



CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

Roundtable Meeting

December 22, 2022

Called for 6:00 p.m. broadcast from the Media Arts Studio, 454 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of discussing efforts for RSTA improvement.

Members Present: Vice-Chair Rachel, Member Fantini, Member Hunter, Member Rojas, Member Weinstein, Member Wilson, Mayor Siddiqui

Also Present: Dr. Turk, Deputy Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Brown, Chief Strategy Officer
Dr. Gittens, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Schools
Damon Smith, Principal of CRLS
Linda Radzvilla, RSTA Director

Mayor Siddiqui in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

The Chair read the call of the meeting and explained that this meeting is being televised, votes will not be taken, and there will be no public comment. The meeting proceeded with a roll call of members present: Member Fantini PRESENT; Member Hunter PRESENT; Vice-Chair Rachel PRESENT; Member Rojas PRESENT; Member Weinstein PRESENT; Member Wilson ABSENT; Mayor Siddiqui PRESENT.

Member Hunter joined the meeting at 6:02 p.m. Member Wilson joined the meeting at 6:06 p.m.

Mayor Siddiqui turned the floor over to Dr. Turk who served as the meeting facilitator. She provided a brief overview of the purpose of the Roundtable Meeting, which was for the district to discuss the efforts regarding the RSTA program improvement.

Dr. Turk then turned the meeting over to Dr. Gittens who led a presentation, in partnership with Ms. Radzvilla and Dr. Brown. The full presentation can be found on the [website](#).

After the presentation, Mayor Siddiqui passed the floor over to the Committee for feedback on the following three discussion prompts:

- What excites you about the progress shared with you thus far?
- What clarifying questions do you have?
- What would you be interested in learning more about in the future?

Member Fantini expressed his enthusiasm for the updated presentation and highlighted RSTA's notable progress in recruitment, internships, innovative software, and increased certifications among others. He inquired about the organization's structure and Ms. Radzvilla confirmed that she reports to Dr. Gittens. He expressed hope that RSTA's presence at CRLS could be increased. He inquired about RSTA's driving force and main objective. **Mayor Siddiqui** echoed Member Fantini's sentiments and believes that a big-picture goal should be established. Both are concerned that students should be directed to high-paying jobs and careers post-graduation, notably in growing industries.

Dr. Brown confirmed that addressing this question is driving their upcoming work. She and members of the team plan to look at the data, assets, and demands to inform a set of pathways. This will be a priority for the spring. Ms. Radzvilla shared that data points are important and stated "RSTA is the foundation for some and the finish line for others." She stressed the need for launching points that are data-driven. Dr. Givens highlighted that students will most likely have several careers and that students need to be equipped to be nimble.

Member Fantini asked for clarification regarding the Chapter 74 programs. Ms. Radzvilla confirmed that there are ten Chapter 74 programs along with two business programs. **Member Fantini** stressed the importance that RSTA offers the most appropriate programs, as well as providing pathways for students to access programs that are not offered by RSTA. He shared his hope that the career exploration program should be offered at lower grades.

Member Rojas expressed his enthusiasm that the presentation was more on a positive note with a focus on the best strategies to face ongoing challenges. He asked Ms. Radzvilla to share her sentiments since joining RSTA earlier this year. Ms. Radzvilla highlighted the district's enthusiasm, the community's passion, the commitment of RSTA's teachers, and numerous opportunities to grow. She is hopeful that RSTA can one day serve as a model for the state. **Member Rojas** asked about the recommendation on program improvement and the district's status in utilizing those recommendations. Ms. Radzvilla shared that in a short amount of time the district has made improvements in organizing and in prioritizing RSTA initiatives to move forward. She shared that the "lower-hanging fruit" is cleaned up and she looks forward to tackling the more robust recommendations. She stressed that student voices need to be a part of these important conversations. **Member Rojas** wanted to ensure that the district can take advantage of local partnerships, notably MIT. Dr. Turk confirmed that she met with an MIT representative for an initial conversation.

Mayor Siddiqui inquired about the creation of a dashboard highlighting the data of RSTA's improvement process. Dr. Brown enthusiastically agreed and intends to move forward with the idea. In addition, Dr. Brown highlighted that the success of RSTA's work involves moving forward and completing sequential action items. She stressed that quantity is not a definition of success, but rather ensuring quality experiences with positive outcomes. When expansion comes, the success of the foundational programs will be essential.

Member Hunter expressed her excitement about the details that were shared in the presentation and inquired about the following: 1.) if out-of-placement student data informs the district about students' interests 2.) the availability of job-shadowing opportunities for middle school students; 3.) current access to co-op experiences and 4.) the talent/skills and composition of members on advisory committees. Dr. Brown responded that according to data, the district did not share adequate information with students about their out-of-district options and how to access them. Ms. Radzvilla shared that there is currently one student out-of-district at Minuteman Regional with placement and interest in Cosmetology. She expressed her enthusiasm for co-op opportunities and stressed the importance of students learning to be good employees and feel supported in this process. She also shared that the district currently has a co-op pathway with students. Currently, five students are learning with Audible and a partnership with CVS Health has been established for pharmacy tech. Regarding advisory membership, Ms. Radzvilla and her team are looking for people who represent the community, careers, and unions. She stressed that relationship establishment is extremely important and believes that implementing more guest speakers into the RSTA classroom can assist with student engagement. She encouraged community members to reach out to her if they are interested in joining an advisory committee. She highlighted the sustainability of programs to ensure the future success of the RSTA programs. Dr. Givens shared that middle school teachers are currently being trained in MYCAP. She highlighted the sequence/overview of MYCAP -- Discover, Plan, and Act. Ms. Radzvilla highlighted that guidance counselors have been given union handbooks to assist students with pathways.

