



SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

Special Meeting

July 24, 2017

Called for 6:00 PM on Monday, July 24, 2017, in the Henrietta S. Attles Meeting Room, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, 459 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of discussing the Cambridge Public Schools District Plan Framework.

Members Present: Ms. Bowman, Ms. Dexter, Mr. Fantini, Mr. Harding (~~ABSENT~~), Ms. Kelly, Ms. Nolan and Mayor Simmons

Also Present: Dr. Kenneth Salim, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Carolyn Turk, Deputy Superintendent
Ms. Jean Spera, Acting Asst. Superintendent for Student Services
Mr. James Maloney, Chief Operating Officer
Ms. Claire Spinner, Chief Financial Officer
Dr. Lori Likis, Chief Planning Officer
Mr. Tony Clark, Educational Liaison to Mayor
Mr. Dan Monahan, CEA President
Ms. Low Fleury, Student School Committee

Mayor Simmons in the Chair.

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

Mayor Simmons turned the meeting over to Superintendent Salim. Dr. Salim shared that the purpose of this Special Meeting is for further discussion on the Cambridge Public Schools District Plan Framework including the district's strategic objectives and strategic initiatives and the plan for continuing the work on the outcomes. He explained that the agenda for this meeting would allow for questions and comments at different points during the presentation.

Dr. Salim walked the Members through a PowerPoint presentation as follows (on file in the School Committee office):

CPS District Planning Process

Agenda

Implementing the district plan
 Ongoing planning process timeline
 SY17-18 strategic initiatives
 Action planning process and examples
Aligning district systems to the plan
Q&A
CPS strategic objectives and initiatives
Q&A
Timeline and plan for finalizing outcomes
Q&A

Planning for Success

The District Planning Process/3 Phases

1. Create Plan

2. Align Systems
3. Implement

CPS Planning Process Timeline SY17-18

7 Initiatives Already in Process for SY17-18

7 Initiatives Selected for Action Planning SY17-18

Town Hall Voting: Strategic Initiatives

Administrative Council Voting: Strategic Initiatives

Action Planning Retreat 1: June 26, 2017

Action Plan Template

Implementation Benchmarks

Examples

PDSA Cycle (Act, Plan, Study, Do)

Examples of Our Work to Date

Draft Definitions: Rigorous, Joyful Learning

Draft Definitions: Social/Emotional Learning

Draft Definitions: Families as Partners

Draft Definitions: Professional Learning

Draft Definitions: Student Goal Setting

Draft Definitions: Inclusive Practice

Next Steps: Aligning Systems to the District Plan

Questions?

Digging Deeper (Strategic Objectives and Strategic Initiatives)

1. Provide Equity and Access
 - a. Student Goal Setting
 - b. Cultural Proficiency
 - c. Dynamic Diversity
 - d. Priority Standards
 - e. Curriculum/Technology
2. Provide Engaging Learning for Students and Staff
 - a. Real World Learning
 - b. Rigorous, Joyful Learning
 - c. Professional Learning
 - d. Innovation
3. Support the Whole Child
 - a. Social Emotional Learning
 - b. Inclusive Practices
 - c. Student Engagement
 - d. Systems of Support
4. Expand and Strengthen Family Partnerships and Community Partnerships
 - a. Family Partnerships
 - b. Partnership System
 - c. Partnership Evaluation
 - d. Community Partnerships
5. Improve Implementation and Progress Monitoring
 - a. Continuous Improvement
 - b. Grade Span Reviews
 - c. Special Education Review
 - d. Process for Vetting Initiatives
 - e. Targeted School Support

Questions?

Finalizing Outcomes – School Committee Retreat, September 2017

What would you like us to consider as we prepare for the School Committee retreat on outcomes?

Discussions took place and Dr. Salim responded to the Members questions, comments and concerns.

Ms. Kelly commented that she would like the emphasis for guidance to be on grades 6 through 12. She also asked how we will know when we have effective inclusive practices in our classrooms.

Dr. Salim responded that the grades 6-12 guidance perspective is the work that they are looking at as well as looking more broadly at school counseling. In terms of knowing when we have effective inclusive practices in all our classrooms, Dr. Salim noted that there are lots of measures to assess that. We look at the practice and the achievement of all students in the classroom as well as instructional practices which teachers are utilizing. He indicated that they also look at the collaboration of the special educator with the classroom teacher.

Mr. Fantini asked about aligning the school improvement plans to the district plan. He inquired if the school improvement plans are aligned to the outcomes or the strategic initiatives. Dr. Salim responded that one level is around the strategic initiatives and part of that work will be determined. He indicated that the school improvement plans are constructed around three objectives: instructional practices, social and emotional learning and family engagement. He explained how the progress of the school improvement plans are measured. He added that there may be specific initiatives that have connection to the school improvement plans. He shared that there will be further collaborative discussion with the principals on August 22nd regarding defining the final framework around the school improvement plan.

