



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 15, 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 7:03 PM.

Roll Call Attendance:

Ms. Valentin - Present
Ms. Crawford - Present
Ms. Hurst - Present
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 4, 2025.

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

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Valentin - Yes
Ms. Crawford - Yes
Ms. Hurst - Yes
Mr. Gomez, Jr. - Yes
Ms. Gresham - Yes



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Ms. Monroe-Naylor (Vice Chair) - Yes
Mayor Sarno (Chair) - Yes

Motion passes to approve the Minutes of the School Committee's Regular Meeting on December 4, 2025.

- B. Vote to approve the Minutes of the School Committee's Special Meeting on December 15, 2025, at 5:15 PM.

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

Roll Call Vote:

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

Motion passes to approve the Minutes of the School Committee's Special Meeting on December 15, 2025, at 5:15 PM.

- C. Vote to approve the Minutes of the School Committee's Special Meeting on December 15, 2025, at 6:00 PM.

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

Roll Call Vote:

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

Motion passes to approve the Minutes of the School Committee's Special Meeting on December 15, 2025, at 6:00 PM.

- D. Vote to approve the Minutes of the School Committee's Special Meeting on December 18, 2025.



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

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

III. VOTING ITEMS:

- A. Vote to approve Springfield Conservatory of the Art's same day field trip request to the Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY on January 23, 2026.

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

Roll Call Vote:

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

Motion passes to approve Springfield Conservatory of the Art's same day field trip request to the Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY on January 23, 2026.

- B. Vote to approve Springfield Conservatory of the Art's same day field trip request to Kingswood Oxford School's 14th Annual A Capella Competition in West Hartford, CT on January 24, 2026.

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

Roll Call Vote:



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

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

Motion passes to approve Springfield Conservatory of the Art's same day field trip request to Kingswood Oxford School's 14th Annual A Capella Competition in West Hartford, CT on January 24, 2026.

- C. Vote to approve Bowles Elementary School's overnight field trip request to Red Gate Farm in Ashfield, MA on June 1, 2026, and returning June 3, 2026.

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

Roll Call Vote:

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

Motion passes to approve Bowles Elementary School's overnight field trip request to Red Gate Farm in Ashfield, MA on June 1, 2026, and returning June 3, 2026.

IV. PRESENTATIONS:

- A. Middle School Transformation. The district presented a comprehensive progress update on its Middle School Transformation initiative, emphasizing that the work extends beyond rhetoric and is being actively implemented through intentional structures, instructional shifts, and student-centered experiences. District leaders, principals, and instructional staff highlighted how the transformation is grounded in research showing that attendance, academic performance, school culture, and eighth-grade outcomes are strong predictors of long-term success in high school, college, and careers.

The strategy centers on four interconnected focus areas: teaching and learning; career planning and exploration; student voice; and family empowerment and student well-being. Principals from STEM Middle Academy and South End Middle School shared how redesigned schedules have increased instructional time for core subjects while adding acceleration blocks that provide targeted intervention or enrichment based on ongoing data review. Families have responded positively, noting clearer communication and more responsive academic support for students.



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Instructionally, both schools have narrowed their focus to two district priorities: grade-level instruction and authentic checks for understanding. Through professional learning, educators are deepening their understanding of grade-level standards and high-quality instructional materials, ensuring lessons are rigorous, engaging, and accessible. Leaders stressed the importance of daily formative assessment—not as a measure of compliance, but as a true gauge of student understanding—so learning gaps can be addressed early, and strengths amplified.

Partnerships have played a key role in supporting this work. Organizations such as UnboundEd and Mass Insight are collaborating with teachers, coaches, and administrators to strengthen math instruction, particularly in eighth-grade Algebra I and algebra readiness. The district expanded access to Algebra I across most middle schools and provided professional development to ensure students are supported. While expected challenges have surfaced, including gaps in foundational math skills, educators report strong collaboration and enthusiasm, with additional supports such as Saturday Algebra School launching to reinforce skills and confidence.

