

CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING/RETREAT

Royal Sonesta, 40 Edwin Land Boulevard, Cambridge, MA
(Longfellow B West Tower)
Tuesday, October 17, 2017
5:00-9:00 PM

Called for the purpose of a Retreat with the School Committee, the Superintendent of Schools and any other invited School District Senior Administrators focusing on District Outcomes and District-Wide Planning for 2017-2018 and beyond, and any other business that may properly come before the Committee.

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

Also Present: Dr. Kenneth Salim, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Carolyn Turk, Deputy Superintendent; Dr. Anda Adams, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Ms. Jean Spera, Acting Assistant Superintendent for Student Services; Dr. Lori Likis, Chief Planning Officer; Mr. James Maloney, Chief Operating Officer; Ms. Claire Spinner, Chief Financial Officer; Ms. Jennifer Amigone, Director of Research, Assessment and Evaluation; Ms. Barbara Allen, Executive Director of Human Resources; Mr. Tony Clark, Educational Liaison to the Mayor; Superintendent's Interns: Jay Jordan and Stephanie Downey Toledo; Mr. Dan Monahan, CEA President; Ms. Judy Martin, Executive Secretary to the School Committee

Members of the public present: Jake Crutchfield, Cambridge resident; Jean Cummings, Reporter for Cambridge Day and Cambridge resident

Facilitators: John Kim and Sam Ribnick, District Management Group

Mayor Simmons in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 5:22 PM. Mayor Simmons read the call of the meeting and turned the meeting over to Superintendent Salim.

Dr. Salim introduced himself, John Kim, founder and CEO of the District Management Group, and Sam Ribnick, senior director at the District Management Group.

Mr. Ribnick informed the Members that during a meeting held on September 29th, the Administrative Council (including Cabinet, principals, curriculum coordinators, and other central office administrators) participated in the same outcomes prioritization activity that the Committee participated in during its retreat on September 26th and the results of both activities were shared with the Committee last week (on file in the School Committee office).

Mr. Ribnick noted that the School Committee, the district administrators and the administrative council all prioritized Grade 3 reading and Grade 8 math as high focus areas.

Sam Ribnick announced the Agenda for the retreat and began a PowerPoint presentation prepared by the District Management Group entitled "Setting Targets Within a District Planning Process, Cambridge Public Schools, October 17, 2017 (on file in the School Committee office). Mr. Ribnick also distributed the CPS Strategic Plan Outcomes Dashboard, Fall 2017.

Agenda:

Introduction and Recap of Workshop 1
Proposed District Outcomes
Sharing Perspectives on Priorities
Dinner Break

Finalizing Outcome Targets Next Steps

Mr. Ribnick explained the chart on page 9 of the presentation entitled, "Priorities from School Committee and Administrative Council". This chart narrowed the list of priorities. He also shared that based on the priorities voiced by both groups; the Administrative Council is proposing a more focused list of 7 outcome measures (page 10):

1. Grade 3 reading, proficiency for each student group
2. Grade 8 math, proficiency and growth for each student group
3. AP participation for each student group
4. Percentage of teachers of color
5. School climate survey (instrument TBD, capturing student, staff, and family perceptions)
6. Students' meaningful connection with adults (Teen and Middle School Health Survey)
7. Chronic absenteeism

Ms. Bowman joined the meeting at 5:47 pm.

Ms. Dexter joined the meeting at 5:50 pm.

Mr. Kim indicated that the focus for tonight is to have outcome targets that the Members' agree with. It is important to make sure there is a cohesive understanding between the district administrators and the Members as a group and to set a good foundation for a working relationship to help propel the district to a positive outcome. A common understanding needs to be built.

Mr. Ribnick passed out a sheet for the participants to record their perspectives of the outcomes on 2 key questions:

1. If all of these targets were met or exceeded by 2020, how would you feel about that outcome?
2. What questions or uncertainties do you have about the likelihood of hitting these targets by 2020?

