

**Nantucket School Committee
Meeting Minutes
December 3, 2024**

Present Members: Chair Timothy Lepore, Vice-Chair Laura Gallagher-Byrne, Esmeralda Martinez, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, Vincent Murphy, and Student Council Representative Nora Sullivan.

The December 3, 2024, 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 Esmeralda Martinez, seconded by Laura Gallagher Byrne. The amended agenda was approved unanimously.

No Public Comment

Superintendent's Update

In December, enrollment across Nantucket Public Schools decreased by two students, totaling 1,733 compared to 1,735 in November.

2025-26 School Calendar

Two adjustments were made to the 2025-26 school calendar:

- Staff PD on October 15 changed to October 22
- Staff PD January 21 changed to January 14

Annual Town Report

Dr. Hallett provided a draft of the Nantucket Public Schools section for the 2023-24 Annual Town Report. This document, shared at the Annual Town Meeting, includes:

- A summary of the district's progress, including the launch of the 5-Year District Improvement Strategy and Year 1 Action Plan.
- Introduction of new leadership: a Curriculum Director for Humanities, a Director of English Learner Education, a Facilities Director, and an Interim Technology Director.
- Highlights from each school and department, showcasing accomplishments from the year.

Dr. Hallett acknowledged the contributions of principals, program directors, and other leaders in preparing the report. She also noted a correction: the Dreamland and Hospital, key community partners, were omitted in a section and will be added in the final draft.

Additional Updates

- The Dreamland partnered with the district, hosting seniors for The Great Gatsby and younger students for A Year with Frog and Toad.
- CPS's production of Finding Nemo Jr. was a success.
- Upcoming events:
 - Middle School Holiday Concert: December 4
 - High School Holiday Concert: December 11
 - Dessert Cabaret with the Accidentals and Naturals: December 16

Dr. Hallett extended congratulations to the Nantucket High School Football Team for winning the Island Cup at Fenway Park. Photos of Martha's Vineyard Superintendent Dr. Richie Smith, honoring his wager by wearing Whaler colors, are forthcoming.

Presentations and discussions of issues to the Committee

English Learner Update - Barbara Cohen, Director of English Learner Services

Ms. Cohen began her presentation by explaining key acronyms used in the department and provided an overview of staffing, noting that there are three Educational Support Personnel (ESPs) and no recent staffing changes.

She shared data comparing Nantucket Public Schools with state averages and presented a graph showing English Learners (ELs) by school, with Nantucket Elementary School and Nantucket High School having the highest EL populations.

Key Points Discussed:

- Home Languages: Spanish, Portuguese, and English are the most common languages among ELs.
- English Language Proficiency: Proficiency levels range from 1 to 6, with incoming high school students often at Level 1. Students exit EL services when they achieve an overall score of 4.2, a state-mandated threshold (previously determined at the district level).

Program Highlights:

- Delivery of Services: Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) is the primary instructional model.
- ELPAC: Ms. Cohen discussed DESE guidance requiring screening and identification of students two or more years behind (referred to as "Slice" students).
- Seal of Biliteracy: Introduced last year, with eight students earning the seal on their diplomas. This year, 26 students have earned the seal so far.
- Flashlight 360: A new program for progress monitoring, allowing more fluid placement and tracking of student progress.
- SEI Training: Training for high school staff began in October, building on successful NES training from the previous year.

Upcoming Initiatives:

- DESE Tier Focused Monitoring (TFM): A virtual review will involve interviews with parents and the community. DESE may identify areas for improvement, and the process is expected to take two years.
- Parent and Community Engagement: Ms. Cohen noted ongoing challenges in engaging families and fostering cultural connections.

Dr. Lepore: Why do students exit EL services at a 4.2 proficiency level?

Ms. Cohen: This threshold is determined by the state, which recently standardized the requirement. Previously, districts made this decision independently.

Mrs. Bloise-Murphy: Are students set up for success after exiting the EL program? What supports are available?

Ms. Cohen: Students are integrated into mainstream classrooms, which encourages them to use English more actively. While this approach presents challenges, it helps with language acquisition. Program models focus on co-teaching to ensure students receive necessary support.

Mrs. Gallagher-Byrne: Is there reluctance among older high school students to engage with EL services?

Ms. Cohen: Yes, older students often face time constraints, but we have seen success stories, such as students entering as beginners in their junior year and progressing to college. Many students demonstrate strong motivation to succeed.

Mrs. Gallagher-Byrne: What professional development (PD) are teachers receiving to support ELs?

Ms. Cohen: High school staff received SEI training in October, and NES staff participated in training last year. There is a need for more individualized PD.

Mrs. Bloise-Murphy: How can the School Committee support the EL program?

Ms. Cohen: Continued support for professional development and resources for EL services would be beneficial.

English Learner Parent Advisory Council (ELPAC) - Lauren Gabriel, ELPAC Coordinator

Mrs. Gabriel Introduced Rosa Aminta Guevara as the new ELPAC president. Then read the ELPAC mission statement: To foster strong partnerships between schools and families by providing opportunities for engagement rooted in mutual respect and trust. She emphasized that the goal of ELPAC is not only to help families learn English but also to honor and respect their cultures.

Mrs. Gabriel highlighted the organization of a decommissioned computer giveaway in collaboration with the tech department.

Mr. Murphy asked how many computers were distributed and if more were needed.

Mrs. Gabriel responded that the initial supply ran out quickly, more were provided, and additional computers would still be useful. She plans to continue partnering with the tech department to secure more devices.

