

**S C H O O L C O M M I T T E E**  
**(Official Report)**

**Regular Meeting**

**May 21, 2013**

Called for 6:00 PM in the Dr. Henrietta S. Attles Meeting Room, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, 459 Broadway, Cambridge.

Members Present: Mr. Fantini, Mr. Harding, Mr. McGovern, Ms. Nolan, Mr. Osborne, Ms. Turkel, Mayor Davis

Mayor Davis in the Chair.

Also Present: Student School Committee Members Lucy Sternbach and Grant Baker

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:08 PM.

**1. Public Comment:**

Due to the number of people signed up to speak, the Chair limited the speaking time to two (2) minutes per person.

On a motion by Mr. McGovern, seconded by Mr. Fantini, it was voted to suspend the Rules to hear a brief report on the CRLS students' visit to El Salvador. Rachael Wyon, Tessa Tracy and Hanna Gibson gave a brief report on their visit to the Sister City.

The following people were heard during Public Comment:

- Susan Connelly, Newman Street, Nancy Brigham Report
- Jane Chaing, 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Controlled Choice/Immersion
- Abdi Samater, Walden Square Rd., Controlled Choice/Immersion
- Jeff Perkins, Antrim Street, Controlled Choice/Immersion
- Jennifer Dunn, Controlled Choice/Immersion
- Pamela Mindell, Albany Street, Controlled Choice/Immersion
- Phyllis Hardy, Controlled Choice/Immersion
- Yael Bourke, Dual Language
- Parth Patwari, Valentine Street, Controlled Choice/Immersion
- Suzanne Flynn, Memorial Drive, Controlled Choice/Immersion
- Wojtek Szczterba, Lakeview Ave., Controlled Choice/Immersion
- Wenhao Tien, Thorndike Street, Controlled Choice/Immersion
- Nien-he Hsueh, Ballard Place, Controlled Choice/Immersion
- Erica Pastor, Western Ave., Olá
- Ryan Hammond, Copley Street, Olá
- Abby Fechtman, Thorndike Street, Controlled Choice/Immersion
- Jaine D'Almeida, Hamilton Street, Immersion
- Danielle Johns, Controlled Choice/Immersion
- Lea Muellner, Allston Street, Controlled Choice/Immersion
- Jackie Mow, Highland Ave., Controlled Choice/Immersion
- Mary Ellen Doran, Spring Street, Controlled Choice/Attractive Choices
- Bethany Versoy, Langdon Street, Controlled Choice/Attractive Choices
- Zoë Levitt, Fayerweather Street, Core Content Curriculum

- Robin Harris, FMA Principal, Controlled Choice

On a motion by Ms. Turkel, seconded by Ms. Nolan, it was voted to suspend the Rules to allow Ms. Harris to finish her comments.

- Toni Kim, FMA, Controlled Choice
- Jocelyn Viterna, FMA, Controlled Choice
- Susan Gurry, FMA, Controlled Choice
- Mike Fraley, FMA, Controlled Choice
- Mercedes Soto, FMA, Controlled Choice
- Jeff Jardin, FMA, Controlled Choice
- Joel Richards, FMA, Controlled Choice
- Louis Soto, FMA, Controlled Choice
- Caitlin O'Donnell, FMA, Controlled Choice
- Art Bardige, FMA, Controlled Choice
- Kazimiera Fraley, FMA, Controlled Choice
- Jon Anjaria, FMA, Controlled Choice
- Freedom Baird, Reed Street, Middle School Report

Mr. Fantini in the Chair.

- Zeyneb Magari, Huron Ave., Middle School Report
- Sue Cusack, Everette Street, Controlled Choice
- Xu Lai, Harvey Street, Controlled Choice/Immersion
- Elizabeth Hill, Richdale Ave., Controlled Choice
- Chris Colbath-Hess, CEA, Controlled Choice.

On a motion by Mr. McGovern, seconded by Ms. Nolan, it was voted to suspend the Rules to allow Ms. Colbath-Hess to finish her comments.

Mayor Davis in the Chair.

- Christine Gerber, Principal, K/Lo, Controlled Choice
- Helen Bryant, Columbia Street,
- Heather Hoffman, Hurley Street, Language
- Janie Katz-Christie, Nancy Brigham Report

On a motion by Mr. Harding, seconded by Mr. Fantini, it was voted to close public comment.

