



CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

Special Meeting

March 23, 2021

Called for a 6:00 pm broadcast from the Media Arts Studio, 454 Broadway, Cambridge, there will be a Virtual Roundtable Meeting of the School Committee for the purpose of a Budget Workshop on the FY 22 Superintendent's Proposed Budget.

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

District Present: Superintendent Kenneth Salim; Dr. Carolyn Turk, Claire Spinner, CFO, Dr. Michelle Madera, B. Kimmerman, Dr. Lyndsey Pinkus Brown, Dr. Alexis Morgan, Dr. Nicole Gittens, Lisa Richardson, Jim Maloney

Vice-Chair Bowman in the Chair

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

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 yielded the floor to Vice-Chair Bowman and Co-Chair Fantini for a word to begin the presentation. Chair Fantini comments on the budget being driven by our educational leaders, and it's a balanced budget.

Vice-Chair Bowman yielded the floor to Superintendent Salim; he begins with the framework of the evening's meeting. After the overview, Dr. Michelle Madera presented it to the members.

The agenda is as follows for tonight's meeting:

Part 1: Multi-year investments to support a MTSS vision

- Overview of MTSS:
- CPS Budget and MTSS Connection
- Part II: FY22 Budget Proposal

Reflects Community Feedback

- Part III: Discussion
- Looking Ahead: Areas of Focus
- March 30: Office of Equity,

Inclusion & Belonging

- April 6: Recover & Thrive -
Summer 2021 & SY21-22

Superintendent Salim paused the presentation to take questions from the members.

Vice-Chair Bowman asked for clarity regarding the timing of the presentation.

Member Jose took this time from the presentation to ask about system-wide versus pockets. What are the results that you have seen with the specialists?

- Superintendent Salim answered that the focus around interventionists came from the engagement with principals and their school improvement funds. There was targeted support and intervention as a critical part of the school's improvement plan. There has been a robust effort in literacy intervention; mathematics, however, was not a strong focus. Engagement with the principals during this budget development cycle has been an overlay in this fiscal year offering, increasing the math interventionist. Resources are abundant for students during the day.
- Dr. Madera spoke about working and training for the MTSS working group. Based on training, the District started to align with MTSS. There was a greater understanding of what MTSS was and how it was being incorporated. COVID 19 did upend that, and the work was met with a significant pause. There is now a need for more momentum for MTSS; one positive impact from the break is noting the importance of MTSS.

Member Rachel wanted to build on Member Rojas's question, are we confident that MTSS training and adding interventionist will help close the opportunity gaps and bring students up to grade level? Asked what a universal screener is?

- Salim reflected on the interventionist piece; high-quality tools and materials have added success and student learning and outcome. The training and support are a complement to the individuals. Grade level learning expectations for all students not with a remediation mindset through our instructional support from our principals.
- Dr. Pinkus Brown answered that universal screeners are in both math and ELA. The team has been looking at many tools and selection, there is an immerging recommendation, and with those, and finally, there will be a procurement process. A launch would happen, start more narrowly and support the implantation role out.
- Dr. Gittens emphasized the importance of the interventionists and coaches as we speak about the expanded skill sets of our teachers in tier 1.
- Superintendent Salim shared that based on this year, there has been a success in small group instruction. Some emerging data show that there that students are on par with a typical year. Having a solid foundation of tier 1 experiences for all students and assessing student progress to id what support is necessary rapidly. Part of this approach is the work that is being done with the JK and K teachers.

Member Weinstein asked how and why is tier 2 too big? Member Weinstein wanted clarity on the proposal that is being submitted supports what Dr. Madera is saying.

- Dr. Madera answered that it requires a cultural and mindset shift for the District; if a scholar is struggling, it weighs heavy on the interventionists, and there needs to be more robust strategies and tools for the employee. There is a conflicting culture that we send our scholars with difficulties to another interventionist. We need to delve into why that is happening. Yes, it is reliant on professional learning.
- Dr. Pinkus Brown highlighted that families understand their students' strengths and challenges and approach family conferences and goal setting for next year. Aligning programming through family university and specific focus, i.e., the executive function workshop, has been initiated. The

team also explores a shared opportunity for OST providers supporting remote student sharing professional practices.

Member Wilson thanked the District for the presentation. Follow up on how we are going to measure the achievement gap. What does the gap mean to the students who need services? What are we able to implement now?

