



CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

Regular Meeting

November 18, 2025

Called for 6:00 p.m. in the Dr. Henrietta S. Attles Meeting Room, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, 459 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of discussing any and all business that may properly come before the Committee.

Members Present: Member Harding, Member Hudson, Vice Chair Hunter (REMOTE), Member Rachel, Member Rojas, Member Weinstein, Mayor Simmons (REMOTE)

Others Present: Ms. Jennifer Amigone, Director of Data Assessment & Accountability; Student Member Asraf; Mr. Allan Gately-Gehant, Interim Principal of CRLS; Student Member Jama; David Murphy, Superintendent of Schools; Desiree Phillips, Director of Special Education; Mr. Damon Smith, Interim Chief Operation Officer; Ryan Souliotis, Principal of High School Extension Program

Member Rachel in the Chair.

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

The meeting proceeded to the first order of business with a roll call of members present: Member Rojas, PRESENT; Member Weinstein, PRESENT; Vice Chair Hunter, PRESENT; Member Harding, ~~ABSENT~~; Member Hudson, PRESENT; Member Rachel, PRESENT; Mayor Simmons, PRESENT

Member Harding arrived at 6:08 p.m.

1. Public Comment

The following individuals were heard:

- **Chris Montero**, Warren Road, Superintendent's Presentation, **#25-282**, emphasized support for broader competency measures beyond MCAS and better integration of RTSA/High School Extension Program.
- **Anne Coburn**, Otis Street, **#25-280**, **#25-281**, **#25-282**, expressed concerns about the timeline for hiring a new lawyer to negotiate with the teacher's union, how the district monitors IEP goal progress for students placed out-of-district and how tuition/transportation costs have changed, and requested that the Massachusetts State Auditor conduct an audit of school committee expenditures and all no-bid contracts from the last five years.
- **Mary Shillue-Goldberg**, Clifton Street, **#25-282**, expressed concerns about the irregularities in the bidding process, citing reporting in Cambridge Day and The Harvard Crimson.
- **Yann Dardonville**, Columbia Street, **#25-282**, expressed concern about the initiation of a payment for a contract without full committee approval.
- **Jess Goetz**, Pemberton Street, **The consent agenda**, questioned the inclusion of certain items in the consent agenda and calls for greater transparency and accessibility in the decision-making process.
- **Lilly Havstad**, Granville Road, **#25-282** expressed concerns about possible circumvention of competitive bidding requirements under Massachusetts procurement law.

- **Anna Shin**, Sidney Street, #25-282, reported contacting the State Auditor about a quorum-approved audit of committee funds, and suggested auditing all contracts.

On a motion by Member Hudson, seconded by Member Rojas, public comment was closed on the following roll call vote: Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Rachel, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA

2. Student School Committee Report:

Student Members Eva Asraf and Zihaam Jama, provided the following updates:

- Q1 ended, and Q2 two has begun; seniors are experiencing a stressful time as they approach the end of their final year.
- Student Government organized senior class events to foster community and celebrate senior year, including a senior scavenger hunt created by the senior class and student government.
- CRLS Homecoming was highlighted as a successful event for fundraising and community engagement.
- They discussed the success of the yonder pouches in organizing phone policies and the implementation of a no credit attendance policy. Attendance form policies have improved, making it easier for students to arrive on time and get to first period. **Member Jama** expressed gratitude to staff.

Student Members Asraf and Jama concluded their report and thanked the committee.

3. Presentation of the Records for Approval:

- October 21, 2025, Regular Meeting
- October 24, 2025, Special Meeting
- October 27, 2025, Special Meeting
- October 29, 2025, Special Meeting
- October 31, 2025, Special Meeting (10:30 a.m.)
- October 31, 2025, Special Meeting (1:00 p.m.)

