

**CPS Administration and School Committee
Roundtable on Academic Challenge
November 29, 2011
Cambridge Main Public Library**

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David Maher: Calling the meeting to order, 6:10pm - 8:10 in Cambridge Public Library community room, to discuss Academic Challenge. No public comment.

Jeff Young: Welcome, I would like to recognize members of the staff. Mr. Osborne, welcome. What we're hoping to do tonight is to walk through the agenda and have some discussion with the committees. It's a conversation. Not really a presentation. Goal is to engage school committee members so we can hear from you. We've been engaged with principals and others in the district, to shape the academic challenge policy. We want to get your input [School Committee's]. We're not asking for votes or action at this time.

Turn to the agenda sheet. Here's how time can break out. Section on goals – till 6:20pm. Spend 20 min with your initial reactions to academic challenge policy. Review of background. Then on to implementations, 6 or 8 bullets of possible approaches. So our purpose is to share our current thinking. Definition of Academic Challenge, what we mean by it. To share this academic challenge policy, it has been vetted, but needs work. So we can bring a formal policy forward eventually.

It's fine to have a policy on paper, but what are we actually going to do in classrooms to make this policy come to life. Materials we'll go through are the ones that are in your packet, in order.

Focus on paragraph highlighted in blue, called Differentiated Academic Challenge. Also there's a brief synthesis of research. Our aim with the synthesis is to illustrate that there is no right answer around many of these issues, particularly around the issue of ability grouping. If there were clarity, everyone would know what the right answer is. There is no right answer. It's for every school community and district to puzzle through. The research is really meant to illustrate that there really are two sides to this.

_____ is meant to talk about how students internalize their view of themselves as students and scholars. There's a piece from the NCSM, about math. We'll spend some time on that. We'll spend a little bit about multicultural education and equity. So, that's our plan.

Fred Fantini: Question: can we start with the implications first? I.e., hear the best thinking first?

Jeff Young: Ultimately #2 is what you'll be voting on.

Fred Fantini: #4 is going to inform #2.

Alice Turkel: Can we go ahead as planned?

Fred Fantini: I think you're making a mistake?

Patty Nolan: Let's do it the way the superintendent stated.

Jeff Young: OK, moving on.

Alice Turkel: This doesn't look like a policy, it looks like a wish list. If I was voting for it, I wouldn't know what I was voting for. I'd like to see a policy that's more concrete. That's clear.

Jeff Young: Can you give an example?

Alice Turkel: I'd like to know if we'll do ability grouping, e.g. with mathematics. E.g., you read the Brookline policy, you know what they plan to do. E.g. what is "effective and flexible groupings" what is "meaningful family engagement". I read it and I still don't have answers.

Marc McGovern: What I'd like to see from the administration is a more comprehensive plan. If the recommendation from the administration is to have leveled classes, I want to know how is that going to work. Are there going to be formal tracks? are they going to be fluid? how will we insure that the lower level classes are also rigorous. If classes are heterogeneous, how are we going to meet the needs of all kids, including the accelerated learners? I'd like the administration to flesh out, to say: this is the direction we're going. Then we can talk about if certain specific things will or will not work. I want to see a more comprehensive plan in front of me. More specifics. How much it will cost? How it will be rolled out? I don't think there's anything on this list that people would say we shouldn't be doing.

Jeff Young: That's something we fully intend to come forward with. The purpose of tonight is to get the School Committee's views on what those specifics will be.

Carolyn Turk: we need to know if what we're going to be doing is aligned with our values, with what we believe. We need to make sure as a community that we have identified and articulated what we're committed to. So that the policy is aligned to those things. So, this may not look like a policy in terms of the "what", but before we say "here's the what", we need to identify what we believe.

Marc McGovern: I'm hoping to get a multi-page policy in front of me, with the details. Ultimately my goal is, I want to make sure that every child in the district is educated at an appropriate level. There's 10 different ways we can go about doing that. I want a comprehensive explanation about how and why you came to that conclusion.

Jeff Young: We're trying to hear from the stakeholders about what things resonate, then put them together.

Nancy Tauber: It's important to have our values and core beliefs represented. We all have a different definition of what the policy is. Some people think the policy is this [points to the draft that was handed out]. some people think a policy is a very specific detailed document. So we need to define what is "policy". That seems challenging. Also, I had some questions about what different things mean.

