



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, February 12, 2026

LOCATION

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

I. CALL TO ORDER – REGULAR MEETING – ROLL CALL

At 6:37 p.m., the regular meeting was called to order by the clerk, Mr. Vargas. The clerk noted that both the mayor, who serves as chair, and the vice chair, were absent. In accordance with School Committee policy BDA, the committee was required to elect a chairperson pro tem to preside over the meeting. The clerk presided temporarily for the sole purpose of conducting this election.

Nominations were opened for the position of chairperson pro tem. A nomination was made for Ms. Hurst by Ms. Gresham. The clerk asked if there were any further nominations. Hearing none, nominations were closed.

A motion was made by Ms. Crawford to elect Ms. Hurst as chairperson pro tem for the meeting and was seconded by Ms. Gresham. Because the action required a roll call vote, the clerk proceeded with the vote.

Roll Call Vote:

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

Motion passes to elect Ms. Hurst as chairperson pro tem for the meeting. The clerk relinquished the chair to Chairperson Pro Tem Ms. Hurst, who then proceeded to formally call the meeting to order at 6:39 PM.

Roll Call Attendance:

Ms. Valentin – Present (Remote)
Ms. Crawford - Present
Ms. Hurst - Present
Mr. Gomez, Jr. - Present



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Ms. Gresham - Present
Ms. Monroe-Naylor (Vice Chair) - Absent
Mayor Sarno (Chair) - Absent

A. Invocation

The meeting began with a moment of silence.

B. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge of allegiance was led by Ms. Hurst.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:

A. Vote to approve the Minutes of the School Committee's Organizational Meeting on January 5, 2026.

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

Roll Call Vote:

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

Motion passes to approve the Minutes of the School Committee's Organizational Meeting on January 5, 2026.

B. Vote to approve the Minutes of the School Committee's Special Meeting on January 15, 2026.

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

Roll Call Vote:

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



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Motion passes to approve the Minutes of the School Committee's Special Meeting on January 15, 2026.

- C. Vote to approve the Minutes of the School Committee's Regular Meeting on January 15, 2026.

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

Roll Call Vote:

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

Motion passes to approve the Minutes of the School Committee's Regular Meeting on January 15, 2026.

III. VOTING ITEMS:

IV. PRESENTATIONS:

- A. Superintendent Dr. Dinnall introduced a presentation titled "Building Bridges for Multilingual Learners." The superintendent emphasized the linguistic diversity within the district and highlighted the important role translators and family liaisons play in ensuring that families who speak different languages can access school services and effectively support their children's education. She thanked Assistant Superintendent Terry Powe and the multilingual learner team for their work supporting students and families.

The presentation began with an overview of the Massachusetts State Seal of Biliteracy, which recognizes students who demonstrate proficiency in English and at least one additional language. The program affirms the value of multilingualism and multiculturalism across the Commonwealth. Students are eligible if they achieve a proficient or advanced score on the English Language Arts MCAS and demonstrate proficiency in another language through an approved Massachusetts language assessment. The district also awards a Seal of Biliteracy with Distinction to students who earn advanced scores.

Presenters explained that the recognition provides several benefits for students, including college recognition, advanced language placement, and potential college credit—with some institutions awarding 12 to 15 credits. Recipients may also receive a voucher to take a Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL), which can support future careers in bilingual education or world language instruction.

Statewide data was also shared, noting that 77% of school districts in Massachusetts are



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authorized to award the Seal of Biliteracy. Since 2019, 18,049 students across the Commonwealth have received the recognition, including 4,793 students in the 2024–2025 school year. Within Springfield Public Schools, 53 graduates earned the Seal of Biliteracy, and 23 earned the Seal with Distinction last year, for a total of 76 recognized graduates.

As part of the presentation, a recent graduate shared her experience earning the Seal of Biliteracy in 2025. She described the achievement as empowering and meaningful, noting that it allowed her to connect her heritage and language skills with her academic and professional goals. She also shared that she is currently serving in the Massachusetts National Guard and attending Holyoke Community College, where she is pursuing studies that will lead toward a degree in political science.

The presentation also introduced several family liaisons, whose work supports communication and engagement between schools and multilingual families. Cedric Cunningham, a former Springfield Central High School teacher and current world language specialist, helped introduce the team and highlighted the wide range of languages and cultural perspectives represented within the district's staff. Ms. Powe emphasized that these liaisons play a critical role in helping families navigate the school system, understand services, and advocate for their children.

Following the presentation, Chairperson Pro Tem Denise Hurst invited questions or comments from committee members. Committee members expressed appreciation for the work of the multilingual learner department and family liaisons. One member thanked the presenters for demonstrating the richness of the languages spoken across the district and emphasized how important it is for families to be able to communicate with the school system and have their voices heard.