On a motion by Mayor Simmons, seconded by Member Weinstein, the records were accepted as presented on the following roll call vote: Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Rachel, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA

4. **Reconsiderations:** None

5. **Unfinished Business/Calendar:** None

6. **Awaiting Reports:** None

7a. Superintendent's Update:

An update on pending matters and highlight various initiatives that have occurred or been planned since the last meeting of the committee.

Superintendent Murphy shared the following update:

- SNAP Grocery Card Distribution Effort
 - Expressed gratitude to CPS staff, the City Manager's Office, and community partners for helping distribute over 1,200 grocery cards to SNAP families during the federal shutdown.
 - Noted that three distribution events successfully reached nearly all CPS-connected families.

- My Brother's Keeper

- Expressed gratitude to MBK leaders for hosting him and acknowledged committee members and members-elect who attended.
- Shared appreciation for the opportunity to discuss district priorities at the event.

- Upcoming Upper School Caregiver Academies

- Announced sessions on December 4th and December 18th at upper school communities.
- Recognized the Cambridge Families of Color Coalition (CFCC) for long-term advocacy supporting this initiative.
- Shared that programming is being developed for rollout this school year and expansion into SY 26–27.

- FY2027 Budget Development Calendar

- Noted the calendar is consistent with prior years and will be shared more clearly with the public.
- Committed to strengthening internal processes to ensure linked documents are accessible.

Member Rojas expressed gratitude that Mr. Murphy was able to attend the My Brother's Keeper event for a second time. **Member Weinstein** echoed the appreciation and noted that anyone who watches the event will understand its importance; as an upper school parent, he is excited for this step. He also confirmed that gift cards were sent to SNAP recipients.

Member Harding requested clarity on processes such as the consent agenda and how the public can better access School Committee information, asking who is responsible for ensuring accessibility. Superintendent Murphy accepted responsibility for an administrative error and noted that minor fixes have been made to prevent it from happening again. **Member Harding** also seconded Member Weinstein's comments on SNAP benefits and thanked the Superintendent for efforts at the My Brother's Keeper event.

7b. Presentation

The Superintendent and members of the central administration will continue the presentation on the recently released student achievement, growth and accountability data with a focus on Cambridge Rindge and Latin School (CRLS).

Superintendent Murphy, Ms. Jennifer Amigone, Mr. Allan Gately Gehant and Mr. Ryan Souliotis presented the third in a series of presentations focused on the MCAS Data. The presentation can be found on this [website](#).

Highlights of the presentation and discussion include:

School Highlights

- An overview of the high school's performance, including improvements in the yonder pouches and attendance policies.
- Introduction of the no credit attendance policy and the Honor Code to address issues related to AI and academic integrity.

CRLS Accountability & MCAS Data Update

- CRLS students outperform state averages in all subjects such as: strong math growth, high levels of advanced coursework participation, gains in science MCAS, and English Learners exceeding state proficiency targets.
- Declines in ELA and math consistent with statewide trends; disparate outcomes across student groups; and historic high levels of chronic absenteeism.

- According to the state's accountability system, high school accountability includes more measures than grades 3–8 and includes both normative (percentile) and criterion-referenced components.

Progress Towards 2025 Targets and Accountability Metrics

- CRLS met 41% of state improvement targets and ranks in the 62nd percentile statewide.
- Targets met include extended engagement, 5-year graduation, EL proficiency, math achievement/growth, and dropout rate.
- School is meeting or exceeding growth targets in ELA, math, and chronic absenteeism for lowest-performing students.

Areas of Non-Compliance and Improvement Discrepancies

- Targets not met in ELA achievement/growth, science, 4-year graduation, chronic absenteeism, and advanced coursework.
- Some improvements are occurring but not at the pace required by the state.

Performance in ELA and Math

- ELA declined 6 points, matching the state, with below-average growth over two years; Asian and African American students are below state averages.
- Student motivation concerns reflected in more blank/off-topic responses on MCAS.
- Math declined 3 points, consistent with the state, but showed strong growth for the first time since 2019.

