



CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

Roundtable Meeting

October 25, 2022

Called for 6:00 p.m. in the Dr. Henrietta S. Attles Meeting Room, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, 459 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of discussing the findings of the RSTA review and identifying specific findings and recommendations to plan for program improvement.

Members Present: Vice-Chair Rachel, Member Bhambi, Member Fantini, Member Rojas, Member Weinstein (Remote), Member Wilson, Mayor Siddiqui

Also Present: Dr. Greer, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Turk, Deputy Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Brown, Chief Strategy Officer
Dr. Gittens, Assistant Superintendent, Secondary Schools
Linda Radzvilla, RSTA Executive Director
Damon Smith, Principal of Cambridge Rindge and Latin School
Elizabeth Bennett, Associate Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Nicole Smith, Assistant Director, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Garvy Altine, CTE Liaison, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Penny Hasseli, Senior Director of Strategy and Impact, MassHire Metro, North Workforce Board

Mayor Siddiqui in the Chair

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

The Chair read the call of the meeting and explained that this meeting is being televised, votes will not be taken, and there will be no public comment. The meeting began with a roll call of School Committee Members present: Member Wilson YEA; Member Bhambi YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

Mayor Siddiqui opened the meeting by providing background for the reasoning regarding the RSTA program review. She then turned the floor over to the administration who introduced the presentation panel for the evening. Dr. Turk served as the facilitator of the Roundtable and discussed the goal of the roundtable meeting and the RSTA review discussion.

The robust presentation centered on the district review of its current RSTA program and centered on a multitude of subjects within the RSTA program that included, the state's Chapter 74 CTE Program, Perkins-only local programs, innovations pathways programs, highlighted economic trends regarding workforce-based development learning plans, the 90-day entry findings of the new RSTA Executive Director and an overall review of the current RSTA programming in the district. The full presentation of the meeting can be found on the website.

After the presentation, Mayor Siddiqui opened the floor to the Committee Members for discussion and questions following the three discussion prompts provided by the district administration. The discussion prompt questions were:

- Do you have any clarifying questions?
- What resonates with you?
- What are 1 or 2 areas based on tonight's conversation that excite you as an area of focus for improvement?

Vice Chair Rachel discussed the RSTA program findings and some disappointment she has had regarding the detailed RSTA report of the findings and inquired about the reasoning regarding why students in the RSTA program and their choices of choosing electives regarding actual credentials for the program. She also inquired about the timeline of the recommendations following the review. The district administration will be providing the status of the recommendations in the upcoming weeks.

Vice Chair also inquired about employer-based training and the 88% percent of students interested in RSTA. What initiatives the district will do to provide cooperative education? Ms. Radzvilla shared steps that are needed for the district to provide cooperative education for RSTA programs.

Member Fantini inquired about the Chapter 74 regional schools waitlist and whether is there a plan for the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to provide more opportunities in vocational programs for Massachusetts students. **Member Fantini** also discussed electrician and plumbing opportunities. Currently, the district does not have those hours to accommodate electrician and plumbing CTE vocational programs and most regional schools with vocational programs have waitlists. DESE is working on discovering additional pathway resources to provide opportunities for students in the state.

Member Bhambi inquired about the cultural components (cultural shifts) that need to be addressed in the ongoing work of improving the RTSA program. Dr. Greer responded that although cultural shifts are difficult, the district and the committee had already started the work and have centered on college career readiness as a vision based on student feedback. Principal Smith discussed the importance of creating and implementing values that are in sync and align with student values and interests.

With the two-hour mark approaching, Vice Chair Rachel motioned to extend the meeting beyond the two-hour timeframe. Seconded by Member Wilson, on the following roll call vote, it was voted to extend the Roundtable Meeting to allow all School Committee members the opportunity to ask questions following the presentation: Member Wilson YEA; Member Bhambi YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

Member Weinstein discussed his support for the growth mindset in improving the RSTA program and his support for cooperative education for high school students as co-ops support a range of college and career pathways beyond traditional internships.

Member Rojas shared that the student perspective on the RSTA program overall resonated with him the most following the presentation and his excitement on the concentric circles regarding the discussion of career readiness for younger students. He inquired about the comparison of Cambridge's challenges with other districts in the state. The panelists from DESE responded that each district is unique regarding its action plans on how best to improve its RSTA and vocational programs and districts comparable to the size of Cambridge are experiencing similar challenges, the differences are the action items and next the other district are doing to combat those challenges.

Member Wilson inquired about the possibility of providing more opportunities for students under 8th grade with collaborations with community partners, more opportunities for student exposure to places to learn more different jobs (i.e., visiting a police department and getting exposure to other jobs in the police

headquarters that are not tied to just civil service) and the scheduling challenges student have regarding RSTA enrollment. Ms. Radzvilla and Dr, Brown both responded that the district is currently working on innovative solutions and a working group to assist with the issue. **Member Wilson** also asked about the reason cooperative education is not a current requirement for students. Dr. Brown responded that co-ops are structured more as an opportunity for students to take advantage of rather than be a requirement, Ms. Radzvilla also provided additional clarity on the reasoning why co-ops are not a requirement in the district, with one reason being that not every student may be ready to take advantage of a co-op.

Mayor Siddiqui also shared her thoughts on the presentation and asked if CPSD were to designate Minuteman Regional Vocational Technical High School as our “school of preference” would an MOA and contract detailing funding per student to be needed from the district? Dr. Brown and DESE responded that the district does not need an MOU with the school to establish an institution as a school of preference, nor do we need an MOU for a CPS student to enroll in such an institution via the state’s “non-resident” Chapter 74 program. The School Committee could designate any school or district in the state offering approved Chapter 74 programs as a school of preference, however, enrollment in regional schools would require a membership.

Mayor Siddiqui also inquired about the approximate number of student participants who were interviewed for the RSTA review. Dr. Brown will provide an approximate number soon. **Mayor Siddiqui** also shared that the improvement in collaboration with city programs for additional resources resonated with her. She also asked when the RSTA report and dashboard will be available online. Dr. Brown announced that it is anticipated for the dashboard to be posted online on Monday, October 31st.

Mayor Siddiqui wrapped up the Roundtable and discussed the next steps which include another Roundtable regarding the RSTA program that will occur on Tuesday, November 29th.

On a motion by Member, Fantini seconded by Vice Chair Rachel, on the following roll call vote the meeting was adjourned: Member Wilson YEA; Member Bhambi YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA (8:46 p.m.).

Attest:



Ariel B. Kennebrew
Executive Secretary to the School Committee