

**Nantucket School Committee
Meeting Minutes
May 14, 2024**

Present Members: Chair Pauline Proch, Vice Chair Laura Gallagher Byrne, Timothy Lepore, and Shantaw Bloise-Murphy. Also present from the Studio, an NCTV Representative. This meeting is an in-person participation meeting in compliance with Governor Charlie Baker's statement allowing public bodies the ability to hold a meeting at a physical location that is open to the public, without requiring to provide alternative means of remote access.

The May 14, 2024, School Committee meeting was called to order at 6:04 PM in the Nantucket High School LGI by Chair Pauline Proch with a motion made to approve the agenda by Timothy Lepore, seconded by Laura Gallagher Byrne and approved unanimously.

Public Comment

David Dickson, a Nantucket resident, voiced his concerns about the local high school not offering AP Pre-Calculus. He noted that while students nationwide took the AP Pre-Calculus exam for the first time, none of the 58 honors Pre-Calculus students from the local high school participated. This omission prevents these students from enhancing their college applications with this course or high exam scores. Despite his efforts since November to push for the inclusion of AP Pre-Calculus in the curriculum, he feels the administration has not taken action. Mr. Dixon highlighted a decline in overall AP exam participation and argued that not offering this course shortchanges students and taxpayers. He refuted the superintendent's claim that a summer course is needed for approval, explaining that only a syllabus submission is required. Dixon urged the school committee to ensure AP Pre-Calculus is available next year, emphasizing the need for fair educational opportunities.

Through the Chair, Sherri Lewis, Coordinator of Student Support Services, clarified some points. She agreed with the importance of allowing students to take the AP test but noted that the process is more involved than just writing a one-hour syllabus. According to Ms. Lewis, the College Board requires teachers to be certified in the AP course they teach, which involves attending the College Board Institute for several hours over a couple of days. Additionally, teachers must submit a detailed syllabus for the entire year. She offered to work with Dr. Hallett to explore the possibility of implementing this in the future.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Hallett invited Nantucket High School Principal Mandy Vasil to recognize students for their achievements. Principal Vasil shared that the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education awarded student achievement awards for MCAS performance. This is the second year these prestigious awards have been presented, and eight students from the high school received them. Principal Vasil expressed her pride in these high-achieving students and proceeded to present the awards to,

Angie Pena Gonszalez

Jack Kinsella

Jeremie Kohan

Garvia Lee

Olivia Nascimento

Merlin Orellana Rivas

Stephaine Ramos

Ava Watson

Principal Vasil announced an additional award, the John and Abigail Adams Scholarship, which goes to seniors who achieve advanced scores in two or more MCAS tests. This year, the recipient is Elizabeth Hemingway, who was not enrolled at Nantucket High School last year. Mrs. Vasil, the Committee, and the audience applauded all the students.

Superintendent Hallett reported that the May student enrollment is 1,711, an increase of three students from the previous count of 1,708. Nantucket Elementary School added two students, and Cyrus Peirce School added one. She mentioned that enrollment appears to be stabilizing, though there could be changes by the end of the school year. Dr. Hallett then handed over to Barbara Cohen, Director of ELL, for an update on the Seal of Biliteracy, noting that many students participated in the testing for this recognition. Ms. Cohen happily reported that seven students tested for the Seal of Biliteracy in Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian. Preliminary results indicate that four of these students will earn the seal, with the potential for two or three more to qualify as scores come in. Additionally, three juniors have expressed interest in testing next fall. Currently, most participants are students with a heritage language other than English, but efforts will be made to encourage all students, including those with English as their primary language, to pursue proficiency in another language and test for the seal.

Mrs. Bloise-Murphy inquired about the criteria used to determine which languages students can receive seals in. Ms. Cohen explained that students can apply to test for the seal, with most world languages requiring assessments in four domains: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. However, for less widely spoken languages, such as Bulgarian, tests may only cover two domains. For more obscure languages, the state allows portfolio assessments. Essentially, proficiency in almost any world language can be demonstrated. She emphasized that the seal represents biliteracy, not just bilingualism, necessitating proficiency in both reading and writing in the chosen world language.

