

**Nantucket School Committee
Meeting Minutes
October 15, 2024**

Present Members: Chair Pauline Proch, Laura Gallagher-Byrne, Timothy Lepore, Esmeralda Martinez, and Student Council Representative Nora Sullivan. 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 October 15, 2024, School Committee meeting was called to order at 6:02 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 Dixon, a full-time resident for the past 12 years, shared detailed observations on the 2024 MCAS performance within Nantucket schools. He first addressed the high school's notable success, which exceeded expectations in all three tested areas (Science, Math, and English) for the first time since 2008. Specifically, Nantucket High School students surpassed statewide averages, with 55% meeting or exceeding expectations in science, 50% in math, and 68% in English. Female students particularly excelled, with 78% of high school females meeting or exceeding expectations in English. Dixon further highlighted that the high school achieved competitive scores in all areas, attributing much of this success to rigorous courses, including AP classes. Mr. Dixon expressed significant concern over the underperformance of intermediate and middle schools. He noted that the percentage of students meeting expectations has not only lagged behind state averages but has also declined from the previous year. For instance, only 21% of students in grades 3-5 met English expectations, compared to 39% statewide, with math and science scores similarly underperforming. At the middle school level, just 22% met expectations in math, far below the 39% statewide average. Strikingly, Dixon emphasized that for the second consecutive year, only 1% of students in grades 3-8 exceeded expectations in math, and not a single student in grades 5-7 achieved this level.

Superintendent's Update

Dr. Hallett provided her superintendent's report to the School Committee, beginning with an update on school safety and security. She reported that all schools conducted fire drills within the first week of the school year and that two of the four schools had successfully completed lockdown drills. The new Raptor Technologies entrance security system has been implemented at all front entrances, streamlining visitor registration with sticker badges instead of lanyards and enabling repeat visitors to check in more smoothly. Raptor devices will also be installed at additional entrances that receive frequent public use, and the goal is to eventually incorporate Raptor into safety drills later in the year. Additionally, new security cameras with improved image quality have replaced older models at several locations. Dr. Hallett emphasized that school safety is a top priority and expressed gratitude to principals and key staff for their support in implementing these security measures. Superintendent Hallett also discussed the upcoming School Committee vacancy, as Chair Pauline Proch plans to step down after the November 12 meeting. The district has advertised the position and received five applications thus far, with the deadline for submissions set for Friday, October 18. Candidates will participate in interviews conducted in one or two workshop meetings, where each applicant will answer the same set of questions. Following interviews, the School Committee will deliberate and present their recommended candidate to the town's Select Board in an open meeting for a final decision. Dr. Hallett confirmed that the school committee clerk, Katie Bell, will coordinate dates for these sessions, aiming for deliberation by November 12.

Presentations and discussions of issues to the Committee

The homeschooling report is to be moved to the November 12, 2024 meeting.

2024 Advanced Placement Results - Mandy Vasil, NHS Principal

Principal Mandy Vasil presented Nantucket High School's Advanced Placement (AP) exam results, expressing pride in the student's accomplishments and the value of AP courses beyond exam scores. She emphasized that AP courses provide essential preparation for college-level rigor, regardless of final scores, recognizing the efforts of students who

achieved both high scores and those who engaged deeply with challenging material. In the 2023-2024 school year, 114 students took a total of 200 AP exams, with many enrolled in multiple AP courses. Overall, 59% of students scored a three or higher, with notable achievements across grade levels. Tenth-grade students performed particularly well, with 88% scoring three or above, followed by 11th and 12th graders with mean scores of 2.73 and 2.88, respectively. Additionally, 23 students earned AP Scholar recognitions, including five AP Scholars with Distinction who averaged scores of 4.06. Ms. Vasil highlighted subject-specific outcomes, noting that AP Biology students excelled with an average score of 3.54, while students in English Language, English Literature, and U.S. History also achieved high passing rates. Additionally, a diverse group of students participated in AP exams, with representation from various racial and ethnic backgrounds. She acknowledged teachers' significant contributions, with many offering extensive support through early-morning, evening, and weekend sessions. This year, the school is also implementing a new accelerated math pathway, combining honors Algebra II and pre-calculus to prepare more students for AP exams next year. Ms. Vasil commended faculty members for their dedication to fostering academic rigor and supporting students in achieving their best outcomes.

