working alongside parents and community partners as true collaborators in this work. Your input helps guide our decisions and supports our students so every learner can succeed.

Many of these upcoming discussions are strongly supported by the efforts of the SFLC - which brings us to our first presentation this evening.

Our community-facing initiatives are led by the Somerville Family Learning Collaborative. Their work on behalf of students and their families has been instrumental in:

- reducing barriers
- expanding access to resources
- creating meaningful pathways for families to engage with our schools and with one another.

By intentionally reaching those who have historically been underserved, we strengthen trust, belonging, and equity across the district.

Alongside city partners and school liaisons, the SFLC kicked off the year with another highly successful districtwide back-to-school event.

Throughout the year, the team has continued its work to expand access to food markets at three schools and to support families impacted by immigration-related activity.

The importance of the SFLC's role was especially evident during last year's period of heightened food insecurity, which disproportionately affected families who rely on SNAP benefits to meet basic needs.

The director of SFLC, Ruth Santos, is here tonight to highlight how these efforts help ensure that every family feels welcomed, supported, and fully part of our shared community.

- **SFLC Department Update**

Ruth Santos Director of Somerville Family Learning Collaborative shared her presentation

Comments/ Questions

Member Green: I can't say enough about the work of the SFLC. In a community that often talks about reaching underrepresented and marginalized groups, no one in this city does it better than SFLC full stop. I'm always interested in how we can better support you in doing your work, because you are truly on the front lines. I also want to acknowledge the bravery of your staff. They were among the first to return in person during the pandemic, while managing their own family responsibilities, and they have continued to carry an incredibly heavy load. This year, my question is both how we can better support the organization overall and, more specifically, how we can better support the staff.

Ms. Santos: One of my priorities is continuing to advocate for basic needs resources. Food support, in particular, offers much more than food it opens conversations with families and allows us to better understand what additional supports they may need. It creates opportunities to connect families to the Office of Basic Needs and Housing Support Services. Resources such as grocery assistance and MBTA gift cards were incredibly helpful for families last year, and while we know those funds can be difficult to sustain, they made a meaningful difference and supported our work. An additional need I would highlight is dedicated space for playgroups, which would further strengthen our programming and family engagement.

Member Green: May I briefly dig deeper into the basic food support issue? I know the City of Somerville was represented when the Boston Foundation announced their food security partnership, and I know there were some citywide funding announcements at the end of last year. I'd love to know more about the extent to which the city is part of that partnership, and whether SFLC and SPS have been involved. What has that looked like, and have resources been provided? If not, we can continue the conversation offline about how to possibly secure some support.

Ms. Santos: Yes, SFLC works very closely with the City of Somerville's Office of Healthy Living and Food. We have always partnered with them. We also work with the "Work for Food for Free" program, which strongly advocated on our behalf for the food funding we received this year. While we weren't part of the initial conversation, we were very glad to receive the funding.

Member Lippens: I want to commend SFLC for their tireless work. During this critical window of a child's life roughly 1,800 days I have three kids, and all of them took advantage of the playgroups and other resources, which I know have only expanded. I'm very interested in learning more about how family engagement ties to learning, because investing in early childhood education is investing in our future. I also want to echo Member Green's comments about supporting this important work. Thank you.

Member Pitone: Thank you for the presentation. It's always exciting to see how people are connecting, and I appreciate how you include pictures of staff, giving the School Committee and the community a chance to really see the people and the work being done. My question is for the administration. I appreciate Ms. Santos's concern about playgroup space,

and I'm curious about the process for considering that need. Does it go through school space planning, city space planning, or elsewhere? How is it prioritized alongside other district and city needs? I'd like to understand how we can formally put this request forward and ensure it's considered appropriately.

Superintendent Carmona: We know that when the Cummings building and the Edgerly facility were offline, it created space challenges, and access for families who needed it most was also impacted. Solutions require collaboration not only within the district but also with the city. Space is clearly a challenge, but we have willing partners and will continue exploring this formally in collaboration with all stakeholders.

Member Pitone: I'm also curious about an appropriate timeline for follow-up. Will updates come to this body or to the school building maintenance team? I'd like to know when to expect the next discussion whether in April, May, or whenever is appropriate so I can keep track of progress and receive updates. Thank you.

