Melrose School Committee
Regular Meeting

Tuesday, October 28, 2025, 7:00 PM
562 Main Street, Melrose, MA 02176
Council Chamber, First Floor, Melrose City Hall

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Dorie Withey	Chair	Present
Jennifer McAndrew	Vice Chair	Present
Jen Grigoraitis	Mayor	Absent
Jennifer Razi-Thomas	Member	Present
Seamus Kelley	Member	Present
Matt Hartman	Member	Present
Margaret Raymond Driscoll	Member	Present
Cari Berman	Interim Superintendent	Present

Also in attendance: Interim Deputy Superintendent, Ken Kelley and Recording Secretary, Kristen O'Connor. With a roll call vote with six (6) present, the meeting convened at 7:00 PM.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Without objection, the Chair opened Public Comment. With no one present and without objection, the Chair closed Public Comment.

3. ANNOUNCMENTS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

1. Report: Personnel

   The Superintendent presented the personnel report from the packet and highlighted a few unfilled positions that were in the approved budget from the spring and the two new reading specialist positions approved following the increase in Chapter 70 funding. Interviews for the reading specialists are scheduled for later this week.

2. Report: Technology Plan Update

   The Superintendent presented the technology plan update and expressed gratitude to the technology committee for their work, specifically acknowledging Melanie Acevedo (Executive Director of Academics and Accountability) and Ms. Jones. Ms. Razi-Thomas acquired about any budgetary implications for the rest of the year, and Ms. Acevedo was invited to speak to the memo. She spoke of the plan next week at the PD day to replace all teachers' aged out laptops with new Chromebooks as part of some free cash allocations, and shared that the committee is looking carefully at program and application budgeting as many technology resources were cut this year. Ms. Acevedo also spoke about the new BYOD program working very well but some concerns with lack of Chromebooks for MCAS testing, so trying to put a plan together to put some devices aside for that time.

4. REPORT OF THE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

There were no student representatives present this evening.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Seamus Kelley
SECONDER:	Margaret Raymond Driscoll
AYES:	Dorie Withey, Jennifer McAndrew, Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman
ABSENT:	Jennifer Grigoraitis

Ms. McAndrew requested that the concussion report be removed and placed under Policy and Planning and Ms. Driscoll requested that the cafeteria report be removed and placed under the Announcements of the Chair. All other Consent Agenda items were approved as presented.

1. Meeting Minutes from October 14, 2025
2. Cafeteria Report
3. Concussion Report
4. Warrants
   Warrants dated 10/28/2025:
   FY26 School - S26029- $426,398.06
   FY26 Officials/Refunds - S26030- $7,189.50

6. SUBCOMMITTEES (COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE)

1. Policy and Planning - Matt Hartman/Margaret Driscoll
   Matt Hartman

A Vote: CTE Policy

Mr. Hartman shared the CTE Policy as it was being presented for a second vote. A motion was made by Ms.Driscoll, seconded by Ms. McAndrew, with six (6) in favor and one (1) absent, the policy passed.

MOTION:	To approve the CTE Policy
RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Margaret Raymond Driscoll
SECONDER:	Jennifer McAndrew
AYES:	Dorie Withey, Jennifer McAndrew, Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman
ABSENT:	Jennifer Grigoraitis

B Vote: JJF Policy

Mr. Hartman presented the JJF Policy for a second reading. The packet included the current Melrose policy, the proposed version and the MASC version. Discussion included policy language around the timing of independent auditing and also internal auditing. A motion was made by Ms. Driscoll to approve the proposed policy with language that states "in the years with no audit, the School Committee will receive a report of the results of the review from the district on the accounts" which was seconded by Ms. Withey, and a friendly amendment was made by Ms. Razi-Thomas to update the numbering of the proposed version, with all in favor, the middle proposed policy passed.

MOTION:	Approve the JJF Policy with the amended language
RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Margaret Raymond Driscoll
SECONDER:	Dorie Withey
AYES:	Dorie Withey, Jennifer McAndrew, Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman
ABSENT:	Jennifer Grigoraitis

Mr. Hartman presented the student activity funds manual in the packet for an informational reading. Deputy Superintendent Kelley shared that they reviewed several neighboring communities and put together this document to show how the student activity funds are currently operating which aligns with the policy. Discussion included fundraising for student activities and what can be paid for out of these accounts, the process for fundraising and depositing funds, the idea of training student leaders as a learning opportunity to learn about the process, and also how there are only student activity funds at the middle school and high school levels, not at the elementary level as that's not recommended by DESE.