A discussion followed on the 7 outcome measures and proposed targets:

#1 Grade 3 Reading: By fall 2020, increase MCAS proficiency for each student subgroup by _____.

Dr. Salim noted that the 2017 MCAS scores represent a new start since the initiation of the MCAS 2.0 test. Former test scores will not be comparable to 2017 and beyond. He explained the guidance on the State Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan. Mr. Ribnick indicated that guidance from the State ESSA plan recommends the target of reducing the number of students not proficient by 1/3 over 6 years. The example is: if 65% proficient on 2017 MCAS, then target for 2023 is 77% proficient. Ms. Nolan asked if MCAS is the best way to measure Grade 3 reading proficiency. She doesn't know if this test is the best way to measure it. Ms. Kelly would like to have a greater understanding of assessments in K, 1st and 2nd grade classrooms to know how the student is progressing in learning to read. Dr. Adams added that we have a very rigorous assessment going on in grade 2 classrooms to get a sense of where kids are at. Ms. Kelly asked about assessment and screening for students with dyslexia. Mr. Fantini assumes students should be on level for grade 3 reading and for every grade thereafter. The data system should mean progress monitoring. If we see a slip, we need to pivot and make adjustments to move forward. Mayor Simmons indicated that she is uneasy with using MCAS as a measurement and asked if it really gets us the information we need. Ms. Dexter commented that MCAS is a moving target. We have a very small cohort size for each of these groups. The next group of kids may be very different. Numbers are very unstable by cohort. It is an unstable time in Cambridge. People are moving out of the district. Ms. Bowman indicated that we understand the complexities that come along with every single cohort and we talk about and identify the necessary strategies to improve those cohorts. The State indicates that this is an achievable and ambitious goal in light of all the uncertainties. Ms. Nolan commented that if this is an ambitious target, she is comfortable with it; if it is not, she wants Cambridge to do better.

Dr. Likis indicated that she has done an analysis of grade 3 ELA proficiency and the typical change for the State for last 3 years was minus 3%. This is very difficult work to do and hard to see those gains. Dr. Adams added that these are more rigorous so that needs to be kept in mind.

#2 Grade 8 Math: By fall 2020, increase MCAS proficiency for each student subgroup by _____ and growth by _____.

Ms. Dexter commented that we need to know if Algebra is on the 8th grade MCAS test. If you pass Algebra in 8th grade you are going into a particular class. She suggested a better measure would be to use the Algebra pass rate rather than Grade 8 Math MCAS proficiency. Dr. Salim responded that MCAS tells you how students are performing in relation to the curriculum frameworks. Ms. Amigone noted that 8th grade MCAS has a higher level of rigor and that the 7th grade math test is a keystone test to see the cumulative measure of the student's knowledge of standards. Ms. Nolan indicated that she would rather have the 8th grade algebra pass rate as the measure.

#3 Advanced Placement (AP) and Honors enrollment. By fall 2020, increase proportionality of traditionally under-represented student groups in AP and honors courses.

Ms. Dexter asked why we aren't looking at grades in these courses and only looking at enrollment. Ms. Nolan added that it is critically important that we have pass rate measurements for these classes. She shared that a disproportionate number of students don't take the exam. We need to track who is enrolled, who is taking the exam and who passes the exam. Ms. Nolan added that the 3 year target of 400 students is a slower rate of growth than we have seen. She would like the target to be increased by another 100 over 3 years. She suggested the possibility of requiring students to take at least 1 AP level class before graduating. Ms. Bowman commented that every child is good at something. They are proficient in a subject area. It is our responsibility as a district to tap into their talents and cultivate them. It's a paradigm shift to raise expectations for our students. Mr. Fantini suggested that we benchmark our district against other higher performing school systems.

Mr. Ribnick noted that the aim for tonight is to establish targets. The conversation does not end tonight. The district's philosophies will continue. He indicated that just because a target is set, a final decision won't be made tonight to the district's approach.