Member Eldridge: I'm not sure who the best person to direct this question to Ms. Santos or Superintendent Carmona, but I'm looking for more clarity on slides 7 and 11 regarding intensive literacy opportunities for families in Somerville. I'd like to better understand how families qualify for these programs and how they can inquire or become involved. I'm also interested in learning more about the volunteers who support math and literacy tutoring how families and students access those supports, and what is needed to strengthen and expand those programs.

Ms. Santos: I'll start with the early home visiting literacy program. Fernanda Villar, who is here this evening, leads that work. The program is built through deep community relationships rather than open recruitment. Most participating families speak English as a second language, and many have low literacy themselves. The goal is to partner with families and show that literacy extends beyond traditional reading, using tools such as wordless books and everyday experiences. Home visitors work with families twice a week for 30 weeks. Staff identify potential families through community events and relationships, followed by home visits and an intake process.

Regarding math and literacy tutoring, schools submit requests through their volunteer coordinators or via a district form. Requests are managed by Jen Capuano, who matches classrooms with volunteers based on skills, availability, and language abilities. This system has been working well. We have discussed with Superintendent Carmona the possibility of expanding and formalizing volunteer support through greater coordination, standardized programming, and curriculum alignment, which would require a dedicated point person. This is something we hope to move forward with this year.

Dr. Stelman: Thanked Ms. Santos and praised the SFLC as a phenomenal organization that not only serves Somerville families exceptionally well but also serves as a model for communities across the country. Noted the importance of elevating and sharing this work so other districts can learn from SFLC's practices. Asked a clarifying question regarding the scale of the Carrot Card program, including an approximate number of families served and the typical level of support provided, to better understand its reach.

Ms. Santos: Stated that she could provide exact figures and noted that the monthly support amount was recently increased. Offered to share additional details offline.

Superintendent Carmona: Provided context on the scale and structure of SFLC food markets, noting that they often serve 100 to 300 families at a time through a highly organized and intentional process. Emphasized that these experiences revealed both greater levels of need and greater community support than previously realized. Highlighted that SFLC's systems were well-positioned to respond to increased demand, underscoring the dedication and capacity of staff to meet families' needs during challenging times.

Member Biton: Thanked Ms. Santos and the SFLC staff for their exceptional work, noting deep appreciation and admiration for their impact across the school community. Followed up on the discussion regarding space for playgroups, emphasizing its importance as an area for continued attention. Encouraged the administration to think creatively about

space usage across the district and city, particularly in a dense, space-constrained environment. Suggested exploring complementary uses of shared spaces such as balancing playgroup needs for young children and teen programming at different times of the day to maximize available facilities.

- **Summer Overview Community Schools/ Out of School Time**

Dr. Carmona: OST programming plays an important role in supporting students and families across our district, And provides spaces where students can learn, explore interests, and build relationships. Out-of-school time programming has been the subject of recent discussion, largely in connection with a fee adjustment announced early in the fall. This adjustment helps address a budget shortfall while preserving these important enrichment opportunities for students. Even with this change, our pricing remains well below that of many surrounding communities. We also remain committed to supporting families experiencing financial hardship so that every student continues to have affordable access to these programs.

Rosanna Paribello, the Director of Out of School Time, is here to focus on how strategic investment in programming has strengthened academic outcomes, supported equity, and advanced the district's commitment to educating the whole child.

Director Paribello along with James Mandart Summer School Director share their presentation.

Comments/Questions

Mayor Wilson: Expressed appreciation for the creative use of the Arbiter app and noted that it appears to be an effective tool. Raised a question regarding summer program attendance, referencing a prior presentation from Boston After School and Beyond that highlighted improved attendance outcomes, particularly among high school students, girls, and girls of color. Noted the reported increase in attendance across most programs, as well as the identified need to increase high school student roles and hours. Requested, if feasible, a breakdown of summer program attendance data by age, gender, race, and ethnicity to better understand participation patterns within the city.

James Mandart: Explained that overall summer program attendance was strong, with a notable dip in the third week of July related to ICE activity in the Somerville area, which led some families to disengage. Noted that more detailed attendance data by student demographics can be provided. Addressed the need to expand high school student roles and hours, explaining that partnerships with the Mayor's Office created student employment opportunities, but demand for both additional hours and more student workers exceeded availability. Shared that students expressed strong interest in working in summer programs particularly in mentoring, supporting younger students, and assisting with language translation and emphasized plans to strengthen student involvement as planning begins for Summer 2026.

