

# EAST LONGMEADOW SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES



## District Mission

"Our mission in the East Longmeadow Public Schools is to promote achievement and accountability in all endeavors as we educate today for the challenges of tomorrow"

**DATE:** February 22, 2021

**TIME:** 6:00 P.M.

**WHERE:** Superintendent's Conference Room

**Meeting called to Order by :** Gregory Thompson, Chair

THIS MEETING IS BEING HELD REMOTELY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE GOVERNOR OF MASSACHUSETTS' MARCH 12, 2020 ORDER SUSPENDING CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE OPEN MEETING LAW MA G.L.c. 30A, SECTION 20.

PER THE GOVERNORS' ORDER THE PUBLIC WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO PHYSICALLY ACCESS THIS SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC CAN ACCESS THE MEETING VIA LIVE STREAM AT:

As a preliminary matter, this is Gregory Thompson, School Committee Chair. Permit me to confirm that all members and persons anticipated on the agenda are present and can hear me. Members, when I call your name, please respond in the affirmative

Sarah Truoiolo - here  
William Fonseca - here  
Antonella Raschilla - here  
Elizabeth Marsian-Boucher - here  
Gregory Thompson - here  
Gordon Smith, Superintendent - here  
Pamela Blair, Asst. Supt for Business - here  
Kathy Celetti, Recording Secretary - here  
Heather Brown, Dir. of Curriculum - here

### Approval of Minutes

2.1 Approval of the February 1, 2021 executive session meeting minutes.

**William moved to approve the February 1, 2021 executive session meeting minutes, Sarah seconded the motion.**

**Chair: Any further discussion? All those in favor say aye (5), those oppose (0), motion carries (5-0)**

2.2 Approval of the February 1, 2021 regular session meeting minutes.

**William moved to approve the February 1, 2021 regular session meeting minutes, Elizabeth seconded the motion.**

**Chair: Any further discussion? All those in favor say aye (5), those oppose (0), motion carries (5-0)**

### Opportunities for Visitors to Address the Committee:

Mr. Harding who was speaking on behalf of the Parents for In-person Learning had a few questions for the committee. With the number of cases decreasing and vaccinations increasing, nearby towns are increasing the in-person learning or full in-person learning, have you considered moving to possibly (2) cohorts; one full-time in-person learning, and a full-time fully remote. Ask the parents and students to make a greater commitment into one or the other so that we can make things easier on teachers. Any discussion on purchasing or asking businesses to donate portable tri-folds so that we can better mitigate transmission in classrooms?

The Chair stated that we will be touching on some of these topics today, and appreciated Mr. Harding checking with the committee.

### Committee/Sub-committee Communications :

### Presentations

#### Superintendent 's Report

5.1.1 MIAA Floating Season for Football, Track and Cheerleading were presented by Mr. Magee and Mr. Paige

**Mr. Magee:** So far winter sports have been a very smooth season, zero teams quarantined, we followed all safety protocols. ELCAT has been amazing filming all sports. Our spring season will begin on April 26<sup>th</sup> - July 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Elizabeth** asked about the athletic fees

**Mr. Magee:** We are holding off on the fees until we have a schedule. It could \$100-\$149 depending on game.

MIAA General Modifications (Football, Indoor Track and Cheerleading)

- The floating season will be March 1<sup>st</sup> - April 25<sup>th</sup>)
- Face coverings will be worn at all times (except for mask breaks while socially distanced)
- Personal items to remain in the athlete's bag, athletes to bring own water and hand sanitizer
- Limited shared equipment and sanitizing breaks will occur on each sport's guidelines
- Limited spectators
- Limited use of locker rooms
- Competitions will be limited within geographical bubbles

Football MIAA Modifications:

- Team rosters for game day not to exceed 45 players and a maximum of 6 coaches
- Huddles - there must be spacing between players and they should be facing the same direction
- Mandatory water breaks at halfway point of each quarter will occur around the 6-minute mark
- Time out - extended to 2 minutes
- Half-time - 10 minutes, but will be outside
- Full contact is allowed, no more than 2 practices per week, not more than 15 minutes per day
- Equipment will be disinfected at the end of each practice
- Only Level 1 practices allowed indoors, Level 1 practice is non-contact workouts, conditioning, individual skill work and drills