Richard Harding: I want to be informed on where you're leading us as the educational leader. Some people like tracking, some don't. I don't want to get into that conversation. You're the education leader, you need to lead this conversation, so we understand where you're going with this. There's no need to

rush this. We need to take the time to do this. The anxiety is there around what's going to happen in the upper school. We need a system that will, in the upper schools, challenge kids across the board.

Some people see tracking as inherently not a good thing across the board. We should have that conversation. But you as the leader should give us that direction. And we'll have the discussion after.

Alice Turkel: I don't exactly agree with Marc. What Marc is asking for we need, but what we need now is a relatively short policy that sets boundaries. Then the Super from that makes the more detailed plan. Because the details are the implementation of the policy.

Jeff Young: You can see how it's challenging for us, to say how much detail we should put up front. E.g. let's say the SC wants to make a policy on ability grouping. And there was a vote. And it was voted that there's no ability grouping at all. But then after a year we found that in some circumstances, ability grouping might work. So, what is policy, and what is implementation? That's the hardest thing.

Patty Nolan: maybe we need a pilot program, and we want to approve this pilot. So maybe that's the task at hand. I agree that this [the draft policy] is more of a mission statement almost. A statement of beliefs. And I have trouble understanding some of the beliefs. What are the core beliefs. Let's clean them up. We need to acknowledge that there are currently gaps. There are kids in every school who feel lost, there are kids who feel unchallenged. We've had policy in place for years. But it hasn't been implemented. There are kids throughout the district who have addressed concerns. We have to grapple with that. I'm concerned with: are we going to provide every student with the *same* opportunities? Because what every kid needs is different. Kahn academy – his point is: the reason videos work is that it's not about ability. It's about time on task. So, if I need 10 hours and you need 5 hours, giving us both 8 hrs is not going to work. It's a question of how much time or attention each kid needs to get there. Given our district, we have to address what's reasonable for teachers to expect. If I'm teaching a class and kids are 2, 3 or 4 grade levels ahead, what will I do? It's almost impossible for any but the most extraordinary teacher to teach to that range of students. About teachers: no matter how good you are, if I took the test tomorrow and got certified, it would still take me 5 or 6 years to be good at differentiation.

Jeff Young: Those are really good comments. Time is a really key piece of it. It's not only about time. It's about a variety of instructional techniques.

Fred Fantini: I'm glad everybody spoke. I think it's good that we have an academic challenge policy. It'll convince people that we're heading in the right direction. This policy is going to lead to support systems, and is going to provide something richer than what we have now. I just read "A Nation Deceived". It talks about all kind of acceleration techniques we can have for children. Things that will make our program stronger and richer. The Harvard extension program came out different than we had originally intended. Programs take on a life of their own.

Nancy Tauber: it's interesting looking at these core beliefs. Patty said that many of them are in place. a culture of high expectations has not been a core value of this school system. I would echo Richard's question. You [to Jeff Young] have been here, you are our leader. There's been so much discussion about this topic, I think it's time for us to stop this debate over accelerated learners vs. kids with special needs; tracking vs. no tracking. I want to know from the professionals what they think is best for the system at this time.

Richard Harding: Cambridge sets itself up for failure, we want to do big things, but then lack the support. We can pass any policy we want, but if we don't have the support it's a fruitless effort. So, we have to realize what we have now, and realize where the gaps are across the board. Looking at one of the core values: classroom free of distractions. We've heard about that for years. That causes the teacher to have to change the game, in the middle of the game. But if we melt this into a policy with no flexibility, the policy is not going to work. So, you have to decide if the *policy* is the avenue you want to take as a district, to get to where we want to be. I'm hearing the CPS needs to address: do all kids have a robust education, policy or not?

Jeff Young: The drive to have a policy, I understand where that comes from. From my perspective, a thing that distinguishes a district is its agility, its ability to respond quickly and effectively. A new technology is available, etc. There's all kinds of things that are constantly changing in schools. The strength of a district is its agility. Whatever we have today we're not going to have tomorrow. So, having a policy can have the unintended consequence of limiting our agility.

