

**Nantucket School Committee
Meeting Minutes
September 2, 2025**

Present Members: Chair Laura Gallagher Byrne, Vice-Chair Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, Timothy Lepore, Esmeralda Martinez, Vincent Murphy, and Superintendent Elizabeth Hallett

The September 2, 2025, School Committee meeting was called to order at 6:08 PM in the LGI by Chair Laura Gallagher Byrne. A motion was made by Timothy Lepore, seconded by Shantaw Bloise Murphy. The agenda was approved unanimously.

Ms. Gallagher Byrne welcomed everyone back to the new school year.

Announcement: this meeting is being audio and video recorded

Public Comment

Tomeka Gary, parent of a sixth-grade student, shared a public comment describing a concerning incident involving her son and an eighth-grade student. She explained that over the summer, her son had a disagreement with another boy in a group chat, and she had advised him to ignore the situation and leave the chat if it continued. On the first day of school, her son encountered the same boy in person, leading to verbal exchanges that escalated into a physical altercation. A teacher intervened to break up the fight. Ms. Gary stated that her son was deeply upset. Superintendent Hallett offered to meet privately with Ms. Gary to discuss the incident further. Ms. Gary declined at that moment but expressed willingness to do so in the future. She stated that her frustration stemmed from not being notified about the altercation that occurred earlier in the day, though she confirmed that her husband had spoken with the principal. Ms. Gary emphasized that her son currently does not feel safe at school and expressed concern that neither the principal nor the school security officer seemed aware of the situation. She noted that this is her son's first year in middle school, and he feels unsure of which staff members he can turn to for support since the adults he previously trusted remain at the elementary level. Ms. Gary said it was unacceptable that her son spent most of the day feeling scared and unsupported without anyone checking in with him.

Superintendent's Update

Dr. Hallett began her superintendent's report by welcoming Courtney Rau Rogers as the district's new Coordinator of Special Education. Ms. Rogers joins the team from Newton Public Schools, where she served as Assistant Principal of Student Services for 17 years, and she also served eight years on the Norwood School Committee. Dr. Hallett expressed enthusiasm for her addition to the district.

She reported that the school year opened smoothly, beginning with the new educator orientation on August 25, where 39 new educators were welcomed. The day included introductions to district procedures, meetings with mentors and administrators, and concluded with a social gathering at Cisco Brewers. The three professional development days that followed were described as highly productive. Opening day featured a keynote from Amanda Bickerstaff of AI for Education, who provided insights on responsible and effective AI use in classrooms. Dr. Hallett noted that AI will remain a professional focus throughout the year. Subsequent PD sessions allowed staff to participate in targeted learning by role and content area, with highlights including literacy work at NES and NIS, grading and graduate vision discussions at CPS, and de-escalation training and culture-building activities at NHS. Staff also prepared classrooms and participated in student orientations and meet-and-greets. She concluded that the first day of school was successful and the district was off to a positive start.

Superintendent Hallett provided an update on transportation, noting that the district currently has only four bus drivers, following the departure of one driver who moved off-island. The district reinstated its early and late run system for the airport route serving grades 6–12 and plans to launch a color-coded bus tag system to ensure students ride the correct routes.

She also addressed a growing concern regarding e-bike use, reminding families that all e-bikes must be registered with the school, that students and parents must sign a safety contract, and that students are not permitted to ride e-bikes on campus. Dr. Hallett noted an increase in the use of new electric dirt bikes capable of speeds up to 40 mph, which are classified as motor vehicles rather than bicycles. These require a driver's license and registration, and the district is collaborating with the Nantucket Police Department to manage safety and compliance. She emphasized the importance of helmets and adherence to safety protocols for all riders.

In response to a question about parking for these new vehicles, Dr. Hallett explained that the district is developing

a plan for designated parking areas, as the bikes cannot be stored with standard bicycles due to safety concerns. She said further updates will be provided as the process develops.

Dr. Hallett reported that the district's current enrollment stands at 1,670 students, which is 54 fewer than the final count in June 2025. She noted that both the kindergarten class, with only 91 students, and the sixth-grade class are smaller this year. Enrollment will continue to be monitored throughout the year, with monthly updates provided as usual. In response to a question about the potential impact of lower enrollment, particularly in kindergarten, Dr. Hallett said the district will continue to monitor class sizes and staffing needs as enrollment trends fluctuate. She added that class sizes vary from year to year and that the district also tracks local birth data to anticipate future enrollment changes.

