



## CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

**Roundtable Meeting**

**December 13, 2022**

Called for 6:00 p.m. broadcast from the Media Arts Studio, 454 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of discussing target settings in the district plan.

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

Also Present: Dr. Turk, Deputy Superintendent of Schools  
Dr. Brown, Chief Strategy Officer  
Dr. Gittens, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Schools  
Dr. Madera, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Schools  
Jen Amigone, Director of Research, Assessment, and Evaluation  
Michelle Shannon, Facilitator

Mayor Siddiqui in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 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 proceeded with a roll call of members present: Member Weinstein PRESENT; Member Wilson ~~ABSENT~~; Member Fantini PRESENT; Member Hunter PRESENT; Vice-Chair Rachel PRESENT; Member Rojas ~~ABSENT~~; Mayor Siddiqui PRESENT.

Member Wilson joined the meeting at 6:07 p.m. Member Rojas joined at 6:15 pm

Mayor Siddiqui turned the floor over to Dr. Turk, who provided a brief overview of the purpose of the Roundtable Meeting, which was for the district to present target settings of the district plan to the School Committee.

Dr. Turk then turned the meeting over to Dr. Brown who led a presentation on target settings to the Committee. The full presentation can be found on the [website](#).

After the presentation, the floor was to Dr. Michele Shannon who facilitated a discussion with the Committee based on the following discussion prompts:

- What are your clarifying questions?
- What do these proposed targets signal?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of setting these proposed targets?
- What are the opportunities and threats to setting and achieving these targets?

**Member Fantini** asked will the district use MCAS data or i-Ready data to make decisions. Dr. Brown confirmed that MCAS data will be used.

**Member Weinstein** asked how will grade-level be determined. Dr. Brown confirmed that MCAS data will be used to determine a student's performance level.

Dr. Shannon led a discussion on communication as target settings are about setting the expectation of work that the district is responsible for. She asked the Committee what the proposed targets for English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics signal to the Cambridge Public Schools community at large:

- **Vice Chair Rachel:** CPSD expects every student to grow at high levels and we expect the adults in the system to have an equity lens to accelerate young people who may be falling behind
- **Member Weinstein:** the aim is to support every child to reach grade level and continue to grow and aim for the highest support of growth for students who may be below target
- **Member Fantini:** focusing on MCAS data to describe improvement and where we want our children to go so we are putting a priority on that information to focus on literacy and math
- **Member Wilson:** signals the importance of education by having targets that are rooted and grounded in equity with high stakes of achievement for each scholar in the CPSD care

Dr. Shannon proceeded with a discussion on asking the Committee, the strengths and weaknesses for approaching targets this way:

- **Member Rojas:** Appreciated that goals are not necessarily focused on achievement but more on growth opportunities. He thinks the static is a strength because growth is prioritized and can assist in closing gaps
- **Member Weinstein:** The strength of approaching the targets in this matter is that the goals are uniform for every student
- **Mayor Siddiqui:** Asked for more clarity surrounding the proposed target settings presented. Dr. Brown and Jen Amigone clarified that the target settings will assist the district in high growth that will impact the proficiency of the district to move to higher levels.
- **Member Fantini:** A weakness of the targets could be that the district is “teaching for assessments”.
- **Member Weinstein:** A weakness could be a reliance on MCAS data for growth and achievement
- **Member Hunter:** A weakness from a parent's point of view regarding grade-level performance and grade-level achievement. How will the MCAS data correlate with the data that is used in the classroom between parents and educators?

Dr. Shannon asked for clarity about the additional data sources being used in the district. Dr. Gittens provided clarity and examples of other data sources. She also expressed the importance to teach for standards and the standards are what the measure is at each grade level.

Dr. Shannon asked the Committee for their opinions on the proposed approach to target setting by using “thumbs up” or “thumbs down”. Three committee members put their thumbs up and four members put their thumbs in the middle. Dr. Shannon asked for clarity on the reasoning for those that put their thumbs in the middle:

- **Vice Chair Rachel** expressed that the lingering concern she has is around students being on grade level and the method of messaging families
- **Member Wilson** also expressed that messaging to families is significant and if more can be done to bring higher achievement for students

The meeting continued with a presentation on “on-track to graduation: target settings outlined as 1.) chronic absenteeism 2.) overage or under-credited and 3.) completing college and career readiness planning milestones. After the presentation, Dr. Shannon asked the Committee for any clarifying questions on the topics:

- **Member Fantini** asked if the district has compared itself to similar districts and school systems regarding chronic absenteeism. Dr. Brown responded that MYCAP and overage/under-credited data are currently not available to do a comparative analysis. The two topics are newly collected

data from the state. The district previously shared comparable data of Cambridge and other districts regarding absenteeism.

