

Minutes of the John Avery Parker Elementary School
Open Meeting

Saturday, March 20, 2021
11:15-11:55 am ET (remote via Zoom)

Statutory Notice of this meeting was filed with Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

1. Call to Order

Chair, Jim Gross called the meeting to order at 11:16 a.m. ET.

2. Roll call, Introductions

School & Main Institute (SMI) Board of Directors present: Chantel Devaughn, Jim Gross, Lorenzo Harrison, Robert Sainz, Gregg Weltz.

Others present: Parker Principal Jennifer Mainelli, SMI School Receiver Fran Roy.

3. Report from School Principal and Receiver

Jennifer Mainelli, principal, and Fran Roy, receiver, began with a brief overview of school and review of the demographics of the student population:

Ms. Mainelli is the 4th principal in 5 years at Parker; this is her third year as principal.

SMI is in its third year of work as the appointed receiver of the school.

Nearly equal in Latinx (38%) and white (34%) students and 18% African American.

Ms. Mainelli shared the priorities and goals for the school and how the work is grounded in academics and social emotional learning. There's been a tremendous amount of training and capacity building with the staff, and preparing the kids for the road ahead. It's not just about getting out of receivership but that the kids are ready, independent learners and empowered. Ms. Roy commented that they are seeing that where the teacher is the facilitator of the learning and the kids are owning their own learning. Also have a goal of shared leadership with the parents. Ms. Roy shared the improvements in MCAS results [Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System] and where meeting or exceeding expectations. Ms. Mainelli shared the approaches to, the challenges and strengths under the COVID-19 pandemic, and the plans for transitioning all students back into the classroom (March 22, 2021). Ms. Roy concluded that at Parker it's a safe, supportive, loving environment with academic expectations - as seen with the test scores improving. Also there's the expectation of learning and professional development of the teachers.

4. Q&A between SMI Board of Directors and Receiver

The School & Main Institute (SMI) board had an opportunity to ask questions of the Receiver and/or Principal or give comment.

- Will there be MCAS [Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System] this year? What do you think will be tests results this year to see how you did: same, improved, negatively impacted?
 - Yes, will have a slightly modified version of MCAS to utilize. Will be used as measure to see how the COVID-19 might have impacted their learning.
 - We do use an internal testing tool and have seen some growth in the data, but not as accelerated as in the past when learning is in person. Hopeful to see growth this year.
- On the getting the student to be ready - could you elaborate on this?

- The collaborative problem solving is both implicit and explicit in all they do, even with the social emotional piece. Working on a shift of mindset - it's not a matter of will it's a matter of skill with each student. Have a systematic system of support on needs. It's a very skill-based approach whether on the academic or social side: what are the deficits, what's needed to lift up.
- How do you outreach to parents and to parents who are not English speakers?
 - For those who don't speak English we provide a translation platform to communicate with the families and to be inclusive of the families.
 - A couple focuses on the parent piece. We are working with teachers on professional development and taking ownership of their students and working with their families. Some examples on the outreach: holding monthly virtual events as informal and fun way to connect with the community and to be a community hub; hold parent workshops on learning with their students.
- With going fully remote have you seen any indicators not in deficiencies but in growth in being virtual? What you would keep going forward?
 - Their use of technology is impressive in their virtual learning. How they can navigate Zoom, the features, Google classrooms. At one point those student who were full-remote were not learning as much as those in hybrid. With the hybrid students seeing their data move forward much better than being fully remote. Will have a very small amount in full remote when we go back to hybrid.

Gregg Wertz remarked that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has lifted up Parker as an example for other districts in the state to learn from. A possibility that Parker could serve as a future learning center.

Board of Directors members thanked the Principal and Receiver for the informative presentation, and expressed their thanks to the Principal, administrators, teachers, and other staff for their dedication and impressive outcomes.

4. Public Comment

Andy Beck, consultant to School & Main Institute, remarked on the change in the testing scores. What's important to keep in mind is the kids haven't changed in the school. What's changed are the adults in the building and the mindset. You feel something in the building now; it's an incredible place to be. Recommended if the next board meeting is in person and could be in Massachusetts to hold it at Parker Elementary School.

5. Adjournment

Minutes of meeting will be posted on the School & Main Institute website.

Chair, Jim Gross adjourned the meeting at 11:51 a.m. ET.