



**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)

Regular Meeting

January 2, 2024

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 any and all business that may properly come before the Committee.

Members Present: Member Harding, Member Hudson, Member Rachel, Member Weinstein,
Member Wilson, Mayor Simmons

Also Present: Naseem Anjaria and Jeanne Alailima, Student School Committee
Representatives; Dr. Greer, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Edwards, Chief of
Academics and Schools; Dr. Gittens, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary
Schools; Dr. Madera, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Schools; David
Murphy, Chief Operations Officer; Corey Dotson, Chief Talent Officer; Ivy
Washington; Interim Chief Financial Officer

Mayor Simmons in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

The Chair provided a statement to the public regarding Governor Charlie Baker's Executive Order on guidelines for remote participation and then read the call of the meeting.

The meeting proceeded to the first order of business with a roll call vote for the purpose of a soundcheck: Member Harding ~~ABSENT~~; Member Hudson PRESENT; Member Rachel PRESENT; Weinstein PRESENT; Member Weinstein; Mayor Simmons PRESENT.

Member Harding joined the meeting at 6:07 p.m.

1. Public Comment:

The following individuals were heard:

- Ayesha M. Wilson, Arlington St, spoke regarding the presentations of the evening **#24-001** and **#24-002**.

On a motion by Member Weinstein, seconded by Member Harding on a voice vote, the rules were suspended to allow Ayesha M. Wilson to extend her time to speak after the three-minute expiration.

On a motion by Member Harding, seconded by Member Hudson a voice vote, public comment was closed.

2. Student School Committee Report:

Student Member Alailima and **Student Member Anjaria** gave a student update on happenings at CRLS including their research on finding ways to close the achievement gaps in the high school, the recruitment of students to be more involved in the budget process, finding ways to implement free AP tests for all students.

3. Presentation of the Records for Approval:

- December 19, 2023, Regular Meeting

On a motion by Member Rachel, seconded by Member Weinstein on a voice vote, the records were approved as written and placed on file.

4. Reconsiderations: None

5. Unfinished Business/Calendar: None

6. Awaiting Reports: None

7. Superintendent's Agenda:

7a. Superintendent's Update:

Mayor Simmons passed the floor over to Superintendent Greer who introduced personnel at the Morse School. The Morse School has been recently recognized as a 2023 National ESEA Distinguished School. Former Morse School Principal Chad Leith and current Principal Samantha Headley shared additional highlights and best practices the school has done over the past year.

Following the brief presentation, **Member Rachel** showed recognition to the School and highlighted a recent visit to the School, she inquired about the equity and SEL teams at the School and are these teams intertwined. Principal Headley shared that although their team does not intertwine on their goals and outcomes, there are sometimes collaborations between members of the two groups.

Member Weinstein also recognized the Morse School for its recognition in being a 2023 National ESEA Distinguished School and asked about the weekly community livestream that the school organizes. Principal Headley shared the origin of the weekly livestreams which began during the pandemic in 2020.

Member Harding expressed his excitement in the Morse School and highlighted the importance of effective leadership and being courageous enough to showcase.

Liz Vincent shared that Dr. Leith and Principal Headley both model high-level collaboration with the goals to problem solve and support one another to achieve the common goal of supporting students and providing an equitable experience for every child.

Mayor Simmons shared the importance of children feeling known and supported in their schools and

the classroom. She congratulated the Morse School and its administration for the recognition for the 2023 National ESEA Distinguished School and led a standing ovation for the Morse School team on their tremendous work.

7b. Presentations: Dr. Greer presented Chief Talent Officer Mr. Corey Dotson and Ms. Rasheeda Abdul-Musawwir, Director of Talent Acquisition & Management as they shared a Human Resources update. The full presentation can be found on the [website](#).

After the presentation, **Mayor Simmons** opened the floor for discussion for any additional feedback from the committee based on the updates and the presentation.

After the presentation, Mayor Simmons opened the floor for discussion for any additional feedback from the committee based on the updates and the presentation. A robust discussion followed the presentation between the committee and the presenters with the following questions, feedback, and responses.

Student Member Anjaria inquired about the changes the district is hoping to make regarding diversifying the talent pool and what are some additional methods that the Human Resources department is trying to implement to continue the expansion of diversifying district personnel.

