

Present: Mayor Siddiqui, Ms. Bowman, Mr. Weinstein, Mr. Rojas, Ms. Rachel, Mr. Fantini, Ms. Wilson (ABSENT)

Student School Committee Member: Hersh Kanner

Also Present: Superintendent Salim, Dr. Turk, Mr. Maloney, Ms Brown, Mr. Monahan

Called for the purpose of a retreat focusing on an overview of the District Wide Framework and the current goals and objectives for the district, School Committee Norms, Role of the Subcommittees, and discussion on planning a future retreat with district administrators and the Building Equity Bridges leadership team.

Mayor Siddiqui called the Meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. and read the call of the meeting. She thanked the Vice Chair and Superintendent Salim for planning this Meeting and turned the meeting over to Dr. Salim.

Superintendent Salim reviewed the Agenda (on file in the SC office). He mentioned that some of the Building Equity Bridges members will join us later.

Dr. Salim asked the Members what's one question you hope we answer today about the District Plan? Mr. Fantini wants to focus on the most important measurements that can move our district forward. Mayor Siddiqui wants the missing data that we don't have but need to make more informed decisions. Ms. Rachel asked how do we use the District Plan in evaluating CPS programs to make funding decisions. Mr. Rojas wants to know what has and has not worked. Mr. Weinstein wants to have the right resources for programming a roadmap and communicating what our plan is on an ongoing basis. Ms. Bowman wants to see more of a plan on District Outcomes and strategies that impact the academic outcomes.

Superintended Salim reviewed the original development of the District Plan for the new Members and what targets we are setting to measure our progress. Dr. Salim responded when I started in January 2017, I met with all the schools and there was a missing piece of what were the priorities over a multi-year process. There wasn't a set way of measuring progress over several years. We wanted to have a greater focus on the District vision, strategy and planned outcomes for students. We had two teams developing the plan in December, 2016 the Admin Council (Principals, Coordinators, Cabinet) and a district planning team (families, educators, community members, city leaders) that had four retreats and the Planning team's role was to represent the voices of CPS stakeholders and provide diverse perspectives in the development of the plan.

We developed the Vision Plan of rigorous, joyful and culturally responsive learning, personalized support that builds postsecondary success and engaged community members. The way we measure how we are moving closer to that vision are the seven outcomes: Grade 3 literacy, Grade 8 Math, AP and Honors Enrollment, Teacher Diversity, School Climate, Students Meaningful Connections with Adults, and Chronic Absenteeism.

The 2017-20 Plan: Theory of Objectives. The objectives are Equity & Access, Engaged Learning, Whole Child, Family & Community Partnership and Improvement. There are 22 Initiatives under the five Objectives. Of the 22 there are certain ones that have moved the needle forward. He reviewed which of the initiatives have developed, some more than others.

2017-20 Plan: Relationship – Initiatives & Outcomes and related strategic initiatives and how we measure our progress (handout on file in the School Committee office)

Dr. Turk stated we have focused on the community being involved and hearing different perspectives in order to get to the place we want to be. Every level of the organization was represented. There was an opportunity to review some of the data that existed. The balance of what people feel and data on paper is representative of a larger group of voices is very important. The process is ongoing and includes ongoing review, implementation and evaluation which you see in SIP and progress monitoring (over two years met every other week and now every week).

Mr. Maloney added the plan impacted everything: 5 years ago I would have 3-5 suspension appeal hearings and I can't remember how long ago I had a one. One area is chronic absenteeism. Each child is different and it takes a huge amount of work to coordinate with the teacher, Dean, student and parent. Often it is the school lunch staff person or custodian that forms a relationship with a student and that has informed our training for lunch and bus employees.

Mr. Rojas said it was interesting when you talked about the Initiatives is there some way to capture that. Superintendent replied last spring we centered things around what we have improved on. We need more work on summer planning for students, there is work at the high school; freshmen do four year planning. How we partner with out of school time has not developed as much as we would like.

