



LOWELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Date: March 18, 2026

Time: 6:30PM

Location: City Council Chamber, 375 Merrimack Street, 2nd Floor, Lowell, MA 01852

Members of the public can view the meeting via LTC. Those wishing to speak about a specific agenda item must register in advance by emailing the Superintendent. Please include the agenda item, as well as your phone number and email address so we can provide a Zoom link for access. The email address is skeo@lowell.k12.ma.us. If you do not have access to email, you may contact us at 978-674-4324. All requests must be submitted by 2:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting.

1. SALUTE TO FLAG

2. ROLL CALL

On a call at 6:33 p.m., members present were, namely: Ms. Delrossi, Mayor Gitschier, Mr. Lay, Ms. McFadden, Mr. Bahou and Mr. Conway. Ms. Martin was absent.

3. SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS

3.1. An Executive Session may be called to discuss collective bargaining, strategies and/or possible litigation under Open Meeting Law, Chapter 30A, Section 21 (A) (B), 2, 3 of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts General Laws. Open meeting discussion may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body.

Mr. Bahou moved to suspend the rules to take agenda item 9.1 Climate Resolution out of order; the motion was seconded by Ms. McFadden. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Ms. Martin).

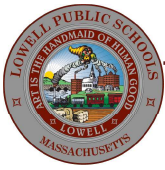
4. MINUTES

4.1. Approval of the Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Lowell School Committee of March 4, 2026.

Mr. Bahou moved to accept and place on file the minutes of the Special and Regularly Scheduled School Committee meetings that were held on March 4, 2026; the motion was seconded by Ms. Delrossi. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Ms. Martin).

4.2. The Approval of the Minutes of the Regularly Scheduled Lowell School Committee Meeting of March 4, 2026.

Mr. Bahou moved to accept and place on file the minutes of the Special and Regularly Scheduled School Committee meetings that were held on March 4, 2026; the motion was seconded by Ms. Delrossi. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Ms. Martin).



5. PERMISSION TO ENTER

5.1. Permission to Enter - March 18, 2026

Mr. Lay moved to approve the Permission to Enter; the motion was seconded by Ms. McFadden. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Ms. Martin).

6. MEMORIALS

6.1. Souphan Deignan, Paraprofessional at the Morey Elementary School

7. MOTIONS

7.1. [By Mayor Gitschier]: Request the Superintendent of Schools provide the School Committee with a five year projection of student enrollment and space needed to meet the needs.

Mayor Gitschier moved to approve; the motion was seconded by Mr. Lay. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Ms. Martin).

7.2. [By Fred Bahou]: Extend Contracts for Assistant Superintendent for Academics & Instruction, Assistant Superintendent for Student Support Services & Assistant Superintendent for School Leadership for 3 years beginning on July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2029, with a salary increase of 3% year one & 2% for year 2 & 3. Also, if the Superintendent fails to notify (Assistant Superintendents) of the renewal of this agreement at least 120 days prior to its expiration, including any period of extension, it shall be automatically renewed for an additional one-year period.

The following individuals registered to speak in opposition to the motion and urged the Committee to delay any vote until the budget is presented. The speakers include Ms. Amlashi, Ms. Maclean, Mr. Georges, Ms. Maggio, Ms. Dumont.

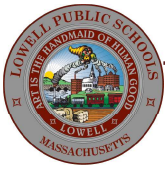
The following individuals registered to speak in favor of the motion and urged the Committee to vote this evening so the good work can continue. The speakers include Ms. Szczesiul and Mr. McDonough.

Mr. Conway moved to suspend the rules to allow the time allowance to be extended for the public speakers; the motion was seconded by Mr. Lay. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Ms. Martin).

Mr. Bahou and Ms. McFadden stated that they believe the district is moving in the right direction under the leadership of the Assistant Superintendents and that they would like to see this progress continue. They added that the Assistant Superintendents deserve to receive this raise.

Mr. Conway stated that he would like to see the budget and is concerned about the deficit that he is hearing about. He doesn't want to see cuts at the classroom level.

Mr. Lay and Ms. Delrossi shared their concerns about cuts at the school level and shared their concerns about the deficit and upcoming budget.



Mayor Gitschier stated that, at the time of the most recent teacher contract negotiations, the future outlook was uncertain, yet the agreement was still approved. He noted that teachers are receiving a 3% increase this year and expressed his belief that the three employees under consideration also deserve the same raise. He added that he was not aware of any budget deficit until hearing about it a day or so ago.

