

**Woburn School Committee,
Woburn Public Schools
55 Locust Street
Woburn, MA 01801**

A regular meeting of the Woburn School Committee was held on April 27, 2022, in the Conference Room of the Joyce Middle School, located at 55 Locust Street, Woburn, Massachusetts, starting at 7:00 p.m.

For the purposes of simultaneous viewing, the School Committee arranged for the livestream of the meeting via Woburn Public Media YouTube Channel.

CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Mrs. Chisholm-Present, Ms. Cormier-Present, Ms. Crowley-Present, Mr. Kisiel-Present, Mr. Lipsett-Present, Mr. Mulrenan-Present, Chair Dr. Wells-Present

Chair Dr. Wells reminded everyone that they are agreeing to be recorded tonight.
Chair Dr. Wells acknowledged Chuck Viola of the City Council was in attendance tonight.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made to approve the 4.12.22 SC Minutes.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

A motion was made to approve the 4.19.22 SC Minutes.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Julie Cotton, parent and vice president of SEPAC president, spoke tonight.
She commented on the budget and commended the committee for getting to the 3.75%.
She hopes there will be no further cuts to this budget. Cuts to teaching staff, technology, content specialists, or curriculum can lead to Woburn's inability to compete with other academic institutions. Cuts to special education can lead to civil rights violations and lawsuits. Reduction in our paraprofessional staff can place additional strain on our already burned-out special ed teachers.
Ms. Cotton asked the committee to keep this in mind as they review the budget tonight.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Ms. Sophia Furxhi presented remotely.

Upcoming Events at WMHS

- 4/28 - Job Fair (1:00-2:30 pm at WMHS sponsored by MassHire / Connecting Activities and WMHS, open to students that are 16+.
- 4/28, Middlesex Community College is coming to WMHS for *Application to Acceptance Day*. For any senior who is interested in attending MCC, you will have the opportunity to sit down with an admission representative, complete an online application, and within a few hours - you will be accepted into MCC's incoming freshmen class.
- 4/30 - Tannerfest
- 5/2 - 5/13 - AP exams
- 5/6 - Sophomore Semi (7-10 pm)

- 5/9 - Term 4 progress reports (SENIORS ONLY)
- 5/13 - 5/15 - School Musical
- 5/17-5/18 - Math MCAS grade 10
- 5/18 - All School awards Night - 7-9 pm
- 5/19 - 5/20 - Internship / Passion Project Presentations
- 5/20 - 5/25 - Senior Class Final Exams
- 5/20 - Spectrum Community Gala (5-10 pm)
- 5/21 - Hall of Fame Event (Woburn Hilton) - tickets on sale at Woburn Ed Foundation website
- 5/25 - College Decision Day - Guidance (Seniors)
- 5/26 - Promenade and Prom
- 5/31 - Graduation Rehearsal (9 am)
- 6/1 - Senior Class Day
- 6/1 - Scholarship Night for grade 12
- 6/2 - Seniors Six Flags (seniors)
- 6/3 - Graduation (6 pm)
- 5/7 & 6/4 - SAT @ WMHS
- 6/6 - Will be the Civics Showcase and Rho Kappa Induction
- 6/7 - Student Govt Day Luncheon
- 6/8 - Student Govt Day
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REPORTS/ PRESENTATION OF SUPERINTENDENT & STAFF

Chair Dr. Wells made a motion to take the Fine Arts presentation out of agenda order.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

Fine and Performing Arts Update, Ms. Susan Thifault, Curriculum Coordinator

Dr. Crowley welcomed Ms. Thifault. Ms. Thifault, on behalf of the Fine Arts department, thanked administration and school committee members for listening and believing in the Arts.

Ms. Thifault thanked and introduced 2 new teachers.

Mr. Steve Turcott - middle school band director, 5th grade instrumental teacher, youth band co-director, and high school band assistant director. Steve is a wonderful and caring team player who works with Mr. Jack Tully.

Mr. Noah Thomas - theater teacher, audiovisual director, musical director and drama coach.