Ms. Brown added we are curating these presentations in a central place for and will list an update of the progress on the initiatives and where we need more work.

Ms. Rachel asked what is it the progress monitoring team looks at every week. Dr. Salim replied they are looking at the outcome level and monitor equity-based initiatives. Right now it is the Cabinet and we pull in others as needed.

Ms. Bowman said when we have a conversation about the District Plan there is a disconnect when it comes to the plan and measurable outcomes. How we frame the conversation and how we look at it for continuous progress at the School Committee level in collaboration with the administration has a big gap. We have two years of data and if we are committed to the dashboard that information needs to inform our decision making in a clear way and right now we don't have the infrastructure to shape our conversation. We have two years but the third year needs to be connected to the dashboard data and knowing how we moved the data forward to know what is working and what is not.

Mr. Fantini stated these goals are viewed as top down. I visit all the School Improvement Council meetings and there is very little time spent talking about these goals. Are they fired up about these goals and are they tying into these in a meaningful way. It does not appear to be part of the SIP's. The last MCAS very few schools showed strong growth. Most schools did not have significant growth in any areas. Dr. Salim replied our pace of improvement was faster than others across the state. As far as SIP's the focus is not on outcomes and we can talk more about that. At the district level we focus on the grade levels.

Ms. Bowman asked how many families are connected to the BEB and School Councils. Dr. Salim answered the purpose of the work was to reach the families that could not come to the School Council meetings. Mr. Weinstein would like to think about how we can support the School Council's. There are some district wide parent initiatives that could use support to keep going.

Ms. Brown reviewed the Roadmap for the next District Plan Development: Process Assumptions: The Vision for Student Success (what, why and how); Values Equity Definition & Anti Racist Statement (why & how); Objectives (big levers for change); Initiatives (or activities); think about the connections. We are thinking about outcome measures (graduation rates?). There are not just final outcomes but ones to tell us we are going in the right direction. The current plan is school climate and relationships. Progress measures are the objectives, at the work level there are implementation measures (for example the Design Lab did we launch it, how many teachers are doing it? do we have evaluation impact? have we funded it?) Most of the work came from teacher led interest but that could be used to key objectives and outcome measures and how can we connect them.

Mayor Siddiqui stated the Achievement Gap is not just in Cambridge but around the entire country. We need to be more transparent. Most places in the country have some districts that have done one or two things but it is difficult to solve this problem. Superintendent Salim replied there is no district in the country that has made the progress that we would want to see for our most vulnerable students. There are individual schools some high-performing Charter schools that have but are more homogeneous. There are trade offs to that and recognize the diversity of our schools. If this is what we want to take on, we need to say what we are and are not willing to do.

Ms. Bowman said when we look at academic outcomes and achievement for the District it is for white students not kids of color. Kids of color are pushed into those systems and an environment that diverse populations need. We can take a step back, what are the things we need if we are committed to a diverse learning environment. An example is the last Motion we debated about the models for what types of schools we want, the FMA did not come up during our discussion and we know they are doing a good job. We have the power to take schools and center them into those models. Dr. Salim added the progress measures are to give us a picture of what is. The connection we will do later with BEB is about how white culture plays into that. It builds on our work with family partnerships, Liaisons and city side particularly immigrant families that have expressed an interest that are touting to prioritize academics and values.

Mr. Fantini stated the Peabody and Tobin showed great success. Best practices need to spread to other schools. I visited the Cambridge Community Charter School (CCCS) and they are willing to sacrifice art and music for academics. They take small groups of students that need academic improvement and work with their BEST teacher to work with them in small groups. Regarding the Design Lab the School Committee never gets an update on what they are doing.

Ms. Rachel commented a few years ago CCCS focused on teachers of color and now teachers of color WANT to teach there. Looking at what they did is important. Schools are the unit of change. We need strong Principals in every building and what are the things that make families want to come to our schools. In each building we can make that happen.