C Annual Review: Policies IJND and IJNDB

Mr. Hartman presented IJND and IJNDB policies for annual review. Ms. Acevedo presented the IJNDB Policy, and the technology committee has been working to update what was the acceptable use policy into the empowered and responsible use of information policy. The committee created a more concise list of what students and staff should be able to do. Ms. Acevedo was happy to answer any question as this was an informational read. Ms. Acevedo also recommended looking at updating the IJND at a later date to better align with the IJNDB Policy once that's approved,

2. Finance and Facilities - Seamus Kelley/Jennifer McAndrew

A Vote: Monthly Budget Summary/Grants

School Committee Member Mr. Kelley presented the grants report and the special education report from the packet with no questions from the committee. Mr. Kelley then brought up the cafeteria report that was pulled from the Consent Agenda. Ms. Driscoll inquired about sales that were slightly higher in 2025, lunch counts were higher and reimbursements were a bit lower resulting in revenues that were close to each other. Interim Deputy Superintendent said he would follow up with the Dining Director regarding the questions presented to get more information, noted that it may be an overlap from the month of August. Discussion include: potential SNAP benefits expiring on Saturday and the impact of that on families, and free lunch and breakfast options for kids all year.

A motion was made to approve the grants report, cafeteria report and the special education report, seconded by Ms. McAndrew. With six (6) in favor and one (1) absent, the motion passed.

MOTION:	To approve the grants report, cafeteria report and the special education report
RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Margaret Raymond Driscoll
SECONDER:	Jennifer McAndrew
AYES:	Dorie Withey , Jennifer McAndrew, Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman
ABSENT:	Jennifer Grigoraitis

B Report: Special Education Expense Update

3. Educational Programs and Personnel - Jennifer Razi-Thomas/ Margaret Driscoll

A Vote: Hoover School Improvement Plan

Ms. Razi-Thomas presented the three items under Policy and Planning: the two school improvements plans and the METCO report.

Principal Galante opened the meeting by celebrating the Hoover School's Blue Ribbon Award, recognizing her staff for this achievement in overall excellence. She then presented the School Improvement Plan, which focuses on two main goals. The first is to elevate math proficiency in geometry and algebraic thinking through enhanced teaching practices, the IXL and Envisions programs, and staff professional development. The second goal is to improve school culture and climate by using a grant to partner with

Jeffrey Benson. This effort involves reviewing the school discipline policy, establishing consistent language, and reviewing the PBIS model to reduce office referrals. The discussion highlighted positive staff responses and confirmed the current downward trend in office referrals.

MOTION:	To approve the Hoover School Improvement Plan
RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Dorie Withey
SECONDER:	Seamus Kelley
AYES:	Dorie Withey, Jennifer McAndrew, Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman
ABSENT:	Jennifer Grigoraitis

B Report: METCO

Superintendent Berman spoke to the METCO Report in the packet, prepared by Director of Student Relations Doreen Ward who was unable to join the meeting. The factual report showed a decrease in METCO enrollment , looking at the need to fill allotted spots to develop a stronger program. The Superintendent acknowledged Ms. Ward's effective efforts in building strong relationships with parents and ensuring that METCO students are fully supported. Discussion following the presentation covered the frequency of receiving such reports, students still enrolling after the start of the year, providing a late bus to address the transportation aspect, Ms. Ward's data collecting, and per pupil funding from the program.

C Vote: Lincoln School Improvement Plan

Principal Patti presented the Lincoln School Improvement Plan. She began by thanking all her staff members who joined her for the evening and highlighted incredible things happening at Lincoln The overall goal of the school is to create a daily learning experience that makes students want to go to school and want to learn and feel a sense of belonging and safety in the school community. The School Improvement Plan will focus on two areas: literacy and attendance. For literacy, Ms. Patti stated that it is a strength and a good starting point. Staff can have the opportunity to dive into MCAS data, implement tier two time, and look at data as a team. In regards to attendance, the school identified just under 50 students as chronically absent last year, noting that many situations involve families who travel. The school is currently in the information gathering phase. Discussion included strategies for communicating the importance of attendance to families, and also looking at ways to provide additional support for students transitioning from 5th grade to the middle school.