Member Hunter asked if there were any themes in entrepreneurship and introductory classes. Ms. Radzvilla confirmed that entrepreneurship is embedded in their curriculum. She shared that the entrepreneurship class currently offered to juniors and seniors is highly popular.

Mayor Siddiqui inquired about more information on the advisory committees and how this information is accessed. Dr. Brown responded that the district is working on being more transparent on these committees and will create a webpage highlighting them in the coming weeks.

Vice Chair Rachel inquired about the following:

- 1.) The selection process for the advisory committees
- 2.) Schedule exploration for RSTA and its alignment with the current scheduling audit.
- 3.) The Committee allocated funds in the FY23 budget for a work-based learning coordinator and the expansion of internships within RSTA and beyond.
- 4.) Industry-recognized credentialing process
- 5.) Internships and the systems in place to work with employers.

Dr. Brown confirmed that the elementary and middle school scheduling audits are moving ahead. She shared that they must carefully think through the high school scheduling audit and how it intersects with pathways. They are focused on short-term innovations within the block schedule that the RSTA program can leverage now. These learnings will inform the forthcoming larger audit. She shared that Dr. Greer would be the best person to update the group on the work-based learning position. Ms. Radzvilla shared that there is currently no formal process to join the advisory committee beyond the recommendation of CPSD community members. Regarding scheduling, the block format allows RSTA flexibility. She is currently exploring hybrid programming, early college opportunities with Lesley, etc. She and her team brainstormed ideas and bring them to the Registrar for feasibility. They have had early success in accommodating students enrolled in AP courses. She shared that she continues to become more comfortable with the schedule and commended the Registrar for her collaborative spirit.

Member Weinstein expressed appreciation for Ms. Radzvilla's good work.

Member Wilson expressed her excitement about the opportunities moving forward including strengthening certifications and work-based skills for students to utilize in their future careers. She also inquired about OSHA and CPR training and if it is something that would be implemented in the next semester. Ms. Radzvilla confirmed that OSHA is a computerized program that is currently available to students. She shared that implementing CPR is more challenging. She would like to offer CPR in the spring and offered to keep **Member Wilson** updated. **Member Wilson** asked about students in the extension programs, immersion programs, or on IEPs and their access to RSTA courses. Ms. Radzvilla confirmed that students on IEPs have access to the RSTA program, students in immersion programs may not have much access due to some of the courses they have. She is working on getting students in the extension program more accessibility to the RSTA program. Many of these barriers to entry involve scheduling issues. She is currently leading efforts to connect with students who left the RSTA program to determine their reasons for leaving and to determine patterns for their exits. She has determined that SCIs and CLs are significantly impacted by scheduling issues. Dr. Gittens added that last year she and her team began to tackle the issue of barriers to SCIs entering RSTA and offered to follow up with **Member Wilson** with this information. **Member Wilson** asked Ms. Radzvilla about her ideal wish list for the upcoming 2023-2024 school year and inquired about the limitations of the block schedule. Ms. Radzvilla shared that throughout her career scheduling issues presented consistent challenges and she does not foresee the creation of an ideal schedule that works for all. The blocks allow for creativity. Ms. Radzvilla responded that her current priority wish list includes: cooperative education organized; certifications and career seminars in place; and a direct line of access to Early College.

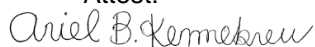
Member Fantini praised the administration for their presentation and shared that there may be a future issue with over-enrollment due to RSTA's success in generating an influx of interest. He asked administrators to be mindful that the budget season was approaching. He mentioned the significance of students' lack of driver's licenses in preventing their access to union job sites. Ms. Radzvilla responded that most union/trade jobs require licenses so it is important for students in the program to have accessibility to driver's education programs. She noted that the expense of the driver's education program (approximately \$700) may be a barrier for some students, as well as the accessibility and ease of public transportation in preventing the need for driving licenses. Mr. Smith clarified that the high school has a thriving driver's education program. Dr. Brown mentioned that in January the administration will bring recommendations on the RSTA admissions policy. **Member Weinstein** highlighted the importance of informing students early in the process that attaining a driver's license will be critical to attaining certain jobs.

Mayor Siddiqui shared her keen interest in incorporating the Mayor's Summer Youth Program with the RSTA program to better align summer internships and jobs for students. She highlighted the importance of strengthening partnerships within the city. Dr. Gittens stressed her early work in this area and agreed that a more organized approach would be ideal. She highlighted the Boston PIC as a model for Cambridge.

Mayor Siddiqui and Dr. Turk closed out the roundtable by thanking the administration for their efforts in the ongoing improvement of the district's RSTA program.

On a motion by Vice Chair Rachel, seconded by Member Rojas, on the following roll call vote, the meeting was adjourned: Member Fantini YEA; Member Hunter YEA; Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA (7:57 p.m.).

Attest:



Ariel B. Kennebrew
Executive Secretary to the School Committee