Ms. Brown reviewed how decision making needs to be done. Strong Principals in every building. What outcomes do we want to impact? What indicators will we use to measure? What tool will we use to measure those indicators? What is our baseline data? What are the targets for improvement? The next slide was Balance Aggressive & Attainable Approaches. How do we determine aggressive? Keep in mind when we get data. Ms. Bowman thinks we should have a State of the Schools Report because it ties into the work we are doing and is another way to engage the community.

Ms. Brown reviewed the proposed approach and timeline (on file in School Committee office) of the District Plan update should be done by June or possibly by the summer meeting. She wants to plan community meetings far in advance to get the location and plan it out. What degree of community participation do we want to design for? Does the School Committee prefer Thursday or Saturdays? What dates/times can we agree to for School Committee retreats? Ms. Bowman prefers meeting on the weekend. Mayor Siddiqui stated Thursday works better for her. Ms. Rachel agrees with meeting on weekends. Ms. Brown will map out options to meet. At this time we are planning three sets of Tuesday/Saturday community meetings in April, May and June. Mr. Weinstein likes focus working groups meeting because it will involve many community people.

Ms. Bowman spoke about the School Committee Operations. She asked everyone to review Pg. 17 of the School Committee Norms, line #4 How We Communicate: The School Committee sets the tone for the district and how we have conversations. The new School Committee needs to think about having a collaborative approach to move things forward and how we present ourselves, engage and acknowledge each other. The way people engage and respect us is very different than the City Council. She recommends Members to be addressed as School Committee Member "Whatever". Mayor Siddiqui recommends using Member "Last Name". Last year there was an assumption by high school students that the Superintendent had authority or power over a School Committee however, we are his boss. She handed out the Cape Cod Regional Technical High School Policy (on file in the School Committee office) which came from the MASC Code of Ethics for review. Last year was messy and this is our chance so future School Committee's have rules in place. Mr. Rojas thinks this should be referred to the Governance Committee. Ms. Rachel suggested adding what the process is if an elected official harms a community member. Mr. Fantini added we can invite someone from the MASC to come to the subcommittee meeting. Dr. Salim remarked for clarification you want us to address everyone as Member Fantini, Member Rachel, Member Rojas, Member Weinstein, Member Wilson and Vice Chair Bowman. The response was yes. The student school committee members should say Member Kanner and Member Green.

Next, Ms. Bowman spoke about, How we Govern: The importance of the Subcommittee's. Over time the subcommittees have leveraged what some of the key issues are to bring back to the Committee of the Whole. How do we engage community, staff and Members? Ms. Bowman reviewed the Subcommittee Assignments for 2020-2022. Mr. Weinstein did not have the opportunity to say what subcommittee's he was interested in so there could be some switching. I have added a description of each subcommittee but the Chair can amend it and do a mission statement if they want to. Ms. Gist will send out the last three sub-committee meeting minutes so you can set an agenda moving forward. Ms. Bowman gave an example of how she implemented the free student sanitary hygiene program and Mr. Maloney and I invited students to be part of the Buildings & Grounds Subcommittee. We were successful in passing it by the Committee of the Whole. We do not have a Social Media Policy for the District. We don't have parameters for our staff and student privacy in one place was something I tried to move forward however it did not get accomplished.

Mr. Fantini said we have three members on each subcommittee because four members would make a quorum. He agrees to refer this to the Governance Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committees are not televised so be cautious. We don't report out on Sub-Committee meetings. Ms. Rachel asked these are subject to the Open Meeting Law so if a fourth person is there it is not a problem. Dr. Salim responded no and added at some subcommittee's members have a discussion first then ask for questions or comments from the public or Members that are in attendance.

