

**CITY OF HOLYOKE
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

REGULAR MEETING OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2021

TIME: 6:00

CALL TO ORDER – ROLL CALL – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

School Committee Vice Chair Mildred Lefebvre called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. and announced that pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, s. 20, attendees are hereby informed that a video and audio recording is being made of the meeting and the meeting is being live-streamed and run live on the City's community TV channel.

Present: Acting Mayor Murphy, Mildred Lefebvre, Devin Sheehan (remote), Erin Brunelle, Rosalee Tensley Williams, Rebecca Birks, Irene Feliciano Sims, John G. Whelihan, William Collamore, Nyles Courchesne and Superintendent/Receiver Mr. Anthony Soto.

Moment of Silence

This past week we lost a Holyoke I want to say child he was 23 years old Artisan Dennis. His family had asked that I share their deep appreciation to not only the school district but also the community at large for all the love and support. He was an assistant coach for our volleyball team and he attended Holyoke Public Schools from Metcalf straight through anybody who got the opportunity or the chance to know him got the opportunity and chance to know love. I'm respectfully asking for a moment of silence for him to remember the light and the love that he's shown to not only every person that he met but everyone in this community. I'd like to thank Mel Martin, and Coach Paula Conway and our Holyoke volleyball teams who attended the services and presented as the honor guard.

Ms. Birks explains Artisan Dennis is one of the many students who make her proud to be a school committee member representing the students and families of the Holyoke Public Schools.

Public Comment

Kiara Krogan, Holyoke High School Senior

My name is Kiara Krogan, I live in Holyoke, I'm current senior attending royal high school north my relationship to ethnic studies started in the fifth grade when Dana Altriller first introduced the topic ever since then I've become a fully devoted student to the subject and it has opened my eyes and literally everything has made me 100% a better student and a better person today. With the ethnic studies director position and absence we have lost multiple opportunities for students to become 100% better for themselves one of these opportunities being UCAPP which is the UMass College Access Program and this program was a partnership between ethnic studies and UMass College that helped seniors navigate the difficult and confusing college process such as helping to fill out financial aid forms seeking scholarship opportunities and even having student mentors from U.S. collaborate with the

high school students to also discuss the issues of access and equality in schools this very helpful program no longer exists in high school now due to the ethnic studies director position being pulled um another opportunity missed by students would be the student equity team organized by dr drake in 2018. this team had 10 students from hoyokai north and 10 students from hoyokai dean or south which is dean come together and discuss current issues in the schools such as like financial issues where funding would go and student input would go straight to the current superintendent in order to make big important changes uh for example one of these changes would be the teacher expectation sheet that all new teachers have to review over and to agree before fully commissioned at boyle high school this agreement opened the door for better teacher relationships and teacher-student relationships and opportunities to spread the ideas of our team to other schools in the state and ever since the ethnic studies director position was removed this program has also vanished leaving kids like me in the dust with nothing to be a part of so i kind of feel stranded and not only did the did the director go make opportunities for us inside of school but it has made really relationships along the way ex-director and i have an amazing relationship she's always been there for me as a leader and as a friend i would even go as far as calling her family should go beyond lengths for me to ensure that i was at my best or reaching for her she hasn't become the person i am today all the knowledge from ethnic studies program in general has made me a better person today ethnic studies has taught me important values such as learning about my identity queer identities and ethnic slash racial identities of students all this information helped build a community of respect in the high school and this position is so much more than a role in the school it's a gateway to respectful learning and a huge building block for the community of hoyokai so we urge you to support ethnic studies not just in words but in action please thank you thank you kiara

John JR. Rivera , Holyoke Resident, 2 Laurel St, Former HHS Student

I hope that my testimony will not only be of value but will be a wake-up call for everybody that receives this to some or all .This might be difficult to hear , difficult enough to make you close off your ears. I anticipate this a reaction so, I urge you please a bare minimum listen to understand and analyze what i'm presenting. I'm proudly first and foremost a dropout student of the holyoke high school, even though I graduated just barely graduating through the gateway program at 21 years old, now I consider myself a student that slipped through the cracks as they would say. Now I won't go into the statistics that six said that I was doing to fail uh the moment I was birthed. From subsidized housing, homelessness, to welfare subsidies I've seen it all. Ethnic studies, Palante presented and the gateway program all contributed massively to my journey avoiding the crack that many of non-english speakers slipped through. I can tell you with certainty that without just one and only one of these programs I would have slipped through that crack just like my colleague previously stated and just like the millions around this country who could use this program to excel. Just like the ones who have gone through these rigorous studies, ethnic studies has proven time and time and again that it not only helps uh students both of color and not of color graduate but to give back to the community that helped us further along. I'm currently a latinx major at HCC, The farmer's market manager of the Holyoke Farmer's Market, co-director at the food policy nonprofit and a member of various boards in Holyoke. Without Ethnic Studies or any of the related programs, Holyoke would have lost kids like me. Holyoke is 52 hispanic latino as the crisis of capitalism and fearless imperialism increased immigration from latin countries has to increase Holyoke is

known for a haven for all latinos of all creeds as we know the next 10 years we'll see hand in hand this effect.

