

**Nantucket School Committee
Meeting Minutes
May 6, 2025**

Present Members: Chair Timothy Lepore, Vice-Chair Laura Gallagher Byrne, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, Vincent Murphy, Superintendent Elizabeth Hallett, and Student Council Representative Nora Sullivan

The May 6, 2025, School Committee meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM in the Nantucket High School LGI by Chair Timothy Lepore. A motion was made by Laura Gallagher Byrne, seconded by Vincent Murphy. The agenda was approved unanimously.

Announcement: this meeting is being audio and video recorded

There was no Public Comment

Superintendent's Update

Superintendent Hallett began her report with an enrollment update, noting a slight increase of two students in May, bringing the total to 1,723. This included one new student each at NES and NIS, with no changes at the middle or high schools. She then transitioned to hiring and staffing, reporting that the district is currently looking to fill 17 teaching positions—three at NES, four at NIS, four at CPS, and six at the high school. Two positions at NIS have already been officially filled, and five more across the district are tentatively filled pending final steps. Recruitment efforts are ongoing through the school and town websites, Indeed, and job fairs. Superintendent Hallett and HR specialist Eileen Taveras plan to attend a job fair at Bridgewater State University in hopes of attracting strong candidates. She expressed optimism about the quality of applicants so far and is confident about achieving full staffing for the upcoming school year.

Superintendent Hallett also shared positive news regarding Nantucket High School's 2024 accountability data from the Department of Education. The school earned 11 out of 12 possible points in the high school completion category, reflecting significant improvement in graduation and dropout rates. This achievement raised the school's annual criterion-referenced target percentage from 55% in 2023 to 71% in 2024.

Additionally, Superintendent Hallett and School Committee member Laura Gallagher Byrne attended the MASC Annual Day on the Hill in Boston, where they met with legislators to discuss key educational priorities. Topics included adjusting Chapter 70 funding for inflation, improving fiscal support for rural schools, expanding vocational technical school capacity, implementing financial literacy curriculum statewide, and increasing privacy protections for superintendents during the job search process. Superintendent Hallett highlighted that Nantucket already includes financial literacy as a graduation requirement, positioning the district ahead of the curve.

Mrs. Gallagher Byrne added insights from the event, particularly regarding the Governor's Graduation Council and its efforts to redefine the high school experience through a "portrait of a graduate" framework. This includes emphasis on vocational pathways, social-emotional competencies, and alternative assessments for graduation eligibility following the removal of MCAS as the standard. She noted upcoming opportunities for educators to provide input on these changes, including sessions on June 5 (virtual) and June 9 (in-person at Barnstable High School). There was also discussion on transportation as a critical factor influencing equity and access in education. Both attendees found the event informative and impactful.

Dr. Hallett expressed her gratitude to staff for their dedication to supporting students, especially in recognition of Staff Appreciation Week. She also extended congratulations to Cecilia Wendelken and Billiana for receiving the Golf Club Scholarship.

Presentations and discussions of issues to the Committee

Veritas Update

Senior students Adney Brannigan and Taylor Bistany reported that this year was not particularly successful for Veritas, primarily due to a lack of interest from their grade level. They stepped into leadership roles mainly to keep the publication going until younger students were ready to take over. On a positive note, they observed increased interest from underclassmen, particularly freshmen and sophomores, and have identified several promising students, including two strong photographers, who show leadership potential and will remain involved

next year. Looking ahead, they recommended creating more workshop-based opportunities to train younger students in publication skills such as editing and layout—areas currently known only to the two of them. They also highlighted the need for updated technology, noting that only three outdated computers currently support the layout software, which significantly slows production.

In closing, Adney and Taylor acknowledged that while this year had its challenges, they are confident in the abilities of the next group of leaders and are committed to setting them up for future success with Veritas.

Mrs. Bloise-Murphy asked how Veritas was funded.

Dr. Hallett responded through the student activity account.

Mrs. Gallagher Byrne remarked that the students should not be so hard on themselves, emphasizing that they should take pride in having kept Veritas afloat during a challenging year.