Marc McGovern: If you come back with a recommendation saying "we should track students". For me to feel OK about that, which inherently I don't, I'm going to have some questions. If you come back and say "We're going to have heterogeneous classes" I don't want just more of the same as what we have now. It hasn't worked. That's where I want to see some of the detail of what you're thinking. About not locking you in: unfortunately in politics, if you vote something, and then 6 months later change your mind because of new data, people call you a flip-flopper. So I hope that we have the ability, if we take a vote, or if you implement the plan, and we realize it's not working, I don't want to stay the course on something that's not working. You've got to dot the "i"s a little bit, at least for me.

Jeff Young: We're going to do that. Not to the point where everything is locked into cement. What you described as foolishness in politics sometimes turns out to be goodness in schools.

Marc McGovern: I don't want to lose sight of JK-5. At some point soon, we need to also make sure we're having a conversation about what's going on in the new lower schools as well.

Alice Turkel: It is our role to set policy. It is our role to guide the Super in what direction he goes in, and what he brings forward to us. Policy is a set of *boundaries*. We have to ask ourselves what is the goal here. Is this for children traditionally called "gifted and talented". Is this for kids like some in the ISP who don't want to be distracted? Is this for typical students? Struggling students? Kids with special needs who also are bright? We don't have a clear description of where those groups begin and end. The labels get you in trouble. One description is the children who are "truly unusual" among their age peers. We have to give the superintendant a clear picture of what needs to be gotten done, so he can get it done. I don't think the policy should look like an implementation plan. We have got to figure out a way that we move forward. I strongly believe in inclusion and heterogeneous groupings. [reads the quote about differentiation] Are we supporting that? Or are we not? We need some clarity.

Jeff Young: Let me try to add some clarity, to be fair about it. The paragraph [reads paragraph that Alice was quoting]. What you hear, and what we meant is a presumption that, in most subject areas, we feel confident that we can provide that academic challenge [in a heterogeneous classroom with differentiated learning], once we have the new curriculum in place. Math does stand out as different. That's why we have a bullet point about it. Let's move on to the bullet points, number four, skip number 3 for now.

Nancy Tauber: It needs to be a partnership between administration and SC. We have the benefit of getting a lot of feedback, you have the benefit of experience we don't have.

Jeff Young: Thank you for saying that. That partnership is best built, we think, on a hot issue like this one. When we're building a policy or program together.

Nancy Tauber: This is where I put in my plug for a retreat in January or February 2012.

Patty Nolan: Just to add to what needs to be included in the policy, it's how it's implemented that really matters. The expectation is a factor. Historically, part of the problem with a lot of the research cited here is that many of the students were in classes with low expectations. Expectations need to be high but appropriate.

Jeff Young: Expectations mean more than the technicality of grouping.

Marc McGovern: When you peel away some of the concerns people have about their kids being challenged, you come down to concerns about behavior in the classroom. Because of the school I work at, we talk a lot about being motivated. I work at a school where kids have been kicked out of every school they've gone to previously. They're the behavior problem in a regular public school. But these kids get up and travel an hour, an hour and a half to face their biggest struggles. They're as motivated as anyone else. They come every single day and struggle and fight. It would be easy to look at those kids and say they're a behavior problem, they don't want to learn. I tend to think all kids want to learn, all kids want to do well. We have to have those high expectations for every kids.

Jeff Young: I appreciate that Marc. Motivation is different for every child.

Richard Harding: We heard from the public, some of this is about early identification. Having a program for these kids early on. A kid came and spoke to us about eight months ago [Alex Zimmer], he was isolated, looked at in a strange way, because he was naturally gifted and talented. We have to figure out a way to identify early, so as these kids move through the system, we're with them every step of the way. The kids who are off the charts. They need a certain level of support. Their families need a certain level of support.

Jeff Young: I think you're exactly right. I make speeches all the time about ALL kids. People interpret that differently. When I say ALL, I mean all the kids that you are all talking about here tonight. The great challenge for us is how do you actually *do* it, and really pay attention to every child, who also brings a whole life story. That's the real challenge.