If ethnic studies is to be done here at HPS, it is a symbolic gesture of the administration that leads it. The symbolic gesture, that under the folks that were in the positions of power, didn't do enough to save it. Those folks in charge did not lead others to advocate on the basis of saving and preserving the culture. The symbolic gesture is a form of compliance with white supremacy, I'll second that and even to add what further a former teacher said in his letter. I'm aware that nobody is proposing to do away with Ethnic Studies, maybe not on paper, but I assure you in practice that this is essentially what you're doing with this group in relation to the statement that you all who are not intentionally, maybe compliant or for white supremacy and I'll finish off by saying I anticipate that you know most who listen to this while on their about their lives without batting an eye towards what I've said. I hope to be proven wrong but from my experience at Holyoke Public Schools, I doubt that that'll be the case. By any chance that you do wish to combat this, I asked you to organize and urge district leadership to pause their decision and collaborate with leaders, students, and community members on the basis of furthering the future of the program. We ask that you please consider supporting the Ethnic Studies Director position, we urge you to support ethnic studies not just words but in action.

Kyson Nygreen - Professor at UMass Amherst

I'm speaking tonight as a university faculty member and a partner of Holyoke Ethnic Studies. I'm just one of many university partners in this region who support Holyoke Ethnic Studies and collaborate with Holyoke Ethnic Studies. In June of this year, 29 university partners signed a letter expressing our serious concern with the elimination of the ethnic studies director position. We called on superintendent Anthony Soto to reverse the decision. I'm here tonight to reiterate this concern because we've not yet seen action all 29 signatories on the letter are university scholars and researchers and professors to collaborate with Holyoke Ethnic Studies. Through our collaborations we provide numerous opportunities to students these include after school programming in clubs field trips to local colleges dual enrollment opportunities at our colleges teacher professional development and support with community engagement and outreach. My work specifically includes helping to plan and facilitate teacher professional development for ethnic studies teachers helping to create a future teachers club and a dual enrollment, agreement with umass college of education and organizing a field trip for ethnic studies students to umass to participate in a black lives matter and education event and that's just one example. Without a full-time ethnic studies director much of this partnership work will not be sustained Holyoke Ethnic Studies is such a special and unique program but it needs a a full-time director who has designated and compensated time in the week to undertake the relational and administrative work of managing multiple community and university partnerships and also to serve as an intellectual leader for the program. The decision to eliminate the director position will result in fewer opportunities for students to participate in community engagement and college access partnerships and it already has had that result holyoke students will lose out from this decision and the ethnic studies program will be weakened by this decision. I urge you to reverse this decision and reinstate the director position immediately. Please consider the unique and transformative nature of the ethnic studies program which is distinct from other departments as an educational researcher. I truly believe that Holyoke Ethnic

Studies program is unique and special and that it could be a model a national model for what ethnic studies can be. Please stand by your commitment to anti-racism in concrete ways that move beyond rhetoric. I'm here tonight with the previous two speakers and together we urge you to support ethnic studies not just in words but in action.

Student Showcase

Notificant sent prior to the meeting that the Holyoke High School Theater Company was unable to attend.

M.A.S.S Certificate of Academic Excellence

Armani Ruiz- Dean Campus

Jacqueline Jourdain - Holyoke High School North Campus (Not Present due to Volleyball Game)

Al Gates - We want to congratulate, Armani Ruiz for the M.A.S.S Certificate of Academic Excellence- Armani is a senior this year in our culinary arts program and armani has been a student leader since arriving on campus as a ninth grade student at Dean. Armani has always sought to be in the action action that makes and creates change and she's mentored students in grades six through eight. She's collaborated with sodexo when they were looking for feedback on on school lunches. Armani has stepped up to lead but is also somebody who will fall back and follow because she's not too prideful and knows when other people need to have the chance to lead. Armani enters her senior year always having been in honors classes and carries a 3.94. Right now she is also working and is somebody that has been through just a lot of challenges that armani has been able to navigate through in order to to show up and be where she is today. We know that doing that and doing that through many challenges in all honors classes is something to be said and working right now Armani stays plugged in so a critical thinker, a member of our community, and somebody who will we will be hearing about over the next year and more.

Armani Ruiz was thankful for being recognized and receiving the award. She is grateful for the people who have supported her, especially during these tough times, and particularly the staff at Dean who always push her to be better and to be a leader.

Jacqueline Jordain had a volleyball game tonight and couldn't be present. She will be invited to the next SC meeting so she can receive her certificate.

Student Representatives 2021-2022

Dr. Mahoney will work with the two principals to identify students interested in being student represrtnatives for this school year.