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Mr. McGovern, it was voted to suspend the Rules to allow Mr. Fantini the opportunity to respond to public comment. Mr. Fantini was heard. Mr. Harding moved suspension of Rules, seconded by Mr. McGovern, to bring forward items 2a of the Controlled Choice Plan, for the purpose of allowing Members to respond to public comment. On the following roll call it was voted to suspend the rules for the purpose stated: Mr. Osborne YEA; Ms. Turkel YEA; Mr. Fantini YEA; Mr. Harding YEA; Mr. McGovern YEA; Ms. Nolan NAY; Mayor Davis YEA. Members were heard.

The Chair returned to the regular order of business.

## **2. Student School Committee Report:**

Mr. Baker reported that their senior prom was an exciting time. AP testing finished up last week and the annual CRLS scholarship night was last week with \$150,000 given in scholarships to CRLS students.

## **3. Presentation of the Records for Approval: None**

**4. Reconsiderations:** None

**5. Unfinished Business/Calendar:**

Members passed over all unfinished business.

**6. Superintendent's Report/Presentations/Consent Agenda:**

**Presentation:**

The Chair turned the meeting over to the Superintendent, who introduced Ms. Brigham and her associate, Cindy Agular. After a brief opening statement, Ms. Brigham walked members through a PowerPoint presentation, *Middle Grades Education in Cambridge Public Schools*, Final Report of a Study Conducted by Nancy Brigham Associates, January 2013 (copy on file in the School Committee office):

- Our philosophy
- Objective of the study
- Background
- Data sources
- This was a dipstick study
- The Three R's
- Some overall findings
- Relationships are very strong
- Relevance is also strong
- Academic rigor not as strong
- Major recommendations

Discussion took place around the following:

- the report was informative and helpful
- It shouldn't be used to demoralize teachers
- The School Committee needs to figure out what the right plan is
- How can we improve the rigor
- I would like to see a plan in writing with concrete actions to address the concerns mentioned in the report by the end of the school year or, by the summer meeting
- We should invite the evaluators back to evaluate again – mid year
- We need to know how we can best work with the teachers to support them
- Changes take time; however, we need to understand that parents are focused on the now, not three years from now
- The part that is most alarming for me is what's going on in the classroom, and what do we do about it
- Clearly, we need to improve
- How rare is it to find this low level of rigor
- I am not alarmed by this report; teachers want to be evaluated
- We cannot preach high achievement, and then endorse failure
- Differentiated instruction is easy to say but harder to do
- I would like to have a roundtable about our instruction system

Mr. Watson, Head of Rindge Avenue Upper School, and Mr. Adkins-Sharif, Head of Vassal Lane Upper School gave members a brief update on how they presented the Nancy Brigham Report to their staff.

On a motion by Ms. Turkel, seconded by Mr. Harding was voted to suspend the Rules for the purpose of extending the meeting to 10:15 PM. The Rules having been suspended for the purpose stated, it was voted to extend the meeting to 10:15 PM.

- This report came as a surprise to me; I don't like surprises

- We should have known what was going on in our classrooms
- This is good information for us
- Measuring rigor is a good idea

On a motion by Ms. Nolan, seconded by Mr. Harding, it was voted to suspend the rules for the purpose of extending the meeting to 10:20 PM. The rules having been suspended for the purpose stated. It was voted to extend the meeting to 10:20 PM.

On a motion by Mayor Davis, seconded by Ms. Turkel, it was voted to refer the Nancy Brigham Report to the Superintendent for a report back to the Committee.

#### **6a. Innovation Agenda:**

On a motion by Mr. Harding, seconded by Mr. McGovern, it was voted to bring forward the Superintendent's agenda for adoption. On the following roll call, the following items were adopted:

**#13-78, Approval of Gift Marilyn A. McGinn Memorial Scholarship Fund:** that the School Committee approve the gift of \$10,000 from the estate of Marilyn McGinn to establish a scholarship fund.

**#13-79, Grant Awards:** that the School Committee accept and approve the grant awards in the amounts and for the periods indicated:

1. Summer Academic Support, for the period July 1, 2012 to August 30, 2013, in the amount of \$47,000.00. Project/Grant SC13839.

**Description:** This grant will serve approximately 70 students entering CRLS as 9th graders in the Fall. Students are eligible based on past MCAS performances. The program will provide five weeks of five hours per day instruction in mathematics, ELA, and physics and include a fitness and youth development/high school orientation component.