Member Biton: Commended the team for the significant reduction in community school waitlists, noting that this has been a long-standing issue and that the progress is impressive. Acknowledged the impact on families who remain on the waitlist but emphasized the marked overall improvement. Asked whether the enrollment and waitlist figures represent the full universe of students, and inquired whether any families were priced out or otherwise unable to participate.

Ms. Paribello: Explained that the figures reflect current and frequently updated data. Clarified that many families on the waitlist are already enrolled in other city programs and that the district is reconsidering whether "waitlist" is the most accurate term, as some families may be expressing a preference rather than lacking access. Noted that pulling more students into district programs has affected enrollment in partner programs such as the YMCA and PDS, which the district is working to address through improved coordination and quality alignment.

Member Eldridge: Asked whether scholarships or financial assistance are available and whether there are options for families to participate without a financial contribution.

Ms. Paribello: Yes, some families pay no fee at all. Approximately 80 families currently do not pay a fee, while others

contribute reduced amounts through a sliding-scale model, with payments as low as \$2 or \$5. Families who apply during the initial registration period can access financial aid, but some families who enrolled later were not aware they needed to apply. The team has been working to identify and support those families to ensure access. The goal is to remove barriers so that families can participate regardless of financial need, including those seeking academic or social enrichment rather than childcare. This work has been made more challenging by a decrease in vouchers and subsidies across Massachusetts, as well as stricter reassessment requirements. Staff continue to support families through these processes and are developing strategies to sustain the sliding-scale model.

Member Lippens: Asked about summer programming opportunities for high school students, particularly through the Mayor's program. Shared a parent perspective and inquired about how families and students can access information earlier in the year, including opportunities for volunteering and employment, and whether there are ways to better connect this information to the Student Advisory Council prior to the April sign-up period.

James Mandart: That makes sense, thank you. Now that it's January, we're beginning the planning process for summer programming. Rosanna and I are working through what this summer will look like and what we want to do differently. Engaging with the Student Advisory Committee to better understand what students want and how we can partner more effectively will be important. We also plan to meet with the Mayor's Office to discuss what the student employment program could look like this year and how it might differ from last year, with the goal of creating more opportunities for students and sharing information earlier.

Ms. Paribello: Clarified that the Mayor's program is run through the Mayor's Office, with SPS serving as a partner. Shared that feedback from high school students indicates that the current 20-hour limit is insufficient. Added that SPS also needs to expand and rethink the types of roles available so more high school students can be accommodated in meaningful summer employment opportunities.

Member Eldridge: Expressed enthusiasm about expanded academic support opportunities over the summer, including those discussed by SFLC and through out-of-school time programming, such as the elementary SPELL program. Asked for additional details on how families can participate, including qualification criteria and staffing, and whether the program is staffed internally or through external providers.

James Mandart: Explained that SPELL programs at the elementary, middle, and high school levels are primarily staffed by internal district educators, with minimal outside hiring. Noted that the programs are referral-based, with staff working closely with building administrators and educators to identify students who would be a good fit. Shared that planning and outreach begin early, with strong communication across school buildings, and that families of identified students are contacted directly.

Member Biton: Followed up on Member Eldridge's question regarding funding and referenced public comment and a recent email from the East Somerville PTA Council about families relying on GoFundMe or charitable giving to afford out-of-school time and community school programs. Asked whether there is a funding gap the School Committee should address, or whether the issue is related to identification, communication, or another disconnect. Requested clarification on where the breakdown may be occurring.

Superintendent Carmona: Explained that the district serves a highly diverse population with varying financial capacities, noting that some families are able and willing to pay higher fees while others are not. Shared that the district uses a sliding-scale fee structure based on available data and strives to be as generous as possible, but acknowledged that any required payment can be a barrier for families facing financial hardship. Noted that some families have been impacted by the current structure and that the district is actively examining the data and unintended consequences. Emphasized that this is a complex issue involving funding, capacity limitations, and equity considerations, and stated that further discussion with the Mayor and district leadership is needed to explore options for expanding access without excluding families. Confirmed that the district will continue to investigate the scope of the issue and potential solutions.