Noah is a kindhearted and devoted teacher.

Both Mr. Turcott and Mr. Thomas started as part-time teachers, but they worked full-time plus, and now they have officially become full-time teachers. They work tirelessly to build our theater and our band programs. Just like Mr. Tully, they are dedicated, hardworking and, most of all, so kind and such great team players.

Ms. Thifault told the committee of events that were coming up.

Tannerfest - April 30, 2022 at WMHS 12:00 pm - 3:00 pm.

The Lightning Thief; The Percy Jackson Musical - May 13 & 14, 2022 at WMHS

Collaborative Partnerships: June 4, 2022

City of Woburn

Woburn Historical Society

K-8 Art Teachers

Mr. Jack Tully, Fine Arts teacher, told the committee the one philosophy they have been following is the WPS Band program is one sequential program; from the moment you join the program all the way

through high school, graduation, and hopefully beyond graduation, you are part of this community; one organization.

Mr. Steve Turcott stated they have been focusing on consistent instruction from school-to-school, grade level to grade level, and throughout the band program. Routines, warm-ups, structure, repertoire, and curriculum are all aligned and appropriately leveled and adapted to meet every student's and each ensemble's needs. Our philosophy is that students work best when working collaboratively. Everything they do is group and team oriented. Students still learn and improve their individual skills, but they have a consistent and reliable ability to grow, achieve, and positively contribute to the bigger picture. A few years ago, a youth band was created, and this year there are 58 students who represent every school in the district from grades 5-12. Regardless of where the student is on their band journey, they are valued.

Mr. Tully spoke of the WIN block; which increases their instructional time and allows them to provide better instruction to students in all the elementary schools. There are 74 5th graders enrolled in lessons. Mr. Tully believes this will lead to an increase in participation in both middle schools. Their slogan is; In the Woburn Public Schools, We Band Together.

Grade 10 student Meghna Somaraj spoke about her band journey. She started in grade 5 and the band has shaped who she is today. She loves seeing how everyone has grown and improved together. It is such a rewarding experience. Meghna has a younger brother who is in grade 5 and started his band journey a few months ago. She feels it is a unique opportunity to partake in his journey, as this is the only opportunity they will have to play together while Meghna is still in school. It is nice to see how his skills are improving. She can see her younger self in him.

Mr. Noah Thomas said after he was hired he hoped to elevate, generate and build.

To elevate the performing arts program, to elevate the theater program and to elevate the quality of the production. To generate interest among the students and in the community. To build a community for students that are there. This is a way in which Mr. Thomas measures his own progress. Mr. Thomas took two separate organizations; the drama club and tech crew, and put them together to what Mr. Thomas calls a company model. In terms of numbers, they moved from a couple of clubs of about 60 students to this year 130 students in this company model. This past fall, Mr. Thomas led a group of student writers to write an original piece. Forty students were involved, and these students took this to a competition in March. Right now, there is a cast of 50 and a crew of 20 involved in The Lightning Thief musical.

Mrs. Thifault ended the presentation by saying she would like to start a dance program at the high school as there is a big interest there. Her department would like to build the chorus program like they did 4-5 years ago with the band program. For next year, they are working on the 4th grade instrumental program. This would fit in with the WIN block and would help to build it. The ARTS allows students to develop skills that make them tenacious, confident, passionate, team oriented and create problem solvers who always look at the world differently.

Mr. Lipsett asked Ms. Thifault about how she sees the Fine Arts is supporting our students' mental health.

Ms. Thifault said she sees the family the kids have created in the Fine Arts.

Mr. Tully said they do teach music, but they teach a lot more than music. It is a place where kids are on a team and have a common goal. It is a sanctuary and supports social-emotional learning, and that is a big part of what they do.

Mr. Thomas told the committee, the student-written piece, "The Littlest Things...", much of the dialogue in this show was taken directly from interviews with students and faculty at WMHS. What was their experience with anxiety and depression? The 10 students who wrote this got to investigate a lot of things about mental health. For some who actually got to act in it, it was important to those students who related to their own experiences.

