



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, March 26, 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 6:29 PM.

Roll Call Attendance:

Ms. Valentin - Present
Ms. Crawford - Present
Ms. Hurst - Present
Mr. Gomez, Jr. - Present (Remote)
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 February 12, 2026.

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

Roll Call Vote:

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

March 26, 2026, School Committee Regular Meeting Minutes



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Mayor Sarno (Chair) - Yes

Motion passes to approve the Minutes of the School Committee's Regular Meeting on February 12, 2026.

III. PETITIONS:

A. Petition to School Committee to hold public hearing on March 30, 2026, pursuant to M.G.L. c.71 §92, on the following:

- ☐ Proposed High School of Commerce Innovation Plan
- ☐ Proposed Aspire Academy Innovation Plan (program within Commerce)
- ☐ Proposed Discovery Polytech Early College Innovation Plan (program within Commerce)
- ☐ Proposed Springfield Honors Academy Innovation Plan (program within Commerce)
- ☐ Proposed Rise Prep Early College Innovation Plan (program within Commerce)
- ☐ Proposed Chestnut Accelerated Middle School (TAG) Innovation Plan
- ☐ Proposed John J. Duggan Academy Innovation Plan
- ☐ Proposed Van Sickle Academy Innovation Plan

The Mayor introduced the item, noting that the petition was necessary to formally initiate the required public hearing process scheduled for March 30, 2026.

Superintendent Dr. Dinnall provided context, explaining that the petition ensures compliance with both state law and School Committee policy governing innovation schools. She emphasized that before any innovation plan can move forward for consideration or approval, the district must first present the plans publicly and allow for community input through a formal hearing process.

Michael Calvanese further clarified that this step is procedural in nature and is required under the state's innovation school statute. The petition formally acknowledges the district's intent to present a series of innovation plans and to provide an opportunity for public comment prior to any potential vote.

During discussion, school committee members sought clarification on public accessibility of the materials. Mr. Calvanese confirmed that all proposed innovation plans have been posted on the district's website, included as attachments to the meeting agenda, and made available at the central office. In an effort to ensure equitable access, the documents have also been translated into four of the most commonly spoken languages in the district.

Additional clarification was provided regarding the procedural timeline. It was confirmed that no vote was required at this stage, as the item was strictly a petition to comply with legal requirements. The formal vote to schedule and conduct the public hearing will take place at a School Committee Special Meeting on March 30, 2026, at 5:15 PM.



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Legal counsel noted that this action represents a technical but necessary step to ensure full compliance with established procedures and to avoid any potential oversight in the approval process. Committee members acknowledged the diligence of staff and legal counsel in identifying and addressing this requirement.

As next steps, the School Committee will take up the vote to formally hold the public hearing at the March 30th Special Meeting. The hearing will provide an opportunity for community members to review and comment on all proposed innovation plans before the Committee considers any further action. Administration will continue to ensure transparency, accessibility of materials, and adherence to all statutory and policy requirements throughout the process.

IV. VOTING ITEMS:

- A. Vote to approve the 2026 - 2027 School Year Calendar.

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

Roll Call Vote:

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

Motion passes to approve the 2026 - 2027 School Year Calendar.

- B. Vote to approve the 2026 – 2027 Informational Calendar.

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

Motion passes to approve the 2026 – 2027 Informational Calendar.



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- C. Vote to approve the adoption of Proposed Changes to Student Acceptable Use Policy, including title change to “Student Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Policy”.

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

Roll Call Vote:

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

Motion passes to approve the adoption of Proposed Changes to Student Acceptable Use Policy, including title change to “Student Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Policy”.

- D. Vote to approve the adoption of Proposed Changes to Staff Acceptable Use and Electronic Data Security Policy.

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

Motion passes to approve the adoption of Proposed Changes to Staff Acceptable Use and Electronic Data Security Policy.

V. PRESENTATIONS:

- A. Celebration of Graduation Rates. The School Committee received a presentation celebrating significant improvements in high school graduation rates across the district. The Mayor introduced the item, highlighting the importance of recognizing student success and institutional progress.

Superintendent Dr. Dinnall addressed the school committee and audience, emphasizing that the increases in graduation rates reflect the collective effort of students, principals, families, and school-based staff. He noted that the progress was driven by hard work, perseverance, and data-



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informed decision-making, and intentionally credited school communities rather than central administration for these achievements.

The Superintendent referenced a prior detailed presentation delivered on March 12, which outlined specific data comparing the 2024 and 2025 graduation cohorts. He reiterated that the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has set a target graduation rate of 95% or higher for all high schools, acknowledging that achieving this benchmark—particularly in large, comprehensive high schools—is a significant challenge. He noted with pride that several district schools have met or exceeded this goal.