David Maher: One of the stakeholder groups are young people, like our high school SC reps. Many people here may know what the kids council is – department heads from across the city, bringing stakeholders together. We had about 25 student reps there. The students wanted to have a conversation with the adults. They asked the adults questions and vice versa. Not one said they felt challenged in elementary school. you could look at it and say well, these are kids who've moved on, and don't want to look back, but they pointed out a number of things: disruptions in class, the growing presence of drugs and alcohol. The peer pressure on kids. What I would encourage is: in going forward, you continue to do some outreach to students. There's something special about hearing directly from kids, about their own experience, about what troubles them.

Jeff Young: That's a great suggestion, I may turn to Grant to help me on that.

Jeff Young: We'll skip #3, that's homework: to read the research.

Jeff Young: We'll move on to the practices. Looking at the question about math. Should we offer a couple of levels in grades 6, 7 and 8? Should we offer embedded honors? Are there lessons we learned from the high school? Staffing patterns. Extensions and support, beyond the regular curriculum. Beyond the 50 minute math or English class. How would we recognize students? What makes a difference to them? Should there be an honor roll? How do we want to recognize students' achievement? We have notes from a parent, Freedom Baird, from the New England Conference on Gifted and Talented Education. How might we help train our coaches? We'll turn to Barbara for a couple of minutes.

Barbara Van Sickle: Apologies for sending something around that you haven't had the opportunity to look at. We know that's not good practice. We want to use the roundtable vehicle to inform each other about what is currently going on. It's the "what" – what is going on. All the bullet points are the "how". One of the things that's interesting – when we think about the notion of challenge: look at the grade 8 comparison of Math Standards, page 1. The table. On the left side, are currently what kids are working on and expected to know and are tested on in MCAS. In the right hand column, in 2013 under the Innovation Agenda, all highlighted in yellow, are brand-new standards. All the gray highlights are standards that our kids will have starting next year in 8th grade that have been imported from the high school. Those things will now be expected of *all* of our 8th graders. So, when we talk about challenge, inherent in our conversation...

This year to support or challenge kids, on the next page, page 95 – this describes what the department of education's expectations are – for what will be the Algebra 1 program at the high school. It will be far more rigorous than what we do right now. Kids will have mastered algebra content, so they can move forward with algebra in the high school. We're going to master it by each grade level, particularly in the middle school. There's this level of new challenge that will be expected for our kids.

This year, and the state acknowledges, there will be kids who have already mastered the 8th grade math before they're in 8th grade. For the 2nd half of the year, kids who show mastery of the 8th grade standards can apply to learn what are formally 9th grade strands. That are highlighted in gray. Mark will talk about that program. Then we'll talk about the "how".

Carolyn Turk: With the two columns, the right column is not in place of the left, it's *in addition* to the left. Important clarification.

Jeff Young: ...educator perspective on the leveling question

Maryann MacDonald: The subject acceleration protocol that's in place right now, in math. It was piloted this year, at Baldwin, King, Amigos.

Mark Healy: [CPS Mathematics Curriculum Coordinator] This year we're doing what's in the first column, we've applied subject acceleration. If they master first column, plus what's in blue, that's an algebra one program. Subject acceleration...

Next year, because it's a new curriculum, we'll do the blue, and in addition the yellow. It's a much more rigorous course. For teachers it's scary. Is this already leveling? Middle school teachers had a

discussion. Lots of talk about supporting students at all levels. Instructional aides, special educators. Leveling, is it a social justice issue? Lots of concerns were discussed. Teachers haven't felt that what we're doing now is necessarily the best, something needs to change. Teachers feel that the discussion shouldn't be leveling vs. not leveling. There could be electives if there are heterogeneous classes. Some schools are offering a 6th class meant to be a more homogeneous grouping. There are a lot of models right now. Teachers are somewhat divided.

Jeff Gaglione: [Dean of Curriculum & Program at CRLS] We have a little bit of luxury, in that we're inheriting students from the middle school. We'll be responsible for implementing the recommendations not next year, but the year after. We've been doing a lot of curriculum work over the last couple of years. At the high school we have ability grouping. at the HS what's important is our ability to be flexible. Ability grouping is not inherently bad. But there's danger if students can't move between levels. So we offer lots of opportunity for students to move among levels. That's been an emphasis. The other piece is teacher expectation – research shows both sides of the debate, but what's universal is high expectations for all. Giving students opportunities who want to challenge themselves. – boils down to teacher recommendation. Being in a College Prep calculus class does *not* stop a student from going into an AP calculus class.

