

Salem School Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
Saturday, January 13, 2018

A Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting retreat of the Salem School Committee was held on Saturday, January 13, 2018 at 8:20 a.m. in the Visitor's Center at the House of Seven Gables, 116 Derby Street, Salem, MA.

**Members Present:** Ms. Mary Manning, Mr. James Fleming, Ms. Kristine Wilson, Ms. Ana Nuncio, Mr. Manny Cruz, Ms. Amanda Campbell, and Mayor Kimberley Driscoll

**Members Absent:** None

**Others Present:** Margarita Ruiz, Superintendent, Kate Carbone, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, Margaret Marotta, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services, Kristin Shaver, Business Manager, Jill Conrad, Chief of Systems Strategy, and Kelley Rice, Chief of Communications

**Call to Order**

Mayor Driscoll called the School Committee of the Whole (COW) Meeting Retreat to order at 8:20 a.m.

**School Committee of the Whole (COW) Meeting Retreat**

Superintendent Ruiz began the meeting by presenting each new School Committee member with a mug containing the same Vision Statement of the Salem Public School graduates and walked members through the first slide of the presentation that listed the goals of the meeting:

1. Learn together as a team
2. Review and discuss strategic priorities as well as challenges and opportunities
3. Review and discuss the 2018-19 (FY19) Budget Planning process

Mayor Driscoll explained that as new committee members it would be great to have as much time as possible to process information. She wanted to inform Ms. Nuncio, Mr. Cruz, and Ms. Campbell of the urgency in terms of their actions in the beginning of the calendar year: January budget needs to be submitted in May for example; if they do not plan for things in the spring, it would not happen in the fall. It may seem that there may be a skip in their step as they approach some of these things whether it be challenges or the budget. Mayor Driscoll continued that staff members, other School Committee members, and she are available to answer any questions or assist if more information is needed for anyone, particularly new School Committee members. The sense of urgency has to do with what needs to be done in September. Superintendent Ruiz continued the presentation with the following Meeting Norms:

- Start on time – end on time
- Be fully present and remain engaged
- Listen to understand
- Honor all voices – invite different perspectives
- Be open to new ideas
- Assume good intentions and
- Other topics - that members would like to add

**Introduction (Learning Together as a Team)**

Ms. Ruiz asked the members to introduce themselves, describe their role in the district, and share a personal attribute they bring to their role in the district. Members introduced themselves

and shared an attribute they feel they bring to the table. Superintendent Ruiz thanked everyone for their introductions and sharing their attributes. She continued the meeting with discussion on the topic of district priorities in terms of where they stand for Salem students. Salem Public School is part of the Our Salem, Our Kids.

### **Our Salem, Our Kids By All Means Cabinet**

Superintendent Ruiz recalled that Salem was one of the cities that were invited to participate as part of the By All Means Initiative at Harvard. Its goal is the recognition is to support the academic social and emotional needs of the students. Salem had the opportunity to form a Children's Cabinet through the By All Means. They have a School Committee member, Ms. Wilson, who is part of the cabinet. Salem has many resources and organizations that want to support the work. Students have very complex challenges. The first area of challenge that the cabinet looked into at their new level is to look at how to create a system or structure by which to connect students with the services they need at the city level. They are careful to avoid calling it an initiative, because initiatives can come and go. They are calling it a "movement" instead. A movement is a way they feel that the entire city takes ownership of the success and future of its students.

### **Our Salem, Our Kids: Theory of Action**

The movement is rooted on the theory of action that says:

- If Salem collectively supports its students, then Salem becomes a healthier city for all
- If Salem coordinates with the support services both in schools and into the community, then they are proactively meeting the needs of their students.
- If they intentionally connect families to resources and opportunities, then they are identifying gaps in services.

The end result is an entire community taking collective ownership of city students and help to increase access and equity in their city. They have great organization such as the YMCA and LEAP, but how well are they connected with students who actually need their services across the city as well as the roles that schools and city plays. This is the role the Children's Cabinet movement can play and as a structure of Our Salem, Our Kids; it is all about everyone taking responsibility for the well being of all Salem students.

