



CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

Regular Meeting

February 6, 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: Vice Chair Hunter, Member Harding, Member Hudson, Member Rachel, Member Rojas, Member Weinstein, Mayor Simmons

Also Present: Corey Dotson, Chief Talent Officer; Dr. Greer, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Edwards, Chief of Academics and Schools; Dr. Gittens, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Schools; Dr. Grace, Interim Superintendent of Student Services; Attorney Maureen MacFarlane, General Counsel; David Murphy, Chief Operations Officer; Skylar Nash, Chief Strategy Officer; Raymond Porch, Director of Family and Community Engagement; 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 6:02 p.m. and 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 PRESENT; Member Hudson PRESENT; Member Rachel PRESENT; Member Rojas PRESENT; Member Weinstein PRESENT; Vice Chair Hunter PRESENT; Mayor Simmons PRESENT.

1. Public Comment:

The following individuals were heard:

- Dan Monahan, Lexington Ave, spoke regarding the Superintendent's Budget Presentation and **#24-026**.
- Michael O'Connell, Old Dee Road, spoke regarding **#24-030**.
- Blair Williams, Chiswick Road, Boston spoke regarding **#24-030**.
- Christopher Cullen, Granville Road, spoke regarding the Superintendent's Budget Presentation.
- Andy Zucker, Winslow Street, spoke regarding **#24-030**.
- Benny Armstrong and Finn Mayeux, CRLS students, spoke regarding the Superintendent's update regarding Chronic Absenteeism.

On a motion by Member Harding, seconded by Member Weinstein, on 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.

3. Presentation of the Records for Approval:

- January 16, 2024, Regular Meeting
- January 23, 2024, Budget Workshop

On a motion by motion by Member Rojas, seconded by Member Rachel on a voice vote, the records were approved as amended.

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 to Dr. Greer who gave a brief presentation regarding *Chronic Absenteeism*. The presentation can be found on this [website](#). Key highlights of the presentation included:

- 2023 accountability results showed that CPS met or exceeded the target for all demographic groups in grades K-8.
- 2023 accountability results showed that CPS students in grades 9-12, met that target for all students and exceeded the target for African American students. There is still much work to be done at the high school level to reach our desired outcomes.
- YTD results show that we have exceeded our target goal and reduced the overall absenteeism by 4.0 percentage points. The target set by DESE is 2.0 percentage points.
- YTD results by grade level show that in grades 1-7 and 9, there has been a significant reduction in chronic absenteeism.
- The current chronic absenteeism rate in the district is 21%.
- The target over the next three years (end of 2025) is to decrease the chronic absenteeism rate by 7%.

Member Weinstein inquired about the chronic absenteeism rates in CRLS (particularly at the 12th-grade level). Dr. Greer provided additional updates regarding chronic absenteeism rates for the 12th-grade students.

Member Harding inquired about the chronic absenteeism rate among high school students asked for some points of clarity regarding the definition of chronic absenteeism and discussed that there should be additional consequences for chronically absent students. He inquired about the accountability program targeted for chronically absent students. Dr. Greer shared some additional interventions that were made for those students whom the district is trying to target who are chronically absent. CRLS Principal Damon Smith also joined the meeting to provide additional clarity regarding the district and the high school's

efforts to combat chronic absenteeism including mitigation strategies to pilot accountability sessions for students who need additional support with four things:

1. Opportunity for student work
2. Community service for students
3. Skill-building opportunities for students
4. Stay at school longer (i.e. traditional school detention).

Member Hudson asked for additional context regarding student absences. Principal Smith mentioned that since the pandemic, Social-Emotional and Mental Health has been a struggle for students including academic success.

A robust discussion followed, and some key questions asked by the Committee were:

- What are your thoughts on how the district will address demographic groups that have seen a decline in their attendance rates including Asian-Americans and students with disabilities?
- Data regarding the SEL data and the number of absentees for COVID-19.
- Why do certain demographics seem to be struggling more with chronic absenteeism than others?

Following the presentation, Member Harding motioned to suspend the rules to bring forward **#24-023** for discussion and adoption. Seconded by Member Hudson, the rules were suspended and **#24-023** was brought forward.

#24-023 Approval of Revisions to the High School Health Graduation Requirements be adopted as follows: that the School Committee approve the revisions to Policy IKF High School Health Graduation Requirement as a result of the February 1, 2022, Order **#C22-026** as detailed in the attached document (First Reading).