Mr. Bahou moved to amend and approve the motion to extend the contracts for the Assistant Superintendent for Academics & Instruction, the Assistant Superintendent for Student Support Services, and the Assistant Superintendent for School Leadership for one year, from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027. The extension includes a 3% salary increase and retains the language of their current contracts; the motion was seconded by Ms. McFadden. The motion passed with 5 yeas, 1 nay (Mr. Conway), 1 absent (Ms. Martin).

Mr. Lay moved to recess at 8:04 p.m.; the motion was seconded by Ms. McFadden. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Ms. Martin).

On a call at 8:10 p.m., members present were, namely: Ms. Delrossi, Mayor Gitschier, Mr. Lay, Ms. McFadden, Mr. Bahou and Mr. Conway. Ms. Martin was absent.

8. REPORTS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

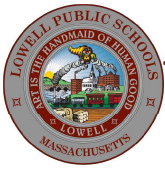
8.1. Strategic Goal Update for Professional Learning

Ms. Crocker-Roberge, Assistant Superintendent for School Leadership, informed the Committee that the district launched this professional learning initiative by reviewing data from two pilot models conducted during the 2024-2025 school year. The first pilot featured a structured, in-school support model led by the district's Academics & Instruction team. The second was a seven-week pilot of Team Learning Cycles implemented across seven schools. In addition to these pilots, a staff survey on coaching practices was conducted in partnership with the Annenberg Institute at Brown University in spring 2025 and is being administered again this week, March 16–20. The results will be used to further refine the district's coaching and professional learning model. Professional learning this year has largely focused on implementing the new ELA curriculum for grades K–10. The district is also preparing to launch the Lowell Public Schools Professional Learning website in summer 2026 for the 2026-2027 school year. This platform will serve as a centralized, accessible hub for professional learning activities, resources, and tools used across schools and departments.

Mr. Bahou moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.7 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Mr. Conway. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Ms. Martin).

8.2. 2025 Graduation and Dropout Rate Results

Ms. Crocker-Roberge, Assistant Superintendent for School Leadership, informed the Committee that following the public release of this information on March 5, 2026, the below data shows the graduation and dropout data for the Class of 2025 cohort, as well as the annual dropout rate for the 2024–2025 school year.



- The district's four-year cohort graduation rate increased by 0.7 percentage points compared to 2024 and is 2.2 percentage points higher than in 2019, the pre-COVID baseline.
- A smaller percentage of students are taking five years to complete high school, decreasing to 5.9% in 2024 from 9.4% in 2019.
- The annual dropout rate of 3.1% is lower than in each of the previous three years and below the 2019 rate of 3.7%.
- The graduation rate for Students with Disabilities reached an eighteen-year high in 2024 and increased further in 2025 to 64.5%, representing a 20 percentage point gain since 2019.
- The graduation rate for Multilingual Learners in 2025 is 69.7%, the highest since 2019, reflecting an increase of more than 10 percentage points over that period.
- The graduation rate gaps between all students and both Students with Disabilities and Multilingual Learners continue to narrow.
- Racial disparities in graduation rates are also narrowing.

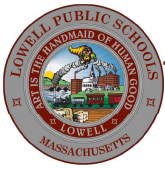
At the district level, the graduation rate of the 4-year cohort of 2025 is 80.2% compared to 78.5 last year and 78% in 2019. At Lowell High School, the graduation rate of the 4-year cohort of 2024 is 83.1% compared to last year and 82.5% in 2019. The 2025 results are higher than last year, and higher than pre-Covid. The district cohort includes graduation results from students attending Lowell High School, the Engagement Center, Career Academy, LeBlanc Therapeutic Day School, and the Adie Day School. The rate improvement reflects the students' and schools' efforts in partnership with the Student Resource Center and Attendance Office.

Mr. Bahou moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.7 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Mr. Conway. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Ms. Martin).