**CPS Target Population:** Approximately 70 incoming 9th graders who scored at the Warning or Needs Improvement level on their 7th grade MCAS.

**Outcomes and Measures of Effectiveness:** Improved students' achievement in the 9th grade math, ELA, and physics courses and improved performance on the 10<sup>th</sup> grade and science MCAS exams.

2. The Big Yellow School Bus Grant-Amendment, for the period November 13, 2012 to June 30, 2013, in the amount of \$200.00. Project/Grant SC13856.

**Description:** This grant will provide an additional \$200.00 for field trips for the Rindge Avenue Upper School. This grant now totals \$1,800.00 for nine schools including the Cambridgeport, Tobin, Fletcher Maynard Academy, Cambridge Street Upper School, Haggerty School, Graham and Parks School, and CRLS.

**CPS Target Population:** The students in the above named schools.

**Outcomes and Measures of Effectiveness:** These visits help foster creativity and innovation in students and provide critical exposure to cultural institutions; students will become more engaged and better informed about their cultural environment.

3. Teaching American History (TAH) (subcontract with Newton Public Schools), for the period July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013, in the amount of \$1,336.16. Project/Grant SC13857.

**Description:** This is an increase in the sub-award contract with Newton Public Schools, (SC Order #C12-224, October 2, 2012) bringing the grant total to \$10,086.61. In the final year of this grant, CRLS and US History teachers will continue to participate in professional development provided by TAH grant in conjunction with teachers from Newton, Brookline, Watertown, Waltham and Sudbury. Training will be provided over the

course of three years by the Gilder Lehrman Institute and Children Discovering Justice, among others.

**CPS Target Population:** All students at CRLS who will be taking a US History, Part I (Sophomore Year) and Part 2 (Junior Year).

**Outcomes and Measures of Effectiveness:** This training will strengthen the skills of teachers of American History (Parts I and 2), many of whom have previously taught World History and need to be retooled for US History, which will now be taught at the high school level. Ultimately, the project will enable CRLS students to score at the proficient level on the upcoming MCAS history exam.

4. The Hilton HHonors Teacher Treks Program, for the period May 3, 2013 to June 30, 2014, in the amount of \$2,500.00. Project/Grant SC13104.

**Description:** This private grant is a onetime donation to the Vassal Lane Upper School given as a result of their reaching the finalist stage of the travel grant competition. The donation is to be used at the school's discretion on any activity that enhances the quality of education. Plans for the funds are still being determined.

**CPS Target Population:** Students at the Vassal Lane Upper School.

**Outcomes and Measures of Effectiveness:** Outcomes will be enhanced educational opportunities for students.

5. MASSexcELLS for the period May 1, 2013 to April 30, 2014, in the amount of \$52,000.00. Project/Grant SC13105.

**Description:** The first year of a four-year grant that will provide the major portion of the salary of an ESL coach to support general education teachers of ELL students in grades K-8. The coach will support effective instruction for ESL and SEI students and will assist with student assessment.

**CPS Target Population:** All ELL students in grades K-8 across the district.

**Outcomes and Measures of Effectiveness:** Improved instruction for English Language Learners will lead to improved student achievement as measured by local and state assessments.

Mr. Osborne YEA; Ms. Turkel YEA; Mr. Fantini YEA; Mr. Harding YEA; Mr. McGovern YEA; Ms. Nolan YEA; Mayor Davis YEA.

**6b. Consent Agenda:**

**7. School Committee Agenda (Policy Matters/Notifications/Requests for Information):**

The following items were placed on the Calendar:

**School Committee Agenda:**

**#13-80, Joint Motion by Ms. Turkel and Mr. Fantini**, that Cambridge Public Schools' Controlled Choice Plan be revised to support the district's core values of academic excellence and social justice for all students, by providing equal access to an array of highly attractive, excellent quality schools, which offer students the benefits of learning alongside and engaged with a diverse group of fellow students. And further that the following recommendations put forward in the document Controlled Choice in Cambridge A Comprehensive Review and Recommendations be adopted:

1. Strengthen the Rules Governing Balance
2. Increase Access to Attractive Choices
3. Strengthen the Rules that Govern Access
4. Improve and Clarify Controlled Choice Practices
5. A Coherent Controlled Choice Policy will be Drafted by the Superintendent

Below is a description of the five recommendations above. Further information on each recommendation is on pages 8 – 23 of *Controlled Choice in Cambridge, A Comprehensive Review and Recommendations*, these pages follow this recommendation.