Mrs. Martinez inquired about the frequency of meetings, to which Ms. Vasil responded that they meet four days a week. Mrs. Martinez then asked how the sign language course was being provided. Ms. Vasil deferred to Student Representative Ms. Sullivan, who, although not enrolled in the class herself, explained that the course primarily uses videos and written explanations rather than live Zoom sessions.

Mrs. Gallagher Byrne observed that the Asian and Black/African-American populations at the school are relatively small. Ms. Vasil agreed, noting that this would be reflected in the overall numbers and offered to calculate and share the data if needed, though she believes it aligns with the school's total demographic breakdown. Chair Proch expressed concern over the low number of students taking AP courses, despite efforts to engage parents and discuss these opportunities. Ms. Proch questioned whether the school should start discussing AP options with students earlier, perhaps as early as eighth or ninth grade, to encourage awareness and preparation.

Ms. Vasil expressed uncertainty about the solution but noted that it's encouraging to see AP enrollment numbers increasing in recent years. She acknowledged that some students might still feel hesitant about taking AP classes, as they involve more rigorous coursework, additional homework, and summer assignments. While she admitted this is her personal opinion and lacks specific data, she believes these factors may contribute to students' reluctance to enroll.

School Improvement Plans

NHS, Principal Mandy Vasil

Principal Mandy Vasil outlined the high school's improvement plan, focusing on four main goals aimed at enhancing student outcomes and classroom engagement. The first goal, set for completion by June 2026, emphasizes increasing collaboration and communication in classrooms, specifically by enhancing the use of sheltered English immersion (SEI) strategies for multilingual learners. Teachers will undergo extensive training on SEI strategies throughout the year, including multiple professional development sessions and classroom observations, to integrate these techniques seamlessly into regular instruction. The second goal involves the establishment of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) by content area, where teachers analyze student work, track achievement, and set specific learning targets. This approach aims to improve teaching methods through collaboration, ensuring that students who need additional support in mastering skills receive it promptly. The third goal centers on curriculum refinement, continuing the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework that was introduced last year. Although external consultants are not involved this year, teachers will be given time to update and expand UbD-based units, promoting long-term curriculum consistency and depth. Lastly, the school will maintain its commitment to restorative practices, a program started the previous year to improve school climate and student behavior. Ms. Vasil shared her gratitude to Assistant Principals Jennifer Psaradelis and Tracy Mailloux, who have taken on a large role in this area, with plans for a professional development session for teachers in early November. Early results indicate positive shifts in school atmosphere and student behavior, aligning with the school's broader focus on fostering a supportive learning environment.

CPS, Principal Michael Horton

Principal Michael Horton presented the 2024-2025 School Improvement Plan for Cyrus Peirce Middle School, created
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with input from the school council to align with district-wide strategic objectives. The plan emphasizes four main goals, with the most significant being the implementation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to promote equity. Inspired by Ken Williams' work on "ruthless equity," the PLC goal formalizes collaborative practices by subject area, where teachers work together to define essential learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide targeted support, and share effective strategies for students needing additional assistance or enrichment. Mr. Horton credited Becky Janda and Donna Johnson at NIS for their foundational contributions, which were adapted for the CPS model. The other three goals are continuations from last year. The second goal aims to reduce the percentage of students scoring in the "not meeting" tier on MCAS to below 15%, addressing recent trends where up to 30% of students did not meet expectations. The third goal focuses on improving school culture and morale through mentoring, coaching, and collegiality. Principal Horton expressed appreciation for Assistant Principal Adriene Lombardi's leadership in this area, highlighting her efforts for positively impacting staff collaboration and morale. The fourth goal continues implementing Responsive Classroom practices, with expanded training this year for counselors, special educators, and new staff to ensure a consistent approach to student engagement. While Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is no longer a separate goal, he clarified that UDL principles remain embedded within school practices, supporting varied and inclusive approaches to student engagement, assessment, and learning. This integrated approach ensures the school remains focused on quality over quantity, strengthening CPS's capacity to support all students effectively.

