



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Sumbul Siddiqui
Mayor

To: Cambridge City Council
From: Sumbul Siddiqui, Mayor
Date: January 8, 2026
Subject: Communicating Information from the School Committee

To the Honorable, the City Council:

On Tuesday, January 6, 2026 the School Committee held a [meeting](#) to discuss an overview of the FY 2027 Budget Development Process and Preliminary Projections.

The [presentation](#) outlined the broader City of Cambridge fiscal context, including signs of an economic slowdown marked by lower property value growth and increased uncertainty. In response, the City has articulated a goal of limiting the overall FY26–FY27 budget increase to less than 5%, with a continued focus on long-term financial stability and minimizing taxpayer impact. Within this context, Cambridge Public Schools (CPS) will have a lower budget increase than in recent years and leadership emphasized the need to maximize the effectiveness of staff time, closely monitor budgeted FTEs, and plan for upcoming employee contract negotiations.

The Committee reviewed the FY27 budget development timeline, which includes cost and enrollment analysis through the winter, stakeholder and community engagement sessions, and the presentation of the Superintendent’s Proposed Budget on March 11, followed by a public hearing on March 17, School Committee review and adoption in early April, and a City Council budget hearing on the CPS Adopted Budget in May. The roles and responsibilities of the Superintendent, School Committee, City Manager, and City Council in the annual budget process were also reaffirmed.

The presentation also highlighted CPS’s strategic priorities as the district prepares for a new strategic plan. These include educator effectiveness, family engagement, and programmatic and capital planning, with preliminary FY26–FY27 focus areas such as improving supports for students in crisis, strengthening before-school programming, investing in data systems, educator empowerment and evaluation, and family engagement.

The School Committee also reviewed student enrollment trends and projections. Total enrollment is projected to increase modestly from 7,089 students in SY25–26 to 7,180 students in SY26–27, though overall enrollment remains below pre-pandemic levels. District leadership noted that enrollment is expected to remain relatively stable but gradually decline over the next several years, informed in part by long-term trends in Cambridge birth rates and kindergarten participation. Demographic data shared with



the Committee showed continued growth in the proportion of English learners and students with disabilities, underscoring the importance of need-based staffing and services.

Preliminary FY27 General Fund projections estimate total CPS expenditures of approximately \$293 million, representing a projected increase of \$12.75 million, or 4.5%, over FY26. The largest cost drivers include salary and benefit increases, estimated at \$10.3 million, along with increases in transportation, facilities and energy costs, special education tuition, and instructional supplies and services. Salaries and benefits account for approximately 83% of the General Fund budget.

The Committee also reviewed CPS's tiered school staffing model, which allocates resources based on base-level staffing, enrollment, and student needs, resulting in different staffing levels across schools with similar enrollments but varying student populations. This approach was presented as a key mechanism for aligning resources with equity and student need.

On the revenue side, CPS projects that approximately 91% of General Fund revenue will continue to come from property taxes, with about 8% from Chapter 70 education aid. CPS represents roughly 28% of the City's overall budget. The presentation also reviewed the role of federal and state funding, which together account for approximately 2.5% of the CPS budget, including IDEA, Title I, and other targeted grants.

Finally, the School Committee reviewed planned community engagement efforts related to the FY27 budget, including multiple meetings for CPS staff, caregivers, and the broader community, with translation, interpretation, childcare, and other supports provided to ensure inclusive participation. Feedback from these sessions will be analyzed and shared as part of the budget development process.

The School Committee emphasized the importance of continued collaboration with the City Council as the FY27 budget process advances and looks forward to further discussion at upcoming joint meetings and during the Council's budget hearings later this spring.

The School Committee moved to table two items on the agenda related to contracts with two law firms so the Committee could have a chance to learn more.

The next regular School Committee meeting will be January 20, 2026. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or requests for additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sumbul Siddiqui".

Sumbul Siddiqui