Mayor Wilson: Appreciated the discussion about fees and noted that while keeping fees low is admirable, it can result in subsidizing families who don't need it. Suggested that a more dynamic sliding-scale fee structure can be more effective, allowing financial aid to be targeted to families who need it most. Expressed interest in data comparing overall student demographics by school to enrollment in community schools, particularly along socioeconomic lines, to see whether participation reflects the broader student body or indicates disparities. Clarified that this is not a request for tonight, but an item of interest for future review.

Superintendent Carmona: Noted that a question has come up about who the community schools are serving. Explained that while some data exists, enrollment historically has favored families with greater access to information, as the system was based on a first-come, first-served model. The district has worked to make the structure more equitable, including incorporating feedback from parent liaisons to prioritize students who need care most, creating a more fluid and responsive system.

Ms. Paribello: Added that a lottery system was implemented last year to increase fairness in enrollment. Acknowledged challenges for families with working parents, and emphasized that the goal remains to ensure that all families needing care have access.

President Davis: Echoed support for a more dynamic pricing structure, agreeing with Mayor Wilson's point that it could allow families to contribute according to their means and reduce reliance on GoFundMe or other charitable sources. Noted that many families would likely be willing to contribute more if able. Highlighted the importance of examining enrollment data by school in relation to school populations, while also considering other factors, such as alternative programs that may serve certain communities and influence the data. Emphasized that understanding these nuances is important when interpreting participation trends.

Member Green: Added context about community-based childcare networks, noting that, for example, the Brazilian community has a well-established network running in parallel hours. Emphasized that some communities prefer to organize their own programs and that it's important not to displace these alternatives. Highlighted the value of supporting out-of-school time through SFLC and other agencies while allowing families to choose culturally or ideologically appropriate options, rather than trying to provide everything solely through the district.

VI. REPORTS OF SUBCOMMITTEES

A. School Committee Meeting for the Rules Management Subcommittee Meeting: December 15, 2025 (Ms. Barish)

MOTION: There was a motion by Member Biton, seconded by Member Green to accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for the Rules Management Subcommittee Meeting: December 15, 2025
Rules Management Subcommittee
December 15, 2025
City Council Chambers

Ms. Barish called the meeting to order at 5:30pm. Subcommittee members Leiran Biton and Ellenor Barish were present along with the MASC's Alicia Mallon and SPS Director of Communications Darryl Nash, who both attended the meeting virtually. Mr. Green arrived a few minutes into the meeting along with one audience member.

There were two items on the agenda.

The first agenda item was to approve the Rules Management Subcommittee meeting report from November. Mr. Biton moved to approve the report, seconded by Ms. Barish. The motion passed unanimously.

The second item on the agenda was Policy Manual Review. Ms. Barish reported that Mr. Berretta had shared some feedback on items in Section D. Ms. Barish will make sure Ms. Mallon and the future chair of Rules Management have

access to that feedback so that it can be discussed at a future meeting and potentially incorporated into the policy revisions.

Mr. Nash also expects further feedback on Section E in January. He will request legal input on some items and will cc the Chair of School Committee and/or the new Chair of Rules Management.

Ms. Mallon began the review of Section J of the Policy Manual.

JA - Student Policies Goals

Ms. Mallon pointed out that this was last reviewed in 2009 and suggested that the subcommittee reconsider it through an updated lens.

Ms. Barish and Mr. Biton shared some specific language suggestions. Mr. Green suggested a complete ground-up re-write of the policy and an expectation that this policy be reviewed/rewritten every 2-3 years. Members agreed that this should be put on next year's agenda to be undertaken alongside the full manual review.

JB - Equal Educational Opportunities

Somerville's is similar to MASC's. It includes Crown Act and everything that is legally required. Ms. Mallon added a McKinney-Vento reference. Ms. Barish noted that if Somerville's version is retained, child should be used (rather than student) as it is a quote from MGLs.

Subcommittee members prefer to keep Somerville's version.

JB-R - GRIEVANCE AND COMPLAINTS FOR TITLE IX AND CHAPTER 622 (S)

Reversion to Title IX. Ms. Mallon recommends removal because this is procedural and it is covered in Section A.

JBB - Equity Policy

Ms. Mallon pointed out that this is not an anti-discrimination policy but a Statement of Equity. MASC reference policy is educational equity only.

