



**C A M B R I D G E
S C H O O L C O M M I T T E E**

(Official Minutes)

Special Meeting

May 9, 2023

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 District's Math curriculum and instructional practices and sharing plans to address Algebra I instruction in the 8th grade.

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

Also Present: Dr. Greer, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Turk, Deputy Superintendent
Dr. Edwards, Chief of Academics & Schools; Dr. Gittens, Assistant
Superintendent of Secondary Education

Mayor Siddiqui in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

The Chair read the call of the meeting and explained that this meeting is being televised, votes will be not taken and there will be no public comment.

The meeting proceeded to the first order of business with a roll call of members present; Member Weinstein PRESENT; Member Wilson PRESENT; Member Fantini PRESENT; Member Hunter PRESENT; Vice Chair Rachel PRESENT; Member Rojas PRESENT Mayor Siddiqui PRESENT.

Mayor Siddiqui passed the floor over to Dr. Greer who gave an overview and update on the district's math curriculum. She passed the floor to Ms. Siobahn Mulligan, Director of Mathematics, Dr. Edwards, and Dr. Gittens who shared the following presentation that can be found on the [website](#). Highlights from the presentation include:

- A consistent amount of time dedicated to math instruction across all schools.
- The curriculum chosen is the Illustrative Mathematics curriculum for grades K-12. Historically the curriculum was first introduced a few years ago at the middle school level, then implemented at the high school level last year, and will roll out at the elementary school levels in the upcoming school year
- Illustrative Mathematics is a problem-based teaching and learning curriculum
 - The teacher ensures that students understand the questions
 - Students work individually while the teacher monitors, listens, and answers questions
 - Students work in groups
 - Teacher helps students synthesize learning

- Illustrative Math draws on research that shows that children can solve problems, usually without being told how by drawing upon informal knowledge of everyday situations.
- The curriculum also applies to Zaretta's Hammond's Culturally Responsive Teaching
- The new curriculum provides access for multi-lingual learners and students with disabilities

After the presentation, Mayor Siddiqui opened the floor to the School Committee for comments and discussion based on the three prompts below:

- Clarifying questions
- Noticings
- Wonderings

Mayor Siddiqui inquired about what is happening surrounding math in the upcoming school year. She reflected on her own experiences as a CPSD student who participated in the Algebra Project. She also inquired if the administration can provide more clarity on the summary and timeline surrounding the Algebra Project and a summary of the algebra plan for the upcoming school year. Dr. Greer responded that next year the district will go back to 3 units of algebra for middle school grades which gets the district back to where it was pre-covid. Additionally, the district is implementing Illustrative Mathematics at the elementary level. Dr. Greer shared that the goal is to create comprehensive pathways for students in 8th grade to implement algebra being taught in the 8th grade.

Member Rojas inquired about the difference between mathematical practices and mathematical content that was shared and wondered about the changes in the math curriculum and why district thinks it is necessary to change now? He also inquired if students are placed out of Algebra 1, does the district feel that those students struggle? He also inquired about students leaving at the middle school level. Dr. Greer mentioned that reasoning is attributed to a multitude of things and doesn't necessarily believe it is tied to the mathematics curriculum. Ms. Mulligan responded that she noticed some struggles from students coming from the upper schools because there was no standard curriculum and some instruction did not align with the high school's math curriculum. Heidi Fessenden mentioned that before Illustrative Mathematics was adopted the previous mathematics instruction did not align with state standards. For a few years, the district was using the curriculum used in the San Francisco public schools.

Member Weinstein inquired about the importance of algebraic thinking at early ages and wondered why the district is not ready to fully commit to algebra in 8th grade. He shared that there are inequities at the high school because some students can skip algebra in 9th grade while some students are required to take it. He expressed that the district needs to agree on the ceiling (i.e. if an 8th-grader wants to explore more math opportunities the student should be able to do so). If all of the students had the pathway to have algebra requirements, it routes them to success. **Member Weinstein** inquired about what we are evaluating at the moment, which makes us not fully ready to commit. Dr. Greer shared that if there is a requirement for the innovation agenda, the district will do a deeper dive. She also reiterated what was shared in the presentation in that the district is still recovering from the effects of the pandemic. The district is trying to get back to where it was pre-covid while also aiming to add more to the mathematics curriculum. She also shared that there is assistance with strategic tutoring for the students during the day. The district has the shortest school learning time of any other school district in the state.