Member Hudson inquired about employee turnover in comparable districts and what 8.5% percent of the turnover rate means regarding Cambridge's history globally. Mr. Dotson shared that one major impact on the turnover rate was that in the past the district made significant hiring practices for personnel who were unlicensed and who eventually had to be terminated or leave due to being unlicensed. **Member Hudson** asked if we track where the educators go when they leave the district – are they leaving the district for another district or are they leaving the educator sector altogether? **Member Hudson** asked about the turnover rate for those who are leaving in the first 90 days. Mr. Dotson shared that the district has an optional exit survey that they provide to employees who are leaving. He also mentioned that one of the challenges of the turnover rate reporting is that DESE only reports the turnover date for Unit A, whereas the district reports turnovers for all employees including Unit A.

Member Rachel inquired about the employee rating based on the survey responses and when would the Stay Survey be distributed. Mr. Dotson shared that the Stay Survey will be distributed in February 2024 and will be available to all staff. Previously, it was only distributed to Unit A members. **Member Rachel** also inquired about the recruitment of diverse staff. Ms. Abdul-Musawwir shared some initiatives that include the Educator Pathway Program and employee research groups in collaboration with OEIB and the CEA.

Member Weinstein discussed the significance of the support of advancement for paraprofessionals and asked if there were any educator pathways for those at the high school level. Ms. Abdul-Musawwir shared that an educator pathway for high school personnel is something the district is willing to explore soon.

Member Harding inquired for more clarity into some of the reporting regarding the recruitment of teachers regarding the filler rate and given that the district reached 90% by September 1st which is considered a little late due to school starting just only a few days later. **Member Harding** asked the panel what their anticipated optimal goal is for hiring what is the district thinking to do a bit differently and how we can collectively do it better. Dr. Greer shared that a September 1 date is just a “go-date” for the district and not necessarily a “goal date”. By September 1, the district needs to have enough staff to teach and fill the classrooms. **Member Harding** inquired about the support in retaining staff of color and asked for the team to provide additional support for educators of color and what is the involvement at the school-based level for hiring. Mr. Dotson provided additional clarity on the involvement of the schools regarding the hiring of the personnel, where most hiring recommendations are made at the school level and recommendations are given to Human Resources to begin and streamline the hiring process.

Member Rachel inquired about the district’s current hiring practices for teachers and administrators. Mr. Dotson shared the timelines of some of the roles that the district has recently acquired which included community and caregiver outreach. **Member Rachel** inquired about what happens if an applicant pool shrinks. Mr. Dotson shared that sometimes the timing may be critical especially if there are at least two or three members in the applicant process.

Member Weinstein inquired about teacher hiring and if the district can share any recommended best practices and guidelines. Dr. Greer provided additional clarity on the community involvement regarding personnel hiring practices. Most of the community involvement is usually a screening committee that screens resumes and interviews earlier candidates. The hiring practices are usually done via the Human Resources department and the Superintendent interviews any finalist candidates and makes the final hiring decision. **Member Weinstein** asked for the types of supports available for personnel and the community regarding the hiring of staff.

Member Harding asked if there are any goals for the Human Resources department and shared some history on some of the past initiatives to attain diverse staff and people of color. Ms. Abdul-Musawwir shared that the goal that was created before her tenure is to attain at least 30% of BIPOC across the district with the ultimate goal of having a staff body representative of the student body. **Member Harding** also inquired about the principal’s role in the the decision-making process of retaining or letting go of personnel. Mr. Dotson provided some feedback on Member Harding’s questions. Dr. Greer shared that there are rare circumstances when the district is not supporting a principal and the administration tries its best to connect with the CEA to ensure there are no grievances and to ensure that proper protocol is aligned, and everyone is given an opportunity for fair employment in the district. **Member Harding** discussed school-based committees in terms of hiring committees and the hiring strategy of school-based positions regarding teachers in the classroom. Both Ms. Abdul-Musawwir and Mr. Dotson shared a timeline on current hiring practices that the district makes on a school-based level. Once a phase is completed, the HR team will send out an update on the current progress.

Mayor Simmons shared some of the historical context regarding some past initiatives and would love to follow up with any additional questions or comments regarding the presentations and current HR practices in a future Roundtable meeting. **Mayor Simmons** recommended that committee members send any additional questions to the Superintendent.

