



School Committee Meeting Materials

Committee of the Whole School Committee Meeting

May 15, 2017

6:00pm

*Mr. James M. Fleming
Ms. Deborah Amaral
Ms. Mary A. Manning*



*Mr. Patrick Schultz
Dr. Brendan R. Walsh
Ms. Kristine Wilson*

Mayor Kimberley Driscoll, Chair

May 10, 2017

Committee of the Whole School Committee Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the **Salem School Committee as a Whole** will hold a meeting on Monday, May 15, 2017 at 6:00 p.m.. The meeting will be held at the Collins Middle School, in the School Committee Chambers.

Agenda

6:00 p.m. – Discuss the following:

Salem’s Participation in the Inter-District School Choice Program for 2017-18

Discussion of Policy 6406 Voting Method (referred by Policy Subcommittee)

Respectfully submitted by:

Angelica Alayon, Secretary to the
Salem School Committee

“Know Your Rights Under the Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. c.30A § 18-25 and City Ordinance Sections 2-2028 through 2-2033.”

MEMORANDUM

To: Salem School Committee

From: Margarita Ruiz, Superintendent

Date: May 11, 2017

Re: Final Recommendation Regarding Salem's Participation in MA's Inter-District School Choice Program for 2017-18

Cc: David Angeramo, Principal, Salem High School

As you know, the annual decision on whether or not to participate in the MA Inter-District School Choice program is scheduled for May 15, 2017 following the Committee of the Whole meeting (at 6:00 pm) and public hearing (7:00 pm) on this topic.

This year, I am recommending the Salem School Committee consider a limited form of participation at the high school level. Specifically, my recommendation for the 2017-18 school year is the following:

- **Salem should accept up to twenty (20) non-resident students in the 9th grade at Salem High School for the 2017-18 school year.**

Over the past several weeks, my staff and I have conducted an in-depth review of the Inter-District School Choice program based on available information, discussions with representatives from the MA DESE School Finance Office (which oversees this program), and discussions with fellow Superintendents and Business Managers. During this process, we have learned much about how the program works and have had all of our questions answered. In addition, we have discussed this recommendation with the Principal of the Salem High School who supports this proposal.

As we have sought answers to our questions, the concerns we initially had dissipated and the opportunities to both better serve nearby students looking for additional options, mitigate some of the challenges associated with housing instability that many of our students experience, and potentially stabilize and/or increase enrollment at SHS became apparent. A complete summary of the information we've gathered, including answers to the questions you identified and advice from participating districts is attached for your review. In addition, I am attaching a 1994 Advisory Opinion on School Choice from MA DESE that offers some helpful information as well.

While there are some potential challenges associated with participation (and we should certainly be thoughtful and diligent to mitigate those), in my opinion, the benefits outweigh the challenges. Further, my recommendation to accept only 20 students in this first year is modest enough to be manageable, allowing the district and the high school an opportunity to "test out" the concept without affecting current staffing and/or programmatic plans for the 2017-18 school year.

I ask you to support this recommendation and I look forward to discussing it further with you during the Committee of the Whole meeting scheduled for 5/15/17 at 6:00 pm.

**Participation in the MA Inter-District School Choice Program
Information for the Salem School Committee
DRAFT 5/15/17**

BACKGROUND

The state of MA has allowed inter-district school choice since 1991. M.G.L. 76, 12B allows non-resident students to enroll in school districts that elect to participate in the inter-district school choice program. The decision on whether or not to participate is up to local school committees which must hold a public hearing on the issue and vote on whether or not to participate in the program by June 1st of each year.

Districts that vote to receive students via the school choice program are called “receiving districts.” Districts that have resident students enrolled in non-resident districts via the school choice program are called “sending districts.” To date, Salem Public Schools is a “sending district” with over 72 Salem resident-students attending other districts via the school choice program. A breakdown of the districts into which these Salem students have choiced-in is below along with information about the grade level of Salem students enrolled in other districts.

Receiving District (2016-17)	Count
BEVERLY	24
HAMILTON WENHAM	9
MANCHESTER ESSEX	2
MAVA	6
PEABODY	25
TECCA	5
TRITON	1

KF	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12
3	1	3	4	5	1	7	6	10	6	7	10	9

Districts do not have to send students in order to receive students, or vice versa. Individual school communities decide if they would like to receive students.

