

CLERK OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WORCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
20 IRVING STREET
WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01609

The School Committee held an in-person meeting with a virtual option*:

on: **Thursday, January 8, 2026**

At: 5:30 p.m. Open Session

Esther Howland Chamber, Worcester City Hall or virtually with link below

MINUTES

A. General Business Items taken in Executive Session

B. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 5:31 p.m.

C. Pledge of Allegiance/National Anthem: The anthem was performed by Sariah Davis (grade 11) and Emma Hartigan (grade 12), from Doherty Memorial High School.

D. Roll Call: There were present at the call to roll: Member Alvarez, Member Biancheria, Member Binienda, Member Guardiola, Member Johnson, Member Mailman, Vice Chair McCullough, Member Roy, and Mayor Petty.

M. Student Advisory Committee Items

E. Consent Agenda

i. Approval of Minutes

Approval of Minutes of the [December 18, 2025](#) School Committee Meeting

Approval of Minutes of the [January 2, 2026](#) School Committee Meeting

ii. Approval of Donations

To consider approval of a donation from Gentles' Counseling Services LLC in the amount of \$200 to benefit Worcester Dual Language Magnet School.

To consider approval of a \$500 donation from Ballard Mack Sales & Service Inc for the benefit of the South High Diesel Technology program.

To consider approval of a donation of 403 coats from the Worcester Educational Development Foundation (WEDF) for Coats for Kids.

To consider approval of a donation of pantry items including breakfast bars, cereal, canned goods, stuffing, macaroni and cheese, pasta, tuna, rice, beans, various snack items from Holy Cross Athletics to support the Worcester East Middle School food pantry.

To consider approval of a donation from Worcester State University Visual and Performing Arts of two tympanis to benefit the band program at Worcester East Middle School.

To consider approval of a donation from Lisa Delgado of 16 coats to benefit Coats for Kids.

To consider approval of a donation from Freedom Logistics of 25 coats to benefit Coats for Kids.

To consider approval of a donation from Linda Hollis of 100 coats to benefit Coats for Kids.

P

To consider approval of a donation from Teamsters of 150 coats to benefit Coats for Kids.

- iii. Notification of Personnel Records
 - a. [New Hire Non-Instructional Staff](#)
 - b. [Resignations/Retirements](#)

- iv. Initial filing of Recognition
(Mailman)

(January 8, 2025)

To recognize the work of our parent library volunteers across the district.

- v. Notices of Interest to the District or to the Public

A motion was made to approve the consent agenda. On a roll call vote, Member Alvarez, yes; Member Biancheria, yes; Member Binienda, yes; Member Guardiola, yes; Member Johnson, yes; Member Mailman, yes; Vice Chair McCullough, yes; Member Roy, yes; Mayor Petty, yes. By a margin of 9-0, the motion passed unanimously.

F. Item for Reconsideration

G. Held Items

H. Recognitions

(McCullough)

(October 23, 2025)

Robin Dion, a teacher at Burncoat High School, who saw a student in distress and immediately jumped into action, performed the Heimlich maneuver on the student, and successfully dislodged the item, was recognized for her efforts.

(Johnson)

(December 4, 2025)

2025 Central Mass Regional Champions 10u Worcester Vikings team, who advanced to the National Championships in Naples, Florida was recognized for their

achievements.

- I. Public Comment**-Any member of the public may address the Committee regarding any item before them for two (2) minutes. Those speaking will state their name, their residence, and the item on which they wish to speak for the record. Those speaking may do so in person or via remote participation. Those wishing to address the Committee in a language other than English are asked to notify the Clerk of the Committee in advance, so the Committee may be provided with an interpreter. Members of the Committee may not respond to the comments of the public at the meeting. [Click to view Policy BEDH-Public Comment](#)

Before public comment began, Mayor Petty read a [statement](#) regarding School Committee purview in personnel matters.

Before public comment began, Superintendent Allen read a [statement](#) regarding personnel matters in the Worcester Public Schools.

1. Melissa Verdier, of Worcester, President of the EAW, spoke regarding ROS 6-1.
2. Cindy Homan, of Worcester, spoke regarding ROS 6-1.
3. Catherine Holmes, of Worcester, spoke regarding ROS 6-1, specifically AI.
4. Noelia Chafoya, of Worcester, spoke regarding ROS 6-1, specifically AI.
5. Dina Tedeschi, , of Worcester, spoke regarding ROS 6-1 and gb 5-94.
6. John Brown, of Worcester, spoke regarding gb 110 and gb 5-117.
7. Heather Stanek, of Worcester, spoke regarding gb 5-94.

J. Public Petition

K. Report of the Superintendent

ros 6-1 (Administration)

[Vision to Action...Superintendent Mid-Cycle Review](#)

Superintendent Allen presented his mid-cycle review, including data on student achievement.

