



# CITY COUNCIL

## ROUNDTABLE/WORKING MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Monday, February 14, 2022

5:30 PM

Sullivan Chamber  
795 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02139

Pursuant to a Policy Order adopted on January 24, 2022, the City Council and the School committee will hold a joint roundtable to receive an update from the City Manager and relevant departments on the next steps towards the implementation of universal Pre-K in Cambridge.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Paul F. Toner	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Dennis J. Carlone	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Patricia Nolan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Alanna Mallon	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Marc C. McGovern	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sumbul Siddiqui	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
E. Denise Simmons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Burhan Azeem	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Quinton Zondervan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A communication was received from Louie DePasquale, City Manager, transmitting a presentation for the City Council meeting on February 14, 2022



**CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL**

**ROUNDTABLE/WORKING MEETING**

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI, CHAIR

COMMITTEE MEETING

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

FEBRUARY 14, 2022

5:30 PM, SULLIVAN CHAMBER

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** We'll get started as soon as we have a quorum.

**CITY MANAGER LOUIS DEPASQUALE:** Hello, everybody.

**ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER ELLEN SEMONOFF:** Evening.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Evening.

**CITY MANAGER LOUIS DEPASQUALE:** Evening.

**ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER ELLEN SEMONOFF:** I think we're just waiting for Lisa Grant to be promoted to be a panelist. She's an -- an attendee right now.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Okay. We will make sure she gets promoted. Go ahead.

**CITY CLERK ANTHONY WILSON:** Mayor Siddiqui, time of the meeting has arrived and you have a quorum.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Great. Well, we'll get started. Uh, good evening, everyone, and Happy Valentine's Day. Uh, a quorum being present, I'm going to call tonight's joint roundtable meeting of the City Council and the School Committee to order.

The call of the meeting is as follows. The City Council and the School Committee will hold a joint roundtable to receive an update from the city manager and relevant departments on next steps towards the

implementation of universal pre-K in Cambridge.

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, adopted by the Massachusetts General Assembly and approved by the Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation at meetings of the Cambridge City Council.

This meeting will be conducted -- City council and School Committee, this meeting will be conducted virtually. To watch the meeting, please tune into Cable Channel 22 or the Open Meeting Portal on the city's webpage. There will be no public comment and no votes will be taken. Roundtable's where our rules last no more than two hours. The first order of business is a roll call of members present. Clerk Wilson.

**City Clerk Anthony Wilson called the roll:**

Councillor Burhan Azeem - Absent

Councillor Dennis J. Carlone - Present

Vice Mayor Alanna Mallon - Present

Councillor Marc C. McGovern - Present

Councillor Patricia M. Nolan - Present

Councillor Denise E. Simmons - Absent

Councillor Paul F. Toner - Present

Councillor Quinton Y. Zondervan - Present

Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui - Present

**CITY CLERK ANTHONY WILSON:** There are 7 members of the City Council present. Moving on to the School Committee.

Committee Member Bhambi - Absent

Committee Member Fantini - Present

Committee Member Luis Rojas Villareal - Present

Committee Member David Weinstein - Present

Committee Member Rachel Weinstein - Present

Committee Member Ayesha Wilson - Present

**CITY CLERK ANTHONY WILSON:** There are five members of the School Committee present.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Thank you. I believe -- go ahead, Councillor Zondervan.

**COUNCILLOR QUINTON Y. ZONDERVAN:** Thank you. Just wanted to say I am present. My, uh, Zoom has a hiccup.

**CITY CLERK ANTHONY WILSON:** You -- you have been recorded as present, Councillor.

**COUNCILLOR QUINTON Y. ZONDERVAN:** Thank you.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** And we're also joined by our student School Committee member, member Vera-DeGraff, uh, as well. Uh, so thank you for being -- everyone, thank you for being here.

So tonight, uh, we'll start our conversation, uh, and presentation with Lisa Grant, our executive director of the Birth to 3rd Grade Partnership, uh, which is sustained by the Department of Human Service Programs in Cambridge Public Schools and is a central coordinating hub for early childhood information. And the Birth to 3rd Grade Partnership includes the school and community-based early childhood education, home visiting and family support and engagement.

We will hear first about the current early childhood education landscape, which has changed in many ways as a result of COVID-19. We'll talk about universal pre-K and what we mean by that term in Cambridge. Assistant City Manager Ellen Semonoff of Human Services will, uh, review the history of where we've been, where we are now, and where we need to go.

The School Committee and City Council will then have an opportunity for questions. We'll hear from, uh, at the end, our superintendent and our city manager. So with that, uh, we will go ahead and go to Lisa.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LISA GRANT:** Thanks, Mayor. Um, we do have a slide presentation that I'd like to share. So I'm

hoping, um, that that can be brought up now. Does the council have our slides or?

