



CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

Regular Meeting

February 3, 2026

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 Hudson, Member Jaikumar, Mayor Siddiqui, Member de Paul Santos, Vice Chair Dube, Member Harding, Chair Weinstein

Others Present: Manual Fernandez, Chief Equity Office & Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Schools; David Murphy, Superintendent of Schools; Desiree Phillips, Executive Director of Special Education; Ivy Washington, Chief Financial Officer

Chair Weinstein in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:010 p.m. and read the call of the meeting.

The meeting proceeded to the first order of business with a roll call of members present: Member de Paula Santos, PRESENT; Vice Chair Dube, PRESENT; Member Harding, PRESENT; Member Hudson, PRESENT; Member Jaikumar, PRESENT; Mayor Siddiqui, PRESENT; Chair Weinstein, PRESENT

At approximately 8:30 a.m., **Member Hudson** transitioned from in-person participation to virtual participation. She left the meeting at 9:25 p.m.

1. Public Comment

The following individuals were heard:

- Anne Coburn, Otis Street, **Superintendent's Presentation**, urged the committee to define "crisis," prioritize prevention through sustained funding for middle school instructional coaches, and explore creating an equitable public therapeutic school for students in crisis.
- Isabella Ehrlich, Kirkland Rd, **Superintendent's Update**, argued that all-screen curriculum disadvantages students and college/Al readiness and urged greater use of physical texts and paper-based work.
- Chris Montero, Warren Road, **#26-018 and #26-019**, called for expanding educator voice through the governance subcommittee, highlighted examples where union representation improved collaboration, and urged collective action and mutual support to address immigration-related challenges affecting students, families, and educators.
- George Sarrinikolaou, Bigelow Street, **Superintendent's Update**, questioned the district's reliance on platforms like YouTube, and urged the district to prioritize children's education over private companies' interests.
- Jess Goetz, Pemberton Street, **Superintendent's Presentation, #26-018 and #26-019**, expressed support for reducing student screen time, requested clearer timelines for superintendent reports, raised concerns about the fast pace of upper school math and Algebra 1 placement, and praised motions to elevate educator voice and improve meeting accessibility.

On a motion by Mayor Siddiqui, seconded by Member Hudson, public comment was closed on a voice vote.

2. Student School Committee Report:

Student Members Asraf and Jama were absent. There was no report.

3. Presentation of the Records for Approval:

- January 6, 2026, Regular Meeting
- January 14, 2026, Special Meeting
- January 16, 2026, Special Meeting (Retreat)
- January 20, 2026, Regular Meeting
- January 22, 2026, Special Meeting

On a motion by Mayor Siddiqui seconded by Vice Chair Dube the records were accepted on a voice vote.

4. Reconsiderations: None

5. Unfinished Business/Calendar: None

6. Awaiting Reports: None

7a. Superintendent's Update:

The Superintendent will provide an update on pending matters and highlight various initiatives taking place across the Cambridge Public Schools. The superintendent will provide a brief summary of the work being done to prepare various reports requested by the school committee including an update on the analysis of screen time and technology usage by students in the Cambridge Public Schools derived from School Committee Order 25-300 approved on December 2, 2025.

Superintendent Murphy opened his remarks by sharing positive news regarding King Open School educator Fabiane Noronha, who was recently named the recipient of the Barbara Capron Award for Excellence in Teaching Elementary Social Studies, presented by the Massachusetts Council for Social Studies. Ms. Noronha was nominated by Ms. Stang, Director of Social Studies. Superintendent Murphy addressed broader concerns regarding school climate and student safety, noting that recent national events and emerging challenges have reinforced the district's responsibility to ensure that all students learn in environments that safe, welcoming and inclusive. He noted caregivers' concern about the level of technology used in schools and that a working group was dedicated to looking at this issue. He thanked the Cambridge Education Association (CEA) for constructive early discussion in the collective bargaining process.