SUPERINTENDENT RECEIVER REPORT

BACK TO SCHOOL

Enrollment - There has been a decrease in enrollment. The decrease in enrollment is more evident in our pre-k and k grade levels. Pre-k and k is down about 171 students. Enrollment for just grades 1 through 12 increased from two years ago from 4,545, to 4,569.. In fy 20 we had about 769 kindergarteners in pre-k and we're down to about 598 which is consistent with last year so we hope that as we combat this pandemic that more families will choose to send their children to school in those earlier grades because we know how important early education is in the development of a child's learning how important pre-k in kindergarten is to their growth.

Attendance - The district's attendance rate for the first four weeks is about 86 %, which is consistent with last year. Prior to the pandemic, we were at about 95 %. The rates tend to be higher in the middle of the week on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, and the lowest are on Mondays and Fridays. We're not able to report yet on chronic absenteeism as it is too early to do that in order to calculate it accurately. 47 Students have not show up which contributes to the low attendance rate. Note: Whenever we present attendance data, we never include a pre-k.

Overall we are well below the 95% that we were at in 19 since our average is about 86%. Some schools you can see have higher attendance than the average while STEM, Lawrence, Peck, and Veritas are below the average. Veritas is really low for some data cleanup that needs to happen. They do have 12 of the no shows and 24 partially completed no shows / withdrawals. Veritas today and with the withdrawals updated they are at 80% which is higher than the 75 but still well below the average.

The high school average is about 84 %. Dean is slightly above the average at about 90 % and then Opportunity Academy is lower at 59 %. Opportunity Academy attendance rates tend to be lower due to the students we serve at are not in a traditional setting and they require alternative learning environment which includes a flexible schedule.

On average 21% of our absences are coded as medically excused. While we are not able to identify student absences that are specifically covid-related, we do assume that a significant amount of our medical absences for this year are related to covid. If we were to remove these medically excused absences from our attendance calculation, our attendance rate would increase by approximately 2-3%. Attendance is a difficult thing to tackle amidst a pandemic especially when we are encouraging families to keep their children home if they are sick. We have to continue to encourage families to do this for the safety of our schools as a whole but also need to make sure we are doing the right amount of outreach with families for students that have non medically excused absences.

Attendance is difficult to tackle amidst the pandemic. We are really encouraging families, strongly to keep their kids home when they're sick so our attendance data definitely reflects

that. We're going to continue to encourage families to to keep their kids at home when they're sick. That's how we're going to keep our school safe. It's also important for us to continue to monitor the students that aren't showing up and aren't medically excused. We want to make sure we're re-engaging our students and and following up and having those conversations with families and making those connections.

Staffing- There has been 15 late resignations this year compared to five last year. Three of the eight Sped vacancies are core teaching positions (others include psychologist, speech pathologist, etc) There are 41 paraprofessional vacancies: 22 are special education positions, the others are support roles. Specials vacancies include Art, Music, Tech, etc. Recruitment Programs will prioritize candidates of color, critical shortage areas, bilingual candidates, and candidates who are deeply connected to Holyoke community. As we recruit, we are continuing to work with higher ed institutions and other partners. On October 6th, we will be hosting a recruitment fairs, including one through Get Hired on October 6 @ the Holyoke Mall as well as an HPS Virtual recruitment fair and will be partnering with MassHire on September 29, 2021.

Learning plan for Extended Leaves- We have developed and are implementing a learning support plan that will be in effect for any student who needs to be absent either due to a mandatory isolation or any type of illness that requires them to be out of school. We also want to make sure that someone at the school is making a personal connection every day you know in some cases it's going to be the counselor some cases, it'll be other staff in the building but we want to make sure that there is that personal connection being made every single day if a student does have to quarantine for a long period of time.

MCAS - MCAS data was broken down by participation rates and surprisingly our participation rates are remain pretty high um they're about 95 percent for grades uh three to eight and in english and math and 81 and 82 for grade 10. i didn't expect the participation rates to be so high given everything that we went through but you can see here that there on average it was about 94 in ela compared to 96 percent two years ago we did not administer mcas tests last year enough in um in 2020 or the year before um our math participation rates are at about 93 percent where we were at 96 percent again in 10th grade you could see a a big dip in terms of the participation rate it went from 86 to 80 and then in science the same thing we're at we were at 95 and 19 and we're at 92 right now.

There was an analysis of MCAS data and compared it to 2019 MCAS data since MCAS was not taken in 2020. You can see that we saw decreases in meeting and exceeding in ALL grades except for grade 10 which saw a 7% increase. 8th grade being the biggest drop of 10% points. The impact that remote learning has had on our students is in ELA. The % of students meeting or exceeding ELA standards dropped 5% points from 19% to 14%. More students are also Not meeting expectations as evidenced by the 9% increase from 32% to 41%. Math decreased in all grades with the highest drops being in 3rd and 4th grade of 11% and 13%. Overall the drop was 7% points since we were at 12% and are now only 5% as a District.

