

September 13, 2023

Minutes of the Lawrence Alliance for Education Board – LAE

The Lawrence Alliance for Education Board meeting was held in person at the South Lawrence East Educational Complex Auditorium with the following members present: Edgar De Leon, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Director at Noble and Greenough School; Juana Matias, Regional Administrator for the New England Regional Office, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); Arlene Garcia, Parent Liaison, Lawrence Family Development Charter School, Maria Moeller, CEO/The Community Group; Patricia Mariano, Chair, Dr. Dolores Calaf, Early Childhood and K-12 Education, Consultant with Community Collaborative, Absent: Mayor Brian DePena

Also in person were Interim Superintendent Juan Rodriguez, Yedrianny Alvarez, LAE Student Representative and Maria L. Campusano, Recording Secretary for this meeting.

Chair Mariano, called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m. The Chair called the audience to recite the pledge of allegiance.

Chair Mariano welcomed the new LAE student representative Miss Yedrianny Alvarez who is a grade 11 student at Lawrence High School; Miss Alvarez came to the United States in 2021 and began her education at the International School before transferring to LHS after her freshman year. She sports a 4.36 GPA and is currently enrolled in our Early College Program at Northern Essex Community College. Yedrianny works part-time at Wendy's, sets high standards for herself and is always seeking to be the best she can be. She is a kind, compassionate young woman and a good friend to her peers. She is consistently engaged and actively participates in class. Yedrianny works very hard on improving her English language skills and is always willing to volunteer and take academic risks even when unsure of her correctness. Yedrianny sets high expectations for herself and the future and takes her goals very seriously.

VOTED: To enter into the Executive Session meeting at 6:12 p.m.

Vote: Upon the motion made by Chair Patricia Mariano to enter into Executive Session pursuant to the general G. L. C. 30A, section 21 (a), exemption #3,4,5 to discuss recent attempts to defraud the school system and related security issues; So move by Juana Matias; Seconded by Maria Moeller

The Vote

- Yes - Dr. Dolores Calaf
- Yes - Edgar De Leon
- Yes - Alene Garcia
- Yes - Juana Matias
- Yes - Maria Moeller
- Yes - Chair Patricia Mariano

Motion Passes

VOTED: To convene into a regular meeting according to the process at 6:44 p.m.

Vote: Upon the motion made by Chair Patricia Mariano to convene the meeting at 6:44 p.m. So move by Juana Matias; Seconded by Arlene Garcia

The Vote

Yes - Dr. Dolores Calaf
Yes - Arlene Garcia
Yes - Edgar De Leon
Yes - Juana Matias
Yes - Maria Moeller
Yes - Chair Patricia Mariano

Motion Passes

Public Participation:

Chair Mariano explained what the expectation of public participation is and how it is conducted, she called the following:

- Homayoun Maali, 53 Chester Street, Lawrence, MA; Welcomed teachers and LPS employees for a new academic year. Explained that the LPS budget should pay teachers, paraprofessionals and cafeteria workers the best compensation explaining that having multimillion buildings does not make LPS better. He quoted a quote on Nelson Mandela, "Education is indeed the most powerful weapon to change the world.
- Via email, James Miele, 15 Independence Drive, Methuen, MA; Asked the board to intervene and investigate why other school safety officers have gotten the sick time buy-out upon retirement that wasn't in their contract.

Chair's Report

- The LAE goals for SY 2023-2024 was set for the board as part of their evaluation from DESE in June. These goals were, to conduct a thorough and transparent budget process, to complete an evaluation of the Interim Superintendent, to conduct a search and hire a permanent superintendent who is aligned to the core values of the Lawrence community and willing and able to implement the turnaround plan to support continuous Improvement of the district schools, to oversee the implementation of the turnaround plan. Chair Mariano explained that her intent with these goals was to present to the board quarterly updates and progress data on the goals during the year.
- Subcommittees will be created for the superintendent search, the budget and finance, and policies. Chair Mariano explained that anyone interested in serving on any of these subcommittees should contact her directly as she may be making appointments in October.

Chair also informed that DESE has issued an RFP which closed on August 30, 2023 and three vendors have submitted bids.

- Superintendent's Evaluation. Chair Mariano recommended a 9-month cycle for the superintendent's evaluation ensuring that his evaluation is completed before the end of his current contract.