### **1. Strengthen the Rules Governing Balance**

- 1a.** The ±10% band will no longer be used for assignment purposes. And further the ±10% band will continue to be used as a measurement and reporting standard for indicating the range of acceptable SES balance.
- 1b.** Balance will be calculated separately for the lower schools and for the upper schools to best capture the most current enrollment trends and to better support the implementation of the IA. And the remaining JK-8 school will also calculate balance separately for its upper school students.
- 1c.** Assignments will be allocated by enrollment starting for the first grade to maximize the beneficial effects of balanced grade level cohorts. Capacity will continue to be used for JK/K assignments.

### **2. Increase Access to Attractive Choices**

- 2a.** Schools that have been consistently under-chosen by either SES category will become new attractive choices through dramatic programmatic change. The Superintendent will identify which schools will participate and will create a process that includes the input of all stakeholders. The first whole school programmatic change will be ready for students in September 2014. The program chosen should have a proven record of success with urban populations, be attractive to families in both SES categories, and have an independent set of standards, such as but not limited to the Montessori or the International Baccalaureate. The Superintendent will make the first whole school programmatic change recommendation to the School Committee by no later than the Regular Meeting preceding the November school break of 2013. This will allow materials to be written describing this new choice in time for the January 2014 lottery and will allow time for appropriate professional development and other necessary preparation. This timetable is necessary, so that a new attractive option is available to families as policies to better balance schools are introduced.
- 2b.** Additional strands will be added to existent schools West of Harvard Square. And further, at least one strand will be opened for September 2014, so that additional seats in a highly chosen school are available to families as policies to better balance schools are introduced. More strands will be added in future years as space allows, including potential additional space as buildings are renovated.
- 2c.** District seat capacity will be closely monitored and maintained in alignment with enrollment trends.

### **3. Strengthen the Rules that Govern Access**

- 3a.** Proximity Preference Points will be reduced giving more weight to the random lottery number and thereby opening the possibility of a seat at every school choice for every family, while retaining some extra benefit to families living near a particular school.
- 3b.** Retain and Clarify Sibling Preference
- 3c.** All children who turn four on or before August 31<sup>st</sup> will be eligible to enter a lottery for a limited number of JK seats. For the fall of 2014 approximately the current number of JK seats will be available, this number will expand as space allows with the goal of access to JK for all four year olds. These seats will be available in the fall lottery (see 4b.), giving parents more time to plan alternative placements for their children. Children not receiving a placement will be on waitlists, which terminate at the end of the December of their JK year. These families must reapply for the Kindergarten Lottery. Families accepting a JK placement may not reapply for the Kindergarten Lottery.]
- 3d.** Junior kindergarten and kindergarten will each be balanced for SES separately by grade level.
- 3e.** It is recommended that when a Special Education or English Language Learner child is placed in a substantially separate classroom, and is likely to fully mainstream, that their name is automatically placed at the top of the waitlist to be mainstreamed. If the child is ready and a seat at their grade level becomes available and the Controlled Choice requirements are met, the child is mainstreamed. Otherwise, the child remains on the waitlist in the same position. Note this is not intended to replace a parent's/guardian's ability to place their child's name on up to three waitlists of their own school choices.
- 3f.** The group of children applying in the first round for junior kindergarten or kindergarten will be placed at the top of appropriate waitlists for the schools they chose on their applications. And further, children on waitlists to transfer between schools will be placed behind the new 1<sup>st</sup> round applicants.