Mr. Mulrenan asked about the marching band.

Mr. Tully said they have been traveling, and they are back on the road. This past fall, the band did a circuit of competitive marching bands and competed at four events. They ended up in 4th place in their division, and this was the highest score of the marching band. The marching band is coming back and becoming more competitive.

Chair Dr. Wells commended the citizens of Woburn for reaching out to the committee for emphasizing the importance of supporting the Fine Arts.

Chair Dr. Wells made a motion to return the regular order of business.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

Chair Dr. Wells informed everyone that Mr. Dunkley will not be presenting tonight.

FY 23 Budget Presentation, Mr. Bob Alconada, Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Operations

Chair Dr. Wells explained Dr. Crowley, Mr. Alconada, and Ms. Young have been meeting with the Mayor over the past few months. Since we had our last school committee meeting, they have met a few more times with the Mayor. The committee had reached his 3.75% increase, and he expressed concern from the city side. When we hire individuals, the school department pays their salaries, but the health benefits are paid from the city side of the budget. The Mayor indicated he had set aside a certain amount of new positions in the school department, and we have come in with more than that and he is concerned with the city side of that. He also expressed concern about integrating these positions into the budget after the ESSER funds we are using are gone.

Mr. Alconada and Superintendent Crowley met with the Mayor this afternoon and worked on some things. We are still not there yet. Mr. Alconada will inform the committee on where they are tonight and there will be another meeting next week.

Mr. Alconada told the committee we are at 3.75% which is a \$73,000,037 budget. After various conversations with the Mayor, they looked at various ways to make some cuts from that amount. On Monday, the Finance subcommittee met, and they presented a number of proposed cuts; \$558,000 was cut off of the budget. This was the first cut.

<u>School/Department</u>	<u>Position/Line Item</u>	<u>FY 23 Cost</u>
SPED	Reduce SPED Transportation	-\$150,000
Curriculum	Reduce Innovation Coaches from 5 to 3	-\$114,428
Facilities	Eliminate Assistant Director	-\$100,000
SPED	Wilson Teacher	-\$ 67,031
Goodyear	Eliminate 3rd Kindergarten Teacher/Class	-\$ 60,552
Central Administration	Eliminate Legal Line Item Increase	-\$ 50,000
<u>Athletics</u>	<u>Cancel Boys Volleyball Team</u>	<u>-\$ 15,856</u>
Total		-\$557,867

FY 23 ESSER Funds	\$1,442,133
FY 24 ESSER Funds	<u>\$ 557,867</u>
	\$2,000,000

Mr. Alconada indicated we are not quite there yet, and we will propose other cuts in the future.

Chair Dr. Wells stated in the original proposed budget, we had 30 new positions. Those reductions bring it down to 25. The mayor has indicated that he would be willing to see 15 new positions in our budget. We are working on looking at positions now. In discussions with the Mayor, that could mean you swap a new position for an old position if we identify an existing position that can be modified by the administration. This is where we are at right now. We are looking to modify our budget by reducing 10 positions, essentially.

Ms. Cormier asked if we could get by with some of these positions if they opt not to take the health insurance.

Dr. Crowley said this is tricky. The city budgets around \$20,000 for the family plan. We wouldn't know if someone would opt out or take the single plan until the time of hire.

Ms. Cormier asked if it is possible to use the ESSER funds for contractual services.

Dr. Crowley said sometimes we would be paying significantly more for contractual services than we would in-district. You can do contractual things, but it costs more.

Dr. Wells said the Mayor understands there are situations we can't control. He added, the Mayor is giving us all of our capital improvement plans outside the budget. We have to keep that in mind.

Ms. Crowley has concerns about reducing our budget. The 3.75% spending limit has been met. At this point, we are making no impact on the taxpayers of Woburn. She does understand the concern, and she will go through the budget to see where additional reductions can be made, and she will do her due diligence in looking over the budget.

Dr. Wells said the mayor recognizes our authority over our budget. Ultimately, the mayor sets the money he sends over to the city council.

