

Meeting of the Budget Sub-Committee (Committee of the Whole)
Budget Community Meeting #2
Saturday, January 25, 2020 @ 10:00 a.m.
Cambridge Senior Center, 850 Mass. Ave.

Called for the purpose of a Community Meeting #2 inviting input from the public on the FY20-21 School Department Budget Priorities. It is anticipated that the Meeting will end by 12:00 PM.

Members Present: Co-Chair Bowman, Co-Chair Fantini, Ms. Rachel, Mr. Weinstein, Mr. Rojas

Student School Committee Member: Ms. Green

Also Present: Dr. Salim, Dr. Turk, Ms. Spinner, Ms. Allen, Mr. Maloney, Ms. MacDonald, Dr. Madera, Ms. Washington, Ms. Pinkus, Ms. Rippey, Vice Mayor Mellon, Councilor Simmons, and Family Liaisons Denise Sullivan, Chris Lima,

A quorum of the Sub-Committee (Committee of the Whole) being present Co-Chair Bowman called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM and read the call of the Meeting.

Ms. Bowman announced this year we are using a different format regarding the Budget because we want the back and forth conversation. We have a District Wide Plan that was put in place three years ago and every year we used the same framework for our budget. By having Community Meeting's it is a consistent continuum we want to know what needs to be adjusted in the budget. Ms. Bowman continued the budget development is about equity and racial equity which has been a challenge for our district. She showed a slide with the definition of equity and racial equity. Taking into account our District Plan Framework she gave a brief overview of what will be discussed regarding budget priorities. Next she had the School Committee Members stand and introduce themselves; then acknowledged Vice Mayor Mellon who stated that Mayor Siddiqui will not be here because she is dealing with an emergency regarding displaced families in the City. Ms. Bowman turned the meeting over to Dr. Salim.

Dr. Salim stated this year we are having different kinds of meetings to insure we hear all of the community voices and have a dialogue and better understanding around the budget. Historically we have had people come to the School Committee Meetings at the Attles Room where they have 3 minutes to speak about what is on their mind but this is a different way to hear them. He asked the Leadership Team to introduce themselves. The Superintendent reviewed the Budgeting and Planning Timeline slide (presentation on file in the School Committee office) and with some of the expenses and potential increases. We try to anticipate all increases in the projected Budget. In March, I will present the Proposed Budget to the School Committee and in April they vote on it. Next it goes to the City Council to review and vote on the total amount of the Budget; they do not control any line items or what we spend the money on. We are really fortunate to live in a city where resources are virtually unmatched. Our overall budget is \$215.2M with spending of \$29,478 per student. The average spending for a student in the Commonwealth is \$14,000. The Budget is comprised of three areas the majority is the General Fund, Revolving Funds including school meals and Federal and other Grants (Title 1 for families that are disadvantaged, Title 3 is typically English Language Learners and Title 2a that are focused on professional development funds). Nearly 80% of the Budget is spent on salaries and benefits with over 1600 employees; 1300 being Teachers or Paraprofessionals. When we think about school funding there are three Tiers. Tier 1 is all schools get the same amount of money, Tier 2 is based on school enrollment and Tier 3 is based on student needs in the building (low income, students with disabilities). That is some of the ways we are thinking about resource allocations. The students that need more receive more. We regularly review and align our greatest resources to our priorities for improvement. A big one is how staff uses time.

Dr. Salim asked everyone to write their thoughts about their FY21 Budget priorities and use of time on the handout that was provided (on file in the School Committee office) on how we can partner with parents to improve outcomes for students, foster school culture better and partner with families to ensure student success. People at tables will write their individual thoughts and how they are affiliated with CPS (Parent,

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Student, Educator or Staff, Partner Organization, Community Member). If people are comfortable we will collect the handouts. There is a Cabinet Member, School Committee Member or Family Liaison at each table to help facilitate the discussions. Next we will come together and discuss the ideas/thoughts and each table will report out for a larger discussion. Ms. Spinner circulated around the room.

