



CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

Regular Meeting

October 3, 2023

Called for 6:00 p.m. in the Dr. Henrietta S. Attles Meeting Room, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, 459 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of discussing any and all business that may properly come before the Committee.

Members Present: Vice-Chair Rachel, Member Fantini, Member Hunter, Member Rojas, Member Weinstein, Member Wilson, Mayor Siddiqui

Also Present: Dr. Greer, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Turk, Deputy Superintendent. Claire Spinner Chief Financial Officer; Maureen MacFarlane, Legal Counsel; Dr. Edwards, Chief of Academics and Schools; Dr. Gittens, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Schools; Dr. Grace, Interim Assistant Superintendent of Student Services; David Murphy, Chief Operations Officer; Corey Dotson, Chief Talent Officer; Jennifer Amigone, Director of Assessment & Accountability, Siobahn Mulligan, Director of Mathematics; Emily Bryan, English Language Arts/Literacy Department Director; Khari Milner, Co-Director of Cambridge Agenda for Children Out-of-School Time

Mayor Siddiqui in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

The Chair provided a statement to the public regarding Governor Charlie Baker's Executive Order on guidelines for remote participation and then read the call of the meeting.

The meeting proceeded to the first order of business with a roll call vote for the purpose of a soundcheck: Member Weinstein PRESENT; Member Wilson PRESENT; Member Fantini PRESENT; Member Hunter PRESENT; Vice-Chair Rachel PRESENT; Member Rojas PRESENT; Mayor Siddiqui PRESENT.

1. Public Comment:

There were no speakers at Public Comment.

On a motion by Member Rojas, seconded by Vice Chair Rachel, on a voice vote, public comment was closed.

2. Student School Committee Report:

The Committee welcomed one of the two new student members - Naseem Anjaria (Junior at CRLS). Student Member Anjaria introduced himself, expressed his excitement about joining the committee for the 2023-2024 school year, and briefly discussed the new grading policy.

3. Presentation of the Records for Approval:

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On a motion by Member Weinstein seconded by Member Wilson on a voice vote, the records were approved as written and placed on file.

4. Reconsiderations: None

5. Unfinished Business/Calendar: None

6. Awaiting Reports: None

7. Superintendent's Agenda:

7a. Superintendent's Update: EXCEL Strategic Tutoring & Supports for Students this School Year
The Superintendent's Update began with a presentation from Dr. Karyn Grace, Interim Assistant of Student Services, and Khari Milner, Co-Director, of Cambridge Agenda for Children Out-of-School Time, who discussed the district's current efforts in strategic tutoring. The full presentation can be found on the [website](#).

Member Fantini asked for more clarity on the program and its research-based data. Dr. Grace shared that research-based data is derived from universities such as Stanford and Brown which have a variety of sources and longitudinal data about the impact of strategic data. Post-COVID, this data has been heavily sought out to assist educators and school districts around the world with the impact of learning loss during the pandemic. The data aligns with the guidelines following the minimum of 3x30 (in terms of session) and meets the guidelines of curriculum materials and instructional methodologies. The district's program ratios and groups align with and highest impact guidelines of 4 or fewer students or on an individual basis. **Member Fantini** also inquired about the capacity of tutoring instructors for students and student eligibility. Dr. Grace shared that currently, the screening is for students in the K-8 grades who may be two years behind grade level. Khari Milner also shared that the district has numerous data sources that have assisted with the EXCEL strategic tutoring supports.

Member Rojas asked about schools with less than 25 students that meet the criteria. Dr. Grace shared that the goal is for school communities to have intervention blocks. **Member Rojas** also inquired about the district's goals in reviewing i-Ready data from spring 2023 and fall 2023 and about the information and data that the district is seeking regarding students. Dr. Grace shared that the district looks into each student's after-school time with the goal of not interrupting the student's schedule.

Member Weinstein asked if educators could identify students who need tutoring in lieu of i-Ready data. Dr. Grace shared that the district is reliant on i-Ready data for tutoring screening. **Member Weinstein** also inquired about the pay rates for the tutors. Dr. Grace shared that she does not have that information offhand but can provide additional information as soon as she receives it.

Member Hunter and **Member Wilson** both shared their excitement for the EXCEL Strategic Tutoring Program and thanked the administration for its implementation.