Ms. Crowley said the budget is at a 3.75%

Chair Dr. Wells said there is no law he has to send a 3.75% to the council. We always have had a collaborative working relationship with the council and the mayor.

Mr. Lipsett is a bit frustrated with this budget; we are finding ourselves here again. We have been talking all year about the dire needs of our students and staff. None of these are luxury items. The money the ESSER funds represent was given directly to the schools to help us deal with problems that are happening in our schools right now. He wants to appeal to the Mayor. These are positions our kids need. The Mayor gave us the 3.75% number; we did a lot of work to get there. It is frustrating to know we have met the number. We have a budget that meets the needs of our kids. Mr. Lipsett will do his diligence on the budget as well.

Mrs. Chisholm commented on the original budget list the committee received; she is not going to cut the assistant principal at the Malcolm White. Parents came to our meetings and did the work. She understands the Mayor, but he can't tell us where to cut. We have to do what we have to do, and it will work out like it has in the past.

Mr. Mulrenan said that the Administration got this news a few hours ago. Moving forward, we are going to have another public hearing. We got by and got the budget down to 3.75%. Mr. Mulrenan is looking for the appeal of the public to reach out to the mayor, and he looks forward to seeing what will be presented in the next round.

Mr. Lipsett inquired about the K-teacher at Goodyear. What are the numbers?

Ms. Young said we are at 28, it fluctuates over there.

Mr. Lipsett expressed some concern, as the Goodyear is a place where we have unexpected move-ins.

Chair Dr. Wells stated if that happens, we would fill that position in the fall.

Mr. Lipsett commented he gets it, if we feel like it is going to happen, and it feels like a shell game.

What good does it do our kids if we have to do an emergency posting?

Dr. Crowley said we have tried to use 5 as a buffer. We are trying to stay away from that to not disrupt a classroom.

Ms. Young stated we now at Goodyear have grade levels that are down to 2. At this moment in time, it will take a while to get to three rooms.

Mr. Lipsett asked about the Innovation coaches. Are we losing staff?

Ms. Young said the coaches would go back into the classroom. We won't know of the disruption until this happens.

Ms. Crowley commented on the 7 MLL positions; sometimes getting too many positions in one area can be overwhelming. We built the infrastructure as we added the interventionists and adjustment counselors, for example. This budget, as it exists now, is wonderful.

Chair Dr. Wells said the administration will work on the budget and run it by the Mayor again.

May 5, 2022, will be the next school committee meeting.

Mid-Year Data Update, Courtney Young, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction

Dr. Crowley began by telling the committee this is an opportunity to see where we were in the fall to where we are now. This has been a challenging year and there were gaps because of COVID-19.

Ms. Young began her presentation by saying they met in the fall, and typically they wait until spring before they look at it again. Knowing we were coming back in the fall, this is a chance to look at the middle of the year. The data presented tonight is from September through January/February, so it is dated. Ms. Young feels it still speaks to the work we are doing. We did a lot of positive things and saw some growth. There are also places we did not see as much growth as we would like to see. Looking at the data is not only looking for the growth but also looking at that information that it tells us and what are the things that we need to be doing. Ms. Young spoke to some things we are seeing, some trends, and what we are noticing. Also, looking at how this is impacting some decisions that are being made and what it means moving forward.

Ms. Young summarized the universal screening tools that are used for the bulk of the data review. Universal Screeners have been used primarily in the elementary schools and were also moved to the middle schools this year. These are being used to drive the focus to grade 6 that transition year. We are not yet looking at the universal screeners to the same extent for grades 7 & 8. We will phase this in next year.

Overview

Universal Screeners

Math & ELA: IXL

Reading: DIBELS

Across the board our math data, in the fall, was an area of concern. We saw this in our internal data and our MCAS scores. We saw our students coming in significantly behind. We talked about how linear it is, and they build on each other, so it was an expected part. Ms. Young said across the board, our students' growth patterns in math have been a significant jump. Although the starting point was hard, it is a place where we made that growth quickly.