At 11:20 AM everyone came back together to report out. They shared ideas around the following; equity and the urgent need to access languages, educator diversity (recruit, retain, support) and continuing to invest in that. The high school wants an ombudsman to help when students are acting out (behavioral). Decisions around teacher curriculum, family engagement, tension between parent and student and the ability to speak out. Mutual respect, outcomes of social emotional issues and expand things that are working, investment in early childhood, being proactive and not reactive. Some students have access to tutors and some don't, fill in the gaps. Partnering and leveraging with out-of-school time community partnerships so all kids have access. Mentoring programs for students at the high school, investing in students with disabilities that need more and project based learning. G&P is looking at expedition learning active hands on because kids have different experiences. Can we track FMA students to the high school and see if the program has had any impact? Not every school needs the same base level funding. We have robust programs in the city for an extended day. How can we structure the academic piece in partnership with the City?

Ms. Simmons, City Finance Committee Co-Chair, mentioned that at the end of the day the kids belong to all of us. If the school doesn't have the time, why don't we use the out-of-school time programs that are exceptional, let's work more collaboratively. We should replicate the FMA model.

Other suggestions included; advocating for needs based and equitable allocation for every school, a Teacher and Paraprofessional or Co-Teacher in every classroom where warranted. A reading program to help all students achieve grade level reading, help for students with disabilities like dyslexia. Curriculum that is historically accurate, culturally sensitive and reflective. Implement the same program using the same language for cultural proficiency at all schools and have the same approach, more out of school programs. CPS should not assume that families know what is available.

Dr. Salim asked what they mean by consistent programs at all schools, cultural proficiency programs? The response was each school has a different approach; all schools should use the same language and approach which makes it easier when moving from school to school.

Superintendent Salim asked do you mean with regards to transitions or other ways where differences have become problematic or an obstacle. The response was it was not academic centered it was more relationships between the staff and families. Families with resources can access additional programs and kids pull ahead faster than the ones that don't, and make it possible to bring some programs into the schools or after school, make it more of a community effort.

The following are more suggestions; Improve academic outcomes with co-teaching more hearts more hands in the classroom, all kids being heard, middle grades get Chromebooks, homework make sure it is aligned so when kids get to the high school they are not overwhelmed. Fix up older schools that are not being rebuilt and foster centered school culture. Have younger students on the School Committee not just in high school, teachers at the doors welcoming the kids and have a student focused participatory budget. Don't have assemblies have morning meetings sitting in a circle to give kids a voice so they know they are being heard. Sustainable out-of-school activities, engaged learning, project based learning hands on, get people from the outside to come in to speak, retain high quality teachers, full time Liaisons in all schools to engage all parents, translations to engage all families in the language they speak and parent training for social emotional learning.

Another table suggested focusing on programs that are already working, schools to be unified across the district, assistant Teachers in all classrooms, keep Amigos families a priority, smaller classes and engaged School Councils. All middle schools need equitable equipment and fields, focus on field trips, use community to fund raise, catch students with special needs earlier, revamp RSTA, hands on project based learning in elementary schools, review psychologist job description, equity coaches in all schools,

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open discussions about Tier 2 & 3, expand JK and JKK and parking for teachers and a dedicated Best Program.

Someone explained that the Best Program is an initiative for psychological counseling and emergency services for kids that need urgent psychological help during the school year. Dr. Salim added the district already has the BEST Program that is shared with Somerville. The team can be mobilized to go to all schools. When the school can't de-escalate a situation the parent is called and then the Best Team is called in. Councilor Simmons added people have to know about it to access it. Can we make it more proactive not wait until there is a crisis. Dr. Salim stated our objective is to be preventative and reduce the number of things that rise to a crisis. They want a dedicated program in Cambridge.

The table spokesperson continued, expand student support 1:1 collaborate with teachers and make a plan, in a more fluid way. Initiate the trades early on in elementary and middle schools so kids know there is some help out there, another pathway and life skills.

Dr. Salim said the City is starting a kindergarten savings account program. The spokesperson went on, translations will make more parents able to participate. Not every event needs to be English focused so we can make it more diverse. Students with different abilities can't go to after school programs because they don't have a facility or the staff; they should be included with the entire community.

Dr. Salim stated people are raising things that are not budget items but I appreciate you bringing them up. Pass in your handout. Dr. Salim invited anyone that wasn't here at the beginning of the meeting to come up and he will do a quick overview.

The meeting adjourned at 11:55 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Gist
Interim Executive Secretary to the School Committee