MOTION:	To approve the Lincoln School Improvement Plan
RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Jennifer McAndrew

SECONDER:	Dorie Withey
AYES:	Dorie Withey, Jennifer McAndrew, Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman
ABSENT:	Jennifer Grigoraitis

7. ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THE CHAIR

Chair Withey brought forward the concussion report which was pulled from the Consent Agenda. Discussion included: possible reasons for the increase in concussions such as more being diagnosed, greater awareness, or an increase in sports participation. The Committee also discussed how to improve tracking this data while protecting confidentiality, how athletic trainers may be using this information, and the nature of this being a co-curricular report. The Committee decided to hold the report until more information is provided with plans to revisit at a future meeting.

MOTION:	To postpone the vote on the concussion report until the November 18th meeting
RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Jennifer McAndrew
SECONDER:	Margaret Raymond Driscoll
AYES:	Dorie Withey, Jennifer McAndrew, Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman
ABSENT:	Jennifer Grigoraitis

1. Review: Superintendent Priorities - Progress Update

   Interim Superintendent Berman presented an update on the progress made toward her priorities approximately 45 days into the school year. She acknowledged the last few months have been challenging and required many difficult decisions, yet she finds the work to be rewarding. She expressed gratitude for her supportive community and the dedicated educators and leaders within the Melrose Public Schools, also recognizing the hard work completed in the previous year. Superintendent Berman then reviewed her core values and discussed progress on the first two objectives of the strategic plan. (see slides) The first objective, Academic Knowledge and Skills, showed evidence of progress through initiatives like offering Orton-Gillingham Professional Development (PD) to over 30 educators, aligning school improvement plans with the district's strategic plan, setting goals with educators, and utilizing data-driven instruction. For the second objective, Personalized and Equitable Opportunities, progress was evidenced by providing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) training for both leadership and educators, as well as initial data gathering. She also reviewed the next steps planned for both objectives. The Committee expressed their appreciation for her follow-through, leadership in organizing

the district, and the positive direction she is establishing.
(Ms. Razi -Thomas left 8:40 PM - 8:41 PM)

2. Vote: MASC Policies

   Ms. Withey reviewed the MASC resolutions. She confirmed that the Committee had previously voted for Mr. Kelley to serve as the delegate for the MASC conference. The Committee's resolutions will be forwarded without a vote, as it's not anticipated that any Committee members will attend the assembly.

3. Vote: School Committee Calendar for 2026

   Ms. Withey presented the School Committee meeting dates for the 2026 calendar year. Since there was no feedback from the last meeting, the Committee voted on the approval of these dates.

MOTION:	To approve the 2026 School Committee meeting dates
RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Seamus Kelley
SECONDER:	Jennifer Razi-Thomas
AYES:	Dorie Withey, Jennifer McAndrew, Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman
ABSENT:	Jennifer Grigoraitis

4. Report: Outreach

   Ms. McAndrew took a moment to remind the community of the upcoming monthly office hours which are posted on the website and encouraged community members to attend.

8. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:48 PM.

MOTION:	To adjourn
RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Margaret Raymond Driscoll
SECONDER:	Matt Hartman
AYES:	Dorie Withey, Jennifer McAndrew, Jennifer Razi-Thomas, Seamus Kelley, Margaret Raymond Driscoll, Matt Hartman
ABSENT:	Jennifer Grigoraitis

School Committee September 28th, 2025

District Priorities - Progress Update

Cari Berman
Interim Superintendent

My Core Values

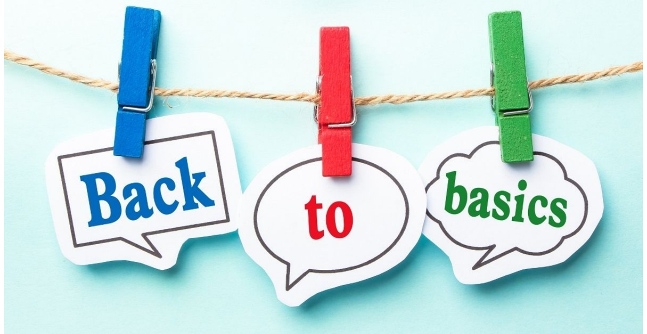
- **All Means All** – Every student, without exception, deserves to feel valued, supported, and challenged.
- **Student-Centered Decision Making** – The needs of our students will always remain at the heart of every decision we make.
- **Equity and Inclusion** – I am committed to creating learning environments where diversity is celebrated and every student has access to opportunity.
- **Integrity and Transparency** – Open communication and honest dialogue will guide my/our leadership and decision-making.
- **Collaboration and Partnership** – Together, as educators, staff, families, and community members, we achieve far more than we ever could alone.
- **Respect and Empathy** – By listening with compassion and honoring the perspectives of others, we build a stronger, more supportive community.