Mrs. Gallagher Byrne asked Mr. Horton for his reflections on the second year of implementing the Responsive Classroom approach.

Mr. Horton explained that implementing Responsive Classroom takes time and should grow organically rather than through a top-down approach. Although they're only in the first year, there have been positive strides, particularly in fostering stronger teacher-student connections and emphasizing that social learning is as essential as academics. Teachers are incorporating "reminding" and "redirecting" language as part of their daily interactions. Mrs. Lombardi noted that a fully consistent advisory or "morning meeting" structure is not yet in place. While grades K-5 include elements of the morning meeting, the school currently has only a 10-minute homeroom period, which limits full implementation. The goal is to eventually integrate these meetings into academic classes to support both social and content-based engagement. They are continuing work with a trainer to build this practice, though time constraints and scheduling adjustments present challenges.

NIS, Principal Becky Janda

Principal Becky Janda outlined the NIS school plan, which aligns with the district's goals. The school council and staff have reviewed the plan to guide goal-setting for the year. Key areas of focus include:

The school is building on the district's initiative with Professional Learning Communities (PLC). Grade-level teams meet bi-weekly with special educators, English language instructors, and interventionists to prioritize essential learning objectives. The goal is to ensure all students reach critical standards and to provide additional support or enrichment as needed.

Following the first year of implementing Reveal Math, the focus now shifts to selecting effective resources that reinforce both conceptual understanding and math fluency. Supplemental materials are being integrated to strengthen foundational skills, preparing students for more advanced critical thinking in math.

Building on last year's work, the school council used family surveys to identify strengths and areas for growth in fostering a sense of belonging. Based on feedback, the school is developing accessible handbook highlights, organizing family nights, and revising the counselor schedule to support real-time and proactive belongingness initiatives. Teachers are also participating in professional development centered on the book *Belonging Through a Culture of Dignity*, emphasizing the importance of both equity and inclusion.

Recognizing literacy as an area of need, Principal Janda and Mellisa Devitt, the Director of Humanities are evaluating literacy programs and materials to address gaps. The aim is to equip teachers with resources tailored to students at varying levels, with plans to expand this goal in the coming year.

These goals reflect NIS's commitment to holistic development, academic support, and fostering a strong community within the school.

NES, Principal Kimberly Kubisch

Principal Kimberly Kubisch expressed excitement about the shared goal of the school, which has been a focus for several years. She highlighted three key district focus areas: successful learning for all students, belongingness and inclusion through collaboration, and ensuring physical, social, and emotional safety. These goals are embedded in NES's strategic initiatives, with a clear emphasis on ensuring every student's success through ownership and commitment. Mrs. Kubisch celebrated NES teachers for their engagement with the Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), where they are working on identifying essential learning outcomes and refining their teaching methods. The teachers are excited about the impact on their report cards and are requesting administrative feedback, demonstrating strong communication and collaboration. The school also focused on enhancing math instruction, building on last year's introduction of Reveal Math, with added emphasis on fluency. Teachers are committing to 30 additional minutes of math practice each week to strengthen foundational skills. In English Language Arts (ELA), NES addressed phonemic awareness last year, introducing specific resources like Heggerty and Foundations, and this year added decodable texts to support early literacy. Kubisch acknowledged the efforts of Mrs. Albertson and the importance of quick staff surveys, which allow for timely feedback and help guide the school's ongoing improvements.

Mrs. Gallagher Byrne inquired about the additional 10 minutes of instructional time and its impact. Mrs. Kubisch acknowledged that while she wasn't the best person to provide a detailed answer, she shared that she has noticed positive changes, particularly with kindergarten students. She observed that some students are quickly recognizing numbers on dominoes without counting, showing improved automaticity. She suggested they could gather more detailed feedback after the first trimester.

