

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

Roundtable Meeting

December 13, 2016

Called for 6:00 PM in the Henrietta S. Attles Meeting Room, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, 459 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of discussing high school staffing in the Cambridge Public Schools.

Members Present: Ms. Bowman (ABSENT), 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. Anda Adams, Asst. Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
Dr. Victoria Greer, Asst. Superintendent for Student Services
Ms. Maryann MacDonald, Asst. Superintendent for Elementary Education
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, Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School
Dr. James Kelleher, World Language Curriculum Chair
Ms. Lynn Williams, Guidance Coordinator
Ms. Jennifer Hamilton, Dean of Curriculum, Learning Community C
Mr. Jeff Gaglione, Dean of Curriculum, Learning Community S
Mr. Allan Gehant, Dean of Curriculum, Learning Community L
Mr. Tony Clark, Educational Liaison to Mayor
Mr. Dan Monahan, CEA President

Mayor Simmons in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM. Mayor Simmons turned the meeting over to Superintendent Salim, Deputy Superintendent Turk and Principal Damon Smith who walked the Members through a Power Point presentation on high school staffing (on file in the School Committee Office):

School Committee Round Table High School Staffing

Agenda for the Evening

6:00-6:40 pm....Sharing of Information from CRLS Team

6:40-7:50 pm....Conversation

7:50-8:00 pm...Wrap-up and next steps

Goals for Tonight's Roundtable:

*To present an overview of average class size/caseload overtime and the corresponding allocation of teacher resources: English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, World Language, and Guidance

*To discuss key planning factors/overlapping pressure points of influence used to build the annual CRLS school-wide course of study schedule

*To use the contents of the presentation to build an understanding of key factors that influence scheduling including: student enrollment, class size, staffing, student choice, and teaching parameters.

Staff Considerations: Keys to Planning
High School Enrollment Over Time
Totals include CRLS, RSTA and HSEP
How does class size impact staffing?

- Contractual class size limit in Science is 20. In all other subjects, 30.
- CRLS class size goal is 20 in Science, 24 in all other academic classes.
- Specialized courses typically have low student enrollment numbers but require a full time teacher

Average Class Size Over time

Class Size Ranges: A Three Year View

How do student requests impact staffing?

- New courses are introduced as needed
- Additional course sections are opened as needed

FTEs vs. Full Time Teachers

How many teacher FTEs support the high school?

How many full-time teachers support each of the five content areas? (2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17)

How do teacher needs impact staffing?

- A full teaching schedule is 3 periods per day each semester, or 6 periods per year, with each class meeting every day
- Per contract – teachers may not have more than 5 preps (different courses) per year
- A significant number of staff at CRLS have at most 2 preps per semester

CRLS Guidance Caseloads 2016-2017

Guiding Questions?

*How do we ensure that our annual staffing plan includes the right number of staff with the right knowledge and skills to support student, school, department and district needs?

*What parameters are we willing to set to build both capacity and efficiency of program offerings?

A discussion took place around the following issues, questions and concerns:

Ms. Kelly asked what Principal Smith would like the Committee to take away from this presentation and understand about staffing when making budget decisions which will support the students and staff members at CRLS. Principal Smith responded that there are many factors that go into supporting student achievement at CRLS. Increasing staffing at CRLS can provide some added benefit but it won't address all the needs which CRLS has. Principal Smith indicated that he wanted to give the Committee a snapshot of the complexities they address in trying to develop a schedule and would like the Committee to work collaboratively with them. Dr. Turk indicated that if she had to sum it up in one word, it would be "complexity". She shared that we need a better understanding of the complexity to build a schedule to support the students.