Indoor Track MIAA Modifications:

- Competitions may be held outdoors using the indoor track distances. Indoor track facilities will continue to stay closed
- It is recommended to conduct dual meets
- Different time slots will be provided to each team for warm-ups
- Sprinting and hurdle events every other lane
- Longer distances to have staggered starts

- Batons, implements, bars and mats to be disinfected between participants' use

#### Cheerleading Modifications

- Mats will be cleaned each day of activity
- Cheer teams will perform for home game ONLY
- Cohort (stunt groups) will be created of athletes of no more than 10. This is the maximum size for stunt group that can compete
- Stunt groups will be kept together in their cohorts. Mixing and matching bases/flyers from groups should be avoided
- During indoor practice, normal speaking voices should be used, elevated voice projection permitted outside only
- A maximum of 20 cheerleaders/team in attendance at any outdoor event

#### Spectators

- Per EEA/MIAA Guidelines: Spectators will be limited to two adults (parent/guardians or chaperones) and two siblings of player
- PVIAC Guidelines: ONLY home team spectators should attend games, away team spectators should watch the athletic event via livestream
- Spectators must wear facial coverings and maintain six feet social distance at all times. Spectators must view the game from designated areas only
- Spectator policies should follow above guidelines; school committees can choose to be stricter with the spectator policies

#### Transportation:

- Every effort will be made to provide transportation for the ELHS athletic teams.

**Elizabeth moved to accept the MIAA Floating Season for Football, Cheerleading and Track as presented this evening, Antonella seconded the motion. Chair: Any further discussion? All those in favor say aye (5), those oppose (0), motion carries (5-0)**

#### 5.1.2 The Equity Audit Report was presented by the Diversity and Equity Stakeholders

Past experience ELPS and the 21 key stakeholders engaged with the Center for Leadership and Educational Equity (CLEE) in a process to analyze data to reveal inequities, the reason for inequities, district strengths, and recommendations to address identified inequities.

#### Collaborative Equity Audit :

- The audit is a service designed to engage educational institution in a focused and targeted self-study, this will result in a constructive analysis and discourse
- To ensure a variety of perspectives and experiences ranging across students, educators, and families, data was gathered through existing data, focus groups, interviews, and school site visits.

#### Racial Identity by Numbers :

Students - 79% identified as white and 21% identified as non-white

Educators - 94% identified as white and 6% identified as non-white

#### Student Characteristics by Numbers :

Students of Color from METCO (1.7%); First Language is not English (7.5%); English Language Learners (1.6%); Students with disabilities (18.8%); Students with high needs (33.9%); Students who are economically disadvantaged (18.7%);

#### District Mission and Goals :

- Increase support of the whole child by creating a safe, nurturing, and respectful learning environment, which students are supported.
- Engage students in a relevant and innovative learning experiences by increasing staff's understanding of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning environment
- Increase student performance and growth of all students by implementing standard-based instruction aligned with the MA curriculum framework and national standards.

#### Data Process: August 2019 - March 2020

- Analyzed Qualitative and Quantitative Data
- Conducted Root-cause Analysis
- Compiled Reasons of Inequities
- Determined Highest Barriers

#### Findings - Learning Community Survey

**Categories:** Reorganizing Systems (Setting Direction and Monitoring) **2.86**  
Building Capacity to Teach (Building Capacity to Collaborate) **3.42**  
Building Capacity to Lead **2.82**

#### Focus Group Themes:

Theme #1 Educator Capacity (Social Emotional Learning; Teacher-student Relationship)

Theme #2 Inclusiveness (Diverse Representation; Anti-racist Training)

Theme #3 Access to Programs Vs Outcomes (Review of Requirements; Advanced Placement Participation)

Theme #4 Student-teacher Relationship (Classroom awareness; Appreciation for Identity)

#### Findings - Compiled Data

Indicators for educator capacity equity:

- High-quality teaching skills
- Educator's equity consciousness
- Staff development and retention

Sub-indicators for programmatic and systemic equity:

- Set the tone for a safe and inclusive culture
- Staff recruitment and hiring policies
- Programs and materials

#### District Strengths :

Overall, student achievement data indicates that ELPS made substantial progress towards most targets, as seen in its 58% progress towards target ratings by the state.

