

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

Roundtable Meeting

January 23, 2018

Called for 6:00 PM in the CRLS Henrietta S. Attles Meeting Room, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, 459 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of discussing the Cambridge Public Schools District Plan Update.

Members Present: Ms. Bowman, Ms. Dexter, Mr. Fantini, Ms. Kelly, Mr. Kimbrough, Ms. Nolan, Mayor McGovern

Also Present: Dr. Kenneth Salim, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Carolyn Turk, Deputy Superintendent
Ms. Barbara Allen, Executive Director of Human Resources
Ms. Jean Spera, Interim Asst. Supt. for Student Services
Dr. Anda Adams, Asst. Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction
Mr. James Maloney, Chief Operating Officer (ABSENT)
Dr. Lori Likis, Chief Planning Officer
Ms. Maryann MacDonald, Asst. Superintendent of Elementary Education
Ms. Claire Spinner, Chief Financial Officer
Ms. Elizabeth Liss, Educational Liaison for Mayor's Office

Mayor McGovern in the Chair.

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

The Chair read the call of the meeting and informed everyone that the meeting is audio recorded and not televised by the district, however there is a member of the public doing a video recording. There is no public comment.

David Rosenberg and his colleague from Education Resource Strategies (ERS) led the presentation.

ERS is a non profit organization based in Watertown, which focuses on working with school systems, generally large urban systems around the country. Primarily, they focus on how the system is used rather than how big the system is.

Elementary Program Review, January 23, 2018

Today's Discussion

- Context
- How this work fits within the Elementary Program Review
- Defining our performance challenge

The kids that start out with an economic disadvantage in our district are performing on par with other economically disadvantaged students in other districts around the country. So, when you look at wanting all students to be reading at grade level by the end of 3rd grade, our advantage in Cambridge is that we spend more, per pupil, than most other districts.

- Resource use in our elementary schools

At this point we are looking at what we are doing with what we have.
Is all of the money sitting in central administration?

- How much do we have

Do we have enough in general? Looking at the dollars, we do.
Principals are able to hire teachers of quality and retain them.
The level of instruction is rigorous.

- How well do we use it?

In Cambridge, 69% of our funds are spent on the school budget
31% of our funds are spent on school transportation and food services
Student needs vary significantly across CPS school
The smaller the enrollment, the more the cost to educate each child

- Implications and potential next steps

Looking across the country, in CPS schools, student time is among the lowest.
Principals also state they do not have enough time to teach everything.
Extended day schools spread added time across core subjects and foreign language.

About Education Resource Strategies

- We believe:
- All students deserve a great education tailored to their needs
- One school at a time is not enough; we must redesign school systems to create the conditions for all schools to succeed.
- Its not just about how much you have, but how well you use it; districts can restructure their resources to meet their strategic goals and schools' unique needs.

Assessing current resource use

Time is our scarcest resource – but is crucial to improving student performance

After controlling for small schools and transportation, CPS still invests more than other MA districts

Student need varies significantly across CPS schools

After adjusting for need, smaller schools and schools with greater need receive more funds per pupil.

SWD and ESL/SEI staffing levels vary across schools, while fixed ratios drive most other staffing levels

Ms. Dexter asked about General Education Aides and
Mr. Fantini asked how many homerooms and how many aides.

Charts are explained

In most CPS schools, student time is among the lowest in the country

Ms. Nolan noticed that most of the schools on this slide are outside of the state other than Boston, and CPS only has two schools with extended day.

Mr. Fantini asked if the Charter Schools were also looked at, if not would it help? It was confirmed it would contribute to knowing another benchmark. The two schools that are extended day schools are FMA and the MLK.

Extended day schools spread added time across core subjects and foreign language

More ELA time may be helping improve performance of economically disadvantaged students

Ms. Bowman asked how he defines instructional time and non instructional time on slide 14. He answered that lunch would be non instructional time.

Ms. Nolan, on slide 15, wanted to make sure that the Cambridgeport came out the highest on both economically and non economically schools.

Ms. Bowman wants to know the number of economically disadvantaged students (he took us back to page 9 and multiplying it by what is on page 10). It was brought up that the Cambridgeport is a Title 1 school.

