

Salem School Committee  
Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes  
Monday, June 18, 2018

A Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting of the Salem School Committee was held on Monday, June 18, 2018 at 5:35 p.m. in the School Committee Chambers at Collins Middle School, 29 Highland Avenue, Salem, MA.

**Members Present:** Ms. Mary Manning, Mr. James Fleming, Ms. Kristine Wilson, Ms. Ana Nuncio, Mr. Manny Cruz, Ms. Amanda Campbell, and Mayor Kimberley Driscoll

**Members Absent:** None

**Others Present:** Margarita Ruiz, Superintendent, Kate Carbone, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, Margaret Marotta, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services, Kristin Shaver, Business Manager, Jill Conrad, Chief of Systems Strategy, and Kelley Rice, Chief of Communications, Charity Lezama, Salem YMCA Executive Director and Co-Chair Salem Public Schools Strategic Planning Committee: Early Childhood June 2016 – February 2017, Sue Todd, Executive Director of Pathways for Children, and Nancy Charest – Salem Early Childhood Center.

**Call to Order**

Mayor Driscoll called the School Committee of the Whole (COW) Meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

**School Committee of the Whole (COW) Meeting**

Mayor Driscoll introduced the purpose of this evening's meeting, explained that they decided to hold the meeting in the library as a more informal way to meet, and introduced the members who were present. Superintendent Ruiz gave a brief introduction and overview of the work that was done last year as they were building the Strategic Plan.

**Early Childhood Education**

Ms. Ruiz recalled there were six levers for improvement that framed the strategic plan. One of the levers that one of the teams has been working on is Early Childhood. Superintendent Ruiz asked Charity Lezama, Executive Director of the YMCA, who was the co-lead of that work team to give an overview of that work, share some of the findings of the group recommendations, and briefly talk about the programs the YMCA currently has in the Salem district. Ms. Ruiz further informed the School Committee that the topic would then transition to some of the opportunities they have coming up, including the consolidation of the Pathways early childhood program at the Horace Mann Laboratory School to be located at the 79 Willson Street building. She has maps to show the Committee on how that is going to look like. Ms. Ruiz stated that members of the Pathway program were present to answer any questions they may have or enter into further discussion if they wish.

Ms. Lezama provided a framing of their work and shared that something she sees in all the work they do in the community is not much different than what is done in Early Learning, in that they have many providers that truly care about the work they are doing and the community and are willing to come to the table. That is reflected in the group who came together in 2016 and met bi-monthly as they tried to develop the recommendations for the strategic plan. Ms. Lezama continued that they encapsulated some of the work they did by breaking it down into four (4) priority areas: Working with Partners, Working with Families, Working with Schools, and

Public Awareness. Ms. Lezama walked School Committee members through the Four Priority Areas, Lack of City Data, Progress/Opportunities, and Salem YMCA's location where that they spent 40 hours of work together, both online and offline.

### **Discussion**

Mr. Fleming asked Ms. Lezama for the definition of a Voucher-04 as shown on the brochure that was handed to all members. Ms. Lezama responded that 0 to 4 signifies the age and vouchers are state subsidies for Early Childcare. Members and others present shared further insight and entered in further discussion. Ms. Lezama said there is currently a 6-month waiting list for vouchers to Early Childcare and Afterschool programs. Mayor Driscoll commented that she would think that Early Childhood providers may really want to know what the Kindergarten expectations are. Members continued to engage in feedback and discussion.

### **Strategies for Children and The United Way Drive Program**

Ms. Lezama talked about an organization they brought in from Boston called Strategies for Children that worked with them towards the end. They were awarded an Early Planning grant through partnership with them and EEC, something that the Mayor and the Superintendent has. Ms. Lezama provided brief details of that plan as well as the United Way program. The United Way Drive program is going to be helpful on the data piece. They have a program called Drive, where they come in and fully fund the program. Every Early Learning Center already does an assessment at the beginning of the program, what the United Way Drive program does is that it gets all those community partners to share that data into one system so they can then have a good snapshot of their community. They are able to see where the gaps are in the programs and students and they can then try to meet those needs. The United Way Drive hire local residents and train them to go out and do these assessments in-home. If they, for example, have 29% of their students in home childcare, these people will go out and identify those families and go into the homes and do the assessments. So then they really have a comprehensive view of what their community looks like as students come into Kindergarten.