Presentations and discussions of issues to the Committee

Central Registration Update - Sarah Kirk, Central Registrar

Sarah Kirk, the Central Registrar for Nantucket Public Schools, provided an update on the centralized registration process. Since centralizing registration in June 2019, significant changes have occurred. She clarified the distinction between registration and enrollment, noting that not all registrations coincide with enrollment dates, and some students, such as services-only students, do not attend the brick-and-mortar schools. Mrs. Kirk shared that she has completed kindergarten registration for fall 2024-2025 and is moving into pre-K registrations, emphasizing the importance of registering students in advance to ensure a smooth start to the school year. She highlighted the goals of consistency and support for families across the district, including offering appointments in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. The centralized registration process provides a uniform experience for families with children entering different schools. She ensures that families understand school policies, such as health forms and technology use, and connects them with relevant school and community resources. This approach helps families navigate the transition and ensures they have the necessary information and support. Mrs. Kirk noted a slight drop in registrations compared to previous years but expects to continue registering new students, including those who require services but do not attend the schools. She emphasized the importance of supporting immigrant and newcomer families, allowing them to start school even if some registration requirements are not immediately met, to prevent educational delays. Mrs. Kirk aims to make the registration process as welcoming and supportive as possible for all families, particularly those facing unique challenges.

Mrs. Bloise-Murphy asked about Mrs. Kirk being a staff of one and if she foresees needing assistance in the future.

Mrs. Kirk confirmed that she is a one-person staff with assistance from others. She acknowledged the possibility of the need for more help as the district grows, as she also handles other responsibilities. While she can manage more registration appointments, this might impact other aspects of her job. She anticipates a continued rise in immigrant families and emphasized the need for support services, particularly if the Portuguese-speaking population grows.

Mrs. Gallagher Byrne asked how long each meeting took. Mrs. Kirk replied she gives 45 minutes per appointment. If translation and services are needed the appointment can go longer.

Dr. Lepore asked about handling homeless students and the availability of students getting physical and immunization appointments.

Mrs. Kirk engages families in conversation by asking about their relocation and what attracts them to Nantucket. She typically receives information such as family members residing on the island or job-related moves. This helps determine if families are temporarily displaced or qualify under the McKinney-Vento Act for students experiencing housing instability. When families lack stable housing, Mrs. Kirk notifies the Director of Student Services who then tracks and ensures appropriate support for the family. In response to doctor appointments, things have gotten better, but there is room for improvement. She mentioned that the superintendent connected her with a previous hospital CEO to establish a protocol for families transitioning to Nantucket Cottage Hospital, which can be daunting due to the registration process. Families must register with Boston's patient services for Nantucket, drop off immunization records at Nantucket Cottage Hospital, and ensure records are properly filed to avoid appointment cancellations. Mrs. Kirk provides families with a cheat sheet to navigate this process but noted that wait times for physical appointments can be as long as three months, sometimes even eight months. While she appreciates the hospital's focus on doctor-led care, she suggests that requesting a nurse practitioner could help alleviate scheduling challenges, particularly for those comfortable with short-notice appointments.

The committee thanked Mrs. Kirk and Superintendent Hallett agreed and praised her for her hard work.

NPS Crisis Protocol - Sherri Lewis, Coordinator of Student Support/SEL

Sherri Lewis explained that she and Dr. Hallett collaborated on creating a document outlining steps to follow in the event of a student or staff member's loss, based on experiences from the past three years. They believe this checklist will help manage the process more effectively. Additionally, the document clarifies that the school will not close unless the situation is catastrophic, aiming to avoid confusion. Over the summer, Ms. Lewis plans to develop templates for letters to the community, staff, and students to streamline communication during such crises. She invited questions about the draft policy.

Mrs. Boise-Murphy questioned a draft letter being insensitive.

Dr. Hallett explained it would be more of a template and whoever is sending out the letter can add in pieces around different situations to personalize.

Mrs. Gallagher Byrne asked if there would be a similar protocol for other types of incidents as well as therapeutic aspects. Ms. Lewis explained yes to the protocol as they continued to look at different possible situations that could occur.

