

**Tuesday, March 6, 2012**

**Notes from CPS School Committee Meeting with 2<sup>nd</sup> Vote on Academic Challenge Policy**

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The meeting Agenda is appended at the end of these notes

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Mayor Davis: Meeting started...

Fred Fantini: [Responding to a student who spoke during public comment about food at his school] Soup and salad, great idea, refer to Superintendent, report back to you.

[Student SC members' report]

Naomi Tsegaye: Voter registration, students need information on how to vote, where to go. We'll be collaborating with Ms. Nolan on that. Setting a precedent for the juniors for next year. Have a day dedicated to registering.

Grant Baker: Student government at CRLS: "[Pennies for Patients](#)" collaboration, raises money for leukemia. We're doing that through the month of March.

Richard Harding: Re voter registration, could do on-site voter registration. Could give an opportunity for our student SC members to lead that charge. Work with the election commission. Make that a reality.

Mayor Davis: Agreed

Patty Nolan: Continuing with getting students to register before they leave in June is a good strategy.

Mervan Osborne: In my experience, important to keep in mind: keep the whole voting process in context for students, not just teach them how to do it, but why it's important. So kids become lifelong voters. When you vote you join a really cool club.

Naomi: Maybe have a mandatory senior assembly every year, where we learn about how and why to vote.

Mayor Davis: Motion referred to Superintendent on behalf of whole committee, to make it possible, that the issues around voter registration are transparent to our students, especially during this important election year.

Mayor Davis: Adopt records for approval

Alice Turkel: Three motions. Superintendent requested that these be brought forward –

- 1) a motion on the calendar, to go back to the old standard of 8<sup>th</sup> grade algebra, we've got new information that that's no longer the gold standard in mathematics.
- 2) 12-23 a motion to have a discussion with the Superintendent and SC around mathematics
- 3) 12-24 an alternative proposal, we heard the head of the HS math department speak about how this would be difficult

My intention is: because the Superintendent requested it on Friday, I would like to refer the math motions to Dr. Young with a request about when we can have such a discussion. It's important for us and public to understand that what we're going to implement may not be the old gold standard, but a new gold standard. We need that explained. We need to buy in.

Jeff Young: Thank you. I want to appreciate Ms. Turkel for bringing your 3 motions together. The intent in writing about this to you on Friday was an echo of what you've heard others say – Mr. Gaglione and others. We want to work with our staff and our teachers in defining the Program (not the Policy). We want to take the time to do an extension that the CTA President was talking about earlier. Also to consult with the Mass Dept of Elementary and Secondary Education [DESE <http://www.doe.mass.edu/>], they too are working on their guidance for the ways the Common Core standards will dovetail with frameworks for school districts.

We'd expect that at one of the two meetings in May, we'd like at that time to docket a discussion with the SC to update you.

AT: So the motion would be to refer the 3 motions for response by the Superintendent in May. It's important for the SC to understand what the new gold standard is. So we can say this is going to be high quality, high expectations mathematics.

JY: I want to appreciate you using the term gold standard. We're trying to make sure that the math (and all content areas) standards, driven by the Common Core, are a much more rigorous intense set of standards. That is the gold standard. Having said that, the DESE understands that every district will put its own spin on the standards. But that will be the driver. The second thing that will be the driver is that this is a new gold standard that will apply to ALL students in this city.

RH: I appreciate Ms. Turkel trying to move this debate along. Don't want us to get caught in a situation where we move it along, then it becomes too late to make a decision that's important around algebra. I've always heard that algebra can be hard to do, there's a reason why kids don't always get it. But algebra can predict how kids are going to do.

If we're going to push this conversation off to May, if we decide that the gold standard *does* include algebra, will we have pushed it off for so long that we won't have time to get it ready for September?

JY: Algebra is definitely a part of that conversation. There's no way it could not be. What's different is, the traditional Algebra I course that people have known for many years – the Common Core takes a different approach. So, no it's not going to be too late. If the SC votes the Academic Challenge Policy tonight, we'll have flexibility to develop the Program. We'll bring it to you in May, frankly as something we'll expect to implement. Not as something to be debated, frankly. We'll say: this is the Plan that we're going to implement, in accordance with the Policy, and the DESE standards, etc.

RH: Are we still saying that we're more than likely to commit to "All students will be expected to complete Algebra I, as outlined by the Common Core State Standards, no later than the end of grade 9 with opportunities for students to complete Algebra I in grade 8 or earlier. " [the last sentence in point 7 of the Policy]?

JY: We can put it this way: the Program is the means by which we'll deliver the written and voted on Policy.

Patty Nolan: I think we could pass the Policy on the standard of Algebra I by 8<sup>th</sup> grade, that it's expected in grade 8, but no later than grade 9. Or, over a course of 5 years.

I also was confused by the pathways presented. Both pathways explained in the math curriculum offered in 2011, prepare you, not for calculus, but for pre-calc, so, to have the chance to do calculus by senior year and not double up on math, students need to have something done by grade 8. Maybe there's an enhanced pathway? I haven't found it on the Dept of Education website. You can't just take pre-calc and sprinkle it into the other math classes.

Lexington High has already issued the new math courses. In their pathway students will take Algebra I in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Brookline high has a sequence, using IMP, which assumes a pre-calc course. We haven't seen any back up on how you could do...

