SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

Roundtable Meeting **December 6, 2016**

Called for immediately following the December 6, 2016 Regular Meeting of the School Committee in the Henrietta S. Attles Meeting Room, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, 459 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of discussing World Language in the Cambridge Public Schools.

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

Also present: Dr. Kenneth Salim, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Carolyn Turk, Deputy Superintendent
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
Dr. James Kelleher, World Language Curriculum Chair
Mr. Tony Clark, Educational Liaison to Mayor
Mr. Dan Monahan, CEA President

Mr. Fantini in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 7:49 PM. Mr. Fantini turned the meeting over to Dr. Salim. Dr. Salim indicated he was pleased to have this roundtable tonight to share the planning related to world language. He explained they would be sharing a proposal to phase in world language at the elementary level, the steps which were taken, and the research and input they have received. He noted that while there are benefits to having world language in the elementary schools, developing a proposal was difficult and has real challenges.

Dr. Salim turned the meeting over to Dr. Anda Adams, Ms. MaryAnn MacDonald and Dr. James Kelleher to update the Members on the planning process for World Language and the next steps. Dr. Adams stated that the learning target for tonight would be to understand the goal of implementing an elementary world language program and to use the understanding of the goal to analyze the proposed plan to provide feedback and to ask questions.

Dr. Adams walked the Members through a Power Point presentation on World Language (on file in the School Committee Office):

<u>Elementary World Language</u>
Tonight's Learning Targets
*To understand our goal in implementing an elementary world language program
*To use that understanding to analyze the proposed plan and provide feedback
The Road to Our Proposed Plan
Articulating Benefits – Understanding Challenges
Budget, Staffing, Curriculum, Space
Systems-focused Phased Implementation Plan
Student Support Considerations
Language Options
Instructional Time

Gaining Multiple Perspectives
- CPS
- Other Massachusetts Districts
- National Experts

Identifying Our Goal
- What do we want students to know and be able to do in a world language when they complete 5th grade?

Articulating Benefits
Understanding Challenges
Reallocating Instructional
Other Massachusetts Districts
Language Selection
Language Pathways
Current Upper School Language Course enrollment (Chinese, French, Spanish)
Student Support Considerations
Proposed Program
- *Begin with one elementary grade – 4th grade
- *1 world language selected for all schools
- *Consider possible instructional time approaches

Proposed Implementation Timeline
- *2017-18 (Grade 4), 2018-19 (Grade 4 and 5), 2019-20 (Grade 3, 4 and 5)

Next Steps: Engagement, Development, Timeline

Discussions Questions:

- How do we ensure close alignment between our educational goal and our implementation plan?
- What trade-offs are we willing to make to add world language to our existing elementary program?

Assistant Superintendent MacDonald acknowledged the work of Dr. Adams and Dr. Salim on this world language research and planning process done in such a short time. The one voice which is missing is that of our educators which is critical. We will need to engage with our teachers and principals. There are many factors to consider as we plan this program. Principals are thinking about the effect on the instructional schedule and the space issues. The principals need the whole school community to engage in this process. The principals also noted the complications involved with part-time staff. There is also the question of how to include SEI and English language learners.

Dr. Adams indicated the reasons why grade 4 was selected for the pilot program instead of grade 3. Grade 3 students will be doing new MCAS and also experiencing new science curriculum next year. It would be too much for that grade level all at once.

A discussion followed around the following issues, questions and concerns:

Mr. Fantini asked how long it takes to be fluent in a particular language. Dr. Adams indicated that it takes 480 hours for fluency in Spanish, French and Portuguese and 1300 hours for Chinese and Arabic.

Ms. Nolan thanked everyone involved in this planning process. She indicated that she is not sure that there is a trade off. If there are 30 minutes in literacy instruction in the school schedule then world language can be considered literacy. World language is still language based so we should consider that. The other advantage is that the time spent by a world language teacher in the classroom would be a gift for teachers to use for other types of work. Dr. Adams indicated that having the classroom teacher in the classroom with the world language teacher helps to develop the relationship. Ms. Nolan indicated that it seems like 3 x week x 30 minutes would be a better model for the world language instructional time. Mr. Kelleher commented that the more amount of time the better. Ms. Nolan stated that she was confused about starting in 4th grade. If we want to build on best practice from other districts, we should offer world language earlier starting in kindergarten or first grade.