Not only did we compare our 19 and 21 data to each other we also looked at the gap between us and the state average. In ELA and Math, the gap between the percentage of students meeting/exceeding expectations narrowed in all but three grades: ELA in Grades 3, 5 and 7. When looking across grades 3-8, the gap between the state and Holyoke narrowed in Math (from 37% to 29%) and remained the same in ELA (34%). Although the gap narrowed, the overall level of performance continues to be very concerning it just shows that this pandemic has had a huge impact across the state as well not just in Holyoke.

These results just highlight the importance of our students needing to be in person and it's why we need to be proactive and plan how we're going to address these gaps. We do have an accelerated learning plan. We've made a significant amount of investments in academic intervention teachers in coaching and math and reading interventions. We are working on strengthening the instructional core, and looking at the students that performed at the bottom 25%. We are currently working with schools to identify those students to be identified and for schools to create a learning acceleration plan to make sure that those students are getting the supports that they need to improve in academics and we do know families will be receiving the mcas report card shortly after september 30th and i think that we still you know we just got this data it was made public last tuesday we're still analyzing it this was a real high level update of the data but we still have to analyze it by school we're going to be analyzing it by sub group for now we thought that this was we just wanted to give a brief update to the committee where we were at with uh relative to the state and relative to 2019 which was the last mcas that we took.

Ms. Brunelle - expressed concerns around submission dates of no shows in sims, Oct & March, will this information that was incorrectly documented be corrected, including students who are being withdrawn prior to the October submission.

Mrs. Birks- expressed concern about compliance with IEP's, since the district is down 22 special education paraprofessionals. She has heard from parents that students are not receiving speech services. She asked if the district is working on a plan to provide services in the interim, until staff can be hired so that the IEPs are fully implemented. She understands the critical staffing shortage and families need to be aware of that as well. However the district has a legal responsibility to provide services in the IEP.

I want to be honest and transparent with families, we have the critical staffing shortage you know these are the issues and work with families to come up with solutions on things that might work. Marianne Currier is working with agencies, however we need to start offering options because legally it's our responsibility to make sure that these students are getting the services provided.

If that means that moms and dads have to call and set up outside appointments, for example with Holyoke Hospital for speech services or Bay State or wherever, then it's on the district to take care of

that bill. We need to start showing parents their options and leading them to making sure that their students are getting the services that they need. The concerns of the unfilled special ed teachers which includes the psychologists as well is that also how many for the speech the ot, pt. I really want to have open honest transparent conversations with families. Parents have an expectation that their children are getting services and 99 percent of the time when you're talking about special education those students aren't able to come home and tell mom and dad whether or not those services happen. Parents are going off trust so when they're starting to see regression and they're finding out after the fact that's not okay. Ms. Birks is aware that the district is doing outreach, trying to hire, there's a critical shortage in the state, and we had to call in the national guard for busing.

Superintendent Soto's Response to concerns

The district is exploring every possible options:

- Making paymore competitive
- Offering services after regular school hours ad providing stipends to teachers
- Working with community partners to develop pipelines to fill critical vacancies
- Afterhours services for students
- Remote services-
- Pipelines for services

Superintendent Soto has reached out to the state to see if they had any short term solutions for these shortages.

Mr. Collamore- Clarification on attendance, 85% for the start school, then 89% at a later date. Does the date keep rising until the end of the school year or does it mean in the middle of the school year or does the attendance keep rising and rising to a point where at one point we were 95.

Superintendent Soto- Clarification in year 2020 before the pandemic, our attendance rate in those grade levels was 95 percent and we're down to 86 percent now.

Last year we were hybrid for much of the year and then we went in april we started phasing in different grade spans. Our attendance rate for the whole year was for the first four weeks of school for 88%, so we did drop but we expected that to be a drop you know kids are in school five days a week.

We anticipated the attendance rates to go down In response we are:

- Outreach through the face team
- Working with the counselors
- Identifying those families that have had absences due to illness
- making sure we're in contact with families who are not absent due to illness

Substitutes on on here but it is we do have some day-to-day some schools have day-to-day subs that show up every day but that's a those are positions that are tougher to fill at the beginning of this year more so than than some of our teaching positions.

A lot of investments in our coaches, a lot of investments in our academic intervention teachers and unfortunately due to the lack of substitute teachers we're having to pull those positions.

Mr. Whelihan discusses this concerns around the major deficiencies with Veritas and their attendance - we start getting the parents involved to try to you know the outreach in terms of getting firm data on why students are absent

Superintendent Soto- In response to being creative with compensation we are offering

- Employee Referral program
- More Competitive Salary
- We've expanded our recruitment
- We're offering relocation bonuses
- Qualified candidates have been offered bonuses to sign on

The state we're in right now like this is not unique to Holyoke, this ESSER money we created positions, we've lost some teaching positions to go into some of those academic intervention and coaching positions. Other districts making the same offerings. The pandemic and the unemployment additional unemployment benefits, it's it's like all of these different factors are contributing to the issues we see.