Mr. Murphy asked whether the students had sought any outside help or advice from journalists in either digital or print media. Ms. Bistany responded that they had not, noting that she has been involved with the newspaper since her freshman year and already has a considerable amount of experience.

Ms. Wendelken shared that she looks forward to each issue of the paper and finds it well done. She asked whether the younger students are committed to continuing their involvement. Ms. Bistany confirmed that all students currently in leadership roles plan to stay on.

Dr. Lepore emphasized the importance of maintaining enthusiasm for the newspaper, noting that it plays a vital role in giving students a voice within the school and the broader community. He added that without such platforms, people tend to move along passively, and acknowledged that there have been some exciting developments with the publication.

Mrs. Bloise Murphy asked how many additional computers were needed for the newspaper. Ms. Bistany responded that they would need two more.

Dr. Hallett asked if there was any insight into why interest in the newspaper had declined, wondering if it might be due to students being too busy. Ms. Bistany responded that the primary reason seemed to be how busy everyone is, particularly in their grade. She added that there doesn't appear to be anyone in their class pursuing journalism, which could also contribute to the lack of engagement. However, she noted that several younger students have shown interest in journalism and would be strong candidates to carry the paper forward.

Nantucket Community School Update

Mrs. Alicia Graziadei, Executive Director of the Community School, provided an update on adult education and youth programming. She began by announcing the return of dog training courses, highlighting the enthusiasm of staff and noting that two classes will be offered: puppy socialization and intermediate obedience. These will be held at the elementary school, with support from the administration.

She also shared that a new construction supervisor course will be added as an expansion of the popular electrical journeyman program. This course will run for seven weeks on Wednesday evenings and will culminate in a certificate, aimed at better preparing participants for the rigorous certification exam.

In terms of language offerings, current courses in French and Spanish will be joined by a Portuguese for beginners class in the fall. A summer program, Spanish for English-speaking children, is also in the works, to be taught by Melissa Ramirez, while her husband will lead the Portuguese class. Mrs. Graziadei reported that lifeguard training is expanding thanks to two certified staff members now on hand. Multiple courses, including re-certification and full certification classes, are scheduled for spring and summer to meet high demand among camp counselors and beach lifeguards. In the sports and wellness area, the gymnastics program has seen renewed interest despite staffing challenges. Jasmine, who oversees the program, has creatively added cheer and tumbling, working with high school cheerleaders. This program is nearly full, with strong interest already shown during a successful April break session. Other offerings include the return of babysitter certification, covering CPR and first aid, taught by Jasmine and Natalie Thompson. After a successful launch on Town Meeting Day, additional sessions are planned for June and summer to meet ongoing demand. For teens, professional basketball player Willy Workman will return this summer to lead a program for 13–16-year-olds, complementing the existing younger children's program led by Fervon Phillips. Finally, a dedicated dance camp, separate from cheer and tumbling, will also run this summer with a new instructor.

Mrs. Gallagher Byrne asked about the frequency of the sports and wellness courses. Mrs. Graziadei explained that most classes meet once or twice a week. Babysitting is a one-day course, lasting about six hours, usually held on a Friday or Saturday. Cheerleading is a once-a-week after-school class. Basketball runs daily for one week, with sessions in July and August.

Mr. Murphy asked if the construction supervisor test could be taken locally. Mrs. Graziadei responded that the test is offered at their testing center.

Dr. Hallett asked about enrollment numbers for the construction class and whether it was full. Mrs. Graziadei said that since the course is new, she did not know the exact number, but noted it was quite large as it is held in the LGI.

I Policies, Rules & Procedures Update

Dr. Hallett explained that the policy subcommittee met to review several policies and is recommending updates based on guidance from the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC). Specifically, the committee recommends replacing policy IK with IKAB, as it reflects a more modern approach.