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Yeah, everyone should have received the slides, um, earlier today, but I think -- um, Clerk Wilson, can you make sure we can enable screen sharing?

**CITY CLERK ANTHONY WILSON:** Yeah, it's -- it's enabled. Um, hold on one second, let me pull this up.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LISA GRANT:** Is it -- is it easier for me to just share my screen or?

**CITY CLERK ANTHONY WILSON:** That -- that would probably be easier.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LISA GRANT:** Okay. So I will go ahead and do that. Okay. So there we go. Um, so Mayor just went through our agenda, so I'm gonna hop right into our first slide talking about the current early childhood landscape. Um, you know, it's interesting because the early childhood profession has had a -- a number of significant barriers for as long as I can remember. Um, and interestingly enough, it took a pandemic to really shed a light on what some of those barriers are.

Um, with that, there has been a -- a spotlight, if you

will, um, shining right now on the early childhood profession that I think will help really build momentum and help us to overcome some of those barriers, um, in the profession. So I just wanted to take a couple of minutes to, um, just bring briefly highlight what's happening at the federal state and local level, um, just to kind of -- um, kind of give some context to, um, the work of UPK and how we'll -- we'll move forward.

Um, many of you probably are aware of some of these things, but again, just wanted to highlight some of the key things as it relates to our work. Um, so at the federal level, we have build back better. Um, there is, you know, some mixed opinions about whether or not that will actually come to pass. Um, I'm optimistic and hoping that there is some element particularly the elements around UPK that will move forward. Um, so just to share a little bit about that.

Um, the way the bill is written, um, up to 75% of families, um, state median income, um, would incur no co-payment for child care and that's all of child care 0 to 5, not just, um, pre-K. Um, families making up to 250% of their state median income would pay no more than 7% of their income towards child care, and that would be for full



day, full year care. Um, programs would be reimbursed at, um, the rate of the cost of care, the cost of quality as opposed to market rate, which is currently how subsidies work for early childhood education. Um, and there are several other provisions that I want to make sure that I mention particularly as it relates to universal pre-K.

Um, the other provisions include that, um, all three and four year olds would be included. So that's both age categories as opposed to, um, just four year olds as -- as is the case in some UPK systems right now. Um, a mixed delivery system would be required. So that would be a combination of both school and community based programs as opposed to a school based only model. Continuous quality improvement support would be a component, so that means things like coaching and mentoring to support programs with, um, quality implementation.

Support for staff pursuing credentials, um, family outreach and enrollment support, and then pay parity for teachers as well. So those are all components of -- of the build back better plan that relates specifically to our work. The state level, we have common start. Um, their provisions align very closely with build back better, um,

and include similar -- similar subsidy structure. So I won't go into that in detail.

Um, and then also at the state level, we have the Commonwealth Preschool program initiative. Um, and that's a state funding opportunity that will support local school districts with supporting implementation and expansion of free preschool in their local community. Um, and that money, um, is -- is really focused at supporting school districts, although, um, the state will support, um, a wide number of governance models, um, depending on what's available and who the lead agency in respective communities might be. At the local level, we have the Birth to 3rd Grade Partnership.

And so we've been supporting the local early childhood infrastructure in a very similar fashion in that we are, um, implementing our continuous quality improvement work, um, our support for the early childhood workforce. Um, our scholarship support for Children in lower income households to attend high quality preschool. Um, and we've also been focused on supporting the early childhood community as it's weathered, not just the pandemic, um, but also, um, the staffing crisis and we'll talk a little bit more about

those later.

So what exactly is Universal Pre-K? Um, I think people tend to utilize this term very broadly and -- and loosely. Um, but there really are a wide variety of models out there for Universal Pre-K. And so I just wanted to, um, highlight a couple of things, um, with regards to what universal Pre-K is. Um, so, you know, according to the definition, universal Pre-K is a policy framework that gives all families with preschool age children the opportunity to voluntarily enroll, um, their child in a public -- publicly funded prekindergarten care and education program in a given state or community.

Um, so with that, um, universal Pre-K might be housed exclusively within a school district, um, but it also could be structured as a mixed delivery system as I mentioned. So this would be a combination of school based and community based providers. Um, Universal pre-K typically serves children who are entering kindergarten, um, the following year. So essentially four year olds, um, but some UPK models also serve three year olds or a subset of three year olds.

Universal pre-K might be free in some communities, um,

for all children, but in some communities, it's, um, to subsidize at different levels depending on family income. There are many numerous, uh, local and state models for UPK. And I just want to emphasize that there really is no single best model for how UPK should be designed and implemented. It really should depend on the context of the community in which the system, um, is going to be implemented.