Science Performance and Demographic Data

- Grade 10 science performance improved overall, though Black/African American and Asian students scored below state averages.
- English learners met English proficiency targets, and advanced coursework participation continues to grow.
- Nearly 20% of students earned the Seal of Biliteracy in 2025, and 47% of 12th graders completed college credit or industry-recognized credentials.

Chronic Absenteeism and Graduation Rates

- Chronic absenteeism reached a historic high of 36% in 2025, including 50% of students with disabilities. The four-year graduation rate remains strong at 94%, with a low 0.8% dropout rate.
- The extended engagement rate is 98%, exceeding the state average.

Competency Determination Policy

- Policy includes course completion and final assessments in ELA, math, science, and history.
- Aligns with local requirements and accounts for students with disabilities, English learners, and late enrollers.
- Encourages use of MCAS for late-enrolling students to meet competency requirements efficiently.

High School Extension Program Updates

- Rebranding efforts and strategies to reduce chronic absenteeism.
- After-school clubs include sports, D&D, and School of Rock; 60% of students accessed Flex asynchronous courses.
- Caregiver Academy offers IEP and literacy support, with more topics planned.

Addressing Chronic Absenteeism and Special Education

- High absenteeism among students with disabilities addressed through new IEP policy.
- Emphasis on family partnerships, regular communication, and targeted interventions.
- Team working to disaggregate data to identify strategies to improve attendance.

School Committee Questions & Discussion Points:

- Areas of progress highlighted: advanced course completion and Seal of Biliteracy.
- Areas of concern: science achievement and chronic absenteeism.
- Chronic Absenteeism: Questions raised on grade-level variation and whether it involves full non-attenders or partial-day absences.

- Implementation of competency determination policy:
 - Questions raised about timeline and impact on students with disabilities and Class of 2027.
 - Need for further guidance from the state.
- ELA MCAS participation:
 - Concerns about declining participation and need for improved data to track student skills.

Superintendent Murphy's closing points included:

- Need to address chronic absenteeism and support all students.
- Committee feedback sought on competency determination policy and other areas of concern.
- Next steps include finalizing the policy and continuing monitoring of student outcomes.
- Commitment to ongoing collaboration with families and transparent accountability for progress.

7c. CPS District Plan: None

7d. Consent Agenda:

On a motion by Member Weinstein, seconded by Member Harding, **#25-281, #25-283, #25-286, #25-288 and #25-290** were adopted on the following roll call vote: Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Rachel, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA

#25-281 Recommendation: Day & Residential Program Services not Available from the Cambridge School Department be adopted as follows: That the School Committee award contracts to the institutions on attached list in amounts not to exceed the shown rates, having been approved by the Operational Services Division of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, funds to be provided from the general fund and/or grant fund budget.

	#	Amount
Day Program Tuition Contracts:	3	\$334,057.60
Residential Program Tuition Contracts	1	\$143,401.24
45 Day Program Contracts:		
Total	6	\$477,458.84

#25-283 Recommendation: Contract Award: Lift Works Corp. (FY26 Contract) be adopted as follows: That the School Committee approve a contract with the following vendor, funds to be provided in accordance with the budget reference listed below. Procurement procedures for this purchase have complied with Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Lift Works Corp., PO Box 1993, Brattleboro, VT for the period of October 20, 2025 to June 30, 2026 in the amount of \$38,695.36.

#25-286 Recommendation: Contract Award: Michael P. Mulligan-Blind on the Move, LLC (FY26 Contract) be adopted as follows: That the School Committee approve a contract with the following vendor, funds to be provided in accordance with the budget reference listed below. Procurement procedures for this purchase have complied with Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Michael P. Mulligan-Blind on the Move, LLC, 188 Linden Street, Manchester, NH for the period of November 15, 2025 to June 30, 2026 in the amount of \$30,000.00.

