

MBK Community Budget Meeting Feedback

(Moderated Discussion) Raw notes have been categorized by District Plan Objective



OBJECTIVE 1

Deliver Ambitious Instruction & Effective Supports

- Post pandemic showed that black/brown students did not recover as well while others improved. How will the FY25 budget address this?
- The fact is students of color, low income or students with disabilities have not recovered as well, however, we are putting a lot of work into closing this.
- Changing curriculum for ELA is a game changer.
- Math had a new curriculum starting FY24 and students are seeing positive impact from this.
- Invested in Preschool and Kindergarten curriculum: early literacy makes a big difference especially amongst struggling groups, and emphasizing the need for a strong curriculum will benefit this.
- Early literacy screener.
- Support school leaders, i.e. principals and instructional coaches
- Learning Walks: one per school where administration can observe classrooms and see the students' experiences. Provide feedback to Principals to target professional learning where any gaps may exist.
- How will this budget be impactful to 3rd grade reading proficiency?
- Curriculum rollout for elementary schools around literacy and professional learning to support 3rd grade reading proficiency
- Data that catalogs hours around standardized testing and the value of this.
- Screeners are done for the curriculum
- US history and provide authentic and factual history
- History and social studies are teaching authentic truth and discussing race and ethnicity. CPS is one of few places that has AP African American studies.
- Teaching social students at least 30 minutes day in elementary school is an important edge
- Relieved the ELT time will be continued in FY25. Will this remain a priority?
- The longer school day also involved revisiting discussions about the two ELT schools, where there was community conversations (staff + parents at both schools). The challenges at first was that it was optional and that made it difficult to staff. We needed to determine goals and ensure staff.
- FMA extended time will continue in FY25.
- Literacy is very important, there is everything in the district that supports it but needs to go out of school to support tutoring. Orton Gillingham? Budget issue to provide this.
- Families should not have to go out of district.
- MClass screener is used to identify students with issues earlier.
- Themes for out of district placement?
- Least restrictive environment is specific to the student. We can't provide everything but try to provide as much as possible. Early intervention is key, good screeners, strong Tier 1 curriculum is important.
- Investing in our new curriculum will continue to make strides for all our students. MTSS is an area that needs to be improved in order to address the learning gaps, especially for our children who are historically disadvantaged. Specifically, we can use data to improve instruction, but at the end of the day, we need more interventionists, special educators and paraprofessionals to provide DIRECT academic instruction, support social emotional learning (more adults to provide love) and more planning time to thoughtfully consider the needs of our most vulnerable learners.
- Cambridge has two schools, MLK and FMA, that have a lot of experience with longer learning days (though they have 8-hour-days instead of 6.5). Is the district leveraging lessons learned from these schools effectively in the implementation of extended learning time?

**OBJECTIVE 1 CONTINUED****Deliver Ambitious Instruction & Effective Supports**

- What would the budget and priorities mean for the lengths of school days at these schools that already have had 8-hour-days in the last 10+ days.
- I hope the district can communicate any implications to these two schools early and clearly, and have a thorough and extended community engagement process if any changes are planned for these schools.
- Are we looking to provide extended programs for ALL schools come 2025 school year? I heard rumors that we did not have enough in the budget for extended programs and that they were being removed (i.e MLK)
 - The school day for 2024-2025 will be increased by 30 minutes. There will be community discussions starting in a few weeks to expand understanding and discuss the planning that is happening. We actually do have the funds to support MLK and FMA but since the state grant that funded those ELT schools for over a decade has ended, it is time for the district to reevaluate continuing the 8 hour day.
- When the reevaluation happens there will be sufficient opportunities for families and teachers to be engaged. So far we have not heard anything.
- A lot of passionate parents about this that aren't in this meeting. Will make sure we attend the future community discussions about this.
- To address students reading below grade level, along with EARLY INTERVENTION for our youngest learners. EARLY IDENTIFICATION of students with specific reading disabilities. In terms of budgeting, interventionists and trained special educators to provide explicit and direct instruction