Member Wilson asked about student engagement, the expectations the program is expecting from students, and the resources the program can provide for students. Dr. Grace shared some past practices that have worked in building community and enrichment, building blocks at the K-Lo, raffles, prizes, and incentives for students. **Member Wilson** asked for clarity on the screening tools – i-Ready will be used as the primary tool. **Member Wilson** also inquired about a Roundtable with out-of-school partners before the end of the year. Dr. Greer shared that she would work with the Mayor and Vice Chair and look at scheduling to see if a Roundtable with out-of-school partners can happen before the end of the year.

Vice Chair Rachel inquired about community data and the out-of-school time dashboard. She asked if the invitations to families should be sent out earlier (in October instead of November when the program starts). **Vice Chair Rachel** also inquired about students who are two years behind grade level. Dr. Grace shared that those students received additional intervention methods in school, but the focus is to offer tutoring for students who are much further behind grade level. Dr. Greer shared that students who are six months to a year behind often catch up but students who are much more behind need the extra support beyond the school day.

7b. Presentations: The second presentation was led by Jen Amigone, Siobahn Mulligan, and Emily Bryan and focused on the 2023 MCAS & Accountability Report and Results. The full presentation can be found on the [website](#).

Following the presentation, Mayor Siddiqui opened the floor for discussion:

Member Fantini shared that in the past, the district would compile the data to share with school personnel and expressed gratitude to the current and past school administrations along with the current and past School Committees. Dr. Greer shared that principals are creating their School Improvement Plans and are using that data to implement the strategy for their improvement plans.

Member Rojas discussed the comparison in Math MCAS and ELA MCAS scores and inquired about the reasonings for certain grade levels not exceeding 2019 MCAS levels. Dr. Greer shared one key component that stood out was the instruction time for certain grade levels during the pandemic. Siobahn Mulligan shared that during the years of the COVID pandemic attendance in the elementary grades was more consistent. For students currently in grades 7 and 8, the district is looking to stabilize the curriculum. During the pandemic, the curriculum that was introduced had to be altered when in-person school was not in session. She also noted some challenges upper school students are having with the current curriculum. Jennifer Amigone also shared that the growth data for the students who did not reach 2019 levels is actually higher than the grades that have met the levels of previous years. **Member Rojas** also inquired about the data from the Science MCAS and the reasons why the district believes this data differs

from the data from the Math and ELA MCAS. He concluded by thanking the administration and the district for their work in assisting the achievement progress of CPSD students on the MCAS.

Member Weinstein discussed the percentage of students meeting/exceeding expectations in the district versus the state and the reasons why certain demographics are behind state levels and averages. He also asked about the feedback on the Illustrative Mathematics rollout and professional development, and if the district has sought feedback from our school communities who have had success in Illustrative Mathematics. Siobahn Mulligan shared that there has been a high percentage of great feedback on the professional learning and trainers on Illustrative Mathematics and the district has sought feedback from a few school communities who have attended some of the professional learning sessions. **Member Weinstein** also discussed school councils and how they can serve as aids in individual school improvement plans.

Vice Chair Rachel asked the district about its theory of action and why certain demographics (Black/African American students, high-needs students) are not progressing the same way as students in other demographical areas. Dr. Greer shared that there are a lot of variables including the impact of COVID-19 on different demographic groups and there already being gaps in the education of different demographics. **Vice Chair Rachel** inquired about the core academic group's collaboration with the Office of Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (OEIB) and if that has any effect on the inequitable data on the progress of some demographic groups. Dr. Greer responded that the district has had many conversations and made efforts to uncover and unmask the areas of implicit and explicit biases in the district and overlay them in the district's instructional practices to make the practices unbiased.

Member Wilson discussed the demographical data that was presented that evening and mentioned that it is hard to celebrate the overall progress of students in the district when African American/Black and high-needs students are below the other demographics in the district in academic progress and how can we ensure they receive all of the support for progress. **Member Wilson** asked how the district communicated with the Black/African American families, the intervention mechanisms to support the students, collaboration with community partners, and professional development efforts. Emily Bryan shared that within thirty days of mCLASS testing, parents will be notified if their child is performing significantly under grade level. Every parent will be allowed to have a school visit to further discuss support for their child. If students receive assessments, their progress will be monitored going forward. Dr. Turk shared some of the questions and criteria the district has asked its participating partners in the strategic tutoring program. **Member Wilson** also inquired about the district's timeline for the individual school improvement plans. Dr. Greer shared the timeline and that plans should be ready in December.

Mayor Siddiqui asked when families should expect to receive MCAS data. Families will receive MCAS data via ParentSquare on Friday, October 6th.

