

**WOBURN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
WOBURN, MASSACHUSETTS**

SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

Subcommittee Name: Student Services & Achievement Subcommittee

Chair: Jessie Wetzel

Meeting Date: 01/28/2026

Time: 6:08 pm

Location: Conference Room, Joyce Middle School

In Attendance: Chair Jessie Wetzel, Member Mike Mulrenan, Member Jose Oliveira, and Administrator Dr. Maureen Ryan

Remote: N/A

Absent: N/A

Topic: *Special Education Update From Dr. Ryan*

Staffing Update

- **Psychology Openings:**
 - Two current vacancies
 - Locations: Kennedy Middle School and Woburn Memorial High School
- **Extended School Year (ESY) Staffing:**
 - ESY staffing in process

Program Updates

RISE Program

- High enrollment anticipated in incoming Kindergarten students
- Ongoing discussion regarding classroom placement for next year
- Administration will project future needs and manage short-term space adjustments as necessary. This is something that is done every year.

Early Childhood Program (ECP) Pilot Discussion

- Exploration of potential ECP pilot models, including peer-based programming
- Proposed pilot concepts:

- Reeves: Five-day program, 8:00 AM–1:00 PM
- Shamrock: Five-day program, 8:00 AM–11:00 AM
- Cost comparisons discussed:
 - Five full days (8:00–1:00): ~\$6,300
 - Five days (8:00–11:00): ~\$4,300
 - Current four-day model (8:30–11:00): ~\$3,300
- Goal is to increase peer integration time while managing costsGoal is to increase peer integration time while managing costs
- Social-Emotional Learning
 - Plan to extend Second Step Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum into preschool programming

Budget Update

- Budget currently on track
- Several students remain on waitlists for out-of-district (OOD) placements
- Continued volatility in OOD tuition costs, which trend upward
- Mid-Year Review with Triumph:
 - Focus on consistency across all service levels
 - Emphasis on supporting educators and implementation fidelity
- Professional Development:
 - Educators completing book group study book by Jeffrey Benson
 - Wellness-focused PD sessions upcoming in February

Y27 Planning Outlook

- Significant planning underway for FY27, particularly within Student Services due to budget scale
- Objective is to finalize the plan while ensuring readiness for implementation next fiscal year
- Discussions held with Charlie Doherty at City Hall and will continue

- Current outlook suggests no need to access stabilization funds
- Key fiscal notes:
 - SPED offsets approximately \$5.8M
 - OOD tuition exceeds \$10M
 - Circuit Breaker funding remains strong
- Budget lines expected to increase:
 - Out-of-district tuition
 - Transportation and busing
 - Parent transportation reimbursements (due to increased federal mileage rates and increased parent-driven transportation)

Topic: *Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) Update*

- SEPAC hosted speaker Sara Ward
 - Approximately 65 families attended
 - Strong engagement; families remained afterward to ask questions
 - Positive feedback from parents
 - Other districts and Early Intervention (EI) representatives were invited
- Next SEPAC Meeting:
 - February 24 @ 6:30 PM (Virtual)
 - Topic: *Dads, Kids, and the IEP*
 - Additional information available via SEPAC website and Facebook page

Topic: *District Wide Therapy Dog Discussion*

Therapy Dog Discussion

- Current Practice:
 - Therapy dog “Lilly” visits Goodyear Elementary once weekly (Fridays)
 - Serves the GAIN program and one rotating grade level (reward-based)

- Recommendation:
 - Refer topic to Policy Subcommittee for policy framework development
 - Goal is to define:
 - Types of animals (service, therapy, comfort)
 - Allergy considerations (e.g., hypoallergenic requirements)
 - Handling expectations (leashing, supervision)
 - Funding and liability considerations
 - Approved areas (food proximity, classrooms, hallways)
 - Any other considerations the committee deems important

- Motion and vote:
 - Motion made by Mr. Mulrenan and seconded by Mr. Oliveira to send the therapy dog discussion to policy to further define how therapy dogs can fit into WPS policy and what further policy we may need to be able to execute on the program.
 - Ms. Wetzel sent this document to the Policy Subcommittee to assist in their efforts.
 - Document sent to the Policy Subcommittee for action on a district wide therapy dog program link:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/15N70gk0irPVQGb3XSP_M7MzZ4HKj4_wxqptWbPXQ_zQ/edit?usp=sharing

Documents and Exhibits Used:

- Notes from Dr. Ryan for her update on special education services
 - Link:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LldKCYWbAP--uB0RfJQqFSYtr13vYI3wfQxnJSL0pJI/edit?usp=drivesdk>

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Next Meeting: February 26, 2026 at 6:00 pm

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Jessie Wetzel
Chair, Student Services & Achievement