Dr. Salim shared that some states including Massachusetts emphasize the AP enrollment piece as the first step. Mayor Simmons commented that it should be made ordinary and customary for students to be enrolled and pass the AP test. In Cambridge, we have the resources to change all the way down. We need to be careful not to adjust our expectations. She would like us to be brave, meet these targets and continue to move forward. This means we have to do the background work to make sure we don't have slippage.

Ms. Kelly added that she wants to make sure that there is a broad diverse group that is accessing these courses. Ms. Bowman shared that she is uncomfortable about having a conversation asking "what if we don't meet our goals?" Mr. Ribnick indicated that it is critical to be aware of what the district needs to do when it doesn't meet these goals at times along the way. We need a way to get back on track. It's a dual way of thinking about it. Ms. Bowman indicated that in a progressive City, it's a given that we are not going to hit every goal. It's challenging but we are going to hold ourselves accountable to do the best we can to reach these goals. Mr. Kim commented that his advice is to be careful this doesn't get into the micromanaging of the district. These targets end up with lots of decisions that must happen at a personnel level. Mr. Fantini added that you have to do what is necessary for the students and lessons have been learned from Members not getting involved. Ms. Bowman indicated that a School Committee's job is to set the vision and to hold people accountable. We need to see ourselves tied to the success of the administration so that it will impact our children. Ms. Kelly commented that respect and trust is needed between the School Committee and the administration.

Dr. Turk joined the meeting at 6:38 pm.

#4 Percentage of teachers of Color. By fall 2020, increase the percentage of teachers of color by 7 percentage points to 30%.

Ms. Kelly indicated that the School Committee voted that 30% was the measure to use and also mentioned that the school district has a new restructured program. Ms. Nolan noted that we've had this target for a few years. Ms. Allen shared that she would like to keep this at the 30% inspirational goal.

#5 School Climate Survey, By fall 2020, improve student, staff, family perceptions on engagement, instruction and community support.

Target setting Rationale: CPS is currently in the procurement process to identify a new survey provider to ensure we have an instrument that reflects our needs and a survey strategy that yields acceptable response rates. We hope to have a new partner in this work by the winter of 2017/18. Therefore, we currently do not have an adequate baseline on which to identify a target.

Outcome Monitoring: This is currently an annual measure at the district level and no plans are in place to collect this data more frequently, though individual schools often deploy surveys for more formative purposes.

#6 Students' Meaningful connections with adults. By fall 2020, increase students' meaningful connections with adults by _____ as measured by the Teen and Middle School health surveys.

Dr. Salim noted that this target relates to social and emotional learning and is one that the administrative council listed as its second greatest focus area. Dr. Adams shared that this is something that everyone can be a part of. Every staff member in the building could be engaged. It is a good tangible goal. Ms. Nolan shared that she worries that the goal is too low since it has fluctuated especially at the middle school level. Dr. Turk indicated that she has heard information that the meaningful adult may be someone from outside of school such as at an after-school program. Ms. Amigone responded that wherever possible we try to find a norm where the rationale can be based. They contacted the survey provider and that person proposed the targets suggested. Ms. Dexter added that we need to collect more data on our students. She suggested that the teachers be asked how they feel toward each student and if they had created a bond with that student.

#7 Chronic Absenteeism: By fall 2020, decrease chronic absenteeism by _____.

Ms. Nolan asked if this dramatically changes with gender and Social Economic States (SES). Ms. Kelly noted that this is complicated work and there are so many layers to this. There are countless reasons for chronic absenteeism. Ms. Fantini noted that tardiness is a factor also. How can the school day be extended in the future if you can't get kids to go to school. He would like to see the target more aggressive. Ms. Kelly commented that this also involves engagement with the family and the student. Ms. Dexter suggested that this could be a citywide campaign with the Department of Human Services (DHS). Ms. Dexter also indicated that we might want to have separate goals for high school and elementary school.

