

May 14, 2026

Baldwin School Council Minutes May 2026

7:30 - 8:45 a.m.

School Council Members in Attendance

Parent Members: Jackie Hayes (virtual), Matt Meyersohn, Eugenia Schraa Huh, Andrew Verardo (virtual), Chunying Yue (co-chair)

School Staff Members: Heidi Cook (principal chair), Elena Haro, Karin Kugel, Sara Oliveira, Susan Tiersch

Absent Members: Jen Nigro, Ben Geiger, Corianne LaBounty

Also in attendance: Sarah Happel, Anna Shin (virtual), Maeve Whitty

Agenda

Supporting Student Learning - Literacy

Housekeeping

Notes for the prior meeting were submitted to be reviewed by co-chairs Heidi and Chunying. Still awaiting approval.

School Council [website](#).

Gratitude

Thank you to Friends of Baldwin for getting the School Council election underway. We are looking for one parent representative.

Public Comment

None

PRESENTATION

By Emily Bryan, Cambridge Public School District Director of English Language Arts/Literacy

People have probably heard about the Science of Reading. Recently, there was an article about schools that did well no matter their demographics. An article by *The 74*: [These Schools Are Beating the Odds in Teaching Kids to Read](#).

https://www.the74million.org/article/these-schools-are-beating-the-odds-in-teaching-kids-to-read/?utm_source=The+74+Million+Newsletter&utm_campaign=8d84ad798f-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2022_07_27_07_47_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_077b986842-8d84ad798f-380158082

If you toggle to the state of Massachusetts, you will see Baldwin School as an ‘exceptional’ school.

Literacy is the ability to understand and express ideas through spoken and written language. The written word is critical to our humanity. How are we setting up students to operate in the world around them?

D - Decoding.

L - Language Comprehension

RC - Reading Comprehension

The two domains of literacy are decoding and language comprehension. You must have both decoding and language for reading comprehension. If you have a deficit in one, you cannot compensate.

What skills and knowledge are necessary for skilled reading comprehension?

Phonics instruction - sounds are represented by one or more letters This is all part of decoding.

Language comprehension consists of background knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, language structures, verbal reasoning, and literacy knowledge.

What has a greater impact on reading comprehension? Fluent word reading skills or background knowledge?

Background knowledge is how we make connections, make sense of what is being read. This is where the opportunity gap comes into play.

Language comprehension sets the limit for what students can read and comprehend.

How does all of this connect to the ELA Curriculum?

Grades preschool to 2: This is where decoding is learned.

Instruction in word reading, phonics, and spelling.

Grade 3 - 5: Language knowledge

Strategic development of vocabulary, background knowledge, and the reading, speaking, and writing skills students need to understand, analyze, and discuss increasingly complex content.

Grades 6 - 12: Skilled comprehension

Literacy skills to analyze complex texts, evaluate ideas and evidence, and to communicate clearly, critically, and creatively.

Curriculum by Grade

*Preschool and kindergarten use **Fundations** and **Focus on 4, Focus on K***

*Grades 1 - 5 use **Amplify CKLA** for skills and knowledge*

The CKLA curriculum has some of the same units in grades 1, 2 and 3 like the human body. This is where we build on language and knowledge.

Each grade level engages in a research project which promotes curiosity and creativity, independently thinking about how to find information.

Novels begin in grade 3, reading some large books like The Wind and the Willow.

Grades 6 - 8 shifts to a text based curriculum and each unit is based on novels.

CPS has been working on enhancing CKLA. It was very Eurocentric, lacking diversity. They have noticed some of the bias and worked that out.

At the end of every unit, student feedback is used to determine what they liked about it, and how hard it was. We are proud of the constant, collaborative improvement.

CKLA has been adapted across all grade levels simultaneously which was difficult for the staff, however with each year it is getting better.

Screeners

MClass - grades K - 2

Reports for families sent. The assessment is eight one-minute timed tests around decoding and phonemic awareness.

iReady - grades 3 - 5

Tests more things like the main idea, theme, tone, mode of a passage. The assessment takes longer.

Boost Reading - grades K - 2

Boost is a student-led digital intervention program, a personalized tutoring plan that was identified in MClass testing.

Supporting Literacy at Home

Fluency

Have your child read you from something they are interested in to help with their fluency. Don't battle it out. We don't want tension at home. Determine what they find enjoyable and let the school do the hard stuff.

There are thousands of e-books and audiobooks through SORA (Classlink)

Language and vocabulary words

Wildcrats exposes them to language and vocabulary, and gets curiosity going. Ask questions. Even things like Alexa - "where does the water we drink come from?" Always ask questions

Next Meeting

Tuesday, June 16, 2026

7:00 p.m.

Virtual

Agenda: Supporting student learning in math

School council meetings follow Open Meeting Law. Meetings are open to all.

For morning meetings, students are always welcome to come to the library and may go to the cafeteria for breakfast at 8:00 or they may stay in the library until the bell rings at 8:30. Parents are welcome to come when they can, leave when they wish.