



CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

Special Meeting (Retreat)

January 16, 2026

Called for 9:00 am held in the My Brother's Keeper, 301 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge for the purpose of a Retreat to discuss roles, responsibilities and norms, develop agreements for communication and engagement between the School Committee and Superintendent, and to develop a timeline for mutually acceptable goals and objectives.

Members Present: Member de Paula Santos, Vice Chair Dube, Member Harding (Absent), Member Hudson, Member Jaikumar, Mayor Siddiqui, Chair Weinstein

Also Present: David Murphy, Superintendent of Schools

David Weinstein in the Chair

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 9:11 a.m.

The Chair informed the Committee that members of the public were present and audio recording the meeting. The Chair noted that this meeting was a retreat, votes would not be taken, and there would be no public comment.

Chair Weinstein reviewed the retreat objectives, emphasizing the importance of developing a clearer understanding of fellow Committee members and strengthening effective governance practices.

Objectives discussed included:

- Articulating shared assumptions about effective School Committee governance
- Identifying top priorities for the term
- Establishing a common picture of effective and credible governance
- Beginning to codify shared operating norms
- Identifying near-term action items and timelines

The Chair turned facilitation of the retreat over to Vice Chair Dube.

Vice Chair Dube reviewed the agenda and outlined the objectives of the retreat, emphasizing shared purpose, roles, and operating norms. The Vice Chair noted that the retreat would cover a substantial amount of material in a short time, with scheduled breaks throughout. Opportunities were provided for members to share personal background, perspectives, and goals.

Vice Chair Dube led a group discussion called 'Who Are You and What's Your Why' where Committee members and leadership engaged in introductions focused on their personal motivations and connections to public education.

Mayor Siddiqui shared her passion for constituent services and public policy, emphasizing the central role schools play in her work. **Member de Paula Santos** spoke about her professional work in special education and her personal connection to autism. **Member Hudson** highlighted the importance of preparing students for life and work after graduation, sharing experiences from students she has

encountered. **Chair Weinstein** reflected on his lifelong commitment to education and his path to serving on the School Committee. **Member Jaikumar** discussed his career in public service and his perspective as a parent of a child in public education. **Vice Chair Dube** emphasized education as a tool for social change and shared that she is currently working on the development of a non-profit organization.

Facillatator **Vice Chair Dube** passed the floor over to Superintendent Murphy who introduced an exercise called 'Identifying Team Unique Gifts' designed to identify the unique strengths, experiences, and perspectives each participant brings to the work of the Committee.

Committee members first reflected individually, then discussed in pairs, and finally shared with the full group. The goal of the exercise was to foster understanding of different working styles and to build a collective appreciation of the team's strengths. Each participant were instructed to write six words

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Shared attributes included:

- Chair Weinstein: Curiosity
- Mayor Siddiqui: Levity
- Member Jaikumar: Principled
- Member de Paula Santos: Willingness to listen to different perspectives
- Member Hudson: Persistence and commitment to purpose
- Superintendent Murphy: First-generation immigrant perspective
- Vice Chair Dube: Perseverance

Members engaged in an individual reflection exercise imagining the School Committee as effective and credible in December 2027.

Key reflections included:

- **Chair Weinstein emphasized respect, clear communication, and sustained focus on educational objectives.**
- **Mayor Siddiqui highlighted agendas that center education and student needs rather than administrative tasks.**
- **Member Jaikumar noted the importance of clear norms that support respectful disagreement and thoughtful decision-making.**
- **Vice Chair Dube stressed identifying barriers to efficient governance and improving transparency.**
- **Member de Paula Santos suggested broadening presentations to include diverse perspectives and public priorities.**
- **Member Hudson emphasized regular reflection on success, prioritizing a small number of key issues, and dedicating sufficient meeting time to meaningful progress.**

The Committee discussed assumptions about how the School Committee should function when operating effectively in an activity called 'Operating Assumptions > Operating Instruction'

Discussion points included:

- The importance of preparation and efficiency in communication
- Respect for the Superintendent's time
- Alignment of Committee priorities with the strategic plan
- Clear processes for decision-making and follow-up

Superintendent Murphy emphasized the importance of members being prepared prior to meetings and maintaining efficient, balanced communication. **Chair Weinstein** recommended checking in with the Superintendent before taking external actions to ensure informed decisions. **Mayor Siddiqui** expressed appreciation for the Committee's collaborative approach and emphasized the importance of finalizing the meeting calendar through clear communication. **Member de Paula Santos** requested clarity around meeting availability and advance notice when changes are required. **Member Hudson** reflected on the importance of aligning skills, goals, and meeting structure to achieve meaningful results.

Members discussed the need for each meeting to clearly advance identified priorities. Committee Members agreed on a retreat part two for the date of Friday, February 6th from 8:00 to 11:00 a.m.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 12:05 p.m.

Attest:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Aunjalee Galloway", enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Aunjalee Galloway
Confidential Secretary to the School Committee