#### **4. Improve and Clarify Controlled Choice Practices**

- 4a.** Lottery application will remain in January for JK/K.
- 4b.** It is recommended that in addition to the January Lottery there be one more lottery for the students that register between February 1<sup>st</sup> and the assignment of January applicants. Following that second lottery, students will be assigned to a school their family chooses on a first come first served model. Each family will be informed about the seats available and be allowed to choose any seat available following SES balance criteria. Families can then, if they wish, place their child on up to three waitlists.
- 4c.** It is recommended that a separate registration period for the programs available to students under the age of K eligibility be held by the FRC each fall.
- 4d.** It is recommended that in-district transfers be accommodated until the December school vacation.
- 4e. Hardships:**
- are only granted for the physical or emotional safety of the student
  - must be for the direct benefit of the student
  - are not granted for parent/guardian convenience
  - cannot be used to simply override the Controlled Choice Policy
  - shall not be used to gain admission to a specific school
  - may be used if siblings, upon entry, cannot be admitted to the same school

#### **Hardship Appeal Process for a Change of School Assignment**

The Superintendent will develop guidelines to be used to determine under what conditions a Hardship Appeal will be granted. These guidelines will include specific information about what types of documentation may be presented at a hardship hearing. The guidelines will be available in print and online.

Requests for a Hardship Appeal Hearing will be made to the Family Resource Center using a Hardship Appeal Form. When the Hardship Appeal Process is appropriate a hearing will be held within six weeks of the date it is requested. If a Hardship Appeal Hearing is not appropriate the family will receive in writing a response explaining why and whenever possible a recommendation of other routes to meet their child's needs.

Three Hearing Officers that are designees of the Superintendent will hold hardship hearings and all decisions will be based on the guidelines. Families will receive written notification of the decision made by the Hearing Officers. If the response is not to grant the family's request then a brief explanation and whenever possible a recommendation of other routes to meeting their child's needs will be included in the letter.

Families that wish to appeal the decision of the Hardship Officers may appeal to the Superintendent or his/her designee.

Records will be kept of all requests for appeals and of all appeals heard. The records shall include but not be limited to: the child's grade level, ethnicity and SES status, the school they attend when applying, the reason for the hardship and the family's requested outcome, the Hearing Officers' response and the action taken. Once a year the School Committee will receive a report compiling this data in a way that maintains the privacy of families and students.

**5a.** A coherent Controlled Choice Policy will be drafted by the Superintendent for adoption by the School Committee by the 1st meeting in October 2013.

**#13-81, Joint Motion by Ms.Turkel and Mr. Fantini** that the Superintendent develops a plan which allows students in the SEI classrooms to fully mainstream without switching schools.

**#13-82, Motion by Ms. Nolan**, that whereas the District has been invited to join the national collaborative initiative which has formed a national consortium of programs focused on Chinese and Portuguese language programs, and whereas the consortium requires no financial commitment and offers free resources and opportunities to participating districts including study abroad opportunities, curriculum support and assessment tools, and whereas Cambridge has been a leader in bilingual education

including Chinese and Portuguese, that the District accept the offer to join the consortium, per the invitation letter.

**#13-83, Joint Motion by Ms. Nolan and Mr. Harding**, that whereas in the past School Committee has discussed several items related to AP classes and tests, including rates of participation by ethnicity, socio-economic status and gender, whether to require all students in AP classes to take the tests, whether to further subsidize test costs, whether to de-emphasize AP courses and how to support all students enrolled in AP course, now therefore the School Committee requests that a report on the AP program at CRLS covering all these topics be delivered in the fall, with any recommendations to improve the program.

**7a. Controlled Choice Sub-Committee (Committee of the Whole):**

Due to the time, the Controlled Choice Sub-Committee (Committee of the Whole) was postponed to May 28, 2013.

**8. Non-Consent Agenda:**

**9. Resolutions (letters of congratulations, letters of condolence):**

It was voted that **#13-84, Motion by Mr. Harding** that the School Committee sends a letter of condolence to the family of Moe Gentile, lead carpenter and long time CPS employee, who recently passed away be adopted.

It was voted that **#13-85, Motion by Mr. Harding** that a letter of condolence is sent to Tracy Rose, CRLS school nurse, on the recent passing of her father.

**10. Announcements:**

**11. Late Orders:**

The following motions were adopted:

**Motion by Mr. Fantini** that the School Committee sends a letter of thanks to the Estate of Marilyn A. McGinn for the \$10,000 gift to establish a scholarship fund.

**Motion by Mr. McGovern** that the School Committee sends a letter condolence to the family of Bob Stevens who recently passed away.

**Motion by Mr. McGovern** that a letter of thanks be sent to the Les Kimbrough ad hoc committee for the work that it did in establishing the Les Kimbrough Way at CRLS.

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Ms. Turkel, it was voted to adjourn (10:20 PM).

Patricia A. Berry  
Executive Secretary to the School Committee