The school committee was informed that most high schools experienced measurable gains in their four-year cohort graduation rates, with several schools achieving notable increases, including double-digit improvements. The Superintendent emphasized that while these gains are worthy of celebration, the district remains committed to continuous improvement and ensuring equitable outcomes for all students.

Individual schools were recognized for their progress, including Central High School, Conservatory, Putnam Vocational Technical Academy, Renaissance School, Springfield Virtual School, Gateway to College at HCC, Gateway to College at STCC, International Academy at Sci-Tech, Springfield High School, Duggan Academy, Springfield Honors Academy, High School of Commerce, Rise Prep High School, and Aspire Academy.

The Superintendent underscored the difficulty of improving graduation rates, particularly in larger schools, noting that even modest increases represent substantial effort and coordination. He emphasized that achieving a 100% graduation rate or sustaining rates above 95% requires consistent, intentional support for students over four years.

The school committee and audience joined in recognizing school leaders and their teams for their accomplishments. Building leaders were invited forward to receive tokens of appreciation in acknowledgment of their work and dedication.

- B. Recognize Central High School's Girls and Sci-Tech's Boys Basketball Teams for their achievement as Western Mass Champions. The School Committee recognized and celebrated the achievements of the Central High School Girls Basketball Team and the High School of Science and Technology (Sci-Tech) Boys Basketball Team for their successful seasons as Western Massachusetts Champions and their advancement in state competition.

The Mayor and Superintendent Dr. Dinnall led the recognition, commending both teams for their athletic excellence, discipline, and strong representation of Springfield Public Schools. The Central girls team was acknowledged for an outstanding season, including a deep postseason run to the state championship game, while the Sci-Tech boys team was recognized for making school history by securing its first Western Mass championship in over 30 years.

In addition to athletic success, both teams were praised for their character and commitment beyond the court. The Sci-Tech team, in particular, was highlighted for community engagement, including volunteering efforts during the holiday season. Leadership emphasized that these accomplishments reflect not only talent, but also teamwork, perseverance, and a commitment to



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academic success.

Coaches and administrators spoke to the dedication of the student-athletes, emphasizing values such as teamwork and steady progress, captured in the Sci-Tech team's "brick by brick" philosophy. Athletic Director Dwayne Early noted that both teams demonstrated unselfish play, strong work ethic, and growth throughout the season.

School Committee members expressed pride in the students, highlighting the importance of balancing academics and athletics and recognizing the critical role of families, coaches, and school staff in supporting student success. Members also underscored the value of publicly celebrating student achievements, noting that such recognition reinforces student confidence and community pride.

- C. Recognize the Central High School's Swimming Team for their achievement in the Western Mass Championships. The School Committee recognized the Central High School Swimming Team for their continued excellence and recent achievement as Western Massachusetts Champions. The mayor noted the program's long-standing history of success and expressed pride in the team's accomplishments.

Athletic Director Dwayne Early provided additional context, confirming the continued leadership of coaches Josh Rice and Teresa Scully, and highlighting the strength and consistency of the program over time. He also acknowledged recent facility improvements to the school's pool, made possible through School Committee support, noting that these upgrades contributed to the team's success this season.

Members emphasized that the team's achievements reflect not only athletic ability but also dedication in the classroom, reinforcing the district's commitment to well-rounded student success. Appreciation was extended to the coaching staff, student-athletes, and the broader school community for sustaining a high-performing program.

Due to scheduling constraints, the team was not present for recognition at this meeting, but the school committee expressed its intent to formally acknowledge them at a future meeting.

- D. Recognize Discovery High School's robotics team. The School Committee recognized the Discovery High School Robotics Team (Polybots) for their outstanding achievement in winning the New England Robotics Competition, held at Western New England University. The Mayor and Superintendent Dr. Daniel Warwick highlighted the significance of this accomplishment, noting that the team competed against more than 40 teams across the region and secured first place for the second consecutive year, marking the first such achievement for Springfield since 1992.

The Superintendent emphasized that this accomplishment reflects the district's commitment to celebrating academic excellence and innovation, particularly in STEM fields. She noted that participation in robotics programs provides students with valuable skills and credentials that support college readiness, particularly for competitive institutions and technical career pathways.

School leadership and staff described the robotics program as a multidisciplinary effort that



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integrates engineering, programming, business, media, and design. Administrators emphasized that the team operates as a collaborative, student-led model supported by dedicated staff, allowing students to apply their academic learning in real-world, hands-on contexts. The program was also recognized for earning an additional award for imagery and design, highlighting student contributions in branding and visual presentation.