Grant Baker: [student SC rep from CRLS] About leveling – as a student who went through the k-8 CPS, and a grade 6-8 heterogeneous class with differentiation in math, I saw that work with teachers who had been doing it for a long time. This [new] curriculum looks a lot more advanced than what I did in 8th grade. I had a great teacher in 8th grade, he mastered a system, he was able to split kids up. I don't expect all teachers to be able to do that. 6th grade is early for separate classes. But 8th grade is OK. Because I feel kids are too young in 6th and 7th grade. It has to be acknowledged that, based on classroom performance, a kid might be better at math than he shows.

Naomi Tsegaye: [student SC rep from CRLS] As a student, it was difficult, I was in the higher math group, I had to help my peers. I felt that we did need to differentiate the students in the class. It was hard to learn. But also to teach, because you wanted to help your classmates, but also do your own work.

Jeff Young: How did you balance that?

Naomi Tsegaye: A lot of 8th grade is group work. I kept in mind that we couldn't move on with the lesson if a student didn't understand it. So, it took more time teaching those kids, in order for the whole class to move on. It was easier to work with the students who were a little behind, instead of focusing on what we needed.

Marc McGovern: So, the groupings in your math class – those groups were kids of different abilities. would it have been different if that larger class was broken up so that kids who were more advanced were together, kids in the middle were together, etc... how would that have been? Is it a matter of how the groups were formed? Or did you feel it didn't work?

Grant Baker: That's how mine worked. One or two kids would go into the hallway. The teacher had an aide. We did the work and the homework. I'm a strong believer in peer teaching. Sometimes it's better if a kid explains something to you. Yes it does sometimes hold back the smarter kids. The goal is to give the *most* kids a good education.

Naomi Tsegaye: I feel like if I were in a group with the kids who were faster, I would have been challenged. Yeah, the groupings mattered. If I were in a group with kids who were faster, I would have pushed myself harder.

Nancy Tauber: The assistant teacher is a certified teacher, who seems to be there all the time. My son has two math teachers, and a very dedicated volunteer in the class. I don't know if all classes have that.

Jeff Young: They probably don't, but staffing patterns...it's good to know...

Patty Nolan: Just to step back. In terms of leveled or not, it's what's best for the kids. There is no right answer. I keep coming back to what I've heard from students and teachers across the board. When there's that big a grade span, it takes a really remarkable teacher. Why don't we try it in two middle school and not the others. [other SC members ask: which two schools?] If you have a golden opportunity to try two or four different models, do that. That could be an opportunity to get some real data. Equitable doesn't mean the exact same thing for everybody. There's a couple points to bring in: (1) about the truly gifted and talented, in our middle schools, can we be open to the idea of a sixth grader taking this assessment and being placed in 8th grade math? Would Alex Zimmer's needs be met now in the district? It's probably only maybe one or two percent of our kids, but they need this in order to help them succeed. Some of these kids are twice exceptional. Some have IEPs. Some need these challenges to help them stay motivated, to help them stay in school.

We know that our district has failed in math, because of low expectations. We had 15% of our kids pass into the next level of math. We should find out how the schools who had 30% of kids do that, how did they do that? In Brookline it's 100%, in Belmont it's 80%. We need to get to a point where our goal is 70-80% of kids are going into geometry before high school.

Jeff Gaglione: My biggest concern is: algebra 1 is a gatekeeper subject. If you've mastered those skills, you have a very good foundation, for calculus, etc. For me, it's not so much the age it gets mastered, it's just that it does get mastered. Also, there is that element of a 7th or 8th grader sitting in a classroom with 10th or 11th graders. Some of the conversations may be too mature for those kids.

Richard Harding: Do parents understand what you described as the flexibility within the group? A lot of times parents might think, my kid's in the low group, they'll be stuck there forever. How do you articulate that flexibility to parents? The fear of that is what people are trying to avoid.