Mr. Harding asked Principal Smith to use this moment to inform the Committee of the supports he needs. Mr. Harding asked how student course choices are negotiated and when do the parents give input on their child's choice of classes. Principal Smith shared that there are parents who look at their child's schedule and immediately begin the process of negotiation with our guidance department. With online course scheduling, some families are not seeing or having input in their child's course selection. Principal Smith noted that when students receive their schedule at the end of the school year, their classes are listed without teacher names to prevent "teacher shopping". We have teacher recommendations for 8th grade into 9th grade. There are advisory recommendations from teachers from one grade to the next level. Families can begin the process of communicating with their guidance counselors about the proposed schedule almost immediately after receipt of the schedule. It was strongly put forth that we need to do more work to tell our families it is their decision on course sequence. With Aspen right now, a student could choose their own schedule without a parent's approval. Mr. Harding added that we need to have a better interface with parents about this. Mr. Harding asked if it makes sense to have added support during the busier times such as preparing for college applications and recommendations. He heard that there is not enough support during these hectic times. Although the

caseload has increased over the last few years for our guidance counselors, Principal Smith indicated that our guidance counselor caseload is well below the ASCA recommendation. Principal Smith mentioned that students are using UAspire to assist in the financial aid process for college. Many more students are entering into this early action decision process which increases pressure on the guidance department. Ms. Williams added that the beginning of the school year is a very crucial time for scheduling issues and senior college applications. Many students come back multiple times to work on their schedules. A lot of the college recommendations get written after school or in the evening because the guidance counselors are so focused on the students during the day.

Mayor Simmons shared that she wonders about students coming into the high school needing guidance and those leaving high school needing guidance. She asked what can be done to support the guidance department. Mayor Simmons asked how course schedules which are done in May affect rising 9th graders. Principal Smith noted that on the 8th grade campus sites, the guidance counselors go out and help those 8th graders register for their courses. They have schedules before they leave 8th grade. Those schedules will be ready late May for guidance counselors to view and then send out to students. It was asked if 8th graders have control over selecting their courses. Parents have Aspen accounts as well as students. Parents are allowed to check the courses and have a conversation with the student about the selection. Principal Smith indicated that the lack of proof of parent approval on the students' course selection existed even when parents had to sign off on a paper document; not all signatures were obtained. Mayor Simons commented that what a student does during the freshman year could very well affect the rest of that student's high school career. She asked if we could have better communication with the parents or guardians.

Mr. Gaglione added that for the course registration process, the guidance counselors meet with the students at the upper schools and the deans of curriculum meet with the 8th graders and the staff at the upper schools.

Mr. Fantini asked that the deans of curriculum and the guidance coordinator to offer their reflections and thoughts on their departments.

Mr. Gehant noted that with the number students, decisions need to be made as to whether to maintain certain classes and policies due to staffing. In Science, because of our curriculum review, we will provide more science opportunities for students. We have been cooperating with the bilingual department these past few years to work within our current staffing to address bilingual student needs within science education.

Dr. Kelleher shared that a world language curriculum review was done four years ago and that the nature of the block schedule is a challenge for taking world language courses in sequence. Students delay world language choices until later in their high school career which results in groupings of students who are very challenging to teach. The singleton world language courses have very demanding loads.

Mr. Gaglione added that it is a challenging and exciting time in math at the high school. We have aligned our math requirement in terms of the State. We now require our students to take 4 years of math. The largest pressure has come from new courses they we have offered. There is large growth in computer science classes. AP statistics is the second largest enrolled AP course in the high school. He noted that the block schedule is probably not ideal for the math department. He noted that between 400 and 500 students are taking a full year of math. Mayor Simmons asked Mr. Gaglione about the cap of 24 students. Mr. Gaglione indicated that the cap of 24 for some classes is too large, but other classes could possibly handle more than 24 students. Mayor Simmons asked the School Committee to think about giving the high school flexibility to change the cap size in some classes.

Ms. Williams noted that the increase in caseloads for the guidance counselors has been a challenge. The goal is for every guidance counselor to meet with the freshmen before the first parent night. For the past few years they have not been able to do this. She shared that it has been difficult to know their 9th and 10th grade students because of the large number of students. They have no time to do small group meetings with students. They can no longer meet with C or below C level students. They are trying to

work with D level students and below. Because of the high caseload, they can only meet with the students who are failing. Ms. Williams noted that there has been tremendous difficulty in the guidance department. Mayor Simmons asked Ms. Williams the difference between 1997 when she started as a guidance counselor and now. Ms. Williams responded that in 1997 she had 170 students on her caseload and there were 4 more counselors on staff. She shared that in 1997, they had 12 guidance counselors at one time and now they have 8 guidance counselors. Mayor Simmons shared her concern for the struggling freshman and wants to look at this through the lens of student achievement. Mr. Harding indicated that we are looking at the most vulnerable population and that we need to think strategically to identify these students to make the system work for them. Ms. Dexter indicated that by the time the student gets to the high school, we have spent a substantial amount on the education of that child. She asked how we get these students from the high school to being prepared for the rest of their lives. She shared that if we are not meeting the needs of these students in high school, then we are wasting the money we invested in them beforehand. She gave the statistic that only 60% of our students are going to 4 year colleges after high school and that the 4 year college rate for low income students has been basically flat. Ms. Dexter indicated that it would only cost \$800,000 to double our guidance staff.