7b. Presentation

The Superintendent and members of the administration will continue their presentations on student achievement data, focusing on the most recent data pertaining to the Science and Social Studies MCAS results. The administration will also brief and take questions from the School Committee regarding curriculum planning and development in these two content areas.

Mr. Murphy and CFO Washington gave the following presentation that can be found on this [website](#).

• Budget Leadership Announcement

The Superintendent announced that the Budget Co-Chairs for the current budget cycle are Mayor Siddiqui and the Superintendent. This reflects the transition to a new School Committee and ensures continuity in the budget development process.

• Overview of Budget Process and Strategic Context

The Superintendent emphasized that:

- The budget process serves as both a financial planning exercise and a strategic planning opportunity.
- The district is focused on transparency regarding investment priorities, areas for improvement, and sustaining successful programs.

- Specific investments have not yet been assigned final costs, as the budget process remains under development.

- Budget Timeline and Public Engagement

- Budget Allocation Update

- Updated FY27 allocation: \$293.5 million
- Increase includes a \$500,000 transfer from the City for student MBTA passes.
- Revised total budget increase:
 - From \$12.75 million to \$13.25 million
 - Percentage increase revised from 4.5% to 4.7%

- Revenue and State Aid

- Preliminary Chapter 70 state aid increased from approximately \$22.7 million to \$23.2 million.
- Overall funding changes reflect modest adjustments without significant impact on budget structure.

- Long-Term Budget Growth

- Total budget has increased by \$61.1 million (26%) over five years.

- Enrollment and Demographic Data

Birth Rate Trends

- New 2025 birth rate data indicates stabilization following prior declines.
- This plateau supports more predictable enrollment planning moving forward.

Charter School Enrollment

- Charter school enrollment among Cambridge students has generally declined.

- Staffing Model Overview

The district presented staffing allocations in three categories:

- Base-level staff (principals, counselors, etc.)
- Enrollment-based staff (teachers)

- Strategic Budget Priorities

The district outlined several priority areas for investment:

- Expanded supports for students with significant needs
- Strengthening data systems
- Improved utilization of school day time
- Continued focus on strategic priorities

- School Committee Discussion

Special Education and Resource Allocation

Committee members asked about:

- Strengthening in-district special education services
- Potential reduction in out-of-district placements
- Supporting staff through professional development

High School Support and Student Outcomes

Committee members raised concerns regarding:

- Chronic absenteeism rates at CRLS
- Adequacy of guidance and family liaison staffing
- Career and technical education program integration (RSTA)
- Academic outcomes in certain schools

The Superintendent acknowledged areas needing improvement while emphasizing the district’s commitment to strengthening student support systems and improving student engagement.

• Community Engagement

Committee members requested expanded outreach to higher-needs communities to ensure meaningful participation in budget development and strategic planning. Administration confirmed continued engagement efforts and commitment to improving communication and outreach.

• Summary and Next Steps

Key upcoming milestones include:

- Additional budget workshops
- Continued stakeholder engagement
- Development of detailed investment proposals
- Statutory budget hearing on March 17

7c. CPS District Plan: None

7d. Consent Agenda:

On a motion by Mayor Siddiqui seconded by Member Harding, **#26-015** and **#26-016** were adopted on the following roll call vote: Member de Paula Santos, YEA; Vice Chair Dube, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Jaikumar, YEA; Mayor Siddiqui, YEA; Chair Weinstein, YEA

#26-015 Recommendation: Day & Residential Program Services not Available from the Cambridge School Department be adopted as follows: That the School Committee award contracts to the institutions on attached list in amounts not to exceed the shown rates, having been approved by the Operational Services Division of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, funds to be provided from the general fund and/or grant fund budget.

