

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

Special Meeting – Budget Retreat

February 7, 2017

Called for immediately following the February 7th Regular Meeting in the Henrietta S. Attles Meeting Room, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, 459 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of a Budget Retreat for discussing an update on the FY2018 School Department budget development.

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

Also present: Dr. Kenneth Salim, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Carolyn Turk, Deputy Superintendent
Dr. Victoria Greer, Asst. Supt. for Student Services
Ms. Maryann MacDonald, Asst. Superintendent of Elementary Education
Dr. Anda Adams, Asst. Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
Mr. James Maloney, Chief Operating Officer
Ms. Claire Spinner, Chief Financial Officer
Ms. Barbara Allen, Executive Director of Human Resources
Dr. Lori Likis, Chief Planning Officer
Mr. Damon Smith, Principal of CRLS
Mr. Tony Clark, Educational Liaison to Mayor
Mr. Dan Monahan, CEA President

Budget Sub-Committee Co-Chairs Harding and Kelly in the chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, Ms. Kelly and Mr. Harding called the meeting to order at 8:08 PM.

Mr. Harding and Ms. Kelly turned the meeting over to Dr. Salim. Dr. Salim shared that they would be discussing the revenue update, kindergarten lottery, level up proposal and world language at this meeting. Dr. Salim indicated that they have had a number of meetings with the City Manager and his finance team. He added that Ms. Spinner, Mr. Maloney, Mr. Smith and Dr. Adams would be participating in the presentation. Dr. Salim turned the meeting over to Ms. Spinner, CFO, to begin the first part of the presentation. Ms. Spinner indicated that she and Dr. Salim in working collaboratively with the City Manager and the City fiscal staff feel that they can develop a budget which can support what needs to be done next year.

Ms. Spinner and Mr. Maloney walked the Members through a PowerPoint presentation on FY18 School Department budget update:

Agenda

- Revenue Update
- Kindergarten Lottery
- Level Up
- World Language

Revenue Projections

- Estimates developed with City Manager and City fiscal staff
 - Preliminary estimate \$179.2 million (+6.4 million)
 - Revised estimate \$183.0 million (+10.2 million)

- Kindergarten Lottery Update
- Kindergarten Budget Implication

Discussion took place on the following questions, comments and concerns:

Mr. Fantini and Mr. Harding expressed their concerns that our new schools have enough space to accommodate the increasing enrollment.

Ms. Bowman shared that she feels there should be a person from this body to have conversations in the redesign of these new schools. She asked how we can come together to figure out the needs first before the hiring of the architect.

Ms. Kelly added that we need to keep on top of predicting the enrollment. She has some frustration that we are not keeping up with the enrollment in terms of space.

Ms. Dexter asked for clarification on the projections.

Mayor Simmons asked Ms. Bowman to clarify her comment. Ms. Bowman responded that she wanted someone from the School Committee side to be at discussions in collaboration with the administration when making the initial plans for a new school building. Mayor Simmons suggested that as it pertains to new schools that our contract with Human Services be factored in. Ms. Bowman noted that we are hitting capacity issues and we have to talk about our joint needs and build schools for our children. The goal is to serve our children adequately.

Ms. Nolan thanked the city and school department staff for working to provide enough resources for the FY18 budget. She noted that Controlled Choice becomes an advantage to us in the issue of increased enrollment.

Deputy Superintendent Carolyn Turk and CRLS Principal Damon Smith walked the Members through the Level up plan portion of the budget presentation:

Level up: FY2018 Budget Implications
Level up plan update: Honors ELA 9 Course staffing
Level up plan update: Professional development and planning
Level up plan update: Summer programs

Discussion took place on the following questions, comments and concerns:

Ms. Kelly asked how students going into AVID 9 summer session would be determined. Principal Smith responded that those students will be composed exclusively of those students enrolled in AVID.

Ms. Kelly asked how many weeks the summer preview courses would be. Mr. Smith responded that the preview course is two weeks for two different sessions.

Mr. Harding noted that some students will not be ready for the Level up plan and asked what the plan would be for those students. Mr. Smith shared that they are developing the honors access class for those students who have a higher challenge in meeting the demands of the honors level course. Mr. Harding added that this is a way to empower students to believe they can succeed.

Ms. Nolan asked for clarification on staffing the honors access class. She explained that we are taking a class that was full year which is now half a year. Ms. Nolan asked about the 3 FTE Office of Student Services (OSS) staff members and how they would be allocated. Mr. Smith shared that the 3 OSS staff members would add for greater collaboration and consistency in classroom presence.

