

December 18, 2024

Baldwin School Council Minutes

7:45 - 8:45 a.m.

School Council Members in Attendance

Parent Members: Caitlin Dube, Kate Flaim, Matt Meyersohn, Eugenia Schraa, Chunying Yue

School Staff and Community Members: Heidi Cook, Allegra Fletcher, Sara Oliveira, Susan Tiersch

Also present: Serena Facchinetti, Jen Nigro

Welcome

The Cambridge Public Schools School Committee voted to close the Kennedy-Longfellow Elementary School (KLO) at their meeting last evening. We are holding that community in our thoughts this morning.

Agenda

- Review of the Report Card and Conference Schedule
- Conversation about the results of the snack-sized survey and next steps

Report Card and Conference Schedule

The district sent out a survey looking for family input about report cards, as well as focus group. This has been discussed for years but was tabled for other issues. The problem: Every school has their own report card. It was not long ago that every school had their own curriculum. Now that the curriculum is aligned, it is time to work on the report card, to reflect what is going on with the curriculum.

Currently, report cards are issued twice a year in grades 1 - 5.

The current schedule:

- Listening conferences at the start of school in the fall
- Conference in November - update on student progress
- Report card - end of January for grades 1 - 5
- Conference in April
- Report card at the end of the school year

That is two written and two oral feedback reports on a child's progress.

Kindergarten is all oral reports - no report cards. This year, the district is looking at having kindergarten do some written reporting.

Heidi is on a district team that is looking at standardizing the report card. She does not get the sense that there was a lot of participation in Dr. Madeira's focus groups.

Parent question: *What are teachers feeling about report cards?*

They would like to pare it down to fewer items on the report card and have more impactful items that align with the curriculum. Having a streamlined report card will be better for all.

Parent comment: Prefer the conference to the written report as it is nice to have a discussion but know it takes a lot of the teacher's time. (The teacher contact has hours for conferences and time to input report card information.)

Parent comment: Would like to have the screeners explained. For example, a child may be in the red at the start and end, however, progress is made, so there is growth. So is this good or not?

Parent: Comments on the report cards are useful, not just a score (ME - meeting expectations). Although understand that comments take time. It seems like the use of comments varies from teacher to teacher. Is there a way to make this easier for teachers, like ChatGPT?

Wondering if perhaps Dr. Madera, who is spearheading the report card alignment, can come.

Snack Sized Survey Follow-Up

The snack-sized survey was administered at Baldwin after the district-wide survey last spring.

Thank you to parent Matt Meyersohn for being the administrator of the survey. Thank you to the school council members who worked on the thoughtful survey questions. Thank you to Caitlin for summarizing the written comments.

The Baldwin Snack Sized Survey asked:

- What is your favorite things about Baldwin?
- How happy are you at Baldwin?

The responses were extremely positive. A wordle of the favorite things showed the words “teachers”, “community”, “staff”, “welcoming”, “amazing” . Responses showed families are extremely happy or happy at Baldwin.

The last two questions were open-ended.

- What would you liked to see change about Baldwin?
- What questions would you like asked in a future survey?

Here is a summary of the answers:

What would you like to see change about Baldwin?

Screen Time and Technology

- Eliminate non-instructional screen time
- Reduce YouTube
- No screens during free time

Physical activity and health

- More recess and outside play
- More time for lunch
- Healthier lunches
- Air conditioning (Note: Central air conditioning should be ready for the warm weather. Look at the top of the building - new compressor and new chiller installed!)

Academic Improvements

- More dedicated and rigorous academics
- Support for advanced learners
- More science and social studies
- Stronger interventions for reading and math

Extracurricular and After School

- Sports teams
- Foreign language offerings
- Dance and drama programs

Parent and Community Engagement

- More parent involvement opportunities and community events
- Clear information for new families
- More transparency about student experience

Special Needs and Diversity

- Improved IEP process
- More awareness of neurodiversity
- Support for students with different learning needs

More diverse students and staff

What questions would you like to see asked in future surveys?

Technology and Screen Time

- What level of screentime are you comfortable with during the school day?
- Should the school have a policy regarding phone use?
- Do you feel comfortable with children using software with no educational benefit?

Academic and Learning

- Do you feel your child is adequately challenged?
- What would you like to understand better about the curriculum?

Extracurricular and Language

- Would you like foreign language to be taught at Baldwin?
- How to make on-site afterschool more affordable?

Community and Parent Engagement

- How would you like to contribute to the Baldwin community?
- How can parents with limited time stay connected?
- How can parents support classroom learning without interfering?
- Are there ways to involve parents even more?

Social-Emotional and Well-being

- Do you feel confident your child is receiving needed social-emotional support?
- What environmental improvements should be considered for students well-being?
- What matters most to your child when it come to school?
- What values would you like Baldwin to help students cultivate?

Public Comment and Questions

How will the closure of the KLO impact Baldwin? Will teachers be distributed to Baldwin?

Our school is mostly full. It sounds like the KLO staff will follow their students to three possibly locations:

- Tobin School (new building) for the SEI students
- King Open School (proximity to KLO)
- MLK School (feeder school to Putnam Avenue Upper School (PAUS). KLO students go to Putnam Avenue Upper School)

We may get a few families. There is a good possibility that Baldwin will eventually have three sections for all grades (we currently have 3 classes in grades 1 - 3 and 2 classes in grades 4 & 5), however, mostly likely not this coming fall.

With the exception of preschool, we are full with a waiting list. We have a few low income seats open in preschool, however, with no preschool afterschool, it is unlikely they will get filled. Licensing for preschool afterschool is very stringent.

Next School Council Meeting and Meeting Schedule for the School Year

Next meeting is *Tuesday, January 14*

Meetings will be in the morning from 7:45 - 8:45.

Remaining Meetings

January 14

February 11

March 11

April 8

May 6

June 10

School council meetings follow the open meeting law. Meetings are open to all.

Students are always welcome to come to the library and may go to the cafeteria for breakfast at 8:00 or they may stay in the library until the bell rings at 8:30 and then go to their classroom.