



Springfield Public Schools
Office of the School Committee
1550 Main Street, 2 FLR
Springfield, MA 01103-1410

SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MINUTES OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, January 29, 2026

LOCATION

City Hall, 36 Court Street, 2 FLR,
Room 220, Springfield, MA

I. CALL TO ORDER – REGULAR MEETING – ROLL CALL

The Chair, Mayor Sarno called the Regular Meeting to order at 6:37 PM.

Roll Call Attendance:

Ms. Valentin - Present
Ms. Crawford - Present
Ms. Hurst - Absent
Mr. Gomez, Jr. - Present
Ms. Gresham - Present
Ms. Monroe-Naylor (Vice Chair) - Present
Mayor Sarno (Chair) - Present

A. Invocation

The meeting began with a moment of silence.

B. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge of allegiance was led by the Chair, Mayor Sarno.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:

A. Vote to approve the Minutes of the School Committee's Regular Meeting on December 18, 2025.

With no further questions, a motion was made by Mr. Gomez, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Gresham.

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Valentin - Yes
Ms. Crawford - Yes
Ms. Hurst - Absent
Mr. Gomez, Jr. - Yes
Ms. Gresham - Yes
Ms. Monroe-Naylor (Vice Chair) - Yes



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Mayor Sarno (Chair) - Yes

Motion passes to approve the Minutes of the School Committee's Regular Meeting on December 18, 2025.

III. **VOTING ITEMS:**

- A. Vote to approve the expenditure of \$28,859.00 from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education – FC710 MA Farming Reinforces Education and Student Health Grant.

Superintendent Dr. Dinnall expressed enthusiasm about receiving and utilizing funds to further develop the district's gardening and farming initiatives. She shared that many students across the schools actively participate in gardening projects, with some maintaining small, flourishing gardens. She reflected on her arrival at Liberty School, where she was warmly welcomed with a basket of fresh vegetables grown and harvested by students. The grant funding, she explained, would help expand the capacity of early childhood educators to integrate gardening into classroom instruction, strengthening hands-on learning opportunities connected to health, nutrition, and environmental education.

With no further questions, a motion was made by Ms. Monroe-Naylor and seconded by Ms. Crawford.

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Valentin - Yes
Ms. Crawford - Yes
Ms. Hurst - Absent
Mr. Gomez, Jr. - Yes
Ms. Gresham - Yes
Ms. Monroe-Naylor (Vice Chair) - Yes
Mayor Sarno (Chair) - Yes

Motion passes to approve the expenditure of \$28,859.00 from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education – FC710 MA Farming Reinforces Education and Student Health Grant.

- B. Vote to approve the expenditure of \$550,000.00 from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education – FC 2517- Fair Share Earmarks Grant.

Superintendent Dr. Dinnall explained that the proposal had already been reviewed and advanced by a subcommittee and was now before the full committee for approval. She expressed appreciation to the district's state legislators for advocating on behalf of Springfield Public Schools and securing the earmarked funding. She emphasized the importance of the investment, noting that Chief Patrici Roach and his facilities team consistently work to ensure that school buildings are safe, welcoming, and conducive to high-quality learning.

The funds will support several targeted initiatives across the district. Improvements are planned for Chestnut Accelerated Middle School (TAG) and Dorman Elementary School, with additional



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resources directed toward multilingual learners through the purchase of specialized materials and equipment. The grant will also expand arts programming and provide support to Indian Orchard School and Boland Elementary School.

Following the superintendent's remarks, additional thanks were extended to key contributors involved in securing and planning the use of the funds. With no further questions, a motion was made by Ms. Monroe-Naylor and seconded by Ms. Valentin.

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Valentin - Yes
Ms. Crawford - Yes
Ms. Hurst - Absent
Mr. Gomez, Jr. - Yes
Ms. Gresham - Yes
Ms. Monroe-Naylor (Vice Chair) - Yes
Mayor Sarno (Chair) - Yes

Motion passes to approve the expenditure of \$550,000.00 from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education – FC 2517- Fair Share Earmarks Grant.

- C. Vote to approve the expenditure of \$510,000.00 from the Executive Office of Education – FC 2517- Fair Share Earmarks Grant.