Um, so with that, I just want to give a couple of examples, um, because there are other communities that we can look at and lean on for information and guidance in terms of how they've implemented their UPK system, but I'll say there really is no perfect system.

So, for example, we have California, um, that's implemented an expansion of what they call transitional kindergarten statewide. Um, the program is housed exclusively in their school district, um, which causes some, you know, problems in that, um, there are ramifications as it relates to the impact on community based providers and that's, uh, something that the state is contending with right now. Um, in New York City, um, they've implemented their own version of UPK, um, for all

four year olds and a limited number of three year olds. Um, funding and support for community based organizations has been inequitable, um, and so there's been ramifications for that, right? Because some families may not have access to the program of their choice. Um, the program of their choice might not be as high quality as school based program, and so there are some things that that community is contending with as well.

Um, in Denver, they have the Denver Preschool Program where funding actually follows individual children, um, to their choice of a high quality preschool for both three and four year olds. Um, with education being subsidized at different levels, depending on the family's income. And then you have Boston Public Schools, which I'm sure many of you are familiar with. Um, that's implemented UPK in a mixed delivery model serving mostly four year olds, but now beginning to serve three year olds as well and their program is at no cost to families. Um, lastly, we have Chicago Public Schools that I'll mention, who also has a mixed delivery model. Um, and what they're best known for is their comprehensive application process of cross program texts and settings. So making it much easier than a lot of

the other systems for families to be able to navigate.

So when we're talking about universal pre-K and, um, I'll say I've been in this community for a little over a year now. And so, um, definitely comes to this work from an outsider's perspective. And one of the things that I've, um, often heard, um, when people ask me about EPK is, um, this notion of around space or slots and how, um, you know, design a system of UPK means we need to build more preschools or more open more classrooms. And I will say, I think that's really only a -- a piece of the picture. So when we look at the entire early childhood landscape in Cambridge, um, theoretically, there are enough seats for all of the four year olds that live in our community. So the question then becomes, uh, more -- less about space and more about, um, how many of those seats can be dedicated exclusively to Cambridge children? Um, where are those seats located in the city? Are they quality seats? Um, do we have enough qualified teachers to teach all of these young children?

And then after we answer all of those questions, then the question becomes, is there still a gap? So knowing that there are more preschool seats than there are children in

our city means that UPK is really only partially about space, like I mentioned, and it's truly more about how we align and support what currently exists to ensure that, um, every parent with a pre-K age child has access to a program that they're choosing, that's high quality and is affordable. And so really the heavy work of UPK in Cambridge is, um, largely around alignment, um, and -- and less about space and capacity. I'm gonna turn it over to Ellen Semonoff for just a moment to share a little bit more about where we've been or kind of where we left this work off a couple of years ago.

**ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER ELLEN SEMONOFF:** Thanks, Lisa. So, um, I think that certainly many of the, um, City Councillors know this history, um, and some of the School Committee members do as well, but I think it's worth walking through where we've been before we start talking about where we are and where we're going. Um, and so, as some of you may remember back in um 2014, '15, then, uh, city manager Rich Rossi, and superintendent Jeffrey Young, set up a joint city school department task force to explore the options of expansion of early childhood services. And the, um, work that was done with that task force which

represented both school people, city people, community, um, based providers, um, family child care providers, and individual, um, family, um, caregivers were part of that group. And the key findings that came out of that task force and were then reported back to the City Council and School Committee at a round table in November of 2015 were really about, um, a recommendation that starting with four year olds, um, was too late that all of the research and knowledge about support for children and families suggested that the work really needed to begin deeply starting at birth and going up through, um, four year olds and not just focus on the four year old.

Um, the, um, task force came back to indicate that really needed to focus on that whole system of zero to four, um, focus on the support to families because there was so little information easily available to families about the services available. And you may know that ultimately out of that came find it, which I know so many of you are familiar with. Um, in addition to that the recommendations that we begin the work with a scholarship program piloting that work to see and to build off of that also begin the development of a quality improvement program



since it was clear that while we had lots of providers, there were questions about the quality of the providers and what was the work that needed to be done to support them.

The, uh, proposals for intensive professional development, um, proposals to, um, include family child care providers into the quality improvement efforts and also, um, deep work that was done as a result of, um, a blue ribbon task force led by Councillor McGovern and then Councillor, um, Marjorie Decker around what were the mental health needs of children in early, um, education programs? So when we came back to the round table in 2015, shared the results of that work and, um, recommended the, um, hiring the creation of the Birth to 3rd Grade Partnership and the hiring of an executive director who would report jointly to the, um. assistant, um, superintendent for elementary education in the school department and to me as the assistant city manager of human services. And, um, we hired the executive director for the Birth to Third Partnership, um, uh, during 2016 and began some of the work that, um, Lisa will describe more of, um, moving forward.