### **Our Salem, Our Kids Today**

A dynamic online website is in the works and has been created. It is going to be the depository of all the opportunities and resources available to support students. This online site is going to be the place where families, principals, teachers, and anyone in the city that need service programs for their child or children can visit. This would apply to founding members and others who might be looking to begin an organization in Salem to provide services for students and want their services to be known. The website address for Our Salem, Our Kids is: [oursalem.org](http://oursalem.org). The website will be further developed with some funding from the Nellie Mae Foundation which is currently in the works.

### **Discussion on Screening System**

Ms. Manning asked Superintendent Ruiz about a screening system for anyone who wants to provide new services but have a dishonest license, for example. Superintendent Ruiz responded that many of the organizations that are on the site are part of their partnership anyway. They have someone who is helping with the coordination of Our Salem, Our Kids program. Members of the cabinet would discuss that. Ms. Manning asked for the name of the person who is helping with the coordination of Our Salem, Our Kids program. Ms. Ruiz responded that it is Rebecca Levine. Ms. Manning clarified that the school system, through City Connects, hired

this person to work with that. Superintendent Ruiz and other members agreed. Mayor Driscoll agreed and added that she comes from a Youth Development background. Members continued discussion. Mayor Driscoll added that it is a good question. All of the protocols may not have been established. That is something that would have to be worked on. It is more of a directory of known services and providers. They are currently working on having the infrastructure and movement set up. Education is a community mission; they want this to be the place where they would go to whether they are looking for soccer, a math tutor, early education, etc.

Ms. Manning shared an example of a situation where service providers would join, gain their clients, and later separate to service them individually, rather than remain within group servicing. Mayor Driscoll responded that it is something they would have to be clear about on whether it is a referral or a directory. Mayor Driscoll shared she views it as a Directory. Screening is a very valid issue and they are not there yet. Mr. Fleming agreed and said that one has to look at it as a Directory but there should still be some screening on the Directory. They do not have a preliminary simple screening in place on those organizations. Mayor Driscoll responded that organizations that have been around for a long time are the ones that are currently in the Directory and agreed with Mr. Fleming that it is a good point to consider. Mayor Driscoll said she would raise that with the Children's Cabinet and suggested adding something to the site to confirm that it is a Directory, in the meantime.

### **Discussion on Screening at the Community Health Center**

Members discussed screening of the community health center. Ms. Marotta responded that all of the professionals they have now are experienced Masters level licensed clinicians with the state. Mayor Driscoll added that they also partner them with outreach workers downtown for the homeless and wellness visits. Members shared insight, feedback, and continued discussion.

### **Mass Mentoring**

They have also conducted training around the community on developing effective youth/adult relationships through Mass Mentoring. This is predicated on the fact that students are less likely to engage in risky behaviors when they have effective relationships with adults. Thus far, they have done training with 13 organizations, and the model of the training is 'Training the Trainer.' These organizations are sending folks to get trained so that they in turn can return and train the rest of the organization.

### **City Connects**

There was much talk about City Connects last year. City Connects is a key element of Our Salem, Our Kids, because it is the structure they needed at the school level to connect students with resources and allows them to keep the data. It is also important to know that City Connects is just one element of Our Salem, Our Kids program. It is one of a larger set of initiatives for the movement. Superintendent Ruiz continued sharing a couple of examples of how City Connects coordinators stepped in to help families in need.

### **Strategic Priorities 2017-19 (Salem Public Schools)**

Superintendent Ruiz reported that they have a strategic plan, for the district, in place. It is keeping the vision, mission, and core value at its core. Its first year is to align implementation with a Pillar of the Strategic Plan. Ms. Ruiz continued that she hopes School Committee members have taken notice that presentations listed on School Committee meeting agendas, since they began last September/November, have been aligned with a Pillar of the Strategic Plan.

### **Strategic Plan 2017-2022**

### **Salem Public School Vision and Mission Statement and Core Values**

Superintendent Ruiz referred members to a separate handout that contained the Salem Public Schools Mission and Vision Statements and listing of Salem Public Schools Core Values. This was work that was done for the committee. Ms. Ruiz asked members to take a few minutes to go over these as they help ground the work they are doing and asked a member to volunteer to read the Vision statement out loud. Mr. Cruz volunteered and read the Vision statement out loud for everyone. Superintendent Ruiz asked for a volunteer to read the Mission statement. Ms. Campbell volunteered to read the Mission statement and read the statement out loud for everyone. Superintendent Ruiz briefly walked members through the handout and list of Core Values.