Member Rachel provided historical context on the recommendation and the reasoning for the revisions to the policy that was adopted by the School Committee in February 2022. The revisions will provide additional flexibility for students to complete the courses in grades 12 and grades 11. **Member Rachel** mentioned that the district dropped the ball on implementing the policy as guidance counselors did not alert the current class of 2026 to whom this policy would have been initially implemented.

Vice Chair Hunter discussed that there should be additional processes regarding altering graduation requirements.

A robust discussion followed the recommendation that included:

- The best strategy, best practices, and protocols regarding School Committee policies changes to graduation requirements
- The effect the previous policy adopted in 2022 has on the upcoming graduating classes
- The differences between the health and PE requirements
- Modifying course credits from 5 credits to a 3-2 model
- Potential amendments to assess the impact the policy has on the class of 2026 and if amendment of the current policy would affect the district's current Wellness Policy
- The current issue for students in PE Athletics who do not take PE classes.

Following the discussion, **Mayor Simmons** gave the floor to Dr. Greer and Interim CFO Ivy Washington. She gave an update on the FY25 Budget. After the presentation, a robust discussion included the following topics:

- Extended Day Time
- The current budget overview and its connections to the objectives in the current district plan.
- Goals the district hopes to achieve with the FY25 budget that aligns with the district plan.
- Additional support in the FY25 to address school climate and school safety.

The full presentation and discussion can be found on this [website](#).

7c. **CPS District Plan:** None

7d. **Consent Agenda:**

Member Rojas pulled **#24-022** and **#24-026**. Member Rachel pulled **#24-021**. On the following roll call vote, items **#24-019 through #24-021, #24-024 through #24-025, #24-027 through #24-029** were adopted: Member Harding YEA; Member Hudson YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Vice Chair Hunter YEA; Mayor Simmons YEA.

#24-019 Approval of Settlement of Cambridge Education Association Units A & B Grievance Number AB 4-23-24 be adopted as follows: that the School Committee approve the settlement of the Cambridge Education Association Units A&B Grievance number 04-23-24 which clarifies the stipend amount outlined in Appendix G, Section 3 of the collective bargaining agreements between the parties for the period of September 1, 2021 through August 31, 2023, and September 1, 2023 through August 31, 2026, that are paid to assistant principals working in an expanded learning time program during these school years as detailed in the attached document.

#24-020 Approval of Criminal Offender Record Information & Sexual Offender Registry Information Policy (Second Reading) be adopted as follows: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Criminal Record Information and Sexual Offender Registry Information Policy as detailed in the attached document (Second Reading).

#24-024 Day & Residential Program Services Not Available From the Cambridge School Department 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	2	\$127,780.54
Residential Program Tuition Contracts		
45-Day Program		

Total	2	\$127,780.84
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#24-025 Contract Award: DIT Transportation: Student Transportation 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.

DJT Transportation, 121 Hazelton Street, Mattapan, MA for the period of September 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024, in the amount of \$65,875.00.

#24-027 Contract Award: McGraw Hill Education: Special Education Instructional Materials 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.

McGraw Hill Education, PO Box 182605, Columbus, OH New Solutions K12, 29 Winthrop Road, Brookline, MA for the period of February 1, 2024, to August 31, 2024, for \$34,695.94

#24-028 Gifts/Miscellaneous Receipts be adopted as follows: that the School Committee accept and approve the following donations as described:

1. \$1,173.46 from Lesley University through the Biogen STAR Initiative funding to partially reimburse for stipends paid to teachers who attended the Math Retreat on Complex Instruction at Lesley University in July 2023.

#24-029 Grant Award: Chronic Absenteeism Grant (SC24778) be adopted as follows: that the School Committee accept and approve the increased grant award below in the amount and for the period indicated:

Chronic Absenteeism (SC24778) from Federal through State, allocation in the amount of \$10,000.00 for the period of December 14, 2023, to September 30, 2024.

Description: The DESE Chronic Absenteeism Recovery Initiative provides resources to support schools and districts to scale and strengthen efforts to address chronic absenteeism. Grant funds are intended to support:

- Student tracking and monitoring systems
- Family engagement and communication.
- Attendance recovery academies.