Mrs. Proch asked how many assessments are being done. Mrs. Kubisch explained that assessments are based on multiple data points. These include the MAP test, benchmark assessments (administered three times a year), and unit tests. In PLC meetings, teachers first identify essential outcomes and then determine how to measure them, using assessments like MAP or unit tests. They ensure consistency by calibrating scores across the grade level, so a "4" means the same for all students. Teachers will then review data, including MAP results, to track student progress, with support from experts to help interpret the data effectively.

Mrs. Proch asked about the progress and effectiveness of the curriculum changes.

Mrs. Kubisch explained that while teaching students is the priority, having the right resources is necessary. Not every program works for every student, so using multiple data points helps ensure the curriculum is effective and meets students' needs.

Dr. Hallett, through the chair, mentioned that districts often have to follow state-level research and mandates. She

Presentation of Superintendent Goals 2024-2025 - Superintendent Elizabeth Hallett Superintendent Hallett outlined four key goals for the 2024-2025 school year, emphasizing alignment between various district and school goals. The first goal is focused on creating a culture of belonging and inclusion through collaborative engagement, aiming to improve both the working and learning environments across the district. This includes continuing the implementation of responsive classroom practices, restorative practices, and professional learning communities. The second goal targets academic growth and achievement in literacy, math, and science. Special attention will be given to English Learners (ELs) and former ELs, addressing gaps in achievement and incorporating professional development in instructional strategies, such as sheltered English instruction and math curriculum. The third goal is to enhance safety and security within the district. This involves conducting safety audits, increasing drills, improving safety measures, and addressing cybersecurity concerns. Additionally, there will be continued focus on supporting students' social-emotional needs, including behavioral health and substance use support.

The fourth goal emphasizes strengthening communication and partnerships across the district and community. This includes building relationships with staff, students, families, and community organizations to address important issues

and share feedback. A new quarterly superintendent's newsletter will be introduced to keep everyone informed on district developments. Dr. Hallett stressed the importance of alignment in these goals, ensuring they support the district's strategic initiatives and the school committee's objectives. She looks forward to collaborating with stakeholders to achieve these goals and is open to questions.

Committee discussions and votes to be taken

Vote to approve the donation from Suzanne & Paul Belanger to the Nantucket High School Woodshop for \$1,000.00.

Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Laura Gallagher Byrne, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the donation from Laura Lamb to the Nantucket High School Woodshop for \$1,000.00.

Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Laura Gallagher Byrne, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the 2024-2025 NES, NIS, and CPS Student Handbook. *Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Laura Gallagher Byrne, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Vote to approve October 1, 2024 Meeting Minutes. *Laura Gallagher Byrne made a motion to approve, seconded by Timothy Lepore, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Transfers & Invoices. *Laura Gallagher Byrne made a motion to approve, seconded by Timothy Lepore, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Student Council Representative - Nora Sullivan

Student Representative Nora Sullivan provided an update on recent and upcoming events at the high school. She shared that the Teen Truth program has resumed, which pairs upperclassmen with underclassmen to teach communication skills, career exploration, and goal setting. Every Thursday, juniors and seniors coach freshmen and sophomores through this program. Additionally, college representatives have visited the school, offering valuable information to juniors and seniors.

Ms. Sullivan also highlighted the annual open house on October 8th, where parents followed their children's schedules, met teachers, and observed classroom activities. Tomorrow, the senior class will take their class photo for the yearbook, and there will be a half-day for the school district. She also mentioned the All Cape College Fair, which will take place at Barnstable High School from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m., providing another opportunity for juniors and seniors to engage with college representatives.

Sub-Committee/Work Group Report

Paul Hilton stepping down CCC - interviews - voting on Friday

Agenda for the next meeting, November 12, 2024 - Enrollment, FY26 Proposed Calendar, Preliminary Annual Budget Forecast, Federal Grants, Nantucket Community School Update, English Learner Update/MLPAC, Home Schooling Report

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 7:39 PM by Dr. Lepore, seconded by Laura Gallagher Byrne, and with no opposed, the motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Katie Bedell
School Committee Clerk