First, Superintendent Allen reviewed the Student Achievement goal. He presented STAR testing data in reading, The percentage of students Meeting/Exceeding the State Benchmark at SY26 BOY (beginning of year) deviated from a three-year long pattern of continuous improvement, but the current percentage at MOY (middle of year) is the second highest in four years.

Mr. Allen also presented STAR testing data in math. The current percentage of students Meeting/Exceeding the State Benchmark in STAR Math is the highest it has been since the beginning of SY22.

Superintendent Allen reviewed his professional practice goal of collaborative teaming. He shared the district meeting focus completion rates and that Tier 1 instruction

practices district meeting completion rate is at 75%.

Mr. Allen's District Improvement Goal #1, communication, was also discussed. The Superintendent noted his progress on this goal includes the creation of a Communications Framework and Guidebook documents, Increased transparency and streamlining staff communications, continued to enhance WPS's Award-Winning external communications strategies, as well as continued feedback and continuous improvement.

Progress on District Improvement Goal #2, Grow Our Own and Vision of a Leader, was presented. The current cohort of students is enrolled and slated to take the first Education course (ED 150) through WSU this Spring. Juniors will complete four education classes by graduation. The Office of Personnel, Equity and Engagement is developing workshops and panels to sustain student engagement with Worcester Public Schools through college.

District Improvement Goal #3, school boundary and quadrant alignment was noted to be completed by June 2027. This goal will be a two-year process. Mr. Allen reviewed the background, considerations, and status update of this goal.

Culturally responsive instruction. Culturally Responsive Instruction was embedded in the Instructional Framework. Developed a Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) Empowerment Tool to collect both quantitative and qualitative data through Instructional Rounds. Culturally Responsive Instructional Agency (CRIA) Teams piloted in two schools to use the CRP Tool to promote professional growth and learning through data-driven inquiry. To date, 26 teachers & 21 students trained, WPS launched the CRP learning series for all instructional coaches to deepen knowledge of CRP theory for stronger instructional coaching.

Superintendent Allen Completed Restorative Practice training, in collaboration with Suffolk University, with Secondary Deans and Culture & Climate Coaches in October 2025 and shared with all principals. Restorative framework shared with staff, with restorative circles being used at secondary schools. Elementary staff will begin implementation soon. Next steps will include building restorative circle teams to develop training materials in collaboration with Suffolk.

Implementation of the Vision of a Leader framework to leadership groups that meets leaders where they are and builds their capacity to apply the competencies in alignment with district priorities, strengthening coherence across leadership roles.

School site councils are now active in every school with meeting dates, times, and agendas posted to the WPS website.

Mr. Allen spoke regarding AI in K-12 education. He said the intended 25-26 outcome is to create and begin a multi-year AI strategy based on DESE AI in education guidance focusing on district operations, teaching and learning with and about AI, Tools & Apps, and Communications.

Vice Chair McCullough asked Superintendent Allen to elaborate about the gaps in PLCs and how PLCs work. Superintendent Allen noted PLC common planning time is one of the most important methods to increase student achievement. Vice Chair McCullough appreciated the information on the Grow Your Own pipeline, including student demographics and looks forward to more information in the future.

Member Biancheria asked Superintendent Allen to elaborate on the Spark program. Mr. Allen noted that the 14 principals are helping to shape the initial work that will be brought to all principals. Member Biancheria also asked about chapter 74 programs. Mr. Allen noted WPS is taking a comprehensive review of the programs and will be looking at potentially adding programs based on this evaluation.

Member Biancheria expressed concerns over boundary realignment with current building plans, particularly on the east side of the city. Mr. Allen noted he is working closely with the Economic Development department at City Hall to coordinate potential developments that could impact school populations. He anticipates the alignments to be completed for the 2027-2028 school year.

Member Johnson made a motion that Superintendent Allen add more information to his professional practice goal regarding informational sessions he attends outside of the district and what he has learned from those as a first year superintendent.

Member Guardiola asked if there would be some leeway for a student who is currently enrolled in one school to remain if their boundary changes. Superintendent Allen noted that the majority of the boundary alignments will be at the elementary level and the high schools will be minimally affected. WPSs intention is not to disrupt any student's school assignment.

Member Binienda made a comment about restorative practices, as reported in Mr. Allen's report. She noted she appreciates the AI goal and Mr. Allen agreed, noting that he slowed down some of the use of certain platforms to assess what AI use may look like going forward.

A motion was made to file this report with Member Johnson's motion. On a voice vote of 9-0, the report was approved and filed with the motion.

L. Reports of the Standing Committees

N. Approval of Grants and other Finance Items

To consider approval of the [Fair Share Earmarks Grant](#) in the amount of \$245,000 to provide additional funding for capital expenditures.

To consider approval of the [MassGrad Promising Practices Grant](#) in the amount of \$34,000.

To consider approval of the [Work-based Learning Implementation](#) grant in the amount of \$14,985.

