

Graham & Parks SCHOOL COUNCIL

(Official Minutes)
DRAFT

School Council Meeting

Called for 5:45 at the Graham & Parks School, 44 Linnaean St, Cambridge, MA 02138

School Council Members Present: Inbal Alon (on zoom), Nasrin Belali (arrived at 5:50), Debra Gadsen-Holiday (on zoom), Talia Greenberg, Mason Gloudemans, Lilly Havstad (arrived on zoom at 6:02), Christian Henry, Mary Hermann, Arjun Jaikumar, Lauren Morse, Jodi Rich (arrived at 5:57), Guy Rosenzweig, Gwen Savych, Dr. Kathleen Smith

School Council Members Absent: Karima Cherguaoui, Aboma Dirbaba

Also Present: Robin / Fen

Arjun Jaikumar & Kathleen Smith in the Chair.

A quorum of the Graham & Parks School Council being present, Arjun Jaikumar called the meeting to order at 5:45 pm and read the call of the meeting

The meeting proceeded with a roll call vote:

Date: March 27, 2025 **Time:** 5:45 PM - 7:00 PM

1. Meeting Convened & Approval of Minutes

- Meeting called to order at 5:45 PM
- 5 members absent at time of roll call but 3 joined shortly after
- Motion to approve March 6th meeting minutes: **
- Seconded by: **
- Vote: Unanimously approved
- Roles assigned:
 - Timekeeper: Guy Rosenzweig
 - Secretary: Mary Hermann
 - Tech Support: Fen

2. Welcome & Introductions

a. Feedback from March 6th Meeting

- Heard voices from people who don't usually participate
- Timekeeper helped keep meeting on task
- Discussion could be more energetic
- Suggestion to use rounds forum format

b. Intended Outcomes

- Provide an update on progress toward School Improvement Plan (SIP)
- Update on subcommittees and timeline for new SIP creation

3. School Administration Report

a. Family Engagement

- School spirit day tomorrow with sports theme
- Take home flyers will show all events for remainder of school year
- Next principal coffee will focus on screen time
 - The intention behind this principal coffee is to help parents understand how screen time at home affects our kids and how we can create the boundaries that feel good to us. Will have a Q&A session at the end and we can talk about the intersection of screen time at school and home
- April events include:
 - Grade 1 & 2 music concert
 - Literacy night & Book Fair week in the library
 - Free food market
 - Community circles

b. Staffing & Professional Development Updates

- Recently completed last session of staff community circles
- Fewer upcoming professional learning sessions scheduled due to parent-teacher conferences
- Upcoming training on inclusive schools and LGBTQ+

c. Facilities Updates

- no update

d. Vision in Community Task Force

- Moving toward more alignment in Cambridge public schools while remaining a choice district
- Focus on what parents are choosing when they select Graham and Parks
- Discussions about the school's long history of alternative learning and potential to become an EL school
- Meetings will be open to public with opportunities for feedback

4. Update on Progress Toward Goals of Current SIP

Goal 1: Literacy

- Mid-year results (expected at 50% to reach 100% by EOY)
 - Progress towards growth: **105%** for all students, far exceeding mid year expectation
 - Black and African American students showing significant growth, well above mid-year targets
 - G&P consistently outperforming district averages for targeted populations
 - Kindergarten improvement:
 - Students "well below grade level" decreased from 41% to 15%
 - Students "at benchmark" increased from 9% to 32%

Goal 2: Math

- Growth lower than literacy but still positive: 73% growth at mid-year

Goal 3: School Climate and Culture

- Social emotional learning (SEL) team leading effort to anchor behavioral matrix in core values
- Core values redefined as C.A.R.E.S. (Community, Action, Responsibility, Effort, Support)
- More room for student voice is coming via voting and was the intended outcome of their last meeting

Goal 4: Attendance

- Current chronic absenteeism rate is 10.6%, lower than district average

5. Discussion

Positive Observations

- Tremendous growth in literacy scores, particularly in targeted subgroups
- Successful implementation of content-rich text forward curriculum (CKLA)
- Ahead of district on addressing chronic absenteeism
- When focused on a goal, our school can achieve tremendous results even after devastating circumstances - this news shows that we have successfully transitioned out of the pandemic disruption
- Effectively closing achievement gaps compared to other district schools

Questions and Wonderings

- Ensuring high-achieving students are also being challenged appropriately
- Sustainability of growth trends with new curriculum
- Specific classroom practices contributing to success
- Ongoing workload concerns with CKLA implementation
- Parent awareness of progress for children who were significantly behind
- Impact on classroom culture with reduced academic struggles
- Family involvement and support strategies
- Handling of curriculum pacing for absent students

6. Next Steps for SIP

- May and June: Year-end reflection and planning
- Awaiting updated timeline for SY 25-26/26-27 development
- Planned goal areas: Literacy, Math, Climate, Family Engagement, plus one school-specific goal

7. Subcommittee Updates

- Family & Community Engagement Subcommittee: First meeting scheduled for next Wednesday at 6 PM via Zoom
- Budget Subcommittee (Chair: Lilly Havstad): First meeting scheduled for next Friday at 4 PM via Zoom
- Subcommittee information will be posted on school website (Graham and Parks page > School Council section)

8. Community Comment

- Discussion about upcoming School Council elections (May)
- Need to educate community about council responsibilities before elections

- Clarification that positions are 2-year terms without re-election (not 2-year commitments)
- Suggestion to send ParentSquare message about elections with handbook link
- Similar outreach needed for staff elections
- Need to determine which current members are continuing

9. Meeting Evaluation

What Went Well

- Better time management
- Balance of protocol and flexibility
- All voices heard with active participation
- Thoughtful observations and questions
- Effective use of established protocols
- Authentic conversation
- Childcare provided
- Good balance of celebrating progress and deeper data analysis

Areas for Improvement

- More room for discussion during noticing and wondering activities
- Paper copies of data would be helpful
- More information on how ideas are incorporated into next steps
- More structure around wonderings to enable follow-up
- Increasing community attendance and engagement
- Clearer guidance on when/how parents can ask questions or relay community concerns
- Advance access to presentation slides
- More back-and-forth conversation on SIP
- Consider extending meeting time - member thought meeting time was 1.5 hours (not 1.25)
- How do we balance the requests for more and varied information with the request for more room for conversation

10. Adjournment

- Motion to close: Talia Greenberg
- Seconded: Guy Rosenzweig
- Vote: Unanimous
- Meeting closed at 7:10 PM

Minutes submitted by: Mary Hermann