### **4 Pillars of the Strategic Plan**

Superintendent Ruiz continued that they are implementing the Strategic Plan for the district and highlighted some of the priorities of the 4 pillars. Pillar 1 Create a vibrant learning ecosystem, Pillar 2 Reimagine the High School Experience, Pillar 3 Nurture Staff Leadership and Empowerment, and Pillar 4 Strengthen Family and Community Engagement. Superintendent Ruiz briefly outlined each of the pillars as listed on the presentation.

### **Other Priorities**

Ms. Ruiz continued the presentation with the following two additional priorities:

- Develop a data dashboard to monitor progress and track critical outcomes associated with the strategic plan and
- Successfully raise private funds to support critical areas of work associated with the strategic plan

They have been working with the Nellie Mae Foundation and are trying to seek external funds to do some of this work. Mayor Driscoll talked about the importance and need of the funding. Ms. Marotta shared further input. Ms. Manning asked how funding is considered when identifying the critical areas of work. Mayor Driscoll responded that it is a basic issue. They have a college and career readiness mindset now at the High School redesign. What if someone wanted to help fund additional initiatives as part of that? It is a matter of how much can they dive deeply in those areas and if they have some additional private funders who want to help do some of that work. Ms. Manning asked if they, as a system, are going out to private funding asking for help with additional funding, if there are volunteer funders, or if it is a little bit of both. Ms. Driscoll responded that it is a little bit of both. Members continued further discussion on the topic. Ms. Ruiz shared there are grant opportunities for redesigning high schools, for example, where they are truly servicing the students; there are grants that fund those opportunities. Members agreed.

### **Group Activity**

Superintendent Ruiz asked members to break into 3 groups to discuss additional questions they may have related to these priorities and any suggestions and recommendations to help the Superintendent & District Leadership Team be successful in implementing them. Members gathered into three separate groups for 20 minutes.

#### **Group 1**

Suggestions and recommendations:

- Early Education - Make sure there is an Early Education emphasis - work on that Early Ed service as part of Pillar 1: Create a Vibrant K-12 Teaching & Learning Ecosystem and Pillar 4: Strengthen Family and Community Engagement

- Closing the Digital Divide - Recommend closing the digital divide. They have some rollout of the 1x1 initiative at Collins, how do they build off that to improve it, at the High School level in particular, whether it is one-on-one programming – being able to learn from the rollout at Collins
- Initiative on Chronic Absenteeism - How is absenteeism personal – making sure those teachers, students, paraprofessionals, and everyone in the building understands (and is part of) the initiative
- The High School redesign – add questions for specific recommendations about buy-in from staff – there was some commentary about some of the public meetings at the High School redesign, there were lots of High School teachers there; what could they do more of to help with staff buy-in if they are talking about an overhaul or major change?

Student Engagement - Looking at students' engagements – can they also ensure that students are part of that; have a part in the role of Pillar 2: Reimagine the High School Experience – have a better understanding or explanation of what is happening in standards based grading. It is on the way and not part of the redesign - there are questions in the community about how that gets implemented long term, because it is only offered to Freshmans at this time

- Pillar 3: Nurture Staff Leadership & Empowerment – what more can they do to help recruit a diverse group of teachers and how can they ensure that Exit interviews or surveys are part of the process for teachers when they are leaving the district?

## **Group 2**

Suggestions and recommendations:

- Data Dashboard - One question is about the data dashboard: What and where is it and how were the indicators developed? They heard it is not in existence as an entity, it is exceptional
- Programs Included at Salem High School - Question about City Connects. They realize that programs exist for K-8 and not the High School
- Qualified Staff - Retention of qualified staff, what tools are used for new teachers to share work: is there a place where they can go to access onboard materials, learning such as ‘what do I need to do as a new teacher? What are practices I should follow, etc.?’
- Staff Diversity - What is the long-term challenge for increasing staff diversity or stretching long-term strategy?
- Fellowship - How can Salem fellowships be developed to students, through Salem State University, as a pathway to enter education?
- Staff retention – Is there a way to systematically develop a way to find out why staff members leave?