Remarks underscored the broader impact of the program, including its role in preparing students for college and career opportunities, with some alumni already leveraging robotics experience for employment in technical fields. Staff highlighted the importance of access, noting that the program provides opportunities and resources that many students may not otherwise have outside of school.

The School Committee expressed strong pride in the team's accomplishments, recognizing both their competitive success and their role in advancing innovation and opportunity within the district. Students were invited to introduce themselves and share their academic majors and roles on the team, reinforcing the connection between their academic pathways and extracurricular engagement.

- E. Post Secondary Success. The School Committee received a presentation on Post-Secondary Success, aligned with the district's fourth strategic goal, led by Dr. Yolanda Johnson and her team. The Superintendent introduced the item, emphasizing the importance of ensuring that all students are prepared for success beyond high school, including college, career, and civic engagement.

The presentation highlighted the critical relationship between post-secondary attainment and financial stability. Data demonstrated that a high school diploma or some college coursework is often insufficient to meet the basic cost of living, while a bachelor's degree or higher significantly improves earning potential. This reinforced the district's focus on expanding access to post-secondary opportunities.

The team reviewed data on student outcomes, noting that while graduation rates have improved, post-secondary completion rates remain a concern. From a cohort analysis, only a small percentage of students ultimately earn associate or bachelor's degrees within six years. Presenters emphasized the need to shift the district's focus from graduation alone to long-term success, beginning as early as preschool with college and career readiness planning.

Additional data showed that the average Springfield Public Schools graduate has a GPA around 2.5, average SAT scores below college-ready benchmarks, and significant absenteeism, all of which impact post-secondary success. The team also highlighted a gap between students' stated post-graduation plans and actual enrollment, with many students not matriculating despite initial intentions to attend college.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) outcomes were presented as a strength, with a majority of respondents either employed, enlisted in the military, or continuing education in their vocational field. Certain programs, including early education, construction, HVAC, culinary, and automotive pathways, demonstrated strong alignment between training and post-graduation outcomes.



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The presentation also included an update on FAFSA completion rates, noting recent increases and ongoing efforts to improve completion among current seniors. The team emphasized that financial aid access remains a key lever in supporting college enrollment.

A post-secondary success coordinator shared testimony underscoring the importance of direct student support and mentorship, particularly for historically underrepresented groups. The district is developing a comprehensive PreK–12 post-secondary success system, focused on aligning existing initiatives into a cohesive strategy that ensures students are prepared, supported, and guided through the transition after graduation.

During the discussion, school committee members raised questions regarding the impact of early college programs, access to such opportunities across the district, and barriers preventing students from enrolling in or completing college. Administration acknowledged the need for further data analysis on early college outcomes and noted ongoing efforts to expand access, including pursuing broader district designation through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The team also described targeted interventions, including identifying students who have not completed FAFSA or college applications and providing one-on-one mentorship and summer transition support to ensure successful enrollment. Broader efforts include gathering student and family feedback to better understand barriers and improve support systems.

The school committee commended the team for a comprehensive and data-driven presentation and emphasized the importance of continuing to expand equitable access to post-secondary pathways.

VI. INFORMATIONAL/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- A. Update on the School Committee retreat. The Superintendent provided a brief update regarding the planned School Committee retreat. She noted that the retreat was a commitment established during her first year in the role and remains a priority for the district.

The Superintendent reported that efforts are ongoing to identify a suitable date, acknowledging prior coordination challenges, including leadership transitions. She also noted that staff continue to work diligently to finalize both scheduling and the scope of the retreat.

VII. 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)



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- a. The chair of the subcommittee gave a report regarding a recent meeting focused on updates to the district's Student and Staff Acceptable Use Policies. The subcommittee chair described the discussion as thorough and productive, with particular attention given to the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) considerations within the policies.

The subcommittee engaged in detailed dialogue to ensure that the policies reflect current technological realities and position the district to remain forward-thinking and responsive to emerging trends. Administration and staff were acknowledged for their collaboration and for presenting thoughtful recommendations aligned with best practices.

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. All items were addressed on the agenda.

H. School Safety (Ms. Gresham, Chair)

- a. No report.

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

- a. A meeting is scheduled for April 1st.

J. Innovation School (Ms. Valentin, Chair)

- a. No report.

VIII. REPORT OF THE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE:

- A. The School Committee received a report from the Student Representative, Anthony "Tony" Martins, a senior at Springfield Virtual School, who provided updates on student engagement, district initiatives, and upcoming student activities.

