

December 11, 2023

**SPECIAL EDUCATION & STUDENT SUPPORTS
SUBCOMMITTEE**

Special Education and Student Supports Subcommittee
Monday, December 11, 2023 at 5:00 p.m.
Broadcast from the Media Arts Studio
454 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02138

Called for the purpose of discussing Office of Student Services updates and planning for the spring.

Subcommittee Members: Ayesha M. Wilson (Chair), David Weinstein, and Jose Luis Rojas

Other School Committee Members Present: Caroline Hunter, Rachel Weinstein

Also Present: Dr. Karyn Grace, Interim Asst. Superintendent of the Office of Student Services; Dr. Frank Alves, Executive Director of Special Education; Lendozia Edwards, Chief of Academics and Schools Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SE-PAC) members: Karen Dobak and Maya Gonzalez

Chair Wilson started the meeting at 5:04 p.m. She welcomed the group and read the call of the meeting. She introduced the meeting's attendees. She asked attendees about their new reset buttons for 2024. **Chair Wilson** provided an overview of the discussion and shared the following agreements:

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 turned over the discussion to Dr. Grace and her team for updates. Dr. Grace shared that Dr. Blume is hosting a 5-part virtual series with CPSD staff highlighting the new IEP format required by DESE. Dr. Samuel Ortiz will be working with Beth Kershner, Director of Multilingual Learner Education, and focusing on action plans with multilingual students with special education needs. She encouraged families to take part in the Panorama survey. The OSS team is now undertaking summer planning. Dr. Grace highlighted the recently hired director of MTSS, Heather Francis.

Chair Wilson opened the floor for questions and comments. **Member Hunter** suggested working with Cambridge City Hall to assist with outreach to increase survey participation. Ms. Gonzalez asked if the Panorama survey and Climate survey were one and the same. Dr. Edwards confirmed that it is the same survey and shared that the deadline for completion was Friday, December 22. Currently, over 40% of caregivers have completed the survey. **Member Rojas** was happy to hear about summer planning. **Member Weinstein** highlighted the distinction between Individual Success Planning (ISS) and IEP plans and wants to ensure that efforts are coordinated. Dr. Grace confirmed that ISS is for all students. **Vice Chair Rachel** wanted to highlight for the MTSS Director the need to articulate goals for advanced learners. **Chair Wilson** noted that a disproportionate amount of Brown and Black students are referred for services and wonders if there are biases. She highlighted that the district should tap into partners and stakeholders and asked about the focus on Tier 2 and 3 students. She asked how the new IEP format differs from the old one. Dr. Grace shared that the new IEP plan focuses more on data and that the format and language are friendlier for caregivers.

Chair Wilson pivoted the conversation to spring planning and recapped the previous subcommittee's discussion. She asked about the status of the 2019 5th grade student cohort who were identified as underperforming. How are we meeting the needs of these students and exhausting all resources? Ms. Dobak would like an update on the current 5th-grade cohort. Ms. Gonzalez advocated for better after-school programming for K-8 students (handled by DHSP) and noted the success of after-school options for CRLS students. She would like to gather information from parents. **Member Hunter** noted that a DHSP discussion might be best served by a Roundtable as it involves

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a larger scope of stakeholders. **Member Weinstein** highlighted the spring focus of ISS planning and the early stages of organizing the Navigator network.

The group highlighted the following potential topics for spring focus:

- Student discipline and how it relates to special education scholars
- Over-identification and types of identification of students of color for special education services
- Police relations
- Summer and Fall programming
- DHSP partners
- Identification of advanced learners
- Feature with MTSS Director

In the closing minutes, participants expressed their appreciation for Member Wilson's leadership of the subcommittee and her dedication to special education and student services. **Member Wilson** thanked the attendees and reiterated her ongoing commitment to these important issues as she begins her role as a City Council member.

The meeting adjourned at 6:33 pm.