Jeff Gaglione: That's been a particular challenge. Teachers will communicate that information to parents. We have the teacher recommendation piece about how students will get to the next classes. We have a chart on the website. There's a clause that says the student doesn't have to stay in a level. But it is difficult. We've made some headway into it. At the 9th grade we have a full-year algebra 1 course, 10th grade full-year geometry course. Teachers make recommendations about who will do the honors work. Many students re-enrolled in the honors work this year. On the issue of being pulled out into the hallway and being instructed separately, this year we're doing Kahn academy. Student's homework is to watch the video. Feedback from students is overwhelmingly positive. Students love the videos because they can pause them, rewind them. We don't have hard data on how students are doing. We'll get some next year. I found it engaging myself – my wife caught me on the computer watching lessons! [laughter from everyone]. I gave the department a warm-up activity to do derivative problems, then watch the video, then do more derivative problems. I hope we've tried to do some fairly creative things to address these issues.

Jeff Young: Regarding the Kahn academy are you aware of challenges for students re the digital divide?

Jeff Gaglione: That was an initial concern. My sense is that that divide is closing every day. Students have cell phones. We have the library right next door. We have guaranteed that every student in that classroom has access.

Jeff Young: Kudos to Ross Benson for pushing ahead with that.

Marc McGovern: I've seen, with leveled classes that kids go down more often than they go up. That worries me. Those classes in the HS really are divided along racial lines, socioeconomic lines. If the lower class is going to be all special education kids, English language learners, low income kids, I can't support that. We can tell parents that their kids *can* move up, but the lower level classes aren't rigorous, then those kids are going to be stuck. They're not going to be prepared to move up. It's really hard for me to look at an 11 year old kid and say, you're going to be in that lower level class, and you're going to be in that pathway indefinitely. If we go in that direction, I have to feel confident that the instruction that kids are getting in those lower level classes really is preparing them to move up, so there is fluidity among those leveled classes. It's a huge concern of mine.

When I look at this list, I'd be afraid if I was a math teacher, of the additional work. There's going to be a lot more that teachers and students will be responsible for. Teachers are going to need far more support. A great scenario: two quality teachers, a dedicated volunteer. That's pretty nice if we can get that in every class. We've got to really take a look at staffing. It's going to be challenging.

I'm really intrigued by the embedded honors that's going on. My son, for example, is very strong in math, but not so much in ELA. He took an honors class in math, but college prep in ELA, with embedded honors. He has more rigorous work, graded differently, it's a heterogeneous class, but he's getting that additional challenge. If we do go to heterogeneous classes, that's the kind of thing I'd like to see.

Jeff Young: So now we start to dig down to a couple of other bullets, which is great.

Alice Turkel: I agree with Marc. When we talk about making a decision for an 11 year old which could have not positive consequences for the rest of their education, that makes me tremble with rage. I don't want to go there. I don't think we have clarity about who these kids are. But, children need to be with their academic peers, and also, to some extent, with their social peers. For the majority of our children, we shouldn't be sending them to be with children who are in a whole different developmental stage. They shouldn't be subject to isolation. I believe we can do that with heterogeneous groupings. Brookline has "invisible ability groups". Clumps of kids, so everyone has academic peers in any given classroom. Kids need peers. We have to deal with the idea that there are motivated children, and there are bright children, and they're not always the same children. My son, e.g., got great grades in math, but when it came to the optional piece, he'd only handed in 3 out of 5 of those assignments. He handed in only 3 of those, because they were "optional". Not every kid will get picked up in every pattern. If you're self motivated, you'll get more, or if your parents push you. That's not so good. We can do this in heterogeneous groupings. We are spending so much on each kid. Let's put our money where our mouth is. We can do co-teaching if that's required, two certified teachers in a classroom. Let's do it. There are other models out there. There are ways to give every child challenge. But it should not be a system where we leave it up to parents who are able to choose options for their kids, but parents who can't don't.

Let's start saying that teachers *can* do it. Not that it takes a teacher with superhuman abilities. We used to say that not all kids can learn to read. But now they all do. And we do it. If we set our minds to it, we can do it for all kids in heterogeneous classrooms, with the exception of that very small percentage of kids who are truly advanced. Same as at the other end, some kids have extreme special needs. We're only talking about 12 math teachers in the upper school. If we can't dive into the school department budget and fund the needed number of math teachers, shame on us. The policy I would set is: we're gonna teach our children in heterogeneous classes, and we're gonna do it damn well.