INTER-DISTRICT V. INTRA-DISTRICT SCHOOL CHOICE

Inter-District school choice is the statewide program that allows non-resident students to enroll in participating districts, statewide. An Intra-District school choice program refers to how a district assigns students within its boundaries such as a specific district's own policies that may allow forms of choice for resident students among schools within the district. Salem Public Schools currently has an Intra-District school choice program by virtue of its choice-based student assignment policy (see [SC Policy #5103](#)).

LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION, STATEWIDE

Participation in the program has expanded over the 16 years since its inception with 32 districts participating in FY92 and 190 districts participating in FY17. This means that approximately 15,000 students are currently enrolled as non-resident students in districts other than where they reside. In some parts of the state, such as in western MA, nearly all of the districts participate while in other parts of the state, participation varies. Within Essex County, almost half of the school districts in the county (15 of the 32 school districts), currently participate in the school choice program. A complete [list of participating districts](#) can be found on the DESE website.

TUITION REIMBURSEMENT FOR NON-RESIDENT STUDENTS

Sending districts pay tuition to receiving districts for each student enrolled via the school choice program. According to the law, the tuition rate, per student, is set at 75% of the per pupil operating cost (for the receiving district), capped at \$5,000. According to DESE, tuition rates for all districts are now at the \$5,000 cap.

The money for tuition comes from a district's state aid. The state deposits money that would otherwise go to the sending district's Chapter 70 aid into the School Choice Tuition Trust Fund. The state treasurer distributes funds to receiving districts based on a district's number of non-resident students. A projection is made in the fall, based on the October 1 enrollment count, per district, and the actual enrollment is adjusted based on a reconciliation process that takes place each spring.

Participating districts must establish a revolving account to manage incoming tuition dollars. The funds in these accounts can be carried over and districts have flexibility to use the money from the tuition reimbursements deposited in this account in flexible ways, as needed. There are no restrictions on how this money is to be used, however, DESE advises that school choice tuition is intended to cover any additional out-of-pocket expenses associated with students who are enrolled under the school choice program and to provide a financial incentive to encourage districts to participate in the program. Allowable expenditures may include any expenditures for staff, materials, equipment, or services that directly enhance the quality of a district's educational programs and benefit students who currently attend a district's schools. Funds may

not be transferred to another municipal department for purposes unrelated to education, or for payment of debt services.

For additional information on tuition reimbursement, please visit the [DESE Advisory on the Financial Administration of the School Choice Program](#).

REIMBURSEMENT FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

In addition to the \$5,000 per-pupil tuition rate, districts may get reimbursed for special education increments, based on an accounting of all special education services provided to students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), including any transportation required as part of an IEP, and/or the cost of an out-of-district placement. The amount of the increment is determined by applying annual cost rates to the specific services cited in a pupil's individual education plan (similar to "circuit breaker" program). It is the receiving district's responsibility to keep an accurate record of what services were counted toward the cost. For information on the cost rates that would be applied, please see the [special education services calculator](#).

TRANSPORTATION

Receiving districts are not required to provide transportation to non-resident students enrolled via school choice. If a student is enrolled via a school choice program, the parent/guardian is obligated to get the student to school. The only exception to this is in cases where transportation is required as part of a student's IEP. In these cases, the receiving district is responsible for ensuring the transportation services are provided, but they are reimbursed via the special education increment claim forms.

ROLE OF INTRA-DISTRICT SCHOOL CHOICE (E.G., STUDENT ASSIGNMENT POLICY)

If a school district operates an intra-district school choice program (such as Salem's student assignment policy), school choice students would be assigned using the same criteria as resident students, however, resident students can be given priority over non-resident students. According to MGL 76, Section 12B(d), "If the city, town or regional school district operates an intra-district choice plan, non-resident students may apply for schools on the same basis as resident students, but the intra-district choice plan may give preference to resident students in assigning students to schools."

ROLE OF CHAPTER 74 - VOCATIONAL EDUCATION (Revised 5/15/17)

Students who choice into a district via the inter-district school choice process must be allowed the same access to available programs as any other student. This rule also applies to all Chapter 74 programs available within the school(s). The tuition reimbursement rate for these students is the school choice rate.

Some Chapter 74 programs – such as Salem's -- have admissions policies that allow non-resident students to enroll in the district's Chapter 74 programs via the non-resident tuition process. The Non-Resident Tuition Rate is higher than the school choice reimbursement rate. Non-resident students (who are **not** already admitted via the school choice process) may apply, through a separate process, to attend the SHS Chapter 74 programs via the non-resident tuition

application process, allowing the district to charge a higher rate to the sending district. Sending districts have the authority to approve or reject these applications depending on the types of Chapter 74 programs available in their home district.

