



**MEETING OF THE
NORTHAMPTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION SUBCOMMITTEE**



Monday, February 2, 2026 ~ 6:30 pm - 8:01 pm
By Videoconference

MINUTES

Approved: March 25, 2026

Attending: Member Jewell, Member Mahoney, Member Montgomery-Tamakloe
Also Attending: Superintendent Bonner, Curriculum Director Messmer, Principal Taglieri, Reading Coach Nicholas, Kate Fontaine

Documents Reviewed
November 3, 2025 Meeting Minutes

- I. **Announcement** that Meeting is Being Videorecorded - [Recording](#)
- II. **Call to Order** - Superintendent Bonner called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm .
- III. **Roll Call** - The roll was called. This meeting took place by videoconference and the roll and all votes taken were done so remotely.

Tiffany Jewell	Present
Cindy Mahoney	Present
Renika Montgomery-Tamakloe	Present
QUORUM	Present

- IV. **Subcommittee Vote to Elect Chair** - Member Mahoney nominated Member Jewell for the position of Chair. Member Jewell accepted the nomination. The roll call vote follows.

Tiffany Jewell	Tiffany Jewell
Cindy Mahoney	Tiffany Jewell

Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra	Member Tiffany Jewell	Member Robbie Saner Sullivan	Member Alenda Bartoli
Member Anat Weisenfreund	Member Renika Montgomery-Tamakloe	Member Michael Stein	Member Amy Martyn
	Member Cindy Mahoney	Member Valerie Reiss	

Renika Montgomery-Tamakloe	Tiffany Jewell
VOTE	Tiffany Jewell, 3

- V. **Review of Minutes** - Member Jewell made a motion, seconded by Member Montgomery-Tamakloe, to approve the November 3, 2025, minutes. The roll call vote follows.

Tiffany Jewell	Aye
Cindy Mahoney	Aye
Renika Montgomery-Tamakloe	Aye
VOTE	Aye 3

- VI. **Hate Crimes and Bias Prevention Grant** - Curriculum Director Messmer reported that NPS pursued this \$30,000 competitive, state-funded grant to support JFK's efforts to address concerns about student language. Supporting data were drawn from the internal database Open Architect. NPS will be working with CES who will be working in the second part of this grant with 15-20 students from three grade levels interested in this work. Student participation is voluntary and necessary accommodations will be made. In response to a question from Member Montgomery-Tamakloe, Director Messmer said this grant gives us the important step of student involvement. Teachers are learning to use consistent language. Sixteen teachers and staff have been trained in Tier 1 and Tier 2 restorative practice. 25 staff have received some training. Superintendent Bonner directed members to the DESE website for data on incidents.

- VII. **Update on the Identified 9th Grade Cohort and Reading Program** - Principal Taglieri provided background information. He described how Reading Coach Nicholas performed two rounds of testing. In the first round, all eighth grade students were screened. Based on that data, additional testing was done for the students performing below grade level to determine supports required for 9th grade. Two high school teachers are trained in direct reading instruction. Approximately 20-25 students were expected to need support. Specialized classes were created. He said that what was less clear is how many students are still struggling with grade-level literacy so that they would have trouble accessing grade-level text and content. Small 9th grade classes were prioritized. The original intent was for Coach Nicholas to provide coaching to teachers but scheduling issues surfaced. NHS needed to identify a diagnostic tool to identify students who aren't at reading grade level. Multiple assessments were piloted, the results of which were mixed. Coach Nicholas said that an adolescent literacy screen, CAPTA Assess Read Basic, is being piloted and preliminary results are positive. The test has reading comprehension and efficiency components. She said she is hopeful that this screen could be rolled out to a larger group of students. Principal Taglieri said that, once the size of the problem is known, it will be possible to identify required resources. He said he is looking for long-term, system-wide solutions. In response to a question

from Member Montgomery-Tamakloe, Superintendent Bonner confirmed that the two teachers are special education-/reading-certified. Member Montgomery-Tamakloe asked about the IEP status of the 9th graders. Coach Nicholas responded that a majority of those students were already on IEPs. 3-4 students did not have IEPs, several of whom are now enrolled at other schools. Students who were not on IEPs and were low in reading were transfers in from other school systems. Member Montgomery-Tamakloe asked if other grades would be assessed. Coach Nicholas said this is under discussion. She said that the paid version of the assessment costs \$9 per student excluding training. There is also discussion of adopting Language Live, a specific program for secondary readers. In response to a question from Member Mahoney, Coach Nicholas described the challenges of scheduling. An asynchronous course, *Striving Secondary Readers*, has been purchased with PRISM funds for the middle school. The partner, School Kit, is willing to allow NPS to use it at the high school. Finding time for teacher training is a challenge. In response to a question from Member Jewell, Coach Nicholas said that last year's JFK screenings showed that the current 9th grade had many more issues than the 7th and the 6th graders. She provided an overview of the programs in place at the middle school. She offered to present the Science of Reading and literacy initiatives to the School Committee.

Member Mahoney asked for a discussion of the PRISM III grant. Superintendent Bonner cautioned that the PRISM grant is not on the agenda and therefore should not be discussed. Member Mahoney said that this topic has come up this evening and there was a related opinion piece in the *Daily Hampshire Gazette*. Member Jewell said that PRISM III can be put on the next meeting's agenda. Member Montgomery-Tamakloe said the topic was pertinent. Director Messmer said that upon hire, she was asked to implement MTSS and reduce the ELA and math performance discrepancies between students who are not part of subgroups and those who are. She said that last year she reviewed what was being taught, particularly in middle school, and found no vertically or horizontally aligned ELA curriculum. DESE created the competitive PRISM III secondary literacy grant, for which NPS received \$200,000. Under this grant, the State pays 50% of the cost of curriculum purchases. The State chose the professional development provider, School Kit. A Curriculum Council has been established. School Kit has conducted multiple instructional leadership sessions and a landscape analysis, during which teachers were observed, and assignments were reviewed. School Kit determined that 83% of the assignments collected for the landscape analysis did not meet or exceed grade-level expectations. For the same proportion of collected assignments, no evidence-based writing had been required. In 6th grade, assignments were more rigorous, and students were required to write more. The landscape analysis also included surveys of teachers, parents, and students. The results indicated that a majority of teachers believed they did not have enough collaborative time, and that a majority of parents did not know what was being taught in middle school ELA classes. Most significantly, the results revealed that a majority of the 500 students surveyed believed they were not being academically challenged in their ELA classes. The survey results and the low performance of JFK's subgroups, compared with the state average for those subgroups, led Director Messmer to believe that pursuing the PRISM III grant, which supported the purchase of high-quality instructional materials for MS ELA, was required to teach all students equitably. She called the grant a tremendous opportunity

to acquire the best instructional materials available, vetted for bias, culturally relevant, and on grade level.

VIII. **Future Business** - Professional Development

IX. **Next Meeting** - April 14, 2025, 5:00 pm - 6:00 pm, by videoconference. A March meeting will be scheduled.

X. **Adjourn** - Member Montgomery-Tamakloe made a motion, seconded by Member Mahoney, to adjourn. The roll call vote follows.

Tiffany Jewell	Aye
Cindy Mahoney	Aye
Renika Montgomery-Tamakloe	Aye
VOTE	Aye 3

The meeting was adjourned at 8:01 pm.