#25-288 Recommendation: Grant Award: FY26 Influence 100 (SC26167) be adopted as follows: That the School Committee accept and approve the grant award below in the amount and for the period indicated:

FY26 Influence 100 (SC26167) – State - in the amount of \$1,000.00 for the period of October 17, 2025 to June 30, 2027.

#25-290 Recommendation: Grant Award: FY26 Targeted Tiered Math Off Ramp Grant (SC26867) be adopted as follows: That the School Committee accept and approve the grant award below in the amount and for the period indicated:

FY26 Targeted Tiered Math Off Ramp Grant (SC26867) – State - in the amount of \$8,500.00 for the period of September 16, 2025 to June 30, 2026.

8. Non-Consent Agenda:

#25-280 Recommendation: Approval of Approval of the FY2027 Draft School Committee Budget Process/Meeting Calendar be adopted as follows: That the School Committee approve the Cambridge Public Schools Middle School Pathway Exploration Policy as detailed in the [attached document](#).

A brief discussion followed **#25-280. Member Weinstein** requested the superintendent to walk through the budget development calendar and its key dates. Superintendent Murphy outlined the calendar, including a roundtable with the School Committee and City Council, community forums, and budget updates. **Member Weinstein** emphasized the importance of meaningful engagement with stakeholders to influence the budget process.

Superintendent Murphy noted fixed costs in the operating budget and the need for the School Committee to set priorities.

Statutory public hearing scheduled for March 17; additional budget workshops may be added per the new committee's discretion. He highlighted transparency, accountability, and collaboration with city administration, while maintaining high standards without MCAS. **Member Hudson** emphasized the need for a detailed \$5 million budget proposal, criticized the initial January presentation for lacking specifics, and stressed early engagement and meaningful discussion before finalizing the budget.

On a motion by Member Weinstein, seconded by Member Rojas **#25-280** was adopted on the following roll call vote: Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Rachel, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA

#25-282 Recommendation: Contract Award: The Equity Process (FY26 Contract) be adopted as follows: That the School Committee approve a contract with the following vendor, funds to be provided in accordance with the budget reference listed below. Procurement procedures for this purchase have complied with Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The Equity Process, 20 Fox Hill Drive, Bridgewater, MA for the period of July 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025 in the amount of \$40,000.00.

A brief discussion followed **#25-282. Member Hudson** questioned the approval process for a contract for work that has already been completed. **Mayor Simmons** noted the contract amount was inaccurate due to changes in the scope of work, particularly the fourth phase for superintendent onboarding and coaching, which has not occurred. She recommended laying the item on the table for revision. **Member Hudson and Member Harding** raised concerns about incomplete work, unclear payments, and the need for legal guidance. Member Rachel shared that she had contacted the Committee's counsel and the City Solicitor and recommend that the Committee wait on legal advice from the latter. They emphasized clear communication to the vendor and pausing work on the fourth phase until guidance is received. Late motions may be submitted by Member Hudson and Member Harding to clarify expectations for the equity process going forward.

On a motion by Member Rojas, seconded by Member Weinstein **#25-282** was to lay on the table for next meeting

on the following roll call vote: Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, NAY; Member Hudson, NAY; Member Rachel, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA

On a motion by Vice Chair Hunter, seconded by Member Weinstein to extend the meeting until 10:30 p.m. on the following roll call vote: Member Rojas, NAY; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Rachel, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA

#25-284 Recommendation: Contract Award: Avidex Industries, LLC (FY26 Contract) be adopted as follows:

That the School Committee approve a contract with the following vendor, funds to be provided in accordance with the budget reference listed below. Procurement procedures for this purchase have complied with Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Avidex Industries, LLC, 1100 Crescent Green, Suite 200, Cary NC for the period of November 7, 2025 to November 6, 2026 in the amount of \$250,000.00

Member Hudson requested clarification on the purpose, procurement process, and assurance of best pricing for these large line items. Mr. Murphy and Mr. Smith clarified that Avidex Industries is used for hardware (presentation boards/interactive boards) replacements districtwide, that these are ongoing upgrades, and that the amounts represent maximum authorized spending. The discussion also noted specific infrastructure needs in the School Committee's Attles Room.