Subcommittee Members prefer to retain and revise the Somerville version. Ms. Barish asked if racial/ethnic equity was an intentional specification when this was originally written. Mr. Green confirmed that it was, because the biggest predictor of educational outcomes in our district is race. The goal was to make race no longer a predictor of success. Mr. Biton noted that disparities exist for other groups as well and wondered what outcome measures are being used to quantify success. Mr. Green named graduation rates, post-secondary plans, MCAS results, et. Mr. Biton asked about MLL and SpEd disparities and Mr. Green explained that a statistical regression shows that race is still the primary predictor.

Ms. Mallon pointed out that later paragraphs address MLL, poverty, and Special Education status.

Subcommittee members agreed that this policy deserves a carefully considered review in the new year.

Mr. Biton asked if we should include a policy on Educational Equity specifically. Ms. Mallon believed this policy covers that but said that members might consider the model Educational Equity policy when revising JBB. This is ALL aspirational because there is no MGL or federal law attached. Adjusting to our district is appropriate.

JBD - GENDER IDENTITY SUPPORT

There is no model policy. It looks like this was written around when MA law was updated. Ms. Mallon recommended discussing whether this is still in line with the mission and vision of the district as well as practice.

Ms. Barish asked about the passage: "For students who identify as gender nonconforming and/or transgender, a supportive strategic plan to address legal and social emotional issues will be developed by a team of school personnel who are familiar with the student." Is this always the case? Should we say "as requested by the student or their family"?

Mr. Green pointed out that it is intentionally not with the family's permission.

Mr. Biton questioned the word "strategic", saying that it implies less about implementation than theory. Ms. Mallon suggested that it was probably to delineate between going by a new name vs. legally changing a name. Mr. Biton also asked about the word "team" and suggested more specific language: Student Support Team?

Ms. Barish advocated for more assertive language around professional development. Ms. Mallon suggested reframing it as something the district would provide.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00pm.

Documents Used:

November Rules Report 2025

Somerville Draft Section J With Changes

The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

B. School Committee Meeting for the Finance and Facilities Subcommittee Meeting: December 17, 2025 (Mrs. Pitone) Table

Member Pitone: The finance report will be in the next packet it's done, but it got in too late for people to actually look at it.

C. School Committee Meeting for the School Committee and Student Advisory Committee Meeting: January 7, 2026

MOTION: There was a motion by Member Biton, seconded by Member Green to accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for the School Committee and Student Advisory Committee Meeting for January 7, 2026

School Committee and Student Advisory Meeting - 1/7/26

Attendance: Ms. Pitone, Ms. Lippens, Ms. Eldridge, Mr. Green, Ms. Stellman, Mayor Wilson, Mr. Biton, Dr. Ackman

Also in attendance: Superintendent Dr. Carmona, Assistant Superintendent of Academics Dr. Boston Davis, Principal Kersten, and Shannon Donnellan, SHS Social Studies teacher

Topics:

Clubs Budget

- Alicia Kersten provided some background information on clubs. Club stipends are based on negotiations.
- Students' names that there are many clubs that would like to be added but there is no stipends
- Teacher

X-Block:

Student Ideas:

- X-Block is an important time, and we would like to encourage students to come.
- Can we add community events?
 - Sports Fairs or Club Fairs could happen during this time.
- Can we incorporate clubs into x-Block

Questions from Committee Members:

- EA: It's a pretty heavy workload. Students may take off during xblock for a brain down time. Want to note this and think the sports ideas is good. References Boston Globe article about open gym during lunch. Appreciate students bring solutions to the challenges named
- LP: Curious about the original vision for x-Block. Why did we create it in our schedule? Community? College and Career Support? The conversation on this topic should be centered on the the goal. What are we trying to accomplish.
 - AK: Provides some history and context. We used to have it daily for 20 mins. Wasnt long enough to do anything – ended up being like a recess. Should be a flex block where students can get what they need based on data (eg extra math support). Some people have treated as an advisory. Some want it to be community building. Tentative plan is for 3rd quarter to form a x-block committee with students and

staff to plan how we use xc-block next year. One proposal from AK was to make it pass/fail. We will move forward with making it 1.25 credit for 9th graders only. Lots of decisions to make. Want to ensure that there is a diverse representation of students on this committee. Only one hour a week and counts towards time on learning.