Ms. Hamilton shared that she was hired 15 months ago. She has noticed the lack of equity in our CP English/Language Arts courses. She noted that the ELA staff have developed elective courses for 11th and 12th grades and that students participated and showed a strong interest. She noted that many students are taking two English classes this year. Ms. Hamilton shared that she is proud of the partnership we have with Bunker Hill Community college and is looking to expand our partnership with them.

Mr. Fantini noted that we don't have a proficiency standard in Cambridge for 8th grade and that some of these students are not high school ready. Staffing should complement how we deal with this situation. Mr. Fantini stated that the goal for him is a 6 year cohort graduating rate. Mr. Fantini noted that the School Committee did not have a formal motion capping the classes at 24. It was indicated that the wording was where possible, the cap should be 24.

Mayor Simmons shared that if we are sending students who are not prepared for high schools, then it is up to the upper schools to do better. It is not fair to put this pressure on the CRLS guidance staff. Mayor Simmons also noted that everyone doesn't need to go to college but if not, they should have a career. We should be careful about looking at college numbers. We shouldn't judge solely on a student's success on whether he/she went to college.

Ms. Nolan indicated that every time we talk about education, relationships matter and guidance is the first relationship and it is maintained for 4 years. She wants us to meet the highest standards. She supports the idea of identifying the lapses and looking to provide support. She noted that many families focus on guidance related issues during the summer and we don't have hours for the guidance counselors during the summer months. Ms. Nolan added that there were more than 100 science requests that weren't fulfilled in the last year which is a concern for her. She indicated that the math move up program to get underrepresented students to move from CP to Honors is a very successful program but it is in jeopardy this year because of lack of available spaces. Ms. Nolan noted that maybe block scheduling should be evaluated.

Principal Smith indicated that he is in complete agreement with Ms. Williams, but he added that we need to note that by adding more guidance counselors may not change the dynamics of student learning. We have a robust student body that has very diverse needs. In the 1990's applying to college was not at the same level as it is now. He noted that adding summer hours may be better.

Ms. Dexter expressed her concern about 9th grade ELA and history classes and how they will be staffed. She asked if inclusion classes have a full time special educator every day of the week. Ms. Dexter indicated that we have a high absence rate. She suggested maybe letting class sizes drift up for electives and down for core. Ms. Dexter asked about the school climate and if the high school was polling teachers in regard to increasing enrollment and resources they need.

Principal Smith responded that we have not polled staff members on growth or size of their classes. He shared that non-core class teachers are expressing concern over their class size particularly wellness classes. He shared that the physical education classes are now graded classes and that there are concerns around equity for 24 cap for math classes and 30 for wellness.

Ms. Nolan asked about the balancing of classes or changing the algorithm to make scheduling more seamless and in response to student needs. She also inquired if a check box could be added to the course selection process on Aspen to have the parent or guardian sign off electronically. She added that she would like to have families be more involved in this process.

In closing, Dr. Salim remarked that we need to make sure we are meeting the needs of those students who are in danger of falling through the cracks. He noted that guidance counselors are very important but are not the only support for our students. He noted his appreciation of our partners, homeroom teachers, deans, support staff, families and the community for the role they play in knowing and supporting our students. He shared that we need to use data to identify students in need as early as possible.

Mayor Simmons thanked Dr. Salim, Principal Smith and the high school staff for this informative presentation and discussion.

Principal Smith acknowledged his hard working and dynamic staff for being at this meeting and for their candor in this discussion.

On a motion by Ms. Nolan, seconded by Mr. Fantini, the meeting was adjourned at 7:55 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 CRLS Staffing