The two processes are and should be managed as separate processes. In general, a student who enters the district via school choice remains in the district as a school choice student with access to the same opportunities available to resident students. Simultaneously, the school may receive additional applicants for the Chapter 74 programs via the non-resident tuition process, and these may be taken for any grade level that offers Chapter 74 programs.

For more information about tuition reimbursement for Chapter 74 students and the role of school choice, please visit the [DESE Guidelines](#).

DETERMINATION OF AVAILABLE SEATS WITHIN A DISTRICT

When a local school committee opts to participate in the school choice program, it may specify the grade level(s), school(s), and level of enrollment it will accept via school choice for any given year. While some school districts choose to open their enrollment to students at any grade level and/or school, many have identified specific grade levels and have set caps on the number of students they will accept for those grade levels. It is up to each local school district to determine the total number of students they will accept via school choice for any grade level(s) and/or school(s) identified. This information must be reported to the state by June 1st of each participating year.

SELECTION OF STUDENTS

Once a school district opts to participate in school choice, the selection of students must be free from discrimination on the basis of race, color, religious creed, national origin, sex, age, sexual orientation, ancestry, athletic performance, disabilities, special needs, home language, or academic performance. If the number of applicants exceeds the number of available seats, the selection process must be on a random basis. Once a student is accepted and enrolled via school choice, that student must be treated as if s/he were a resident of the district. In addition, these students must be allowed to complete their education within the district, until graduation.

ROLE OF A STUDENT'S DISCIPLINE RECORDS

According to the 1994 Advisory Opinion on School Choice, "there is nothing in the school choice law that would prohibit a receiving school district from considering the discipline records of an applicant. School districts must use this criterion carefully to avoid challenges. If there are more applicants than seats, the review of discipline records should not take place prior to the lottery (should be after the decision to admit is made).

RESEARCH ON INTER-DISTRICT SCHOOL CHOICE IN MA

Currently, there is no research available on the MA Inter-district school choice program, however, a researcher from Boston University is beginning a study to look at the impact that school choice has on student outcomes in MA. A few articles have been written on the subject, however, and additional resources may be helpful, including:

- [School Choice Opens Options Beyond District Schools](#) (WBUR, October 20, 2014)
- [Wachusett Regional School District School Choice FAQ](#)
- [Mapping School Choice in MA: Data and Findings](#) (Boston Foundation, 2003)
- MA DESE [website on school choice](#)
- [Parents' Guide to School Choice in MA](#)

GETTING STARTED - HOW IT WOULD WORK

When a local school committee votes to participate in the inter-district school choice program, the next steps entail:

1. Submitting the decision and description of the total # of seats available at the specific grade levels and/or schools that will accept non-resident students
2. Establishing a deadline for initial applications (recommended, most districts do this, as an example, see [Beverly School Choice Application](#), [Ipswich School Choice Application](#))
3. Advertising the availability of seats to non-resident students (optional -- context and consideration of relationship with surrounding districts important factor)
4. Receiving applications by the deadline
 - a. If the district receives more applicants than spaces, a lottery must be held to select students (siblings can be given preference in a lottery)
 - b. If the districts receives fewer applicants than spaces, all students who apply are enrolled and the remainder can be filled on a rolling basis
5. Complete the registration/student assignment process for those students who have been accepted via the school choice process
 - a. Residency verification -- to verify the sending district
 - b. Other registration requirements as established by the local School Committee policy (e.g., student assignment policy)
 - c. Language and special education evaluations as needed
 - d. Other procedures as applicable
6. Enroll the student in the new school
7. Track and monitor any address changes (Note- if a the student moves to another town, must report new city/town of residence so the state can charge the tuition to the correct city or town)
8. Include non-resident students in the October and March SIMS reports
9. Complete the school choice claims process in the spring to claim reimbursement for non-resident students, including any special education services provided as part of a student's IEP (due in the last week of April, each year)
 - a. A claim form completed for each choice student
 - b. A special education increment form completed for each student with an IEP
 - c. Tuition deducted from sending districts' local aide accounts/added to receiving districts' local aide accounts
10. Local aide accounts for both sending and receiving districts are adjusted based on school choice enrollment.

