



**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 26, 2024

Called for a 6:00 p.m. broadcast from the Media Arts Studio, 454 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of a budget workshop to review the FY25 Proposed Budget.

Members Present: Vice-Chair Hunter, Member Harding, Member Hudson, Member Rojas, Member Rachel, Member Weinstein, Mayor Simmons

Also Present: Dr. Greer, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Alves, Interim Executive Director of Special Education; Beth Kershner, Director of Multilingual Learner Education; Skyler Nash, Chief Strategy Officer; Ivy Washington, Interim Chief Financial Officer

Mayor Simmons in the Chair.

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

The Confidential Secretary, Katherine Christo, read the call of the meeting and explained that this meeting was 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: Member Harding; **ABSENT**; Member Hudson **PRESENT**; Member Rojas **PRESENT**; Member Rachel **PRESENT**; Member Weinstein **PRESENT**; Vice Chair Hunter **PRESENT**; Mayor Simmons **PRESENT**.

Member Harding joined the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

Mayor Simmons turned the meeting over to the budget co-chairs, **Vice Chair Hunter** and **Member Rojas** who both gave brief remarks. The Superintendent gave a brief update on the budget process and introduced Beth Kershner who gave a presentation on the Department of Multilingual Learner Education (MLE). The full presentation can be found on the [website](#).

Presentation highlights included:

- Multilingual Learner Education Options
- Response to Families at Emergency Assistance Shelter
- CPP and Multilingual Learners
- FY25 Strategic Initiatives

After the presentation, **Vice Chair Hunter** opened the floor to the Committee members for questions and comments. The following topics were discussed:

- The significant increase in multilingual families joining the district at Cambridge is a designated sanctuary city.
- Additional funding will be coming from the state.
- STAMP language test
- Importance of the MLE program to establish goals and measurable outcomes.
- DESE targets are based on testing/proficiency benchmarks vs. content knowledge and grade-level expectations.
- With additional funding, request of additional FTEs and the need for human capital. Ms. Washington, Interim CFO, confirmed that 4.5 FTEs to MLE were designated to MLE in the FY25 budget.
- Impact to Amigos School as the second largest school in the district.
- The goal of offering a higher-level Portuguese curriculum to CRLS students and the challenges of the block schedule.

Vice Chair Hunter turned the meeting over to the Superintendent who introduced Dr. Alves who gave a presentation on the Division of Special Education. The full presentation can be found on the [website](#).

Presentation highlights included:

- Complex needs and challenges of the department.
- Culture and Climate Survey as they relate to families of IEP students
- New IEP format
- Departmental objectives include:
 - Delivering ambitious instruction and effective supports
 - Program development
 - Providing accessible college and career pathways
 - Staff learning and support
 - Building welcoming and supportive schools

After the presentation, **Vice Chair Hunter** opened the floor to the Committee members for questions and comments. The following topics were discussed:

- Training for IEP families and the district receives funding for these efforts. Providers include outside vendors and online options. Training is not multilingual, but interpreters are provided.
- Climate survey results for families with IEP students and the importance of creating a sense of belonging at the school and within the district. Engaging parents throughout the IEP process. Dr. Alves is hopeful that the new IEP process will help in these efforts.
- The highly positive impact of the OSS position, Special Education Liaison – Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC).
- OSS staffing and the prospect of offering independent advocates for students in the IEP process. Dr. Greer noted that the advocates would be paid by CPSD which would question their impartiality.
- Approximate Statistics – 1570 students (22%) on IEPs. Approximately 23% of those identify as a student of color; 121 students in out-of-district programming; 21 students waiting for placements; 14 self-contained classrooms in the district. The disproportionality of Black and brown students

being identified as needing IEPs. Dr. Alves will follow up with the group regarding confirmed numbers.

- Importance of professional development opportunities for paraprofessionals.
- The stress of finding out-of-district placements and the importance of supporting families. (This is a statewide issue.)
- The importance of disaggregating the data of the Climate Survey as it relates to the OSS and especially Black and brown students.
- The district's commitment to providing an education in the least restrictive environment.
- The Committee's desire for more data, especially as it relates to high school students. Dr. Alves will follow up.

Vice Chair Hunter turned the meeting over to the Superintendent who introduced Mr. Nash who gave a presentation on Student Success Planning. The full presentation can be found on the [website](#).

Presentation highlights included:

- Overview of the Core Team
- Success Planning Components
- Emerging Theory of Change and Goals
- Next Steps

After the presentation, **Vice Chair Hunter** opened the floor to the Committee members for questions and comments. The following topics were discussed:

- The priorities of moving to the design phase and compiling the navigator database.
- Importance of investing in training navigators
- Determining the measures of success
- SY24-25 serving as a pilot year which will help determine future costs.
- The nature of cross-sector work and the importance of doing it well.
- The desire by Committee members to dig deeper into the program's details with a future presentation.
- The importance of closing opportunity gaps

On a motion by Member Rojas, seconded by Member Harding on the following roll call vote, the meeting was adjourned: Member Harding YEA; Member Hudson YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Mayor Simmons YEA. (8:02 p.m.)

Attest:



Katherine Christo
Confidential Secretary to the School Committee