	#	Amount
Day Program Tuition Contracts:	1	\$40,084.00
Residential Program Tuition Contracts		
45 Day Program Contracts:		
Total	1	\$40,084.00

#26-016 Recommendation: Contract Award: Gifts/Miscellaneous Receipts be adopted as follows: That the School Committee accept and approve the grant award below in the amount and for the period indicated:

DONATION - \$3,000 donation for the Visual and Performing Arts (VPA) Department from Cambridgeside/New England Development. The donation represents proceeds from their 2025 Half Marathon. Funds will be used for the general support of VPA activities across the district.

8. Non-Consent Agenda

#26-017 Recommendation: Grant Award: FY26 Broad Institute Coding Clubs be adopted as follows: That the School Committee accept and approve the grant award below in the amount and for the period indicated:

FY26 Broad Institute Coding Clubs (SC25153) Private - in the amount of \$1,500.00 for the period of September 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026.

A brief discussion followed **#26-017**.

Member Jaikumar asked why these three schools were selected and inquired more broadly about district funding and support for hands-on STEM enrichment opportunities across schools. He noted that some families have

expressed interest in additional STEM programming and sought clarification on how schools are selected and supported.

The Superintendent responded that when stipend opportunities exist for extracurricular programming, school leaders are encouraged to communicate with the district if financial barriers arise. He noted that in many cases, funding solutions can be identified, and that participation in such programs may also reflect school-level priorities and alignment with school goals rather than financial constraints alone.

Mr. Fernandez explained that the district regularly receives invitations from educational institutions, including MIT and other organizations, to participate in coding and STEM-related extracurricular programs. He stated that the three participating schools responded to the invitation and had faculty members willing to serve as advisors and liaisons. He also noted that some of the schools had participated in similar programs previously.

On a motion by Mayor Siddiqui, seconded by Member de Paula Santos, **#26-017** was adopted on the following roll call vote: Member de Paula Santos, YEA; Vice Chair Dube, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Jaikumar, YEA; Mayor Siddiqui, YEA; Chair Weinstein, YEA

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

#26-018 Educator Voice in School Committee Deliberations – Chair Weinstein, Vice Chair Dube & Member Jaikumar

WHEREAS: The School Committee values the perspectives, priorities, concerns, recommendations and feedback of various stakeholders, including current and former Cambridge Public Schools (CPS) educators, in conducting its work; and

WHEREAS: There are currently insufficient opportunities for current or former CPS educators to engage directly during School Committee meetings other than during public comment; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the School Committee undertakes to provide additional opportunities for direct educator participation in School Committee meetings beyond the limited time afforded in public comment; and be it further

RESOLVED: That this matter be referred to the Governance Subcommittee to be considered as a part of the annual review of the School Committee rules; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the Governance Subcommittee will discuss and research this matter; shall consider various alternatives, including but not limited to amending the agenda to include a designated or optional educator presentation, a non-voting membership, or any other proposal; and shall recommend to the full School Committee one or more options to better ensure frontline educator perspectives, priorities, concerns, recommendations and feedback are heard by the Committee.

A discussion followed **#26-018**.

Committee members expressed a range of perspectives, including:

- Support for elevating educator voice and recognizing educators' expertise in improving student outcomes.
- Concerns about potential conflicts of interest related to non-voting seats.
- The importance of ensuring equitable access for all stakeholder groups, including families and students.
- The need to carefully consider how structural changes align with the Committee's core mission of supporting student learning.
- Recognition that subcommittee review would allow for a thoughtful and inclusive evaluation

Member Harding proposed an amendment to include the following language:

RESOLVED: That the Governance Subcommittee will also discuss and research mechanisms for structured parent and caregiver input during School committee meetings , including but not limited to: A non-voting membership for important parent and community stakeholders, such as the Families of Color Coalition, Cambridge Special Education Parent Advisory Council, Families of Asian Descent, and the Cambridge Advance Learning Association;

On a motion by Member Harding, seconded by Mayor Siddiqui, the amendment was accepted on the following roll call vote: Member de Paula Santos, PRESENT; Vice Chair Dube ,NAY; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Jaikumar, NAY; Mayor Siddiqui, YEA; Chair Weinstein, YEA