### **Need for More Research**

Ms. Lezama continued they still need to do some research, as they do not know where the gap is. They have 29% data information but wonder if that is real. They do not know where all of the programs in the community lack, if students coming in from one program against another, are the same? They do not know what the financial gap is in terms of how many families cannot afford it and may be the cause as to why they are leaving. There are still a lot of unknowns as they work to try to figure this out.

### **Discussion on Assessments**

Mayor Driscoll inquired, as a working parent, about the assessment piece, how to make sure that those who are trained to do the assessment have high quality operators or support those that are not high quality operators. Is there a tool or framework now that exists, at the state level? Ms. Lezama responded that there is not, they could not find what that was. They looked at different models, such as Boston, which looks to come to Kindergarten Ready. There certainly are different measurements of programs. Ms. Lezama continued that she does not know that it would meet them where they want to be until they identify what the need actually is.

### **Discussion on Measures on Child Readiness**

Mr. Fleming asked if either of their organizations have any measurable to determine whether a child, who reaches five (5) years old, is ready or not; what kind of measurable do they have? Ms. Todd responded that they do an assessment three (3) times a year to all of their preschoolers. The assessment measures their readiness based on certain standards for literacy,

math, concepts, etc. Ms. Todd continued providing further details of other measures used. Members engaged in further discussion.

Mayor Driscoll explained that Head Start is primarily serving students who are low income and thinks they, as a district, need to determine what the expectations are for Kindergarten readiness and then how do they support that whether it is a system, one of their district programs, operating from within one of their buildings either private someone working with them on a range of different areas. Ms. Lezama added they are a community of 16 different providers, and they are all private providers. How do they, as a community, get everyone to come together in that United Way Drive program is a great way to get that data? Ms. Lezama continued that she thinks it is also important to recognize that Pathways and the Head Start program is a little bit different than those other 15 providers in the community and that their funding sources are different.

### **Discussion on Cost**

Members discussed the cost; taxpayers pay for these services. Mayor Driscoll stated that Pathways is the federally designated Head Start provider for their region; they do not have the financial relationship with them other than Pathways uses their space for school and they provide some of the services that are paid for such as cafeteria, bussing, anything of that sort that they do – they do not have a contractual relationship. Charity is very much the same way in the YMCA in that they are providing services there. There might be a small subsidy associated with the Teen/Parent program at one point. Ms. Lezama elaborated on requirements of the Head Start program and shared brief information of grants. Members continued discussion on the measures of child readiness.

### **Another Benefit of the United Way Drive Program**

Ms. Lezama continued that the YMCA, Nancy Charest of Salem Early Childhood Center, and Salem Community Child Care are going to have different levels of programs. Another benefit of the United Way Drive program is that once they get a center's data, when they identify gaps, they provide the resources to go in and train those teachers and support those students so that they can raise those gaps - another opportunity with the United Way program that is exciting to her as a community member. Members engaged in further discussion. Ms. Lezama explained that some of the work they tried to do out of this committee is to answer Mr. Fleming's question of how to get all of those partners, not just the 16, but those 46 home-based licensed care centers on board.

### **YMCA**

Ms. Lezama continued to explain what the YMCA does, they have a downtown location licensed program serving 60 children from infant through preschool ages. The YMCA has its own financial assistance program that assists about 40% of enrolled children. They try to be diverse in that they have about 30 to 40% that are on YMCA financial assistance vouchers and another 30 to 40% are full pay. Ms. Lezama continued that they began to support the Salem High School last year, the beginning of the school year with the goal of serving High School teen parents. They served six throughout this year. Two have stayed with them for the entire year and the other four were not able to complete the school year due to other circumstances. Six High School students came through their program with infants. Ms. Lezama explained that another thing that she thinks is great in this partnership and relationship is helping sound teachers. Childcare is a year-round program, trying to take off weeks from the summer is cause for a loss of membership spots. They also commit to supporting Salem teachers. They know that childcare is expensive, and teachers have their summers off. They are going to want to spend time with the kids but also have that cost savings. Ms. Lezama continued that they honor

what they were paying with some transferred family services so that they did not have to pay more. They did not charge them for vacation weeks and they get to take the summer off. This is the program they run at the High School. Superintendent Ruiz explained that this gives the School Committee an overview of the work their team has done and work they hope to continue.

### **Discussion**

Mayor Driscoll commented on the High School childcare program to have pretty good flexibility. Mr. Fleming asked about the difference between childcare and pre-school education. Ms. Lezama responded there is no difference, in the early learning world.

