



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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

To: Cambridge City Council
From: Sumbul Siddiqui, Mayor
Date: June 4, 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.

The School Committee's June 2 meeting focused on leadership transitions, celebrations of the Class of 2026, an update on the future of the 158 Spring Street building, and an introductory discussion on the district's Controlled Choice school assignment policy. The Committee also approved a series of FY27 contracts through the consent agenda.

Superintendent's Update

New School Leadership Appointments

Superintendent Murphy announced several key leadership appointments:

- A new principal for Cambridge Rindge and Latin School (CRLS)
- A new principal for the Fletcher-Maynard Academy (FMA)
- An interim principal for the Cambridgeport School

Celebrating the Class of 2026

The Superintendent highlighted accomplishments of graduating students from both CRLS and the High School Extension Program (HSEP), recognizing academic achievements, post-secondary plans, scholarships, and student contributions to the school community. The update served as a celebration of the graduating class ahead of commencement activities.

158 Spring Street Update

The Superintendent provided a brief update regarding ongoing discussions about educational programming and facility planning for the former Kennedy-Longfellow School building at 158 Spring Street. The administration emphasized that conversations remain underway and that no final decisions



have been made regarding future use of the building. The Building and Grounds Subcommittee, of which I am a member, met last week for an update on this as well.

Controlled Choice Presentation

The main [presentation](#) of the evening was an overview of Cambridge Public Schools' Controlled Choice Policy. District staff emphasized that the presentation was intended to provide background information only and did not include recommendations for policy changes.

Purpose of Controlled Choice

District leaders explained that Controlled Choice is designed to advance two longstanding district priorities: academic excellence and social justice. The policy seeks to ensure that school demographics generally reflect the broader CPS student population while allowing families the opportunity to rank their preferred schools. Staff emphasized that the district's goal is to provide equal access to high-quality schools and diverse learning environments across Cambridge.

How the Assignment Process Works

Families entering grades K-8 select and rank up to three preferred schools. School assignments are then determined using several factors, including seat availability, socioeconomic balance (as evaluated by percentages of students who would or would not qualify for the Federal Free and Reduced Price Meals Program), waitlists, registration timing, and gender balance (only applicable to in grades 1 through 8). Staff noted that family choice is one component of the process, but no student is guaranteed assignment to a preferred school.

School Choice Trends and Lottery Data

The presentation reviewed the ten-year averages of kindergarten lottery data and highlighted consistent patterns in family preferences. Over the past decade, Amigos/Baldwin has averaged the most frequently selected first-choice option, averaging 78 first-choice selections annually, followed by MLK Ni Hao + Immersion and Peabody. Schools such as Haggerty, Fletcher-Maynard, and Kennedy-Longfellow historically received fewer first-choice selections.

Staff also reviewed more recent kindergarten lottery rankings. In the 2026 kindergarten lottery, Baldwin ranked first, MLK Ni Hao + Immersion ranked second, and Tobin ranked third among first-choice selections. Similar patterns appeared in 2025 and 2024, although the specific rankings shifted somewhat from year to year.

The district reported that 325 students participated in the 2026 kindergarten lottery, including 86 students who were assigned through sibling preference. Of the 239 remaining students, 147 (62%) selected the same three schools—Baldwin, MLK Ni Hao + Immersion, and Tobin—as their preferred choices, while



the remaining 38% selected from the district's other elementary schools.

The presentation also included preschool assignment data through the Cambridge Preschool Program. For three consecutive years, MLK Ni Hao + Immersion was the most requested preschool option, while Baldwin, Amigos, and Tobin also ranked among the most popular choices

Key Clarifications from Staff

District leaders sought to address several common misconceptions about Controlled Choice, including:

- Lottery results represent only one point in time and should not be viewed as a complete measure of school quality.
- Family preferences do not necessarily reflect the full educational experience offered at a school.
- Controlled Choice is only one factor influencing school enrollment patterns.
- Program locations, specialized services, facility size, feeder patterns, and overall demand also affect school assignments and demographics.

Staff also noted that the socioeconomic measures used for school assignments are not the same as DESE's current low-income calculations and that changing state definitions over time have complicated comparisons.

Challenges and Opportunities

The administration emphasized the importance of how the district communicates about schools, arguing that public narratives can sometimes differ from the actual educational opportunities available across the district. Staff stressed that all elementary schools provide strong educational experiences and cautioned against using lottery popularity alone as a measure of school effectiveness.

Events

Since our last meeting, I had the opportunity to attend several district events that showcased the incredible talents and civic engagement of our students.

On June 2, I attended and spoke at the Student-Led Civics Finalist Showcase at City Hall, where 27 CPS eighth-grade student teams presented their civic action projects after advancing from the districtwide civics showcase. Their presentations built on work first shared on May 29, when more than 400 CPS eighth-grade students presented civic action projects to community advisors and elected officials at the Massachusetts State House. The projects reflected thoughtful research, creativity, and a strong commitment to addressing issues facing their communities. It was inspiring to see the confidence and professionalism with which the finalists presented their work and engaged with community members.

I also attended the Districtwide 5th Grade Instrumental Music Concert at the Fitzgerald Theatre at CRLS.



The concert brought together student musicians from across the district and highlighted both the hard work of our students and the dedication of our music educators. It was wonderful to see so many families celebrating the arts and supporting student achievement.

These events serve as reminders of the many ways CPS students are developing as scholars, artists, leaders, and engaged members of our community.

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". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sumbul" and last name "Siddiqui" clearly distinguishable.

Sumbul Siddiqui

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