



237 Essex Street · Post Office Box 1498 · Lawrence, MA 01840

February 14, 2024

Minutes of the Lawrence Alliance for Education Board – LAE

The Lawrence Alliance for Education Board meeting was held in person at the South Lawrence East Educational Complex Auditorium with the following members present:; Patricia Mariano, Chair; Dr. Dolores Calaf, Early Childhood and K-12 Education, Consultant with Community Collaborative; Juana Matias (joined meeting via zoom at 6:09 p.m.), Regional Administrator for the New England Regional Office, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Edgar De Leon, Diversity (via zoom), Equity, and Inclusion Director at Noble and Greenough School, and Arlene Garcia, Parent Liaison, Lawrence Family Development Charter School. Absent: Mayor Brian DePeña, Maria Moeller, CEO/The Community Group

Also in person were Interim Superintendent Juan Rodriguez and Maria L. Campusano, Recording Secretary for this meeting. Absent: Yedrianny Alvarez, LAE Student Representative

Chair Mariano, called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. The Chair called the audience to recite the pledge of allegiance.

Public Participation

Chair Mariano explained the norms of public participation. She then called on Mr. Homayoun Maali.

Mr. Homayoun Maali, 53 Chester Street, Lawrence, MA, stated that "to have the best schools for teachers, the teachers' union must be supported; if we want the best future for children, we must pay the best compensation to teachers, paraprofessionals, and cafeteria workers" and added that "building a multi-million dollar school building will not improve the Lawrence Public Schools". He also quoted Horace Mann: "Education is indeed the most powerful weapon," stating that parental involvement must be encouraged. Mr. Maali wished everyone a happy valentine day.

Chair Patricia Mariano's Report

Chair Mariano introduced Sylvia Flowers and Eliana Pareyra from the Alma Advisory Group who shared a powerpoint presentation about the Superintendent Search Community Engagement feedback summary.

- Shared goals and purpose were read by Arlene Garcia
- Recognized the Superintendent, Mr. Juan Rodriguez and his team for facilitating all logistics when the group was on site.
- The Summary Report will be available in Spanish

Superintendent Search Revised Timeline to the date

- Communications and outreach to the community, launch of survey
- Virtual and in-person meetings, and completion of community survey
- Completion of the job profile



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Community Engagement Report

- Between December and January, the Alma team collected input from the Lawrence community through various channels including their community survey, virtual, and in-person sessions resulting in 1866 responses
 - In-Person Community Gathering. Resulted in 30 In-person meetings
 - Virtual Interviews and Focus Groups. Resulted in 32 virtual interviews and focus groups
 - As a result of 62 meetings, Alma touched base with 390 participants among students, parents, staff, community members and district partners.

Students Voices and Perspectives

- Included the voices of students representing the Superintendent's Cabinet, Arlington MS, Nuestro Mundo, Parthum MS, Lawrence HS, Unidos Academy, Oliver MS, Spark Academy
 - 68 Student in-person participation and 277 Students who participated in the survey
 - ***The Alma team had prepared a student summary and would like to take it back to the students as they asked how the information would be used.***
- Survey generated 1866 responses representing a range of community stakeholders that include: Caregivers, students, staff and community members
- Racial/Ethnicity of survey respondents indicated that 700 respondents were completed in Spanish

What had the Alma team learned through the survey:

- Lawrence is a resilient, caring and very involved community
- Lawrence has a very strong involved political climate
- Lawrence has a rich history of resilience, diversity and mutual aid and support
- Resources to aid families are essential for the success and stability of students
- School autonomy while described as a positive, also poses some challenges
- Differing perspectives exist about the benefits and challenges of state receivership

LPS has many strengths to champion and protect

- Caring educators and dedicated staff
- Students who care about their future and want to be heard
- Consistent professional development for new teachers and expansion of PD for other roles
- History of school autonomy and evolving earned autonomy model



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- Strong partnerships with community organizations to support schools and families
- Developing a diverse pipeline of bilingual paraprofessionals and educators
- Family Resource Center and school - based parent liaisons
- Emerging practices and programs implemented to support literacy, special education and programs for multilingual students

Lifting Students Voices - What they want to protect - Areas to improve

- The sense of community within the schools and district
- Student voice and community are celebrated and honored
- Newcomers appreciated the effort schools make to welcome them into the community and help them make friends and join activities
- Additional course offering including classes with real world application
- Increase the number of school activities
- Consistent enforcement of policies
- Increase mental health services and support
- Strengthen measures to promote and create safer schools
- Improve the quality of food in the cafeteria and offer more options that reflect the culture of our community