Member Hunter asked if schools would hold individual meetings to discuss the MCAS data and results and when will the School Committee receive copies of the aggregated MCAS data. Dr. Greer responded that at the moment, schools will not be holding individual meetings, and the district will send along the

MCAS data to the School Committee. **Member Hunter** also highlighted and expressed that more needs to be done to close achievement and progress gaps for the black/African American, low-income, and Hispanic demographics and that expectation is critical. The school community as a whole (including the School Committee, the district administration, educators, etc.) needs to support students in the education equity gaps. **Member Hunter** recommends that the district hold a webinar for the school councils to present the MCAS data.

Member Fantini asked about the possibility of Saturday tutoring sessions for students. Dr. Greer shared that Saturday sessions have been considered but the district has to be mindful that Saturday is the Sabbath day for a lot of students in the district.

7c. CPS District Plan: None

7d. Consent Agenda:

Member Hunter pulled **#23-240**. Member Weinstein pulled **#23-242**. Vice Chair Rachel pulled **#23-243**. On a motion by Member Fantini, seconded by Member Weinstein, on the following roll call vote, items **#23-239, #23-241, #23-244 & #23-245 were** adopted: Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Hunter YEA; Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

#23-239 Approval of Revisions to the 2023/2024 Cambridge Public Schools District Calendar be adopted as follows: that the School Committee approve the deletion of the early day scheduled for January 24, 2023, on the 2023/2024 Cambridge Public Schools District Calendar.

#23-241 Day & Residential Program Services not Available from the Cambridge School Department be adopted as follows: that the School Committee contracts to the institutions as detailed in the list in amounts not to exceed the shown rates, funds to be provided from the General Fund and/or Grant Fund Budget, having been approved by the Operational Services Division of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Description: SY23-24 Placement of students in private schools for implementation of educational plans in accordance with Chapter 766.

Program	#	Amount
Day Program Tuition Contracts	2	\$159,410.01
Residential Program Tuition Contracts		
45 Day Program		
Total	2	\$159,410.01

#23-244 Gifts/Miscellaneous Receipts be adopted as follows: that the School Committee accept and approve the following donations as described:

1. \$656.58 from HELPSY to the Cambridgeport School in return for items collected in the school's clothing/book donation collection box. Funds will be used for the general support of the school.
2. \$23.87 to the Cambridgeport School from O'Connor Portraiture, Inc., as a commission for student portraits. Funds will be used for the general support of the school.

#23-245 Grant Award: FY2024 Fresh Fruit & Veggie Grant FMA (SC24858) Increase be adopted as follows: that the School Committee accept and approve the increased grant award below in the amount and for the period indicated:

FY24 Fresh Fruit and Veggie Grant FMA (SC24858) Increase from Federal through State of \$24,145.00 for the period of September 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024.

Description: Funded by the US Department of Agriculture, this grant provides for fresh fruit and vegetables to be served 3 days a week to the students at the Fletcher-Maynard Academy and Kennedy Longfellow Schools. The grant supports food purchases, non-food program supplies, and stipends for staff to prepare and distribute the fruits and vegetables. The last time CPS had this grant was in FY 2016. **The grant award was increased to \$24,145 — an increase of \$2,045 which is primarily allocated to non-food supplies to support the start-up and implementation of the program.**

8. Non-Consent Agenda:

#23-240 Approval of the Inter-departmental Services Agreement Between the Cambridge Public School Department & Cambridge Public Health Commission be adopted as follows: that the School Committee approve the Interdepartmental Services Agreement between the Cambridge Public School Department and the Cambridge Public Health Commission as detailed in the attached document.

A brief discussion followed on **#23-240**.

Member Hunter asked if the contract was a new agreement or a renewal and to confirm that CHA is not providing on-field services and if so, who will provide on-field services. Dr. Greer responded that the contract is a renewal and confirmed that CHA will not provide on-field services and EMTs will.

Member Fantini asked for clarity regarding the remote coverage that was highlighted in the agreement. Attorney MacFarlane clarified that remote coverage is the equivalent of telehealth services.

On a motion by Member Hunter, seconded by Member Fantini, on the following roll call vote, **#23-243** was adopted: Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Hunter YEA; Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

#23-242 Contract Award: Burgess Pest Management FY24 Pest Management Services adopted as follows: that the School Committee approve a contract with the following vendor, funds to be provided in accordance with the budget reference listed below. Procurement procedures for this purchase have complied with Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Burgess Pest Management, 177 South Main Street, West Bridgewater, MA for the contract period from July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024, in the amount of \$74,960.00.

A brief discussion followed on **#23-242**.

Member Weinstein asked if this was a contract renewal and if the district has evaluated previous pest control contracts to ensure they are making the best efforts. COO Murphy shared that the contract is a renewal from a previous vendor and some school communities have issues but there are not widespread issues.