I'd be ready to vote a Policy that says that every student does a full Algebra I class, even if it takes 3 or 5 yrs to get there.

The Program is not our role, but the Policy is our role.

JY: I would recommend that the SC not alter the language of paragraph 7 [of the Policy] at this time. As recently as this past Friday: a report from the DESE, sat with the Urban

Superintendents, and told us that this is still a work in progress. Maybe Lexington and Brookline are just putting themselves out in front. But this is still in progress.

The existing conception of Algebra I as a course for 8<sup>th</sup> grade is a conception that is going away according to the DESE. People may agree or disagree with that. The DESE will soon publish its “cross-walking” documents, to explain the ways in which the “traditional” Algebra I are linked to the new standards. It’s a challenge of public communication. It’s difficult for me and other Superintendents to try to say that Algebra I as people have know it forever, is changing. The language and political power has stayed with it for so long. But if we just hang on to it, in the name of traditional symbols of excellence, we will end up shortchanging the students of the future. We have to get the DESE description, and understand how it dovetails with the standards. The Standard *are* going to elevate.

Marc McGovern: I would support referring these motions to you, I’m one of the co-sponsors. If what comes back to us is something we want to have later, down the road, we can. At this point there’s too much unknown about what it is actually going to look like. It doesn’t make sense for us to pass a Policy tonight that would limit your [JY’s] flexibility. It’s about being careful, planful, with the expectations that you’ll come back to us with a plan that we can hash out.

JY: For the sake of clarity of expectations: assuming you vote the Policy this evening, we’ll write a Program and a curriculum. But we can’t come back and debate that. What we’ll do is take the Policy, and write the Program, and say: this is the Program we’re going to utilize to implement your Policy.

AT: In the Academic Challenge Policy, which I support un-amended, it talked about Algebra as a standard for 9<sup>th</sup> grade. A social justice approach says Algebra for 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Have had conversations with the Superintendent and our math dept leaders. I said, I’m not convinced, but I’m willing to be convinced. But we need, as a Committee to discuss it – and that’s why I wrote the motion that says we need to discuss the 6-12<sup>th</sup> grade pathway. We’re like the canary in the coalmine of all the parent anxiety around this. I do want to find the new gold standard. But I don’t think it can come to us packaged and tied up. I think we need to find some way that we can have a workshop on this, where we can talk about this. Mark Healy did a very good job of explaining to me how to move from the old standard to the new standard. So, I move that, before May, we have a workshop where we can all talk about this.

Mayor Davis: motion to include a workshop prior to that time.

JY: So, yes, I can work with the Mayor and Vice Chair, where we can have more of a working session that will pre-date the reporting session that I was talking about.

GB: Re Algebra I in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, it's not something that should be rushed in the middle school. Because it takes a while. For Brookline and Lexington to say they have it means one thing, but we should look and see, how do those kids do in HS? Do they actually do better? Or is it just a title where they can say "I took Algebra".

MO: I agree with Mr. Baker. As a teacher I've had to try to force some squares into some circles around Algebra I. It's important to hold on to some of these standards, however, I've given 300 students tests around algebra. Fewer than 30 have passed the test, after taking Algebra 1. This is about the skills, the quantitative reasoning, etc. It comes down to: we might have a hiring problem. We need to empower our professionals to identify and develop the curriculum, to actually teach it, and deliver it. The reason I support this motion is, I'd love to see our teachers empowered to do this.

FF: As you know, Mr. Harding and I have a motion, an amendment that says "except math". [To amend the Policy to keep open the option of having honors math] The purpose was to turn the whole math curriculum back to the Superintendent, to provide him with the flexibility to bring back to us a math program that's going to meet the high standards set by the Core Curriculum. Mr. Superintendent, does the Academic Challenge Policy provide you with that flexibility?

JY: I don't see restrictions. I believe the Policy provides us with ample flexibility to create a curriculum and Program, (not just in math), and that also empowers our teachers to deliver it in real life. We're not just looking for a Program that looks good on paper, or gives a student a sticker to put on their sweatshirt. We want a real program that empowers our teachers.

JY: To Mr. Osborne's comment: I want to invite the SC to think about the word rigor in a different way. Rigor is often equated with speed. How fast you can get through something, a content area. The education establishment is party to this, like "Race To The Top", "accelerated learning". So, we own some of this problem. I want to invite the community to think about rigor not only as speed, but as depth, to think about problems in more profound and challenging ways. Rigor also means breadth, not just to go deeply into something, but also widely. The world is interdisciplinary. It's just schools that create silos of content, make things "disciplinary". We're less good at the synthesis part. Putting things back together. Our definition of rigor shouldn't be based solely on speed, but on depth of learning, and breadth of experience.

FF: We listened to two student from KO and GP give an inspiring presentation the other day, relates to that concept of rigor. Common Core standards are going to be hard to meet. What if teachers recommend an honors class?

JY: What I believe is – in the realm of this Policy – is around flexible groupings. In paragraph 1 ["Flexible grouping will be employed as an instructional strategy based on student need."]

MM: Point of information...