**OBJECTIVE 2****Provide Accessible College & Career Pathways**

- Student success plans, 7000 students: how to implement this and monitor this? Especially with only 1 or 2 staff?
 - Harvard redesign lab. Focusing on the navigator piece of this program. Number of partners are already in place. Developing communication and framework now. How to leverage existing resources/partnerships successfully. Interdepartmental work. We will get there but want to develop a thorough plan, therefore, it is crucial that we do not rush the process as it may lead to diminished results.
- What drives success? Who is leading this?
- Talking with identified partners and creating new ones. We know we cannot fund every partner. Some we fund and others that can support CPS. Making sure that goals are aligned and explained thoughtfully.
- Grassroots efforts for SEL for minority groups, being spearheaded by Skyler Nash and Mr Milner. End of summer should have framework complete and then pilot next school year
- Strategic tutoring: match young people with targeted support?
 - Meeting with school leaders and staff. Lots of supports exist but wait too long until after they have failed in some way. Early identification to match students with needed resources. Communicate individual student needs and make evolving choices
- Elementary low level reading. How will you support those that are beyond this age group to support them now and in future?
 - High school screeners to determine who is having difficulty. Have a class to address this. New curriculum in upper schools already in place
- What are our children losing by so much time devoted to testing - at the expense of some necessary play time at the elementary level and interpersonal relationships which enhance social/emotional development every level.

**OBJECTIVE 3****Effective Staff Learning & Support**

- Invest in curriculum, professional development. Include Assistant principals next year.
- Equitable vs equity? How many family liaisons and what is their role? Impact on student outcome?
 - Strategic Objective 4. Full time family liaisons and purpose behind it.
 - Support caregivers to combat absenteeism. Absenteeism is large across the state. Post COVID has seen this on rise.
 - Language barrier issues: removing barriers to access.
 - Professional development: teachers can see the needs of the caregivers and properly support them.
 - If folks can't understand the system, they cannot advocate and can't get the info that they need to support the students.
 - 18 schools so 18 full time family liaisons to support the school, students and caregivers. They are conduit to provide information. Teachers need to contribute to this as well.
- Some schools have gaps where teachers do not have as much impact.
- Student outcomes- being more direct on this. Build relationships and develop trust so that students can engage. Stronger through line of communication.
- How many vendors are looking at student outcomes? What is the fidelity of this, can this be done in house?
 - As an estimate, there are roughly 25 PD providers. Significant number but not 100s. To estimate the other consultants working on projects related directly to learning (scheduling audit) around an additional 25. The price range for these are varied.
 - School vs district wide makes a difference in cost.
 - Instructional time- 84% of budget going to staff, not vendors, and is a huge resource.
 - Learning loss- FY25 budget has the longer school time and the summer and vacation programs.
- How do we evaluate the efficacy of vendors and outside support? No duplication of efforts (in-house and out of house)
 - District climate survey to get an understanding of feelings. Our capacity around educators and staff are exhausted as they are asked to do a lot. Need to prioritize what is most important to close achievement gaps and achieve goals. Give staff the proper amount of time and structure to do that and everything else they have to do. Hone in priorities. Can't solve everything, everywhere all at once. Instead solve a few priority things very well.
 - One of the realities is that you have a lot of consultants and vendors. This is done because we do not have in house staff for a curriculum rollout. Trying to balance this out by doing 'train the trainer' to build institutional knowledge.
- Extended day program. How to leverage this?
 - Work with principals to develop engagement plans for staff and school communities to show the impact on their lives. If that does not exist it will not be effective.
- CEA bargain is complete. More academic time. Scheduling audits helps show what students do differently. Now it will be in line with the rest of the commonwealth. Imbedded intervention in the school day to allow for targeting of students

