



CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

Special Meeting

October 27, 2020

Called for 6:00 p.m. broadcast from the Media Arts Studio, 454 Broadway, Cambridge, there will be a Virtual Roundtable Meeting of the School Committee, for the purpose of discussing the opportunities and challenges of this exceptional year with all elementary school principals.

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

Also Present: Nuriel Vera-Degraff, Anais Killian, Student School Committee Representatives

Mayor Siddiqui in the Chair

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

The Chair read the call of the meeting and explained that this meeting is being televised, per the Rules of the School Committee and the call of the meeting, no votes will be taken except to adjourn and there will not be public comment.

The meeting proceeded to the first order of business with the following roll call: Member Fantini Present; Member Rojas Present; Member Rachel Present; Member Weinstein Present; Member Wilson Present; Vice Chair Bowman Present; Mayor Siddiqui Present

Mayor Siddiqui yielded the floor to Superintendent Salim and Dr. Madera, he began with introductions and thanks of the principals and staff on hand. He then introduced Dr. Michele Madera who begins presentation. ***Noted that there is a Special Education Subcommittee on October 28, 2020.***

- Dr. Michele Madera, Assistant Superintendent, Elementary Schools
- Principal Jaime Frost, Tobin School
- Sarah Marrero, Principal, Amigos School
- Heidi Cook, Principal Baldwin School
- Genteen Lacet Jean Michel, Principal Cambridge \port School
- Tony Byers, Principal Graham and Parks
- Nancy Campbell, Principal Haggerty
- Christine Gerber, Principal Kennedy Longfellow
- Darrell Williams, Principal King Open
- Gerald Yung, Principal King School
- Dr. Chad Leith, Principal Morse School
- Patty Beggy, Interim Principal Peabody School
- Maisha Rounds, Principal Fletcher Maynard Academy

Elementary School Principal Roundtable Presentation, presented by the District and the Principals

Which will focus on the following:

1. Health, safety, and operations
2. Instruction

3. Student well-being

4. Staff support & well-being

2020.10.27

Elementary Principals

Dr. Madera introduces the presentation and goes over the agenda, the presentation will be discussed and explained by the elementary principals.

Mayor Siddiqui thanked the Principals for their presentation and yields the floor to the Committee for questions.

Member Fantini thanked the Principals for their time and efforts. Proceeded to ask is there an effective process in place are their collaborative meetings? Is leadership at schools helping with efforts of the educators

- Dr. Madera answered that there is bi monthly and shared best practices. These best practices and collaboratives include rolling agendas, problem solving and check ins. She personally checks in with Principals daily.
- Principal Marrero speaks to the operationalize of SEL for adults, references a faculty meeting that consisted of relationship building and speaks of making an effort of acknowledging wellbeing.

Member Rachel began with thanks and acknowledged the demands that the Principals and their staff are facing. Remarked that Educators Collaborative be up and running. Asked Principal Rounds and Gerber specifically about equity and sustainability on the JK model. Then questioned Principal Campbell and Yung - What opportunities to we need, how do we use this crisis as an opportunity/transformation?

- Principal Rounds responded with thanks, began that there are a lot of opportunity to champion equity in the JK model. While providing the extra layers of support, praised the extra support of staffing and the para professional in the room as well.
- Principal Gerber answered the way you staff has to be educationally sound. However, it is through the curriculum that our scholars have to be seen and represented. The question must be what does equity really mean and look like. Referenced Principal Byers and how hard they teachers are working and acknowledging the space they need to teach.
- Principal Yung spoke about collaboration and team work. Collaboration with teachers and families. Student Engagement is crucial. Past was centered on routines and routines are not present in the remote world. Looking at what is the best way students can be reached.
- Principal Campbell spoke of a recent training and what the focus was a new world and about the impact of COVID and racial trauma, forced them to think about what does this new world offer and what you want to keep and leave behind. Timelines and schedules need to be looked at differently. Joy must be a component and how are we engaging with our students.