The presentation concluded with the committee expressing gratitude to the presenters and family liaisons for their continued dedication to supporting multilingual students and families across the district.

V. INFORMATIONAL/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- A. Superintendent Dr. Dinnall opened the discussion by emphasizing the district's commitment to continuing its work with the eight schools transitioning back to Springfield Public Schools from the Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership. She noted that the district's approach is unique within Massachusetts, stating that no other district in the state has attempted a transition process like the one taking place in Springfield. She described the work as both rewarding and a learning experience and expressed confidence that the initiative will benefit the students and staff of the returning schools.

Before the presentation continued, Chairperson Pro Tem Ms. Hurst acknowledged that committee member Ms. Valentin was present remotely but experiencing audio difficulties. She noted that Ms. Valentin would be recognized if she became able to participate during the discussion.

Mr. Calvanese then provided an update on the innovation school designation process and proposed timeline. He first thanked the members of the screening committee and the innovation school's subcommittee for their work and commitment, specifically recognizing Ms. Valentino



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for chairing the subcommittee and attending numerous meetings related to the initiative.

Mr. Calvanese explained that the process began with a screening committee meeting held on January 22, where the committee voted by majority to move forward with the prospectus, the framework guiding the innovation school plans. The process has now entered the next phase, in which each of the eight schools is holding Innovation Planning Committee meetings. These meetings are conducted under the open meeting law and involve school stakeholders working to develop individual innovation plans based on the approved prospectus.

Each school is currently drafting its own Innovation School Plan, which will outline how the prospectus framework will be implemented at the school level. Mr. Calvanese reported that five innovation planning meetings had already taken place, and four schools had voted to advance their plans to a teacher's vote. One school, Discovery School at Four Corners, had already completed its teacher's vote earlier that week, with 100 percent of teachers voting to approve the innovation plan. He acknowledged the leadership of Dr. O'Connor and the school team for their work in achieving that result.

Additional teacher votes were scheduled, including one the following day at William N. DeBerry School (The Duggan Academy). He also reported that Springfield Honors Academy (formerly TAG School) had just completed its Innovation Planning Committee meeting earlier that day with a unanimous vote to advance the plan, with a teacher vote scheduled for the following Monday. Other schools, including Commerce High School, were expected to vote shortly after the school break.

Mr. Calvanese explained that once teachers approve a plan by a two-thirds majority vote, the proposal must then be presented to the school committee. Before the committee can vote on approving any innovation school plan, the district is required to hold a public comment session. These sessions will allow families, community members, and other stakeholders to review the plans and provide feedback. The plans will be posted publicly once teacher approval occurs so that the community can review them in advance of the public comment meeting.

The tentative timeline calls for public comment sessions in March, followed by school committee votes in April, with a target completion date of April 9. Mr. Calvanese explained that this timeline is intended to ensure teachers understand what their school structure will look like for the following year before the district's March transfer process. However, he emphasized that the timeline ultimately depends on when each school completes its planning process and teacher vote.

During the discussion, Chairperson Pro Tem Ms. Hurst asked for clarification about when the remaining schools might complete their teacher's votes and how the public comment process would work. Mr. Calvanese explained that the district hopes to complete most teacher votes by late February or early March, after which the innovation plans would be posted publicly and scheduled for public comment sessions before coming before the school committee.

Committee members acknowledged the significant amount of work involved in the process and thanked Mr. Calvanese, his team, and the innovation school's subcommittee for their efforts. The discussion concluded with appreciation expressed for the progress being made toward completing the innovation school transition process.



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VI. REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES:

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

- a. Ms. Gresham reported that the committee held a meeting the previous week. The meeting included a discussion regarding policies and procedures related to transportation for students who require special accommodations. During the discussion, concerns were raised by parents who have experienced difficulties using the FirstView transportation tracking application. To assist families encountering these issues, the committee recommended that parents contact the district's transportation department directly for support and guidance in resolving app-related concerns. Ms. Gresham noted that the discussion was informational in nature and that the committee did not advance any items for action at that time.

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. No 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)



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a. No report.

VII. REPORT OF THE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE:

- A. Anthony “Tony” Martins, Senior at Springfield Virtual School. The student representative opened by thanking Mayor Sarno and Dr. Dinnall, and the members of the school committee for the opportunity to present. The student noted that during the earlier public speak-out portion of the meeting, they had shared updates about the work of the Student Advisory Council, including activities related to Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR). The report then focused on recent developments within the virtual school community.

The student shared that seniors at the virtual school have been actively working on college and career readiness, including completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and submitting college applications. The student representative noted that this process has been both challenging and rewarding. They shared a personal milestone, announcing that they had applied to Westfield State University and Springfield College to study early childhood education with the goal of becoming a first-grade teacher and had been accepted to both institutions. The student also highlighted the use of Schoolinks, a platform students are using to complete various college and career preparation tasks.