Stetting the groundwork for an inclusive learning environment for students, the district's leadership set up a Diversity and Equity Committee to focus on equity issues. For high and equitable outcomes for students, educators were aware that having certain structures such as advanced placement and sports opportunities are not sufficient to guarantee equitable engagement, to impact equitable learning outcomes. For transformative culture for educators, teachers report that there is intentional time and place dedicated to working together and that these structures are adequate.

#### Recommendation to Improve Programmatic Equity - Action Steps

- Clearly define goal and direction for a safer and inclusive culture
- Work collaboratively using the data to identify local groups
- Use practical measures to evaluate access programs
- Document disciplinary referrals
- Assess students that do not meet academic milestones
- Use surveys and communicate
- Increase teacher capacity around culturally responsive pedagogy
- Improve and increase professional learning and collaboration time

- Recruit educators and students to serve in leadership roles to improve equity
- Increase racial and ethnic diversity of staff and students

**Recommendation to Improve Teacher Capacity - Action Steps**

- Provide CRT training around high expectations and growth mindset
- Provide educators opportunities to connect as part of students' communities
- PanoramaEd for student's feedback surveys and teacher monitoring/addressing of subgroups
- Meet educators' professional needs with learning plans/goals/coaching
- Incorporate district-wide social-emotional pedagogy
- Train educators and implement constructivist pedagogy
- Increase teacher capacity to use UDL, CRT, modifications/accommodations for students with diverse needs to persist in AP/honors classes, including practices for focal groups
- Engage students in relevant, culturally-conscious curriculum
- Create, engage with, and reflect upon community-wide norms
- Increase capacity of educators to give and receive feedback around changing assumptions about students
- Increase capacity of staff to collaborate and lead CRT and equity work
- Improve personalized onboarding support for new educators of color with coaching, mentorship and affinity groups.

**Framing Recommendations - Programmatic Equity:**

- Establish expectations promoting and upholding inclusivity (including race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, faith) across the district
- Re-evaluate disciplinary policies for equity to align with restorative justice in order to eliminate disparities in disciplinary practices of underrepresented students
- Increase advanced course enrollment and persistence by subgroups and subject to provide a more equitable access to programs by eliminating tracking practices and analyzing practices for counseling students into Honors/AP courses
- Set priorities around recruitment, retention, and inclusive practices increasing diversity of educators and students

**Framing Recommendations - Educator Capacity**

- Improve student-teacher relationships by incorporating district-wide social-emotional pedagogy
- Standardize use of PanoramaEd, including opportunities to solicit feedback from students, and use of dashboards to assess sub-group needs
- Increase teacher capacity to effectively teach students with diverse needs by using research-based strategies (e.g., incorporating UDL pedagogy, culturally responsive/conscious practices, high expectations/growth mindset)
- Engage students in relevant, culturally-conscious curricular materials, and rigorous tasks that are aligned to grade-level standards

**High-leverage Recommendations - The committee identified four high-leverage areas to focus on first:**

- AP/Honors course access and persistence
- Professional Development
- Hiring
- Restorative Practices

5.1.3 Mr. Smith presented an update on the ELPS Learning Model

**Chair:** As a Hybrid Model, we as a School Committee believe that we should continue to follow the CDC guidelines. Currently the CDC guideline is (6) feet social distancing, we will continue with that until they say otherwise. Which leads us to the Hybrid model for now. It could be subject to change in the future, but for now we are sticking with the (6) foot distance per CDC, we believe the science leads us to that.

**Mr. Smith:** This week and next week we have two points of expansion. We are expanding students who are riding and coming to school during their cohort week or in-person week riding to school on our buses. One of the areas we are looking at expanding is students in grades 7-12.