- LP: What are the three things
- AK: Community building, targeted intervention/enrichment, and advisory/homeroom
- LB: We have discussed for credit
- ES: Wondering about accessibility for students who have IEPs or other support. Inclusivity for people with different styles of learning.
 - AK: Currently everyone is assigned to a teacher. Anyone with an IEP is assigned to their liaisons.
 - RC: Part of our core values is to ensure students have access to learning. It is critical that those who don't have the skills or come in late or have a different learning style might use that time differently. In k-8 we use the time to provide extra support. Want to make sure we can use the time to support the disparate outcomes.
- AK: Support raising issues that are very central to the work that we at SHS want to do. Center student experience. Very excited.

Inclusive School Curriculum:

Student Thoughts:

- How do we make our current school curriculum more inclusive to different cultures. We have electives that focus on different ethnic groups. How do we incorporate this into required courses.
- A lot of cultures and teachings are left out. If we can make the electives required that would be great.
- CTE and exploratory – a lot of classes that are left out and making them more inclusive
- We see more music and art electives, and not a lot of people have interest in that.

Questions for Committee Members:

- LB: Are there any examples you can provide?
 - Student response: Having a reading list with authors who represent different identities. Teachers can incorporate reading that aligns to their curriculum. I've seen a lot of that missing in my courses
 - Government Politics: Intro to ethics
- LE: Would like to know specifics. Other than Art and Music.
 - Classes are very broad but focusing on certain aspects of government and law would be interesting. New electives that are not in the fine arts category. Politics, law, and cultural things.
 - AK: We have a very flexible and responsive system for electives. Provided examples of social studies – things change each year based on student and community input. Will do an electives audit. Electives fair is Jan 21 during xblock. Humanities does work very hard on cultural responsiveness. Department chairs would like this feedback.
 - LE: Maybe we can lean into clubs to align to the interests if we can't add courses

Communication

There is an issue when we are making an announcement – instagram, email, bulletin board, etc.

Questions from Committee Members:

- LB: Can Darryl Nash suggest any ideas? Thanks students for the opportunity to listen
- MJW: See great success with What's App. Used a lot as a coach.

LB Ended the meeting at 1:45pm

The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Draft 2026-2027 School Calendar

Dr. Boston Davis: Good evening. In your packet, you'll find the draft 2026–2027 school year calendar along with a memo outlining the legal requirements for the school committee related to approving the school year schedule. I wanted to bring the draft calendar back to the committee, especially since we have new members, and provide a high-level overview.

As noted in the memo, the school year must be scheduled for 185 days, with schools operating for 180 days. The additional days help accommodate potential snow days. The draft calendar also includes tentative full committee meetings on the first and third Mondays, breaks, and early-release Wednesdays.

In December, questions arose about the tentative last day of school falling on a Monday. We are exploring creative options, such as shifting dates or using typical days off, and are currently discussing possibilities with SEU leadership, our largest union. SEU has been a strong partner, and while we don't have formal updates yet, these conversations are ongoing as we consider options to have the tentative last day on June 17th.

Comments/Questions

Member Green: Thanked the administration and SEU for being creative and flexible regarding the school year schedule. Noted that having school on a Monday after a three-day weekend could result in lower attendance, and appreciated efforts to make the calendar logical for both families and staff.

Member Biton: Raised two points about the calendar: first, suggested considering January 11th instead of January 4th for the first school committee meeting after winter break, as reconvening so early may be challenging. Second, noted potential confusion in the February break section where it states February 15–19 is vacation but also lists President's Day as a day the office is closed, and suggested clarifying that information.

Member Green: Responded to Vice Chair Biton's point, noting that the first Monday of the year is typically the organizational meeting and State of the City address. Questioned whether this has changed under the new charter, acknowledging that a regular school committee meeting would not normally be held on that day.

B. MSBA Update

Dr. Carmona: In late December, the Construction Advisory Group delivered its recommendations to Mayor Ballantyne regarding the City's plans for a new school building for the Winter Hill Community.

This recommendation comes after a more than 13-month process in which CAG members reviewed data from the City and District, alongside community input from survey responses and focus groups.

The CAG unanimously recommended that the new school be built at 115 Sycamore Street, the former Winter Hill location. A majority of members also recommended building the school to the maximum size permitted by the MSBA.

Regarding the future of the Brown School, the majority of the CAG recommended that this decision ultimately be decided by the School Committee. The full recommendation is publicly available at the city's website.

Next Steps: Engagement with WHCIS & Brown

Since the recommendation from the CAG, my team and I have met with Mayor Wilson who is eager to move this project forward and ensure that Winter Hill has a new building as soon as possible. The Mayor plans to join district leadership in meetings with both the Winter Hill and Brown school communities to discuss next steps in the MSBA process and what the CAG recommendations mean for each community.

