

____Graham & Parks____ SCHOOL COUNCIL
Name of School

(Official Minutes)
DRAFT

School Council Meeting

Called for 8:30 at the Graham & Parks School, 44 Linnaean St, Cambridge, MA 02138

School Council Members Present: Rabell Afridi; Karima Cherguaoui; Erin Garcia; Valarie Ifill; Fen Portmann-Katz; Lauren Morse, Dr. Kathleen Smith, Nasrin Belali; Lilly Havstad (remote); Arjun Jaikumar; Ira Nichols-Barrer; Matt Patton (remote), Jodi Rich, Aboma Dirbaba

School Council Members Absent: Guy Rosenzweig

Also Present: ____Paul McKnight____
Names

____Ira Nichols-Barrer & Kathleen Smith____ in the Chair.
Name

A quorum of the Graham & Parks__ School Council being present, ____ called the meeting to order at ____ and read the call of the meeting

The meeting proceeded with a roll call vote:

INCLUDE MINUTES FOR EACH ITEM ON THE AGENDA OF THE MEETING

Date: October 9, 2025 **Time:** 8:30 AM - 10:30 AM

1. Meeting Convened, Welcome & Approval of Minutes (Sept 2025)

- Meeting called to order at 8:30 AM
- Welcome

- Motion to approve Sept 2025 minutes: Arjun
- Seconded by: Erin
- Vote: Unanimously approved by attendees
- Roles assigned:
 - Timekeeper:
 - Secretary: Arjun
 - Tech Support: Fen

2. Review of G&P School Improvement Plan

Kathleen: presenting goals, opportunity for clarifying questions, and then when we discuss individual topics, opportunity for noticings and wonderings for each goal.

a. Goal 1: Literacy

- Goal
 - Past target, some students met target, some groups improved below target, others declined.
 - For Black/AA students, 17th percentile in 2023, 62nd now.
 - mClass and iReady data showing similar patterns in terms of moving the needle.
 - All translates into a goal:
 - All students meeting or exceeding DESE accountability targets.
 - Also an action plan.
- Clarifying Questions
 - Growth data for K-2?
 - Yes, have that with mClass
- Notice & Wonder
 - Strategic action
 - Kids often captured into multiple demographic groups.
 - English learners need to be in school for two years to be captured in Growth & ELA data
 - Notice gap between highest performing group and lowest
 - Priority goal - what is the actual goal and can we move away from defining goals in terms of test score percentages? Can we articulate goals in simpler language, plain English etc. Define what achievement is? Can we bring school data in without relying so much on state data.
 - Notice that goal is ambitious and achieving it would be rare. (Clarified that goal will be hitting targets for 2025 achievement)

b. Goal 2: Math

- Goal

- In math, last year we were in the second year of implementing the new curriculum. Exceeding or meeting improvement targets with all demographics, except students with disabilities which improved below targets.
- Were in the 34th percentile for achievement for Black/AA students previously, we are now in 87th percentile
- Current goal: all students will meet DESE accountability targets for achievement/growth on MCAS.
- Strategic action steps are very similar to ELA to support work of teachers
- Clarifying Questions
 - Learning walks - Are they new this year?
 - We piloted previously, this year everyone is doing it.
 - We will have different “look-fors”
- Notice & Wonder
 - Data looks great
 - Evidence of patience and dedication to goals
 - We have new SEL data, looking at overlap in demographic groups and how SEL data overlaps with math data

c. Goal 3: Culture

- Goal
 - Data overview focused on school climate section of survey data
 - asked students how much does the behavior of other students help or hurt learning. Response was 39% favorable, a quarter neutrally. We would like progress.
 - 75% of students responded favorably to “how fair or unfair are the rules?”
 - Need other data sources, which we are implementing as part of the strategic action plan as we do not want to over rely on survey data
 - Goal: schoolwide approach to behavioral response system in accordance with CARES values.
 - Focused on establishing core values - foundation to build rest of this on.
 - Start with values you’re teaching and how you roll out those values, as opposed to starting with behavioral response system.
- Clarifying Questions
 - What is Wayfinder? It’s a pilot curriculum for Social Emotional Learning - the goal is next year every school in the district will use it; it is more antiracist approach to SEL
 - All schools this year are using WayPoints, an assessment that correlates to activities we can directly relate to CARES
- Notice & Wonder