Back to Basics and the ABC's

A = Accountability

B = Belonging

C = Consistency



MPS Strategic Objectives and this year's focus

- #1 Academic Knowledge and Skills
- #2 Personalized and Equitable Opportunities
- #3 Global Engagement
- #4 Professional Culture
- #5 Finance and Operations

Executive Summary and Implementation Guide

#1 Academic Knowledge and Skills

Objective: MPS will promote the learning and growth of all students through the implementation of high quality curriculum materials and rigorous, grade level instruction with just-in-time scaffolding.

Our educators will hone in on creating effective lessons with clear goals that drive the creation of assessments and activities.

#1 Academic Knowledge and Skills - Evidence of Progress

- **Professional Development (PD):** MPS will be offering **over 30 educators**, both general education and special education teachers, intensive training on the **Orton-Gillingham (OG) principles and Morphology**. Educators will gain additional skills that will directly support **high-quality, research-based literacy instruction to ALL students.**
- **Planning Alignment:** All School Improvement Plans (SIPs) have/will be aligned with the District's overarching Strategic Plan and five objectives. This alignment will ensure that **school level goals directly support district level priorities**.
- **Goal Setting:** Goal development for all educators is in process. The expectation is that each educator's goal will be directly **aligned with both the Strategic Plan and the respective SIP**.
- **Data-Driven Instruction:** **Every educator participated in a fall data meeting** to analyze initial student performance data (DIBELS, IXL, common assessments) and **identify areas for targeted instructional focus**, a critical precursor to effective lesson planning.

#1 Academic Knowledge and Skills - Next Steps

Our work moving forward will shift from planning and training to execution and monitoring:

- **Lesson Plan Checklist:** The leadership team will create and implement a lesson plan checklist focused on ensuring clear goal statements and assessment-activity alignment.
- **Collaborative Meeting Time:** Teachers will focus on unpacking standards, writing measurable goals, and aligning assessments before designing classroom activities.
- **Walkthrough Focus:** Administrators and teacher leaders will begin conducting **non-evaluative walkthroughs to gather evidence on instructional alignment.** Key "look-fors" will include: the teacher articulating the clear learning goal to students, and students understanding why they are engaged in a particular activity.

#2 Personalized and Equitable Opportunities

Objective: MPS will ensure personalized and equitable opportunities so that all students may learn to use their voices to define success in their own way, celebrate differences and multiple perspectives, empathize with others, and build connections with peers and adults.

The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework will be utilized to ensure inclusive, equitable, and accessible learning environments by proactively reducing barriers to learning and providing multiple options for how students access information, demonstrate their knowledge, and engage in learning activities.

#2 Personalized and Equitable Opportunities - Evidence of Progress

We have successfully launched our UDL reset through focused professional learning:

- **Professional Development (PD):** Leadership and all educators participated in comprehensive **UDL training led by Kelly Mertens**. This has equipped our educators with the foundational knowledge needed for implementation.
- **Alignment:** Just as with Priority #1, SIPs and goal development for all educators are fully **aligned with the district's UDL priority**.
- **Initial Data Gathering:** Initial classroom walkthroughs and observation data have begun to **identify baseline data on instructional practices and student engagement practices.**

#2 Personalized and Equitable Opportunities - Next Steps

We will now move into collecting evidence to measure the impact of UDL implementation:

- **<u>UDL Walkthroughs:</u>** We will implement **non-evaluative classroom walkthroughs using a UDL-specific rubric**. This data will specifically look for evidence of choices being offered, flexible grouping, use of diverse materials, and intentional use of digital tools to support accessibility.
- **<u>Equity Impact Analysis:</u>** We will **compare achievement gap data** to establish a benchmark. Our goal is to measure a **reduction in disproportionality among our subgroups**, which will suggest improved equity and accessibility resulting from UDL.
- **<u>Perceptual Data:</u>** We will provide s**tudents with surveys to gather feedback** regarding their sense of belonging, their perceived control over their learning (choice), and whether they feel the instructional methods help them understand the material.


Questions