How well? High performing systems and schools organize school-level resources strategically

What CPS does well is focusing on the whole child and providing rigorous joyful learning. We have a growth oriented culture. There is a focus on a well rounded education.

- Whole Child
- Teacher Collaboration How do teachers work together to improve instructional practice?
- Time and Attention Multiple structures for teacher collaboration
- Talent Management Expand instructional time for students that are farthest behind
- Instruction

High performing systems and schools organize school-level resources strategically

Strategic School Design

Assets

- Coaches focused on helping teachers improve instruction
- Multiple structures for teacher collaboration

Opportunities

- Expand instructional time for students who are farthest behind
- Create more fluid structures for teacher teaming and small group instruction
- Leverage other teachers – students with disabilities, instructional coaches, librarians, and specialists – to reduce group size
- Schedule longer blocks of collaboration time among shared-content teachers

CPS has many foundations for connected Professional learning – how can we build on these?

Practices that provide additional attention for students are most prevalent

Extending and differentiating ELA instructional time within current structures implies tradeoffs

Schools can leverage existing staff to provide small group instruction during intervention blocks

- Typical classroom structure – Group size 9-18
- Push in other staff during ELA/intervention blocks + centers – Group size 5-7
- Concentrate supports in one classroom at a time – Group size 3-6

Ms. Dexter asked if we have staff with empty blocks with time to come in and provide extra support to students. Mr. Rosenberg explained it is defined as re-purposing time as opposed to empty blocks.

Mr. Kimbrough wants clarification on whether or not there is enough staff to accommodate group sizes of 3-6 students. Mr. Rosenberg confirmed that during targeted blocks, yes however, he wants to be clear that it is not easy to flip a switch and have class sizes of 3-6 students.

Mr. Fantini asked if he sees this work in other schools, the answer was yes.

Mr. Bowman asked for clarification regarding the models and whether or not we are using at least some pieces of the models. Going back to page 19, her question was answered as yes Mostly or Always for providing additional attention for students.

Ms. Dexter asked why principals answered the way they did. Mr. Rosenberg very wisely stated that he was most hesitant to answer why any principal answers the way they do.

Schools could also re-structure existing staff to differentiate time and attention throughout the school day

- Typical classroom structure
- Co-teaching, with one dual-certified teacher
- Grade –level teacher
- Family model

Additional Considerations

- ✓ Potential creation of new dual-certified and teacher leadership roles
- ✓ Greater need for expert support, access to data, and time for effective collaboration
- ✓ Requires growth-oriented adult culture committed to continuous improvement to find solutions that are right to address the needs of each school's students

High-performing systems and schools organize school-level resources strategically

Areas for further exploration

- Curricular rigor and consistency
- Coordination among curriculum groups at the district level
- Effectiveness of/ opportunities to improve impact of supports for Students With Disabilities

The floor was opened for questions and further discussions:

Ms. Kelly stated that this is the first time that we can actually consider extending the school day; it remodels what the day will look like. She stated that the district made a good decision to bring someone in from outside the district and look at what CPS looks like.

Ms. Nolan asked about extending the time with core literacy. She could see it for lots of different uses, and there was data on the Morse, which has the highest needs. She wonders if instead of using the extra time for ELA, it could be used for something else. Perhaps some kids just need to run outside. Do we have solid proof that we really need more ELA time to achieve our goals?

Mr. Rosenberg indicated that we do have evidence that yes it can have an impact on literacy. There are implications. Make sure there is high quality across the board and make sure the literacy is also high quality.

Ms. Nolan notes that it seems that a lower ratio is better across the board. She asked what the ideal school system is that CPS should desire. How do all students' learning needs become known and how do all students' learning needs get met?

Mr. Rosenberg responded there are many ways to differentiate instruction, therefore the answer is murky. In large part it depends on what is going on during the school day. We will find different models in different schools. Schools vary by student and intervention depends on what the student population looks like.

Ms. Bowman pointed out the fact that it seems to be if we just do this, magic will happen. Are there models for what the extended day will look like, is there a formula?