We have Cohort A week which includes students in Cohort D, roughly 322 students riding buses. In a Cohort B week, which includes Cohort D students, we have roughly 303 students riding the bus. That could change once we expand to those who are asking to go from Cohort C (fully-remote), to in-person learning. The deadline was Feb 15<sup>th</sup>. Some families did alert us that they would like their children to transition into the hybrid model. So starting on March 1<sup>st</sup> we will be increasing our students in the hybrid model by 149 students, that would be, (34) students at MB; (10) students at MS; (19) students at MV; (39) students at BP and (47) students at the HS. We are looking at 149 students who might take the opportunity to use bus transportation. Over the break our Administrators were looking at how we set up sections, to make sure that they are putting all safety protocols in place for any expansion so that we continue to keep our students and staff safe in all of our buildings.

**Sarah:** I total understand about the six feed distance, and I was less than pleased when I saw the CDC's guidance come out after plans to make some adjustments. I think at some point we need to work as a committee to consult with our local healthcare professionals, maybe individuals from local hospitals who specialize in infection control to talk about how we can work around the six feet indicator. The Dept. of Ed is pushing for three feet, as well as other agencies. We need to continue our conversations around six versus three feet. We need to continue to revisit not only for this year, but even going into next academic year.

**Elizabeth:** I do find it frustrating because we are getting so many conflicting suggestions from all different walks of life. When I'm working we are at the three-foot point in circle time. I don't necessarily think it's unsafe. I would like to hear more about it. With that said I don't know if I necessarily trust what the Dept. of Ed is saying, they flip flop so much. I would like to hear somebody who knows what they are talking about.

**Antonella:** Do we know if any other school district has tried this at three feet?

**Mr. Smith:** There are some district in the Commonwealth that have adjusted to three feet. The LPVEC districts are all at six feet.

**Sarah:** Maybe as we approach warmer weather, we might be able to utilize some additional outdoor spaces. How we can utilize the remainder of this year to help set us up for next year, since we don't have recommendations from DESE yet for next year. It's our time to start planning ahead.

**Elizabeth:** We need to focus more on the lunchtime, how do we make more space in school. We don't necessarily want the kids at three-feet, that close when they are eating.

**William:** I agree with what everyone is saying, but to Sarah's point if we could use outdoor spaces, instead of fooling around with the classrooms. We need to plan for next school year, so we are ready to hit the ground running in September.

**Chair:** The CDC has to address the six-foot distancing. Logistically most districts can't make that requirement fit. With them coming out with new guidelines for opening schools and specifically stating that six-foot distancing is their recommendation, it's difficult to go against that. I'm hoping to get as many students in the district as soon as possible into school. Mr. Smith spoke about increasing in-person learners as we go forward with another group coming back in April. Some of our lower levels are reaching capacity in a hybrid model at six-feet. If we bring them all back, we are close to capacity, and potentially excluding opportunity for some of those students who are fully remote from coming back based on not have room for them. I'm open for discussion. I recommend we wait for the March 15<sup>th</sup> numbers in terms of those that will be returning on April 1<sup>st</sup>, visit some the classrooms again Mr. Smith, look at the logistics of the desks and maybe after March 15<sup>th</sup> the numbers in terms of classroom size we could re-address for a potential April change.

**Antonella:** I would like to see when the teachers get vaccinated, I'm hoping it's soon.

**Sarah:** I have individuals who have questions around the transportation model and pool testing, Mr. Smith could you speak to those so that the general community has a sense around what pool testing is, why we might not be considering it, here in town, and how DESE's guidance around transportation has shifted.

**Mr. Smith:** We attended a webinar on pool-testing, which is coming in and swabbing a whole classroom and going into one test vial. As that gets processed in the lab it gives you the baseline of those that come back negative where your community is. The challenging part that we found is that, as we went through the

webinar, that DESE will set you up, then you as a district, have to staff it, run it and pay for it. You are talking \$5 a swab; you will need more than our (5) building nurses to make this happen. After the testing, if you get positive results, you don't know where the positive is, so now you are still looking for PCR testing. Right now our nursing staff was not in favor of taking this on.

**Chair:** The results of the test is a week lag time. I don't see the value of the pool-testing for us district trying to identify cases of COVID.