RH: One additional comment: not popular, but true: at least one if not two experts in our math meetings said: one of the toughest challenges: you have to have very skilled teachers doing this [differentiating successfully]. I don't know if we have teachers that can do this, across the board, and do it well. The reality is: we have to make sure and figure out how to assess and develop teachers, to be able to do it. This is a major piece of this whole equation. To understand that we may have some teaching gaps. Bob Moses said he's seen across the country, many districts where they just didn't have enough teachers that could do it.

Every kid who leaves an Algebra I course in the district should have the depth and breadth of the *course*, not of how well that course is taught at that particular school.

JY: Two points: yes, that's a major component of what the Innovation Agenda is all about, that the curriculum is consistent across all the schools, so students are getting the same exposure. Going back to your first point about the teachers, I couldn't agree more. Instruction is even more important than curriculum. So, what matters is teacher quality. I do believe it comes from three places: 1<sup>st</sup>, who you bring in, 2<sup>nd</sup>, how you provide professional development to help them grow and stretch, take risks, take on challenges, expand their repertoire, and 3<sup>rd</sup>, evaluation, and accountability.

Ms. Allen can speak to this: we get great candidates. Professional development: it's safe to say, as we go forward, it will become more targeted and tailored. Third, around the accountability: as you know, all districts in MA are being asked to adopt, adapt, or revise state standards – a new system of teacher evaluations will be in place by September, it's state law. Those three things combined will win the day.

Mayor Davis: motion carries...on to item 6

JY: I'll ask Dr. Turk to pick up briefly on comments made by the CTA President. Pass around folders which show materials we used. It was a lively meeting. Our teachers were thoroughly engaged. They were the ones giving reports on what works in various curriculum areas.

CT: As our CTA President said at beginning of this meeting, today was a marvelous day. The spirit in the room was felt within the structure of the day: "Photos, Food, and Folders". This was an opportunity for the Upper School network, all 250 faculty, to come together in a festive way. For information and conversation. That network opportunity was followed by Upper School community conversations. In the packet that was distributed was an opportunity for 15 "share-outs", representatives of teacher groups who have been working on various pieces of the Upper Schools puzzle. Giving people an opportunity to come together and share the work.

There are lots of groups, multiple groups, people have been working very hard, but there's so much going on. People haven't had an opportunity to hear how it's all coming together. So this was that opportunity. At one point, we took people back to August 2011, at that time we'd said to teachers, everybody can't do everything, but everyone can do something. And today was an example of all those pieces coming together, showing the strength and possibilities for September and beyond. An amazing testament, an opportunity for folks to feel good about all the work that's being done. You can follow up with your additional questions any time.

Everyone walked away with a folder filled with information, we had photographers, so people can get a sense of the networks, and work being done.

MM: A while ago we had the ELA folks come and speak, and we felt inspired and hopeful in hearing what's ahead, and what's being done for our students. The meeting today sounded great, but what about a presentation to us [the SC], and for the community?

JY: April 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting, teachers will come and present (math, science, social science). Also, 1<sup>st</sup> meeting in June – June 5<sup>th</sup> – we've invited the four Heads of Upper Schools to the SC meeting to become acquainted with you.

MM: Do you feel that that's enough time?

JY: We haven't talked about this, but one thought is, to make it just science and social studies, not math. Also, I just want to acknowledge Chris Colbath-Hess, who I know had a very busy day today, and how proud you should feel of the work...

AT: Can it be televised?

Mayor Davis: Can be arranged...

FF: Sounds like it was a wonderful day. I'd like to attend the next one. I need to be inspired myself. I'd like to know when the next one is. I could use a little inspiration.

PN: Always better for us to know in advance, to know about board developments so people can access them over the web, etc.

JY: What we'll try to do now is: we're going try to do more frequent but shorter updates. Not wait for things to build. Even if they're really brief. To keep people posted.

MM: One more thought with the updates on the Innovation Agenda: will we get a sort of "where are we" along the progression? You could walk us along the timeline you presented a while back.

AT: A persistent question that I get is: when will faculty know their placement? An update would be great to know.

Barbara Allen: I would like to congratulate Dr. Turk for the event today. Assignment is forefront in 90% of the teachers' minds. When we initially put together the staffing plan, we put out a target date of April 30<sup>th</sup> to give out assignments. The date was selected because there are a lot of things that go on behind the scenes, key dates, vacancies. Eg. This past Feb 15<sup>th</sup>, a major date for teachers to let us know if they are resigning, taking leave, etc. That gives us additional info. March 15<sup>th</sup> is a key date, it's our deadline for teacher evaluations. That's a big deal every year. Based on that data we make re-hiring decisions, and will affect our decisions for the Upper School campuses, because we've made some performance requirements. March 15<sup>th</sup> is also a key date, because we'd established that teachers must be certified in their content area, to teach in the upper school. Deadline for proof of that certification is March 15<sup>th</sup>. We have done preliminary staffing analyses. I really want to acknowledge, for our non-professional status teachers – our plan is that our professional status teachers will funnel into affiliated Upper school campus. And non-professional status teachers, we are fleshing how it will work for them. We know there is anxiety around this. Our overall goal is to let people know that we are respectful and considerate of their needs. Bottom line is April 30<sup>th</sup>.