He also plans to join the Educational Leadership Visioning session scheduled for January 20th. It will be an opportunity for the Project design team to hear from educators and SPS families on what their hopes are for the educational design elements in the building project.

Please note that additional community engagement opportunities on project design are anticipated in the coming months. Be on the lookout for more details on that soon.

Comments/Questions

Member Pitone: Noted the new Winter Happenings page and the upcoming Building Visioning Forum, which is scheduled from 8:30 a.m. to 2:15 p.m. She expressed concern that the long session might limit participation to those with more availability, potentially excluding some voices. Asked whether visioning forums are ever staggered into shorter sessions to increase accessibility, and flagged this as a question for consideration while acknowledging that the schools may feel this schedule is best.

Superintendent Carmona: Thank you for flagging that. I know we're working with the SFLC to find a time that makes sense. We also recognize that more time is needed, and we plan to hold some visioning sessions. We don't have the dates yet, but that was a recommendation for the design group. Sometimes, these sessions are designed by people who don't often work with families facing certain limitations, so we are mindful of those constraints. We will have more sessions, and I'll share the dates once they're set.

Member Lippens: I'm also wondering, as part of the building visioning forum, how are students' voices included in this discussion? I apologize I just don't know enough, so I'm asking.

Superintendent Carmona: That's a good question. Ruth, do you know if there's still a group scheduled within that session time for students? I know we have different stakeholder groups participating.

Ruth Santos: Explained that the initial session is designed for SPS staff and parents, with the goal of offering many different sessions moving forward in partnership with the city. Noted that evening sessions will be scheduled at individual schools, along with larger sessions that will incorporate Student Voice. Emphasized that a calendar of multiple engagement opportunities, potentially targeting different populations or topics, is in development.

Superintendent Carmona: Confirmed that the two invoices mentioned will be part of the engagement process.

Member Pitone: Suggested creating a central resource, such as a website, to clearly outline the visioning process, goals, and desired community voices, even if all session dates are not finalized. Highlighted the importance of giving the public a clear picture of the community involvement process.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. December Bill Rolls (Recommended action: approval) **Table**

B. Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual

The following policy is being presented the evening for the **first** reading for the 2026 School Committee

- Policy Manual Section A, B, and C

Member Biton: I want to start by recognizing the excellent work of my predecessor, Member Barish, as chair of Rules. For context, the December 15th meeting packet includes a summary of the policy manual review for Sections A through C.

This is part of our ongoing process to review all district policies, from A through L. The policies before us now, Sections A through C, represent a substantial portion of that work and reflect at least a year and a half of effort by the Rules

Subcommittee. I reviewed them carefully over the weekend and noted a few items I hadn't caught before, for which I'll suggest minor changes.

Since the review began, our charter has been updated, so several policies in this batch will need to be revisited. I want to specifically highlight that policies **AD, BB, BBBE, BTA, BTEA, and BGC** should be withdrawn for reconsideration, because some elements do not align with either current practices of the body or with the new charter. This overview is intended to provide context for observers and new members.

Chair Ackman: My request would be that you send a written version of that request.

Member Biton: Absolutely, I will do that. Thank you.

Member Pitone: Just to clarify, the version we receive for the next meeting will not include the policies you just listed?

Member Biton: Yes, I will make that change.

Chair Ackman: So, these were voted out of the subcommittee? We can choose to vote on whatever we want, unless there's opposition. I tend to defer to the subcommittee chair about taking items back, as long as it's very clear well before our next packet what we will be voting on. My interpretation of the request is that the body should have a clear understanding of what will be reviewed and voted on at the next session.

Member Biton: I will work with Mrs. Garcia to make sure it reflects what we should move forward with.

Member Pitone: And to be very specific, if Mrs. Garcia can send an email to all of us shortly indicating which items we shouldn't review, that would be helpful. We don't want anyone, especially new members, spending time on items that won't be included. I don't want that clarification to come only with the packet on Thursday.

Chair Ackman: Makes perfect sense, I agree. We'll move on that as quickly as possible. Thank you.

C. Acceptance of FY26 Grants Fund: (Recommended action: approval)

MOTION: There was a motion by Member Biton, seconded by Member Lippens, acceptance, with gratitude, of the following donations recommended by the Superintendent.