Beyond academics, schools are reshaping middle school experience through enrichment and joy. New enrichment courses—including financial literacy and creative writing—have deepened student engagement and resulted in tangible outcomes, such as the launch of South End Middle School’s first student newspaper. Leaders emphasized that these opportunities help students feel connected, inspired, and proud of their learning.

Student voice has also been elevated through Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) programs at both schools. Students across grade levels are developing leadership skills by analyzing data, conducting surveys, identifying schoolwide issues, and proposing solutions. This work has empowered students to see themselves as change agents and has strengthened their sense of belonging and ownership within their school communities.

Career and college readiness have been intentionally embedded into the middle school schedule through dedicated weekly programming. Students engage in goal setting, GPA analysis, career interest inventories, and virtual college tours, building early awareness and purpose as they prepare for high school. Counselors and teachers work together to ensure these experiences support both academic planning and student well-being, while also helping students develop resilience, emotional regulation, and collaborative skills.

The district also provided an update on middle schools transitioning back into the system, noting strong alignment with transformation priorities based on third-party School Quality Reviews. These reviews confirmed that foundational structures—such as effective schedules, instructional routines, leadership teams, family engagement, and student support systems—are firmly in place. Leaders expressed confidence that these schools are well-positioned to continue improving instruction, student ownership, and alignment from elementary through high school.

The presentation concluded with acknowledgments of the collective effort involved in the transformation, praise for school leaders and educators, and recognition of the positive momentum underway. District leadership reaffirmed its commitment to refining alignment across grade spans and ensuring that middle school students experience rigor, joy, support, and a strong sense of purpose as they move forward.



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V. INFORMATIONAL/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- A. Discuss the scheduling of the school committee retreat. The school committee engaged in a discussion focused on scheduling a long-anticipated committee retreat, emphasizing its importance for collaboration, clarity, and effective governance. Superintendent Dr. Dinnall expressed a strong desire to convene the retreat and invited input from committee members to help identify a workable date. She acknowledged that multiple attempts had been made in the past, but conflicting schedules had prevented the retreat from moving forward.

Committee members voiced broad support for holding the retreat, recognizing the challenges of aligning schedules but stressing the value of planning well in advance. There was consensus that an early spring timeframe could be realistic if planning began promptly. Members also highlighted the opportunity to partner with the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC), which offers the “Charting the Course” training. Given the number of newer committee members, several participants noted that this training would serve as both an orientation and a refresher and could potentially be coordinated alongside the retreat to meet statutory requirements.

It was noted that similar retreats had been held in the past during periods of committee transition, including sessions facilitated by MASC, and that these experiences had helped foster camaraderie and shared understanding among members. Committee leadership emphasized that retreats are not only procedural necessities, but also valuable opportunities to strengthen relationships and teamwork.

Vice Chair, Ms. Monroe-Naylor, clarified that new committee members were already scheduled to attend a “Charting the Course” session on March 21, with attendance confirmed. Given ongoing scheduling constraints, she suggested that the retreat focus less on general training and more on internal communication and operations specific to the district. She underscored the importance of helping members better understand the practical scope of the committee’s role within the district, beyond general governance principles, while still respecting individual perspectives.

Additional discussion touched on logistical considerations, including location. It was clarified that one of the scheduled MASC sessions would be held outside the immediate region, prompting conversation about the possibility of hosting a similar session closer to home in Western Massachusetts. This could allow for broader participation and potentially enable an earlier collaborative opportunity.

The discussion concluded with acknowledgment of the available options for training and retreat planning, and the shared understanding that the committee has flexibility in how it structures these opportunities. With no further questions or comments, the chair moved the meeting forward to the next agenda item.

- B. Discuss the scheduling of subcommittee meetings. The school committee discussed a proposal to streamline the scheduling of subcommittee meetings, acknowledging the ongoing challenges of coordinating multiple member schedules throughout the year. To improve efficiency and predictability, leadership recommended establishing a standing meeting time for every other



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Wednesday from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. for all subcommittee meetings.