Mr. Fantini asked about MCAS 2.0 and what role it will play in terms of the monitoring systems that we will have. Dr. Salim indicated that they have preliminary dates in the fall from the State for the availability of the next MCAS data. He expects to use the data as done in the past to inform how the initiatives and focus areas are identified. Mr. Fantini asked what progress monitoring will look like. Dr. Salim indicated that part of it depends on the work on the outcomes and engaging with the Committee. He shared that having the retreat in September will give us a good picture. Some outcomes exist in the framework and some don't as yet.

Mr. Harding joined the meeting at 6:30 pm.

Ms. Nolan followed up on the question of accountability of MCAS 2.0. Given that the data from MCAS 2.0 will be different from the data of PARCC and also the MCAS given the year before that. She noted that the students have been given three different tests in three different years. She asked about using longitudinal data to understand the advancement of students. She also asked about our own internal data and assessments. Dr. Salim responded while there will be three sets of data over the last three years and the hope is that having strand analysis data will be valuable in understanding whether our students are meeting benchmarks. The State may have some way of measuring growth with the previous versions of the tests. Dr. Salim indicated that regardless of the assessment, being able to compare the results of the students with the frameworks in what standards they are meeting will be utilized as part of the school improvement planning process. Ms. Nolan asked to hear more about how administrators, leaders and teachers throughout the district will be managing the tension of us wanting innovations such as design lab with how teachers feel they should work with students on how they best see fit. Ms. Nolan also mentioned the need for more common standards throughout the district. She added that teachers must have the autonomy and creativity they need in their teaching in order to get to that joyful, rigorous learning and how will we manage this dual goal. Dr. Salim indicated that in some ways that is the central challenge of how we empower educators and staff to do the best work possible and also making sure we are maintaining high level expectation across the system. It's from working with our educators and making the connection of the work with our draft plan framework and the work around our high expertise teaching and the work that has been successful.

Ms. Low Fleury asked about the cultural proficiency and what it would look like. Dr. Salim responded that they have been doing work in identifying cultural proficiency leads and working with them to build their capacity to work with their building leaders to engage that work. This is work that has already happened in our schools. Dr. Salim noted that they are working with their administrative team this summer on a text called SchoolTalk by Mica Pollock. The idea is about rethinking what we say about and to students every day and how that is part of a cultural proficiency.

Mr. Harding commented that he would like to see exactly what we are doing about cultural proficiency.

Which piece are we doing and how will it be implemented across the board. It's critically important for staff. He suggested reaching out to others who have done this work. He asked about the expectations of the innovation design lab. Dr. Salim noted that the innovation design coach was an essential part of this. At a district wide level, it was being able to convene and look at some of the partnerships in innovation efforts that make sense for the district. They looked at helping to develop this framework related to our partnerships in the district. They looked at this design thinking model in areas such as our world language roll out as well as opportunities of integration such as arts and music. Mr. Harding asked about providing supports for schools identified in need and if there is going to be transparent particular criteria that a school would have to be going through so that the district would trigger the intervention. Mr. Harding commented that we would need a baseline criteria for this. Dr. Salim commented that the cabinet has been talking about having a set of questions which school leaders would respond to as part of accessing meeting those needs.

Ms. Dexter asked if we are going to articulate a set of core values, assumptions and beliefs. She asked Dr. Salim to define the three terms of equity, whole child and cultural proficiency. Dr. Salim responded that the core values piece would have been the next step based on the plan if they had additional retreats with the planning team. They will explore that step in the future. As they continue the action planning, the terms of equity, whole child and cultural proficiency would need to be defined as a school community as they have done the other terms in the plan. Ms. Dexter noted that equity is a huge term. She asked if we are only talking about social and emotional in terms of the whole child. She mentioned that there are people who are culturally not proficient but not racist. She commented that proficiency implies adequate skills. Dr. Salim noted that they have had discussion with the administrative council about how we think about race, gender, disability, and a broad range of diversity within our schools. They are thinking about cultural proficiency relationship practices and what those things are that we can measure and observe in a classroom, e.g. relationship building, advocacy for students.

Ms. Bowman talked about using the term design lab and expressed that she would like to go deeper at a different time on the impact this has in the classroom and how this fits into this plan.