- Interested in understanding the Wayfinder platform better
- Question - Would really like for us to think about how we can improve working conditions for educators in school. Set some goals for what kind of improvement we'd like to see in the next staff survey - similar to school achievement and family engagement goals.
 - Those three things are all interlinked
 - Excited about Wayfinder - looks great. What is the role of communications with families when there are behavioral incidents? Some families have wanted more communication in the past.
 - Longer recess time to help kids get energy out so better able to focus in the classroom
- Noticed that we have student climate data, some family climate data which we'll talk about next slide. We also have data on staff, from same surveys, which shows area for improvement. This is an opportunity for growth.
 - One thing we were unpacking is the issue of feedback – a thing we heard at grade level is we want feedback but not necessarily evaluators.
 - That was a driver for the learning walk protocol.

d. Goal 4: Family Engagement

- Goal
 - Hard to improve something that you don't measure. In part because what we do measure related to family engagement (see culture survey), we do well
 - Goal: (see slide)
 - Worked with district to think about what family engagement looks like and establish a definition. Core beliefs – what is engagement vs. involvement. When we think about engagement, we think about working with families on where child is
- Clarifying Questions
 - How to measure family engagement and attendance.
 - How do we shift from involvement to engagement?
 - The idea is to better engage families in what the students are learning, to better equip families so they can support the learning at home.
- Notice & Wonder
 - Are we getting rid of family breakfasts? Always focused around curriculum, and community too, and that's ok, but really centered around the work.
 - Might be a small shift for some; depends on what the current reality is for that grade level.
 - Changing scenario, paradigm will affect people who are benefiting currently, and there are a lot of them.

- Climate data cited earlier suggested family engagement is going well. Should build on things we do that are working.
- Worried we'll be getting rid of something valued; have wanted to cry tears of joy at the end of family breakfasts. Would be a shame if we were to get rid of an element of family engagement that is working well.
- We are not getting rid of family celebrations. Actually required to do this. They are not going away. Be more like a museum where a staff member can help walk you through some of what students are doing.
 - Question of whether we have food is still up in the air, staff would like either definitely yes or definitely no.
 - Want to be academically focused
- This is a small shift.
- We are also moving to plain language.
- Establishing clear processes and communication, even individual communication, will be helpful for families. Managing expectations, there will be transitions for people (in daycare there is overcommunication).

e. Goal 5: ML Student Discourse

- Goal
 - 4% of English learners meeting expectations on ELA MCAS, 32% on math (significant improvement over prior years)
- Clarifying Questions
- Notice & Wonder
 - Rabell: goal aligns with math as well; fosters collaboration; foundation of math curriculum is students working with each other.
 - Classroom teachers are focused on content and language, so are ML teachers. Collaboration is going to grow.
 - Two action steps involve gen ed and ML teachers collaborating, this is great. Other places we can do this?
 - Can we bring back pre-pandemic buddy program for gen ed families and SEI families?

3. Community Comment

- Anna Shin: comparisons with Baldwin. Some things they do there that are interesting: longer lunch and recess, dance parties at lunch, emotional assistance dog.
 - Collaborative school council model.
 - Joy should be part of learning. That's what we'd like to see across the whole district, every school does it a little different.

4. Debrief

- Plus: What worked well?
 - Heard all voices, different viewpoints.
 - Did very well in time
 - Several: morning meeting is good
 - Incredible amount of work that went into these goals.
- Delta: What can we do better?
 - Protocol we used today: amount of taking up space in the room
 - On school committee there are timers. As a relentless timekeeper
 - Heard from some more than others

5. Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn: Lauren
- Seconded by: Valarie
- Meeting adjourned at 10:40 AM