Mr. Courchesne- share concerns about losing the traction with the pre-k and students not coming to class.

Superintendent Soto- For many buses and big buses we didn't experience any driver shortages so these companies and it's happening, as seen on the news, it's happening across the nation. We have not experience issues with that level of transportation. We use vanpool to transport and this is where we've experienced some driver shortages and they were able to meet our need for the first couple of weeks, then it got to a point where we had 15 new students either move or go somewhere else. When we reached out to them, they informed us it is going to take a while we're experiencing issues. Once I heard that was when I reached out to the state and I asked if they could help.

What they do is they know we needed six drivers and we worked with with the state for the van company to send six vans to the base in Chicopee. Then they provided six drivers and we worked with all families that had students that use this transportation, and made sure they were ok with them driving the van because they would be in uniform.

Mr. Courchesne- concerns about the pre-k uh loss in numbers, great strides getting pre-k's in every school, except the high schools. It has nothing to do with buses.

Superintendent Soto- We have more slots available in pre-k than our current enrollment. Now moving forward we have a lot of half day pre-k programs and we're trying to convert them to full day programs for all families. We're working on a plan to to move in that direction. Some of our current efforts to address this include:

- Enrollment team has been using blackboard connect
- Advertising on our website
- Encouraging neighbors who know somebody that has a pre-k age student or kindergarten age student have them enroll at enrollholyoke.com

Some families are just hesitant to send their five-year-old or their four-year-old or their six-year-old to school in the middle of a pandemic and some of them have the option to keep them at home.

Mr. Courchesne- Has questions around the district trying to provide parents homeschool materials in preparation to their return their school.

Superintendent Soto- We are reviving our HELL program, and there is 2 areas of focus. Identifying parents, and working with partners to provide kits to families in those earlier grade, and focusing on the curriculum its self. This services may not be provided by the HPS but can be provided by one of our partners. There was an attempt to do this 5 to 6 years ago, and due to the loss of funding at the city, it died, and we want to work with the city to ensure it is supported and it is a program that we will continue to have in the future.

Acting Mayor Murphy- If students were effected by the loss of school. SPecifically to PRE- k , are thoser students enrolled in another facility?

Classification to the chart provided by superintendent Soto. Some of the 170 students, Refer to Slide7 of the presentation, which show the breakdown. All student in HPS are receiving support in order to make up for time loss from being out of school. We have in our four cppi classrooms in our schools, which we partner with VOC. If families are choosing to go to a another pre- k program in the district, families may make this choice due to the hours of 7:30- 5 pm, which is beneficial for working families. Superintendent Soto will connect with out side pre-k providers to cross reference enrollment.

Mrs. Lefebvre- On attendance, you have that in the first few weeks of school it was 85.5 percent did that includ the students that had tested positive and were absent? Absences do reflect that parents are not sending their children to school because they could be a closer contact, and or the child is sick and the parents are not sending them to school.

Mrs. Lefebvre has brought up previously to former directors in the district about conducting exit interviews to find out why families or staff are leaving the district.

The district should be doing more for the employees that currently work in the district instead of trying to incentivize outsiders for coming in.

In regard to getting services for student on an IEP is regressing, until the time comes up for the meeting to discuss the supports for the child, the district has the obligation to provide these services to the students if it is outlined in the IEP. If the district is stating that we are going to provide such services as

outlined in the IEP, the district should be working with partners in order to better provide these services and be honest with families, as long as they are willing to as it is the districts obligation to provide these services.

Superintendent Soto- Yes, slide 15 shows the data regarding Medical Absenses. Funding is available, there are higher case loads for out Speech and OT therapist. We as a district want to ensure we meet the needs for all students on an IEP, including outside providers, and asking our current employee if they would be willing to work additional hours to provide these services.

Ms. Birks questions the support from area colleges that can start doing their externships. When we came up with the extra fund and we opened up the higher positions and teachers who fulfilled those positions, does it make sense for them to be in those position instead of in front of students? Are we bringing the coaches back in the classrooms. Are we using paraprofessionals to cover these positions as well? Using paraprofessionals to cover classrooms, is taking away from students on an IEP, and they are coming up and covering a classroom should be receiving additional compensation.

Superintendent Soto - If we need to use a coach or interventionist will be used for teacher absences. Superintendent Soto strongly believes that strong coaching will support our teacher. We are not reaching our student outcomes, so have better coaching, intervention positions, including MTSS and the higher needs for student, allowed us to provide these supports through these positions. A lot of teachers are leaving the profession as a whole. Yes, Paraprofessionals are being used for this. If a paraprofessional is covering, paraprofessional get \$10 for 1 hour, and or for the full day an additional \$55 a day. The starting salary for a paraprofessional is about \$1.50 higher than minimum wage.