Dr. Hallett concluded her report by introducing Danielle Lewis as the new student representative to the School Committee.

Presentations and discussions of issues to the Committee

Summer School Presentation - Kara Evans, Summer School Facilitator

Kara Evans, Summer School Facilitator, reported on the district's summer school program, which ran for five weeks from July 7 through August 7, Monday through Thursday, 8:30–11:30 a.m. The program aimed to maintain learning from the previous year, provide enrichment, and make learning enjoyable while offering opportunities for community connections. This summer, 114 students participated, ranging from pre-K to high school life skills classes, including 90 students receiving extended school year services based on their IEPs. Ms. Evans highlighted the contribution of 43 staff members, including teachers, service providers, teaching assistants, and the school nurse, noting that all positions were successfully filled, ensuring no compensatory services were required during the following school year. Due to budget reductions, field trips were not included, but on-campus activities were successful. Students engaged with Sustainable Nantucket Farm and received visits from the Nantucket Historical Association, providing enriching experiences while minimizing transportation challenges. Ms. Evans emphasized the program's success in offering consistent staffing and meaningful learning opportunities for students. Ms. Evans highlighted the summer school showcase as a program favorite, where students presented projects and shared their work with parents during the three-hour sessions. Despite a windy day, many parents attended, and students were excited to display their accomplishments. She shared survey feedback noting that the Extended School Year program provided a supportive, structured environment that kept students engaged, offered unique learning experiences with the Nantucket Historical Association and community garden, and connected learning to real-life experiences. Staff emphasized that the program helped students maintain academic progress over the summer. Teachers appreciated the classroom preparation time, the consistency of returning summer school and MPS staff, and suggested that future registration open earlier to better inform families. Ms. Evans noted that on-campus activities were especially popular and expressed interest in incorporating more community-based programs next summer to reduce travel time. Overall, the program received positive feedback from both students and staff, and Ms. Evans expressed enthusiasm for continuing the summer school program in the future.

The School Committee members congratulated Ms. Evans on the success of the summer school program. Ms. Bloise-Murphy suggested partnering with Egan Maritime and inquired about the low enrollment and late registration. Dr. Hallett noted the challenge of identifying students based on teacher recommendations. Chair Gallagher-Byrne asked whether participating organizations were donating their time, and Ms. Evans confirmed that all contributions were voluntary.

District Improvement Plan (Year 3 Action Plan) - Superintendent Hallett, Assistant Superintendent Bardsley, Assistant Superintendent Devitt

Superintendent Hallett presented an overview of the district's Year Three Improvement Plan, noting that the plan, launched in 2023, maintains consistent vision, mission, and core values. She explained that the district's strategic objectives and initiatives remain fixed for the duration of the five-year strategy, while the annual action plan outlines specific goals for the current year. School improvement plans, still in draft form, will be linked once updated data and school council input are finalized. She highlighted key departmental goals, beginning with Human Resources, where a comprehensive needs assessment will be conducted to strengthen procedures related to hiring, retention, and licensure. In Finance, departments will collaborate to ensure full and transparent use of federal and state grant funding. The district leadership team will prioritize safety, including preparation for a full reunification drill in coordination with town public safety agencies. In Curriculum and Instruction, she emphasized continued expansion of applied learning with a focus on communication and collaboration. In English Learner Education, the district will increase access to rigorous academic language through SEI professional development and a piloted co-teaching model at the elementary level. Special Services will strengthen SEL resources, parent guides, and strategies to support student well-being. She reported ongoing work in Educational Technology to improve network reliability through major upgrades completed over the summer. The Facilities

Department continues monitoring mechanical systems, advancing the modular office project, and supporting the design work for the stadium renovation. She also noted progress on districtwide camera upgrades. Finally, the Athletics Department will expand emergency and safety training for all coaches, including CPR, first aid, and updated Raptor procedures. She concluded by inviting questions from the committee.

Mr. Murphy asked about emergency protocols for away games. Dr. Hallett explained they would follow procedures of the off island school.

