

# Jesse Hefter

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## School Committee

Issue #5: September 1, 2024  
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### Hello friends,

As Summer 2024 winds down and the 2024-2025 academic school year has begun, I would like to let you know about what I've been doing in my School Committee role since the election last May. As always, if you want to reach out to me about any school-related issue, please feel free. My PSB email address is in the header of this Newsletter and my mobile number is 781-771.2618.



Thanks for your support,

*Jesse*

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### School Committee Meetings

Attending my first School Committee meeting in May was pretty exciting. We got to hear from a large group of parents concerned about the upcoming 2nd-grade class size at the Hayes School (the issue resolved itself over the summer with family moves and student transfers).

In a June Meeting, I presented my first New Business item asking that both the SC and the District consider opening the new School Year with a statement pledging to reduce incidences of hurtful speech and actions by all.

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### Subcommittee Meetings

**Curriculum:** I attended two subcommittee meetings. In the first meeting, we got an update from the District group looking at new literacy programs and a presentation from BHS staff about the 10 sections of heterogeneous 9th-grade English slated for the 2024-2025 academic year. The team plans to continue collecting a variety of data points for supporting moving forward with a full 9th-grade pilot in the 2025-2026 school year. The goal is to make the decision based on solid data evidence. A plan for the reintroduction of World Language education in Grades 6-8 over a multi-year period was presented. In the second meeting, we discussed the status of the literacy program review and saw the schedule for the proposed rollout of whatever program is ultimately chosen.

**Policy:** I attended two subcommittee meetings. In the first meeting, we heard from a representative of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) about the MASC approach to review and formulation of policies. MASC can be a

source of policy templates and electronic storage and retrieval of our policy manual. In the second meeting, we met with the School Building Leaders (principals) to hear about what their priorities are for what our committee should address sooner rather than later. Such policies include (1) Use of Cell Phones/Electronic Devices in School (in the works), (2) Attendance, (3) Building Access, (4) Staffing for After School Building Use, (5) Building Security, and (6) Updated Graduation Requirements. We plan to meet with the Building Leaders in a collaborative, workshop-style framework to review existing and new policies as we move ahead together.

**DEIJ:** Although there were several attempts to meet over the summer, no meetings ultimately took place over the summer.

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## **School Committee Liaison to the Brookline Department of Public Health**

It was a privilege to meet with Sigalle Reiss, the Director of the Public Health Department, to discuss areas where DPH and the School Committee can closely align. We discussed substance abuse, cell phone policy, community education, biking safety, asbestos abatement in the soon-to-be-demolished Pierce School, and support for immunizations across the District. Sigalle and I will stay in contact as the School Year continues.

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## **School Committee Workshop**

This meeting began with a review of the Superintendent's 2023-2024 Evaluation (this is the third evaluation cycle for the Superintendent). I wasn't part of the process as my term only started in May 2024. We then discussed a draft of the 2025-2026 School Calendar and reviewed what our District plan should be about various categories of holiday observances. Any proposed changes will be shared, in advance, with parents, caregivers, and teachers, to get feedback prior to any decision. The Committee also discussed the formation of a SC Communications Team, participation in the upcoming Brookline Day on September 8, and our transition from Zoom Webinar meetings to Zoom Meetings. In the latter, everyone can see the participants (this was a request from the public) and the Select Board has already made the transition.

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## **State-wide Meetings**

1) I served as a panelist in the June 10, 2024 "Combating Antisemitism Summit for the Massachusetts Schools" organized by the Israeli-American Civic Action Network. One of my co-panelists was Senator John Velis (one of the key supporters of the plan to set up an Antisemitism Taskforce in the Commonwealth). Over 500 people from across the state attended the workshop where we heard from students and teachers about overt antisemitism in some of our public schools. Realizing that there were probably other School Committee members listening in to the webinar, I identified two such individuals, one from Natick and one from Holliston. We met in July and plan to continue to stay in contact to address antisemitism issues in our Districts if or as they occur.

2) I met with Glenn Koocher, MASC Executive Director, about the possibility of organizing a session at the MASC Annual Meeting in November on antisemitism in public schools. The meeting schedule has already been set. However, we may be

allocated an early morning meeting block to gather and discuss issues of mutual interest.

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**How to reach me:**

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