7c. CPS District Plan: None

7d. Consent Agenda:

Member Harding pulled **#24-001**. **Member Rachel** pulled **#24-004**, **#24-005** and **#24-006**. On the following roll call vote, items **#24-002**, **#24-003**, **#24-007**, and **23-008** were adopted: Member Harding YEA; Member Hudson; Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Mayor Simmons YEA.

#24-002 Day & Residential Program Services Not Available from the Cambridge Public Schools be adopted as follows: that the School Committee award contracts to the institutions as detailed in the list in amounts not to exceed the shown rates, having been approved by the Operational Services Division of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts funds to be provided from the General Fund and/or Grant Fund Budget.

Description: SY23-24 Placement of students in private schools for implementation of educational plans in accordance with Chapter 766.

Program	#	Amount
Day Program Tuition Contracts	1	\$53,519.76
Residential Program Tuition Contracts 45-Day Program		
	—	
Total	1	\$53,519.76

#24-003 Contract Award: 1722 Behavior & Consulting: Special Education Services be adopted as follows: That the School Committee approve a contract with the following vendor, funds to be provided in accordance with the budget reference listed below. Procurement procedures for this purchase have complied with Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

1722 Behavior & Consulting, 7 Hazelwood Road, Worcester, MA from January 1, 2024, to June 30, 2024, in the amount of \$40,000.00.

#24-007 Grant Award: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part B (IDEA) Federal Targeted Special Education Program Improvement Grant (SC244674) be adopted as follows: that the School

Committee accept and approve the increased grant award below in the amount and for the period indicated:

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part B (IDEA) Federal Targeted Special Education Program Improvement Grant (SC24674) from Federal through State in the amount of \$63,507.00 for the period of December 10, 2023, to September 30, 2024.

Description: This federal entitlement program provides funding to support schools and districts to implement the IEP Improvement Project, with a strong emphasis on transitioning to the utilization of newly revised IEP forms and processes. Funds will support:

- Training and professional development for CPS staff on the new IEP form and processes;
- Stipends for staff trained as trainers to provide instruction and support to other staff in the transition to the new IEP;
- Professional learning in the use of an updated web-based IEP creation tool from our current IEP software provider.

8. Non-Consent Agenda:

#24-001 Approval of Revisions to the Controlled Choice Policy Regarding the Cambridge Preschool Program Admissions & Matriculation (First Reading) be adopted as follows: That the School Committee approve the revisions to the Controlled Choice Policy with respect to Cambridge Preschool Program and admissions and matriculation (First Reading).

Description: Students turning three years old and four years old before September 1st will be eligible to register for enrollment into a preschool program at a CPS school through the Office of Early Childhood registration process. Students turning five years old before September 1st who are not enrolled in a CPS preschool program will have the opportunity to participate in the kindergarten lottery program consistent with current practice whereby their lottery eligibility occurs the January preceding their Kindergarten year.

Students enrolled pursuant to this provision in a CPS preschool at age four or Kindergarten at age five will matriculate into subsequent grade levels at their assigned elementary school. Students enrolled in a CPS preschool program at age three will be eligible to participate in the Office of Early Childhood registration process the following year as well for purposes of enrollment in preschool for the child's aged four years, except for current CPS matriculating programs that commence in the child's aged three years, i.e. Scholar College at the Fletcher Maynard Academy and the Children's House program within the Tobin Montessori.

In the absence of genuine hardship, students will not be allowed to transfer from one CPS elementary school to another, except as provided herein.

Subsequent to assignment to a CPS elementary school via the OEC preschool matching system (for four-year-olds), parents or caretakers of students may request a transfer to a different, single CPS school subject to seat availability from the point of assignment until October 15th of the student's Kindergarten year for students who begin their CPS career in preschool.

Subsequent to assignment to a CPS elementary school via the CPS Kindergarten lottery (for five-year-olds), or an assignment to Kindergarten after the Kindergarten Lottery, parents or caretakers of students may request a transfer to a different, single CPS school subject to seat availability from the point of assignment until October 15th of the student's first-grade year for students who begin their CPS career in kindergarten. Consistent with the current practice, students assigned to an elementary school via the CPS Kindergarten lottery in January of 2024 for the 2024 - 2025 school year other than the first of the three schools to which they expressed an enrollment preference will be placed on the waitlists for the remaining schools to which they indicated a preference for enrollment on the kindergarten lottery registration form. No student will remain on waitlists for more than three schools, and the two-year window to remain on the waitlist(s) contemplated by this provision will be in effect for these waitlist placements.