Vice Chair Bowman began her portion with giving thanks and acknowledgement to teachers and custodian staff. Asked Interim Principal Beggy about the challenges at the Peabody School and staffing? Then asks about reading levels and academic progress for the scholars. How are we having conversations about these concerns?

- Interim Principal Beggy replied that staffing challenges are universal, used an example of hiring 19 people in the last four weeks and the process that goes into it. Comments that there were many vacancies and brings up the nuances and skill sets to various positions. It has been a challenge mainly because of the volume. Talks about the positive support from the district.
- Principal Gerber was first to answer, that actual information in literacy and math for the child is necessary. Data can be looked at in such a broad way, the reality is they need actionable data, and then processes can be put in place.

- Principal Cook answered as well, echoing what Principal Gerber said and added that standards are going to be different. Finding instructional strategies, collaborating with teachers who have found the way. Partnering and sharing information with families will be critical and needed.
- Principal Byers reflects on redesign and equity.

Member Rojas thanked all involved for the conversation at hand. Speaks about policies and what are the levels of importance? Follows up with the choice of wanting in person versus remote.

- Dr. Michele Madera answered that it is incredibly hard to rank them, she begins to break them down with tangibles. Speaks of who factors are in play and their affects.
- Principal Gerber answered that for some it is based on safety and how the family is directly impacted by COVID. Families whose loved ones are high risk and is too much to ask to send their children in.
- Principal Rounds echoes her colleague's sentiments. There is a definite fear of infecting family members and families fears of the disease.
- Principal Frost chimed in about the uptick of the virus and people's and teacher's fears.

Member Weinstein thanked staff and caregivers. Reflected on sharing best practices and brought up a help line for each school. Inquired what do we need to better support our specialists? Can we do something to facilitate volunteer activities?

- Principal Marrero answered that there needs to be a space for the remote child is to go where they can have an outlet, small group learning and tutoring. Especially during this challenging time.
- Dr. Michele Madera speaks about collaborating with Lesley and having them connect with the remote students to help with the learning.
- Principal Cook answered the initial question about specialist and what she is witnessing. Find opportunities to share best practices, have more conversations and have a creative space.

Member Wilson thanked everyone for their time and efforts. Spoke about initiatives with area colleges, graduate programs and internships. Asked about early licensure and if there are conversations happening at the state level. She followed up with asking about school nurse vacancies and next steps addressing the present issues.

- Dr. Madera answered that there are partnerships with Harvard and Lesley Colleges. However, internships are unenviable because of precautions and social distancing. The follow up is how do we get the interns supporting the remote classroom. She is not aware of any accelerated ways to get licensed.
- Superintendent Salim also answered that he is in conversation with the President's Office Bunker Hill Community college for spring internships.
- Interim Principal Beggy answered that some of the existing community partners have offered their assistance.
- Superintendent Salim replied that the CHA is hiring school nurses per diem and active in the hiring process. Referenced Dr. Turk working on the Monday afternoon Educator Collaborative. Will include that information in the upcoming update.

Mayor Siddiqui thoughts focused on utilizing space and outdoors. As well as singling out social isolation and doing whatever we as a city can do to help with the ongoing need. Elaborated on family's fear of this disease and making them more comfortable. Asked about the Tobin's school model of remote and in person.

- Principal Frost responded about the efforts to preserve the Montessori method and it was decided that teachers teach both. Some teachers are engaged in live streaming and it works for their model of small groups every day. This has kept the classroom community and have the interaction between the two types of learning.
- Principal Gerber answered that there is a similar model for the 2nd grade at the Kennedy Longfellow. The relational component is very strong and if the school goes fully remote the continuity remains. Of course it is a work in progress.

Mayor Siddiqui concluded the meeting with thanks.

On a motion to adjourn by Member Wilson and seconded by Member Rojas, On the following roll call vote, Member Fantini YEA; Member Rojas YEA Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA Vice Chair Bowman YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA. The meeting adjourned 8:04pm.

There will be a Special Meeting on November 5 at 6:00pm and the next regular meeting is November 17, 2020 at 6:00pm.

Attest:

Jennifer Dever Wood
Cambridge School Committee