Member Biancheria asked a question regarding the Fair Share Earmarks Grant items that will be covered by this. She asked if the prep work is also covered by the grant. Mr. Allen assured members that all work will be included in the grant.

Member Mailman asked if these grants will be available each year. Mr. Allen said he did not have insight on what grants will be available but WPS will apply for all available grant funds.

A motion was made to approve the grants and other finance items. On a roll call vote, Member Alvarez, yes; Member Biancheria, yes; Member Binienda, yes; Member Guardiola, yes; Member Johnson, yes; Member Mailman, yes; Vice Chair McCullough, yes; Member Roy, yes; Mayor Petty, yes. By a margin of 9-0, the motion passed unanimously.

O. General Business

gb 5-94 (Motion from Member Alvarez)

(November 17, 2025)

Response from Administration on gb 5-94

To receive a report on what events/actions are deemed either bullying, harassment, and conflict, and on what WPS is doing with regard to parent education on bullying.

A motion was made to file this report. On a voice vote of 9-0, the motion passed unanimously.

Items gb 5-110 and gb 5-117 will be taken collectively

Response from Administration for gb 5-110 & gb 5-117

gb 5-110 (Guardiola)

(October 9, 2025)

Request that the Administration provide the School Committee with a detailed report on the district's plan to address student achievement in light of the newly released MCAS results.

gb 5-117 (Johnson)

(November 20, 2025)

Request administration provide a report on school accountability report. Within report please report on four year cohort graduation rate, extended engagement rate, chronic absenteeism, and advance coursework completion. And report on the plan to address the concerns regarding the accountability report.

Member Johnson mentioned that this report was not what he was looking for and anticipated a more detailed report. Member Johnson would like to look at some achievement areas where there are gaps and would like more indepth information on what schools and subgroups are struggling, along with a plan going forward.

Member Johnson made a motion to hold gb 5-117 for a more extensive report, highlighting achievement issues regarding learning gaps with subgroups and a plan moving forward.

Member Guardiola made a motion to hold gb 5-110 to address a significant dip in math and science scores and in depth reporting on next steps to address these issues.

A motion was made to hold both of these items. On a voice vote of 9-0, the motion passed unanimously.

gb 6-3 (Administration)
(January 8, 2026)

Response from Administration gb 6-3

To approve a lease agreement for 30 Chatham Street for additional parking spaces to serve employees and visitors of the Fanning Building.

A motion was made to approve this lease. On a roll call vote, Member Alvarez, yes; Member Biancheria, yes; Member Binienda, yes; Member Guardiola, yes; Member Johnson, yes; Member Mailman, yes; Vice Chair McCullough, yes; Member Roy, yes; Mayor Petty, yes. By a margin of 9-0, the motion passed unanimously.

gb 6-4 (Administration)
(January 8, 2026)

Response from Administration gb 6-4

To authorize the Administration to purchase the National Geographic's Cengage Curriculum for the Multilingual Education Department, at a cost not to exceed \$1,500,000.

Member Johnson asked a clarifying question regarding the curriculum. Jessica Mandes, Director of Multilingual Education, noted that the curriculum is a mix of hard copy and digital curriculum. It is hoped that this curriculum will begin at the start of the 2026-27 school year.

Member Biancheria made a motion to receive an update on this curriculum at the August, 2026 meeting. On a voice vote of 9-0, this motion was approved unanimously.

A motion was made to approve this purchase. On a roll call vote, Member Alvarez, yes; Member Biancheria, yes; Member Binienda, yes; Member Guardiola, yes; Member Johnson, yes; Member Mailman, yes; Vice Chair McCullough, yes; Member Roy, yes; Mayor Petty, yes. By a margin of 9-0, the motion passed unanimously.

gb 6-5 (Administration)
(January 8, 2026)

Response from Administration gb 6-5
City Council backup

To approve the recommendation that provides the district with additional City one-time funding to be used during the current fiscal year that holds the district harmless from the state's reductions, as well as providing an additional amount of

\$1.8 million.

A motion was made to accept this recommendation. On a roll call vote, Member Alvarez, yes; Member Biancheria, yes; Member Binienda, yes; Member Guardiola, yes; Member Johnson, yes; Member Mailman, yes; Vice Chair McCullough, yes; Member Roy, yes; Mayor Petty, yes. By a margin of 9-0, the motion passed unanimously.

P. Announcements

Meeting Dates:

- January 22, 2026, 5:00 p.m., Esther Howland Chamber, Worcester City Hall, 455 Main Street.

Q. Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made to file this report. On a roll call vote, Member Alvarez, yes; Member Biancheria, yes; Member Binienda, yes; Member Guardiola, yes; Member Johnson, yes; Member Mailman, yes; Vice Chair McCullough, yes; Member Roy, yes; Mayor Petty, yes. By a margin of 9-0, the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Kristi Turgeon", is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

Kristi Turgeon, Clerk of the School Committee