She spoke of another meeting where the former ELPAC president highlighted issues with absenteeism. Noting attendance among English Learners students remains a challenge. Then mentioned Community partnerships such as The Boys and Girls Club and Nantucket Historical Association (NHA) representatives engaged with families during meetings. Efforts are being made to help families enroll in programs like the Boys and Girls Club and access scholarships as some families hesitate to apply for scholarships due to missing tax documents

One of the most significant highlights for the English Learner Parent Advisory Council (ELPAC) was meeting with Superintendent Hallett in March following the sudden loss of a Latino student, a tragedy that deeply affected the school community. The district's response, led by Dr. Hallett, differed from the approach taken in a previous similar incident, prompting speculation within the community. Some questioned whether decisions, such as keeping the school open, were influenced by racial bias. In response to these concerns, ELPAC requested a meeting with Dr. Hallett to collaborate on the development of a comprehensive and equitable district-wide protocol for addressing unexpected student deaths. The aim was to establish consistent, sensitive, and inclusive procedures for handling such tragedies in the future. Dr. Hallett acknowledged the concerns raised by ELPAC and informed the group that she was already working on developing a district-wide protocol. She emphasized her commitment to creating a plan that would be equitable and sensitive to the needs of all students and families. Dr. Hallett requested to attend the next ELPAC meeting to review the draft protocol, address questions, and receive feedback. The meeting, held on April 25th, was well attended by parents and some students, reflecting strong community engagement. The protocol was developed and discussed during the session, and Mrs. Gabriel expressed that it was a successful step forward for ELPAC.

Mr. Murphy: Proposed holding meetings in a less formal setting, such as an open house.

Ms. Gabriel: Mentioned limitations due to meeting protocols and expressed interest in exploring more informal events, though raffles are not allowed.

Mrs. Gallagher-Byrne: Asked about meeting attendance.

Mrs. Gabriel: Reported six parents attended the last meeting.

Mrs. Martinez: Suggested sending reminders about attendance issues.

Mrs. Bloise-Murphy: Recommended trying virtual meetings again.

Mrs. Gabriel: Noted virtual meetings were unpopular during COVID-19 but is open to trying again.

Dr. Hallett: Thanked Ms. Gabriel for her leadership and for inviting her to engage with ELPAC. She acknowledged differences in how recent events were handled but expressed confidence in the newly developed policy, which provides clear and consistent guidance for the future.

Committee discussions and votes to be taken

Vote to approve the NES, NIS, CPS, and NHS 2024-2025 School Improvement Plans, Esmeralda Martinez 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 for \$1,250.00 from Gillies Plumbing & Heating Inc. to the NHS Student Activities Account for the Spanish Club field trip to Boston, Esmeralda Martinez made a motion to approve, seconded by Laura Gallagher Byrne, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve a new account in Student Activities for CPS News, Esmeralda Martinez 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 The Seagrille for \$200.00 to CPS News, Esmeralda Martinez made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the fundraising check for \$1963.63 from Hayward Photography to NHS, Esmeralda Martinez made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the fundraising check for \$1,407.03 from Hayward Photography to CPS, Esmeralda Martinez made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the fundraising check for \$1,730.29 from Hayward Photography to NIS, Esmeralda Martinez made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the fundraising check for \$2,596.73 from Hayward Photography to NES, Esmeralda Martinez made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the fundraising check for \$243.16 from Edukits to NES, Esmeralda Martinez made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the updates to Policy ADF, School District Wellness Program, Esmeralda Martinez made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously
Vote to approve the MASC-recommended updates to G Policies, Personnel, Esmeralda Martinez made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously
Vote to approve the October 24, 2024 Workshop Meeting Minutes, Esmeralda Martinez made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy. Vincent Murphy recused himself, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously
Vote to approve the October 29, 2024 Workshop Meeting Minutes, Esmeralda Martinez made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy. Vincent Murphy recused himself, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously
Vote to approve the October 29, 2024 Meeting Minutes, Esmeralda Martinez made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy. Vincent Murphy recused himself, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously
Vote to approve the November 4, 2024 Workshop Meeting Minutes, Esmeralda Martinez made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy. Vincent Murphy recused himself, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously
Vote to approve the November 25, 2024 Meeting Minutes, Esmeralda Martinez made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously
Transfers & Invoices, Esmeralda Martinez made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Student Council Representative - Nora Sullivan

- The Drama Club's staged reading has been postponed to the spring.
- The annual Powder Puff game saw the seniors win with a score of 22-8.
- The Spanish Club recently traveled to Boston, visiting the Museum of Fine Arts and the Boston Public Library.
- The Accidentals and Naturals performed at both the Island Cup and the Tree Lighting. Upcoming events include their Dessert Cabaret on December 16.
- Winter Varsity and JV sports began yesterday. Unfortunately, there will be no girls' hockey this year due to a lack of sign-ups.
- Ms. Sullivan highlighted the Nantucket Varsity Football team's Island Cup victory against Martha's Vineyard.
- The December Delight senior fundraiser is scheduled for December 14 from 9 AM to 3 PM.

Sub-Committee/Work Group Report

Mrs. Gallagher announced the New Cape Cod Collaborative Executive Director, Dr. Hope Hanscom, who will begin her position on January 21, 2025.

Agenda for the next meeting, December 17, 2024 - Student Success Program - Alt Ed, Federal Grants, NHS Vocational Programs Update, Veritas, Tennis Backboard Proposal, vote on FY 26 Calendar

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 7:21 PM by Esmeralda Martinez, seconded by Vince Murphy, and with no opposed, the motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
 Katie Bedell
 School Committee Clerk