Ms. Lewis stated it depends on the mapping of how many schools it crosses and the situation of how many people are impacted. In the past, Fairwinds has come to support.

Dr. Lepore had a concern with bringing in support personnel who the students did not know.

Ms. Lewis explained that some students and staff members are not comfortable sharing their emotions with their counselors or acquaintances. She emphasized the importance of anonymity when discussing feelings of grief. While acknowledging that it can be beneficial to speak with someone familiar, she noted the added stress this places on already overburdened counselors who are dealing with their own grief. Therefore, she advocated for having as many resources available as possible to support everyone effectively.

Mrs. Bloise-Murphy asked how this was going to be rolled out to families.

Dr. Hallett suggested distributing important information to families at the beginning of the school year, possibly as part of the communications and packets sent out. While not requiring families to read every policy in the handbook, he emphasized the importance of sharing this specific information. He also mentioned that it would be available on the website for easy access and proposed including it in early school year communications.

Pre-K Partnership Committee - Mellisa Devitt, Director of Curriculum, Humanities

Melissa Devitt provided a comprehensive overview of the pre-K options on the island. She has included Superintendent Hallett, Kim Kubisch, Kim Albertson, and Mandy Bardley. This initiative was prompted by a conversation with an Uber driver highlighting the challenges parents face in accessing daycare and preschool services on the island. During their initial meeting, the group compiled a list of existing pre-K programs available on Nantucket, including Pathways, Lighthouse School, Children's House, Rising Tide, Small Friends, and Community School. However, they also noted the absence of Head Start and a universal pre-K program, highlighting areas of need within the community. Among the challenges identified were the lack of certified daycare options, staffing shortages, and gaps in wrap-around care, which often left parents struggling to find suitable arrangements for their children. While the partnership primarily focused on addressing daycare needs, Devitt emphasized the distinct role of Nantucket Public Schools (NPS) in providing professional development, ensuring curriculum alignment, and making program adjustments to support early literacy and kindergarten readiness. Devitt stressed the importance of addressing these issues, especially considering that approximately 30% of NPS students did not attend pre-K, impacting their preparedness for kindergarten. Looking ahead, the partnership aimed to expand community-based pre-K programs, explore grant opportunities to fund pre-K expansion, and clarify the differences between academic pre-K programs and daycare services. Devitt concluded her presentation by inviting questions from attendees, demonstrating a commitment to transparency and collaboration in addressing early childhood education challenges on Nantucket.

Dr. Lepore questioned why they are not more involved in this area, noting that if all community-based organizations were at capacity, they would not be encroaching on their efforts. He emphasized that this type of involvement aligns with their mission and suggested considering a more active role in addressing the issue. Without competing with the community fee for service. Mrs. Devitt agreed with the idea of getting more involved and explained that it would require funding, space, and collaboration with the community. The discussion then turned to the curriculum being used.

Sub-Committee/Work Group Report

Laura Gallagher Byrne attended the NET meeting which was around housing with a cookout planned for June 6. Dr. Lepore reported the Facilities

Shantaw Bloise-Murphy reported DEI met and they have big ideas that feel achievable. Starting with meeting with the former DEI committee that was made up of teachers and administrators.

Committee discussions and votes to be taken

Vote to approve the March 12, 2024 School Committee Workshop Minutes, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Laura Gallagher Byrne, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved

Vote to approve the March 19, 2024 School Committee Meeting Minutes, Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Laura Gallagher Byrne, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved

Vote to approve the April 2, 2024 School Committee Meeting Minutes, Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Laura Gallagher Byrne, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved

Transfers and Invoices, Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved

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Agenda for the next meeting, May 21, 2024 - Guidance Update, NHS Graduation Activities Schedule, Food Services Update, 3rd Quarter Budget Update/Audit Report, Wellness Committee Update
CPS Musical is this weekend.

Motion to adjourn at 7:18 PM by Timothy Lepore, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, with none opposed, the motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,
Katie Bedell
School Committee Clerk

DRAFT