



CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

Roundtable Meeting

December 14, 2021

Called for 6:00 pm broadcast from the Media Arts Studio, 454 Broadway, Cambridge, there will be a Virtual Roundtable Meeting of the School Committee, for the purpose of reviewing the Superintendent's Entry Plan Findings and discussing next steps in response to the Findings.

Members Present: Member Fantini, Member Rachel, Member Rojas, Member Weinstein, Mayor Siddiqui, Member Wilson and Vice-Chair Bowman were not present at roll call but joined shortly after.

Also Present: Nuriel Vera-DeGraff (Absent), Anais Killian, Student School Committee Representatives

Mayor Siddiqui in the Chair

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

The Chair read the call of the meeting and explained that this meeting is being televised; per the Rules of the School Committee and the call of the meeting, no votes will be taken except to adjourn, and there will not be public comment.

The meeting proceeded to the first order of business with the following roll call: Member Fantini PRESENT; Member Rojas PRESENT; Member Rachel PRESENT; Member Weinstein PRESENT; Member Wilson ABSENT, Vice-Chair Bowman ABSENT; Mayor Siddiqui PRESENT.

Mayor Siddiqui turned the floor to Interim Superintendent Dr. Greer, who began her presentation of her Entry Plan Findings. Dr. Greer's entire presentation of her Entry-Level Findings can be found on the School Committee webpage [here](#).

Following Dr. Greer's presentation, Mayor Siddiqui turned the floor to the Committee for questions.

Member Rojas thanked Dr. Greer for her presentation. He questioned the organization, alignment, and capacity section of the presentation in which Dr. Greer discussed growth opportunities in ELA and Literacy but not Mathematics. Dr. Greer responded that the district is currently without a Mathematics coordinator, so there isn't a deeper data dive to highlight and recognize opportunities, but that information is coming; it's just not available now.

Vice-Chair Bowman inquired about the hours of instruction for children at the elementary level vs. the children at the secondary level. She asked if there was more information on other districts with an extended instruction time for the elementary levels. Dr. Greer responded that Newton Public Schools have a more extended elementary school day than CPS, and their achievement data for the elementary level is higher than CPS. Dr. Greer mentioned she would do more research and follow up with more information. **Vice-Chair Bowman** mentioned that when often compared to other districts – primarily suburban districts, sometimes the pushback is Cambridge is always referred to as more urban, and the students are referred to as a different demographic. She asked how that plays in extending the school day and ensuring academic success for our children? Dr. Greer responded that "kids are kids." Children from urban districts may be considered economically disadvantaged, but urban students are not always poor, socially, or economically disadvantaged. The common denominator for urban and suburban is that all students were equally affected by the pandemic. Dr. Greer "any strategy that works in a suburban district can work in an urban district and mentioned CPS spends \$13,000 per student than the other suburban districts. Vice-Chair Bowman praised how Dr. Greer's presented information can open up different conversations.

Member Weinstein thanked Dr. Greer for her presentation and expressed that CPS can and should be at the top of the Massachusetts Public School Rankings and recognized the district's effort in heterogeneous approaches. He

asked Dr. Greer to elaborate more on her assessment of strength, growth, and areas of opportunity. Dr. Greer responded the district had had success surrounding project base pieces and the strong practices CPS has and continue to be integrated all over the district.

Member Rachel thanked Dr. Greer for sharing her Entry-Level Findings. She posed clarification in Section 2 in Organization, Alignment, and Capacity. Dr. Greer mentioned that 241 positions are not school-specific employees and wanted to know who those people are in those 241 positions. Dr. Greer responded that some of these positions are Curriculum Coordinators, District Academic Coaches, Food Service, Payroll, Human Resources, Early Childhood, Birth – 3 staff, etc. **Member Rachel** asked how Dr. Greer would answer Tier 1 Social Emotional Learning Support questions. Dr. Greer responded that CRLS advisory coach will assist in answering those questions and can assist in creating a social-emotional classroom for students or a group of students to aid teachers. **Member Rachel** expressed the need for clear protocols and asked Dr. Greer for her thoughts on how these decisions can be made. Dr. Greer responded that the question should be tabled and addressed later. She does not have a protocol, but a decision needs to be made regarding those protocols.

Member Fantini asked Dr. Greer about the next steps and three/four takeaways to create a district strategy. Dr. Greer responded that there should first be a facilitator and outline a process. She mentioned having an ad-hoc subcommittee to assist in the district planning process. **Member Fantini** asked Dr. Greer if the district plan would be made before the budget and mentioned that principals have already started to work on their school improvement plans. Dr. Greer responded that the district plan would not be available, but the budget guidelines will be next week and based on her Entry-Level Findings and similar to a district plan.

Member Wilson asked about the district's relationships with the union. Dr. Greer mentioned that it was never really thought about since unions are apparent in municipal school systems and believe the union's relationship is pretty well. **Member Wilson** also questioned a student success plan, not the Entry-Level Findings, and asked Dr. Greer to elaborate more on the process. Dr. Greer responded that a student success plan was not in Entry-Level findings because there is much work surrounding it. She wants the plans to be thorough, and educators need to be ensured that the work they do is included but mentioned that it is a long process.

Member Wilson inquired about universal Pre-K and asked about opportunities surrounding Pre-K. **Mayor Siddiqui** talked about conversations surrounding universal Pre-K and discussed with Dr. Greer. There will be a potential Roundtable with the new School Committee and City Council to discuss universal Pre-K.

Member Rojas asked Dr. Greer about her comments on the lack of instructional vision and framework regarding student success. He asked why it has been hard in the past and why does she feel sufficient to tackle it this time around? Dr. Greer mentioned that she is not afraid to take the risk and doesn't know why it has been hard in the past.

Member Weinstein followed up on universal Pre-K and the birth-3 program. He believes Cambridge can be a pioneer in this area.

Mayor Siddiqui commented that as the governing body, there would be policies that can be planned out in the long-term, and then there are policies that need to be made shorter-term and quickly. There are times when policies need to be created on the spot. She encouraged everyone to aim to work together at those times. **Mayor Siddiqui** also commented on the RSTA review and expressed the Committee's to hear updates on the RSTA program.

Member Wilson also took the opportunity to address recent school issues and encouraged the district to reinsure safety for the young people.

On a motion to adjourn by Member Fantini and seconded by Member Wilson, on the following roll call vote, Member Fantini YEA; Member Rojas YEA Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA Vice-Chair Bowman YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA. The meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm.

Attest:

Ariel B. Kennebrew

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Executive Secretary to the School Committee