Member Wilson recognized National Custodians Day and expressed gratitude to all of the custodians in the district.

On a motion by Member Weinstein, seconded by Member Wilson, on the following roll call vote, **#23-243** was adopted: Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Hunter YEA; Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

#23-243 Contract Award: Blue Engine: Professional Development be adopted as follows: that the School Committee approve a contract with the following vendor, funds to be provided in accordance with the budget reference listed below. Procurement procedures for this purchase have complied with Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Blue Engine, 142 West 57th Street, 11th Floor, New York, New York for the contract period from October 6, 2023, to June 30, 2024, in the amount of \$61,350.00.

A brief discussion followed on **#23-243**.

Vice Chair Rachel shared that she is excited about the contract and the implementation of co-teaching. She inquired about more context the district's goals for co-teaching and the district's vision to implement it. Dr. Grace shared that the district currently has co-teaching models in place and provided more context on the contract.

Member Weinstein asked if the contract is viewed as a pilot with the hopes of implementing it in more schools. The contract is currently a pilot with the goal to extend in the future.

Member Wilson asked for the reasoning for the contract to be exclusively for the two identifying schools. Dr. Grace shared that the principals of the schools were extremely interested and invested in the model which was a big factor for Blue Engine and have established similar models in their schools.

Member Fantini asked if the co-teacher training would be implemented this year and if it would impact the current budget. Dr. Grace shared that the training is effective this year and funds were allocated already in the budget before it was finalized.

Student Member Anjaria asked for the reasoning for why Blue Engine is only implemented in two schools. Dr. Grace shared that it was advised that districts should start small.

On a motion by Vice Chair Rachel, seconded by Member Wilson, on the following roll call vote, **#23-243** was adopted: Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Hunter YEA; Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

9. School Committee Agenda (Policy Matters/Notifications/Requests for Information): None

10. Resolutions:

#23-246 Joint Resolution by Member Hunter and Member Fantini

WHEREAS: The Benjamin Banneker Public Charter School (BBCS) was founded by a group of Cambridge parents, educators, and community members including Cambridge parent Kathy Reddick (former NAACP President), Caroline Hunter (former CRLS teacher), educators Dr. William McLaurin (former CRLS Assistant Principal) and Nella LaRosa Waters (middle school specialist), community members George Chip Greenidge, the late Harvard Professor Charles Ogletree, Pam Ogletree, and many others; and

WHEREAS: The Benjamin Banneker Public Charter School founders met and worked on the BBCS proposal at hundreds of meetings over the course of four years, successfully receiving a state charter in 1996; and

WHEREAS: The Benjamin Banneker Public Charter School is the inspiration of concerned community leaders, parents, and educators, with the common vision and purpose of providing all Cambridge and local youth, regardless of race, culture, language, or socioeconomic status with a high-quality education; and

WHEREAS: The Benjamin Banneker Public Charter School's student population is racially and ethnically diverse, including students in the following DESE categories: 72.6% high needs, 65% low income, 40% first language is not English, 11% with disabilities, and 6% are English language learners; and

WHEREAS: The Benjamin Banneker Public Charter School, under the capable leadership of Executive Director Sherley Bretous, is one of seven Massachusetts schools, among 350 nationwide, that has been named a 2023 National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education. The school received this designation based on overall academic performance or progress in closing the achievement gap among student groups on assessments; and

WHEREAS: The Benjamin Banneker Public Charter School is sincerely commended as a recipient of this national honor in recognition of its achievement as a National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the School Committee extends a congratulations to the Benjamin Banneker Public Charter School community; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the Executive Secretary be and hereby is requested to forward a suitably engrossed copy of this resolution to Executive Director Sherley Bretous on behalf of the entire School Committee.

A brief discussion followed on **#23-246**.

Member Hunter highlighted and acknowledged the significant achievement of the Benjamin Banneker Public Charter School. The school was one of seven charter schools in the state that was awarded a Blue Ribbon award.

On a motion by Member Hunter, seconded by Member Fantini, on a voice vote, **#23-246** was adopted.