Ms. Tensley Williams- has reached out to schools to provide donations for uniforms for the students.

COVID- 19

While we continue to see an increase in COVID cases in our student population, our staff numbers remain very low. (vaccine likely). We have allocated funding and are in the process of hiring 2 full time nurses to assist with contact tracing for the district. We continue to stress the importance of distancing and proper mask wearing to reduce the chances of in school transmission

New additions to our safety procedures are:

- **Rugs:** Discontinue using rugs as an instructional space since it is difficult to maintain 3-foot spacing between students while on a rug.
- **Open Houses:** Out of an abundance of caution, all Open Houses will be virtual events for families, with staff in-person at the school.
- **Adult meetings and 6 feet distancing:** Host remote meetings when possible and reserve in-person meetings for times when adults can be 6-feet apart and being in-person dramatically increases the effectiveness of the meeting.
- Please note, by the end of the week, we will send **an at-home instructional plan for students** who need to quarantine due to a positive case or other long term absence/illness.

It is important for all of us to follow this plan...If we follow this plan we will make sure that we are doing the best we can to keep each other safe and keep us in school In person...

- **Masks for all in school buildings and on buses**
- **Encouraging all eligible people to receive the COVID-19 vaccine**
- **COVID-19 testing offered in schools through routine COVID safety checks and rapid testing for symptomatic individuals,**
- **Proper ventilation through open windows and HEPA air filtration machines,**
- **Physical distancing as much as possible in the classroom and lunchroom**
- **Placing students in cohorts when possible to limit cross-group exposure**
- **Staying home when sick**
- Daily Screening Tool
- Contact tracing when possible exposure to COVID-19 has occurred and quarantining as per protocol
- **Teaching and ensuring students participate in healthy practices like handwashing and covering coughs/sneezes**
- Limiting visitors to school buildings and promoting virtual and outdoor opportunities for family engagement (e.g. IEP meetings, back to school events, etc),
- Enhanced cleaning procedures
- Use of personal protective equipment (PPE)

Air filtration machines that supplement our existing HVAC systems to quickly reduce airborne pathogens by 99.97%. The machines, found in every classroom, cafeteria and other areas of congregation effectively achieve air exchange rates of 4-6 times/hour depending on the size of the room and the fan speed selected which follows the current CDC guidelines and recommendations.

Mrs. Lefebvre- what's plan b if the numbers keep rising? then if they're out for two weeks then how's your tutoring or what are you doing so that they're not losing that education time?

Superintendent Soto- That's is the learning plan, making sure teachers are posting assignments in google classroom that kids have a tech a device if they're going to be out for an extended period of time. There is no option right now for remote learning. It's not allowed in the state for Holyoke. We didn't start a virtual school they will open up the application process again for next year. It's not something that would count towards student learning time that time would have to be made up in accordance with state law. Students are sent home with a device and we make sure they have 7-10 days worth of assignments posted in google classroom within 2 days. School day staff conduct regular check-ins with the student with the family to see how they are keeping up with his work and if there is any additional needs.

If the state were to open up and lift the restriction on being in person then we would look at at another option but right now that's not an option and there's no indication from the state.

The commissioner did announce today he was extending the mask mandate from October 1st to November 1st but there's been no indication that he will lift the restriction. If you look at the results across the state that shows the impact that remote learning had on students across the state not just in Holyoke, the state's looking at that and I don't see them creating an option where where the hybrid learning is an acceptable model anymore they will there will be an option to create a virtual school.

We're we're looking into that process for next year but for right now we just need to make sure that families that are willing and can get the vaccine. We need to encourage families to sign up for the test and stay because that's going to keep their kids in school if they're identified as a close contact and then it's just another safety measure that we have in place to make sure that that kids are safe and we need to continue to reiterate with staff the importance of keep your mask up and putting your mask up as adults it's what's going to keep our students safe and in person.

Mrs. Birks- if students are out for a prolonged period of time due to the sickness like the the 10 to 14 plus days are they not so they're not getting tutoring Can we have a staff member virtually through zoom check in with them.

Superintendent Soto- As part of the entry plans, the teachers expressed that hybrid teaching, or streaming, overwhelming do not want to go back to teaching in person and remote. The schools are being responsive to the checkins. The district has upped their contract with tutoring providers with the expecting that an increase in the amount of tutoring services that we're going to have to provide especially for for those medical situations.

Entry Plan- I have already completed classroom visits and focus groups with students and staff at Metcalf, Sullivan, E.N. White. I will also have a survey coming out next month, which I would love for you to take. We have two virtual sessions for families and one for staff coming up. We also have an outdoor in-person one at Heritage park on Oct 12 at 5 p.m. for anyone who is interested. Please encourage your friends, neighbors, colleagues, etc. to come attend. Information is accessible from our main webpage at www.hps.holyoke.ma.us.

