



February 17, 2022 5:15 p.m. – 7:15 p.m.

Zoom: <https://cambridgema.zoom.us/j/92461748993>

Summary of Conversation Topics

- CYC updates
- Language Justice Updates
- Mental Health

Present:

Chair: Mayor Siddiqui

Members: Tina Alu, Akriti Bhambi, Christine Elow, Fred Fantini, Wendy Georgan, Bob Gittens, Sophie Goldman, Michelle Godfrey, Kim Goldstein, ~~Victoria Greer~~, Liz Hill, Tabbie Howard, ~~Mike Johnston~~, David Kale, Christine Kim, Elijah Lee-Robinson, Michelle Lower, Alanna Mallon, Maria McCauley, Derrick Neal, ~~Geeta Pradhan~~, Bridget Rodriguez, Ellen Semonoff, Tagesech Wabeto, Elaine Wen

Executive Director: Nancy Tauber

Find It Manager: Andrew Liedtka

Cambridge Youth Council (CYC) Coordinator and Notetaker: Ty Ruwe

CYC Members: Jonathan Akbari, Ziya Forbes, Urbana Barua

Guests: Jose Wendel, Mary Kowalczyk, Marie Mathieu, Jessica Smith, Jamie McCarthy

5:15 Meeting Starts

Welcome and Introductions

Family Policy Council Business

- Adoption of Minutes (January 20, 2021)
- Public Comment
- Announcements
 - Looking for a new City manager! Employees can weigh in on an anonymous survey, due tomorrow. Non-employees can get more information and weigh in [here](#).
 - Reminder: City scholarship is due March 7th. Typically awards \$3k and 80 scholarships
- Family Policy Council will become the Advisory Council for Center for Families - unanimous vote
 - The advisory Council is about linking resources and building connections

- Family Policy Council would get an update from Michelle at each meeting, but otherwise would not change
- [Here is the letter](#) with more information

CYC Updates

- CYC/BSU raised \$11,346 and Cambridge Community Foundation is matching \$5,000. A total of 16,346. Each of these organizations will receive \$1,634
 - Youth on Fire
 - Y2Y Harvard Square Homeless Shelter
 - On the Rise
 - Transition House, Inc
 - Food for Free
 - Cambridge Family and Children's Services
 - Women's Center
 - CEOC
 - Just-A-Start
 - First Church Shelter
- MBTA
 - Still working towards a more equitable transportation
 - Met with people involved in the City's budget to see how realistic their plan is
- Mental Health
 - Working towards mental health workshops
 - Creating mock workshops to try out with CYC members

Language Justice Update

- Plain Language Guide and working on a companion guide focusing on producing accessible docs.
- Plain Language Networking Event - 177 attended
- We have received requests to do the training again
- Working on the budget with the City Manager.
- We are requesting a full time language access specialist and funding for translation, interpretation, technical assistance and training.

Presentation - Middle School/ Teen Health Survey

📄 Middle School/Teen Health Presentation 2-17-22

[Middle School/Teen Health Survey Report](#)

Q&A

- Q: Was the response rate lower this year?
 - A: Yes, not as high as normal, due to the survey being given remotely. Usually given in school with teachers around to help
- Q: It looks like the substance use has dropped, is that correct?
 - A: Yes, the survey reflects a decline in substance use. It may be confounded by the students taking the survey at home, remotely.

- Q: What was the difference in response from the previous year to the year we're looking at?
 - A: Typically have between 70-80% of students at CRLS, higher at upper schools. This year 50-60%.
- Q: Can you talk about how the data is being used?
 - A: Met with principals, had building based meetings w/ the upper and high school leadership teams. Put additional supports in place, looked at the high priority needs from the curriculum perspective. Principals used the school-based data to improve their schools in specific ways. Also, increased staffing/social workers.
- Q: The statistics for genderqueer kids are alarming; we must pay attention to them. What is the approach to supports for this population?
 - A: There have been focus groups at the upper schools and the high school. On a district level there has been heightened awareness and training of educators. De-gendered wellness curriculum, being inclusive, listening and hearing students as to what they feel like is missing and what's beneficial to them
- Comment: Need a universal approach to 70% of kids not feeling connected to an adult
 - Response: This is likely due to students being home and not seeing many adults
- Q/C: Could language justice be used to create language that's gender inclusive?
- Q: How do we understand the students that have intersectional/multiple layers of identity when looking at this data?
 - Committed to ensuring that students can identify in multiple ways; the next version of the survey will be even more focused on intersectionality, based on feedback
 - Started trainings before the pandemic. Ramping up again with help from the office of equity, diversity, and inclusion (Jenny Chung); working towards having every building equipped with a support person
- Q: If we're seeing our genderqueer kids struggling at middle/high school, can we insert interventions at an earlier level? (e.g. elementary school). For students & for educators
 - A: there is a need for increased awareness, this is being currently worked on
- Q: The genderqueer population that answered the survey: were there many of them that identified themselves so as to be found later?
 - A: Not high enough that we would be able to disclose how many
 - About 13-14 in total provided their name
- Q: Some Cambridge ethnic groups were not identified, is it possible the numbers would have changed if they were included?
 - A: If one of their group wasn't listed they could write it in. However, it may be a good idea to try to expand the list, but expanding it too far could jeopardize the anonymity of the survey (e.g. if a specific ethnic/minority group has very few people representing it)
- Q: Is it possible for the data to be displayed in numbers, rather than percentages?
 - A: Yes, that data exists, just not in this presentation
- Q: Did the issue of accessibility come up? Ways to make taking the survey easier
 - A: Yes; schools are trying to work with the needs of their students. Students will be brought in for feedback