Um, after a year or so, a year and a half of implementation, we came back again, the school department

and the City council -- and the, um, city to a joint roundtable of the School Committee and City Council in the fall of 2017. We gave an update to the council and School Committee about where we had been over the course of that, um, two years since the roundtable in November of 2015 and came back with a recommendation then that it was time for us to take a more serious look at universal Pre-K and we committed then to beginning that process. And in 2018, the, um, Cambridge Public Schools and the city jointly engaged early childhood associates together with the UMass Donohue Institute to develop UPK, um, model options for the city and schools and for us to, um, look at the potential for implementation of those models.

Um, I think that, um, all -- virtually all of the City Councillors are close to -- were here in December of 2019, um, when we had a round table to present the findings from, um, the early childhood associates and UMass Donohue reports. Um, I think that just Councillor Fan -- a School Committee member Fantini was I think the only member of the School Committee who was there then. Um, I know that Councillor Nolan has moved to the City Council, Mayor Siddiqui was then a City Councilor, so she was there. But

we've had lots of new School Committee members who've joined us since that time. Um, and the at the, um, roundtable in December of 2019, the, um, school department representatives in particular, um, assistant, um -- I'm sorry, assistant superintendent for elementary education, um, Mary Anne McDonald, who was, um, in that position at the time, Claire Spinner, the Chief financial Officer, um, Leanne Ellis, who was the Birth to Third director, and myself presented information about the study findings and the recommendations.

And that evening, both, um, Superintendent Salim and the city manager recommended to the City Council and the School Committee that we move forward with the development of universal prekindergarten and move forward with a series of steps that had been outlined that evening. Um, and I would say that the city manager made the commitment that night that, um, although, the funding information was fair significant about what such a proposal would look like that he believed that the city should be moving forward with it. And Superintendent Salim explained why this was so critical to the schools having universal prekindergarten. Um, the next and last piece on this is something which I would say

is also quite critical and that was a little more than a year ago. The, um, then superintendent and city manager joined the committee that was, um, doing the national search, um, for the new executive director of the Birth to 3rd Grade partnership and we were extremely fortunate, um, to be able to hire and I want to be clear, Doctor Lisa Grant, um, who -- who, um, comes to us with enormous experience in a number of different communities, um, and a lot of experience at all levels of the early child care landscape.

She has a doctorate in early child care leadership for equity and, um, she brings enormous talents, um, to this work. Um, Lisa, could you -- uh, thank you. So, um, I'm gonna let Lisa talk more about some of the individual pieces here, but I want to share with you. I know that there has been considerable disappointment on the part of particularly some of, um, our colleagues on the City Council that we have not moved more quickly in implementation of universal Pre-K. And I want -- as Lisa will say more about where we are. I want to explain the thing that have moved forward lest the City Council or the School Committee believe that despite the pandemic that we

have not moved things forward. So that evening, based on the study and the recommendations from your school department and city team, we indicated what would be the next steps that we would be taking during 2020 and beyond.

Um, and so the first of those was expand the quality improvement work and Lisa will be able to share with you the, um, enormous steps forward we've made in that work. Expand the professional development offerings. Again, um, expand the scholarship program and we've done that. Expand the family child care program pilot that, um, move forward to expand to many more family child care sites. Um, Something which actually, um, several of the City Councillors had urged us to do, which was to support head start expansion because head start is a critical piece of our system provides wraparound supports for families. And in Cambridge, um, of the four classrooms, we had only one of them operated until 3 o'clock in the afternoon, which meant -- and the rest were half day programs which meant that for families who needed what -- where the wonderful riches of head start wasn't available. And so the city fully funded the expansion of those classrooms to full day, full year.

Happened a little later than we hoped because head start was closed much longer because of the pandemic, but the city is now funding the full day, um, programs and full year programs for head start. Um, the, um, next green checkmark here was convene the community-based providers. Um, there was deep concern expressed by many of the community based providers, um, when they came to the round table in December of 2019 about decisions that we might make as a community which would undermine the early childhood programs that are critical to this community. And part of the decision to move forward with a mixed delivery model, which Lisa has alluded to is both about that it is the dominant model around the country. It is the build back better model. It is the state model and it is the model that was recommended by our consultants and it is the model which is most likely to provide the longest term support and the best support for family choice of program and to meet family need.

So we met with, um, the superintendent and the city manager and the team in the first week of March just before the pandemic shut down so many things. We met with over 80 staff and leadership staff of community based programs and

walked through with them, um, what it was that the city and schools were proposing and made a commitment to them that we would continue to work with them in the development. And as Lisa will be able to describe lots have happened with the community-based providers, but moving forward directly on discussions of universal pre-K actually came behind the need for these programs to work with us around their survival and thriving for families during the pandemic. The three yellow boxes, let me just say a couple of things or yellow triangles. Um, let me say just a couple of things about that.

