

# BACK TO THE FUTURE

*Envisioning Cambridge Public Schools*



Hosted by Agenda for Children Out-of-School Time Initiative  
and Cambridge Nonprofit Coalition

4/19/2017

THE  
Agenda  
for  
Children  
Out-of-School Time Initiative



Cambridge  
Nonprofit  
Coalition



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## SUMMARY

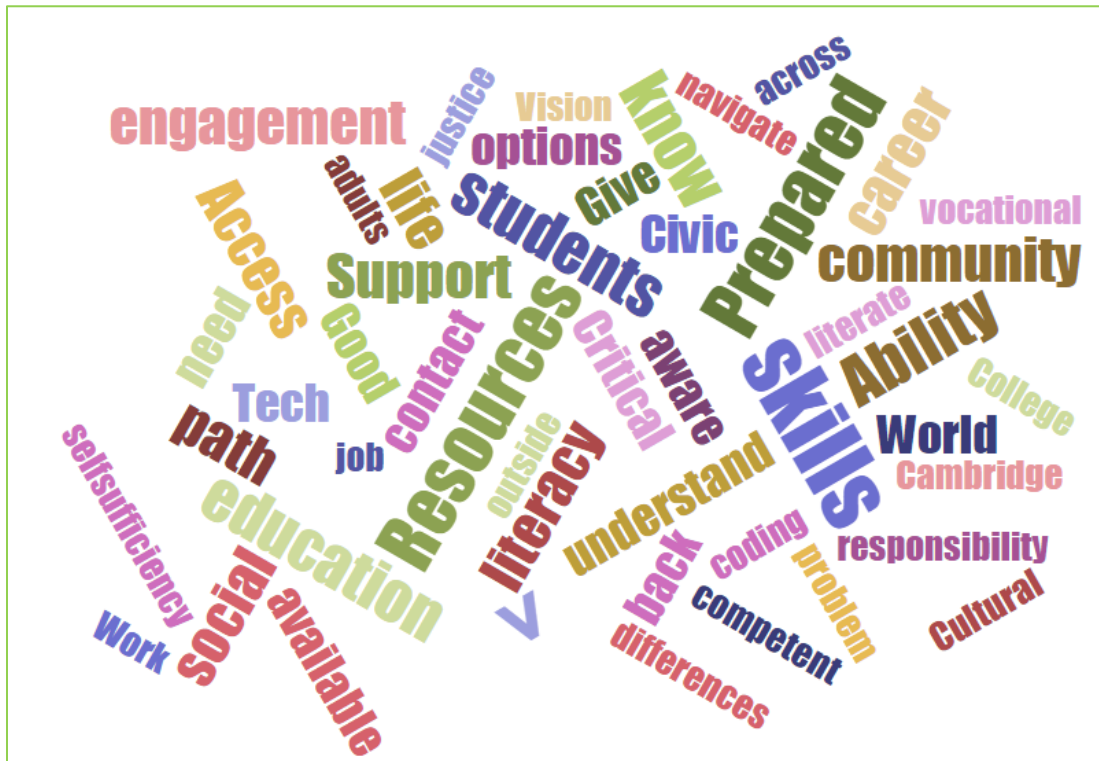
On *March 29, 2017* Agenda for Children Out-of-School Time Initiative, in partnership with the Cambridge Nonprofit Coalition, brought together 45 professionals representing 34 child and youth work organizations and initiatives across the city to support the new Superintendent, Dr. Kenneth Salim, envision the future of Cambridge Public Schools (CPS).

Ellen Semonoff, Assistant City Manager for the Department of Human Services, facilitated the workshop with support from Elena Sokolow-Kaufman, Managing Director of the Cambridge Nonprofit Coalition, and Susan Richards and Khari Milner, Co-Directors of the Agenda for Children Initiative.



The 45 participants were split into six groups and asked to imagine that they were in the future, reflecting on the present and past success and challenges of Cambridge Public Schools. Four questions were used to guide the discussion:

1. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A SUCCESSFUL GRADUATE OF CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS?
2. WHAT DOES CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS LOOK LIKE, SOUND LIKE AND FEEL LIKE TODAY?
3. WHAT DID CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS LOOK LIKE BEFORE?
4. HOW DID CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS BECOME WHAT IT IS TODAY?



- **Civically engaged:** CPS graduates feel connected to their local and global community. They have a strong sense of belonging, and motivation to “give back”, providing “leadership to unite communities”.
- **Culturally competent:** CPS graduates “embrace cultural differences and common humanity” and can engage with people with different opinions and worldviews. They are bilingual, or have been exposed to opportunities to learn another language. They seek to ‘bridge gaps’.
- **Work/life ready:** CPS graduates “know what it means to work” and develop professional skills. They have vision and are “passionate, bold, adventurous” and “deeply believe they are needed”.
- **Critical thinker:** CPS graduates are “critical thinkers” and problem solvers. They engage critically with media, are “tech savvy”, curious, know how to access resources that they need. They are self-aware, literate and know how to express themselves.