- Q: What role does the teen health center play in all this? Is it a place students can go if they need help?
 - A: The teen health center has been a great resource for youth. It is also not just restricted to students at CRLS
- Q: The survey is done every other year, but will that be changed to every year?
 - A: It is likely they will stay on their normal every two years schedule as it leaves room to actually act on the data received
- Q: Will the survey be brought back into the school? Students doing it at home may not have complete freedom to answer questions honestly
 - A: Yes, this year it will be done in school though still online
- Q: What is the intro to the survey for the young people? What do you say it's for, why they should take it, why they should answer freely, etc
 - A: The advocacy team (comprising CRLS students) made a video for their peers talking about what the survey is, that it's anonymous, and more
- Q: As a parent and community worker this is of the utmost concern. Families, committee members, schools, etc should work together on this issue. A campaign that would be helpful would be distributing this data in multiple languages and getting community leaders to collaborate.
 - A: Agreed. Caregivers are important partners in this work. The survey data was published to the public and is on the website; we can work with school-based leaders to figure out how to support families

Cambridge Youth Council (CYC) Conversation about Mental Health

- Ty (facilitator), Elaine, Sophie, Ziya, Urbana, Jonathan, Elijah
- How common is to see your peers to struggle with a mental health issue
 - It seems so normal
 - It shouldn't be so common
 - There might be others who don't say anything, but are still struggling
 - It is scary that people don't know they should/can be getting help
 - There needs to be more conversations about these topics. Can't brush them off or dismiss them. It will help validate feelings. Your mental health does not exist.
 - Adults invalidate our feelings. - "Why are you so stressed out?" "It will get more stressful later on." "You are so young, how can you be having mental health struggles?"
 - We need more spaces for more open conversations
 - Stigma - individual stigma and shame if you have to get help.
 - People think there is only one way to deal with mental health. People have different coping mechanisms
 - You can't compare different mental health issues.
 - Some causes
 - Impact of internet
 - How people treat each other impacts mental health
 - School
 - Peer pressure
 - No time for mental health breaks

- What does a positive mental health outcome look like for you?
 - When you have understanding adults at school
 - Every student needs at least one so they can find the resources they need
 - When I have a good balance between academics, social life, sports, etc.
 - There are resources in Cambridge but we don't know where to find them.
 - It is hard to find a therapist. It cost a lot of money
- One moment that you have had that has been a positive mental health experience
 - My teacher asked me how I was - that meant a lot. Someone caring about me made my day
 - At the beginning of the semester, my new algebra teacher asked us to write a letter about how we feel about math. She gave us the opportunity to vent and express how we are feeling. I usually keep stuff inside, and this was helpful.
 - I had an issue getting something done, and my teacher was really understanding.
 - Met up with my mentor who I haven't seen in awhile. It was nice to reconnect in an in person setting.
 - I had a teacher who never talked about mental health, but he seemed to be the most understanding.
 - A teacher asked a connection question everyday - kind of silly and fun but really helped build a community.

Debrief

- There are things happening to help young people, and we need to take stock of that.
- The little things are really helpful.
- This was a powerful testimony of what is happening.
- Young people going to an adult and not feeling validated is heartbreaking, but there is an opportunity here.
- Connection to an adult is important
- CYC has pointed out important pathways for us to pursue
- How can we communicate these issues with families - do it individually. Families don't really understand what is happening. There is so much stigma around mental health. Need to communicate in a language families can understand.
- Immigrant families need to see this information.
- Parents struggle too and don't necessarily know how to talk about it and/or deal with it.
- How do we break the cycles?
- It is hard when you feel alone.
- How can we use our positions to make a difference?
- Small moments are so important. And do it consistently.

Resources

- Sown to Grow is a resource that help to facilitate connections between caring adults and kids - www.sowntogrow.com
- [Oregon - Mental Health Days Off](#)

- There is a lot of research about the efficacy of a caring adult in each child's life . [This is one study](#):
 - Developmental research shows that having one or more caring adults in a child's life increases the likelihood that they will flourish and become productive adults.
 - Children and adolescents who have a formal or informal "mentor-like" relationship with someone outside their home are less likely to have externalizing behavior problems (bullying) and internalizing problems (depression)
- Ed Redesign Lab has been promoting the idea of having Navigators for all kids so all kids are seen and heard
<https://edredesign.org/files/edredesign/files/navigator-resource-guide.pdf?m=1642091099>

Next Steps

- Next Meeting - Thursday **February 17** (5:15-7:15)
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7:15: Adjourn