Here is a picture of my first official entry plan visit at Metcalf. This is Michaela Guzman, a 6th grader, who has been at Metcalf since PreK. (Optional: When talking to her, I realized I used to play baseball with her Dad - although that made me feel a little old, it is one of the things I love about meeting with our students, families and staff. I make these connections that reemphasize the importance of what we do as a school district - and I love hearing both positive and negative feedback.

As your superintendent I have 4 core beliefs that guide me every day in this work

- **Students are first and foremost.** Please understand that every decision I make is led with the question: *How is this decision going to impact our students?*
- **Every child can and will learn.** If we truly believe in our students, create trust, and create an environment that makes them feel valued, they will be ready to learn. One of the worst things

we can do is cry “ hay bendito Pobresito”....or “ ahh poor babies they have it so hard at home”...NO We have to be understanding of what our students are going through but believe that even with all of that.....they are smart and they need to be pushed to learn at a high level. We can't blame parents or blame conditions at home for being the reason that our students “can't learn”....that is a way for us to not take accountability for what we can do and what our role is as educators in the Holyoke Public Schools.

- **School is about more than academics.** We need to support the whole child. Many students rely on our school communities to give them the right amount of love and push to be the best version of themselves and not just a place to learn academics.

It takes a village (to raise a child). We can't do this work alone but every one of us needs to do our part. Families matter. Teachers

I am embarking on a listening and learning journey over the next 5-6 months. This will inform the revision of our strategic priorities, objectives and goals, and develop a vision and plan for Holyoke together for the next 3-5 years. You can see here that the planning phase of this is now through the end of October where I will share my official draft of the entry plan and conduct regular meeting sand interviews through the end of December. Sometime around February we will develop an entry plan findings report and share it out with the community. These findings will then inform the work that needs to happen to either refine or develop our District Strategy.

Some of the students are bringing up that we we have a hard time addressing when a when a student is having behavioral issues in the classroom we have a hard time addressing it in a way that that keeps other students learning. We really have to dig in we got to listen to our students and see how we can address some of those concerns.

Ms. Brunelle- Teachers have been having huge concerns about our discipline policy we've been hearing it all over my kids school's facebook page, and in the middle school collaborative meeting today one of the gentlemen that was speaking as a former school leader in the middle school grade is that we need to stop treating our middle schoolers like their their five-year-olds and making them feel accountability for their actions helping them understand that they are responsible for their decisions.

Those were the two main themes:

- Teachers feel like they need more collaboration time
- retention teachers are voicing their opinion that our attention is a problem and having as many new teachers as we do every year and that they need more time to collaborate.

TIMELINE OF ENTRY PLAN PROCESS

The entire process these are the key questions that i'm asking in the small focus groups with students, staff, families, and community members.

- What are the strengths and successes of our school district what are some challenges and areas for growth?
- How do we ensure that every graduate is prepared for college and career success?

- Aligned to it takes a village how do we work better together to support student success?
- What do you want to see from me as your superintendent?
- What else do you think is important for me to know?

Acting Mayor Murphy- What is the longest time a student is on a bus ?

Superintendent Soto- Student are on the bus under 50 minutes, we have had the opportunity to split the run to the berries, to shorten that run. Our ability to solve some of those issues is going to be harder given the driver shortage but what we did do was we're riding the the we're routing the buses ourselves

Annual Planning and Goals

In Holyoke we have a vision and that vision is "A pathway for every student"Every student is unique and our job is to prepare them to be the best version of themselves. Every student has a place in society whether they choose the arts, teaching, the military, college, or career...we want to make sure that the experience they get here in HPS creates a pathway to meet their individual needs.

We also want Our students graduate with an additional credential (that could be a SEAL OF BILITERACY, a VOCATIONAL CERTIFICATE, or COLLEGE CREDITS prior to even getting to college)

And...By the time our students graduate, we want them to be effective communicators, critical thinkers, engaged and productive community members, and mindful individuals.

One of our most important commitments is to Equity.....Over the last 2 years we have been working and refining these commitments and here they are:

- We ensure that the students/families/staff who need the most get the most.
- We incorporate the voices of those impacted, especially those who have not been heard historically.
- We promote access and inclusion for all students/families/staff, especially for those who are not being heard.
- We reflect and embrace the greater diversity of our students and families.
- We work to be an anti-racist, inclusive and culturally-responsive community.

Seeking excellence through equity the District has 4 strategic priorities to organize our annual planning—we continue to work towards those four strategic priorities—which are Teaching and Learning, Supporting the whole child, family and community engagement and Shared Learning and Leadership.

The committee questions where are school councils where we're bringing those back and making sure that every school has a school council by october 15th and we need to strengthen the the work around those um around those school councils and we're going to continue to strengthen translation and interpretation and under shared learning and leadership lastly we're supporting educators uh to earn and maintain appropriate licensure and endorsement and in partnership with relay we're strengthening our teacher observation and feedback our lesson planning and the implementation of weekly data meetings at all of our schools.