Ms. Bowman said we have a listserve for the School Committee that we don't use; after a subcommittee meeting we can update the public for transparency. The Subcommittee Chair will type one paragraph and give it to the Executive Secretary to post on the listserve. Ms. Gist asked for clarification in addition to the meeting minutes you want a summary posted on the list serve? Ms. Bowman replied we can figure it out. Mayor Siddiqui is happy to work with any Members that have questions about what to write in a Motion. The City Council's awaiting report list has 60-80 items on it and goes back to 2016. We need to do diligence before attempting to do this; don't submit 30 things. Ms. Rachel inquired before the Sub-Committee takes up something does it come from the Committee of the Whole? Ms. Bowman responded not always, you can submit whatever Motion you want but keep in mind what you want to focus on. Ms. Bowman volunteered to write a template for all Motions to be submitted. Superintendent Salim stated that he shared in the January Weekly about when writing Motions to let him know so he can have the correct staff at the meeting to address the issue. Ms. Bowman added Ms. MacFarlane is very helpful with writing Policy.

The Building Equity Bridges (BEB) team introduced themselves Tessa Bridge, Debbie Bonilla and Naqibah Al-Kaleem. Ms. Bridge handed out three documents (on file in the School Committee office) BEB Project Overview, Barriers to Equity in CPS, and the BEB Commitments, December 2019. Ms. Bridge explained that they are a partnership with CPS and the CEA. Phase one was from March 2018-June 2019: Engagement, Inquiry and Sense Making to investigate root causes of inequities in CPS. We are doing the work differently through an inclusive, participatory and power sharing way. Our work was with four different groups; Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), Sense Making Teams, Critical Participatory Action Response (CPAR), Synthesis Retreat, and Celebration we went back to the community to see if we got it right.

Ms. Bridge continued with Part 1: Barriers to Equity. As we enter our work today we acknowledge that each of us bring our own power and privilege in this space. We acknowledge that for people of color and other traditionally marginalized groups it can be re-traumatizing to engage with these stories, experiences and the need to center the voices of those most impacted.

Ms. Bonilla mentioned she is an alumni of CPS, has kids and a grandson that went through the system as Black Latino people.

Ms. Bridge went on; what keeps us from hearing these voices? Some feelings and behaviors were reviewed. Ms. Bonilla added that people of color internalize things. From a transformed paradigm our responses to feedback can include different feelings (gratitude, motivation, compassion, interest, etc.) She reviewed Shared Agreements: how to act during this meeting, we're all growing in some ways. They transitioned to two breakout groups; Whiteness, Privilege & Bias and Power & Decision Making is Inequitably Distributed.

Whole Group Reflection: How does this resonate for you? How do these barriers manifest in our work? Would anyone like to share their experience? Mayor Siddiqui stated each school has ELL and their parents need to have translations so their voice is included. We have some perspectives from people of color but not all.

Ms. Bowman stated when these conversations happen as it relates to the School Committee as a woman of color in a position of power, maybe the framework misses out a little bit. No matter where you are part of a cohort in the system that has been undermined by society just because you get into a position of power sometimes it makes it even harder to navigate and function, including educators.

Ms. Bridge continued with Phase 2: Advocacy, Organizing and Action: Building the movement and increase participation in the movement and catalyze the equity work.

The arc of the BEB work: Commitments were published in December, 2019 and there were 100+ Barriers to equity/racism. The District is working on anti-racist action steps or recommended commitments. The commitments are an aggregation of all the comments.

Ways to get involved: Participate in an organizing action team, come to community or school based events, use BEB barriers and commitments as a framework, or read Ibram X Kendi's book-How to be an Antiracist. There is no neutral in this work.

Possible future work: further reflection on implications for the School Committee's work, process and actions. We could do a deeper dive into commitments, work with the anti-racist framework and processes for equity. Reflection and planning for future work: Ms. Bridge asked everyone to write down something you are reflecting on walking out of here today. What is a thought that you have about how the BEB foundation can support ongoing School Committee work? Superintendent Salim asked them to think about something from today that could be included in the discussion for when we meet with the City Council. Mayor Siddiqui announced two weeks ago we passed a Motion to have a retreat with the BEB by March and we will plan that. Ms. Rachel wants to be included in the planning. Ms. Bowman stated since being on the School Committee it has always been adversarial because people think that is the way to get things done but she wants to collaborate with the BEB to lay the framework differently.