Member Hunter shared that in 1986/1987 The Concerned Black Staff report recommended that the district provide Math Specialists in the 8th grade. She also shared that one of the things the district

struggles with is more math specialists as most instructors are taught in English Language Arts. **Member Hunter** inquired about the Flagway Program and what it does and thinks that every parent should be able to look at a middle school and review the program of studies at the schools and where parents can find that information. She also shared her concerns that semesterized courses and what are the hours of the semesterized courses vs. the full-year courses. What data does the district have to ensure students transition from 8th grade into high-school algebra? Ms. Mulligan shared that it is hard to obtain data as the current data she has isn't viable due to the interruption of the curriculum during the pandemic. The five-year Illustrative Mathematics program started in 2017 and had a different rollout than the anticipated rollout of the elementary curriculum this upcoming school year. The district is relying on information from other sources (i.e. other schools and districts) to get feedback and suggestions on the best rollout strategies. The Flagway Program was created by Bob Moses in the mid-nineties and became a part of the Young People's Project (YPP), with the ideology that students learn best with their peers.

Vice Chair Rachel inquired about the student growth numbers regarding iReady in the presentation and about the three units being added in 8th grade and what that means if students want to place out in 9th grade. Ms. Mulligan shared that with three units at the 8th-grade level, students cannot place out. **Vice Chair Rachel** also went on record that the district has never removed algebra in 8th grade and would like to see more pathways to 9th grade. **Vice Chair Rachel** also asked what the district anticipated the Illustrative Mathematics outcome to be. Ms. Fessenden responded that the Illustrative Math Curriculum was first created for Middle School grades, then High School grades, and then Elementary. The elementary curriculum has only been around for two years but feedback from other school districts has been positive especially when reviewing iReady data. Ms. Mulligan shared that the curriculum has been in discussion for years by the district.

Member Fantini inquired about the Illustrative Mathematics curriculum and whether it has also been at the elementary school level. He also inquired about the mathematics pathways at the high school level and was always under the impression that students would have to double up to be able to learn calculus. Ms. Mulligan shared that doubling up meant that students take two math courses a year as courses are not full-year courses but semester-long courses.

Member Wilson inquired about the pathways program and inquired if there is any interest in expanding the capacity of the project. **Member Wilson** also inquired about a breakdown of community resources in schools as many resources are within reach of students in schools. **Member Wilson** also inquired about the evaluation of the implementation of the Illustrative Mathematics curriculum.

Mayor Siddiqui concluded the discussion by giving an overview of some of the questions and feedback from the Committee on the evening's presentation.

On a motion by Member Wilson, seconded by Member Weinstein, on the following roll call vote, the open 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. (8:13 p.m.)

Email communications:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| ✓ Nancy Wei | ✓ Catherine Reilly | ✓ Grace Chiang Nicole |
| ✓ Ruth O'Meara Costel | ✓ Andrew Groh | ✓ Christopher Perry |
| ✓ Rebecca Lester | ✓ Emily Braunstein | ✓ Andrew Koschwanez |
| ✓ Eugenia Scraa | ✓ Amanda Steenhuis | ✓ Peter Lubetsky |

- ✓ Kate Skubecz
- ✓ Bridget Rutherford
- ✓ Samuel Murphy
- ✓ Paul O’Gorman
- ✓ Erika Abbas Hanna
- ✓ Rebecca Bowie
- ✓ Susan Park
- ✓ Nataliya Yufa
- ✓ Sam Ribnick
- ✓ Margot Iverson
- ✓ Kris Dickson
- ✓ Cathy Cabrera
- ✓ Ben Mazzotta
- ✓ Laura Warren
- ✓ Katherine Yung
- ✓ Elisa Van Voorhis
- ✓ Matthew Rutherford
- ✓ Renee Beard
- ✓ Kalle Heikkinen
- ✓ Melanie Cohn-Hopwood
- ✓ Vera Hoffman
- ✓ Tara Edelschick
- ✓ Marta Bianciardi
- ✓ Drew Volpe
- ✓ Jill Crittenden
- ✓ Maria Arlotto
- ✓ Lynn Li
- ✓ Martin Udengaard
- ✓ Sara Dana
- ✓ Lucy Budman
- ✓ Tim Nicolette
- ✓ Amy Bates Markham
- ✓ Kelly Dolan

Attest:



Ariel B. Kennebrew
Executive Secretary to the School Committee