Lifting Caregiver-Community Voices - What they want to protect - areas to improve

- Increase collaboration and receptiveness to working with and listening to parents
- Supportive and caring teachers, staff and leaders
- Community Partnerships
- Improve academic and technical offerings for our students so they have more choices in the future and success
- Improve school safety especially outside and perimeter of school grounds
- More inclusion and additional supports and services for multicultural learners and students with IEPs and 504s (before and after school)
- Communication and transparency
- More quality and culturally diverse food options in schools

Opportunities for Improvement - Eight areas were highlighted

- Recruitment and Retention
- Safety and Security
- Inclusive communication and access to information in the home language e.g. Spanish
- Coordinating and organizing resources to address the mental health needs of students



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- Increase options for before and after school extracurriculars activities, ensuring student access to these opportunities that also include transportation
- Improve alignment and coordination of community partnerships
- Improve human resources expertise and support for principals/school leaders
- Increase resources and access to services like inclusion for students with Disabilities and Multilingual Learners/Newcomers at all schools.

Top 5 issues in open text responses: ***“Lawrence Public Schools will be successful if we accomplish these 3 things within the next 5 years”***

- Recruiting, retaining and supporting teachers, school leaders and support staff
- Staying focused on academics
- Improving school safety for students and staff
- Increasing trust, collaboration and transparency
- Engaging and involving families/caregivers more

Critical Skills for the next Superintendent

The Lawrence community wants an experienced educational leader who celebrates and embraces the diversity of the community. A leader who skillfully builds trusting relationships and fosters a safe and supportive environment for students, teachers, staff, and families through collaboration and transparency with a laser focus on continuous improvement and student centered decision making

A leader who:

- is culturally competent, open-minded
- fosters open dialogue and transparent communication and is responsive to feedback
- is fully committed to creating a culture of trust and respect
- keeps the impact on students as the primary focus when making decisions
- is deeply knowledgeable and has track record of success improving academic and socio-emotional outcomes for students
- an adaptable leader who willing explore and pursue innovative ways to address new and existing challenges
- is active in promoting an inclusive environment that fosters a sense of being welcome and valued
- a leader who provides the resources and support needed for all to excel

The Job Profile will be divided into two categories:

- The Key responsibilities - the WHAT



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- And the skills and experiences needed - the HOW

Job Description - Headlines

- Brief about the district
- Role of the Superintendent
- Responsibilities
- Requirements
- Benefits

VOTED: To approve the Superintendent job profile with the edits

Vote: Upon the recommendation of the Chair Patricia Mariano to approve the Superintendent job profile with the edits, A motion was made by Juana Matias; Seconded by Arlene Garcia

The Vote

Yes - Dr. Dolores Calaf
Yes - Edgar de Leon
Yes - Arlene Garcia
Yes - Juana Matias
Yes - Chair Patricia Mariano

Motion Passes

Chair Patricia Mariano indicated that these documents were going to be available in the Superintendent's Search webpage: www.lawrence.k12.ma.us

VOTED: To approve the Superintendent goals for the SY 2023-2024

Vote: Upon the recommendation of the Chair Patricia Mariano to approve the Superintendent goals for the SY 2023-2024; A motion was made by Juana Matias; Seconded by Arlene Garcia

The Vote

Yes - Dr. Dolores Calaf
Yes - Edgar de Leon
Yes - Arlene Garcia
Yes - Juana Matias
Yes - Chair Patricia Mariano

Motion Passes



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VOTED: To approve the minutes of the January 10th meeting

Vote: Upon the recommendation of the Chair Patricia Mariano to approve the minutes of January 10th minutes; A motion was made by Juana Matias; Seconded by Dr. Dolores Calaf

The Vote

Yes - Dr. Dolores Calaf
Yes - Edgar de Leon
Yes - Arlene Garcia
Yes - Juana Matias
Yes - Chair Patricia Mariano

Motion Passes

VOTED: To table the SOA presentation until the March 13th meeting.

Vote: Upon the recommendation of the Chair Patricia Mariano to table the SOA presentation until the March 13th meeting; A motion was made by Juana Matias; Seconded by Arlene Garcia

The Vote

Yes - Dr. Dolores Calaf
Yes - Edgar de Leon
Yes - Arlene Garcia
Yes - Juana Matias
Yes - Chair Patricia Mariano

Motion Passes

VOTED: To table the School Quality Review - SQR presentation until the March 13th meeting.