Elementary Math (IXL)

Ms. Young thanked Kristen Slagmolen, Innovation Coach, for spearheading the IXL implementation at the elementary schools. Just looking at growth, the starting point was lower than what we are used to. The increase for students has been significant. Across the board, all of our students 1-5, in our IXL Math, between 80% and 90% are showing significant increases. Very minimal students showing any form of regression.

Elementary Reading (DIBELS)

When looking at the data for reading, one thing that was looked at was what did it look like in 2019-2020; pre-pandemic. We had 56% of our grade 1 students above benchmark. Now, in the fall of 2021, our students in grade 1 were 24% above benchmark. Let's remember that our students are starting at a different place. We have students who missed pieces of instruction. As we are working with our students in the area of reading, we are working on our approach to accelerate learning the quickest. With that said, what we are seeing is that the growth we made in 2019-2020 from fall until winter is the same that we're making now. Students are learning at the right speed. It is that they are coming to us, needing to fill in the gaps.

Ms. Young spoke of the data for students who were in grade 1 in the fall of 2019 and are now in grade 3 in the fall of 2021. She compared their first grade data to their third-grade data. When you look at that data, you have your benchmark and above benchmark. When looking at 2019 data compared to 2020 data, it is about the same; 60% at benchmark and above benchmark. Our students who were at and above benchmark in first grade stayed at and above benchmark in third grade. The group of our students who did not make as much growth as we normally see are students that were struggling before. What we know is the Tier II group is bigger than what we are used to. We are looking at some of the things we have been doing. It is this group of students that maybe didn't make that growth over time, but our at or above benchmark students did. It is not necessarily that we are adding more; it is just that we are looking at that group of students and targeting those who possibly would have made it in second grade and targeting them now.

One of the important parts of all of this is that we look at this data a lot. We look at this data to drive our specific needs for our learners. We are constantly monitoring our students' progress and identifying the areas they require support in.

This year, we moved to grade 6 to focus on our WIN block and our IXL data. Our starting point in math was an area not as strong as our ELA numbers at the beginning of the year, and we were able to see growth very quickly. The last time our current 6th graders had in-person instruction was 4th grade. Most of their math was hovering around the 4th-5th grade level. This past winter, they all bumped it up. This data showed us what we expected. A lot of students got a lot of learning, but a lot of students just needed us to plug in the gaps. In our math data, we are seeing a lot of jumps regularly at a much more accelerated rate. Ms. Young commented it is not that a lot of students didn't know things, it is that a lot of students didn't hear it. What our assessment goals have done for us is teachers are able to say a student is here because they didn't get this piece of instruction; they can teach that to them, and then the student moves right along. To support our students in the middle school WIN block time, the team analyzed the diagnostic data to determine if the cycle would focus on literacy or math. Teams looked at pre-sorted student groupings on IXL based on the diagnostic data and made adjustments, so groups were relatively even. When the specific focus was determined, staff looked at the top recommended skills for the student group to focus on.

When we think of the ongoing things this is doing for us, we looked at the data from the winter to here and one of the biggest things we understood; coming from our teachers and the data itself, is that our students really needed great directed instruction around early literacy skills. Starting this week, we have Melissa Orkin coming for professional development. She is actually going into classrooms, and she is modeling exact lessons based on the data that we have. This will help our teachers meet those

teaching skills. Ms. Young is also looking at the assessments that we have and revising that plan. She is also working on building that Student Profile and looking at the scope and sequences in Atlas.

Mr. Kisiel asked Ms. Young based on her presentation tonight what she has done to fill in that 2 year gap, what does she feel would bring the kids backwards?

Ms. Young feels things would fall apart without interventionists. Those that work directly with our students are imperative. We could not function without them in terms of directly affecting the function of this. Also, the content specialists in the buildings are the ones that drive this entire thing and that would also break down the entire process.

Mr. Lipsett asked Ms. Young if she had noticed any growing equity gaps.

