



CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

Special Meeting

December 8, 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 principals at the Upper Schools, CRLS, and HSEP.

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

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.

Mayor Siddiqui yields the floor to Superintendent Salim, he begins with introductions of the principals and staff on hand. He then introduces Dr. Nicole Gittens who begins presentation.

- Dr. Nicole Gittens, Assistant Superintendent, Secondary Schools
- Damon Smith, Principal CRLS
- Ryan Souliotis, CRLS Extension Program
- Manual Fernandez Cambridge Street Upper School
- Julie Craven, Rindge Avenue Upper School
- Daniel Coplon Newfield, Vassel Lane Upper School
- Sara B. Marerro, Amigos School
- Cristina Farese, Instructional Coach, Putnam Avenue Upper School
- Dr. Michael Ananis, RSTA

Upper and High School Principal Roundtable Presentation

- <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1BzXk24hrOCRTW5m3wEaDFrxQhbxQtu7OQlszhrB3ZE0/edit?usp=sharing>

Prior to opening up the floor for questions, Dr. Gittens mentions that these are the numbers for in person learning for the upper schools and CRLS.

- CRLS, 64
- VLUS, 22
- CSUS, 12
- RAUS, 5
- Amigos, 110,
- PAUS, 7

Superintendent Salim introduces as a participant Desiree Phillips, Office of Student Services Coordinator for the upper grades. Which is integral to the instructional and administrative sides of this equation with remote learning.

Dr. Gittens introduces Ryan Souliotis to speak about what is happening at High School Extension Program.

Principal Ryan Souliotis, addresses the positives that are occurring during remote learning. Due to the small numbers of the program, they have been able to individualized their class structure and approach. There is one to one time, for 30 minutes each week in addition to regular class time. 62% have qualified for the honor roll. The HSEP has work extensively to develop strong relations with families. Advisors are on constant contact with members, through various ways, resulting in a 30% decline in absenteeism.

- Member Rojas how much remote instruction is taking place for in person students?

Desiree Phillips answers through the Chair, it depends on which programs the student is in. Partial inclusion model and general education for students are in several subject areas. Majority are partial inclusion. General Education classes are remote. Vassel Lane, Rindge Avenue and Putnam are half. CSUS majority are in person, moderate class about half. CRLS follows the same line, approximate $\frac{3}{4}$ of the students are accessing remote classes.

Principal Daniel Coplon Newfield, answers as well, sheltered English immersion, take classes with their peers, across programs they are now taking one special a day because their specialist is not in the building.

- Member Rojas follows up with the asking if the children are understanding what is being taught and how do we know.

Principal Manual Fernandez answers that, in the moment we don't know because of myriad reasons, however we will send an educator who will check on the child through a visit, email, text etc. to determine if the child is doing well, educationally and emotionally. We have wellness liaison to help find out how the students are faring.

Principal Julie Craven, speak about how the visual follow up is missing. In the moment form of assessment is not here. Teachers are tracking who is comprehending, utilizing the chat functions. References the programs, Desmos and Pair Deck

- Member Rojas ends his segment with how can we help that innovation to continue?

Principal Damon Smith answers with the following as difficult as this experience has been, engaging in conversation with various stakeholder as to what we want to keep. Speaks to the necessity of keeping the beneficial pieces to remote learning.

- Member Rachel, thanks all for their round the clock, round the week work both in person and remote. One clarifying question, regarding the presentation, in person support is not available for students previously identified for support and the follow up question is about the future expansion of in person learning and how would the principals carry out?

Dr. Gittens, starts with the clarifying question it is not specific to special education, a student who may need a daily check-in with guidance may not translate to the remote world.

Desiree Phillips follows up with that she is trying to get several more children in the High School, two challenges are: they are in the middle of a semester and they are general education with IEP's with adult support and that presents a problem with teacher's schedules and in person.

Principal Daniel Coplon Newfield thinks about what coming back may look like, having teachers have a draft and space for feedback is helpful but also letting the current events play out as well. He is very cognizant on the stress that teachers are under to even to begin to contemplate in person during remote learning. Each school models may look different because on staffing. That will depend on what teachers are available.

Principal Julie Craven adds how can we figure some of the structures that teachers can build upon? There was a week and half of very intentional professional development along with professional days to reflect and plan. Upper Schools differs from elementary because the upper schools are departmentalized. Of course it can be done. We have systems for asynchronous learning.

