



Thursday, September 18, 2025  
Citywide Senior Center  
806 Mass Avenue, Cambridge, MA

#### Summary of Conversation Topics

- CPS Family Engagement
- 158 Spring Street Building

**Chair:** ~~Mayor Simmons~~

**Co-Chair** Sumbul Siddiqui

**Members:** Tina Alu, ~~Eva Asraf, Jasper Adiletta~~, Johanny Castillo, ~~Christine Elow~~, Lida Griffins, Michelle Godfrey, Tabithlee Howard, Caroline Hunter, ~~Mike Johnston, Michelle Lower~~, Jasper Mallon, ~~Maria McCauley, Larisa Mendez-Penate~~, Dave Murphy, Matt Nelson, Geeta Pradhan, Bridget Rodriguez, Ellen Semonoff, Liz Stapleton, Tagesech Wabeto, Ayesha Wilson, ~~Derrick Neal~~, Yoyo Yau

**Executive Director:** Nancy Tauber

**Notetaker:** Izzy Schpeiser

**Find it Manager:** Andrew Lietdka

**CYC Coordinator:** Izzy Schpeiser

**CYC Members:** Lio Caravan, Kieu Anh Huynh, Musie Fulsum, Reyyan Elfiky, Shakia Afrose

**Guests:** Marse Romero, Joyce Majewski,, Tawanya Garrett, Shawn Proctor, Manuel Fernandez, Joy Kim, Vanessa Manluco, Malene Council, Gao-Wen Shao, Mackenzie Henrique, John Galli, Lindsay Diaz, Fred Cabral, Carrine Bury,

#### 5:30 Welcome and Introductions

- Family Policy Council Business
  - Approval of May 7, 2025 Minutes
    - PASSES: Unanimously
- Public Comment
  - N/A
- Announcements

- The Family Policy Council is the Advisory Council for The Center for Families, the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Grantee.
- Recruiting for Baby U for North Cambridge and West Cambridge.
- Cambridge Preschool Program applications open up on October 1st.
  - Encourage families to apply.
  - Center for Families helps fill out applications.
- Events
  - Danehy Park Family Day this Saturday September 20th - 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.
  - Central Square Night Market this Saturday September 20th - 5 p.m. - 10 p.m.
  - Roast to the Coast this Saturday September 20th
  - Night market happening on Sydney St Saturday Sept. 20th 5-10p.m.
  - Annual Rib Fest happening next Sunday September 28th
  - Bridges Homeward is hosting an [Building Futures, Celebrating Impact](#)
  - [Bridges Homeward Annual Impact Event](#) at the Main Library on September 29th at 5 p.m.
  - CEOC is hosting a City Council Candidates Forum Panel in October 23rd
- Center for Family is launching Welcome Baby packages available for Cambridge babies.

### **Icebreaker (Small Groups)**

Introduce yourselves to the people in your group.

Tonight we are talking about Family Engagement in schools. What advice would you give someone if they wanted to engage with your family - either now or when you were in school?

### **Interim Superintendent Dave Murphy**

#### **Cambridge Public Schools Family Engagement**

CPS Family and Community Engagement overview

- CPS is hiring a Director of Family Engagement, and they want feedback. How can CPS strengthen the relationship between the school district and City?
- The goal is to improve CPS family engagement practices, communication, and partnership with families.
- There is a difference between family engagement and family involvement. CPS does a good job providing families with information (involvement), but they want to improve how they engage with families.

- They want to improve relationships with families about teaching and learning. They want to help families know what students are learning and the role of guardians with helping enforce the learning.
- CPS is hiring an individual to deepen the capacity across the board in family engagement. The Director will not be responsible for doing family engagement, rather this person will support school leaders so they can build trust with their families.
- It takes everybody to achieve the same goal.
- CPS has received many applications.
- Interview panel that includes caregivers, family liaisons etc.

Small group discussion to get feedback

1. What qualities should we be looking for in our next Family Engagement Director?
2. What attributes, values, and credentials should we prioritize?

## Notes

Priorities for the Next Family and Community Engagement Director – emphasize both community and family.

### 1. Core Beliefs & Values

- Starts with the belief that families and caregivers are valuable partners in schools.
- Cares about and believes in students.
- Understands the importance of working with community partners and how it benefits students.
- Respects and elevates the work of educators, staff, and families.
- Demonstrates patience, openness, and vulnerability.
  - Acknowledges what they don't know and is willing to learn.
- Invites people in, values relationship-building, and prioritizes authentic connections over technology (Parent Square).
- Strong advocacy for families and school staff, ensuring they have resources to do authentic engagement.

### 2. Community Knowledge & Trust-Building

- Needs to be ready to hit the ground running.
- Deep knowledge of Cambridge—not just the schools, but the broader community.
- We need someone that knows what the community was, where the community is now, and works towards creating a space that works for all.
- Understands Cambridge's unique nuances and embraces them.
- Ideally from the community (preferably a person of color) to build trust quickly; if not, must have extensive, proven community and family engagement experience to overcome the deficit of not being from Cambridge.

