

June 12, 2023

**SPECIAL EDUCATION & STUDENT SUPPORTS  
SUBCOMMITTEE**

Special Education and Student Supports Subcommittee  
Monday, June 12, 2023 at 5:00 – 6:00 p.m.  
Broadcast from the Media Arts Studio  
454 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02138

Called for the purpose to hear findings from the Special Education Executive Director, summer programming opportunities, and plans for the fall. This meeting is expected to end on or before 6:30 p.m.

**Subcommittee Members:** Ayesha M. Wilson (Chair), José Luis Rojas, David Weinstein

**Other School Committee Members Present:** Vice-Chair Rachel Weinstein, Fred Fantini

**Also Present:** Dr. Frank Alves, Interim Executive Director of Special Education, Dr. Lendozia Edwards, Chief of Academics and Schools, Dr. Karyn Grace, Interim Asst. Superintendent of the Office of Student Services, CPSD educators: Jennifer Bump, Kate Ehresman, Liza Gosselin, Jillian Kalen, Indira Pierre-Paul, Community members and Special Education Parent Advisory Council: Karen Dobak, Lisa Downing and Jennifer Wade

**Chair Wilson** started the meeting at 6:02 p.m. She welcomed the group and the Confidential Secretary read the call of the meeting. She asked participants to introduce themselves and share their favorite summer activities. Following introductions, she led the group in a brief breathing exercise and asked Member Rojas to read the agreements of the meeting:

1. Speak and listen from the heart
2. Share the air
3. Lean into discomfort/make yourself someone willing to be educated
4. Expect and accept non-closure
5. Bike rack (Things to note for future discussion)

**Chair Wilson** opened the floor to public comment and the following spoke:

Karen Dobak, SEPAC member, shared that she is enthusiastic about Cambridge's progress. Regarding i-Ready and its implementation in after-school programming, Ms. Dobak noted that many special education students are being excluded from after-school programming and missing out on this benefit. She wants the School Committee and the administration to work with Human Services to rectify the situation.

Jillian Kalen, Special Education Educator at CPSD, shared that she appreciated public comment and hopes this group can keep advocating for special education students and teachers. Due to a reduction in staff, a member of the Kennedy-Longfellow Special Education team was no longer there, which impacted Special Education instruction and accommodated individual needs. Making sure that instruction is geared toward individual needs. The feedback given to consultant was not as robust as she would have hoped. She is hopeful for continued collaboration between educators working in general education and Special Education. She shared her concern about interventionist positions being eliminated.

**Chair Wilson** closed public comment and passed the floor to Dr. Francisco Alves who shared the following presentation located on this [website](#).

Highlights of the presentation included:

- Entry Plan Purpose & Goals
- Critical Questions Posed Upon Entry
- Findings related to:

June 12, 2023

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- Special Education Practice & Compliance
  - Programming & Service Delivery
  - System Design & Management
  - Parental/Caregiver Involvement & Experience
- Accomplishments to date
  - Recommendations

Following the presentation, **Chair Wilson** inquired about summer opportunities for students. Dr. Alves highlighted the ESY program, the eleven-month program, tutoring, and a more comprehensive program for students who need more services,

**Chair Wilson** opened the floor seeking feedback from the subcommittee meeting. Member Weinstein asked Dr. Alves to share more about over services” that he mentioned in his presentation and the process for educators who want to provide additional services. Dr. Alves shared examples of potential communication disconnects between Special Education educators and classroom teachers. He cited that processes, including student needs, should be documented in the IEPs. He underscored the need to capture accurate data to inform data-driven decisions. Member Weinstein shared that he is interested in Dr. Alves’ recommendations regarding leadership of IEP teams and he is eager to work more on this endeavor. **Member Rojas** thanked Dr. Alves for the presentation and asked him to share his priority order of recommendations. Dr. Alves highlighted his commitment to a team-facilitated model and implementing team chairs. His goal is to relieve the burden of logistical paperwork for teachers to allow for more time in the classroom. Given the time constraints of the meeting, Member Rojas offered to follow up with Dr. Alves with additional questions. **Member Fantini** asked about staff buy-in and Dr. Alves’ approach. Dr. Alves agreed with the importance of staff buy-in and transparency. He shared that we worked closely with subcommittees, working groups, and OSS coordinators throughout the process. **Vice Chair Rachel** asked about the changes that have already been made and the collection of parent feedback. Dr. Alves underscored the changed approach to customer-based including streamlining confusing processes, educating parents on procedures, and bridging gaps between parents and educators. He has attended IEP meetings and mediations to help inform the updated process. **Chair Wilson** echoed her colleagues’ remarks. As a social worker, she remains cognizant of educator burnout. She reiterated the School Committee’s support of Dr. Alves’ efforts.

**Chair Wilson** opened the floor to questions from meeting participants. Jennifer Bump, CPSD educator, agreed with Member Fantini regarding the importance of communicating with teachers and staff. She inquired about the timeline for hiring team chairs. Dr. Alves shared that the action plan is now being developed including a rollout timeline. Katie Ehresman, CPSD educator, asked where the MTSS interventionists fall under CPSD. Dr. Grace shared that MTSS is under OSS, content interventionists fall under curriculum coordinators, and SEL interventionists fall under school principals. She asked about content interventionists being cut due to lack of ESSR funding and Dr. Grace directed her to follow up with the curriculum coordinators who would have this information. Ms. Ehresman highlighted that co-teaching was not consistent across individual schools and the district and she advocated for professional development opportunities. She asked about the commitments of school psychologists and their lack of time available for evaluations. Dr. Alves shared that psychologists are currently devoting time to leading meetings that will eventually be taken over by the team chair role. Ms. Kalen is concerned about staffing and that special educators are being stretched. She asks that Dr. Alves continue listening.

**Chair Wilson** adjourned the meeting at 6:37 pm.