AT: And coordinated to that, is something that came up earlier in public comment, and it comes up again and again: all the involvement of faculty, we often see proof of that. And yet we hear, and heard from the head of the teachers' union, that teachers want to be *more* involved in the planning. I think we're hearing a kind of tension. Some of which may relate to not knowing assignments. Key to this succeeding is for people to feel like their input is being heard.

JY: You're right, teacher involvement and shared ownership is key to ultimate success. All work being done in curriculum areas is being done by our teachers. Is every single teacher, all 250, equally engaged in this? By their own choice or not, no, but they're all invited to be.

We think that, now that we've hired the four upper school heads, what we saw today, those relationships will turn out to be the most important ones. People working in the buildings with their new classrooms and new administrators. Building school culture. It's an upward trajectory.

AT: Do some faculty know their assignments?

BA: We are making some assumptions about where people may be, but no specifics have been communicated.

RH: Any indication of when guidance counselor positions will be hired?



Ms. Allen: We began recruiting for guidance counselor positions some time ago, there's debate around issue of guidance counselor/adjustment counselor, etc. We're getting feedback currently. The new position will report to heads of Upper School, and be hired by them.

RH: How's the team-building going at each of the Upper School campuses? The community building, bring the different school perspectives together? Also, lastly, we've been getting inundated with emails and questions about the community schools. It may be an opportunity to at least think about how, together, we move forward to have that bigger conversation with the City Council. I expected that there would be some particular Community School offering, it's not clear where that's going. We don't have to talk about it now, but for next time, it would be helpful for the community.

Mayor Davis: Superintendent's consent agenda, passed except for 12-13, 12-14...

PN: Want to clarify something about this: yes we can have flexible groupings, but it's still true in the policy that a teacher can't create a separate class. And this only applies to the Upper Schools. This doesn't apply to the High School? Let's make sure of that.

JY: Yes, this is about the Upper Schools only, for the record. Nothing to do with the High School.

About honors or not: it's all about trying to link paragraph 1 and paragraph 7. Last sentence of paragraph 1 reads: "Students, classes, and academic units of study will not be designated as 'honors' or 'non-honors'".

That's the way the Policy reads, un-amended. That there will be no title of "honors' or "non-honors" affixed to a class. However, in paragraph 1, it does say that flexible grouping will be employed as an instructional strategy based on student need. We are seeing this as: teachers will have the discretion to group kids in different ways, depending on ways that they, in their professional judgment, can meet the needs of all students. That's not the same as saying : the ones over here are honors kids, the ones over here are non-honors kids.

PN: I want to make it clear that I don't think this the best way to address the achievement gap. But want to respect others' approach. But it's very hard for me to vote something that I don't think is in the best interest for all. Recent research suggests that it's actually better to have separate classes based on educational need. Separate classes can be the best for truly ALL kids, including the requirement that every student take an accelerated class.

Mayor Davis [I think]: I'm hearing you say we're not going to have separate classes, but groupings within classes.

FF: Bringing forth motion 12-20 [to add the words "except math" to paragraph 7 of the policy]. I'll ask the question: the reason I brought this forth is, I didn't have a particular view on what

we should do in math, but I wanted to give the Superintendent, his team, and the teachers, totally flexibility in responding to math [including the possible option of having honors in math]. So if the Superintendent, educational leaders, and teachers decide, for in math, that's the way they can best deliver it, then I wanted the Superintendent to have that flexibility. That's why I brought in that amendment with Mr. Harding. I think that's the flexibility Dr. Young needs to do what's best for all the students.

The Superintendent just came back from the Minority Students Network, the leaders there said what they do in math: they all do ability grouping, and Urban Superintendents meeting, they had the same response. I do want the Superintendent to have that flexibility.

Mayor Davis: Mr. Superintendent, do you feel you have the flexibility you need without this amendment?

JY: I think Mr. Fantini accurately states that this Policy, as it's worded tonight, rules out the possibility of having leveled classes. And, in that respect, leveled classes are not on the menu of options that we can choose from. So that's less flexibility than having a complete menu of options.

MM: We voted a Policy, at the last meeting, 6 to 1, that I assumed – being that it was put forward by the Superintendent and the administration, and the CTA was behind it, and the principals were behind it – that it was OK with you Mr. Superintendent. I was surprised when the amendment came in [the “except math” amendment]. If the Superintendent didn't feel that he had enough flexibility, with the Policy as it was written, why was it put forward that way?

As much as I have consistently called for flexibility, and for the teachers to have flexibility, I am fine with taking that option off the table for the bigger picture. For me the labeling *does* matter. I understand that we have leveled classes at the HS. We need to look no further than the HS to see how those play out. The fact is that certain kids get put into certain classes, and certain kids get put into other classes. Some of that is appropriate, because of their level, some of it, unfortunately, is because of low expectations, lack of parent involvement, a host of other reasons.

I can stomach that at the high school, because I understand the importance of having “AP” on your transcript, I understand that there's a million different ways a the HS for kids to shine, and feel good about themselves, and figure out where they're the star.

But I've got a real problem saying to an 11 yr old kid: “sorry, you're not smart enough to be in this class”. Counselor Simmons used to say all the time: what was really difficult for her, seeing 4, 5, 6 year olds come into school with a spark in their eye for education. Watching that spark get extinguished over time. I can't think of a better way to extinguish a spark than to say

“you're not smart enough to be in this class”. I know no one would say it that way, but that is what labels do. That is what happens when you separate kids.

