



## CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

**Roundtable Meeting**

**November 28, 2023**

Called for 6:00 p.m. and broadcast from the Media Arts Studio, 454 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of a discussion focused on Mathematics with community partners and CPSD leaders, educators, and staff.

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

Also Present: Dr. Greer, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Lendozia Edwards, Chief of Academics and Schools; Manuel Fernandez, Director of Equity Inclusion and Belonging; Dr. Madera, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Schools; Dr. Gittens, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Schools; Corey Dotson, Chief Talent Officer; Ivy Washington, Interim Chief Financial Officer; Maureen MacFarlane General Counsel; Sujata Wycoff, Director of Communications; Siobahn Mulligan, Director of Mathematics; Maisha Moses, Young People's Project (YPP); Julia Stoller, RAUC Math Coach; Christen Sohn, CSUS Principal; Ben Moynihan, Executive Director, Algebra Project; Bill Crombie, Director of Professional Development, Algebra Project; Adrian Mims, The Calculus Project; Josh Marden, Dean of Curriculum for Math; Nataliya Yufa, Math Circle; Jordan Harvey, Tutoring Plus; Tina Cardone, Illustrative Mathematics; Kentaro Iwasaki, Concentric Math; Robin Gottlieb, Harvard University Mathematics Department; Sharlene Yang, Director, Cambridge STEAM Initiative; Khari Milner, Co-Executive Director, Cambridge Agenda for Children Out-of-School Time; Katisha John, District Instructional Lead, Upper School; Molly Singh, District Instructional Lead, Math, Advanced Learning; Heidi Fessenden, District Instructional Lead, Math, Elementary; Deepa Bharath, District Instructional Lead, Math, Elementary

Mayor Siddiqui in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:03 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: Vice-Chair Rachel PRESENT; Member Rojas PRESENT; Member Weinstein PRESENT; Member Wilson PRESENT; Member Fantini PRESENT; Member Hunter PRESENT; Mayor Siddiqui PRESENT.

**Mayor Siddiqui** turned the floor over to Dr. Greer who provided a brief overview of the purpose of the Roundtable Meeting, which was for the district to discuss Mathematics with community partners and CPSD leaders, educators, and staff. **Member Rojas** shared that the roundtable was composed based on

[C23-215](#), a robust discussion between the Committee and community partners partners focused on mathematics, and middle school principals, on the cost vs. benefit analysis to the students of the different approaches to compressing mathematics in middle school and high school. The Roundtable featured an extensive and robust panel that included CPSD Mathematics educators as well as community partners from the Young People's Project (YPP), the Algebra Project, Illustrative Mathematics, Cambridge STEAM Initiative Math Circle, and the Calculus Project.

Dr. Greer then turned the meeting over to Ms. Mulligan and Ms. Moses who began the presentation for the evening that focused on Access to Advanced Mathematics. The presentation featured multiple presenters who each presented slides on their respective programs and discussed the following topics: 1.) Compressing mathematics in upper schools so that all students engage in Algebra 1 as a part of the 8th-grade curriculum vs compressing courses in early high school grades (grades 9 and 10); 2.) best practices in meeting the different needs of our students; 3.) the long-term positive impact of our scholars having a solid foundation of middle school and high school mathematics and; 4.) how these pathways impact the students of Cambridge. The presentation included the following participants and the full presentation can be found on the [website](#):

- **Maisha Moses**, Executive Director, Young People's Project (YPP)
- **Sarah Steward**, Upper School Teacher
- **Wislande Pierre**, Upper School Teacher
- **Alyssa Tyler**, Math Interventionist
- **Rebecca Sawady**, Math Interventionist
- **Julia Stoller**, Math Coach at Rindge Avenue Upper School
- **Christen Sohn**, Principal at the Cambridge Street Upper School
- **Manuel Fernandez**, CPS Chief Equity Officer
- **Ben Moynihan**, Executive Director, Algebra Project
- **Bill Crombie**, Director of Professional Development, Algebra Project
- **Adrian Mims**, Founder, The Calculus Project
- **Nataliya Yufa**, Math Circle
- **Jordan Harvey**, Tutoring Plus
- **Sharlene Yang**, Director, Cambridge STEAM Initiative
- **Khari Milner**, Co-Executive Director, Cambridge Agenda for Children Out-of-School Time
- **Josh Marden**, Dean of Curriculum, Mathematics
- **Katisha John**, District Instructional Lead, Upper School
- **Molly Singh**, District Instructional Lead, Math, Advanced Learning
- **Heidi Fessenden**, District Instructional Lead, Math, Elementary
- **Deepa Bharath**, District Instructional Lead, Math, Elementary
- **Tina Cardone**, Illustrative Mathematics
- **Kentaro Iwasaki**, Founder, Concentric Math
- **Robin Gottlieb**, Harvard University Mathematics Department