On a motion by Vice Chair Hunter, seconded by Member Weinstein **#25-284** was to adopt on the following roll call vote: Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Rachel, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA

#25-285 Recommendation: Contract Award: Apple (FY26 Contract) be adopted as follows: That the School Committee approve a contract with the following vendor, funds to be provided in accordance with the budget reference listed below. Procurement procedures for this purchase have complied with Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Apple, 1 Apple Park Way Cupertino, CA for the period of January 1, 2026 to December 31, 2026 in the amount of \$450,000.00.

Member Hudson requested clarification about the contract's purpose and assurance on pricing and vendor choice. Mr. Murphy explained that this purchase was part of the district's standard routine replacement and maintenance of Apple instructional and operational technology, with the amount representing a maximum potential expenditure, not necessarily the total to be spent.

On a motion by Vice Chair Hunter, seconded by Member Weinstein **#25-285** was adopted on the following roll call vote: Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Rachel, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA

#25-287 Recommendation: Grant Award: FY26 Fair Share Earmarks (SC26866) be adopted as follows: That the School Committee accept and approve the grant award below in the amount and for the period indicated:

FY26 Fair Share Earmarks (SC26866) – State - Targeted in the amount of \$100,000.00 for the period of October 22, 2025 to June 30, 2027.

School Committee Members expressed gratitude to Senator DiDomenico for helping secure these funds. **Member Weinstein** summarized the grant's purposes: establishing a sensory Makerspace at Cambridgeport School and supporting repairs at King Open School.

On a motion by Vice Chair Hunter, seconded by Member Weinstein **#25-287** was to adopt on the following roll call vote: Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Rachel, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA

#25-289 Recommendation: Grant Award: FY26 Mass Cultural Council Creative Experiences Grant (SC26894) be adopted as follows: That the School Committee accept and approve the grant award below in the amount and for the period indicated:

FY26 Mass Cultural Council Creative Experiences Grant (SC26894) – State - in the amount of \$12,500.00 for the period of July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026.

A brief discussion followed **#25-289. Vice Chair Hunter** asked about the origin of the grant, specifically why only three schools were selected and whether the opportunity might expand to others in the future. Superintendent Murphy responded that he did not know the precise origin at that moment but would follow up with the committee. He believed it was related to advocacy, either by the schools themselves or by a centralized effort.

On a motion by Vice Chair Hunter, seconded by Member Harding **#25-289** was adopted on the following roll call vote: Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Rachel, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA

9. School Committee Agenda (Policy Matters/Notifications/Requests for Information): None

11. Announcements:

- **Member Rachel** congratulated committee members who were re-elected and expressed her appreciation for those who were not.
- **Member Rojas** announced that the Building & Grounds Subcommittee will meet this Thursday, November 20th at 5:30 p.m. He also shared that he attended the MASC Conference in Hyannis, MA, and highlighted several key topics discussed at the event.
- **Member Weinstein** provided updates on the upcoming musical school production and noted that additional information is available on the VPA website.

12. Late Orders:

Search Firm Contract: Superintendent Search – Member Hudson & Member Harding

WHEREAS: The scope of work for the firm that aided us in the Superintendent search process may be unclear; therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the District communicate to The Equity Process to immediately stop all work on the Cambridge Public Schools Superintendent Search, and communicate that the it does not intend to pay for services not ultimately rendered; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the Chief Financial Officer produce the School Committee Order referenced on Page 2 of the Cambridge Public Schools Superintendent Search Articles of Agreement (File Number CPS—FY26-30564)

13. Communications and Reports from City Officers: None

On a motion by Member Rojas, seconded by Member Weinstein the meeting was adjourned on the following roll call vote: Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Rachel, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA (10:15 p.m.)

Attest:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Katherine Christo".

Katherine Christo
Executive Secretary to the School Committee