Instructional Leadership

- Strengthen the implementation of instructional strategies to **support multilingual learners.**
- Complete a **Literacy audit** to inform the creation of a three-year Literacy improvement plan

- Ensure students identified in the **bottom 25th percentile** receive **systematic interventions** in ELA and math based on their needs.

Supporting the Whole Child

- Support principals in the implementation of student supports, including the new **social-emotional curriculum called Trails**
- Continue the plan to move towards **distinct elementary and middle schools to support our students needs.**

Family and Com Eng

- **Strengthen School Councils to engage families as active partners in their child's learning.**
- **Continue to strengthen translation and interpretation services.**

Shared Learning and Leadership

- Support educators to earn and maintain **appropriate licensure/endorsement.**
- In partnership with Relay, strengthen teacher observation and feedback, lesson planning, and implementation of weekly data meetings at all schools

Mr. Whelihan-The Supporting the whole child about the food service contract any thought that may be going to a three-year contract as opposed to a five?

Superintendent Soto-if we're not happy, that is something that we can look into uh i've found i mean we're never locked in right like if i'm not happy. With the service and i think that they could be doing a better job we could there's always an out what a five-year contract does is it gets us better pricing and it gets us a better commitment from the company to to stay in Holyoke.

Ms. Brunelle- request Dual Language Task force update for October or November meeting.

Mr. Collamore- can you explain to me the liability of national guard people coming in here and driving our buses. Does it fall on the city or does it fall on the company or does it fall in the state for providing this?

Superintendent Soto- the national guard is providing they have their 7d van license so we're not putting drivers in there just because they're part of a national guard they're licensed to do to to transport in these type of vehicles.

A member of the committee who would like to be a part of the Holyoke Ethnic Studies, Mrs. Birks, yes.

We have a request for putting an ad in the holyoke hall of fame program book. This was done 2 years ago as it did not take place last year. There does not need to be a vote as the committee is using their sunshine funds.

Mr. Collamore Motion to be allowed

Mrs. Lefebvre- we have a motion to allow we have a second all those in favor.

All in favor.

Motion for the Chair of the Urban Division Delegate

Past President Miss feliciano sims is our chair of the urban divisio.

Mrs. Lefebvre- Sets a motion for Mrs. Rebecca Birks to serve as a delegate um on delegate assembly

Mrs. Birks is unable to attend due to previous obligations, **a motion for Mr. Collamore to be the alternate delegate to the assembly.**

Motion passes unanimously

On Going Business- NONE

Acting Mayor Murphy-

The last meeting we tabled the requests for the transfer of the property at Dean. Acting Mayor did try to set up a meeting with the city engineer but i wasn't able to get that coordinated. Since item was not carried forward on the agenda, the three people that were assigned to that committee was Mrs. Birks, Mr. Whelihan, and Mr. Courshene. The request is to find out exactly what are the ins and outs of the zoning is for to transfer the parcel right and then at our next school committee meeting in October which the city engineer wouldn't have to be here because they're already presenting to the subcommittee that we're sending to hear about it to come back give us the update at the Oct 18 meeting.

It's 32 000 square feet, 160 feet coming down, 200 feet from St. Vincents going north towards mcdonald's and it leaves approximately 50 feet from the school parking lots.

Announcements

- Mrs. Mary Birks dedication of the old blessed sacrament, now Metcal Middle School 4 pm
- SRO Community Group subcommittee - Survey for sros, the MOU, an opportunity to share thoughts. Survey must be turned in by Oct. 1.
- SEPAC, ELPAC Entry Plan Sessions for families.
- School Building Committee- October 15th from 6 to 8

Ms. Tensley Williams- Poem Dedicated to the students of HPS

You will never outgrow the need to read

Do you know your abc's

I hope that you did not forget that they are called the alphabet

It doesn't matter what grade you're in the alphabet can be your friend

When you know your abcs they can teach you how to read
If you can read you will know the wonders of nature and how things grow
Do not miss out on your chance
If you can read you will advance
when you travel near afar
The alphabet will be your star
If you are not sure of what to do
Reading directions can guide you through
Never give up and you can't succeed because you will never outgrow your need to read

Acting Mayor Murphy-Athletic fields and the track, we are currently trying to get the athletic field corrected. We are now expecting that we'll have some action from court action hopefully within near future and hopefully have some kind of proposals that we might be able to accept regarding the track. I'm working with bond council to try to determine and put some kind of financial package in front of the city council. The council would pass it on october 19th which would include repairing and replacing the track the bonding would be approximately 690\$, 000 for that would be done potentially next june after graduation. Which requires city council approval. Superintendent Soto has worked with our city engineer and with others to make sure that the temporary repairs are going to be done.