The School Committee discussed policy IKAB and how often progress reports are shared with families. Ms. Psaradelis, assistant principal at the high school, stated that progress reports are required at mid and end points of each quarter. Teachers are expected to maintain regular communication with families, not only when concerns arise but also to share positive updates. The district supports non-English-speaking families through staff resources and technology tools that enable communication in multiple languages.

Mr. Horton, principal at CPS, explained that while the school operates on trimesters with report cards every 60 days. They also send a grade report from school that each grade level sends home and the parents have to sign it and bring it back. Mrs. Johnson, assistant principal at NIS, shared that their communication focuses more on holistic student progress rather than traditional letter grades. Teachers frequently communicate with parents, particularly when students receive intervention services. Reports explain the nature of the support and are accompanied by regular progress updates. Parents are also informed before a student is discussed in MTSS, with documentation required of at least two prior communications. NIS sends home hard-copy report cards and MAP assessment data, as digital-only communication sees lower engagement. Reports focus on both achievement and growth, acknowledging that students begin at different levels and emphasizing progress over time.

Committee discussions and votes to be taken

Vote to remove Policy IJM, Special Interest Materials Selection and Adoption. *Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Laura Gallagher Byrne, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Vote to remove Policy IK, Academic Achievement /Student Progress. *Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Laura Gallagher Byrne, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Vote to adopt Policy IKAB, Student Progress Reports to Parents/Guardians. *Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Laura Gallagher Byrne, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Vote to approve the Nantucket High School overnight field trip to the Galapagos, April 16, 2026 - April 25, 2026. *Laura Gallagher Byrne made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Vote to approve April 1, 2025 Meeting Minutes. *Laura Gallagher Byrne made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Vote to approve Transfers & Invoices. *Laura Gallagher Byrne made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Student Council Representative - Cecilia Wendelken

Student council representative Cecilia Wendelken shared that students are now one week back from April break. She highlighted a recent school trip to Europe, where 40 high school students traveled with Mr. West and Ms. Psaradelis to England, France, and Germany, visiting cities such as London, Normandy, Paris, Cologne, and Berlin. She noted the trip was educational and well-organized, especially for Mr. West's first time leading a trip. Cecilia also reported on the Golf Club Scholarship event, where 20 students, including herself, received scholarships. She expressed gratitude for the strong community support. She noted that nearly half of the Professional Scholar recipients credited Ms. Douglas and her nursing program as their inspiration for pursuing careers in healthcare, which she found particularly meaningful. She added that AP testing has begun, starting with biology and chemistry, and will continue over the next week and a half. Junior prom is also approaching, scheduled for Saturday, May 17 at the Great Harbor Yacht Club with a masquerade theme. Tickets are currently

on sale, and she encouraged support for the junior class officers who have been working hard on the event. Lastly, she shared highlights from a busy week in athletics, noting that boys lacrosse defeated Groton-Dunstable, sailing won 3–2 against Sturgis East, and girls lacrosse beat Dennis-Yarmouth. Thursday, softball lost to Falmouth 22–7, and girls tennis fell to Monomoy 4–1. However, girls lacrosse secured a strong 17–5 win over Dennis-Yarmouth, while boys tennis lost to Monomoy 5–0. On Friday, baseball won decisively against Rising Tide 20–3, and girls lacrosse also came out ahead against Falmouth 9–5. Boys lacrosse, however, lost to Falmouth 10–3. Most recently, both boys and girls tennis teams swept Rising Tide 5–0, softball beat Martha’s Vineyard 22–6, and girls lacrosse claimed another victory against Martha’s Vineyard with a score of 14–7, capping off a packed and successful week of sports.

Sub-Committee/Work Group Report

Mrs. Gallagher Byrne reported there was a policy meeting and NET meeting. Dr. Hallett announced ESP negotiations have been completed.

Agenda for the next meeting, May 20, 2025 - Hiring/Staffing Update, Special Education Update, Social Emotional Learning (SEL)/Student Support Update, Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) Update, Policies Updates

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 7:01 PM by Laura Gallagher Byrne, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with none opposed, the motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Katie Bedell
School Committee Clerk