## 2. ENVISION THE FUTURE: WHAT DOES CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS LOOK LIKE, SOUND LIKE AND FEEL LIKE TODAY?



For workshop participants, Cambridge Public Schools today *looks clean*, “*sparkly*” and culturally diverse, *sounds “joyful”* and you can “hear” student participation, and *feels “welcoming and represents who I am”*.

- **Calm, centered and inclusive:** CPS teachers and students are calm, centered, joyful, supported by an inclusive, culturally diverse and dynamic learning environment: “Adults care. It feels safe and loving”.
- **Meaningful collaborations with OST, community, private sector and universities:** We have a centralized shared data system, “integrated and co-located services”, school buildings are “open all day” and we share a “whole child” approach to education and supports.
- **High student and parent engagement:** “All voices are considered”.
- **Responsive curriculum/equitable education:** Curriculum is relevant, reflects diversity, and values social-emotional skills, project-based learning and restorative justice. All classes are racially integrated and the faculty reflects the student body.
- **High Tech:** “State of the art computer labs”, “coding classes”, technically literate student body.

### 3. ENVISION THE FUTURE: WHAT DID CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS LOOK LIKE BEFORE?



For workshop participants, the *old* Cambridge Public Schools faced a number of challenges, and opportunities, in supporting students to reach their potential.

- **Conscious of the need for inclusive classrooms:** CPS were conscious of the need for inclusion, yet classes remained segregated creating an opportunity gap. “Privilege wasn’t acknowledged or examined”. Mental health supports were limited.
- **Uneven innovation and development:** Schools operate as separate, rather than coordinated, entities. “School environment and openness to collaboration very dependent on that school’s administration”.
- **Disjointed/disconnected:** Lack of a “shared philosophy”, time and intentionality prevented coordination with the OST community. CPS struggled to create opportunities for children through reciprocal and mutually-beneficial relationships with partners.
- **Family engagement challenges:** CPS struggled to lead change in family engagement and prioritize their needs. Families found it hard to navigate the school system, and this was especially the case for immigrant and low income families.

#### 4. ENVISION THE FUTURE: HOW DID CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS BECOME WHAT IT IS TODAY?



Looking back, workshop participants suggested a number of ways that Cambridge Public Schools became what it is today, including:

- **Shared vision, shared accountability:** By articulating a shared vision and articulating equitable outcomes for students, CPS was able to bring OST providers, families, universities and students together to support “whole child development”.
- **Intentional-information-sharing infrastructure:** By creating a centralized, information sharing system, CPS improved city-wide collaboration, communication and innovation. This information/data system provided a clearer and more accessible picture of student success.
- **Strong and consistent leadership:** Strong and consistent leadership from adults and young people, guided by best practice and shared principles, were crucial to CPS success. Cultural proficiency and socio-emotional development was highly valued by leaders.
- **Creating spaces for youth/family supports through all transitions:** Providing consistent facilitated mentoring “from previous grads” and “host families” at all transitions, including post high school.
- **Emphasis on civics education:** Including “local history”, and skills-building in line with the world today with access to community mentors and networks.

## INPUT FROM LEADERS AND STAFF REPRESENTING THE FOLLOWING:

	<b>Organizations</b>
<b>1</b>	Agassiz Baldwin Community
<b>2</b>	Agenda for Children-Out-of School Time Initiative
<b>3</b>	Beyond the 4th Wall
<b>4</b>	Big Sister Association
<b>5</b>	Breakthrough Greater Boston
<b>6</b>	Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee
<b>7</b>	Cambridge Nonprofit Coalition
<b>8</b>	Cambridge School Volunteers
<b>9</b>	Cambridge-Ellis School
<b>10</b>	City Sprouts
<b>11</b>	Cambridge Department of Human Service Programs
<b>12</b>	Dragonfly
<b>13</b>	East End House
<b>14</b>	Enroot Education
<b>15</b>	Good Men Gang
<b>16</b>	Guidance Center Family Clinic
<b>17</b>	Inclusion Initiative
<b>18</b>	Innovators 4 Purpose
<b>19</b>	Just a Start
<b>20</b>	King Open Extended Day
<b>21</b>	Linnaean Community School
<b>22</b>	Magazine Beach
<b>23</b>	Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House
<b>24</b>	Moses Youth Center
<b>25</b>	Office of College Success
<b>26</b>	Office of Workforce Development
<b>27</b>	Parenting Journey
<b>29</b>	Phillips Brooks House Association
<b>30</b>	Recreation
<b>31</b>	Riverside Community Care
<b>32</b>	Science Club for Girls
<b>33</b>	City of Cambridge STEAM Initiative
<b>34</b>	TERC
<b>35</b>	Tutoring Plus of Cambridge