Mayor Simmons exited the meeting (7:25 pm)

Mr. Fantini in the Chair.

Mr. Ribnick directed the Members in an activity to use the proposed targets as a starting point to determine final targets for each outcome. Mr. Ribnick gave each Member post-it notes in 3 different colors. He asked them, "as a School Committee Member, serving as a liaison between the community and the administration, how ready are you to support this particular target?" As each outcome is read, he requested that they indicate by holding up the appropriate post-it note as follows: green post-it indicates enthusiastic to support the target – yellow post-it indicates you can live with the target and support the target – red post-it indicates you still have questions and concerns before you can support this target.

Outcome	Administrative Council Proposed Target	Finalized Target	Questions/Concerns
1. Grade 3 reading proficiency	Reduce # of students not proficient by 1/3 over 6 years	Reduce # of students not proficient by 1/3 over 6 years	Guidance from State ESSA plan recommends the target of reducing the number of students not proficient by 1/3 over 6 years.
2. Grade 8 math proficiency	Reduce # of students not proficient by 1/3 over 6 years	Reduce # of students not proficient by 1/3 over 6 years	Guidance from State ESSA plan recommends the target of reducing the number of students not proficient by 1/3 over 6 years.
3. AP & Honors enrollment: proportionality	400 students enrolled in AP courses	450 students enrolled in AP courses	Ms. Nolan indicated that 400 students enrolled is not ambitious enough. All Members supported her suggestion of the target of 450 students enrolled in AP Courses. Ms. Bowman asked if there is a way in year #1 to follow a certain cohort of students to identify access and in year #2 look at how this cohort is doing and learning to make recommendations to move forward towards a goal in year #3.
4. Percentage of teachers of color	30% of teachers	30% teachers of color	All Members supported the target of 30% teachers of color
5. School Climate survey (TBD)	TBD – instrument needed	TBD	Passed over – instrument needed TBD
6. Students' meaningful connection with adults (Teen and Middle School Health Surveys)	4 point gain at each level	6 point gain at each level	Ms. Nolan indicated that a 4 point gain is not ambitious enough. She indicated that she has faith in obtaining a 7 point gain at each level. All Members supported a target of a 6 point gain at each level.
7. Chronic absenteeism (CPS-reported State data)	15.2% of students	14% of students	Mr. Fantini indicated that there still are so many students being absent and he feels we can do better. Mr.

			Fantini suggested the rate be lowered to 14% of students. All Members supported the target rate of 14% of students.
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Next steps:

1st review meeting (review on progress on implementation steps for plan initiatives) will take place in December.

Ms. Nolan commented that the implementation of these district plan outcomes and targets is for administration and that voting on these is the responsibility of the School Committee. She suggested that this be brought before the Committee for a vote on November 21st. Ms. Dexter agreed with Ms. Nolan and commented that we need to give the public a chance to weigh in on this. Ms. Dexter asked why the focus tonight did not include college success. Mr. Fantini responded that the college success initiative is making great progress. He has followed its development.

Dr. Salim thanked everyone for the work tonight. He shared that these two retreats were incredibly helpful and that he looks forward to the next steps of progress monitoring and review. He is excited to enter the FY19 budget process with this district plan framework. He thanked Sam Ribnick and John Kim for facilitating these retreats.

Mr. Fantini added that this was a great way to work with the Superintendent and the administration to focus on a few goals and create the momentum of success. He commented that they can be proud of themselves in their work with the Superintendent. He noted that all School Committee Members did a wonderful job in raising questions and working well with the administration.

Ms. Nolan motioned, seconded by Ms. Dexter, to adjourn.

Adjourned (8:55 PM)

Judith T. Martin
Executive Secretary to the School Committee

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

- ✓ PowerPoint slides: Setting Targets Within a District Planning Process, Cambridge Public Schools, October 17, 2017
- ✓ CPS Strategic Plan Outcomes Dashboard, Fall 2017
- ✓ Activity #1: Perspectives on Outcomes worksheet