Ms. Young thinks it is hard for her to draw conclusions of gaps of subgroups from the benchmark of fall/winter. There are just too many factors. She thinks it is important to take note of it in one year and really important to take note of it in two. There are so many factors post pandemic that are impacting the data that is in front of us. A really big part of the success we are having is looking at the tiers of our students; under one umbrella of need. Ms. Ryan and Ms. Young spent a lot of time educating all of our teachers to educate all of our students. Staffing is a part of that support and always helps, but supporting our teachers for their current needs is important.

Mr. Lipsett has concerns we might see things that data might not spell out clearly now.

Mrs. Chisholm commented that looking at grade 6 scares her, 4th graders never left home and now are in grade 6. These kids lost out on the after school help they could have had when we were home for a year. It helps to have the late buses so they can stay after.

She's worried about the kids that are going mainstream and not getting the extra from where they need to do. Our bright students are going to excel because they're going to be pushed because they're driven to do that. And the lower ones are going to get the attention because they're going to make sure they're on IEPs and they have all the extra help. It's those middle kids that she's worried about.

Dr. Crowley gave credit to the middle schools for adopting the WIN block last spring in preparation for what we are seeing here tonight. It was a tremendous collaboration among teachers and administrators.

Dr. Wells commented about the amount of students below grade level.

Ms. Young stated a lot of those students probably made a lot of growth.

Dr. Wells asked what kind of measures are we looking at above the grade 6 level?

Ms. Young said we are using IXL data for grades 7 and 8. Those teachers are piloting it. ELA and Math up to 7 and 8. Conversations about high school. We do have a lot of curriculum based measures they are using at the high school to look at gaps and draw conclusions, although it is not as clean as the universal screener.

Dr. Wells commented the state has hired someone to look at a lot of data. He wants to make sure we get some data on our middle and high school students to see where they're at moving forward.

Ms. Young said we work with 30 other districts around literacy as a whole and our data is similar to what everyone else's data is looking like.

Mr. Lipsett said we have to be careful about there being a universal level to where kids should be at.

This is a universal issue. We didn't shut our school down for a year.. Kids were learning in a different way. We should avoid putting those particular labels on our students when we talk about whether they are behind or they are ahead.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Mrs. Chisholm said they met on 4.25.22.

A. Topics: List of Bills;

Packet 1	\$ 334,941.91
Packet 2	\$116,817.73
Packet 3	\$153,930.33
Packet 4	\$ 584,014.22
Packet 5	\$ 68,660.41

A Journal entry was submitted and approved \$ 2544.70 from Athletics to the Field Account
\$ 158.00 from Athletics to Fine Arts account

They discussed the budget that was in tonight's presentation by Mr. Alconada.

Mr. Lipsett said they have not met.

Mr. Mulrenan said they have not met.

Dr. Crowley said they will repost in the Spring

Ms. Cormier told the committee a couple of people reached out to her with concern about the transparency of the process with the Interim principal position, knowing they were trying to get

candidates. Some members were part of the process of trying to find a new principal. Going forward, will we have the same process when the position is reposted in the spring?

Dr. Crowley said yes.

Resource & Capital Planning Subcommittee

Mr. Kisiel said they have not met.

Mr. Alconada told the committee that Mr. De Luca sent him a draft of the feasibility study.

Student Services & Achievement Subcommittee

Ms. Crowley said they have not met.

CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Kisiel - May 6th, 9:00 A.M. at the Linscott the book room dedication

Mr. Kisiel - a couple of people have asked him if the Resource Officer has changed the location of his station

Dr. Crowley will look into this.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Budget

Dr. Wells would like to explore how many students we are actually capturing that are eligible to come to Woburn Public Schools and are going elsewhere.

Ms. Cormier would like to invite the new principal at the Linscott to a future meeting.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Negotiations with a non-union personnel

Ms. Crowley made a motion to enter into Executive Session.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

Chair Dr. Wells announced we were going into the Executive Session at 9:10 P.M.

Ms. Cormier made a motion to enter back into the regular order of business at 9:40pm.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

Dr. Wells announced that no vote was taken in the executive session.

Ms. Cormier made a motion to adjourn.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

The meeting adjourned at 9:42p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean MacLeod

Jean MacLeod

Recording Secretary