Families wishing to remain on a waitlist for another elementary school into the second school year of the two-year window contemplated by this provision must affirm that desire to remain on the waitlist by November 15th preceding that second year. Transfers from a waitlist for students availing themselves of this provision will occur prior to October 15th of the year in which the transfer occurs. No student will be permitted to transfer pursuant to this provision more than once.

The transfer and waitlist policy herein will take effect upon the assignment of students to preschool and Kindergarten for the 2024-2025 school year. Students currently on previously established waitlists from earlier iterations of this policy will remain unaffected throughout their elementary school careers.

Students with older siblings enrolled in the Chinese Immersion program at the Martin Luther King Elementary School or the Portuguese Ola Immersion program at the King Open School who are denied entry via the Office of Early Childhood Preschool Registration process and/or the Cambridge Public Schools Kindergarten Lottery Program due to seat capacity attributable to the total number of siblings enrolling and receiving sibling preference will be prioritized concerning enrollment in the non-immersion classrooms in the school in which the older sibling is enrolled and will have the opportunity to enroll in the immersion program should a seat become available during the two-year transfer window

A discussion followed on **#24-001**.

Member Harding asked for clarification about the process of the first reading of the policy.

Member Hudson asked the district about the allowance requirement for matriculation and if there is a summary of changes made to the policy as there are some versions that do not flag all of the changes that were recently made. COO Murphy shared additional feedback on the matriculation. The full changes can be found on the website. When the policy was adopted, September 2023 established the matriculation policy, that extended the right of matriculation in a school community to students in the preschool program and Special Start program to maintain continuity and established fully fledged school communities. The policy did not specify matriculation for students enrolled in Special Start at age 3. The amendment allows families who are enrolled at age 3 to also have eligibility to enroll in programs that begin for 4-year-olds.

Member Rachel discussed families on the waitlist, perhaps having some additional communication. David Murphy agrees that active communication can be warranted if the community desires. COO Murphy stated that under our enrollment policies, the immersion programs at the King Open and the MLK program are just specific programs that are entities in the school which is the reason why the Amigos is omitted from the recommendation. **Member Rachel** asked if there is a vacancy after October 15th and what happens next. COO Murphy shared that the understanding was to allow transfers through March, but it was later moved to December. If there are any additional seats, it would give families a wider selection of seats.

On a motion by Member Rachel, seconded by Member Weinstein, on the following roll call vote **#24-001** was adopted: Member Harding YEA; Member Hudson; Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Mayor Simmons YEA.

#24-004 Contract Award: Benjamin Franklin Cummings: Instructional Services-Amended be adopted as follows: That the School Committee approve a contract with the following vendor, funds to be provided in accordance with the budget reference listed below. Procurement procedures for this purchase have complied with Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts:

Benjamin Franklin Cummings Institute of Technology, 41 Berkeley Street, Boston, MA
from August 15, 2023, to August 31, 2024, in the corrected amount of \$156,000.00
(Original Amount \$130,000.00).

A brief discussion followed on **#24-004**.

Member Rachel asked a few questions on behalf of Member Elect Hunter that included more context of the contract including how many students the contract is supporting, what year and grades are those students in, and how is the CRLS liaison supporting them. Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education Dr. Gittens shared that this contract is in conjunction with the Early College Program for students searching for a more technical vocational curriculum there are currently twelve students enrolled and the Early College Coordinator Michael O'Shea is supporting the program in the contract.

Member Harding asked for additional clarity on the contract and if those students were attending Benjamin Franklin are so because the district does not offer a program, they are interested in through RSTA. Dr. Gittens clarified that these students would obtain college credit in addition to high school credit.

On a motion by Member Rachel, seconded by Member Harding, on the following roll call vote, **#24-004** was adopted: Member Harding YEA; Member Hudson; Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Mayor Simmons YEA.

#24-005 Contract Award: Metropolitan Foods dba Driscoll Foods: Groceries be adopted as follows: That the School Committee approve a contract with the following vendor, funds to be provided in accordance with the budget reference listed below. Procurement procedures for this purchase have complied with Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts:

Metropolitan Foods dba Driscoll Foods, 6 Westbelt, Wayne, NJ, from January 1, 2024, to June 30, 2024, in the amount of \$1,000,000.00.