Mayor Simmons noted that a glossary of terms is very important. We have to agree on what cultural proficiency is so we know when we get there. She commented that "embedding" cultural proficiency is not concrete enough. She wants to know the baseline for this. Mayor Simmons referred to what was done in Cambridge in 1987 on the Minority Achievement Report and where we have had this conversation so many times in the past. She questioned when we will become concrete and intentional of what we are doing in cultural proficiency. She inquired what is different now than in the past. She referred to a series of reports in 2003, 2010, 2012 and 2014 which were a journey of no success. She asked what the initiatives are that address cultural competency and how is the district aligning these initiatives. Mayor Simmons talked about professional learning and what the cost of these initiatives would be to the district. It would be helpful for her to know the organization of what we have done in cultural proficiency, what we are doing and where we need to be. We need standards on cultural proficiency; everyone should be included such as secretaries, custodians, cafeteria workers, etc. Cultural competency needs a better distinction than the word "embedded". Mayor Simmons spoke about rigorous, joyful learning and its relationship to cultural proficiency. She shared that as someone who has done work in cultural competency, the word joyful might not be good in relationship to that type of training. It is hard gut-wrenching work. We need to have a concrete percentage of what the increases will be such as the algebra pass rate.

Dr. Salim responded that the language of embed was changed because it was ambiguous. He noted that the framework now reads as "providing cultural proficiency to all educators".

Dr. Turk commented from her perspective. She indicated that people have felt they have been invited to be part of the conversation and what they have said at the table has been heard. Dr. Turk suggested that it is important that we stick with what we said we are going to do. We start out strong and then we lose focus. She added that there is a great deal of energy and excitement about the process because it came from the people instead of being told to the people.

Ms. Kelly noted that the term cultural competency is a tricky term because she doesn't think we ever reach full cultural competency. It is ongoing work. It has to be the ongoing work of the policy bodies as well.

Ms. Dexter commented that this framework looks as if it is improving on what we are already doing and which was begun with Dr. Young. We did a lot of curriculum work and improving instruction, family engagement, RBT, special education integration, universal design for learning, response for intervention, and targeted supports. She noted that initiatives are starting something different. She also named initiatives that the School Committee wanted. She questioned where these other issues fit into the plan not to mention planning for increased enrollment. Dr. Salim responded that the purpose of the district plan is to create focus and prioritization and not to capture everything that the system is doing. These initiatives represent important steps forward. How do we see them as collective and coherent as part of a district plan framework. When there is limited time, what is our focus. The focus is on increasing outcomes for all students.

Ms. Dexter asked if this plan is saying we are not doing anything else but what is in this plan? What about our priorities? What about expanding the Chinese Immersion program? Dr. Salim responded that ultimately the plan is about how we do our work at every part of the organization. The plan framework does not capture all the work a classroom teacher does. This is a 3 year plan and certain things will happen over a 3 year period. Certain things will happen that require attention and discussion about other matters. For instance at the classroom level, a teacher is not thinking about controlled choice.

Ms. Bowman added that some of the things we are discussing do not fall on the Superintendent but fall on the School Committee. She noted that it is the Committee's job as policy makers to take all these concepts that come before it and have meaningful conversation with the Superintendent as it relates to the baseline goals and the vision the Committee wants to have for the young people in this school system. She suggested thinking about a timeline.

Ms. Low Fleury asked if there is a place where people can see where we are starting from, e.g. cultural proficiency, etc. Where are our baselines?

Ms. Nolan shared that she wants to know what the outcomes are, what the smart goals are, and what the specific measures are we need to reach our goals. She added that as we develop policies, we may determine to take on different issues. Whatever happens should fit into one of these strategic objectives or otherwise we shouldn't be doing it. Whatever we decide to engage in should support this vision of the district. She reminded the Committee that the outcomes in the end should be smart, specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant and time based. None of these outcomes are smart yet. She commented that by the September retreat we need to get there. She also indicated that use of a dashboard is a family friendly way to measure the results and easy to do.

Mr. Harding indicated that we have to understand the things that are motivating us. How are we supporting and strengthening the instruction. How are we measuring excellent instruction in every classroom. He commented that we need to make sure we assess and evaluate any initiatives. The outcomes will help the public understand what is strategic. He added that he would like the specificity to be real when we have the roundtable in September. He indicated that we need to take risk and make sure that we are shooting for the stars.

Mr. Fantini noted that as a Committee we could have chosen to work on individual initiatives. He added that by giving the Superintendent the time to work on the district plan, we will be in a better place in the long run for the Cambridge Public Schools. This will give us the discipline and allow us to be successful. This will create a structure and alignment for improving the system.

Ms. Kelly shared that she was glad there is a special education review included in this. She indicated that we need to be specific and definitive about what inclusive practice is. It will be critical to the success of many of our students. We are moving in the right direction. We need to understand what is going on, what is effective and ineffective.

Mayor Simmons commented that she would like to move this forward at tomorrow's Regular Meeting by vote. It will move it forward as a framework and we will meet in September at a roundtable.

Mayor Simmons reminded everyone that tomorrow's meeting starts at 5:00 PM.

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Mr. Harding, the meeting was adjourned at 7:55 PM.

Judith T. Martin
Executive Secretary
to the School Committee office

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

CPS District Planning Process PowerPoint presentation
CPS District Plan Framework 2017-2020