Under the proposed structure, subcommittee meetings would be held on Wednesdays opposite full school committee meetings. This scheduling approach would allow subcommittees adequate time to meet, deliberate, and make decisions, while also ensuring that any resulting items could be placed on the subsequent school committee agenda in a timely manner.

Committee members raised clarifying points regarding joint subcommittee meetings, emphasizing the importance of maintaining transparency for the public. It was suggested that when joint meetings are necessary, committees should formally adjourn one meeting before convening the next, rather than combining them, so that committee membership and participation remain clear.

Members expressed general support for the proposal. One committee member specifically welcomed the idea of a consistent, predictable meeting block and requested that calendar holds be sent in advance to help members adjust their schedules. Acknowledging that the proposal was newly introduced, the committee noted the need for flexibility during the initial weeks as members worked to clear their calendars.

With no further questions or comments, the discussion concluded, reflecting shared interest in adopting a more organized and accessible approach to subcommittee scheduling.

- C. Discuss the addition of future town hall meetings. The committee discussed a proposal to expand community engagement by introducing formal town hall meetings that would create additional opportunities for families, students, and school committee members to connect outside of regular meetings. The discussion built on the district's existing community outreach efforts, including Super Saturdays and Super Sundays, which have been well received and have fostered trust, open dialogue, and collaborative problem-solving between families and district staff.

Superintendent Dr. Dinnall emphasized that these outreach events have been meaningful and informative, reinforcing the district's commitment to being embedded in the community. She noted that while current engagement efforts allow families to interact with district staff, they do not always provide direct opportunities for families to engage with school committee members. The proposed town halls would address that gap by creating a structured space for dialogue and relationship-building.

Vice Chair, Ms. Monroe-Naylor added context to the proposal, explaining that legal constraints limit how school committee members can respond to public comments during formal meetings. She noted that past issues—such as concerns requiring additional explanation and transparency—have necessitated the scheduling of special town halls on short notice. By establishing two standing town hall meetings each year, one in the fall and one in the spring, the committee would have a predictable and centralized forum to address community concerns more effectively.

These planned town halls would allow community members to submit questions in advance, enabling the district and committee to prepare thoughtful responses and provide frequently asked questions to improve clarity and transparency. This approach would also allow the committee to share information about ongoing work that may not typically be discussed during regular meetings.



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With no further questions or comments, the committee concluded the discussion and moved forward with the meeting agenda, reflecting shared support for enhancing structured, proactive engagement with the community.

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. Mr. Gomez, Jr. requested an update on Gerena and its future, as well as a briefing of any ongoing issues or future projects.
- 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. No report. A subcommittee meeting is scheduled for the following week.
- 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.

VII. REPORT OF THE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE:



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A. Alexandra Rivera, Senior at Central High School.

Alexandra provided an update highlighting student achievements, school spirit, and upcoming activities, offering a firsthand perspective on the vibrant experiences taking place at the high school. Introducing herself as Alexandra, known as Sophie, the senior shared her appreciation for the opportunity to speak and reflected on the positive momentum of the new year.

The student representative also highlighted extracurricular and schoolwide events that contribute to student engagement and school pride. She noted the Panini Hoop Hall Classic, hosted at Springfield College, where Central's boys' and girls' basketball teams are competing against teams from across the country. The tournament has generated excitement among students and has served as a major point of school spirit and community interest.

Several upcoming student activities were shared, including a planned senior skating event in February, which has generated enthusiasm among many seniors. Sophie also discussed academic enrichment opportunities, particularly her participation in the Botany and Environmental Club and an upcoming science fair focused on environmental improvement. She described her project proposal for a community composting initiative aimed at reducing food waste and greenhouse gas emissions, as well as other student projects such as planting greenery along highways to improve environmental health.

In addition, she highlighted cultural and community-building activities led by student organizations, including the Black Student Union's upcoming Family Feud-style competition and banquet, which brings together students across grade levels in a fun and inclusive setting.