- Dr. Madera answered that the measures are not just in the achievement gap but through the screeners, district assessment, and progress monitoring. Tier 2 and 3 interventions, tier 2 will be monitored less frequently than 3, focus on what is working, and then regroup if it is not.
- Dr. Gittens continued that work being done, data assembled, for students whose needs are not met in the classroom. Clarified that success will be measure by the number of students who need services outside of the school. As we start to expand what is happening in Tier 1 instruction, there should be a decrease in Tier 2 needs.
- Dr. Morgan remarked that similar to Dr. Gittens, she had an opportunity to meet with several school principals and psychologists, and several referrals are coming from the parents. Parents are unclear where their children stand in terms of grade-level state standards. Some students have been prioritized due to significant issues; there have been cases that have been reevaluation that has moved forward. There will be work over the summer and hiring outside of the District to help with the assessments.
- Superintendent Salim followed up that different diagnostic tools can be utilized; one of the features is a progress monitoring tool that can be used by the family too.
- Principal Cooke followed up with the multi-tier support model is to align everything. We need to strengthen Tier 1, and we need to have what intervention and Tier 1 look like when remote? Using data is key to their approach.

Member Fantini commented that grade level is the goal, and MTSS plans to get the student there. Who would be the point person to advocate for the child at their school? Spoke of the investment made to the child. Reminded the audience that the school day for some is ten hours.

- Superintendent Salim clarified that strengthening what happens in Tier 1 for all students is part of Cultural Responsive Teaching in the Brain training.
- Dr. Gittens, we need to be intentional when working with interventionists. What are the practices that we are doing, and how they widen the gap? We need to support and encourage teachers to connect with scholars who already received special education services. You do not need to wait for an IEP.

Vice-Chair Bowman remarked about the structure of the day and how it meets the needs of the scholar. When we think about interventionists, tutors, and coaches, how do they meet the needs of the children in a six-hour day?

Superintendent Salim continued the presentation.

Mayor Siddiqui asked about the application Google Extension?

- Steven Smith, ICTS Director, answered there are two versions of the extension, a free and paid. The free version came with all Chromebooks and a paid version, 12.00 per year, and produced by OSS for in-needs students.
- Dr. Morgan responded that she is familiar with the program and that OSS has purchased 200 licenses for students. OSS is also looking at other platforms. There is a hesitancy to put additional tools on educators.

Member Rojas asked can you speak to what initiatives have been implemented? Were they phased out as part of monitoring past initiatives?

- Superintendent Salim answered that there is a sector-wide challenge in education. Some programs meet standards and try to assess whether progress has been made and then making adjustments.

- Claire Spinner remarked that aligning the present resources focuses on the goals and outcome of the District-Wide Plan. The goals have shifted from what is being to better utilizing what we have—looking to leverage the resources in the best way. References Fast Bridge and that diagnostic tool do not meet their current needs. It relates to curriculum, software, and tools that may not be needed.
- Dr. Pinkus Brown replied about a multilayered approach to a short cycle of improvements about evaluating our use of time and staff. We need to build the data capacity, routines, and structures. Another layer may be specific tools such as professional development and curriculum tools; the third level could be the bigger picture, a systemic evaluation.

Member Rachel asked about funding, specifically the Esser funds. What is the School Committee's role?

- Claire Spinner answered that the process is ongoing and specific to some extent multi-year, and that is also multi-year planning. The process is continuing, and the funding could be academic and also about infrastructure. It could be incremental. When the application is complete, the District will come forward.

Member Wilson commented, how can we implement more educators in the classroom? What happened to the extended day proposal?

- Superintendent Salim answered that an earlier proposal for paraprofessionals in classrooms was for supporting early literacy. It was not as so much staffing but training. There are several approaches to staffing for classrooms. That model to have two adults in every school would be surfaced with a zero-based budget approach. The negotiation process did not move forward based on the talks with the CEA.
- Claire Spinner continued that if there were proposals for a paraprofessional in the classroom, there would be a need to go to a zero-based budget. There would be significant shifts in collaborative planning.
- Dr. Madera remarked that there needs to be a solid professional learning plan for the additional staff being spoken about either way. There is training and time that need to be considered for this option.

Motion to extend the meeting was introduced

On a motion to extend the meeting by ten minutes, by Member Wilson seconded by Mayor Siddiqui, 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.

- Dr. Morgan responded that more adults in a classroom create more dependent learners. You need to very strategic in developing this model.

Member Weinstein wanted to speak about outdoor learning and civic education.

- Dr. Turk replied that there are recommendations where outdoor learning stands, submitted to Member Weinstein's subcommittee on Curriculum and Achievement. She then continued about the civic portion of the question. We are helping the students with the skills necessary to interact with society to build the character and civic component to engage in our community.

Vice-Chair Bowman commented on Claire Spinner's effort for transparency and prioritization.

On a motion to adjourn by Mayor Siddiqui, seconded by Member Wilson, 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. 8:06 pm.

NB- There will be a Budget review with public input on March 25, and the next regular meeting is April 6, 2021, at 6:00 pm.

Attest:
Jennifer Dever Wood
Cambridge School Committee