



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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

To: Cambridge City Council
From: Sumbul Siddiqui, Mayor
Date: September 28, 2026
Subject: Communicating Information from the School Committee

To the Honorable, the City Council:

I write to provide an updated summary of recent Cambridge School Committee activity.

Governance Subcommittee Meeting (Thursday, September 10, 2026)

Working with our Executive Secretary to the School Committee, I drafted proposed revisions to the School Committee Rules. These proposed changes include technical updates to standardize terminology, remove repetitive language, and eliminate outdated provisions; as well as substantive changes requiring further discussion by the Committee that include the process for canceling or posting meetings, clarifying the amount of awaiting reports requested, selection of a presiding officer when neither the Chair nor Vice Chair are available, and clarifying the distinction between withdrawing and rescinding a motion.

We also discussed the role of the Cambridge Education Association (CEA) at School Committee meetings. Members reviewed [Arlington's informal practice](#) of providing an education association representative an opportunity to share updates, provide feedback, and raise issues affecting educators. This was discussed along alternatives outlined in Superintendent Murphy's memo on CR26-017 and C26-022, which include partnerships with existing subcommittees, public hearings, and designated agenda space during select meetings. Subcommittee members agreed on many technical changes, with our next steps being ongoing conversations around the substantive changes.

School Committee (Tuesday, September 15, 2026)

Superintendent's Update

The Superintendent began with a positive update: the CPS dropout rate has declined by more than half since 2017, from 1.3% (25 students) to 0.6% (13 students). While every student who leaves school before graduation is a concern, this represents continued progress from CPS, especially compared to the state dropout rate average of 1.8%.



CPS is also building their next four-year strategic plan. To ensure the priorities for the new strategic plan reflect the values and opinions of all CPS stakeholders, they are requesting community members complete the following [survey](#) in which you identify your top priorities from a list of potential initiatives. Your feedback will directly inform which projects move forward and how they sequence them over the next four years. The survey will take about five minutes to complete, and I encourage you all to participate.

Transportation Start for SY26-27

CPS reported significant improvement in school bus on-time performance compared with the first two weeks of last school year. During the second week of this school year, only approximately 3% of buses arrived after the start of the school day. However, some regular and specialization transportation routes continue to experience unacceptable delays; the district is continuing to work with transportation vendors and employees to address specific issues while also identifying and correcting system problems.

Specialized transportation remains particularly challenging because NRT/Beacon was the sole qualified bidder for the district's specialized transportation contract. The Transportation Department is also not fully staffed, which has created challenges in communicating directly with families. Families who experience transportation issues should first contact their building administrator, who can connect them with the appropriate District administrator and assist with troubleshooting.

158 Spring Street Options

Discussion surrounding 158 Spring Street first began with the December 2024 decision to close the Kennedy-Longfellow School. Following community engagement throughout 2025 and 2026, CPS developed several potential uses for the facility. 158 Spring Street remains a significant district priority because:

- East Cambridge has a high concentration of students, and CPS is committed to maintaining an elementary school in the area.
- The existing facility can accommodate more than 650 students, creating an opportunity to serve additional students and use resources more efficiently.
- The adjacent John A. Ahern Field provides substantial outdoor space for students and the broader community.
- The site could provide programs that support students with higher needs, including opportunities for instructional and programmatic synergies.

CPS's goal is to determine how the building can best support student success, particularly for students qualifying as high need, while considering enrollment, educational programming, equity, operational efficiency, financial constraints, and implementation timelines. The Superintendent provided an in-depth [presentation](#) including three scenarios for 158 Spring Street:



1. **Relocate the Amigos Schools.** This would create additional seats at one of CPS' highest performing schools, with an opportunity to serve more high-needs students. Among PK-8 students from Spanish-speaking households who do not currently attend Amigos, 135 are identified as high need, including 60 students receiving IEP services and 61 English learners. Of students who ranked Amigos as their first choice, 79% are high needs.

The 158 Spring Street facility would also provide Amigos students with amenities not currently available at Upton Street, including an outdoor playing field, age-appropriate playgrounds, science lab, large gymnasium, auditorium, appropriately sized cafeteria, accessible entryway, and expanded space for special education and support staff. The major drawback includes the logistics of relocating the school and not addressing other needs identified below such as significant upper school enrollment pressures.

2. **Create an Early Learning Center (ELC).** This would create a more coordinated early-childhood system focused specifically on the needs of 3- and 4-year-olds. Potential benefits include developmentally appropriate learning environments, stronger access to early multi-tiered system of supports and specialized support, extended day and afterschool opportunities making CPS preschool more accessible to working, priority, and low-income families, and a centralized hub for wraparound preschool services and family support.

The strongest case for an ELC is a broader system redesign – it creates clearer early-childhood programming, stronger extended-day options, and more deliberate K-entry planning. Potential challenges include the site's geographic location, campus considerations, and capital expenses.

3. **Merge the Upper Schools.** This could create larger, more sustainable upper schools with greater programmatic flexibility, especially for students with complex needs. Other potential benefits include more variety of electives, special and extracurricular activities, reduced reliance on single-teacher subject areas creating opportunities for collaboration, and opportunities for more varied social connections.

Potential drawbacks include the disruption associated with a merger without solving the underlying enrollment and feeder-pattern problems, infrastructure limitations, and uncertain savings after accounting for staffing, transportation, administration, and facility costs.

I encourage our community members to get involved with these discussions. Community engagement opportunities will take place **Tuesday, September 29** (in-person forum at CRLS), **Wednesday, September 30** (virtual community engagement forum), and **Thursday, October 1** (in-person forum at Amigos School). In October, the Superintendent will return to the School Committee with one recommended option for implementation, and depending on the final decision, targeted for no later than August 2028.



Upcoming Dates

As always, please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or requests for additional information. The next regular School Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, October 6, 2026.

Sincerely,

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