The update concluded with an expression of gratitude for the opportunity to share student experiences and a lighthearted encouragement for attendees to support Central High School athletics. Overall, the presentation reflected strong student engagement, academic ambition, environmental awareness, and a positive school culture at Springfield Central High School.

VIII. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT:

- A. Superintendent Dr. Dinnall provided a concise update highlighting recent accomplishments and ongoing initiatives within Springfield Public Schools. She began by sharing her engagement with the community on financial literacy, noting her appearance alongside Vice Chair Ms. Monroe-Naylor on the Lewis and Monroe Financial Hour on WTCC. Dr. Dinnall emphasized the district's commitment to embedding financial literacy across the educational experience, a priority that emerged during the superintendent search process and continues to be a focus with both the school committee and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Next, Dr. Dinnall highlighted the success of the recent Middle and High School Choice Fair held at Putnam, which drew over 400 families. The event showcased collaboration across departments, including principals, Assistant Superintendent Jose Escibano, and Chief Bob St. Lawrence. Families were provided bilingual training on the new choice software to ensure they could make informed enrollment decisions.



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Dr. Dinnall also recognized ongoing professional development for educators. Chief Valerie Williams and her team led extended new educator orientation sessions throughout the school year, designed to support teachers' growth and ensure high-quality instruction across the district. In addition, Dr. Dinnall acknowledged classroom visits with Assistant Superintendent Terry Powe and academic directors to nine schools, noting strong evidence of teacher growth and effective coaching practices at White Street, Kensington, and Washington Elementary.

The superintendent highlighted a visit from University of Massachusetts Chancellor Dr. Javier Reyes to Discovery High School. Dr. Reyes met with students and district leaders to discuss expanding UMass support for college and career pathways, including dual enrollment and early college programs, with particular attention to ensuring opportunities for exceptional learners.

Finally, Dr. Dinnall reminded the committee about the upcoming State of the Schools event. She shared that the event would celebrate student achievements, showcase talents, and present the alignment of the district's four strategic priorities with the six pillars of the Portrait of a Graduate. She also teased a special appearance by an alum, underscoring the event as a key moment to engage with the broader Springfield Public Schools community and reflect on the district's progress.

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. The meeting opened with a brief acknowledgment of unfinished business. Committee members revisited the topic of scheduling a school committee retreat, an initiative that had been previously discussed but not finalized due to scheduling conflicts. Ms. Crawford emphasized the importance of setting a clear timeline, suggesting that within 30 days a survey or scheduling process be sent to members to finalize a date. She noted that the retreat would be especially beneficial for newer committee members and expressed excitement about committing to a specific timeframe. Other members reflected on past retreats, noting that previous events had been smaller in scope and that the current committee's turnover presented an opportunity for a more comprehensive retreat.

X. NEW BUSINESS

A. School Committee Page Updates

A committee member raised the need to update and enhance the school committee's web page. It was noted that other districts are facing similar challenges with online updates. The member suggested that these updates be reviewed and coordinated through the Technology Subcommittee before any decisions are made. Attorney guidance was requested to ensure proper procedure. Superintendent Dr. Dinnall added that collaboration between the city's existing page and the school page could help ensure consistent representation and visibility for the committee.

B. Subcommittee Request Process

To streamline subcommittee operations, the committee discussed a new process requiring requests for subcommittee meetings. While a formal form exists for submission, members may also provide information via email. This process is designed to give cabinet members and the superintendent's team sufficient notice and preparation time, improve transparency, and respect



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the busy schedules of all participants.

C. Committee Naming and Framing

Ms. Hurst brought up the topic of terminology for standing committees, specifically the current “Student and Parent Concerns” committee. She suggested that the term “concerns” might create a deficit-oriented perception and propose a more positive, asset-based framing. One idea discussed was renaming it “Student and Parent Interests,” though the discussion remained open to further suggestions. The clerk was asked to note this topic for future consideration.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:24 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Triny Vargas
Executive Assistant to the School Committee