### **Salem Early Childhood Center and the Pathways**

Nancy Charest, of Salem Early Childhood Center, which is located in the same building as the Bentley Academy Charter School, and the Pathways team talked a little more about the programming they have to provide to give an idea of their services. Salem Early Childhood Center services include speech and language occupational therapy and physical therapy, among others. Pathways is in their 50<sup>th</sup> year providing Head Start services with 150 staff members in the Early Ed program, and serving 13 communities. Their primary areas are Salem, Lynn, Gloucester, and Peabody.

### **Discussion on Early Childhood Center Tuition Cost**

Members asked questions about the program's capacity and tuition, and how it reflects, in terms of the Salem Early Childhood Center cost. Members were referred to a brief pink brochure that was handed out, which contains tuition information and were briefed with further details. Further discussion ensued.

### **Discussion on Pathways Head Start Cost**

Mr. Fleming asked about the income level for Head Start. A participating student would need to be at, or below the poverty level (which is \$24,000 a year), to qualify for Head Start grant. The grant is intended to give at-risk families a boost and work with them to help prepare them on the path for public school.

### **Landscape, Challenges, and Opportunities**

Superintendent Ruiz explained they wanted to give School Committee members a context of their work. Last year, they started to think critically about Early Childhood, the parent programs that they have, and moving the path forward for city providers. Ms. Ruiz recalled that the School Committee voted on the recommendation to close the Nathaniel Bowditch School and relocate the Horace Mann Laboratory School into the 79 Willson Street building this year. The reassignment of Bowditch students to other elementary schools meant those schools needed more space for more classrooms, and would have less space to accommodate early childhood programs such as Pathways. Classrooms were added at Bates Elementary School, at Witchcraft Heights, etc., and Bentley is increasing its enrollment. Superintendent Ruiz continued that the need for space in their schools became evident and they saw that the Horace Mann Laboratory School was not going to completely fill the 79 Willson Street building. This brought the conversation to consolidate all of the Pathways Head Start classrooms they currently have in the building in a section at the 79 Willson Street Building.

Superintendent Ruiz recapped there are three Pathways classrooms at the Bentley Academy Charter School, one at Bates Elementary School, and another at Carlton Elementary School. Superintendent Ruiz walked everyone through a presentation detailing the areas of space that would be utilized for the Pathways wing area, the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor that would be utilized for Horace

Mann School, and 3<sup>rd</sup> floor where third, fourth, and fifth grade classrooms would be located. They are in the plans of working out shared entrances and which would be devoted to Pathways entrances. Superintendent Ruiz continued they are also in conversations with Dr. Joseph Cambone, Dean of School of Education. They are going to have Fellows, the Charlotte Forten Teaching Fellowship, teach full-time at the school for the entire year. The University would love to hold college level classes for the Fellows and some of the students related to methods and instruction, during after school and non-school conflicting hours. Superintendent Ruiz said they are working on the timing to ensure different entry times between the young Pathway Head Start students with elementary school students. Members were further informed.

### **Discussion on Staff**

Ms. Campbell asked on an approximate number of staff members. Ms. Todd responded that each of the classrooms will have a minimum of two teachers, and many classrooms will have three. They have floater teachers who will go where the greatest needs are. Some of the Early Ed classrooms will have three teachers. They are currently under discussion that includes assignment/allocation as to who would be where. Members engaged in further discussion.

### **Conclusion**

Mayor Driscoll explained that the goal for this evening was to make sure that the School Committee was aware of the progress thus far. Head Start is in the Salem Schools already; it would just be a consolidation into one school. It will give them a chance to do an expansion to ensure to bring all the students who need services into one location. They also hope it will bring together a stronger working relationship between a large early child care/early Ed provider in their district. Members engaged in further discussion. Members agreed to think about what is next on their 'to do' list and ask Superintendent Ruiz or Margaret Marotta, before she leaves, for some recommendations going forward about how to amplify the Early Ed work; to seek greater understanding of what that may entail in order to move forward to the next level. Whether there may be need for resources, training, and someone to actually do this work and try to figure out the right structure and mechanism to make that happen.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Committee of the Whole (COW) School Committee this evening, Mr. Fleming motioned to rise and report. All members seconded the motion. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by:

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Angelica Alayon, Secretary  
Salem School Committee

### Meeting Materials

Committee of the Whole (COW) School Committee Meeting Agenda  
Early Childhood Presentation  
Reorganizing The Way We Work handout  
Salem Early Childhood Center Brochure