Develop the local talent pipeline and others who consider a career in Education, retention, and repositioning repository of tools that can help bring someone up to speed and provide new staff

members an opportunity to connect; tools and resources network for new teachers to have access to more experienced educators.

### **Group 3**

Suggestions and recommendations:

- Retention – How do they retain high quality teachers? Need to improve retention through Exit interviews as to why teachers leave which might also help solve the problem of inexperienced teachers
- Dashboard – Who is inputting data? What data is being used? Who is accessing the data?
- Welcome Center – Who would staff the welcome center? What is the vision of the staffing? Do they need additional staffing? What is the vision of its function, other than welcoming? There has to be more experience in terms of the planning programs, explaining differences in our schools, individual plans, and emphasis on why? Additional staffing for this would be very helpful and they are open to it
- New Student Assignment Policy – How would they implement the new Student Assignment policy? They hope to see a transparency on the implementation of the policy and how it will be implemented
- College and Career Center/Career Readiness - On the priority side, how are they monitoring internships and externships of the Salem High School? Who is (or would be) evaluating?
- On the Suggestive side, there was a strong suggestion to work more closely with Salem State, relative to educator prep/recruitment
- All of Group 3 expressed a desire to work with the district leadership team on additional tools that they may need. They promised to help whether they need to work on parts of the budget or anything else for it
- They hope that the evaluation of the leadership team is aligned with these priorities. School Committee members do not look at the evaluations of the leadership team. They would like those evaluations to be aligned with these priorities
- Kindergarten Parent Information Night – There was much praise at the Kindergarten Information Night, but there still needs to be more information, resources, and multiple locations available
- District Website – needs improvement

Superintendent Ruiz thanked every one for their thoughtful questions, suggestions, and recommendations. This very helpful information will be compiled and considered as part of the work and priorities. Members adjourned for a 15-minute break before continuing the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the meeting.

Members returned from their 15-minute break

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

Superintendent Ruiz walked members through the challenges of the Nathaniel Bowditch School, the setting of high expectations for all students in all schools (with a focus in Salem High Schools), unsustainable facility and location of the Horace Mann Laboratory School (HMLS) and long-term enrollment trends and projections. Members shared feedback, insight, and continued further discussion of the Horace Mann Laboratory School lack of funding, its location, and the School of Nursing located within the building.

### **Salem Public Schools Demographics Compared With the State**

Superintendent Ruiz directed members to the data packet showing that Salem Public Schools has a higher number of economically disadvantaged students for the district than the statewide average, which paints a picture of student challenges. Mayor Driscoll clarified and asked Superintendent Ruiz if it is fair to say that while they want to have similar results to statewide averages, their population is not the same as the statewide average. Superintendent Ruiz agreed. Members continued viewing the data for 2017 MCAS 2.0 ELA achievement by school (Grades 3-8), Math achievement by School, and School ELA and Math achievement percentile comparison across the state. Members shared insight, feedback, and concerns, particularly of the low percentile of the Bowditch School. School Committee members continued reviewing the data comparison for the 2012-18 Bowditch K-8 enrollment and its demographics compared with the district average. Members reviewed further data comparisons of the Nathaniel Bowditch School, shared concerns, and continued discussion. School Committee members agreed with Mayor Driscoll of the need for an aggressive plan for the Nathaniel Bowditch School. There was a recommendation for moving the 6, 7 and 8<sup>th</sup> grades over to the Collins School as one component of that. There has been much success in that age group at Collins. They have to address the Horace Mann building.

Members discussed student behavioral challenges and continued further discussion on the Nathaniel Bowditch School. Ms. Campbell shared that it is very important to consider, if they explore the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade move to the Collins School, that they maintain the same level of current leadership to address behavioral problems and allow the principal to be an instructional leader and not have to become so involved that he or she cannot perform their role. Ms. Campbell continued that they would have to make sure to get a higher concentration of resources despite being a much smaller K-8 school. Members shared further insight and feedback on the topic. Members shared further insight and feedback on the topic.