Vote: Upon the recommendation of the Chair Patricia Mariano to table the SQR presentation until the March 13th meeting; A motion was made by Juana Matias; Seconded by Arlene Garcia

The Vote

Yes - Dr. Dolores Calaf
Yes - Edgar de Leon
Yes - Arlene Garcia
Yes - Juana Matias
Yes - Chair Patricia Mariano



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Motion Passes

District Updates

VOTED: To to approve the district to send a request for Extraordinary maintenance waivers to the commissioner's office

Vote: Upon the recommendation of the Chair Patricia Mariano to approve the district to send a request for the extraordinary maintenance waivers to the commissioner's office; A motion was made by Juana Matias; Seconded by Arlene Garcia

The Vote

- Yes - Dr. Dolores Calaf
- Yes - Edgar de Leon
- Yes - Arlene Garcia
- Yes - Juana Matias
- Yes - Chair Patricia Mariano

Motion Passes

English Learners Parent Advisory Council - ELPAC

- Ms. Natalia Duran, Secretary. Presented a powerpoint explaining the originating Look Act signed by Governor Baker in 2017, objectives, consolidation, meetings, parent participations, work in progress and team members composing ELPAC.

Acceleration Academies Update

- Ms. Daritza Francisco, Strategic Initiatives Manager. Presented a powerpoint explaining that students who participate in the Acceleration Academies receive 20 hours of additional instruction in a given subject over a week. Ms. Francisco also explained the goals, program logistics, staffing, examples of student schedules, and the student opportunity act.

Juana Matias left her virtual session at 7:45 p.m.

Interim Superintendent Juan Rodriguez shared powerpoint presentation that included LPS celebrations and events showcasing:

- Photos of students at the Bruce S. celebrating their school dance
- Photos of students at the Parthum M. S. participating in the girls sport celebration at the LHS
- Photo of student Ms. Elena Guzman artist of the week showcasing her beautiful paint on alligator



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- Almost 600 students classified as multilingual learners are taking the ACCESS testing
- Congratulations to Melissa Spash, Deputy Superintendent was hired recently by Newton Public Schools as a Superintendent. Ms. Spash served the LPS in various capacities over the course of 14 years.
- The Leahy S. project is now at 50% completion
- The Oliver S. project is now ready to start working inside sections of the building
- Thanks to the Archdiocese for supporting the LFPA S. during the three days the school had to close due to a mechanical problem with the boiler.
- Thanks to the SROs Unit and Mr. Kendric for facilitating a social media and internet safety training session for families at the Leonard S.
- On January 17th GEAR UP Mass was at HLC to assist students with college applications. Since 2012 Gear Up has helped over 460 LPS seniors complete college applications
- Working in collaboration with the LTU several district staff attended the Center for School Improvement Leadership Institute on January 18-20th.
- Mr. Luis Salgado assists LHS theater students with scenes and body movement.
- GLTS Information Session was held on January 24th where middle school families were given general application information about the GLTS as well as specific information about career and technical education. Families also received information about the After Dark Program.
- Across the district, schools are celebrating the Black History Month
- In observance to the National Girls And Women in Sport Day events were celebrated at the LHS
- On February 10th, LPS celebrated the Middle School Musical Theater Festival
- The Athletic Department recently hired Emilio Colon as the Head Football Coach, Mr. Colon is a 1990 LHS graduate with extensive coaching experience.
- On February 5th, Al Horford and Melissa Valdez from Boston Celtics visited the students from the Bruce School
- The basketball teams are celebrating the HS Seniors.! Congratulations! to Igor, Joendy, Obbie, Adriel, and Jaiden from the boys squad. !Congratulations! to Kelsie Savannah, Arianna and Jailani from the girls squad.
- On February 9th the South Lawrence East School celebrated their Sweetheart
- Congratulations to the LHS Cheer in Action who did a great job representing the LHS at the National Cheerleading Championships

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Vote: Upon the recommendation of the Chair Patricia Mariano to adjourn the meeting at 8:14 p.m.; A motion was made by Arlene Garcia; Seconded by Edgar de Leon



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The Vote

- Yes - Dr. Dolores Calaf
- Yes - Edgar de Leon
- Yes - Arlene Garcia
- Yes - Chair Patricia Mariano

Motion Passes¹

Ms. Patricia Mariano, Chair
Date

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