



CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Special Meeting

September 30, 2025

Called for 3:30 p.m. and held in and broadcast from the Dr. Henrietta S. Attles Meeting Room, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, 459 Broadway, Cambridge for the purpose of interviewing finalist candidates for the position of Superintendent of Schools: Dr. Lourenço Garcia, Assistant Superintendent for the Revere Public Schools; Mr. David Murphy, Interim Superintendent, Cambridge Public Schools; and Ms. Magaly Sanchez, Chief Family Advancement Officer for the Boston Public Schools. The meeting is expected to end on or before 9:00 p.m. No votes will be taken and there will be no public comment.

Members Present: Member Harding, Member Hudson, Vice Chair Hunter, Member Rachel, Member Rojas, Member Weinstein, Mayor Simmons

Also Present: Dr. Carolyn Turk, Director of Education Policy for Mayor Simmons

Mayor Simmons in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

The Chair read the call of the meeting and explained that this meeting is being televised and recorded. Votes will not be taken and there will be no public comment.

The meeting proceeded with a roll call of members present: Member Hunter, PRESENT; Member Harding, PRESENT; Member Hudson, ~~ABSENT~~; Member Rachel, PRESENT; Member Rojas, PRESENT; Member Weinstein, PRESENT; Madam Mayor, PRESENT

Member Hudson arrived at 3:33 p.m.

Mayor Simmons outlined the interview structure highlighting that each finalist was allotted 90 minutes total and had the option of giving opening and closing statements. There are 20 assigned questions and asked in a round-robin format with approximately 3 minutes per response.

Each finalist was asked the following questions:

1. Cambridge likes to think of itself as on the cutting edge, but even here it could be said that the model of public education is outdated in the 21st century. What is your vision for public education in Cambridge? What roles do you see for staff, students, and families in making change?
2. 22% of Cambridge students are on IEP and our climate surveys show that parents do not feel they are adequately informed and involved in the IEP process. In addition we have a significant number of out of district placements. What strategies would you employ to include parents and counter their feelings of exclusion in their child's educational program. In addition how would you systematize the review of out of district placements and facilitate the return of students to district classrooms?
3. Many CPSD constituencies have called for better communication from CPSD at every level, and for greater transparency from central administration in particular. How would you assess the needs greater for communication and transparency in CPSD, and how would you address those needs? What role would communication and transparency play in your work as Superintendent?

4. Looking at the barriers to racial equity Building Equity Bridges identified, which one resonates with you today? For what reason?

- Inequitable school experiences
- Lack of focus on relationships
- Youth are not centered
- Educators of color are not valued
- Centered and supported
- Whiteness, privilege and bias
- Power in decision-making is inequitably distributed
- Existing structures and policy perpetuate inequities
- Lack of coherence has disproportionate and inequitable impacts
- Equity work has lacked commitment, coherence, and accountability

5. What examples would you offer for effective evaluation processes for teachers and administrators that actually work to improve performance and motivate teachers and administrators? How would a process like this be consistent with the current requirements of the professional standards, curriculum frameworks, and proper roles and responsibilities? In particular, describe a process that would work best, in your opinion, over a reasonable period of time.

6. It is common for CPS classrooms to include children whose preparedness for the material at that grade level differs wildly (some far behind; some far ahead). The District explicitly moved away from “tracking” - grouping students by ability and placing them in different classrooms - years ago, based on the understanding that we could differentiate instruction within a classroom, but many charge that this differentiation doesn’t happen (or doesn’t happen effectively) in practice, leaving many students without instruction that appropriately challenges them. What do you do in this scenario?

7. Can you describe your knowledge and experience of school finance? Describe a budget planning process you have used. What has been your experience with budget management? Budget controls, and budget reductions?

8. How should CPSD balance or consider or prioritize our children's academic achievement; social, emotional and cognitive development; and pursuit of non-academic interests and skills; college and career readiness; and development life skills? In other words, what role does “whole-child” support play in our work as a school district?

9. The Concerned Black Staff Report of 1986-87 reported a tale of two cities -where Black and Brown students are getting the same education as their white peers. Unfortunately while CPS has made progress, we still see significant academic gaps and behavioral problems with our Black and Brown students, especially boys. How do you propose to address this issue?

10. How would you approach community & stakeholder engagement in a district like Cambridge, where privileged and underrepresented communities co-exist in silos?

11. Tell us about a time when you have put a matter of ethical practice, principle or urgency ahead of your personal or professional interest? Have you ever put your position or job security on the line to pursue what you believed to be fair or just? What was it (or if more than one, which were there) that required you to demonstrate personal courage in your work or in your life?

12. The next Superintendent will begin their tenure with a half dozen open labor agreements. How would you deal with contentious negotiations with a given labor partner when there are multiple units bargaining

simultaneously? How would you go about prioritizing high quality teaching and learning while ensuring fair labor conditions?