So, I do think it's important. If you're in the same classroom, you can move kids in your classroom around any way you want, to make that work. But when you have different *classes*, moving from class “A” to class “B” is much harder to do when you're bouncing between classes, than when you're all in the same classroom. I trust our teachers to do that.

Labeling sends a message to our kids. We know how it's going to end up, because we see it at the HS, and we see it at other districts that do it. If I look at the Innovation Agenda, and the work we've done to create equitable experiences for kids across the district, if I see 3 yrs from now that I voted on a Policy that ends up with certain kids who fit a certain demographic over here, and certain kids from a certain demographic over there, unintentionally, but that's the result, I'm not going to be able to look at myself in the mirror.

The richness of diversity, race, class, religion, gender, the richness of diversity of ideas, concepts, conversation, of teaching kids how to collaborate with one another is really important. You lose that when you separate kids. I'm willing to take a little flexibility away, because it sends the wrong message to our kids.

JY: Striving to find a path between Mr. McGovern and Mr. Fantini. I still believe that this is a good Policy. Mr. Fantini's question was: does this policy afford us maximum flexibility? The answer is no. But it's also true that all you say about heterogeneity is also true, you've heard all of us say those things. So, we believe in those same concepts. Just wanted to make that clear.

MO: I came on a little bit of a journey on the whole notion of honors. I've been involved in very successful schools that do have honors in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. I don't have an ethical dilemma about it. I've seen it work. But I came around to the language in the Policy, because of all these people we spoke with; teachers, coaches, principals; that this is the direction we've decided to go with, as a district. I don't fully disagree with Ms. Nolan. I've been involved with honors classes at 7<sup>th</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The good news is: it doesn't diminish kids, if done well by incredibly well-trained professionals. But I'm not arguing for honors classes anymore. But that horse has left the barn. I find myself at odds, because I don't think I'm in support of the added language [“except math”]. I'm not sure the Superintendent was looking for more flexibility. We've gotten our marching orders in many ways, from the people who are going to be delivering the content. If we have the language that opens the door to having honors classes, I fear a steamroller at some point. It's better to go with what we've decided. To go without honors. It's a bit of a bitter pill to swallow for those of us who believe that honors groupings could be potentially so successful. But we, clearly, as a district, have decided to go in a different direction. I want to see

us not get bogged down, and move forward. It pains me a bit, but I will not support this amendment.

RH: I've talked to many people over the last few weeks. There is a 50-50 split here. For me, there was, (1) the issue of the flexibility. Even though we're committed to starting something new, and heterogeneous groupings, the Superintendent would agree that in math it's different. The range of kids grasping the concepts of math is different than in other subjects. I've always said that in math, I'd like to see us do it differently. The labels, for sure, are what causes a lot of the stir. I do think the flexible groupings will allow you to accomplish some of this. But, at the end of the day, the reality is that it's very, very hard for a teacher – when a kid is at one end of the spectrum or another – to do this, even with flexible grouping. So what I was trying to do [with the motion including the option for honors math] was give you [JY] time to assess and feel out what would be the best option. The comfortability of the language was a compromise. A month and a half ago you had a *whole program of honors* [In the originally published Plan] Everybody stood up, came to the mic, and said how great it was. And we were going to vote it that night. So let's not for one second believe that our philosophical, ideological leanings are stuck in stone. You [JY] moved very quickly along these lines to take that away, and say now we're going to do this other thing. I think that you [JY] may be conflicted in some ways about this. Around not where you want to go as a district, but what you would do as an educator on this issue. The reality is, that much of the fruitful debate that we could have had around this was lost in the whole debate around the ISP. In my opinion those are two different things. If you're going to take the opportunity to look at things, and do them in a new way, I would take *nothing* off the table. That's how you do things when you start from scratch.

Re understanding the ramifications of who is going to be in the classrooms, no one knows it better than me: there are going to be kids who look like me [more kids of color in some classrooms] if it [honors classes] isn't done well. It's something I've always spoken about. The reality of this is: really trying to figure out a way to do what's best for kids across the board. Understanding that we may have some preconceived notions [about who's good at what]. There are some black kids that are good at math too, that may need a separate class, that may need to be in a situation where they need to be challenged. I talked to my friend, he was one of those kids, went to the pilot school. We talked at length about this. There is a slippery slope, but *math is very different*. In order to get these kids to a place, where they can be successful and matriculate in college, the statistics are out there, it's about being on a track to allow you to be successful in college. People do this, and I do this at times, inject a holier than thou sentiment into the debate. This is really just about education, about what is best for kids, every time.

If we win or lose this battle, it's more about the more robust conversation, and not allowing us to be so shallow, to say "Ideologically, I don't believe in tracking" well, if it's good for kids, you've got to change your ideology.

I think this is worthy of – particularly in math – of a bigger conversation around what's best for kids. Anything you want to look at, we're not where we need to be, in math, in our district. It's a fact. This is the time to do this. The time is going to get away from us. I just wanted to have that conversation.

Since 1998 we're supposed to have Algebra in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. We still don't have that. As a SC we should always bring up things that have need at the right time. This was the time to have this conversation. I'm not scared to challenge things we done in the past if there's a brighter light at the end of that tunnel.