On a motion by Member Harding, seconded by Member Jaikumar, **#26-018** was accepted as amended on the following roll call vote: Member de Paula Santos, YEA; Vice Chair Dube, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Jaikumar, YEA; Mayor Siddiqui, YEA; Chair Weinstein, YEA

#26-019 Meeting Formality Rule Amendment – Member Jaikumar and Member Hudson

WHEREAS: The School Committee represents the people of Cambridge and its proceedings should be as accessible to the public as possible, to provide stakeholders with the information they need; and

WHEREAS: It is incumbent upon the School Committee to conduct its business with as much accessibility and efficiency as possible and to provide a welcoming atmosphere to community stakeholders; and

WHEREAS: Excessive formality in School Committee meetings can serve as a barrier both to the public understanding and to efficiency in its proceedings; and

WHEREAS: The School Committee wishes to maintain decorum and civility while promoting an atmosphere of collaboration, cooperation, and accessibility; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the School Committee amend Rule 4.3 by eliminating (f), "Promote a formal atmosphere, with members referring to other members in the third person, and speaking to each other and to members of the public through the Chair."

A discussion followed **#26-019**

Member Jaikumar spoke in support of promoting a more collaborative, open, and accessible meeting environment. He noted that reducing excessive formalities could help foster more candid dialogue among Committee members, administration, and the public, and make meetings feel more welcoming and less intimidating. **Mayor Siddiqui** expressed concerns about the proposed change, stating that speaking through the Chair helps maintain order, prevents interruptions, and ensures effective facilitation of meetings. **Member Harding** also expressed reservations, noting that directing remarks through the Chair is a standard governance practice across formal boards and helps ensure efficient meeting management. He emphasized that while fostering a welcoming atmosphere is important, he did not believe existing formal procedures created barriers to participation or collaboration. **Chair Weinstein** recommended referring the matter to a subcommittee for further review as part of the Committee's broader annual review of its rules. He noted the importance of considering both the benefits of formal structure and the desire for greater accessibility, and suggested that additional guidance and training, including Robert's Rules of Order and MASC training, could help inform the discussion. **Vice Chair Dube** stated that the proposal reflected an interest in improving accessibility and democratic engagement, but recommended further study before implementing such changes. She moved to refer the matter to the Communications and Community Relations Subcommittee. **Mayor Siddiqui** stated she would not support referral to the Communications and Community Relations Subcommittee, indicating that the Governance Subcommittee would be a more appropriate venue for reviewing procedural rules.

On a motion by Vice Chair Dube, seconded by Member Jaikumar, **#26-019** was referred to the Communications and Community Relations subcommittee on the following roll call vote: Member de Paula Santos, YEA; Vice Chair Dube, YEA; Member Harding, NAY; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Jaikumar, YEA; Mayor Siddiqui, NAY; Chair Weinstein, NAY

11. Announcements:

- **Member de Paula Santos** reminded members and the public of the Thrive Equity Audit presentation scheduled for Monday evening.
- **Member Harding** recognized Nicole Pacheco on her retirement from the Cambridge Police Department. He shared appreciation for her service, including many years as a School Resource Officer in Cambridge schools.
- **Mayor Siddiqui** announced a community skate day during school vacation week on Thursday, February 19 at the Kendall Square rink.
- **Chair Weinstein** shared upcoming VPA performances and announced School Committee subcommittees

12. Late Orders: None

13. Communications and Reports from City Officers: None

On a motion by Mayor Siddiqui, seconded by Vice Chair Dube the meeting was adjourned the following roll call vote: Member de Paula Santos, YEA; Vice Chair Dube, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, ABSENT; Member Jaikumar, YEA; Mayor Siddiqui, YEA; Chair Weinstein, YEA (9:30 p.m.)

Email Communications:

- ✓ Katie Stevenson
- ✓ Sarah Hogan

Attest:



Katherine Christo
Executive Secretary to the School Committee