8.3. Finance Report - Analysis of Staffing Growth and Fiscal Transition FY20-FY27

Dr. Pinto, Assistant Superintendent of Finance, provided an update that informed the Committee that as Lowell Public Schools move away from federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding, the district must reconcile the strategic staffing expansions made during the pandemic with long-term fiscal sustainability. The report stated that strategic staffing expansion during the ESSER funding cycle, the district intentionally increased headcount to mitigate learning loss and bolster social-emotional supports. While these additions provided vital intervention capacity, they represent a significant shift in the district's structural cost base. The most significant growth occurred in regular education teachers and mainstream paraprofessionals. Multilingual learners had a baseline of zero in FY20, and the district established a cohort of MLE paraprofessionals, peaking at 33 in FY24 before beginning a projected contraction. This staffing surge occurred despite a nearly flat enrollment trend. District enrollment moved from 14,434 (FY20) to 14,387 (FY26) which is a nominal decrease of 47 students. Consequently, the student-to-staff ratio has decreased significantly, creating a higher per-pupil cost than in the pre-pandemic era.

Mr. Bahou moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.7 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Mr. Conway. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Ms. Martin).



8.4. Response to Motion (By Dave Conway, 01/21/2026) School Safety Protocol

Ms. Crocker-Roberge, Assistant Superintendent for School Leadership, informed the Committee that the following information is provided in response to the motion regarding detailed safety protocol updates for each school and describes how the Lowell Police Department is kept informed of current policies and annual updates. The district Safety Coordinator maintains an active presence at Lowell High School several times per week to have frequent points of contact with the leadership team overseeing all School Resource Officers to review safety procedures, response protocols, and emerging concerns. They also have a formal monthly meeting with representatives from the Lowell Police Department's administrative team and School Resource Officer unit to work on longer-term safety response and preparedness items. This ongoing collaboration ensures that law enforcement remains informed of current district policies and operational procedures. The Safety Coordinator, in partnership with the Facilities Department, conducts biannual safety audits at each school. In addition, a comprehensive district-wide safety audit was conducted in 2023/2024 and will be completed every three years. This year's audits have been tailored to focus on specific safety and facilities needs identified during that process. Based on findings from these audits, the Safety Coordinator collaborates closely with the Information Technology (IT) and Facilities Departments. The team meets weekly on Wednesdays to review safety priorities and coordinate safety initiatives across the district. Current areas of focus include key card access systems, security cameras, and public address (PA) and bell systems. The schools also have door and window numbering. This is done in collaboration with the Lowell Police and Fire Departments. The door numbering has been completed in accordance with established regulations, and window numbering is nearing completion. These measures are designed to improve the speed and accuracy of emergency response significantly. Door and window numbering allows emergency responders to identify specific locations within a school building during an emergency. When emergency personnel arrive on scene, numbered doors and windows provide a common reference system that aligns with building maps and emergency plans.

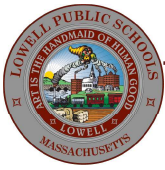
Mr. Bahou moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.7 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Mr. Conway. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Ms. Martin).

8.5. Response To Motion (By Fred Bahou, 01/21/26) Regarding Costs for Transportation for Homeless Students

Dr. Pinto, Assistant Superintendent of Finance, provided an update to the Committee regarding student transportation under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. In accordance with this federal law, Lowell Public Schools (LPS) provides transportation to ensure educational stability for students experiencing homelessness. Please see below:

➤ In-District (Lowell → Lowell):	50 students	\$262,508.90
➤ Into-District (Other Town → Lowell):	93 students	\$535,035.67
➤ Out-of-District (Lowell → Other Town):	217 students	\$2,781,439.49
➤ Total:	360 students	\$3,578,984.06

The data demonstrates that Lowell Public Schools continues to manage a high volume of transportation services for students experiencing homelessness, largely driven by regional shelter placements and



family mobility. Out-of-district transportation represents the largest share of this activity and includes many long-distance routes exceeding 40 miles daily.

Mr. Bahou moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.7 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Mr. Conway. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Ms. Martin).

8.6. Response To Motion (By Eileen DelRossi, 3/04/26) Regarding Receiving Grant Awards Process

Dr. Pinto, Assistant Superintendent of Finance, provided a report to the Committee that informed them that the Grants Department at Lowell Public Schools (LPS) plays a critical role in securing and managing external awards/funding that supports district programs and services. Through partnerships with state and federal agencies and private funders, LPS administers more than 50 individual grants that provide resources to students, staff, and school communities. The Grants Department provides schools with clear direction, consistent procedures, and appropriate fiscal oversight while supporting continued innovation in our schools. Primary funding partners include the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the U.S. Department of Education, and private organizations. These grants expand educational opportunities, support targeted student populations, and advance district priorities. Examples of major grant programs currently administered include: Title I, Title IIA, Title III, Title IV; 21st Century Community Learning Centers; McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Grant. These funds support academic programming, enrichment opportunities, and services for vulnerable student populations, helping advance equity and student success across the district

Mr. Bahou moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.7 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Mr. Conway. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Ms. Martin).