MM: ...directed at me...? .. people flip-flopped... Couple things; it is a powerful conversation. People came up and said moving stories of why they want this [want honors classes]. I don't begrudge anybody. The Core Curriculum standards are going to be different. So math is going to be much more intense than what it is now. There *will* be co-teaching in math for 6<sup>th</sup> grade for next year. I wanted to say that, in terms of the different way that we're going to teach math next year, the curriculum standards are going to be different.

JY: To clarify about co-teaching, it *is* in for the upcoming year. We'll evaluate it and determine how well it works, before we say we'll commit to it.

AT: We have an Upper School Academic Challenge Policy which was written and presented by the Superintendent. Obviously it could be more or less flexible. I don't love every piece of it, but as a package I think it's a great way to move forward. When we used to talk about the old gold standard, that didn't say, "Some kids will get it, some kids won't get it". I think what we should be striving for is the new standard, for all children. Because, at the HS, there are lots and lots of opportunities, children can pick a wide range of things. My goal is that we launch students into the HS ready to choose their pathway, not having pre-chosen it for them. Giving them all the same opportunity to access the high school.

JY: We (the team) work very closely. You can be assured that the Policy that we put forward...

I would ask you to vote it tonight.

AT: I would like us to vote the Policy un-amended, I think it's the best thing for all students. Number 7 does talk about students doing work an entire year ahead of other students [advanced learners]. This is not a rigid plan that keeps students stuck. I would beg my

colleagues to vote the Academic Challenge Policy as it was written and voted at the first reading. I do not intend to vote for the amendment.

FF: Does this flexibility, whether this amendment passes or not, do you feel you have the flexibility to bring the initial Plan back?

JY: Initially we had a Plan, this is the Policy to be voted on. We believe paragraph 7 within the policy continues to give us the flexibility to group children according to need, without affixing any sort of label.

FF: It's clear this amendment isn't going to pass, but many families deserve an up or down vote on this –

Yes votes: Fred Fantini, Richard Harding, Patty Nolan

No votes: Alice Turkel, Marc McGovern, Mervan Osborne, Henrietta Davis

Mayor Davis: The amendment failed to pass.

Mayor Davis: On the main motion, on the Upper School Academic Challenge Policy: all yes, except Patty Nolan no. The Policy is passed by a vote of 6 to 1. Policy is finalized.

Mayor Davis: Now, onto 12-14.

PN: This is about the relocation of the buildings. Want to thank the School Department for coming to resolution. Very positive for the HS Extension program to be going back to the CRLS. Need a backup plan for enrollment gains throughout the district in the future. Right now, the only building that has no chance of being overenrolled is the Rindge Ave campus. Every other campus will have some decisions to be made if in just a couple of years, enrollment increases. We may need a fifth campus, or to restructure some of the upper schools. If people stop leaving, or come back to district, we'll have to address this.

RH: Quick question – can I hear from someone in the administration on how this is being articulated across the city? Are we putting this out? From a communications standpoint? I know in the Riverside community, they understand their building will be overhauled, but...

JY: Two part answer: 1) To all the families being affected, to let them know, assuming you vote this tonight, we'll post something on the website, and a future mailing home, a statement that reflects what the policy is, that we've voted, and the timeline for construction.

AT: We heard earlier tonight from a teacher about difficulty of parking at the Longfellow building. In addition to the HS extension program, there's been a JK-5<sup>th</sup> program temporarily housed there. I know there's no lot around the corner we can just rent. Can we refer the issue of parking to the Superintendent, and get a response, at our next meeting, about how we're

going to facilitate this issue, for many faculty members. For the HS program and the JK-5s that will be, serially, in that building?

Mayor Davis: motion carries unanimously

Mayor Davis: 12-21 A motion by Mr. Fantini and Mr. Harding that the Superintendent procure the services of a company to do professional development for “Advanced Learners.”

RH: I wanted to speak to this motion. We’ll have a deeper conversation about the budget. The brevity of the language may not speak to the spirit of the motion. We’ll have a deeper conversation about the recommendation of having a coordinator to liaison to a group of parents [CALA]. It might do us more good if we think about an outside agency, recommended by the same group [CALA], think about using professional development dollars wisely, to get an expert to help us train our teachers. If we are committed to heterogeneous class groupings, it's important that the instructor can deal with every learner. This goes to strengthening every teacher, using the experts recommended to us by our constituents [Dr. Dina Brulles - The Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model]. If you look at the places where we put a person [coordinator or administrator] in place, the person outlasts the effectiveness of what we’re trying to accomplish. This happens across the country. If we can figure out a way to craft some professional development with some dollars set aside, this will allow our teachers to be professionally developed in a way that they can meet the needs of all the teachers in the classroom. Allows us to be agile.

AT: I think this relates to the 9<sup>th</sup> point in the Policy we just voted: a Subject Acceleration Protocol for students significantly above grade level. I can support this motion to do professional development, but we also need a plan to come back to us from the Superintendent, whether it is new hires, or assignment of responsibilities to someone already in the administration, we need someone to work with families around SAPs, monitor implementation of SAPs. We need professional development so people know how to implement the SAPs. We need a plan which explains to us whether or not we do need a person, a coordinator. I’m going to support the motion... But I want to see, in time for the budget, a plan which says if we need a new coordinator or not.