8. Non-Consent Agenda:

#24-021 Approval of the Physical Education Policy (First Reading) be adopted as follows: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Physical Education Policy as detailed in the attached document (First Reading).

A brief discussion followed on **#24-021**.

On a motion by Member Rachel, seconded by Member Harding, on the following roll call vote **#24-021** was adopted: Member Harding YEA; Member Hudson YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Vice Chair Hunter YEA; Mayor Simmons YEA.

#24-022 Approval of the Cambridge Public Schools Wellness Policy (First Reading) be adopted as follows: that the School Committee approve the Cambridge Public Schools Wellness Policy as detailed in the attached document (First Reading)

A discussion followed on **#24-022**.

Member Rojas inquired about the redlined changes in the first reading of the policy and the reasoning for them. Attorney MacFarlane shared that the revisions to the policy were recommended by the Wellness Committee to provide further clarity on the district's wellness policy.

On a motion by Member Rojas, seconded by Member Hudson on the following roll call vote **#24-022** was adopted: Member Harding YEA; Member Hudson YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Vice Chair Hunter YEA; Mayor Simmons YEA.

#24-026 Contract Award: New Solutions K12: Consulting 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.

New Solutions K12, 29 Winthrop Road, Brookline, MA for the period of February 9, 2024, to July 31, 2024, in the amount of \$99,450.00.

A discussion followed on **#24-026**.

Member Rojas asked for more clarity on the recommendation and the significance it has to school personnel. Dr. Greer shared that this recommendation is a consultancy of the district's initiative to improve and modify the schedules of elementary schools.

Member Rachel expressed reluctance to move forward with the recommendation without the understanding that the consultants will have family and community engagement.

On a motion by Member Rojas, seconded by Member Harding on the following roll call vote **#24-026** was adopted: Member Harding YEA; Member Hudson YEA; Member Rachel NAY Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Vice Chair Hunter YEA; Mayor Simmons YEA. (7-1).

9. School Committee Agenda (Policy Matters/Notifications/Requests for Information):

#24-030 Joint Motion by Member Rachel, Mayor Simmons, and Member Harding

WHEREAS: The Cambridge Public Schools has a historical commitment to teaching all students fundamental skills; and

WHEREAS: Being an informed, effective community member in the 21st century requires critical thinking as well as the ability to discern reliable information sources from misinformation and disinformation; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the School Committee updated the policy [IHA, Basic Instructional Program](#), to add accessing, analyzing, and evaluating information in written and digital media to the list of fundamental skills.

A discussion followed on **#24-030**.

Member Rachel provided clarity on the motion which updates the current district policy IHA, Basic Instructional Program to include written and digital media.

On a motion by Member Rachel, seconded by Member Hunter, on the following roll call, the first reading of **#24-030** was adopted: Member Harding YEA; Member Hudson YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Vice Chair Hunter YEA; Mayor Simmons YEA.

Approaching the 10:00 p.m. meeting end time, on a motion by Member Harding, seconded by Member Hudson, on the following roll call vote, the meeting was extended to 10:30 p.m.: Member Harding YEA; Member Hudson YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Vice Chair Hunter YEA; Mayor Simmons YEA.

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

11. Announcements:

- **Member Harding** shared that the Cambridge NAACP will be hosting their annual MLK Day Brunch on February 24th.
- **Mayor Simmons** recognized Black History Month and shared some city-wide initiatives that recognize Black History.
- **Vice Chair Hunter** shared that there is a Black History Popup in Harvard Square on February 9th and February 10th.

12. Communications from City Officer:

- 2024/2025 School Committee Subcommittees

Vice Chair Hunter shared a list of the Subcommittees for the 2024-2025 School Committee.

Email communications:

- Dan Monahan
- Finn Mayeux
- Deidre Logan
- Robert Travers
- Christina Ullman
- Kate Skubecz
- Lauren Gibbs
- Gwendolyn Stewart

On a motion by Member Rachel, seconded by Member Rojas, on the following roll call vote, it was voted to adjourn the open meeting and enter Executive Session for the purpose of conducting a strategy session in preparation for contract negotiations with nonunion personnel as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating positions of the School Committee: Member Harding YEA; Member Hudson YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Vice Chair Hunter YEA; Mayor Simmons YEA. (10:10 p.m.)

Attest:

Ariel B. Kennebrew

Ariel B. Kennebrew
Executive Secretary to the School Committee