Dr. Salim reviewed the CPS Anti Racist Action Plan and Call to Action Next Steps taking into account the commitments the BEB made. Last night we sent out our monthly Equity and Access Newsletter that I will summarize. For each action area: work plan and mechanisms to engage community. Implementation Management: Weekly Progress monitoring meetings and weekly anti-racist planning meetings team and we are recruiting teachers of color to join and Community Updates Other Updates: Incident response, anti-racism and racial equity statement, mandatory staff training, office of racial equity and curriculum review for cultural responsiveness.

Looking ahead: enhanced support for staff affinity groups, structures to engage youth, staff and families from traditionally marginalized groups in decision making, support for school community-based discussions with family and staff and improvement of student discipline practices-including restorative approaches.

Mr. Weinstein went to a coffee talk at G&P and we don't have a comprehensive, clear list of all the initiatives that are happening. It felt like they were almost reinventing the wheel. Superintendent Salim added some schools may need more supports either because of building leadership, the school community or resources that is what we are seeking to do. Ms. Brown stated she is curating and communicating so much about racial equity and approaching this work in a different way. We are reorganizing the website now. We are trying to figure out a way for everyone to know. Ms. Bowman is discovering that these equity conversations are happening differently based on their race because Black parents want to talk about academics and White parents want to talk about understanding the types of framework. We need to make the learning environment better for all kids. Superintendent Salim responded we are an educational institution and at the end of the day it is about learning. Mr. Maloney stated a couple of years ago both you and Mr. Harding spoke out about social justice as African Americans who had experienced what being African Americans means and the School Committee just

ignored it. These are the toughest conversation we are going to have. Mayor Siddiqui added we need a communication expert that has a skill set for monitoring the tension. Ms. Bowman added we are putting a lot of money into this work. The assumption that this will impact this and it is not necessarily translating. Mr. Rojas asked how much staff time has this taken, how does this impact them. Superintendent Salim answered we started with the District Plan some of this work is being done concurrently and speaks to the initiatives what is going to be most impactful, there are trade offs. If that is not going to affect the experience for students and teachers in the classroom they build on the work we are doing around that. Ms. Rachel added look at the nine commitments and decide what is going to move the needle on outcomes. What are the BEB commitments that are appropriate for the Sub-Committee's to take on or should they come from the community. We measure what matters. It matters what they are evaluating the Principal's on and other personnel. Dr. Salim replied we can get some proposals and the Sub-Committees can look at the policies that can improve and advance the work that either exist or don't exist. Mayor Siddiqui was thinking of which commitments will lead to the outcomes and what work needs to be done by a Sub-Committee. Ms. Bowman added we haven't even started planning Sub-Committees. It may be better for retreats to stay on Saturdays. Mayor Siddiqui stated the Sub-Committee needs to meet before March 26. We can have this conversation at a Regular or Roundtable Meeting to see how it is going. Ms. Bowman suggested that one person could go thru and read it and see which Sub-Committee should do this. Superintendent Salim commented that he can draft something and send it to Ms. Rachel, Mayor Siddiqui and Ms. Wilson. Ms. Bowman does not want to formalize an Ad-hoc Committee for this. Superintendent Salim commented that maybe at the retreat but now it is just to get the Sub-Committee's started. Ms. Rachel will work with the Governance Sub-Committee. Ms. Bowman wants to give Members time to read through the rules and if things need to be changed this is the time to do it because we are going to add an ethic component and send a recommendation to the Governance Sub-Committee.

Mayor Siddiqui thanked everyone for coming and the meeting adjourned at 1:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Gist
Interim Executive Secretary to the School Committee

Documents on file in the School Committee office:

Agenda

Rules of the School Committee

How will we Measure our Progress Flyer

Proposed Timeline

Cape Cod Regional Technical High School District School Committee Policy Manual

Building Equity Bridges Project Overview, March, 2018 – June 2019

BEB-Barriers to Equity in Cambridge Public Schools

BEB Commitments, December 2019