RH: One challenge we’ll have as a district, we’ll need some continuity on who’s identifying the kids. I do agree in the big picture, that you’re right . But if we can take this opportunity to really set up an opportunity for the consultants to inform us, and then we can decide if we need a coordinator, as part of the way to reach these kids.

MM: In terms of the professional development, this is a fine motion, I have no issue with it. Are you talking coaches? Staff? JK-12 staff? Is that to be determined?

RH: the Superintendent should speak to that question, but the idea is to develop a relationship with this firm, then the Superintendent will identify which is the most appropriate place to begin this type of professional development. I think you bring up a good point. How do we start this? With teachers, coaches? I don't know. But it's important to make sure that this gets to the teachers. But the Superintendent has his vision around this.

MM: We've done this with other programs: one way to think about the professional development, because this is a new thing, and a very important thing, and is going to take teachers some time to fully grasp. One thing we've done in the past is brought in someone for a three year contract. Someone we contract with over a multi-year period of time, until staff is up and running with it. As opposed to just a number of hours in a workshop. A way to do it more methodically over a longer time.

MO: I also support a version of this, and the spirit of it. Because I do believe that we as a district, as a country, of educators... There are hundreds of thousands of hours being done now, developing this, around advanced learners. We're not doing our due diligence as a School Committee if we're not investigating how to deliver the fruits of some of this work to our families and students. Blunt force is not the way to go. There are people with resources – Freedom Baird comes every week with another example of research we could benefit from. Like it or not we have some families with advanced learners whose needs aren't being addressed. We need to make an honest effort to meet their needs. Questions: how do we identify who these young folk are? Some estimate it's a tiny percentage, 1% 3% 8%, – there are people who can help us figure this out. This is not like LGBT, a better comparison is to IEP. This is the thinking we're talking about heading towards. It's a sober way to proceed, and the best way to proceed. If this motion commits us to pursuing further research, further commitment to learning about this growing, self-identifying group in our midst, we should all support it. I urge caution in throwing money at it. Take advantage of resources in our city already.

Mayor Davis: an amendment to the motion?

MO: Yes, I feel the spirit is right. Mr. Harding did refer to the economy of the wording. I do think this is something we could do well to put some research behind.

Mayor Davis: Friendly amendment:

MO: "... to evaluate and recommend a plan of action for addressing the needs of advanced learners in our district".

[so, the motion was amended to something like: "A motion by Mr. Fantini and Mr. Harding that the Superintendent procure the services of a company to do professional development for 'Advanced Learners', to evaluate and recommend a plan of action for addressing the needs of



advanced learners in our district.” Not sure if the friendly amendment text was appended, or was swapped in.]

Mayor Davis: If you know you want to hire someone, why not indicate that possibility? Rather than actual necessity?

RH: Can Superintendent give his brief thoughts? Perspective?

JY: When we come to the budget, you'll see that one of Dr. Turk's goals is around improving our strategies and programs to meet the needs of these students. It's in the budget book. We do recognize that that is something we need to strengthen in the system. I don't think we're going to recommend necessarily another administrator at this point. We're trying to break the habit of, anytime something comes up, hiring another person to do it. We're interested in building the capacity of our district to respond to the needs of students. Going through training with our Principals, coaches, teachers. Our coaches are there every day. We have a lot of confidence in the coaching model. Terrific article in the New Yorker about coaching for teachers, from the perspective of a surgeon. So, we think we're really on the right path of using coaches to deliver those kinds of supports to our classroom teachers. Extend their knowledgebase, skills, so they can work with teachers in the classrooms.

PN: It's terrific that MO, FF, and RH agreed on the new wording [of the motion]. If we can do it this year, we have additional surplus to do an evaluation.

JY: We don't have the capacity to do another study at this moment in time.

PN: I would hope to see some allocation in the budget, redirect funds, we need a point person in the district to address these students [advanced learners] needs. Right now there's no go-to person. How can we creatively come up with something without re-directing. The model, I certainly hope, will be a full-time person. Brookline, I understand we're using as a model. For their "Enrichment Challenge Support" program, they have a deputy Superintendent oversee the program, and a part-time administrator for the program, and support teachers in every school. I hope we use this staffing model as well, for it to be implemented well, to set it up for success. Framingham, a district that has been a top performer in the state, and is an urban district. They have a program to address the needs of these learners. I want us to be the best, and set ourselves up for success. It's not something Cambridge has done. Some have felt we don't need to, because we don't want to acknowledge that we have these kids. I want to seek, in our budget, specific resources dedicated to this initiative to meet the needs of all kids.

FF: I appreciate the comments, I think we're moving in the right direction on this.

Mayor Davis: motion carries

Mayor Davis: Item 12-22 – the Superintendent or his designee meet with all non-tenured staff...

PN: This is a motion I want to make sure it's in line with the CTA, we have teachers under contract...

JY: This is what Barbara said today, her report on speaking with teachers today, as she described.