8.7. Personnel Report

The Personnel Report officially informs the Committee of all retirements, resignations, promotions and new hires.

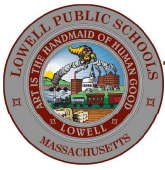
Mr. Bahou moved to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.7 as reports of progress; the motion was seconded by Mr. Conway. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Ms. Martin).

8.8. Home Education

Superintendent Skinner recommended that the following parents/guardians be allowed to home educate their child:

Samantha Dennis

Mr. Lay moved to approve Home Education; the motion was seconded by Ms. Delrossi. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Ms. Martin).



9. NEW BUSINESS

9.1. Climate Resolution

The Massachusetts Audubon Society's Climate Resilient Schools Coalition-Lowell Team presented a resolution to the Committee that informed them that the Lowell Public Schools has a historic opportunity to lead the Commonwealth in climate resiliency, student wellness, and environmental justice. Bolstered by the recent award of up to \$15 million from the US Department of Energy's 2024 Renew America's Schools Prize, our district is well-positioned to turn existing momentum into long-term, systemic action. The impacts of extreme heat, flooding, and air pollution disproportionately affect urban school districts, directly impacting student health and learning. In response to growing student demand for climate action and leveraging partnerships with UMass Lowell, Mill City Grows, and MASSDOT, this resolution provides a comprehensive roadmap for a sustainable future. The resolution outlines actionable steps to decarbonize our infrastructure, modernize our transportation, and ensure that every student has access to interdisciplinary climate education, nutritious food, and a healthy learning environment. The resolution was written by student Lilly Ros, who developed the objectives through focus groups involving community partners, classmates, and Lowell Public School teachers and administrators.

Mr. Bahou moved to accept the report as a report of progress; the motion was seconded by Mr. Lay. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Ms. Martin).

9.2. Finance Public Hearings-Annual School Budget

In accordance with the School Committee approved FY27 Budget Calendar, it is the intent of the LPS Finance Office to hold public hearings on the Superintendent's Proposed FY27 Annual Budget. The draft FY27 Budget Calendar that was approved December 17, 2025 notes two dates that are aligned with regularly scheduled School Committee meetings, and the "if needed" on the off-week date is scheduled as a placeholder at this time.

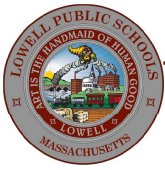
9.3. Approval To Accept and Expend Allocated FY26 Awards

The grants funds provided in the report have been secured by the Lowell Public Schools through the United Way of Massachusetts Bay Inc., and the State Treasury's Financial Education Innovation Fund.

Mr. Lay moved to approve, accept and expend the allocated FY26 awards; the motion was seconded by Ms. McFadden. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Ms. Martin)

9.4. Budget Modification Request

Mr. Lay moved to approve the budget modification in the amount of \$9,996.47; the motion was seconded by Ms. Delrossi. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Ms. Martin).



10. CONVENTION/CONFERENCE REQUESTS

10.1. Overnight Travel Request - LHS to Emerson College in Boston, MA

Ms. McFadden moved to bundle and approve the convention/conference requests; the motion was seconded by Mr. Lay. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Ms. Martin).

10.2. Out of State Over Night Convention Request - Nashville, TN

Ms. McFadden moved to bundle and approve the convention/conference requests; the motion was seconded by Mr. Lay. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Ms. Martin).

11. PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL

11.1. The Members of the United Teachers of Lowell Hereby Donate thirty [30] Sick Leave Days To Kelly Ash McAuliffe School Paraprofessional.

Mr. Conway moved to approve the professional personnel; the motion was seconded by Ms. Delrossi. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Ms. Martin).

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION

12.1. Items:

1. Continued discussion on negotiations and potential courses of action related to Facilities' leases and uses, in consideration of benefits of proposed legal notices, actions, and studies.

The Executive Session was cancelled.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Bahou moved to adjourn at 9:03 p.m.; the motion was seconded by Mr. Conway. The motion passed with 6 yeas, 1 absent (Ms. Martin).

Respectfully submitted,

Liam Skinner, Superintendent and
Secretary to the Lowell School Committee

LS/mes