



**C A M B R I D G E
S C H O O L C O M M I T T E E**

(Official Minutes)

Special Meeting

March 23, 2023

Called for 6:00 p.m. broadcast from the Media Arts Studio, 454 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of a budget workshop to review the FY24 Proposed Budget

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

Also Present: Dr. Greer, Superintendent of Schools; Claire Spinner; Chief Financial Officer
Dr. Madera, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Schools
Dr. Gittens, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Schools
Mr. Fernandez, Chief Equity Officer

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 to the first order of business with a roll call of members present: Vice Chair Rachel PRESENT; Member Rojas PRESENT; Member Weinstein PRESENT; Member Wilson PRESENT; Member Fantini ~~ABSENT~~; Member Hunter ~~ABSENT~~; Vice Mayor Siddiqui PRESENT.

Member Hunter joined the meeting at 6:09 p.m.

Member Fantini joined the meeting at 6:13 p.m.

Mayor Siddiqui turned the meeting over to the Superintendent who gave an overview of her proposed FY24 budget which included the:

- Funding sources for the budget
- Investments in instructional improvement
- Tutoring and academic support
- Early childhood
- College and Career Pathways
- New positions

The full presentation can be found on the website.

After the presentation, Mayor Siddiqui opened the floor to the Committee members for questions and discussion, and feedback based on the following discussion prompts:

- Clarifying questions
- Warm/positive feedback
- Cool/constructive feedback

Member Fantini inquired about the 1.5 Human Resources position, school improvement councils, and summer programs. He also asked if principals could utilize their school improvement funds to hire staff. Dr. Greer responded that the Superintendent has to approve all hiring. The district has hiring teams for school personnel which include hiring and interview teams that have representation of students, staff, and parents. Schools can use school improvement funds for hiring but it is highly discouraged.

Member Hunter inquired about the capacity of programs such as the Calculus Project, BAM, etc., and the one school that is utilizing Paper. Dr. Greer responded that the district is working on a deeper dive into Paper and will share capacity numbers for programs soon.

Member Weinstein inquired about the programs in the district and what efforts the section is making to evaluate the success of these programs. Dr. Gittens responded that the community is using different approaches this year like iReady data to measure student success (i.e., how much information the student has attained, and is the student on grade level, etc.). Dr. Madera shared that the district hires social workers for summer programs to better support students and their success plans. **Member Weinstein** recommends including qualitative student data when evaluating these programs.

Member Weinstein also inquired about the Executive Director of Early Childhood and the Executive Director of Career and College Pathways and asked the district about the reasonings for making these positions director-level and not Assistant Superintendent roles. Dr. Greer explained that because the Early Childhood department is part of an academic area in the district and a part of elementary education the director would report to the Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Education. The Executive Director of Career Pathways would report to the Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education.

Member Rojas asked the administration if there are any areas or things previously invested that the district is planning on pausing or eliminating based on evaluations. Dr. Greer responded that due to educator feedback, the district had made changes to the curriculum. As the district begins more programming there will be more curriculum shifts, particularly with the implementation of universal pre-k. **Member Rojas** also inquired about the impact of reinstating the Design Lab in the budget. Dr. Greer responded that since the position is not a full-time position it didn't make a significant impact on the budget.

Vice Chair Rachel inquired for more information about the summer programs and scholarships. Dr. Greer shared that summer scholarships were promised for the entire duration of ESSER funding so that was allocated into the budget. Dr. Madera explained that the district and DHSP mutually agreed to not continue the model implemented during Covid. The bandwidth for the school and the district to collaborate on the curriculum that was being offered didn't live up to its promise. DHSP is looking to expand its after-school programs. The district is currently exploring options for extended summer programming hours.

Member Wilson asked the district if it feels hopeful for opportunities for families to receive extended

summer programming. Dr. Greer shared that DHSP will still have slots for extended days and it is still an option for families. The difference is that there is a different registration process. The district is working to get opportunities. Dr. Madera explained that the district is intentionally aligning dates so that families can have the most information on the offered programs, so they'll be able to have more options. **Member Wilson** also inquired about the equity department and whether there is a need for investment in their ongoing work. Dr. Greer explained that the equity department is well funded with about \$2 million and well-staffed, however as needs arise the district will accommodate. Mr. Fernandez reiterated Dr. Greer's response and highlighted some of the work that the OEIB is partaking in.

Mayor Siddiqui expressed a wondering if the district can use some creativity in renaming the position for the Executive Director of Early Education to avoid confusion with titles on the city side. She also discussed the 1.5 Human Resources personnel positions and shared that the comps provided were helpful, but allocations do not justify the positions, and wonders if the additional positions are truly needed. **Member Hunter** also shared similar statements surrounding the positions especially when they are some instructor positions being eliminated.

Member Rojas inquired about special projects like building studies and asked where projects like this fit into the budget. Ms. Spinner responded that projects like this are generally included in the general budget, but longer-term projects are sometimes built into the contracts. Regarding the building study, the city has funded that project.

Member Fantini inquired about the 28.5% of ESSER positions that were eliminated and how many of those people will remain in our system. Dr. Greer responded that she does not have that information off hand but the majority of them have professional licenses and will remain with the district. She will provide a follow-up to the Committee.

On a motion by Member Wilson, seconded by Member Rojas on the following roll call vote, the meeting was adjourned: Vice Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Hunter YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA. (7:54 p.m.)

Attest:



Ariel B. Kennebrew
Executive Secretary to the School Committee