State

Mass Cultural Youth Reach- El Sistema Dept- \$26,550

Computer Science Engage Part 2- District Wide- \$33,627

The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

D. DONATION: (Recommended action: approval)

MOTION: There was a motion by Member Pitone, seconded by Member Biton, acceptance, with gratitude, of the following donations recommended by the Superintendent.

Donaton	Donor	City, State	Value	Program
Computer Keyboards	Ashish Koul	Cambridge, MA	\$390.00	District Wide

The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

Member Green: I have a question what's the story behind this? It seems like a fairly unique and specialized donation, and I'm just curious.

Chair Ackman: From what I'm hearing from Ms. Garcia, the donor offered the items, and once the body approves, we will gratefully accept them.

IX. COMMUNITY OR CALENDAR ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

X. CONDOLENCES

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

Daniel Reilly Moynihan – Brother of Julie Hughes, ESL Specialist at the East Somerville Community School.

Russell Arredondo Jr. – Husband of Leah Arredondo, Principal Account Clerk (Payroll), Finance Department.

Mary Houghton – Sister of the late Rita Houghton, retired teacher; Maureen Foster, former PreK paraprofessional; and Kathleen Houghton, retired Special Education teacher. Mary is also the aunt of Diana Young, AFAS teacher, and Matt Young, ESCS teacher.

Miguel Contreras Camacho – Father of Catherine Contreras, Gannon Community Schools / Out-of-School Time Principal Clerk II.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:06 p.m.

Related documents:

Agenda

[SFLC Department Update](#)

[Summer Overview Community School/ Out of School Time](#)

Submitted by: E Garcia

Attach Documents Starting on the next page

CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS – CITY HALL
REGULAR MEETING – JANUARY 12, 2026 – 7:00 P.M.

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2026, 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

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

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

Meeting ID: 810 5048 0087

Password: SPSSC25

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- November 17, 2025
- December 01, 2025
- December 15, 2025

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

- SFLC Department Update
- Summer Overview Community Schools/Out of School Time

VI. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES**A. School Committee Meeting for the Rules Management Subcommittee meeting: December 15, 2025 (Mrs. Barish)**

MOTION: To accept the report of the Rules Management Subcommittee Committee Meeting for December 15, 2025

B. School Committee Meeting for the Finance and Facilities Subcommittee Meeting: December 17, 2025 (Mrs. Pitone)

MOTION: To accept the report of the Finance and Facilities Subcommittee Committee Meeting for December 17, 2025

C. School Committee Meeting for the School Committee and Student Advisory Meeting: January 7, 2026

MOTION: To accept the report of the School Committee and Student Advisory Meeting for January 7, 2026

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. Draft 2026-2027 School Calendar**
- B. MSBA Update**

VIII. NEW BUSINESS**A. December Bill Roll (Recommended action: approval)****B. Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual**

The following policy is being presented the evening for the **first** reading for the 2026 School Committee

- Policy Manual Section A, B, and C

B. Acceptance of FY26 Grants Funds: (Recommended action: approval)

State
Mass Cultural Youth Reach- El Sistema Dept- \$26,550
Computer Science Engage Part 2- District Wide- \$33,627

C. Donation: (Recommended action: Approval)

Donation	Donor	City, State	Value	Program
Computer Keyboards	Ashish Koul	Cambridge, MA	\$390.00	District Wide

IX. COMMUNITY OR CALENDAR ITEMS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS**X. CONDOLENCE****XI. ADJOURNMENT**

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

Español - Para Interpretación

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

Para **ver** la reunión regular del Comité Escolar el 12 de enero 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 simultáneo 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_u8Awv93fR6OhvC37Xib1zq

ID de la reunion: 810 5048 0087

Contraseña: SP55C25

Português - Para Interpretação

Para **assistir** à Reunião Regular do Comitê Escolar 12 de Janeiro às 19h, ao vivo de casa, visite o seguinte link e seleccione **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_u8Awv93fR6OhvC37Xib1zq

Meeting ID: 810 5048 0087

Password: SP55C25

Kreyòl ayisyen - Pou entèpretasyon

Pou **gade** reyinyon regilye Komite Lekòl la, 12 Janvyè 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, pòtigè 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_u8Awv93fR6OhvC37Xib1zq

Meeting ID: 810 5048 0087

Password: SP55C25