After the presentation, **Mayor Siddiqui** passed the floor over to the Committee for questions and comments:

**Vice Chair Rachel** expressed the shared hope for all students to have access to advanced mathematics and inquired about why the district is where it is regarding disparities by race and socioeconomic status. She asked how the Algebra Project program was able to double the numbers of the student readiness for geometry in the 1990s, and asked the district administration what is the theory of change. Mr. Moniyhan and Mr. Crombie of the Algebra Project shared that some areas such as Cambridge in the early 1990s and San Francisco in the mid-1990s were able to achieve and double student readiness by teaching students both mathematics and how to interpret mathematic models by using basic models and grounding metaphors. Julia Stroller shared that the current theory of change is implementing the common or aligned curriculum with integrity, how we implement the curriculum and create mathematics standards regarding Illustrative Math, and investing in mathematics for the K-5 levels as it will be extremely beneficial for them as they enter their high school years.

**Member Hunter** shared her experience as a math educator in the district in which she also utilized non-traditional methods to help students interpret mathematics including literacy work. She inquired about alternatives to compressions for students to change their mindsets to learn Algebra and geometry.

**Member Hunter** also stated that in the Concerned Black Staff report of 1986-1987, it was acknowledged that the primary education and major for elementary teachers is language arts and is unfair when it comes to educators in higher grades. She is an advocate for acquiring math specialists for mathematics instruction in the upper grades. Mr. Moynihan shared that his major concern is not repeating the same things at a faster pace and the reason why it is framed on what to do with middle school math as a K-12 issue is that the district has the resources available and stakeholder needs to come together to find a solution.

**Member Weinstein** shared that a problem identified is that the district has not had equitable opportunities to accelerate its math curriculum and shared that it is important to ensure that there are no racial or economic disparities. He also shared his appreciation for supports for those who are struggling and programs for those who are excelling in the curriculum as well.

**Member Fantini** shared his excitement in the presentation and showed his appreciation to district staff and community partners for providing mathematics support and programs for the children in the district. He expressed some concern regarding the potential harm in the acceleration of mathematics programs too soon but does envision a pathway for students to reach higher levels in mathematics.

**Member Wilson** thanked the community partners and educators for their commitment to the students in the district and reflected on her experience as a student at CPSD enjoying math. She asked how are we envisioning and ensuring that students across the district are finding enjoyment in learning math. She also discussed what is the district's overall commitment to every student and how many of the Cambridge scholars end up taking a Calculus course by their senior year.

**Member Rojas** shared and reiterated that the district has not changed the current policy regarding Algebra instruction and the purpose of the Roundtable was to get feedback and expertise that can or may influence the decision to change the policy in the future. **Member Rojas** asked if there was any

awareness of districts that have implemented a similar policy surrounding Algebra instruction at the 8th-grade level. Adrian Mims shared that Brookline, who has K-8 schools, has Algebra instruction in 8<sup>th</sup> grade but shared that it can be challenging to identify what districts actually teach Algebra in 8th grade because there are many types of curricula with differing names for Algebra courses. **Member Rojas** also asked the district how reasonable it would be to adopt the plan for Algebra instruction. Ms. Stroller and Rebecca Sawady shared that it is not currently reasonable and shared specific reasons why it may not be.

**Mayor Siddiqui** closed out the Roundtable by thanking all of the mathematics community partners for their participation in the discussion and shared that this is an ongoing conversation that will be continued and further explored.

On a motion by Vice Chair Rachel, seconded by Member Rojas, on the following roll call vote, the meeting was adjourned: Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Hunter YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA (8:26 p.m.).

Attest:



Ariel B. Kennebrew  
Executive Secretary to the School Committee