13. Some parents feel that their children are labeled as bad behavior students; some of this could be related to cultural differences. Other parents feel that their child's learning time is being taken away due to another child's behavior. Have you encountered this before and how could you reassure all of our parents/caregivers?

14. How would you and the School Committee come together to identify district priorities and resource them? How would you advance student achievement through the budget process and how would you consider adding new budget initiatives or phasing out old or ineffective programs?

15. How do you view and work with subcommittees of the School Committee?

16. There are times when simple intelligence is not enough to resolve a problem. Can you describe a complex problem, situation, or crisis that you confronted in which you had to rely on more than intelligence, when you had to call upon your other skills and abilities for, say, communicating, thinking quickly, working with people, political savvy, instincts, academic training, and intellect?

17. Few people if any can be equally strong, knowledgeable, and experienced in every aspect of the role of Superintendent. What are your most significant gap or gaps with regard to this role? How will you address those?

18. While we believe that all students can learn, not all students are learning in Cambridge. Our data shows us persistent achievement gaps along demographic lines. What is your personal philosophy about the root causes - are they a function of a) curriculum, or b) teaching competence, or c) the teaching environment, or d) something else? Please tell us what we can do to help use curriculum/teaching - competence/teaching - environment/something else, to ensure that more students will reach and surpass grade level standards?

19. We have five (5) upper school programs which feed into one (1) comprehensive high school. How would you ensure that we have equitable instruction in these school programs and that all of our 8th graders arrive at high school prepared?

20. Cambridge has a wealth of resources - money of course, but also dedicated and skilled educators and other staff, community organizations, City staff and departments, programming, and more - yet not every child fully benefits from this. How can CPSD effectively ensure that every child benefits from our resources to the utmost, receiving the supports and opportunities that will help them to thrive.

Highlights of Dr. Garcia's interview include:

Opening

- Dr. Garcia's guiding question for decision-making as superintendent:
"Does this move every student forward?"
- He envisioned learning environments where:
 - Every student feels seen, supported, and challenged.
 - Educators are empowered to innovate.
 - Families and community members are true partners.
- He pledged to lead with transparency, collaboration, and an uncompromised focus on equity and excellence.

Vision for Public Education in Cambridge

- Dr. Garcia's five-year goal is to make CPSD "a beacon of educational equity and excellence."
- He identified four strategic priorities:
 1. Closing opportunity and achievement gaps – through early literacy, multilingual education, and targeted interventions.
 2. Deepening student engagement – via culturally responsive curriculum and elevating student voice.
 3. Strengthening partnerships – with families, community groups, and city agencies to support the whole child.
 4. Leveraging innovation and artificial intelligence – to personalize learning, ease administrative burdens, improve multilingual communication, and prepare students for an AI-driven future, while safeguarding equity, privacy, and human connection.

Special Education and Parent Inclusion

- Dr. Garcia said special education must be rooted in equity, access, and excellence, not treated as a "separate program."
- He emphasized integration of students with disabilities into general education settings through co-teaching, scaffolding, and differentiated instruction.
- He highlighted the need for:
 - Authentic evaluations by trained staff.
 - Parent access to records and inclusion in IEP decisions.
 - Strict compliance with timelines — "no excuses."
- He committed to building a culture of rigor and accountability for all learners.

Communication, Transparency, and Equity

His approach includes:

- Proactive information sharing explaining both *what* decisions are made and *why*.
- Transformative leadership over transactional — building trust through collaboration.
- Regular opportunities for families to contribute ideas and feedback.
- Transparency that builds a culture of shared ownership and trust.

Equity and Relationships

- When asked about the *Building Equity Bridges* initiative, Dr. Garcia focused on:
 - The need for culturally responsive practices.
 - The importance of relationships and trust among teachers, students, and leaders.
- He outlined his "Four R's":

1. Rigor
2. Relationships

3. Resilience
4. Relevance

Teacher and Administrator Evaluation

- Garcia said effective evaluation requires visibility, feedback, and constructive coaching.
- Advocated for:
 - Frequent classroom walkthroughs to gather data on instruction.
 - Providing timely, constructive feedback — “You’re not going after the teacher; you’re going after bad instruction.”
 - Evaluation that promotes growth, not punishment.
- He also highlighted the need to measure multiple data points beyond MCAS, focusing on engagement, rigor, and student growth.

Differentiation and Academic Gaps

- On addressing gaps and varied preparedness among students:
 - He would start with a root cause analysis and review curricular alignment from pre-K to high school.
 - Emphasized the importance of early literacy, strong foundations by grade 3, and MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports).
 - Supported using intervention blocks (WIN) and continuous progress monitoring.