VOTED: To a 9-month cycle for the superintendent's evaluation

Vote: Upon the motion made by Chair Patricia Mariano to a 9-month cycle for the superintendent's evaluation ensuring that his evaluation is completed before the end of this current contract; So move by Juana Matias; Seconded by Edgar de Leon

The Vote

Yes - Dr. Dolores Calaf
Yes - Edgar De Leon
Yes- Alene Garcia
Yes - Juana Matias
Yes - Maria Moeller
Yes - Chair Patricia Mariano

Motion Passes

Superintendent's Updates

- Interim Superintendent Rodriguez reported that the school year is in full swing and provided updates for September 2023. Athletics is two weeks into the fall season, and the SRO unit has an open gym four times a week for students in grades 5-12 for three hours to continue building on relationships and exercise.
- New Superintendent's Induction Program (NSIP) which Superintendent Rodriguez is a current member of. This program is run by the MA Association Superintendents. Newly hired superintendents receive mentoring from retired superintendents. The program includes six hours of monthly coaching along with in person and zoom meetings. Interim Superintendent introduced Ms. Cindy Taymore who provided information regarding the Superintendent Induction Program that is run by DESE and the MA Association of School Superintendents.
- Facilities Updates. During the week of September 5, a few schools were affected by elevated temperatures; the facilities team secured portable air conditioners and fans. The rationale of the current building projects and ESSER HVAC upgrades is to assure that all students have temperature appropriate learning environments.
- General Updates. Nutrition Services served over 93,000 meals, several graduates received scholarships from Keolis, many students participated in Junior Police Academy with the registration team enrolled new students during the summer. There are currently 13,220 students enrolled as of September 6.
- District Priorities. Interim Superintendent Rodriguez explained the SY 23-24 district priorities based on instructional core, diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging, multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), and multilingual learners. The theme is on elevating the student voice.
- Transportation. Interim Superintendent Rodriguez, informed of the hiring of a new Transportation Manager: Naomi de la Cruz. Furthermore, LPS transported over 3,100 students, a

transportation audit was conducted during the summer where 40 families were contacted to receive information regarding the families satisfaction level.

- Human Resources Update. Interim Superintendent Rodriguez informed that Assistant Superintendent who previously oversaw Human Resources transitioned to Lynn Public Schools, the District currently has 55 teaching vacancies, HR is offering sign-on bonus for all staff and referral bonuses for teaching positions, new teacher orientation included training and the distribution of 152 laptops for new hires. The Interim Superintendent also explained the numbers of new hires, re-hirees, and salary changes. The all-staff opening day ceremony was emceed by the Lancer Cheer Squad and performances were by summer school music students.
- Summer Learning and graduation. 77 students completed their graduation requirements and participated in the August graduation ceremony, LPS had students participate in summer learning across the district.
- Christopher Heath, Grants/Title 1 Director, provided an updated overview presentation of ESSER I, II, and III grant allocations, purposes, and how the funds are utilized.

VOTED: To approve the June 14, 2023 minutes of the LAE board meeting

Vote: Upon the motion made by Chair Patricia Mariano to approve the June 14 minutes; So move by Juana Matias; Seconded by Edgard de Leon

The Vote
Yes - Dr. Dolores Calaf
Yes - Edgar De Leon
Yes- Alene Garcia
Yes - Juana Matias
Yes - Maria Moeller
Yes - Chair Patricia Mariano

Motion Passes

Chair Patricia Mariano, asked members of the community to consider participating in the LAE board meetings indicating that this will be an important year, there will be an appointment of a new Superintendent, development of a transition plan and meeting many of the benchmarks outlined in the Turnaround Plan and welcomed community input. Chair Patricia Mariano also urged members of the LAE board to communicate with the community and asked its members to attend the board meetings.

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 8:36 p.m.

Vote: Upon the motion made by Chair Patricia Mariano to adjourn the meeting at 8:36 p.m. So move by Juana Matias; Seconded by Maria Moeller

The Vote
Yes - Dr. Dolores Calaf
Yes - Edgar De Leon
Yes - Arlene Garcia
Yes - Juana Matias
Yes - Maria Moeller
Yes - Chair Patricia Mariano

Motion Passes

Ms. Patricia Mariano, Chair Date