| October 4, 2023 | SPECIAL EDUCATION & STUDENT SUPPORTS SUBCOMMITTEE |
|---|---|

Special Education and Student Supports Subcommittee
Wednesday, October 4, 2023 at 5:00 p.m.
Broadcast from the Media Arts Studio
454 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02138

Called for the purpose of discussing the implementation of the Out of District & Private School Team, an OSS staffing update, and a presentation on the renaming of the ASD program to SCALE.

**Subcommittee Members:** Ayesha M. Wilson (Chair), and David Weinstein

**Other School Committee Members Present**: Caroline Hunter

**Also Present:** Dr. Karyn Grace, Interim Asst. Superintendent of the Office of Student Services; Dr. Frank Alves, Executive Director of Special Education; Lendozia Edwards, Chief of Academics and Schools; Timothy Mellon, Special Education Interim Lead Teacher (HS); Steph Barney, Autism Specialist; Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SE-PAC): Zuleka Queen-Postel (liaison), Karen Dobak, Danielle Jones-McLaughlin

**Chair Wilson** started the meeting at 5:09 p.m. She welcomed the group and read the call of the meeting. She introduced the meeting's speakers and asked participants to share what they enjoyed about October. She read the following agreements.

1. Speak and listen from the heart
2. Share the air
3. Lean into discomfort/make yourself someone willing to be educated
4. Expect and accept non-closure
5. Bike rack (Things to note for future discussion)

**Chair Wilson** asked participants to share their thoughts regarding the subcommittee's agenda. Karen Dobak is excited to have an Out-of-District (OOD) team as part of the Special Education department. She noted that parents often have difficulty navigating out-of-district placements and reentry plans. In addition, she likes the new name, SCALE, as it does not call out the students' autism diagnosis. She shared that some of these students have experienced bullying and feelings of isolation. Dan Monahan noted that he is looking forward to the conversation and would prefer to comment after the speakers have presented.

**Chair Wilson** turned the meeting over to Dr. Alves who noted his enthusiasm for the new name. He highlighted the naming process came before he arrived at CPSD and that he was very pleased to learn that various stakeholders were involved. Dr. Alves invited Timothy Mellon and Steph Barney to share more about the process. Mr. Mellon and Ms. Barney outlined the steps of the naming process and noted that the change had been thought about for many years. They echoed Ms. Dobak's sentiments that the team was committed to a name that did not identify the area of exceptionality (disability) and that represented both autistic and not autistic students. The formal process began in winter 2021 with a six-person committee. In spring 2022, a Google form was created in nine languages and shared with stakeholders (students, caregivers, and staff) and asked for naming suggestions. In March 2023, three names were chosen as finalists by the OSS Leadership team: EAST, STEP, and SCALE. The finalists were put forth to students, families, and school personnel who work with the program with SCALE receiving the most votes. The acronym stands for Social, Communication, Academics, and Life Skills Education.

Dr. Alves commended the staff who led the incredibly time-consuming project. He plans to undergo a similar process with renaming other programs. Dr. Grace recognized the group's work and highlighted that the SCALE logo was designed by a CPSD student designer.

| October 4, 2023 | SPECIAL EDUCATION & STUDENT SUPPORTS SUBCOMMITTEE |
|---|---|

Beth Baniszewski, a CPSD caregiver, commended the name change and asked about additional supports for children in the program and the committee's role. Ms. Barney noted that the committee was charged with the name change only and not OSS services. She noted that she and Liz Rollins work regularly with other members of the OSS team regarding student services. Ms. Baniszewski wants to stay in the conversation and advocated for better dialogue with caregivers regarding the program and its services. Chair Wilson encouraged Ms. Baniszewski to continue the conversation with Dr. Alves and his team following the meeting. **Member Weinstein** congratulated the team on their work and is in enthusiastic agreement with the name change. Danielle Jones-McLaughlin noted the unfilled positions associated with OSS and advocated for the group to share these listings with their networks.

Dr. Alves pivoted the conversation to the Out of District (OOD) & Private School Team agenda item. Upon Dr. Alves' arrival at CPSD, he reviewed the OSS delivery system. He outlined roles and the organization of the Out of District Placement and Private School Team. The team includes an OOD placement specialist, psychologist, and IEP Specialist. The OOD team will be located in the Mass Ave. office space near Porter Square.

**Member Wilson** asked for more clarity regarding the student numbers. Dr. Alves shared the approximate number of out of district and private school students with IEPs.

CPSD educator, Jennifer Bump and Dr. Alves discussed the transition of students to the new team and the timeframe of services. Dan Monahan, CEA president and Dr. Alves discussed open positions, compensation, the workload of special educators, and work schedules. Dr. Alves and CPSD educator, Kara Nies discussed the tutoring rate and the timing and locations of special education services.

**Chair Wilson** pivoted the conversation to the staffing updates and asked Danielle Jones-McLaughlin for her comment. She shared her concerns about available services for in-house students and offered to follow up with Dr. Alves after the meeting. CPSD caregiver, Fay Burgess Backert and Dr. Alves discussed the office space for the OOD team. Dr. Alves commented on district ratios, staffing issues and partnerships with local colleges.

**Chair Wilson** turned the floor to members Weinstein and Hunter. **Member Weinstein** offered the support of the School Committee and reminded Dr. Alves to keep the upcoming budget cycle in mind to assist with the team's needs. **Member Weinstein** shared his hope to visit some of the classrooms. **Member Hunter** thanked the presenters for the informative discussion. **Chair Wilson** thanked the presenters for an enlightening conversation. She noted her goal of ensuring the needs of OSS remain at the forefront.

The meeting concluded at 6:32 p.m.