

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

Roundtable Meeting

December 8, 2015

Called for 5:30 PM in the CRLS Henrietta S. Attles Meeting Room, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, 459 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of discussing the achievement and opportunity gap facing the Cambridge Public School District and using the document "Bridging Educational Equity and Excellence: A Plan to Raise Academic Achievement and Close Gaps in the Cambridge Public Schools".

Members Present: Ms. Cronin, Mr. Fantini (ABSENT), Mr. Harding, Ms. Kelly, Ms. Nolan, Mr. Osborne and Mayor Maher

Student Members present: Griffin Andres and Ben Austin

Also Present: Dr. Jeff Young, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Carolyn Turk, Deputy Superintendent
Dr. Victoria Greer, Asst. Supt. for Student Services
Dr. Jessica Huizenga, Asst. Supt. of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment
Ms. Maryann MacDonald, Asst. Supt. of Elementary Education
Ms. Claire Spinner, Chief Financial Officer
Ms. Barbara Allen, Executive Director of Human Resources
Ms. Lori Likis, Chief Planning Officer
Mr. Ed Byrne, Diversity Coordinator
Ms. Alanna Mallon, Education Liaison for Mayor's Office

Mayor Maher in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 5:35 PM.

The Chair read the call of the meeting and informed everyone that the meeting is recorded and not televised. There is no public comment. He thanked Mr. Ed Byrne for his hard work in putting this report together.

The Chair asked Dr. Young to say a few words. Dr. Young also thanked Mr. Byrne for his hard work and stated he is interested in knowing how we can move forward.

The meeting was turned over to Mr. Byrne, who defined equity and then walked everyone through the 10 equity goals. Each goal has a rationale and strategies.

- Goal #1:** Community, School Committee and Administration should all be on the same page
- Goal #2:** How do we have a culture shift of making decisions through an equity lens
- Goal #3:** Recruit culturally competent educators
- Goal #4:** Curriculum and instruction system with increased rigor using professional development
- Goal #5:** Facilitate equity in distribution of resources and enrollment
- Goal #6:** Create supports for academic, social, emotional and behavioral health needs
- Goal #7:** Optimize community partner collaboration
- Goal #8:** Family Engagement
- Goal #9:** Early childhood outreach, readiness and supports
- Goal #10:** Assess the life needs of students and families and provide the provisions for those needs

He stated this document is not an action plan, but should be used as a springboard for an action plan. Mr. Byrne went over a power-point presentation.

Mayor Maher opened the meeting for discussion between Cabinet and Committee Members. There was a discussion on the following comments, questions and concerns.

Mr. Osborne: What is the vision for a working action plan? Mr. Byrne stated the action plan is outlined on the spreadsheet. This is where we are now, where we want to be in the next 5 years etc. Mr. Byrne explained he likes the dashboard because it tells our story even though we are not there yet, we are able to see the progress.

Mayor Maher asked Ms. MacDonald to speak. Ms. MacDonald indicated that we have done a lot of the work cited in the report and we have a long way to go. She will get back to School Committee on accountability. She mentioned our new Norms that were created by the Ad-Hoc Task Force.

Mayor Maher asked the student School Committee Members to speak on Advanced Placement classes. Mr. Austin spoke first regarding the achievement gap stating freshman and sophomore humanities, i.e. English and History, need to become College Prep & Honors option classes. Freshman physics is taught at a CP level and if you want Honors credit, you need to do some extra work. This should hold true for the humanities also. In this manner, no voice is excluded. Mr. Andres also stated doing this will help break down the social issues that support the achievement gap by having all students come together in CP Honors classes during freshman year.

Ms. Cronin: thanked Mr. Byrne, and stated because many of our students have high needs, the socio emotional, academic and cultural atmosphere needs to be looked at in a holistic way and agreed we all need to come together as a community.

Ms. Allen: She also thanked Mr. Byrne and asked him how successful is the minority achievement network? Mr. Byrne stated the Innovation Agenda is always brought up in critical and important meetings and he wants this work to be included in every decision and in all interactions also.

Ms. Likis: Spoke on the planning work in the district, and thinks of the frameworks as standards and indicators. There are many frameworks in the document that are already being used in the district. She emphasized we need to create a strategic plan before we create an action plan.

Ms. Nolan: Asked can we build on this framework to create a strategic plan? Ms. Nolan wanted to know whether we had data on freshman physics to see if it has really improved anything because when looking at the upper grades, it doesn't look like it. Maybe we should do CP Honors in humanities instead of science. How much work have we done on best practices?

Ms. Likis: Answered yes to being able to see the strategic plan. The transition period of superintendents was acknowledged. The plan is to wait for the new superintendent, get his approval, and then move forward.

Dr. Turk stated they will take a more critical look at the data regarding freshman physics and also speaking on best practices, she stated she participates in Race, Education and Democracy at Simmons College. She learns from other communities and engages with other colleagues at Seton Hall. We have to accept the fact that there are ups and downs.

Ms. Kelly: Looking at Goal #2, what is the role of the School Committee and the district in this decision making process? Where do we want to start setting up structured conversations on these topics in order to move forward? What does an equity lens mean?

Mayor Maher: Spoke on the retreat at Harvard Ed. School, and why the Norms were created. If we are going to discuss big problems, we need to do it in a respectful way. He stated that the Norms were passed at a School Committee Meeting without actually talking about them. He wants to encourage the

new Committee Members to adopt and use these norms. The Mayor also expressed his concern regarding graduating students. When asked what their plans are after CRLS, they are not prepared to actually be able to make their plans a reality. We should begin to follow the students after they leave CRLS and find out how successful they have been.

Mr. Harding: When we measure the equity and outcomes, where do we stand? Just because students walk across the stage, success is not automatically theirs. Dr. Salim will be looking for a strategic plan, we should already have one. We can have a culture of success. We need to have some hard conversations with parents, expecting action to follow the conversations. This will build trust. Mr. Harding stated accountability and how we tell the story are two important points. He likes to tell the story through the lens of the child.

Mr. Austin: One culture: How do we get there? Half of the students are in one track talking to the same teachers, seeing the same students and doing the same extra curricula activities all four years and the other half is in the exact situation with different kids; the result is two segregated cultures. As long as we continue to function in this manner, there cannot be one uniform culture.

Ms. Nolan thanked everyone and read some of the questions from the email from the STARS students, including how can the unity and academic benefits of freshman when there was a freshman campus be brought to CRLS?

The Mayor announced that some School Committee Members, City Councilors and Administration toured the King and Putnam Ave. Bldg. He noted that it is an extraordinary building and sets the bar for what the future is going to hold and what the other schools will look like. The Mayor indicated that there will be a public open house sometime after the opening of building.

On a motion by Ms. Kelly, seconded by Ms. Cronin, the meeting was adjourned at 7:20 PM.

Dosha Beard
Confidential Secretary
School Committee office

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

- Bridging Educational Equity and Excellence: A Plan to Raise Academic Achievement and Close Gaps in the Cambridge Public Schools – Draft: June 30, 2015
- School Committee ORDER C15-347
- Norms and Goals Document
- Feedback on Equity Plan from CRLS teachers
- Student Questions for Equity Roundtable Meeting