Superintendent Dr. Dinnall expressed enthusiasm about the funding, describing it as both innovative and unprecedented in the region. A portion of the funds will be used at Pottenger Elementary School, Kensington International School, and Brookings Elementary School to build audiovisual infrastructure designed to enhance translation services and improve communication with multilingual families and students. District leaders view this as a pilot initiative that could later be expanded to additional schools if successful.

The grant will also address facilities improvements. Although the fire alarm system at Springfield High School of Science and Technology is currently operational, funds will be used to replace aging components and modernize the system to ensure it meets the highest safety standards. Additionally, Margaret C. Ells School will receive upgrades to improve accessibility, reinforcing the district's commitment to ADA compliance and equitable access across all school buildings.

During discussion, Ms. Monroe-Naylor noted that the proposal had advanced unanimously through subcommittee and expressed appreciation to state legislators for their collaborative advocacy in securing the earmarked funds. It was also clarified that the selection of specific schools was based on strategic considerations, including existing technological infrastructure and readiness to pilot new systems. The intent is to evaluate the effectiveness of these investments before scaling them districtwide.

With no further questions, a motion was made by Ms. Gresham and seconded by Mr. Gomez, Jr.

Roll Call Vote:



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Ms. Valentin - Yes
Ms. Crawford - Yes
Ms. Hurst - Absent
Mr. Gomez, Jr. - Yes
Ms. Gresham - Yes
Ms. Monroe-Naylor (Vice Chair) - Yes
Mayor Sarno (Chair) - Yes

Motion passes to approve the expenditure of \$510,000.00 from the Executive Office of Education – FC 2517- Fair Share Earmarks Grant.

D. Vote to approve the FY27 Budget Calendar.

Superintendent Dr. Dinnall explained that the proposed calendar had already been reviewed in the subcommittee, where it passed unanimously. She described the FY27 budget calendar as comprehensive, balanced, and intentionally centered on students while incorporating meaningful opportunities for community voice. During the subcommittee process, members offered constructive feedback, which the administration incorporated into the revised calendar now before the full committee. District leadership emphasized its commitment to welcoming public comment and engaging the broader community as the budget is developed.

Vice Chair, Ms. Monroe-Naylor added that while there were no major structural changes to the draft calendar, one adjustment was made to better accommodate participation: the April 8 subcommittee meeting will now begin at 4:00 p.m., recognizing that it is expected to be lengthy. She also highlighted a suggestion from Ms. Crawford to broaden public access to the budget document. In addition to posting the budget on the Springfield Public Schools website, placing copies in libraries, and making it available at central office, the district will now distribute it to neighborhood councils and community centers to ensure wider visibility.

Committee members underscored the importance of public engagement, particularly the March 4 public input session, which will provide residents with an opportunity to share concerns and priorities before the formal April hearing. By the time of the hearing, proposed additions and adjustments will already have been discussed, making early input essential.

With no further questions, a motion was made by Ms. Gresham and seconded by Ms. Monroe-Naylor.

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Valentin - Yes
Ms. Crawford - Yes
Ms. Hurst - Absent
Mr. Gomez, Jr. - Yes
Ms. Gresham - Yes
Ms. Monroe-Naylor (Vice Chair) - Yes
Mayor Sarno (Chair) - Yes



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Motion passes to approve the FY27 Budget Calendar.

- E. Vote to approve the new position, including job description, of the Executive Director of Innovation Schools.

Superintendent Dr. Dinnall expressed enthusiasm about the transition of eight schools back into the district from the Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership. She explained that the new executive director role is essential to preserving the key conditions those schools experienced while operating within the zone model. Central to the position's purpose is maintaining school autonomies and sustaining the high-leverage strategies and innovative practices that contributed to their progress. The role will serve as a safeguard to ensure that these structures and opportunities remain intact as the schools reintegrate into Springfield Public Schools.

The superintendent emphasized the district's commitment to a smooth and collaborative transition, noting that leadership is actively listening to parents, students, educators, and staff throughout the process. Additional remarks from committee members acknowledged the significant work undertaken by district administrators, particularly highlighting the efforts made to ensure that the transition is both respectful and seamless for teachers and school leaders returning to the district

With no further questions, a motion was made by Ms. Gresham and seconded by Ms. Crawford.

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Valentin - Yes
Ms. Crawford - Yes
Ms. Hurst - Absent
Mr. Gomez, Jr. - Yes
Ms. Gresham - Yes
Ms. Monroe-Naylor (Vice Chair) - Yes
Mayor Sarno (Chair) - Yes

Motion passes to approve the new position, including job description, of the Executive Director of Innovation Schools.