The student representative began by acknowledging the value of recent presentations and commending school leadership, including Principal Lynch, for their support and collaboration. He also reflected positively on the participation of middle school student representatives, noting their



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confidence and encouraging them to continue developing their leadership skills.

He reported on his participation, along with other students, in a recent district focus group held at Putnam Vocational Technical Academy, which centered on student experiences within Springfield Public Schools. The discussion included reflections on school environments, transitions to high school, and the unique perspectives of virtual school students compared to traditional school settings. He emphasized the importance of incorporating student voice into the district's strategic growth planning efforts.

An update was provided regarding the district prom, noting a change in venue to the Indian Orchard Citizens Council, with the event scheduled for May 1st from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM. The student highlighted the importance of adaptability and planning flexibility in student leadership roles.

Finally, the student shared that he will be attending the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) Day on the Hill, expressing enthusiasm about the opportunity to engage with state-level education leaders and learn more about legislative processes impacting public education.

The School Committee expressed appreciation for the student representative's ongoing contributions, leadership, and thoughtful engagement with district initiatives

IX. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT:

- A. Under the Superintendent's Report, updates were provided by Mr. Gomez regarding the Gerena School replacement project and broader district facilities planning. The Mayor and Superintendent highlighted the district's progress in advancing the project at the former Chestnut Junior High School site, emphasizing that the decision reflects long-term capital planning and the district's commitment to modernizing school facilities.

Leadership noted that the Gerena School project is part of a larger statewide effort placing the district at over \$1 billion in new and renovated school investments, supported by strong financial stability and partnerships. The project timeline anticipates completion within the coming years, with multiple phases of planning, design, and construction still ahead.

It was further noted that Gerena School, originally built in the 1970s, has long required replacement, and the district has now committed to a full rebuild to better serve students and staff. Administration also referenced ongoing HVAC upgrades across district facilities, with continued efforts to reduce the number of remaining schools requiring modernization.

The school committee acknowledged the work of facilities leadership, including Chief Roach and city-side facilities staff, who were credited with effectively managing major capital projects and ensuring timely execution.

In addition to facilities updates, the Superintendent highlighted district enrichment programming, including a successful Ignite Music Program field experience at Symphony Hall, where fourth-grade students engaged in music learning activities in partnership with the Springfield Symphony



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Orchestra. The program was recognized for expanding student exposure to the arts and fostering music appreciation across the district, with appreciation extended to program partners, mentors, and staff.

During discussion, school committee members raised concerns regarding a recent Gerena community meeting, specifically noting limited community participation and the absence of language interpretation services. Members emphasized the importance of ensuring accessibility for multilingual families, particularly in a community with significant Spanish-speaking and Somali populations.

Mayor Sarno acknowledged the concern, noting that translation services have been provided in prior meetings and that the omission was not consistent with established practice. The mayor was committed to correcting the issue in future meetings and improving outreach to ensure broader community engagement. It was also noted that additional community meetings will be scheduled as the project progresses over multiple years.

Committee members further emphasized the importance of proactive communication to ensure families are informed early in the planning process and are not excluded from discussions impacting their schools. Mayor Sarno reaffirmed its commitment to transparent communication, inclusive engagement, and coordination with community partners to strengthen outreach efforts.

X. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

XI. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Ms. Gresham highlighted a recent Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) bulletin recognizing Superintendent Dr. Sonia Dinnall for her leadership and contributions to education. The recognition noted her role as a nationally recognized educational leader committed to addressing inequities and closing achievement gaps, as well as her historic distinction as the first woman and first Black woman to serve as Superintendent of Springfield Public Schools.

Committee members expressed appreciation for the recognition and the Superintendent's accomplishments. The Superintendent briefly acknowledged the honor and provided context, explaining that the recognition was part of a broader MASC initiative led by the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion caucus to highlight Black women educational leaders in observance of Black History Month and Women's History Month.

- B. Ms. Crawford raised a procedural suggestion regarding the placement of the student representative report on the meeting agenda. She requested that the student report be moved earlier in the agenda to ensure that the student representative is not required to remain late during extended meetings, given school responsibilities.

Committee members and administration discussed the request and noted that the student representative item had previously been positioned earlier on the agenda in past years. Leadership acknowledged the importance of supporting student participation and agreed that the item could be moved higher on the agenda moving forward.



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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

The Committee reached consensus that the adjustment would be made to better accommodate the student representative's schedule

On a motion made by Ms. Monroe Naylor and seconded by Ms. Valentin, 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 (Remote)
Ms. Gresham - Yes
Ms. Monroe Naylor (Vice Chair) - Yes
Mayor Sarno (Chair) - Yes

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Triny Vargas
Executive Assistant to the School Committee