

Communications and Community Relations Sub-Committee Report
Thursday, July 23, 2020
Broadcast from the Media Arts Studio
454 Broadway, Cambridge, MA

Called for the purpose of discussing referred Motion #20-99 regarding establishing a “Caregiver University”.

Members Present: Member Weinstein, Chair; Member Fantini; Member Rachel

Also Present: Mayor Siddiqui; Student Member Killian; Dr. Brown, Chief Strategy Officer; Robin Harris, Director of Family Engagement

The meeting started at 12:30 pm. Chair Weinstein provided the agenda for the meeting and background on the motion. Chair Weinstein turned the meeting over to Cambridge Families of Color Coalition who has been working to see how this motion could fit into the community. Chair Weinstein also shared the order to provide further context:

That the following be referred to the Community Relations Sub-Committee:

Whereas the Cambridge Public School District is committed to providing families with information that will promote increased family engagement; and

Whereas engaging families as a partner with a formal, ongoing feedback mechanism that creates differentiated opportunities for family voice and engagement is a crucial component of the 2017 - 2020 District Plan; therefore

Be it resolved that the committee directs the Superintendent to create a Parent University whereby the school department organizes and provides relevant information/courses to parents to allow all parents to become partners in the education of their children.

Be it further resolved that the school department works with the two newly created parent engagement leaders and parent liaisons in this work.

Ms. Bernette Dawson gave background on the Cambridge Families of Color Coalition. Emie Michaud Weinstock presented “Caregiver Shared Learning Space” where she provided context on what a caregiver shared learning space must have. Will Adams provided further information emphasizing this university should be designed by and for students and caregivers of color in collaboration with those most directly contributing to student needs. The group emphasized the importance of the ideas coming from families of color and shared ideas for families of color: funding from the district. In closing, Ms. Michaud Weinstock discussed how these are not new ideas and that generations have not been serviced by CPSD.

Chair Weinstein turned the meeting over to public comment utilizing the progressive stacking method.

Member Killian advocated for the shared spaces and centering caregiver voices. Member Killian asked how they will share the information of these spaces to caregivers.

Obi Carrion discussed the challenges of trying to communicate with families who may not speak English and the importance of reaching those families.

Ena Valenzuela suggested possible methods of engagement: having one-on-ones and having outside events. She discussed the importance of helping the family transition into schools as well as students.

A community member advocated for families of color to be co-creators of this program instead of talking about how they will be able to access the information.

Betsy Preval discussed the importance of having financial support for this initiative and the need to increase the pay for family liaisons/para-professionals.

Will Adams discussed the need of resources in order to do this work.

A family liaison discussed the importance of co-creation and instead of just thinking about language, we need to think about cultures.

A community member asked about funding and whether the funding of this could come from other programs that are not working.

Member Rachel discussed how it is the will of the Committee for the funding of this program not to come out of the funds from FY21 for the families of color coalition.

A community member asked if we could share zoom links and that we are excluding families by running Sub-Committees like this.

Ena Venezuela asked what the Committee is thinking of doing for families with students with disabilities.

Member Fantini echoed the sentiments brought forward so far, the importance of sharing space, and shared that funding should not be a problem. He further talked about how to move this forward.

Chair Weinstein turned the meeting over to Dr. Brown and Ms. Harris.

Dr. Brown presented ideas for the design of a caregiver university. Ms. Harris went through the considerations for design: Families lead the design, build capacity for family and youth, families/caregivers as experts in community needs, equity not equality and emphasizing that Caregiver University is for families of color.

Member Rachel asked Dr. Brown/Ms. Harris, what can we do between August and September?

- Dr. Brown talked about how the intention would be to start in the fall

Chair Weinstein discussed whatever we decide to call this, that the Committee should still strive to follow the original intent.

Ms. Bonilla discussed the importance of creativity in regards to engaging families.

Ms. Mahmud shared her personal experience with CPSD.

Chair Weinstein extended the meeting.

A community member discussed how CPSD needs to apologize for not listening to community members in the past.

Lillian Rater discussed how language cannot be an obstacle in regards to engaging families.

Member Rachel discussed next steps the importance of changing the culture of the district and the working group.

Chair Weinstein asked about moving forward the language piece as its own piece.

Robin Harris discussed listening to a lot of meetings throughout, the access and the ability to speak at the School Committee. She wants to design the public comment for the School Committee in a progressive stacking way.

Dr. Brown discussed how translation services are a huge priority for the administration.

Member Rachel asked if the family coalition could debrief this meeting and help create a list of actionable items.

Member Wilson emphasized bringing educators together.

Chair Weinstein thanked everyone for attending the meeting/their contributions. Chair Weinstein ended the meeting at 2:09 p.m.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Allison Daley".

Allison Daley
Confidential Secretary to the Office of the School Committee