IV. PRESENTATIONS:

- A. College & Career Readiness. Superintendent Dr. Dinnall opened the presentation by emphasizing the long-standing commitment to this work. Reflecting on her own time serving on Dr. Johnson's team years ago, she noted the success the district has seen and reaffirmed that preparing students for life beyond high school remains central to the district's mission. College and career readiness, she said, is not just about graduation—it is about equipping students for postsecondary success and adulthood.

Dr. Johnson began by framing the work through a holistic lens. While academic preparedness is critical, she explained, true college and career readiness goes beyond grades and test scores. It



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also includes academic tenacity, self-discipline, self-regulation, and practical knowledge about navigating college and career pathways. The goal is not simply enrollment in college, but persistence, completion, and meaningful credential attainment.

A snapshot of district data revealed both progress and areas for growth. The team shared cumulative GPA trends across grade levels and academic performance in English language arts and mathematics, disaggregated by student groups including multilingual learners, exceptional learners, and low-income students. Dr. Johnson acknowledged that while there is work to do, the data must also be understood in context, including students who have returned after time away from school. Attendance emerged as a key factor: students with higher GPAs consistently demonstrated strong attendance rates, reinforcing the district's "Attend Today, Achieve Tomorrow" initiative.

Dr. Rose Boulay then highlighted promising trends in advanced coursework. Completion of Advanced Placement and early college coursework has steadily increased from 2022 to 2025, with an overall 9% gain. More students are taking rigorous classes that better prepare them for postsecondary success.

She also provided an update on MyCAP (My Career and Academic Plan), implemented through the School Links digital platform. With a current completion rate of 52%, the district continues to focus on increasing student engagement, particularly among sophomores and juniors, so students can better explore career pathways aligned with their interests and strengths.

Another major point of pride was FAFSA completion. For the first time in four years, the district is mirroring the state's submission rate—an improvement from previously trailing by 10–13 percentage points. The team expressed confidence in reaching its 62% completion goal, particularly by supporting students who have already begun applications.

Ms. Pamela Mathison then updated the committee on Innovation Career Pathways (ICP) programs. Central High School, newly designated last May, has launched its first semester with 49 enrolled students and nearly 100 participating in introductory engineering courses. Partnerships with organizations such as the 18 Foundation, Project Lead the Way, and Spark Photonics have strengthened programming, including the introduction of microelectronics initiatives supported through Intel funding.

Renaissance School, now in its second year of implementation, is expected to grow to approximately 50 students and is expanding into building trades connected to environmental science, with potential collaboration on a clean energy pilot program. Meanwhile, the Conservatory's pathway program, now in its sixth year, continues to thrive, particularly in computer science and digital media, with strong portfolio-building opportunities for students.

Looking ahead, the district is preparing for potential expansion of state Innovation Career Pathways funding, including the development of healthcare pathways across multiple schools. Plans are also underway to create industry-aligned, state-of-the-art lab spaces—particularly at Central—to give students authentic, real-world learning environments.



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The presentation concluded with updates on work-based learning and community partnerships. In collaboration with MassHire, the district is on track to meet or exceed its placement goals. Programs such as Springfield Water and Sewer's student employment initiative were praised as model partnerships, offering students hands-on experience and paid opportunities that have already led to district hires in IT, fire, and public works.

Committee members responded with enthusiasm and gratitude. Several members commended Dr. Johnson and her team for their dedication and the measurable progress demonstrated. One member, visibly moved, stood to speak and expressed deep pride in seeing how far the programs have come since their early stages, calling the work "heartwarming" and affirming its impact on Springfield students.

The presentation closed on a positive note, with a shared sense that while challenges remain, strong momentum is building. The district's comprehensive, data-informed, and partnership-driven approach is steadily strengthening pathways that prepare students not only to graduate—but to thrive beyond high school.

V. INFORMATIONAL/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- A. Review and discuss the Budget Survey. Superintendent Dr. Dinnall opened the discussion by situating the survey within the broader budget calendar, describing it as a critical component of building a balanced and community-informed financial plan for Springfield Public Schools. She emphasized that the district values community voice and sees the questionnaire as an important tool for gathering input to ensure the final budget reflects both student needs and community priorities.