Ms. Bowman asked about supporting students who are more advanced. Mr. Smith noted that we will have greater flexibility of grouping of students with smaller class sizes and hopes that this addition of staff members will provide individual students with more attention and focus. Ms. Bowman added the purpose is to integrate these classes and we need to raise the consciousness and our approach to bring students together.

Dr. Turk added that there is an enhanced level of outreach happening. We are actually identifying students and their needs and engaging them to be a part of this and to be successful.

Ms. Dexter asked Mr. Smith his hopes for the maximum amount of students in the honors access class and if there will be classroom coaching. Principal Smith noted that we are actively recruiting students as potential honors access participants. He shared that they are hoping to have class sizes from 12 to 15 students. He added that they do not have a coaching profile in the requests for this year but have a collaborative process for teachers to work together.

Mr. Fantini asked about an 8th grader who doesn't sign up for any of the programs offered and how would outreach be provided to that student. Principal Smith explained the multiple levels which would be used to reach that student, i.e. teacher recommendations, SRI, etc. CRLS staff will identify individual students for "rise up". There is in school support and outside support during the summer time. The Honors access 9 class is on top of all the other resources CRLS already has in place. Dr. Turk added that this is about good practice and the key is to know our kids. We know that the student is capable and the adults have to convey this to the students. Mr. Fantini asked about the criteria for AVID. Mr. Smith responded they are students in the middle who have the potential to reach high academic performance. It is to get "B and C" students to the "B+ and A" range. Mr. Fantini asked if our partners have been asked to bring anything to the table to add to the success of the Honors ELA 9 experience. Mr. Smith added that they are already involved in the college success program.

Ms. Kelly thanked Principal Smith for this informative presentation and the work gone into developing this experience for our students. Mr. Harding suggested sending a letter to the 500 new families entering 9th grade to explain these changes in the 9th grade ELA program.

Dr. Adams walked the Members through a PowerPoint presentation on Elementary World Language Update:

Design Process

Understand goals & options → Engage families & educators → Design program & budget

School Committee Roundtable

- We identified opportunities and challenges

- We shared our community and educator engagement plan

- We heard your request to be thoughtful and strategic about design, implementation, and progress monitoring

1012 families and educators responded to survey

877 individual comments written

10 in-person focus groups with educators and families

Survey Respondents

Survey Themes

- Goals ranged from cultural exposure and global understanding to full immersion and proficiency

- Many envision an immersion experience

- Most support for Spanish, followed by Mandarin Chinese and French

- Questions about serving students with disabilities and English language learners

- Concerns about the already-full school day and not wanting to give up existing learning experiences

- Sharing innovative ideas for how to address identified challenges

Educator Focus Group Themes (to date)

Next Steps

17-18 Pilot (1 grade level, 2 schools) (1 teacher, 2 schedules)

Measure impact on language learning, academic cores

FY2018 Budget Implication

Winter-Spring 2017

Questions Comments

Credits

Discussion took place on the following questions, comments and concerns:

Ms. Dexter shared that she appreciated this plan.

Ms. Nolan would like world language in every grade and in every school but would approve this plan. Since language is literacy, we could fulfill the literacy requirements using many of the requirements currently provided in English and create the rest in another language. There are ways to approach this creatively.

Ms. Kelly is looking at this in the model of the Kodaly program with pilots and seeing the success of that incredible music curriculum. We need to find a couple of schools in the district who express interest and want to pursue this model and then we move forward with that. You need to give it a place to grow. Ms. Kelly appreciated how much Dr. Adams reached out to the community about the world language program.

Ms. Bowman hopes we take the word "pilot" seriously and be intentional about what information comes from this. If this doesn't have the impact that we wanted it to then we would need to have the conversation to adapt.

Mr. Fantini shared that we are at a great place now with this pilot. He congratulates the Superintendent, Dr. Adams and the leadership team for responding and finding the right answers.

Mr. Harding thanked Dr. Adams for her efforts and is supportive of this plan. He agrees to wait to see what happens with this pilot and then decide what to do next.

Dr. Adams added that the challenge of a pilot is always the timing of it. Next year we will have a certain amount of data but not enough to make a decision at this time next year. Also, she mentioned that their focus group community engagement team and outreach meeting is next Thursday on February 16th. She shared that they have not heard their voices yet and this will also help inform their thinking.

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Ms. Kelly, the meeting was adjourned at 10:00 PM.

Judith T. Martin
Executive Secretary
to the School Committee

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

- PowerPoint presentation on Elementary World Language Update
- PowerPoint presentation on FY18 School Department Budget Update