Ms. Dexter asked to avoid use of the word “trade-off”. Maybe some of that literacy time would be better used for world language. She asked why this didn’t come up with the Kodaly music program which was added to many elementary schools. She asked what the difference in terms of time and transition is. Ms. MacDonald shared that it wasn’t easy for Kodaly and that’s why we haven’t implemented Kodaly in all of our schools. Ms. MacDonald added that we have problems finding part-time teachers Dr. Adams shared that every district has its own context. There is an impact on social emotional learning with part time staff. Dr. Kelleher indicated that the whole field of world language is moving towards the proficiency model instead of fluency and is transitioning from the “old fashion way”. When we do hiring and teachers develop units, we are using authentic materials from youtube, electronic texts at an appropriate level at all levels. We need teachers who have a growth mindset.

Ms. Bowman shared that there are trade-offs. We are in an urban district with a 6 hour school day. If we cannot use this as a mechanism to close the achievement gap, then we need to use that as a conversation to extend the school day.

Ms. Kelly shared that we need to decide the grade level to begin this and we need to discuss whether to add time to the school day. She asked if any principals shared how this would add to the program in their schools. You need the leadership to feel that this is adding to what they are responsible for in their schools.

Mr. Harding added that this is one of the times the public and the Committee may think this might not be the optimal time to do this. The administration has made an attempt to meet us half way. He appreciates the Superintendent and his staff bringing this forward. He wants to see that in taking this risk, the end result be worth it. That result for him is fluency. At the last teacher contract negotiations, if we had said we were going to use the extra time to the school day for world language, we may have received more support. This is another initiative that will put more pressure on the principals and educators in the buildings. There is a trade-off. We have students that are not mastering English. We need to assess and monitor what those trade-offs are. We need to do things well. He noted that this will be difficult and asked if it is manageable. Mr. Harding shared that the Kodaly music program is difficult to manage but nothing like world language will be. He is willing to try this and put his trust in the administration. He asked that the administration give themselves flexibility and to think about when this is rolled out are they comfortable that they gave CPS the best product.

Ms. Kelly thanked the leadership team for a good job on this detailed plan. She asked if the School Committee could get an update regularly on where they are in the process and the decisions made.

Ms. Bowman asked if they can tie this in to tackling the achievement gap. She asked if this can be integrated into the district. If it doesn’t meet that goal, then we need to figure out how to meet the needs of those students.

Mr. Fantini asked about the K-3 literacy reading goal. Ms. MacDonald noted that Principals are committed to that goal and focusing on the achievement gap and literacy.

Ms. Nolan indicated that this is about closing the achievement gap, learning and education. We should set up specific goals to monitor this. This is solidly researched and can actually help close the achievement gap. There is never a good time to do something new. There is always a good time to move the needle on the achievement gap. We need the goal of students being fluent in high school if they choose to continue in the language they have had before. If we provide choices in language that may impact that overall proficiency level for students. We need to reach out to the community about just having one language choice.

Ms. Dexter added that we shouldn’t be looking at suburban schools for any models that we do. She noted that maybe we should start at schools that don’t have Kodaly program.

Ms. Nolan indicated that an email she recently sent to the School Committee had links to other school districts which have done this program in elementary grades (on file in School Committee office).

Ms. Bowman shared that she wants us to be intentional and to make sure we are program rich and outcome rich.

Mr. Harding asked if we are going to get the outcome that we want across the board which is fluency.

Ms. Kelly wants us to be really focused on what the end game is and what moves the lever on the achievement gap and the opportunity gap. It is important to focus on the opportunity gap with this as well.

Mr. Fantini referred to "finding a sweet spot between implementing a world language program and supporting our principals who have a sense they are struggling to do the job they have now". He would like to see more adult learning programs in our immersion schools. He would like the students to experience travel. He would like to see the world language planning committee expand to include parents, out of school time partners, vendors (such as Rosetta Stone), and other district representatives. Mr. Fantini suggested starting small with three elementary schools which feed into one upper school as the pilot. He also suggested using vacation time to study world language.

Mr. Harding noted that many of the most successful public schools have a robust world language program. He asked about the associated cost for a world language program. Dr. Salim noted that he will work with the budget process on this.

Mr. Fantini thanked Dr. Salim and his team for their collaborative efforts on this proposal.

On a motion by Mr. Harding, seconded by Ms. Nolan, the meeting was adjourned at 9:25 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 World Language
Email from Ms. Nolan listing websites for school districts implementing world language