Chief Azell Cavaan then provided an overview of the six-question survey, which is administered on behalf of the School Committee. She explained that the survey first asks respondents to identify themselves as stakeholders—whether they are parents, staff members, or community members. Participants are then asked to rank district programs and services in order of importance. The survey also includes an open-ended section, inviting suggestions for cost savings or additional ideas related to the budget.

Ms. Cavaan detailed the district's outreach efforts to encourage participation. The survey is posted on the district website and promoted through robocalls to families, social media, a media release, and local cable access Channel 15. Additionally, the district utilizes a growing communications network called "Amplify to Empower," composed of roughly 100 community leaders and organizations who share district information within their own networks. Families who prefer a paper copy can request one by phone, and communications also include information about upcoming public input sessions.

Historically, responses have ranged from 700 to over 1,000 participants. The majority of respondents—typically between 60% and 70%—are staff members. Families account for roughly 20%, with the remaining responses coming from central office staff, community members, and individuals selecting "other."

MS. Cavaan underscored that the survey is not scientific in nature but is intended to gather broad



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community input. The results are shared with the School Committee to help inform members as they deliberate and ultimately approve the district's budget.

With no questions from committee members, the presentation concluded efficiently, reinforcing the district's commitment to transparency, engagement, and inclusive decision-making during budget season.

VI. REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES:

A. Student and Parent Concerns (Ms. Gresham, Chair)

- a. No report.

B. Buildings and Maintenance (Mr. Gomez, Jr., Chair)

- a. No report.

C. Legislative and Contracts (Ms. Crawford, Chair)

- a. No report.

D. Curriculum and Programs (Ms. Hurst, Chair)

- a. No report.

E. Budget and Finance (Ms. Monroe-Naylor, Chair)

- a. All items were discussed with no additional report.

F. Career Technical Education (Mr. Gomez, Jr., Chair)

- a. No report.

G. Technology (Ms. Monroe-Naylor, Chair)

- a. No report.

H. School Safety (Ms. Gresham, Chair)

- a. No report.

I. Diversity/Equity/Inclusion (Ms. Crawford, Chair)

- a. No report.

J. Innovation School (Ms. Valentin, Chair)

- a. No report.



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VII. REPORT OF THE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE:

- A. Alexandra Rivera, Senior at Central High School. Introduced with appreciation for her strong service throughout the year, Alexandra began by expressing gratitude for the opportunity to serve. She described her time on the committee not simply as a résumé highlight, but as a deeply meaningful experience. While she initially believed the role might feel like being “president of the students,” she said she quickly realized it was something different. Rather than leading from the front, she found herself in the position of “receiver”—absorbing the passion, care, and dedication of educators, administrators, and fellow students working tirelessly to improve the district.

She spoke warmly about the relationships she formed during her tenure, naming district leaders and staff who demonstrated that meaningful change requires both hard work and a genuine capacity to care. She emphasized that serving on the committee allowed her to witness firsthand the effort invested in creating supportive, opportunity-rich environments across the district’s schools.

As a token of appreciation, Alexandra shared that the Black Student Union at Central, along with Principal Tokarz, would be presenting members of the School Committee with a small gift—a BSU quarter-zip sweatshirt—as a symbol of gratitude and remembrance of their service to students.

In keeping with her formal role, she also delivered updates from student life. Central’s knitting and crochet club was launching a fundraiser to support club supplies and expand opportunities. The Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) group was developing surveys for ninth-grade teams to assess student experiences and identify areas for growth and improvement. She also highlighted the recent introduction of the Innovation Career Pathway (ICP) program at Central, noting how engineering courses and related career partnerships were helping students clarify and accelerate their aspirations in fields they love.

Closing on a personal note, Alexandra expressed her desire to continue nurturing student-centered projects and strengthening connections between students and the broader community. Though her time as a representative felt short, she said she gained unexpected lessons and growth from the experience. She encouraged committee members to continue leading with the passion and care she had witnessed during her service.

Committee members responded with warmth and praise. Several highlighted the value of the district’s rotating student representative model, which allows more students to participate in governance. They commended Alexandra for her consistent preparation, advocacy not only for her own school but for students districtwide, and for taking responsibility seriously. Members shared that student representatives often provide insights—both celebratory and constructive—that adults might otherwise overlook.

