_Graham and Parks_____ SCHOOL COUNCIL
Name of School

(Official Minutes)

School Council Meeting, September 30, 2026

Called for 5:45 at the Graham and Parks School, 44 Linnaean St, Cambridge MA 02138
Time Name of School Address

School Council Members Present: Rabell Afridi; Karima Cheguaoui; Erin Garcia; Fen Portmann Katz; Lauren Morse; Kathleen Smith, Ira Nichols-Barrer, Matt Patton, HoEun Song, Endrias Teklu, Jodi Rich, Steven Shitemi, Lara Silberklang
Names

School Council Members Absent: Valerie Ifill (Had tech difficulties - couldn't log on)

Kathleen Smith in the Chair.
Name

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

The meeting proceeded with a role call vote: All present.

INCLUDE MINUTES FOR EACH ITEM ON THE AGENDA OF THE MEETING

Introductions.

Approval of minutes: Unanimous by those present.

School Administration Report

Kathleen on opening school: Always a challenge getting 300 kids back to school. An enormous task. And we had to do it without a clerk. It went really well! We already see students owning the expectations and getting into routines. New this year we have Playworks. One of the focuses is what happens at recess. One challenge is dynamics of kids on the schoolyard, specifically using examples of soccer field with very different skill levels. This can sometimes lead to difficult transitions back to the classroom. Playworks adds some structure to recess and tries to level the playing field. Once a month the coach teaches new games. Kids don't have to play new games, but often do. Have also added an end-of-recess routine to help recenter kids. Feedback from teachers has been overwhelmingly positive.

We also had back to school night. Focused on making it accessible to all families, and focusing on fall rather than overwhelming families with information about the entire school year.

We're going to have data meetings soon. These meetings are designed to help inform WIN (What I Need) blocks as well as what we do in regular classroom time.

Lauren
At back to school night we had more external organizations to give information at a time that families are already here. Shout out Harvard Museum of Natural History and CEOC as examples. We also had a fun back to school picnic a few weeks ago.

Lots of ways to get involved. Room parent, Friends of Graham and Parks, or helping out with planning/supporting school events. One big event coming up soon is the International Potluck. Last year we had 25 tables of families representing their cultures. Free food market is another example and a way to help families at G&P and the community more broadly. Lastly, Family Engagement is a focus of professional development this year. We had a meeting with staff to talk about how to use family conferences. How do we build community and also help families understand what their kids are learning and how to best support that learning. The school knows how busy parents and families are, but Lauren encouraged parents to pick the things you want to do.

Kathleen highlighted Friday messages for main communication. Grade level teams send updates every two weeks (or weekly depending on the grade). Different grades will have slightly different timing. We know families are busy. Mildrid reminded us that there's a Clothing Swap coming up at the end of October. It's a very casual event and started thanks to parent initiative.

Staffing update: we have a clerk! Mr. Shai has been working at BPS in the office of civil rights. He's thrilled to be part of school community. Please welcome him.

Facilities update: facilities are looking better than ever. New light fixtures. The auditorium has all new flooring and the stage was refinished. Still working to get railings in the new main entrance. Big thanks to our amazing custodial team!

Purpose of School Council & Structure of Meetings

Purpose: highlight passages from the School Council Handbook

Things that were lifted up: the school improvement plan (SIP) / emphasis on racial equity / general functions / SIP definition and goals / question about school council's role in reviewing budget. Playworks is example of something in the SIP budget. Council's role is to advise on the discretionary pieces of the budget. Importance of having school council reps present at school events. Important to help staff identify educational needs of students attending the school.

Roles

Parent co-chair, Secretary, Relentless time-keeper, Tech support

Roles for 26-27 school year
Matt: secretary again

Motion to have two co-chairs: Erin, Jodi seconded
Unanimous by those present
Motion to vote on cochairs Lara and Ira by Fen seconded by Karima
Unanimous by those present

Co-chairs: Lara and Ira, along with Kathleen
Relentless time-keeper will rotate
Fen as tech support

Open meeting law

Meeting agendas need to be posted 48h in advance of the meeting. Agendas need to be specific enough that they inform public of what will be discussed. All of the meetings must be open to the public. And we need quorum. Open meeting law applies if we are having conversations with half of the council, and those conversations must be public.

Norms are designed to support collaboration.

G&P Meeting Norms:

- Take an inquiry stance
- Ground statements in evidence
- Speak your truth and be open to other perspectives
- Hear all voices and stick to protocol
- Start and end on time
- Be here now

Kathleen highlights protocols and how they can help "hear all voices." Specifically highlights lifting things up and noticing/wondering. These are the same norms used by G&P staff.

Draft meeting schedule: Focusing on SIP process. Kathleen points out we're in year two of current plan. In second meeting we will go into SIP to talk about progress and focus areas.

In third meeting budget (both SIP and General) will be reviewed since we will have context around SIP. Later meetings are more flexible and we should start thinking about those topics at the October meeting. Faculty have opportunity through other teams to discuss SIP, but can also go to their representatives on the council.

SIP Goals:

ELA and Math: all students will meet or exceed DESE targets for achievement and growth on MCAS.
We really focus on growth. If we have children starting below grade level, they may not be at grade level on the end of the year, but it's critical that they will have grown by more than one year's worth so they are on track to catch up. We also don't ignore achievement. There are some demographics that are already achieving at high levels at G&P. We focus on the groups that are not currently achieving at the same levels.

School Culture: SEL and support (and discipline) to ensure kids can stay in the classroom. It's also why we track absences and tardies closely and intervene quickly. Fen brought up new SEL curriculum (Wayfinder) adopted this year. Connected to CARES values. Last year we adopted SEL assessment Waypoints. Will be focus of January meeting.

Family Engagement: Our goal is for all of our families to know what their children should be learning and how their child is doing. We want them to have strategies for supporting children at home. And opportunities for families to share with us.

ML (multilingual learners) will increase by at least one ELP (English Language Proficiency) speaking level.

Community Comment: Is there connection between school and after school? Parent requests more structure and support for kids doing homework at DHSP afterschool. Kathleen: We will connect with them.

It's hard to hear voices of people in the corners on zoom. Fen will look into this.

Pluses: lots of information to hit ground running, new members,
Deltas: time, slow down, hear from more voices, and more time for dialogue.

Move to adjourn: Erin, second Ira
Unanimous by those present.