Principal Sarah Marrero, Amigos Principal, if the decision was up to her it would be great to bring back students from grades 4-8 with the similar criteria that was developed for 2nd and 3rd grade. Would look a four day a week, however space and staffing would impact the decision that they would make.

Dr. Gittens emphasizes how difficult and specific scheduling is and there are nuances that happen at each school while looking at from a district level.

Superintendent Salim reaffirms the staffing and availability is a very significant variable.

- Member Fantini thanks all for all that they are doing. Acknowledges the challenging aspects. Offers to bring in more help for scheduling. Direct his question to Principal Craven regarding loss of learning and being able to monitor it. Out of school providers, are there any partnerships for support?

Principal Craven speaks about trackers and data that will be reviewed in place acknowledging that they are starting the second quarter, pushes back on loss phrase and answers how there are variables of creativity and unconventional learning that are supplementing the loss of traditional learning.

Principal Damon Smith, have been developing tiered inventions for students for support, based on their performance. Communication is key for acknowledging the success as well. Letting equity be the guide is a way to direct expansion.

Principal Marerro shares the Amigos School is working with Cambridge School Volunteers to continue the afterschool tutoring through virtual learning,

Principal Fernandez echoes that they are working with the Cambridge School Volunteers as well as the Middle School Network. Social Services agencies are part of the picture too. Looking ahead to the Summer as well in addition to he mentions funding and Summer Enrichment.

- Member Weinstein starts with giving thanks. What are we doing to support sharing those best practices and innovations across the district? Asks about Wellness Liaisons.

Principal Craven answers that there are district wide meetings and the curriculum coordinators are sharing via a virtual cross district collaboration. ICTS is extraordinary with it sharing capacity and outreach.

Principal Fernandez, echoes Principal Craven thoughts and speaks to it happening on an administrative level as well.

- Vice Chair Bowman, acknowledging the magnitude remote learning is and how challenging this time is and appreciates all the work that is being done. Ask about an existing contract for scheduling support and can we revisit? Amigos is a standalone school and have the experience about bringing back the kids to be in person, is that knowledge being shared, as a learning tool and it best practices. How can we help with the reduction or responsibilities?
- Member Wilson has joined the meeting. Thanks all the educators for sharing their experiences. Asks about gym uses and rentals. Appreciates the conversation of how can we incentive the Summer enrichment? How can we further engage students? Asks about RSTA? Echoes Vice Chair Bowman statement about the reductions of responsibilities.

Superintendent Salim answers that it depends on the space, are there ways that the spaces can be utilized for other aspects than what is originally intended.

Dr. Michael Ananis, answered that the RSTA classes started with Carpentry and Automotive program in the middle of November and it is going well – 36 students in total. This helps with acquisition and practice of skills on equipment not available outside of the shops. Looking to expand pilot projects, biotech and use of the labs, health assistant programs and exams that follows.

- Student Member Anais Killian asks about the status of the Visual and Performing Arts

Principal Julie Craven answers that the Visual and Performing Arts staff got together to offer quarter long mini courses. It is almost like an elective approach it is met with a smaller class size along with critical thinking and creative. In person learning limits the possibilities of creating these classes.

- Student Member Nuriel Vera-Degraff begins with thanks, extracurricular opportunities, what is out there? Is there a thought to in person clubs? Brings up study support.

Principal Coplon Newfield answers that there is a pretty robust set of before and after school clubs with remote learning. For the future how do we expand and find different interest. Speaks to the equity on having in person when traveling an issue. Staffing is also a factor.

Principal Fernandez acknowledges there have been limited events previously and speaks to the challenging weather. Speaks about the Cobra Den.

Principal Smith agrees with the importance of study support and its merit. Wants to change the idea of office and to calibrate it as extra help. There is room to grow with its engagement, outreach and digitally. Mindful of the exhaustion and drain of screen time.

- Mayor Siddiqui announces about speaking to the government affairs at Comcast regarding unstable connection piece, how we improve the abilities for families to sign up. 49 families have signed up thus far. They are working in the present issues. Ends her segment with thanks and speaks to the challenges ahead and talks about collaboration and there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

On a motion to adjourn by Member Fantini, On the following roll call vote, Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA Vice Chair Bowman YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA. 8:10pm.

NB-There will be a Buildings and Grounds Sub Committee meeting on December 11 and the next regular meeting is December 15, 2020 at 6:00pm.

Attest:

Jennifer Dever Wood
Cambridge School Committee