- Recognizes there is a need to repair broken relationships between stakeholders (school staff, community partners, families).
- Proven record of building coalitions inside and outside schools.
- Consensus builder who can bring everyone to the table.
- Good at inviting people in and engaging with the broad community.

### 3. Equity & Inclusion

- Able to explain how they have and will ensure all families have a voice, including those who are less vocal.
- Uplifts underserved families and works alongside them.
- Understands barriers faced by immigrant families (e.g., children acting as translators, cultural differences, language access).
- Makes sure everyone feels included in communications.
- Understands how to engage fathers/men in family engagement.
- Challenges the narrative that “American schools know everything.”
- Values and understands diverse communities, able to walk comfortably in many spaces (parents, teachers, children, out-of-school programs).

### 4. Skills & Experience

- Demonstrated ability to connect the dots between different entities (systems thinker and doer).
- Experience working directly with families and engaging diverse communities.
- Able to use community data to inform decisions.
- Understands CPS school culture and expectations.
- Background in operations is a plus.
- Strong communication skills (multi-lingual preferred).
- Excellent listener, approachable, charismatic, and reliable (follows through).
- Advocacy and coalition-building experience.
- Ability to support families and staff with concrete resources.

### 5. Personal Qualities

- Approachable and charismatic.
- Remembers people by name and face, not status.
- Flexible, patient, and committed to follow-through.
- Strong leadership through listening and empathy.
- Ability to elevate others, making them feel seen and valued.
- Builds trust through authenticity.

### 6. Practical Expectations

- Can increase CPS staff presence at community and outside-school events.
- Works closely with the Community Engagement Team (CET).
- Recognizes language as critical—commits to making communication clear, accessible, and inclusive.

- Brings ideas and strategies for repairing strained relationships.
- Prioritizes **relationship-building over reliance on technology tools.**

Things that need to be improved

- Caregivers need help accessing Parent Square.
- CPS used to do robo calls in languages other than English. Can that happen again?

## 158 Spring Street (former Kennedy-Longfellow School)

### Presentation

#### 📌 158 Spring Street Community Meeting 1

*The interim superintendent stressed the following*

1. *There will be additional opportunities for public engagement on this topic.*
2. *The capital investment in the building will be necessarily limited due to the financial constraints attributable to the historic and generational level of investment in school construction over the previous decade that resulted in the opening of the Tobin/Darby Vassall Upper School, King Open/Cambridge Street Upper School, and King/Putnam Ave Upper School.*

Small group discussion to get feedback

1. What is best for the district as a whole?
2. How do we put more CPS students in better positions to succeed, with a particular emphasis on supporting students qualifying in high-need categories defined by the state (Disabilities, English Language Learners)?
3. Think about our K-8th grade world. What do we have that you think we should? Should we have more dual language or Montessori programs? An arts academy? Stem academy? Etc.
4. What other information should we share with the community, so they better understand this issue?

### Notes

#### Future Use of the Empty School Building

##### 1. Vision & Creativity

- Think outside the box — the building can serve multiple purposes.
- Multi-use center: school plus community hub.
- Space for schools, city, and community programs.
- Groundbreaking programs — if they already exist, replicate them.
- Must have a long-term, realistic district-wide approach.
- Build intentionality into all programs, with clear goals.

##### 2. Educational Opportunities

- Could serve Pre-K–12 opportunities.
- Strong afterschool or early childhood programs.

- Expand afterschool options to keep kids busy and engaged.
- Child-centered programs that prioritize academic learning.
- Place for kids in special programs without isolating them.
- Programs for students with special needs.
- Language support programs.
- SEI Program expansion — current option at Graham & Parks is limited and not always accessible.
- Explore STEM School or STEM programs in partnership with Kendall Square businesses, with rotational spaces for exposure to STEM careers.

### 3. Community & Family Needs

- Create a welcoming space for families and community partners.
- Space for community resources and case management for families.
- Students report lacking safe, free/low-cost hangout spaces; building could provide a safe, relaxed environment.
- Should make the building a place people want to go — prioritize health, light, open space.
- Pride in the physical space matters for students, families, and staff.

### 4. Equity & Inclusion

- Avoid isolating students in high-need categories — programs should integrate them with broader student population.
- Ensure students who were at Kennedy-Longfellow are supported and not falling through the cracks.
- Consider pain points in other schools when designing new offerings, to avoid duplicating challenges.

### 5. Facilities & Logistics

- Requires significant updates — “needs lots of work.”
- Address safety and maintenance issues (e.g., get rid of rats).
- Transportation to and from the school must be figured out.
- Outside fitness space should be included.

### Next steps

- The next Family Policy Council meeting is Wednesday October 29 (5:15-7:15). Location may be changed to 344 Broadway.
- We will be providing you an update on the Youth Wellness work that has been going on since we last met in May. Nancy will send information ahead of time.

### Adjourn 7:16