Superintendent Ruiz walked members through current opportunities of the Salem Public Schools, implementation of new student assignment policy with school-based enrollment targets, mobilizing intervention and acceleration plans for NBS students, redesign of the High School underway, strengthening partnership with Salem State University (and other partners), and the 5-year Strategic plan blueprint in place.

### **Susan Sontag Acceleration Academies at the Nathaniel Bowditch School**

Superintendent Ruiz reported that they would be implementing the Susan Sontag Acceleration Academies at the Nathaniel Bowditch School during February vacation for ELA and for Math in April. The Sontag Acceleration Academies were implemented in Lawrence, MA and have been at the heart of much improvement and success of students in Lawrence, MA. Salem is one of a few districts that will be implementing and instituting the academies. Ms. Manning asked more details about the Sontag Acceleration Academies. Superintendent Ruiz responded that it is a program that seeks to hire very qualified teachers, whether or not they are in the district. They recruit excellent teachers throughout the state and nationally. Teachers are well compensated. This is done through a match of resources between the district and the Sontag Prize. There would be 10 instructors teaching in Salem. Two teachers are from Salem Public

Schools and others are from other districts. Anyone can find more information about the Sontag Acceleration Academies at <http://goldenticketlawrence.newprofit.org/preparation-teacher-selection/>.

### **Whole Group Discussion**

Members were asked by Superintendent Ruiz some inquiry questions on some additional challenges and opportunities that are important to them, questions they have regarding those challenges and opportunities, some of their initial thoughts about ways to address some of those challenges and further leverage the opportunities underway.

### **Additional Challenges**

Mayor Driscoll reflected on some of the current challenges and noted additional challenges:

- The disproportionate enrollment of students in need and challenges at the Nathaniel Bowditch School, consistency, and performance status
- Setting high expectations for all students in all schools, with a focus on the Salem High School
- The unsustainable facility of the Horace Mann
- Long term enrollment trends and projections
- Attaining more students at Salem High School – they have seen there are opportunities for families to go elsewhere; putting effort into possession

Ms. Wilson noted:

- The long term thought with losing 150 students at the Nathaniel Bowditch School over the past two years and the possibility of moving the Horace Mann to that school
- Moving the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades to the Collins School
- Early childhood numbers – A previous Superintendent made a commitment to keep the K1-2 to 18, which have now increased to 24. There is much talk on social media about the higher numbers in Salem, one thing they need to think about if they are going to focus on Early Childhood.

Mr. Cruz noted:

- The chronic absenteeism rate, taking a look at the accountability data and significantly higher chronic absenteeism in High Schools (above state average) as well as the Nathaniel Bowditch and Collins Middle School

Ms. Campbell noted:

- In building on what Ms. Wilson said earlier about Early Childhood considering a look at some districts that have had great success usually by placing huge emphasis on Early Childhood and not just Pre-K but on K and 1 as well; not losing sight of that in the High School redesign

Mr. Fleming noted:

- The Expansion of the Parent/Child Home Program

### **Discussion on Early Childhood Numbers**

Mayor Driscoll mentioned there is more paraprofessional support in Salem district classrooms. They would, at some point, need to consider lower class sizes. This would mean hiring more teachers and less paraprofessional support. They would not be able to keep an array of paraprofessionals and teachers. Ms. Campbell explained that paraprofessionals run a wide range of gamut although the same amount of oversight in evaluation and structure is not necessarily there whereas with an increase in the number of teachers, they would know how



students are being evaluated yearly, assuming there is a qualitative evaluation process in place, and they would know that students would be monitored throughout the year.

### **Additional Opportunities**

Members agreed that Salem State is an additional opportunity and Mr. Cruz noted the Seal of Biliteracy Initiative program. Superintendent Ruiz briefly explained the Biliteracy initiative program for the members.

### **Discussion on the Seal of Biliteracy Initiative Program**

Ms. Campbell shared that she believes the Biliteracy program would come with its own challenges particularly in that the earlier legislation neglected an entire cohort of teachers, in terms of training them to teach in dual language programs. Moving forward on this goal may take time, because it may be difficult to find staffing and a highly licensed qualified and certified bilingual teacher.

### **FY19 Budget: Guiding Principles**

Superintendent Ruiz ended with a review of the FY19 Budget Planning process and giving the more senior serving members an opportunity to share their insights and ideas with newer members on what to expect from the budget process and discussion on the topic.

