



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Sumbul Siddiqui
Mayor (2020-21, 2022-23, 2026-27)

To: Cambridge City Council
From: Sumbul Siddiqui, Mayor
Date: September 10, 2026
Subject: Communicating Information from the School Committee

To the Honorable, the City Council:

I write to provide an update on recent Cambridge Public Schools (CPS) and School Committee activity.

End of Summer and CPS Community Fairs

September 1 marked the first day of school and classrooms across the city welcomed students back. This was an early start as school begins before Labor Day in years when the holiday falls after September 5. The CPS District Calendar is available [online](#) for reference.

Leading up to September 1, the District has been busy preparing. On August 26 it hosted the annual Colloquium in the War Memorial Gym, convening CPS staff for a day centered around family engagement and partnership. More information about this below!

The CPS Community Fair took place on August 29 at the King Open School, offering families the opportunities to reconnect with school communities and gather helpful resources for the year ahead. It was great to see so many community members getting ready to start the new school year. By the time this communication is placed on file, a second fair will have happened on September 12 at the Peabody School.

September 1 School Committee Meeting

September 1 also marked the first regular meeting of the 2026–27 School Committee. We welcomed new student members, received [key updates from the Superintendent](#) on chronic absenteeism, the opening of the school year, the Colloquium, and districtwide guidance on artificial intelligence and technology use, and took up motions including one on the Welcoming Communities Ordinance & the “PROTECT Act.”

Significant Improvements in SY2025-26 Chronic Absenteeism

Cambridge Rindge and Latin School (CRLS) saw a significant reduction in chronic absenteeism during SY 2025–26. Following a high of 36% of students missing 10% or more of school days, the district



implemented several strategies to reduce chronic absenteeism. These included the implementation of the No Credit Policy, improved accuracy of data systems, targeted communication with students and families, and increased individual outreach by educators the specific students. These efforts contributed to a 12-percent reduction in chronic absenteeism at CRLS, and a 5-percent reduction districtwide!

Opening of SY2026-27 & Improving On-Time Arrivals

Grades 1-12 began the school year on September 1, with preschool and Kindergarten beginning September 3. On the first day, Eastern Bus Company reported a 71% on-time arrival rate. While this is a record high, the Superintendent acknowledged the challenges experienced by families affected by delays and noted that the district will be working to identify issues, improve communication, and optimize routes.

Colloquium Recap

Approximately 2,000 CPS staff and guests participated in this year's Colloquium, focused on Family Engagement and Partnership. The event provided staff and guests an opportunity to learn, collaborate, and develop strategies for strengthening partnerships with families. Highlights included:

- Keynote address from Dr. Shadae Harris, a faculty presenter from the Karen Mapp Family Engagement Institute at HGSE;
- Grade-band caregiver facilitated panels focused on strengthening home-school partnerships;
- Interactive, school-based session to review the morning sessions, examine school-specific data, and establish goals for SY2026-27; and
- Department-specific training and family engagement discussions for special education and ESL/SEI educators.

Districtwide Guidance on Technology Use

The Superintendent provided an overview of updated districtwide guidance on technology use, informed by feedback across CPS. A guiding principle emerged that technology should be used intentionally to deepen learning and expand access without replacing relationships, discussion, movement, reading, writing, play, and hands-on experiences.

Rather than establishing a uniform number of screen-time minutes, the district is encouraging educators to consider whether technology is the most effective tool for teaching a particular skill or concept. This year, grade-level expectations include:

- PreK-2: minimal/limited individual device use
- Grades 3-5: short, purposeful use
- Grades 6-12: structured independence and guided autonomy



CPS will also strengthen healthy technology boundaries by prohibiting devices as a reward or for free-choice activity, limiting evening digital homework, and incorporating more intentional screen-free periods. Updated device and artificial intelligence (AI) practices include a revised take-home Chromebook model and guidance generally prohibiting generative AI use in PreK-5, with limited use in grade 6-8. Additional guidance and professional learning for educators will be provided during the school year, along with resources for families on healthy technology habits.

Motion #26-197: Recording Devices and Review Existing Technology Policy

The School Committee took up [Motion #26-197](#) discussed concerns regarding the use of recording devices in schools, particularly as advances in technology create new privacy and academic integrity concerns. The discussion expanded the scope from smart glasses to all surreptitious recording devices and called for a review of the district's existing technology policy, including potential consequences for malicious use. This motion was adopted unanimously.

Motion #26-198: Welcoming Communities Ordinance & PROTECT Act

Following Governor Healey's signing of the PROTECT Act on August 5, 2026, the School Committee took up [Motion #26-198](#) and discussed the district's responsibilities under the new law, which requires school committees to maintain an emergency response plan governing interactions with law enforcement engaged in civil law enforcement.

The Superintendent will implement procedures addressing points of contact for law enforcement, notification of senior administrators and parents or guardians, consultation with legal counsel, verification of emergency contacts, and public access to the district procedures with translation services.

Other Meetings and Upcoming Events

The Governance Subcommittee, which I chair, will meet September 10 to discuss proposed School Committee rule changes for the 2026-2027 school year. We will also discuss the possibility of designating part of School Committee agendas to receive updates and hear directly from educators. I look forward to that conversation with my colleagues.

Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or requests for additional information.

Sincerely,

Sumbul Siddiqui



Mayor of Cambridge (2020-21, 2022-23, 2026-27)