

Graham & Parks SCHOOL COUNCIL

(Official Minutes)
DRAFT

School Council Meeting

November 6, 2025 at the Graham & Parks School, 44 Linnaean St, Cambridge, MA 02138

School Council Members Present: Rabell Afandi, Erin Garcia, Fen Portmann-Katz, Dr. Kathleen Smith, Arjun Jaikumar, Ira Nichols-Barrer, Matt Patton, Guy Rosenzweig, Jodi Rich, Valarie Ifill, Lilly Havstad

School Council Members Absent: Nasrin Belali, Aboma Dirbaba, Lauren Morse

Also Present: Anna Shin, Shawdee Eshghi

Ira Nichols-Barrer & Kathleen Smith in the Chair.

A quorum of the Graham & Parks School Council being present, Dr. Kathleen Smith called the meeting to order at 5:45 PM and read the call of the meeting

Date: November 6, 2025 **Time:** 5:45PM - 7PM

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

- A quorum of the Graham & Park School Council being present, Dr. Kathleen Smith called the meeting to order at 5:45 PM and read the call of the meeting
- Dr. Smith and Ira welcomed the members
- Motion to approve Sept 2025 minutes: Arjun
- Seconded by: Ira
- Vote: Unanimously approved by attendees
- Roles assigned:
 - Timekeeper: Matt
 - Secretary: Arjun
 - Tech Support: Fen
- Dr. Smith reviewed norms for the meeting

2. Review & Discussion of G&P Budget

Dr. Smith and Fen presented a presentation regarding the School Improvement Plan (SIP) budget for the year.

- Review of CPS's 2022-25 strategic plan, which revolved around providing ambitious instruction and effective supports, accessible college and career pathways, effective staff learning and support, and building a welcoming school district.

- Family engagement is a primary focus for the district in SY 25-26, namely an emphasis on Standard 3 practices and a shift from family involvement to deeper engagement (discussed in part at the prior meeting).
- As the largest part of the school and district's budgets are devoted to staffing, Dr. Smith presented a few slides discussing staffing.
 - District-wide, there are 1,320 full-time employees working as teachers or paraprofessionals. They are assigned based on tiers: Tier 1 is a base level of staffing for all schools; Tier 2 is enrollment-based (so schools with more students will have more staff); Tier 3 is need-based.
 - Paraprofessionals: at every school there is a paraprofessional assigned to every early-education and kindergarten class, and 5 additional paraprofessionals. They are also assigned based on student need, including for SEI classrooms.
- Discretionary funds or SIP funds may be allocated for various things: additional staffing for interns or interventionists, stipends or funding for school teams (such as leadership or family engagement), or student clubs.
- Question asked whether there are clubs at Graham and Parks; Dr. Smith answered that there are not clubs that have a budget from the school.
- Review of G&P SIP budget (see slides).

Notice & Wonder Protocol:

- Significant portion of the SIP budget is allocated toward stipends, but that is not broken out of a larger line item for each team
- Wondering about professional development contract; and whether the allocations presented on the slide represented what has already been spent, or what is expected to be spent
- Wondering about the remainder of SIP funds being allocated to new experiences rather than supplementing what is already in place
- Wondering whether there have been recent updates from the Family Engagement Team and observed that \$10,000 has been allocated to that team; last year the Council had voted to create a family engagement subcommittee that had held public meetings, and asked if the subcommittee could continue its work
- Request for clarification on the term “resources for curriculum.”
- Question about whether enrollment has changed year over year

Open Discussion

Dr. Smith answered several questions above:

- Slide 16 represents a previously adopted budget. Last year when creating the budget early in the year, we did have contracts for professional development and allocated money there. Slide 17 is the current proposed plan for SIP spending, and there is no contract

there, because we decided not to move in that direction, so it is in the budget, but reallocated to a new line item. Money gets moved between different line items throughout the year; this happens pretty fluidly throughout the year.

- As to enrollment, there are not such differences year over year that we see changes in staffing. Dr. Smith observed that SEI classes are underenrolled this year because of the current political climate. SEI classes currently range from approximately 7 to 15 students, but there are none close to 25 (which would be the limit for an elementary school classroom in this tier).
- Shift in staffing: a .5 paraprofessional is now 1.0 FTE
- We have also been assigned an additional paraprofessional as a result of KLO closure
- Regarding the question about resources for curriculum, of the Instructional Leadership Team budget, \$15,603 consists of “consumables” for the CKLA curriculum specifically.
- Stipends consist of \$500 per team member per team, with exception of leadership team, which is \$1000 given increased responsibilities of serving on that team, and additional time commitment.
- Differences between general allocation and SIP: school leaders have discretion – workbooks for example, math come out of general allocation, but others might come out of SIP.
- Teachers receive \$400 allocation for supplies, we have an inventory of our own in our supply closet, so they know what they don’t need to buy and what they do need to buy.

3. School Administration Report

Recent district wide professional development day: a “day of learning together”

- Staff learned the PEAR assessment platform, which is a way to see in real time how students are responding in their end of unit assessment.
- Good to have PD with others outside your building; staff don’t feel like they are working in isolation

First “learning walk” at G&P took place this week

Building based time yesterday: new report cards coming on Aspen this year

4. Community Comment

Anna Shin mentioned that at Baldwin they have a stand alone field trip for every grade. Fifth grade does have an overnight trip at Nature’s Classroom (Somerville does the same thing) and she has heard really great stuff about it. Some of the money for that could be allocated from the SIP. Some of those kids would not have the means to go on these really cool trips, so would be great for them to have that opportunity.

She also asked whether the stipend for the intern indicated in the slides should have been in the general fund rather than from the SIP. She also observed that it sounds as though the teams were

doing similar types of work and should have similar allocations. She expressed her view that council members, and community members on the council, should receive stipends as well.

Shawdee reiterated that if we have extra funds we should be ambitious and creative as to what extra things we could bring. Other schools have a Spanish club, which even if only for a few weeks, can be a new experience. Some others bring in Cambridge Math Circle, are open to different interventions and extracurricular activities. It is their family's sixth year at G&P and she hasn't seen a great deal of creativity or ambition to try something new. She does not want to make extra work for staff, but if vendors can bring in new equitable opportunities that can improve educational experiences and outcomes, she would like to think big.

Anna mentioned the SCRATCH program. The leader volunteers, doesn't get paid, does club at Peabody; we talked about doing it here, but folks have many ideas and never launch. There are community resources and parents who have a lot to contribute and they can do this – math club, SCRATCH, etc. Even crochet club. Can do for one day but it will be fun.

5. Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn: Erin
- Seconded by: Matt
- Meeting adjourned at 7:03