A brief discussion followed on **#24-005**.

Member Rachel (on behalf of Member Elect Hunter) asked if the contract was included in the FY24 budget given that the contract value is \$1 million. COO Murphy shared that DESE is more involved in the procurement of the contract and the contract was included in the FY24 budget.

Member Weinstein inquired about the district participating in the program from the government for free breakfast and lunch for all students and asked if there are any reimbursement initiatives for the district in terms of the contract.

On a motion by Member Rachel, seconded by Member Harding, on the following roll call vote **#24-005** was adopted: Member Harding YEA; Member Hudson; Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Mayor Simmons YEA.

#24-006 Gifts/Miscellaneous Receipts be adopted as follows: That the School Committee accept and approve the following donations as described:

1. \$10,000 from the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University to support the Emerging Leaders Program (ELP). ELP is a youth leadership development program that brings together local high school students and Harvard undergraduates to engage in discussions and action on themes related to gender and leadership, social movements, and civic engagement. Funds will be used for stipends for two CRLS teachers to help lead the program.

2. \$997.43 from HELPSY to the Kennedy Longfellow School in return for items collected in the school's clothing/book donation collection box. Funds will be used for the general support of the school.

A brief discussion followed on **#24-006**.

Member Rachel (on behalf of Member-Elect Hunter) asked for additional context and clarity on the donation from Harvard University and asked how students and teachers be selected for the ELP, when the program takes place (before or after school), and the location. Dr. Gittens explained that the ELP is an afterschool program led by Juniors and Seniors at Harvard University at CRLS for young ladies to assist and guide them on leadership projects. The donation is a stipend for staff members who serve as liaisons between Radcliffe Institute and CRLS.

On a motion by Member Harding, seconded by Member Hudson on the following roll call vote **#24-006** was adopted: Member Harding YEA; Member Hudson; Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Mayor Simmons YEA.

**9. School Committee Agenda (Policy Matters/Notifications/Requests for Information):
#24-008 Report of the December 13, 2023, Communications and Community Relations Subcommittee**

Member Weinstein provided a summary of the recent Communications and Community Relations Subcommittee Meeting that took place on December 13, 2023.

On a motion by Vice Chair Rachel, seconded by Member Wilson, on a voice vote **#24-008** was adopted.

10. Resolutions (letters of congratulations, letters of condolences): None

11. Announcements:

- **Member Rachel** acknowledged the School Committee office staff for the inauguration of the School Committee ceremony that occurred the day prior on January 1st.
- **Member Weinstein** acknowledged and thanked the student singers and ushers who assisted with the School Committee's inaugural meeting on January 1st
- **Mayor Simmons** acknowledged and expressed gratitude to Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui and former School Committee Member Fantini for their efforts on the School Committee over the years.

12. Communications from City Officers: None

13. Late Orders:

Late Motion by Mayor Simmons

That the School Committee discusses and determines a Special Meeting date for the purpose of the swearing-in of Caroline Hunter and Jose Luis Rojas, the election of a Vice Chair, and the adoption of the 2024-2025 Rules of the School Committee.

A brief discussion followed on the late order.

There were some suggestions to add the swearing-in of the remainder School Committee Elect, the election of a Vice Chair, and the adoption of the rules until the next Regular Meeting on Tuesday, January 16th.

There were also some preferences to have a Special Meeting on Tuesday, January 9th for the matter.

Mayor Simmons suggested that a Special Meeting on Tuesday, January 9 is feasible if both remaining Committee Elects are available that evening. She also acknowledges that until Caroline Hunter and Jose Luis Rojas are sworn-in they are not active members. If the remaining Committee-Elects are not available, then they will be sworn in at the beginning of the next scheduled Regular Meeting.

On a motion by Mayor Simmons seconded by Member Rachel, on a voice vote, the late order was adopted and placed on file.

Email communications: None

On a motion by Member Harding, seconded by Member Weinstein, on a voice vote, the meeting was adjourned. (9:10 p.m.)

Attest:

Ariel B. Kennebrew

Ariel B. Kennebrew
Executive Secretary to the School Committee