**OBJECTIVE 4****Build Welcoming & Supportive Schools & District**

- Family engagement. One specific goal in the budget that is or should be in the budget.
 - Goal is to get the Superintendent steering committee launched. Not sure of the cost impact at this moment. Entity to support family engagement. Partnership/collaboration between all groups that comprise CPS. Net partnership that liaises with district, schools and caregivers. Lives beyond our state so vision of continually changing landscape can be represented.
- Cambridge is a transient community so constantly in flux and a partnership where we can support each other.
- Migrant families have become incorporated into our schools but time frame and language barriers have made this a challenge, need more support
- High/low performing schools, support low performing schools with resources?
- Some schools have well resourced Friends groups but others don't. Data collection and distribution is important. Build strategies to communicate and create engagement. Build capacity in school so teachers are able to notice, support and communicate.
- First comes to mind is Thrive. Work around equity related to budget. Last year they looked district wide and this year going into schools to see how to direct resources
- Communication from central office to schools
- Advisory committee formed from principals. Principal newsletter (info to know and action items). Monthly principal meeting time and curriculum learning time.
- Migrant families: how to address this and support these families?
 - Opening of transitional shelters have gotten into planning stages. The MLE department makes adjustments to curriculum and SEI teachers. Gearing up for this now. Understanding who is here to stay as some will leave the district.
- Gaps in places where people meet expectations and some do not? How to combat this so gaps do not get worsened?
- Demographic makeup and programmatically have differences. FMA has most groups on the autism spectrum. Community discussions to determine on how to best use extended time
- Creating more safe/welcoming schools. Professional learning needs to do more so that educators can be prepared to support and be proficient at this. Standard 2 lends itself to this. Representation is also important to this. Not just look at MCAS schools.
- iReady and other things are just as important
- Family engagement: need to think about turnaround of approaches
- Understand allocation of resources for migrant families?
 - There is an intake process.
 - Built into the MLE department to do assessments and have enough teachers. And in family engagement.
 - Backlog of 80ish migrant families. Assess the needs. Be in partnership with the City as some might stay and some might not. There is some existing funding. Need to access needs and then take action.
 - Intake/emergency registration location at KLO.
- Plan for families at shelters. Interpreters needed. How can faith groups help?
 - Families have to leave shelter at 7AM until it reopens at 5PM. If at shelter for 5 days then the district needs to educate. Interpreters are part of CPS. Faith groups to support during the day and assess. Also see who has been here for 5 days
- Last year, the standout budget event was the FMA in-person event. I know this was supposed to be in person but it's so so sad there wasn't more planned for this year. Why didn't CPS build on that success this year?

**OBJECTIVE 4 CONTINUED****Build Welcoming & Supportive Schools & District**

- As I look at attendees here today, it seems very, very few are CPS families. So, with all the talk so far of family engagement today, the talk seems more impressive than the action.
 - This is one of several community budget meetings. We hosted a co-designed affinity budget meeting in December; we also held a hybrid community budget discussion that was co-facilitated by caregivers, we held two staff budget discussions and this discussion this evening. As always, we will continue to strive to improve our engagement efforts as we continue to evolve.
- YES to providing family support services at the school level. How can we elevate what is working and extend this to impact more caregivers/families.
- We are working with school leaders and assessing what is working well based on data that is disaggregated
- Given the budgetary challenges, we are trying to think about how to better partner to create more access for the neediest caregivers and families
- Started meeting with the school leaders who will be engaging their staff first to share their thoughts, insights and ideas and we will then begin to engage with caregivers and the broader community.
- The migrant crisis is currently at Cambridge's door. The state is providing inadequate services to families. How is CPSD meeting the needs of young migrants who are school age? How are they acclimating those students? What services are being provided? And how are those services being accounted for in the budget for the upcoming year?
- I do think many families are thoroughly confused as to the next school year's additional 2 hours total/week (30/mins per day, except W).
- I think CPS could have done a better job of being clear about that to families. Did it even go out in the newsletter yet? I'm not sure, but those are quite hard to follow and dense, generally
- Thank you to MBK. I love the focus on OUTCOMES.
- Are there language interpretation services at all the schools?
 - We have district level interpretation services that are provided based on school need and school based request. We are also in partnership with the Cambridge Learning Center's community engagement team to support this work as well
- The interest in our Cambridge Public Schools is valued by all who live, work, and are educated in our city, a city that is inclusive and where all are contributors to the climate of our school, our school leaders, and members of the school community.
- Thanks for your responses. Finally, I hope the vendors that are engaged by CPSD are Black and Latino businesses since Cambridge has an abysmal record with hiring those vendors.