- **Vice Chair Rachel** discussed the reduction rate presented for chronic absenteeism and asked for the reasoning for the 2.5% reduction for all groups including groups with higher absenteeism rates. Dr. Brown responded that at the moment setting incremental targets at 2.5% is a higher rate of improvement than is seen in any of the identified groups. The district can identify a more aggressive target for certain groups if the Committee thinks it is best.
- **Member Hunter** asked for clarity regarding student sabbaticals. Dr. Gittens provided examples of student sabbaticals which include a foreign-born student who may need to leave and return to their home country for a month or two, students who are out of school for Olympic-based training, etc.

Dr. Shannon asked what the targets (chronic absenteeism, overage, or credited and completing college and career readiness planning milestones) signal to the community about what is being prioritized and the work ahead.

- **Member Rojas:** By focusing on absenteeism it shows that we care about what our students are doing when they are not in school and that we want them in school. The district is assisting families in ensuring students remain in school by providing resources.
- **Member Weinstein:** MYCAP and student success plans show that the district is dedicated to preparing our students for what's next. He asked for clarity on the MYCAP target on the presentation surrounding the wording "all students will complete individual student success plans through MYCAP" and does that they will create the plan or will students achieve the goals within that plan. Dr. Gittens clarified that the target means that students will create their student success plans with support and that students will aim to achieve most of the goals in that plan. Dr. Brown provided additional information regarding DESE guidelines and will modify the target to state 95% of students instead of all.
- **Member Wilson:** Referenced the target of 2.5% per year for chronic absenteeism and asked if the goal could be more aggressive by 1 or 2 percent per year.

Dr. Shannon asked the Committee for another pulse check regarding the approach for chronic absenteeism, overage or under-credited, and completing college and career readiness planning milestones by using "thumbs up" or "thumbs down." Dr. Shannon opened the floor for further discussion from the Committee:

- **Member Weinstein:** When reassessing, the district should look into identifying an absolute target number instead of percentages to get the chronic absenteeism numbers to zero.
- **Member Fantini:** What are some best practices the district can make to better understand why some groups are chronically absent? Thinks the district needs to do a deeper dive to find a better resolution to this issue.
- **Member Hunter:** Agreed that the district can be overly ambitious with goals to combat chronic absenteeism.

The meeting continued with a presentation on graduates ready for college careers (graduation rate, advanced coursework participation, and earned college credits of industry-recognized credentials). After the presentation, Dr. Shannon asked the Committee for any clarifying questions on the topics, along with strengths and weaknesses:

- **Member Rojas:** We are signaling that the focus is to assist students on their next chapter in life. He identified that the weakness is that the district is not focusing on the outcomes for students after graduation.

- **Member Wilson:** Discussed expectations for students for early college advanced placement classes if the district does not expect students to be at 50% or higher in those touchpoints. In the presentation, it is targeted at 44% to 46% in the district plan. Dr. Brown responded that the reasoning for the percentages is setting realistic accountability for not only the district but for students.

Dr. Shannon asked the Committee for another pulse check regarding the approach for graduates ready for college careers (graduation rate, advanced coursework participation, and earned college credits of industry-recognized credentials). The community was in unison with thumbs up from all members. Dr. Shannon took the last few minutes of the meeting to reflect on the target settings:

- **Member Hunter:** asked for clarification on the interventions and implementations regarding on-track graduation.

Dr. Brown concluded the presentation by summarizing the essence and feedback received from the committee based on the discussions from the evening.

**Vice Chair Rachel** in the Chair, wrapped up the Roundtable by thanking everyone for their efforts in the target-setting process.

On a motion by Member Wilson, seconded by Member Rojas, on the following roll call vote, the meeting was adjourned: Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Hunter YEA; Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA (8:01 p.m.).

Attest:



Ariel B. Kennebrew  
Executive Secretary to the School Committee