FF: I have a lot of passion on this issue, Barbara Allen covered 95% of it. But what I don't want to happen is for us to lose a lot of our best and brightest teachers. We have teachers who have been here for 2 or 3 years, who are wonderful. We need to communicate with them. Letting them know that we care, that there's potential for them to continue to be employed by us. To have honest communications that we care, and that we know they've done a really good job for us. I don't want to lose one of them.

AT: I do agree with Mr. Fantini, the intention is good, we do want to keep those teachers.

Mayor Davis: Motion carries

AT: Late order, the parking issues, that we referred to the Superintendent, on referral

Mayor Davis: Matter is referred to the Superintendent

RH: Recommend that SC send a letter of condolence to family of William Ewing, past student, first class gentleman, pillar in Cambridge community, will be sorely missed.

Mayor Davis: motion passed

PN: This is the time of year when it would be good to know the timing for the release of lottery results. Would be good for all of us to know, so we can relay that to families.

Mr. Malone: The lottery is usually run right about March 7<sup>th</sup> (last year). I would say early next week. If it's run before Friday, we'll get you an email. Or if it's run after Friday, we'll put it in the weekly. I would say, by the end of next week.

RH: One more congratulatory gesture [to Mayor Davis], would have the SC congratulate you on your first run as Mayor here. I know that as Mayor you'll do your due diligence for our families...

Mayor Davis: Thank you Mr. Harding, it's been a pleasure. The case of hitting the ground running. I know the policies we took up this evening are very important to you and families of Cambridge. Want to thank all the members of the Committee, Superintendent, staff. The Innovation Agenda will be great, and if it's not we'll tweak it to make it great.

[Meeting adjourned]

Notes taken by Freedom Baird

Please send corrections to [freedom.baird@gmail.com](mailto:freedom.baird@gmail.com)

**School Committee - Regular Meeting March 6, 2012**

**AGENDA**

**1. Public Comment**

**2. Student School Committee Report**

**3. Presentation of the records for approval:**

- Special Meeting – November 29, 2011
- Regular Meeting – December 6, 2011
- Organization Meeting – January 2, 2012
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**4. Reconsiderations: None**

**5. Unfinished Business/Calendar**

Motion by Mr. Harding, Mr. McGovern and Ms. Turkel that it be policy that the school department moves to reinstating the eighth grade standard of the successful completion of Algebra I. The timeline for achieving this should be no more than five years. Whereas, currently approximately one in seven (14% of) eighth grade students is taking the full Algebra I course, this percentage should rise significantly each year until the class currently in third grade, at the latest, graduates from the Upper Schools with the standard for eighth grade being the successful completion of Algebra I. **(Turkel C12-023) 2/7/12**

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

➤ **Innovation Agenda Consent**

**Agenda:**

#12-13 Recommendation: Academic Challenge Policy for the Cambridge Public Schools Upper School Program (Second Reading)

#12-14 Recommendation: Approval of the Relocation of Schools

#12-15 Recommendation: Contracts for Day & Residential Services not Available from the Cambridge School Department

#12-16 Recommendation: Contract Award: Nasiff Fruit Company: Supply & Delivery of Produce Products for Cambridge Public Schools

#12-17 Recommendation: Contract Award: Mansfield Paper Co.: Supply & Delivery of Paper Products for Cambridge Public Schools

#12-18 Recommendation: Contract Award: Garelick Farms, LLC: Supply & Delivery of Milk Products for Cambridge Public Schools

#12-19 Recommendation: Grant Awards (1)

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

#12-20 Motion by Mr. Fantini and Mr. Harding to amend item one of the Upper School Academic Challenge Policy, which states the following:

1. All students will have access to challenge opportunities within heterogeneous upper school classrooms. Flexible grouping will be employed as an instructional strategy based on student need. Students will not be assigned to separate upper school challenge programs, nor will separate challenge programs be offered in the Upper Schools. Students, classes, and academic units of study will not be designated as “honors” or “non-honors” by adding the words “except Math”

#12-21 Motion by Mr. Fantini and Mr. Harding that the Superintendent procure the services of a company to do professional development for “Advanced Learners.”

#12-22 Motion by Mr. Fantini that the Superintendent or his designee meet with all non-tenured teachers, many of which are considered to be highly talented professionals, to discuss their potential employment by the Cambridge School Department given the uncertainty created by the Innovation Agenda.

#12-23 Motion Ms. Turkel that the School Committee discuss with the Superintendent and members of the math department the 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics pathway in light of the motion on the Calendar to “reinstate the eighth grade standard of the successful completion of Algebra 1” and the following motion on this agenda involving eighth grade math and any other concerns members have about mathematics in the new upper schools.

#12-24 Motion by Ms. Turkel that starting in the fall of 2012, the 8th grade mathematics curriculum will include all the content prescribed by the 2011 Massachusetts Mathematics Curriculum Framework, which encompasses the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics.

The completion of 8th grade math will prepare students to enter high school having fulfilled the prerequisite for enrolling in the Enhanced Pathway, as defined by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. This Enhanced Pathway will allow students to take a sequence of three single semester, 1 block mathematics courses leading to a fourth math course of advanced placement AB or BC calculus. This sequence of four mathematics courses will be available at CRLS starting in the fall of 2013. CRLS will also offer sequences of mathematics courses that allow additional blocks of time and/or alternative math courses.

**8. Non-Consent Agenda**

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

**10. Announcements Late Orders**

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