The meeting concluded with applause, small tokens of appreciation, and lighthearted encouragement that the committee would “keep an eye on her” as she continues her journey. Alexandra’s farewell reflected both gratitude and promise, embodying the talent and leadership present across the district’s students.



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VIII. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT:

- A. Superintendent Dr. Dinnall began her remarks by offering a heartfelt tribute to student representative Alexandra Rivera, thanking her for the grace, poise, and patience she demonstrated throughout her service. She acknowledged the long hours Alexandra often waited to speak and praised the maturity with which she represented the students of Springfield Public Schools. The Superintendent extended gratitude to Alexandra's parents, noting the partnership between families and schools in preparing students for future success, and confidently predicted that Alexandra's path ahead would be bright.

She then reflected on the recent State of the Schools event, held just before the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend. The evening, she said, showcased "the best and the brightest" across the district. From the student emcee to elementary, middle, and high school presenters, each participant demonstrated excellence and pride. A second-grade reader captivated the audience with expressive delivery. Middle school students shared their MyCAP journeys and portfolio work. A Discovery Polytech student impressed attendees by presenting alongside a robot she helped develop—an example of the power of hands-on, innovative learning.

One particularly moving moment came from First Lieutenant Brandon Stewart of the U.S. Marine Corps, a graduate of Sci-Tech. His return to share how his Springfield education shaped his path to aviation service was described as both humbling and inspiring. Leaders praised not only his accomplishments, but his humility and character, holding him up as a powerful example of what district graduates can achieve.

The Superintendent also noted that several schools were inducted into the district's "500 Club" and formally introduced the district's Strategic Growth Plan. To symbolize collective belief in the work ahead, she distributed lapel pins reading "Ask Me Why I Believe," encouraging School Committee members to serve as ambassadors for the district's mission and proudly share why they believe in Springfield's students and educators.

Community partnerships featured prominently in her update. She highlighted a generous donation from the Springfield Thunderbirds to Walsh Elementary School. While students were excited to see district leaders, it was the appearance of the team's mascot, Boomer, that truly electrified the auditorium. Beyond the fun, the Thunderbirds provided meaningful donations and supplies, reinforcing their role as strong local partners.

The Superintendent reported continued progress from her school walkthroughs, noting visible growth in Tier 1 instruction and clearer alignment between professional development, coaching, and classroom practice. She commended district leaders for strengthening instruction around grade-level content and checks for understanding.

A new partnership with Bay Path University and BloomBoard was also announced. Through this collaboration, paraprofessionals with aspirations of becoming teachers will enter a program without a degree and exit fully certified—creating a powerful grow-your-own pipeline for educators.

The Superintendent reflected on the city's Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration, hosted by the



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King Center, and connected its theme of “restoring justice and reclaiming the dream” to the district’s civic engagement efforts. She praised ongoing work to strengthen civics education and expand opportunities for student participation.

Early literacy remains a central focus, with pilot programs underway in partnership with external vendors. Early data, she reported, is promising, showing measurable improvement in reading outcomes when research-based strategies are implemented with fidelity.

She also updated the committee on the screening process for innovation schools, marking the first formal step in welcoming eight schools back from the Springfield Empowerment Zone. Acknowledging that negotiations were not without challenges, she thanked union leadership and district staff for persevering and ultimately reaching decisions centered on students’ best interests.

In closing, the Superintendent shared a powerful example of rapid-response partnership. Ahead of a major snowstorm that led to school closures, she reached out to district and community leaders to address potential food insecurity. Within hours, nearly 1,000 meals were distributed to families—an effort made possible through swift coordination and community collaboration. What began as a request for snacks turned into a large-scale meal distribution that exceeded expectations and met an urgent need.

Her remarks concluded with gratitude—to students, staff, partners, and community leaders—for collectively advancing the district’s mission.

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

X. NEW BUSINESS

On a motion made by Ms. Monroe-Naylor and seconded by Ms. Gresham, it was voted to adjourn the meeting.

Roll Call Vote to Adjourn:

Ms. Valentin - Yes
Ms. Crawford - Yes
Ms. Hurst - Absent
Mr. Gomez, Jr. - Yes
Ms. Gresham - Yes
Ms. Monroe-Naylor (Vice Chair) - Yes
Mayor Sarno (Chair) - Yes

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,



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S P R I N G F I E L D P U B L I C S C H O O L S

Triny Vargas
Executive Assistant to the School Committee