Budget Management

- Dr. Garcia manages multimillion-dollar grants as Assistant Superintendent in Revere.
- Described his approach as collaborative and zero-based budgeting — starting with a “tabula rasa,” putting “all the eggs on the table,” and aligning every expenditure with goals of equity and academic excellence.
- Prioritizes transparency, stakeholder input, and continuous adjustments to meet student needs.

Whole Child Approach

- Advocated a holistic education model integrating:
 - Social-emotional learning (SEL)
 - Restorative practices
 - Family engagement
 - Early warning systems for absenteeism and behavioral issues.
- Stressed identifying root causes behind disengagement rather than punishment, particularly for students from marginalized backgrounds.

Addressing Racial and Equity Gaps

- Cited systemic inequities affecting Black, Brown, immigrant, and BIPOC students.
- Called for a systems-level study to identify and dismantle structural biases.
- Emphasized culturally responsive leadership and inclusive structures that meet the needs of all learners.

Highlights of Mr. Murphy's interview include:

Opening Remarks and Leadership Philosophy

- Mr. Murphy noted that his candidacy was grounded in the work he has done for CPSD since joining in January 2023 as Chief Operating Officer and later serving as interim superintendent for the past 15 months.
- He emphasized that his leadership has been authentic, consistent, and service-driven.
- His motivation to pursue the permanent role comes from a genuine love for the community and the organization, shaped by his firsthand experience leading through challenges.

Vision and Core Priorities

1. Relevance of Instruction – Ensuring that learning connects to students' lives and prepares them for "fulfilling and happy futures."
 - He stressed experiential learning, community connections, and real-world application of classroom work.
 - Warned that without relevance, students will "see through it" and disengage.
2. Professional Accountability – A culture where educators hold themselves accountable and continuously reflect on their impact.
3. Operationalizing Equity –
 - Murphy described equity as the central moral purpose of public education. He emphasized that equity must be actively implemented, not just spoken about, and must reflect community consensus and shared values.

Special Education and Family Engagement

- He acknowledged family concerns about transparency and inclusion in the IEP process, particularly regarding out-of-district placements.
- His approach centers on:
 - Building trust between families, schools, and central administration.
 - Ensuring that communication with families takes a "listening posture" rather than a top-down approach.
 - Promoting empowerment of school communities to sustain authentic relationships with parents.
- He stressed that relationships and follow-through are foundational to progress:

Communication and Transparency

- Mr. Murphy affirmed that school systems depend on relationships, not just between students and teachers, but also among staff and families.
- He identified trust and listening as key levers for improvement, emphasizing two-way communication where families feel heard, respected, and valued.
- He advocated for clearer, more proactive communication, and greater accessibility in how CPSD shares information.

Leadership Approach

- Mr. Murphy reflected on the following:
 - Empowering schools and staff.
 - Balancing accountability with empathy.
 - Making equity actionable through daily practice and transparent decision-making.

Highlights of Ms. Sanchez's interview include:

Opening Statement & Vision

- Ms. Sanchez described herself as a collaborative, equity-driven leader grounded in family and community partnerships.
- She emphasized a student-centered vision that unites academic rigor with social-emotional well-being, aiming for "every child to be known, seen, and supported."

Equity and Achievement Gaps

- Acknowledged persistent racial and opportunity gaps similar to those cited in the 1986 Concerned Black Staff Report.
- Committed to dismantling inequitable systems by auditing policies, curriculum, and resource allocation through an equity lens.
- Highlighted the need for diverse educator pipelines, culturally responsive instruction, and mentorship for Black and Brown male students.

Teaching & Learning Excellence

- Stressed that high expectations and joy in learning must coexist.
- Promoted differentiated instruction, early literacy, and multilingual learning as pathways to equity.
- Described strategies like walkthroughs, peer learning, and shared feedback.

Special Education & Family Engagement

- Advocated for family-driven IEP processes with transparent communication and clear progress monitoring.

Communication & Transparency

- Outlined a multilingual communication plan ensuring that every major update is accessible in families' home languages.
- Would establish regular "Coffee with the Superintendent" sessions and digital town halls to maintain open dialogue.

Budget and Operations

- Has experience managing multimillion-dollar grant budgets in Boston Public Schools.
- Supports collaborative budgeting guided by district priorities in equity and excellence, with zero-based review of programs each year.

Whole Child & Social-Emotional Learning

- Called for restorative practices, expanded mental-health supports, and community partnerships addressing food and housing insecurity.
- Proposed monitoring early-warning indicators (attendance, behavior, wellness) to intervene before crises emerge.

At the close of the meeting, Mayor Simmons shared that the Committee would be voting for the next Superintendent the following Monday at 5:00 p.m.

On a motion by Vice Chair Hunter, seconded by Member Rojas, the meeting was adjourned on a voice vote. (8:35 p.m.)

Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Katherine Christo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Katherine Christo
Executive Secretary to the School Committee

Documents Distributed:
Interview Questions