**Mr. Smith:** Right before break, DESE did release new transportation guidelines, they are creating a freer space on the buses. They are lifting the capacity, we will be working with LPVEC to look at that, making sure that they can implement it as we expand options. One thing that they are requiring is keeping the windows open about two inches. We have been allowing siblings to sit together. They are going one step further to allow other students to sit together. We have an LPVEC meeting tomorrow and I'm sure I am going to hear more on how the LPVEC might start to implement this and what it looks like. There were other things in that guidance like protocols at the bus stop, on the bus and what's required. We will continue to work with LPVEC, and look at how they are implementing and what they are doing. Obviously we need a roster and seating plan for the bus for contract tracing.

**Assistant Superintendent of Business Report:**

5.2.1 The Birchland Park gift donation from Grynn and Barrett Enterprises was presented by Ms. Blair

**Elizabeth moved to accept the BP \$500 gift donation from Grynn and Barrett, Sarah seconded the motion**

**Chair: Any further discussion? All those in favor say aye ( 5) those oppose (0), that motion carries ( 5-0)**

5.2.2 The High School gift donation from Ohioptye Prints was presented by Ms. Blair

**William moved to accept the \$187.63 from Ohioptye Prints for the HS gift fund , Antonella seconded the motion**

**Chair: Any further discussion? All those in favor say aye ( 5) those oppose ( 0), that motion carries ( 5-0)**

5.2.3 The FY2021 State Coronavirus Prevention Fund Distribution was presented by Ms. Blair

This will be used for technology.

**Elizabeth moved to accept State Coronavirus Prevention Fund distribution for \$110,050, Antonella seconded the motion.**

**Chair: We are going to work in conjunction with IT in terms of purchasing.**

**Ms. Blair: Yes, always. I 'm in the process right now waiting for quotes from Ryan, we are partnering on that. He has some funds available . We are putting everything forward trying to get the technology upgraded for our staff to help with remote learning.**

**Chair: To update existing technology that we have that 's just outdated and we are renewing it.**

**Ms. Blair: Yes, that is correct.**

**Sarah: That grant was targeted towards IT?**

**Ms. Blair: Not only IT, this was for protective equipment, hygiene supplies, cost associated with socially distance on-site learning, technology, so it 's anything around the Corona virus.**

**Sarah: We were seeing the need because we have the other piece 's kind of checked off already, that 's our next highest need in terms of how we are making the decisions of expending those funds.**

**Ms. Blair: Yes, thank you for clarifying that and letting everyone know. PPE we are monitoring that situation, everything is good with that. We are working with the schools to make sure that we are on top of that. Most of that was funded with the CVRF grant and now we are into the second ESSER grant and this one here is the new grant, this is perfect timing for the technology piece.**

**Chair: Any other discussion? Hearing none, a ll those in favor say aye ( 5) those oppose ( 0), that motion carries ( 5-0)**

**Old Business:**

6.1 Mr. Smith gave an update on the Budget Development for FY22.

The current ELPS FY21 budget is \$31,594,089, our preliminary FY22 Chapter 70 (\$12,175,958) that's an increase of \$73,710 over FY21. We did lose some positions during the FY21 budget due to fiscal challenges caused by COVID pandemic: HS Asst. Principal; HS Instructional Tech Specialist; BP Foreign Language Teacher and Literacy Support Teacher; and MS/MV shared Academic Coach. The FY22 level services budget when incorporating all contractual increases, equates to approximately \$948,092. The Leadership Team has identified the following needs over level services: HS Asst. Principal; BP Foreign Language Teacher; MS/MV shared Adjustment Counselor and a MB Pre-school Teacher. We need to submit our budget by March 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**New Business: None**

**William moved to adjourn at 8:30 PM, Elizabeth seconded the motion.**

**Chair: Any further discussion? All those in favor say aye (5), those oppose (0), motion carries (5-0)**

**Chair: Thank you Mr. Maki**

**For a more detailed version of this meeting , go to: [www.eastlongmeadowma.gov](http://www.eastlongmeadowma.gov) (ELCAT)**

Minutes Recorded by: Kathy Celetti

Respectfully submitted by: Superintendent Smith