He answered that there are documents of schools that have organized themselves differently to achieve their goals.

It was stated that there is no magic way to know that what works in Memphis will work in Cambridge.

Mr. Fantini asked if we wanted to implement this system to change the roles of the teachers, how would we go about doing it.

Mr. Rosenberg answered there is adaptive change and technical change. Technical would be bargaining agreements. Adaptive change would be doing it with a cross functional group from the school like the Principal and a team that is willing to try new things. It is not flipping the switch, but taking the time to slowly make changes without changing the goal. Sometimes it is done with a few schools, sometimes it is done with many at the same time. It can be done on the system level change, look at what you want to do and then adopt the budget to do it.

Mr. Fantini stated that we want literacy at the 3rd grade. How many people get involved? Do School Committee Members provide tutoring to kids? He also wanted to know the percentage we need to make change? Is one half hour long enough? He stated that in Holyoke they made a big change, and then they had to take some of it back because they were not ready for it. It was suggested that solutions will differ from school to school.

Ms. Dexter understood this presentation to say that we have been told that we have enough resources and we are not using them effectively. She referred to slide 11, concentrating on the General Education teachers. Also, she brought up that if we add an intervention block, we would have to do it every day, not once. For our students that are not learning anyway, extending the day is not going to help them. They need the strategies to learn not more time to not learn. She questions the premise that we can do more with the same amount.

Mr. Rosenberg made some comments about measuring being different than that of the DESE. The point ERS wants to make is that their initial investment is in instructors. How do we fix it when we have small schools? The tradeoffs are possible in many ways.

Ms. Kelly returned us to the question of how do we most effectively use our resources to reach literacy by 3rd grade? We need to keep our sights on how to accomplish that goal. We need to make creative changes. It is a lot to ask one teacher to identify all of the strengths and weaknesses of EACH child in each classroom.

Mayor McGovern believes CPS should extend the school day. This presentation defends why it is possible and why we may need to do it. We are very well resourced and we can debate it, but do we have the political will to do it?

Ms. Bowman reminded us that when we decided to shift to the Innovation Agenda we had some small class sizes made up of little boys of color. It did not solve the challenge. It is one of the reasons she is

on the Committee to try to shift things in order to accommodate children of color. She is ready to take the challenge in a budget conversation and do the hard work so that all kids can thrive.

Mr. Fantini highlighted the lead teacher role; he thinks it is a good strong model. It has been a great presentation. He would like to make it happen. We have to change how we think as a system.

Dr. Salim gave closing remarks and words of wisdom. He thanked David Rosenberg and the entire ERS team. He thanked the Committee and explained why he wanted to do this first. There will be more components to be shared with the Committee over the upcoming months.

Summary of Findings

To realize our goal of ensuring that all students can read by third grade, CPS must improve reading proficiency among economically disadvantaged students, the majority of whom are Black or Latino.

CPS benefits from significantly higher resource levels than other districts.

The one asset where CPS lacks sufficient volume is time. Students in most CPS schools attend school for less time than their peers in virtually every other district in the U.S.

CPS also could pilot structures that break down the traditional “one teacher-one classroom” model by more aggressively integrating existing instructional staff into core instruction.

Because these models leverage existing staff, they could be implemented at no additional cost to the district.

On a motion by Ms. Nolan, seconded by Ms. Bowman, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 PM.

Distributed Back-up Documents (copy on file in the School Committee office):

- Elementary Program Review power-point presentation January 23, 2018

The Chair entertained a motion to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing collective bargaining and litigation strategy with respect to a level III CEA Unit C grievance as part of collective bargaining as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining and litigating positions of the School Committee.

The Chair announced that no votes will be taken and we will not reconvene in open session.

On a motion by Ms. Kelly, seconded by Mr. Fantini, on the following roll call, it was voted to enter into Executive Session for the purpose stated: Ms. Dexter YEA; Mr. Fantini YEA; Ms. Kelly YEA; Mr. Kimbrough YEA; Ms. Nolan YEA; Ms. Bowman YEA; Mr. Mayor YEA.

Dosha Beard
Executive Secretary to the School Committee