Patty Nolan: We have to be careful that, whether it's called embedded honors, or accelerated learning that it doesn't simply translate into more of the same work, that will de-motivate kids. The point is: more rigor is not the same as more homework. On most of these there's a lot of assumptions. E.g., about tracking, there was a study done that showed that students who were tracked had more advanced kids, *and* fewer failures. It's not a zero sum game. The elephant in the room is the ISP. That's part of this conversation. That's one we have to figure out.

Jeff Young: It is. Decisions around ISP have to be folded into the conversation. For practical purposes we're doing that presentation separately.

Nancy Tauber: It would be really helpful to have these terms defined: accelerated learner, advanced learner, gifted learner. Is it a student with drive? Does the drive have to be part of the gift? To have definitions would be helpful. There's a new parent organization, Cambridge Advanced Learning Association. I think this co-teaching model is something we should look at. [Turns and addresses the parents present]: if there's something you don't want cut from the budget, get parents together and make a strong statement, and it won't get cut.

Marc McGovern: Responsibility of budget is to set priorities and decide how budget will be spent.

Alice Turkel: We have to write a simple, clear policy, that lays out how the budget will get spent. We know that our budget is generous.

Jeff Young: The generousness of the budget increases the appetite.

Fred Fantini: I think we need to pursue leveling. It's something I want to take a look at. In the high school the same teacher teaches the advanced classes and the college prep class. The teacher knows what's happening at all three levels, and can help motivate the students to move up a level. Where folks get in trouble is if you have a leveled class and the best teacher is teaching at the highest level only. So we need to clarify that in our policy. Math is one of those things that needs to be leveled.

Richard Harding: To Fred's point, I remember Steve Barkin, if someone wasn't going to be in his class, it was a crisis [Because he was considered to be the best]. We have to get away from that reality, that if you don't get that one teacher, you're not going to get a good math education. We have to set ourselves up in the right way to have success. We have to address the out-of-school time piece. To help students become proficient and accelerated. That needs to be part of the equation for academic success.

Carolyn Turk: The out of school design team just launched this month, November. It's being chaired by Carrie Miller, Susan Richards and Dan Weinstock. During that first meeting we had 37 people who are

part of the design team. Teachers, coordinators, partners, the MIS department. There' a feeling that we need to be sure that the day-to-afternoon transition is seamless. Trying to get people to think about current needs, and possibilities around: (1) insuring we can improve quality of programming, academics and social needs, and (2) enrollment. Currently only one third of middle school kids participate. It's extremely promising.

Alice Turkel: Responding to Fred. Richard and I met with Chris Saheed. He explained that the same teacher teaches both a college prep and an AP class, to hone their skills, and to reach all students. The goal is to bring those classes *together* once the teacher has those skills. So I don't like to think of that as an end point. That was a step towards heterogeneous grouping.

Jeff Gaglione: We made a conscious effort to have the teachers teach at a variety of levels. I make an effort to have teachers teach classes in succession. We've done back-mapping in classes.

Jeff Young: That back-mapping is a big part of the grades 6-12 pathway.

Grant Baker: About the staffing patterns: I think co-teaching is a good idea. The social element of a 400-kid middle school. Kids are at their most rowdy. In my 8th grade the classroom was full of distractions. Co-teaching would be a good thing to address that.

Patty Nolan: We have not done anything about the policy discussion which proposed that we're no longer going to have honors at the HS. That's *not* what we're doing.

Richard Harding: We met with Chris a while ago, he talked about how he was hoping to move in that direction. He didn't commit to that. He talked about Brookline having more tracks than Cambridge. And how Cambridge was moving in a different direction. The main thing was, he wanted his teachers to be able to have that as a [future] option. This [having any given teacher teach at all levels] was experimentation to that end.

Jeff Young: I want to thank the SC members and the staff. This raises more questions, as always, we'll continue to work this though. Thank you everyone.

David Maher: Thank you everyone.

Robert Winters: [Cambridge citizen, math teacher] the one thing I do notice across the schools of different towns in the area – it's not so much a matter of what topics do kids get, or are exposed to – there's a level of thoroughness about how a student will complete work. A typical Lexington student is thorough and thoughtful. That's not always true across the schools in all the towns. So it's not just mastering a topic, because there's different types of mastery.

David Maher: Meeting adjourned at 8:15.

Notes taken by Freedom Baird
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