One of the things that Lisa again can talk more about is that among the things we need is much more workforce data about the credentials of the, um, staff in our community, um, who work in all of our programs and that work has begun. It has not advanced as much as it might have, but there is actually a plan now to, um, continue to gather that information, um, gather more program data, understanding information about -- as Lisa referenced, we have the programs within the city. But the question of who's in those programs, which programs would be in a position to serve more Cambridge, um, children and how we

collect that data during the pandemic, when programs were operating in a very different fashion than many of them were operating before getting that reliable data wasn't really possible, but we're ready to continue to gather the data. And then finally, there were any number of decisions which we can talk about the options and decisions that need to be made that would impact the development of the system. And there's been a little bit of work on that, but that's a place where as we will describe later in this presentation, that's the place where an enormous amount of work is -- we're ready to begin doing that work.

And then finally, the red X indicates the two things that didn't have happen at all. And one of which is, it's incredibly important that we -- and as we said that night in 2019, that we need to engage with families and caregivers about their needs, their desires, um, so that what -- the system that we're building is responsive to them and that work couldn't really happen well during the pandemic. I know there's been enormous outreach to families about the things that are right in front of them. Um, but this is something which we are deeply committed to engaging in. And finally, the impact of the decisions we make around



universal pre-K are really important to the elementary schools and are working with the principals of all of those elementary schools. And so the convening of those principles, as I think everyone here knows and particularly the School Committee members, all of the things that have sat with the principals over the course of the last two years. But this is something which we believe moving forward, um, we're ready to move forward with that as well. So I'm gonna turn it back to Lisa so she can go into more detail with you about where we've been.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LISA GRANT:** Thank you. Um, so, you know, although the Birth to 3rd Grade partnership really does work in service to the entire birth to third grade or 0-8 continuum, um, much of the work that we do on a daily basis really is also in service to -- to this -- this North Star, this goal of implementing UPK in this community. And so I wanted to take an opportunity to talk a little bit about, you know, the cornerstones of our work and how those directly connect to this building of a UPK system in this community. Um, so first starting with this concept of access and affordability, um, we have implemented a scholarship program that serves children who are at least

2.9 years old or two years, nine months old, um, and live in a family at or below 80% of the HUD median area income.

Um, currently, we have 17 preschool programs in the community that we are in partnership with that, um, we place these children at, um, for their preschool experience. And since, um, the first year that we started doing our scholarship program till now, we've increased the number of children we've served by 152%. I actually think that number could potentially have been higher, had it not been for the pandemic. And that is our goal to continue to serve as many children through the scholarship program who qualify as possible. Um, the other thing I want to mention, um, and Ellen mentioned it previously was our partnership with head start. So this year, um, we are working in partnership with them to, um, have all of their classrooms that, um, are housed here in Cambridge, North Cambridge specifically, um, serve as full year, full day preschool programs for those children. And so they have the capacity in those four classrooms to serve 72, three and four year olds. And so I think that's a very important component of this UPK system and head start in -- in most communities plays a vital role in building out a system of U P K. So I

wanted to make mention of that as well.

Um, and those head start classrooms are located, um, at Jefferson Park and -- and Frisoli. Um, as it relates to our quality work, um, I want to make -- mention of a couple of things that we're doing here, the growth that we've seen in this particular area. Um, so we currently have 24 preschool programs currently engaged at some level in quality improvement work. Some of those overlap with our scholarship programs as well. So we have, you know, programs that are doing both and we have some programs that engage in quality improvement work, but aren't, um, actively engaged in hosting scholarship children right now. Um, this is in addition to the 13 family child care programs that we supported, um, in our first two cohorts of the quality improvement program that started back in 2017.

One of the things I'll mention as a success for this program is that 100% of the centers that we've worked with have either maintained or increased their quality rating over a three year period. So definitely a sign of success. The other, um, sign of success that I don't think any of us probably went into the pandemic expecting is -- is that 100% of the centers that we work with, um, including family

child care providers reopened after their initial pandemic related closures And so in thinking about having this system of high quality providers in our community, um, we wouldn't be able to think about building out a system in partnership with the community if we had closed centers, um, in this community. So just being able to maintain, um, operations is a huge win for us. Um, some of the things that we did, I just want to highlight during the pandemic. Um, we continued to pay for slots for remote programming. So heads start, um, did operate a remote program for families who were not comfortable sending their children back in person. And so we supported them with that.

