



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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

To: Cambridge City Council
From: Sumbul Siddiqui, Mayor
Date: April 9, 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 from our April 7 meeting, which centered primarily on the FY27 budget, alongside updates on district priorities, facilities planning, and governance items.

FY27 Budget Discussion

The School Committee voted to **adopt the FY27 recommended budget**, with four members in favor, two opposed, and one voting present. As Co-Chair of the Budget Subcommittee, I want to share the reasoning behind my vote.

School budgets are not rebuilt from the ground up each year. The vast majority of spending reflects ongoing commitments—educator salaries, special education services, transportation, and student support systems—that are essential to our district's operation. This budget ensures continuity in those areas. I also appreciated that it reflects genuine responsiveness: over the past several weeks, the administration heard concerns from Committee members throughout the process—including at the [March 25 Budget Workshop](#)—and made adjustments accordingly. That kind of iterative refinement matters, and it demonstrates a willingness to balance ambition with fiscal responsibility. Most importantly, this budget maintains a focus on students. It continues to invest in the classroom, in student services, and in the supports that families rely on every day.

Ultimately, my role is not simply to advocate for more spending, but to ensure that what we approve is thoughtful, responsible, and aligned with our district's mission. I believe this budget meets that standard. **It will be brought forward to the full City Council on May 6.**

Superintendent's Update

The Superintendent outlined next steps for determining the **future use of 158 Spring Street**, including the public engagement process that will precede any resolution of that matter. He will return with more detailed information at an upcoming meeting. The update also touched on **ongoing hiring processes for district and school leadership positions**.



Student Assessment Presentation

Due to the extensive focus on the budget, the Committee **did not have sufficient time to fully discuss the planned presentation on student assessment metrics**. The presentation was intended to cover how different assessment tools—statewide common assessments, universal screening assessments, and curriculum-based assessments—work in conjunction to inform continuous improvement for students, schools, and the district. The presentation, which will need to be taken up at a future meeting, is available [here](#).

Screen Use Discussion & Existing Guidance

The Committee discussed [Order #26-040](#)—originally introduced and tabled at the March 17 meeting—which proposed a **temporary pause on non-essential screen use for students in PreK through Grade 2**. Rather than act immediately, the Committee voted to **refer the item to the Superintendent**, with broad agreement that it would be prudent to **await the results of the district's ongoing screen use audit** before establishing policy.

This discussion aligns with existing district guidance, which emphasizes that technology in elementary classrooms should be limited, purposeful, and supportive of—rather than a replacement for—hands-on learning.

Consent and School Committee Agenda

Through the consent agenda, the Committee approved facilities funding for a **school roof feasibility and design study**, **Harmony Academy** as a private school option, contracts for **special education services and various instructional needs**, **out-of-district student placements**, and **acceptance of gifts and miscellaneous receipts**. The Committee also received **subcommittee reports** from **Governance**, **Buildings & Grounds**, and **Curriculum & Achievement**, and introduced new items including a proposed **Youth Risk Behavior Survey roundtable** and a proposal to establish a **School Council Subcommittee and working group**.

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)