INSIGHTS FROM PARTICIPATING DISTRICTS

A handful of district leaders from other, participating school districts (Beverly, Burlington, Hudson, Manchester-Essex, Norton, Somerset, West Bridgewater, etc.) were contacted and asked to share their thoughts regarding the potential benefits and challenges of participation. They were also asked to share any advice they would give to school districts considering participating in school choice. Below is a summary of their feedback and insights.

Potential Benefits of Participating

- The district gets to recover some of costs associated with the benefit extended to our staff that allows them to have their children attend school in Burlington.
- It provides us a flexible option for some of our neediest high school students who often do not have housing security. It allows us to provide them stability in their schooling.
- It provides the district with a small, but flexible revenue source to solve problems quickly
- Has helped the high school with enrollment
- "Choice was the best thing that happened to the district."
- "One of the best decisions our school committee has made."

Potential Challenges of Participating

- There are some students who "choice in" who require significant support to graduate
- For non-special education students, the \$5000 per student does not cover the full cost of educating the students received. Some districts get into a situation where they may enroll more students than they actually can support, based on the staffing levels they have. There is a fine line of taking enough kids and taking too many kids.
- Be careful about considering tuition reimbursement as a revenue stream to cover operational costs
- Balancing the right number of students to allow in via choice with capacity to serve

Advice from Participating Districts

- Initially, start small
- Many school committees believe that if they vote not to participate in choice that their students can't leave to participate in another district that accepts choice students. This understanding is incorrect.



NEW LIBERTY INNOVATION SCHOOL

May 11, 2017

To the Salem Public Schools School Committee:

We, the students of New Liberty Innovation School are requesting your approval of a special event we would like to hold at our school on the evening and night of Saturday, May 27 and into the morning of Sunday, May 28th. We would like to hold a Lock-In Night at our school to celebrate the year's accomplishments, to celebrate the success of the upcoming graduates and to further build school community and culture.

Proposed Outline for the Event:

Open the school for participants at 5:00 pm

5:00-7:00pm--- Games and Team Building Activities

7:00-8:30pm-- Dinner

8:30-10:30pm Open Mic Night/Music/Dancing/Poetry

10:30-12:30pm Movie Watching/Popcorn

12:30am-1:00-- Free time/quiet time

1:00- 2:00 am-- A mystery game called Manhunt which is like hide and seek for adults. A game of tag with "hunters" and "hidiers" with two teams that capture one another. The goal is for one team to capture all the people from the opposing team.

2:00-4:00am-- Quiet time, movie watching

4:00-5:00am breakfast prep

5:00am-6:30am-- Breakfast

Break up for the day 7am-9am Includes cleaning up and packing up

Two staff will be providing supervision. The maximum number of students who will be allowed to attend would be 20 students. Students have to be in good standing with no major infractions to the code of conduct within the last two months. All school rules apply to the event.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Thomas, LICSW
Coordinator of Clinical Services

Ryan C. Sullivan
Graduating Student

A Salem Public School
Two East India Square, Suite 200, Salem, MA 01970
Ph: 978-825-3470 Fax: 978-825-3475

SCHOOL COMMITTEE	6000
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS	6400
VOTING METHOD	6406

State law provides that:

The committee shall create and maintain accurate minutes of all meetings, including executive sessions, setting forth . . . the decisions made and the actions taken at each meeting, including the record of all votes.

No vote taken at an open session shall be by secret ballot. Any vote taken at an executive session shall be recorded by roll call and entered into the minutes.

Approval of a majority of the School Committee, equal to no less than 4 affirmative votes, is required for final adoption or amending policies; approving resolutions, contracts, calendars, improvement plans and the annual budget, as well as other non-routine items before the committee.

A quorum at a meeting may constitute approval for the purpose of routine matters of the committee including approving minutes, budget transfers and general items (e.g. field trips, referral of matters to Committee, etc.) and not specifically requiring approval of a majority of the full body

Members abstaining or declaring him or herself present understand that they are expressing their willingness to accept the will of the majority of those members actively voting.

In keeping with the law, the Salem School Committee has adopted as its policy the practice of recording every vote taken by the committee. The votes of each member shall be recorded.

Legal Reference: [30A:22](#)

- [Tabled March 6, 2017](#)
- [Tabled March 20, 2017](#)
- [Tabled April 3, 2017](#)
- [Tabled May 1, 2017](#)

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