Um, provided funding for PPE for programs, um, helped with applying for small business loans through, um, the Department of Early Education and Care, um, synthesized all of the information that was coming from a wide variety of constituents and helped share that information and support programs with, um, implementing new policies and-- and regulations during the pandemic. Um, we also supported them with reopening including how to best, um, implement health and safety procedures which were ever changing during the - - the pandemic. So again, definitely a success for -- for

B3 and for the programs. The other thing I wanted to mention that relates to quality ,but is kind of a -- a separate cornerstone of the B3 work is around professional development. Um, so up until this point, we, um, have actually been working up, um, in partnership with Fisher College and had implemented and worked in support, um, of having five college courses that are taught by Fisher instructors, um, that serve the early childhood community, um, here in Cambridge.

And so through those five courses, we actually had, um, 94 students who -- who partook in -- in that opportunity. Um, I wanted to make -- mention that we -- actually, this semester are hosting, um, three classes simultaneously with Fisher. And we just opened enrollment last, um, last week for these classes. And within one day, we max out capacity, um, in each of the three classes that we're -- we're hosting. And so really, it goes to show how critical of a need, the professional development supports that we offer are to the -- the early childhood workforce.

We also, um, have an annual PD opportunity that started off as a one day opportunity that's now been expanded to a week. Um, and we've seen a 223% increase in

attendees for that opportunity. Um, in 2021 during the midst of the pandemic, we had 181 early childhood providers that participated.

Um, we've also, um, had hundreds of hours of coaching, communities of practice, professional learning communities, and workshops that have been held each year through the support of our, um, education coaches and our mentors and our B3 staff team. Um, couple of other, um, opportunities to, um, expand this work that we've been taking advantage of that I wanted to highlight as well. Um, we're actually currently working in partnership with the Office of Workforce Development to offer early childhood education as a training option, um, which is a strategy to recruit new folks into the profession of early childhood education. Um, we're also collaborating -- collaborating with their early childhood education program at RISTA, um, to support those ECE students in, um, ensuring that they're having a high quality practical experience that's comparable to their peers, um, in other CTE programs and other co-ops. And again, it's a strategy to really make early childhood education, uh, a desirable profession for those who are interested in working with young children.

Um, these -- these strategies have really been key for us because as I mentioned earlier, um, probably bigger than the pandemic is a severe workforce shortage, um, in early childhood education. So it's been critical for us to really focus our intention on how do we build capacity, um, within our early childhood workforce. Um, the last thing I wanted to mention about quality that isn't reflected here on the slide is around, um, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Um, it's, uh, an area of, um, of interest to me specifically. And I know it was a commitment that the Birth to 3rd Grade partnership made, um, several years ago to really pay attention to this area. And so we've begun to really incorporate a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens into all elements of our work, um, in some ways that, that has manifested over the last year. Um, we facilitated an anti racist book club for directors in our community, um, this past fall.

We're also, um, implementing a diversity, equity, and inclusion, um, series -- training series for early childhood providers that begins this month and will run through May. We also, um, are starting to utilize a equity framework as it relates to our continuous quality

improvement model. Um, and we've built in requirements around diversity, equity, and inclusion into our contracts with our, um, providers that we work in partnership with, um, so that there's, um, kind of an expectation that all of our partners, um, also make the same commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Um, there are a few additional, um, areas that I wanted to highlight, um, for all of you. Um, so school readiness or kindergarten transition has been an area that B3 has been focused on for -- um, since its inception, but really focused, um, primarily on that transition, um, that happens right, as you're moving from preschool into kindergarten. Um, as many of, you know, school readiness doesn't start in a couple of months right before kindergarten, it really starts from birth. Um, but just historically, the activities that we have been focused on, um, one example is our kindergarten transition forms.

Um, this is a process by which, um, community based preschool providers fill out information about the children in their care that is then shared systematically as kindergarten teachers, so that they have an understanding of where the children are coming from and what their, um,



their opportunities for growth might be. Um, on average, about 86% of children who come from Cambridge based preschool programs, um, go into kindergarten with a kindergarten transition form. The other thing that we've done is provide resources directly to families for all incoming junior kindergarten and kindergarten students. Um, we're really looking to expand our school readiness work. Um, and one of the ways that we've done that is through the hiring of a new school readiness manager, um, who not only will, um, lead many of the efforts I just described but really a -- a huge component of her work will be to really connect um early childhood educators across context. So connecting school based early childhood educators and community based educators so that there's a common understanding of, um, what's developmentally appropriate, what school readiness means, and ensuring that children and families have that seamless transition into kindergarten.