### **Planning Process**

Superintendent Ruiz explained that they hold a very collaborative process with school leaders and department heads, in terms of setting the budget, for the budget planning process. They call it the 'Budget Collaborative.' They sit down at a table across a section of senior staff and principals. They work to better understand district school priorities, challenges, and any new initiatives they want to begin. They had the first round of budget collaborative meetings with the principals to understand what they need to achieve. The next round of collaborative meeting would take place between January and February. They will have the final round of collaborative meeting towards the end of February as they finalize the budget and present it to the School Committee. Superintendent Ruiz continued by sharing some of the questions they ask school principals during the collaborative meeting:

- What problems are they trying to solve?
- What solutions do they propose?
- What resources are needed to implement those solutions and are those resources already at the school?

Everything is rooted on the needs of the students at the schools.

### **Expectations of the Budget Process**

Ms. Manning suggested that all School Committee members be notified of Subcommittee meetings in case any one of them chooses to attend. Mr. Fleming stated that the Mayor sets a budget number amount every year, in terms of the municipal ledger, sometime between March and April. The School Committee then works from there. Ms. Wilson said she thought the budget was very transparent last year but that it is important to carefully read everything beforehand, because there are missing pieces. Mayor Driscoll said that she hopes members would give the School Committee the benefit of the doubt when they hear from others in the community; to listen and seek the accuracy of information as opposed to impulsively agreeing to what they heard, as information can sometimes be misconstrued or misunderstood at first communication or glance. Ms. Driscoll continued that one should adopt a trust but verify

beforehand. Members said they appreciated the smaller meetings with the Superintendent where they had a chance to sit down and discuss budget concerns and questions in depth.

Mayor Driscoll explained that the committee would be working with the Superintendent and staff, budget is developed and marinated, and there is a public hearing process towards the end of the cycle when getting close to making the final presentation (submit final budget number) to the city council. They receive many grievances and concerns aired at that public hearing process and have been able to work through many of those issues. Mayor Driscoll continued that the role they take on is to try to ensure they meet the highest priority needs. They have a public meeting, the School Committee votes on it, and that number goes to the City Council. The City Council respects the role of the School Committee except in very rare occasions. Contracts expire at the end of this school year, and they will have some negotiations to do. Personnel are a large part of the budget. The School Department is 70% of the City's budget.

### **School Committee Member Hopes and Dreams for 2018**

Superintendent Ruiz closed the meeting by asking each member to share his or her hopes and dreams for the coming year. Mr. Fleming said that he hoped all schools would be Level 3 and that at least one High School student would have the ability to reach a lifetime grant college application acceptance. Ms. Wilson hopes the Nathaniel Bowditch students receive the help they need. Ms. Campbell also hopes to give the Nathaniel Bowditch students the help they need. Ms. Manning hopes they take a serious look at the library staffing across the district and to bring back World Languages for Middle Schools, which is no longer an academic base subject and not included in academics. Ms. Nuncio shared the need to address segregation at the Nathaniel Bowditch School, Biliteracy, and Languages. Mr. Cruz hopes fostering a positive perception of the High School and Salem High experience for students. Mayor Driscoll shared that all students should not only feel supported but that they also have a thriving experience with adults who care about them, to feel respected and see it as a place that is going to open doors for them in the future – not a chore but an incredible fun experience that would also provide a lifetime of opportunities. Ms. Carbone hopes to ensure that students have a quality of experience to achieve their hopes and dreams, that there are no barriers to that. Ms. Conrad hopes that they are able to create conditions for success at every school. Ms. Marotta hopes that they have the courage to make the full changes that are needed to change the educational trajectory at the Nathaniel Bowditch School. Superintendent Ruiz hopes this year would mark greater equity and access for the students of Salem Public Schools.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Committee of the Whole (COW) School Committee this evening, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by:

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Angelica Alayon, Secretary  
Salem School Committee

### Meeting Materials

COW Notice 1/13/18

COW School Committee Meeting Retreat Meeting Materials

Salem Public Schools Mission and Vision statement and Core Values handout

Salem Public Schools Data Packet