#23-247 Joint Resolution by Mayor Siddiqui, Member Fantini, and Member Hunter

WHEREAS: It is with a heavy heart that we extend our condolences to John C. 'Jack' Haverty, Jr. family; and

WHEREAS: Born and raised in Cambridge, Jack was a dedicated member of the community. Jack had many talents, and he was an educator, carpenter, sailor, skier, runner; and

WHEREAS: Jack was an alumnus of the Cambridge Public Schools, including the Longfellow Elementary School where he made and retained many lifelong friendships; and

WHEREAS: At the age of twenty, Jack enlisted in the National Guard and was stationed at multiple locations around the United States; and

WHEREAS: Jack met his wife, Deborah A. Haverty (Lewis) while working at Charlie's Kitchen and married a few years later. They were married for 42 years and had a son named Jack. With the help of Deb, friends, and family, Jack built a house adjacent to his parents on Ellsworth Ave; and

WHEREAS: During his 33 years working in Cambridge, he taught chemistry, biology, earth science, astronomy, and robotics. He was a sailing coach for several years and helped develop the ski club into a successful extra-curricular option at CRLS; and

WHEREAS: Jack was also the President of the Cambridge Teachers Union and cherished his time in the classroom; and

WHEREAS: Besides his classroom duties, he was a dedicated father who attended every sporting event and coached himself. On any given day in the 1990s, Jack could be found pacing the outfield at St. Peter's Field, too nervous to sit down and watch little Jack play; and

WHEREAS: Jack will be remembered for his passion, wisdom, and unwavering love for his family and community; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the School Committee formally go on record in expressing its deepest condolences to Jack Haverty's family; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the Executive Secretary be and hereby is requested to forward a suitably engrossed copy of this resolution to Jack Haverty's family on behalf of the entire School Committee, Superintendent, and Cambridge Public Schools.

A brief discussion followed on **#23-247**.

Member Fantini shared sentiments for Jack Haverty, a longtime childhood friend of his and Cambridge Public School educator. Mr. Haverty was a teacher at CRLS, a lifetime resident of Cambridge, and a former President of the Cambridge Teachers Association (CTA).

Member Hunter also shared her memories of Mr. Haverty and highlighted some memories from Mr. Haverty's former students that were shared with her.

Member Wilson and **Mayor Siddiqui** also shared fond memories of Mr. Haverty as their science teacher while they attended CRLS.

On a motion by Member Fantini, seconded by Member Hunter, on a voice vote, **#23-247** was adopted.

#23-248 Joint Resolution by Mayor Siddiqui, Member Wilson and Member Hunter

WHEREAS: It is with a heavy heart that we extend our condolences to Mark W. Grant, Sr. family; and

WHEREAS: Mark graduated from Morse Elementary School and from Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School the class of 1982; and

WHEREAS: He was a part of many Cambridge youth sports as a coach of basketball, softball, and baseball and closely mentored students in their pursuits and always encouraged young people to reach their full potential; and

WHEREAS: Mark had a great sense of humor and carried himself with a positive attitude; and

WHEREAS: He was a fiercely loyal friend and generous to his friends and family; and

WHEREAS: He will be remembered for his passion, wisdom, and unwavering love for his family and community; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the School Committee formally go on record in expressing its deepest condolences to Mark Grant's family; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the Executive Secretary be and hereby is requested to forward a suitably engrossed copy of this resolution to Mark Grant's family on behalf of the entire School Committee, Superintendent, and Cambridge Public Schools.

A brief discussion followed on **#23-248**.

Member Wilson and **Member Rojas** shared fond memories of Mark Grant, Sr., and his impact on the Cambridge community.

Member Hunter and **Member Fantini** each expressed their sympathy and condolences to the family of Mark Grant, Sr.

On a motion by Member Wilson, seconded by Member Hunter, on a voice vote, **#23-248** was adopted.

11. Announcements:

- **Mayor Siddiqui** congratulated the RSTA Culinary students for winning first place People's Choice Award at the East Cambridge Smoke Fest on October 1st.

- **Member Rojas** announced that the Offices of Equity Inclusion and Belonging and Community Engagement will host a college preparedness session for families on October 8th and encouraged families to attend and the district to provide more visibility on the event to families.
- **Member Wilson** announced there will be a Special Education and Student Supports Subcommittee on Wednesday, October 4th.
- **Member Weinstein** announced that the Office of Early Childhood will be hosting a Cambridge Preschool Program information session on Thursday, October 12th. He also announced that there will be a Curriculum and Achievement Subcommittee on Wednesday, October 11th.
- **Member Hunter** announced that there will be a School Climate Subcommittee meeting on Thursday, October 12th.

12. Communications from City Officers: None

13. Late Orders: None

Email communications: None

On a motion by Member Wilson, seconded by Vice Chair Rachel, on a voice vote, the meeting was adjourned. (9:22 p.m.).

Attest:



Ariel B. Kennebrew
Executive Secretary to the School Committee