Um, the other thing we've been, um, doing as part of her work is looking at some -- um, looking more closely at our -- our data that's available to us through, um, the various assessments that kindergarten children, um, complete. And so we have done a preliminary look at the

kindergartners this year, um, who are currently in kindergarten and just wanted to share a couple of highlights, um, about, um, that data with you. So as -- as we've looked at this preliminary, um, fall 2021 data, um, we know that 100% of students who have B3 scholarships or are in B3 coached classrooms scored in the okay category on the ESI screener. We know that B3 scholars had the lowest absenteeism rate in kindergarten in comparison to all of their peers. We know that 100% of B3 scholars scored in the typical or strength range on the kindergarten social emotional learning screener. And we also know that children from B3 coach classrooms scored higher on their kindergarten math screening than any of their, um, students in other peer groups. And so I say all that to say that although we can't directly, um, make the case for causation, we do know that the data demonstrates that all of this work that we're -- we're putting in to our early childhood, um, community is having an impact, um, on children. And so really what our goal is to -- to create a system where every child has the opportunity to realize those, those same impacts.

Um, just a couple of additional highlights that I want

to share that really show, um, kind of how we've been working in service to this whole notion of universal pre-K. Um, we work very closely with Riverside Community Care to implement a program called The Early Years Project. Um, and through that project, um, we provide embedded mental health consultation to educators and programs and families across the early childhood, um, community. And that includes a variety of resources, training, support, um, facilitating workshops and direct child consults that they provide, um, to early childhood educators in the community. The other thing I'll mention is our home visiting work.

So as I mentioned, you know, even though this particular meeting is about our work with three and four year olds, um, we have a very large and robust, um, home visiting community that we work with as well. So, um, we have a working group that represents the 14 home visiting programs from across Cambridge. And, um, we provide a wide variety of professional development and support opportunities that really parallel our work with our, um, formal early care and education providers as well. Um, and then lastly, I just wanted to highlight, um, the partnership work, um, that is underway for us. So, um, B3

works very closely with, um, our local university partners. I already mentioned Fisher College. We're also currently working in partnership with Harvard University, um, specifically on a study that, um, is planning to map out the composition of the early childhood workforce here in Cambridge, um, and helping us to identify the key barriers as well as the opportunities to support the workforce.

Um, I'm very excited to be able to work with them on this project And I think the -- the data that that research study will yield will support, um, the decision making process in our work around university, um, universal pre-K. Um, we also collaborate with a wide variety of other city agencies. So the Office of Economic Development, the Library Department of Public Health, a host of others. So really, um, working to interconnect this entire system of agencies and organizations that support, um, early childhood education, I'm gonna turn it over um back to Ellen where, um, I hope that we'll talk a little bit about -- you know, now that you've learned all of the -- the wonderful work that's happening in the early community, what does all of this mean and where do we go from here?

**ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER ELLEN SEMONOFF:** Um, thank you,

Lisa. Um, I think one of the things that the, um, early childhood associates report recommended and that we talked about back when we were here, um, in -- at the round table in 2019 was the importance of creating a governance structure to move this work forward. And, um, I'm happy to report tonight that, um, uh, on what that governance structure -- what we expect that governance structure to look like. Um, Lisa, do you want to go to the next slide? Um, and I know this might be a little bit challenging to, um, read on screen. So let me, um, just describe the first part of it and then I'll let Lisa describe the rest. So, um, under the oversight of the School Committee and the City Council, um, the expectation is that we will have joint school and leadership of, um, a steering committee which will support Lisa as the executive director of Birth to 3rd in the creation of all of the other pieces that need to go together for us to advance the work of UPK.

You see on this chart, it's referred to as the UPK core team, but that core team will be a steering committee jointly led by senior member of the school department and myself, and we will -- and, um, other members to be named both from our respective departments as well as, um,

representatives of the other key stakeholders here. Um, that work, um, will happen and the mayor, um, can say more about this when it comes back to her, but under the leadership of the mayor and the vice chair of the School Committee, um, I believe that the mayor will be appointing a, um, ad hoc committee of School Committee and City Council to, um, be the committee to which this work gets reported back to.

Typically, as you all know, better than I, the work of the school department ends up being reported to individual School Committee committees, and certainly the work of the -- on the city side gets reported back to um City Council committees. And in this case, because this is deeply our joint work, then the body to which we will be, um, bringing this work back would be a joint ad hoc committee of the two bodies.