Ms. Bloise-Murphy asked for an update on hybrid meeting capabilities for the School Committee. Dr. Hallett explained that the district has been working with the Town, but the current meeting space continues to pose challenges, and alternative locations are limited based on town availability. She noted that this may remain a difficult issue to fully resolve, though efforts are ongoing.

Ms. Bloise-Murphy then questions the wifi performance on the first day. Superintendent Hallett responded it appeared stable, with few complaints reported.

Dr. Lepore asked if there is any thought on CPR training for students? Dr. Hallett replied that the option could be explored, but it would come with a cost.

School & Employee Handbooks

Kimberly Albertson, NES Assistant Principal, reported that there were very few changes to the school handbooks. She reviewed updates to employee titles and school committee terms and positions. She also addressed arrival procedures, the civil rights conclusion, the Raptor system, and the updated cell phone policy, including smart watches, which was revised to align with district-wide guidelines.

Donna Johnson, NIS Assistant Principal, provided updates to the School Committee regarding the NIS handbook. She noted that the school council section on page 8 included volunteer forms, the community school information was updated on page 10, and the opt-out section on page 18 addressed curriculum and civil rights. She also reported that the cell phone policy was added for consistency with district guidelines and that e-bike and dirt bike policies were included.

Ms. Gallagher Byrne asked about the opt out process. Ms. Johnson explained the family meets with Principal Janda and has a conversation.

Adriene Lombardi, CPS Assistant Principal, reported that the most significant update to the school handbook is the new cell phone policy, which includes the use of pouches and will be implemented on Monday. She also noted changes to the tardy policy, which now includes progressive discipline and requires students with 20 or more tardies in a trimester to make up time on Saturdays.

Ms. Gallagher-Byrne asked about the volume of lunch deliveries. Ms. Lombardi responded that keeping cell phones secured should help reduce related issues.

Tracy Mailloux, NHS Assistant Principal, presented updates to the high school handbook, noting that the major overhaul occurred last year and this year's revisions are minor. These include updates to the principal's letter, School Committee member terms, and small wording adjustments in Chapter 2. She highlighted changes in Chapter 4, Academics, including new language and adjustments to the Mobile Technology includes the full policy, with a link provided for reference.

Mr. Murphy asked whether the academic integrity section would address the use of artificial intelligence. Ms. Mailloux explained that the technology department already has a policy in place that appears when students and staff log in to their computers. She added that AI is referenced under plagiarism and that the district has purchased SchoolAI to support students in learning responsible use.

Superintendent Hallett reported that the 2025–2026 employee handbook has been updated. She noted that there are no substantial changes aside from some title adjustments, including updates to the School Committee, and the Assistant Superintendent. All other content remains unchanged.

Chair Laura Gallagher-Byrne reported that the School Committee held a workshop on August 19 to review goals for the 2025–2026 year. The committee focused on aligning with district priorities while addressing local school

needs, identifying three key areas of emphasis: engaging with classrooms through school visits and reviewing instructional materials in real time; prioritizing student safety and well-being, supported by the addition of a second school resource officer, and strengthening governance by supporting the superintendent, administration, and teachers, with student achievement as the central focus of all efforts.

Committee discussions and votes to be taken

Vote to approve the donation from the Nantucket Golf Club Foundation to the Nantucket Community School for \$15,000.00 for tuition assistance for after-school and summer childcare. *Vincent Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Vote to approve the donation from ReMain Nantucket for \$12,500.00 to the Nantucket Community School for marketing and communications. *Vincent Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Vote to approve the July 22, 2025 Executive Session Meeting Minutes. *Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Vote to approve Transfers & Invoices. *Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Sub-Committee/Work Group Report

Agenda for the next meeting - September 22, 2025 - School Resource Officers Update, Advanced Placement Results, 4th Quarter Budget Update, Budget Planning Calendar, Budget Directives, Vote on School & Employee Handbooks. Discuss future meeting date changes. 9/22/25, 10/8/25, 10/27/25, 11/17/25, 12/8/2, and a workshop in December.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 7:17 PM by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, seconded by Timothy Lepore, and with none opposed, the motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Katie Bedell
School Committee Clerk