The report also revisited a holiday break celebration held prior to winter recess, which brought together students and families from the virtual school community. The event was well attended, with 66 families participating at the school’s Homer Street School Building. Several student-led activities were highlighted, including a science club experiment exploring genetic taste sensitivity to bitterness. The experiment produced results that differed from the students’ original hypothesis, creating an engaging learning experience. The Empowerment Club also hosted a popular activity table featuring a spin-the-wheel game where students could win small prizes, crafts, and toys.

The student representative also shared that seniors were interested in decorating graduation caps as part of their celebration of completing high school. Because district policy does not permit decorating official graduation attire, advisors worked with students to create an alternative solution by providing duplicate caps so students could still participate in the tradition while remaining compliant with school policies.

Looking ahead, the student council has begun planning the school’s third annual prom, scheduled for May 1, 2026, at The Cedars Banquet Facility. Students selected the prom theme through a schoolwide survey, and the chosen theme is “Starry Night.” The student council developed a list of decorations and materials and launched a fundraising effort through DonorsChoose, which quickly received a generous donation that fully funded the requested items.

Finally, the student representative highlighted participation in the Spark Alpha Explorer Design Challenge, a project-based learning initiative that encourages students to explore scientific problem solving and career pathways. Several science classes from both the middle school and high school levels submitted proposals. Two projects advanced to the finals: a seventh-grade project called “HydroFast”, and a high school project called “Plaque Seeker.” The final competition is scheduled for February 27.



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The student concluded by thanking the committee for their time and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to collaborate with and learn from the school committee members.

VIII. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT:

- A. Superintendent Dr. Dinnall began by directing attention to the memo and contracts report for January 2026, which had been included in the committee's packets, and encouraged members to reach out with any questions. She then provided a comprehensive update on recent district initiatives, accomplishments, and programs.

Superintendent Dr. Dinnall highlighted participation in a collaborative meeting with University of Massachusetts College of Education, where area superintendents discussed strategies for supporting teacher recruitment and retention amid a statewide shortage of qualified educators. She also noted her attendance at the Massachusetts Women of Color Coalition anniversary convening with Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll and Senator Edward Markey. This partnership will bring a mentorship program for young women in Springfield Public Schools focused on academic achievement, social-emotional learning, and community engagement.

The superintendent reported that new committee members visited Central Office, where department chiefs shared priorities and described how their work supports student success. This orientation helped new members understand the connection between governance and academic outcomes.

Superintendent Dr. Dinnall recognized Discovery Polytechnical High School as the first school to formally opt into the district's Innovation Schools program for the 2026–2027 school year. She commended Michael Calvanese, Dr. O'Connor, and the school staff for their efforts in achieving a unanimous vote in support of this innovative initiative, highlighting it as a groundbreaking decision for both students and staff.

The Superintendent emphasized ongoing professional development for principals aimed at strengthening instruction, particularly in tier-one instruction and checking for understanding. These sessions are intended to equip principals with strategies to impact classroom teaching and student learning.

She shared updates from a tour of the Student Success Academy, directed by Rhonda Jacobs, which serves adults pursuing a second chance to earn their high school diploma. Enrollment has grown from 20 students in 2023 to 92 students in 2026, demonstrating the program's success. Superintendent Dinnall highlighted the emotional impact and transformative experiences of students, including a former student reconnecting with Assistant Superintendent Terry Poe.

The report also included updates on efforts to fully operationalize universal pre-K, emphasizing the use of high-leverage instructional strategies and partnerships with parents to ensure early literacy. The goal is for pre-K students to be prepared to read on grade level by the end of grade 2.

Superintendent Dr. Dinnall celebrated the Future Chef Competition, noting participation from elementary school students across Springfield. Students prepared creative dishes evaluated in a district-level and national competition. Winners included Logan Nunez (bang bang chicken),



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Kishana Reed, Enzo Lozato, and Liam Quintero. Logan Nunez was announced as the overall winner, and his recipe will be considered for inclusion in the district's school lunch menu.

Finally, Superintendent Dinnall reported on the district's middle school Algebra One Saturday Academy, designed to provide rigorous coursework and STEM exposure. The six-week program, led by Dr. Dietrich Johnson and her team, supports students in engaging deeply with mathematics and developing confidence as young mathematicians.

Superintendent Dr. Dinnall concluded her report by acknowledging the hard work of staff and leadership across the district and reaffirmed the commitment to innovative programs, professional development, and student success.

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

X. NEW BUSINESS

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

Roll Call Vote to Adjourn:

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

The meeting was adjourned at 7:24 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Triny Vargas
Executive Assistant to the School Committee