Um, under -- with Lisa's leadership, we would then anticipate having three different task force which correspond to the pieces of the work that represent the decisions that need to be made and the development of the processes, um, to further implement universal pre-K and Lisa can walk you through this. But the practice and

development task force, the program quality task force, and the early -- excuse me, hub task force. Um, so I'm going to turn it back to Lisa in a moment. But I just want to say, I think this is another critical moment in which, um, our joint efforts to, uh, bring this forward, um, will result in our ability to have a robust universal prekindergarten program within the city of Cambridge. Uh, Lisa, let me hand it back to you.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LISA GRANT:** All right. So I just wanted to take a moment to -- to describe a little bit, um, in more detail around the-- the concept of these three task forces. Um, and much of the work relates back to things that I've already talked about in terms of the work of-- of the Birth to 3rd Grade or partnership. And so, um, because UPK is such a complex, um, idea and system that really involves a lot of constituents, um, we find it's really important to make sure we're providing opportunities for those who are most impacted by the work to be engaged in the work. And so the practice and development task force really speaks to our work around workforce development. So, um, wanting to have representation from both the city, the school department, as well as, um, the community to really

hone in on questions around things like, um, establishing a structure for teacher qualifications, um, what supports are needed, and then really digging into the work around compensation. Um, so that will really be kind of the charge of this particular, um, task force.

Um, when we talk about program quality, again, bringing together constituents from the three groups that I just mentioned to really think about and hone in on what our program quality standards would be. So this is where we would talk about things like curriculum assessment, program evaluation. Um, currently, just kind of an anecdote, the Department of Early Education and Care is currently in transition as it relates to how they are going to measure program quality moving forward. It's always been very important for us to align with the state in their quality improvement efforts. Um, but the quality rating and improvement system as it exists right now is currently transitioning and so we will transition with it. Um, in some ways, I feel like we've actually been ahead of-- of, uh, the transition and how we've been implementing our program at the local level. But it'll be the focus on that task force that will really help us sort through what we



want our -- our standards to be with -- with regards to program quality.

Um, and then lastly, the early childhood hub or family hub as we sometimes refer to it, um, really is about convening those who are working with and enrolling families across program types, um, within our system to, um, really think about how we align those, um, those systems and support families in navigating their early childhood education ecosystem and universal pre-K. Um, I actually think that this will be our -- our biggest lift and our biggest charge. Um, but if we can do it well, as we've seen in Chicago public schools, it's been really successful to bring various constituents together to really create a system that's unified and seamless for families. And so I'm very excited to - to do that work with our, um, colleagues at the city, the school department, and in the community. Um, I really believe that it will be the establishment of this overall advisory committee and then these task forces that will, um, be kind of the key driver that will help us to, um, begin to operationalize some of the components that I mentioned and move, um, the work of UPK forward.

Um, the other thing I -- I wanted to mention, it's not

reflected, um, clearly on this -- this, um, graphic here, um, is that engagement with the community and families is going to be key to this process. And so building in structures for how we're engaging families in the decision making process or you know, providing input into this process will be a-- a huge piece of how, um, we move this work forward as well. Ellen, were you going to add something there?

**ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER ELLEN SEMONOFF:** That's okay.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LISA GRANT:** So the last slide or - or bit of information that we wanted to share was around a timeline for implementation. And so, um, as I describe the work of the Birth to 3rd grade partnership, there are elements of UPK -- a UPK system that are already in place that at scale encompass our entire community. And so as it relates to this governance structure in the task forces that I -- I mentioned, there's really work that's already happening, um, but needs to be able to continue to happen in a more, um, focused way over the course of the next 18 months or so to really move this work forward. And so there that work kind of falls into three different categories. So we have the work design where we're really thinking about

how we're analyzing the data that we have, what new data do we need, um, looking at the landscape, and, um, creating unified quality standards, um, a unified enrollment strategy, um, and developing the financial and operating model for UPK. Um, all the while we need to be looking at our capacity development, so on boarding community providers to what our UPK quality standards will be, um, building capacity in our community providers, um, and then scaling, um, to be determined based on the landscape audit that, um, we will conduct.

Um, And then last, I just want to talk a little bit about model, um, development and policy implications. So as you may be well aware, um, implementing UPK might mean some pretty large systemic changes from the way, um, the city and our school department are currently operating. And so, um, taking this opportunity to revise district and city policies as needed, um, building the processes, tools, and capacities for implementation, um, and then securing funding and/or, um, determining how the funding model will work for universal pre-K. Oh, a lot. So I -- um, let's see. I think I'm turning it over to perhaps superintendent for a closing.

**SUPERINTENDENT VICTORIA GREER:** Oh, sure. Good evening, everyone. Um, I first want to thank and acknowledge Lisa for all of the hard work that she has done and everything that has occurred thus far, especially under, uh, such challenging conditions with COVID. There still has been quite a bit of work that has been done. Um, the UPK is an extremely vital part of not only, um, the Cambridge Public Schools, but our overall school community.

And I think where it's so important from my purview in regards to the school department is that our goal is to ensure that each and every student is college and/or career ready when they leave us and starting students off and starting children off in a strong way to be prepared to enter school is extremely important. So UPK is an extremely, uh, important part of the work that we are challenged and charged to do here in the public schools.

Um, it -- it's really imperative, um, from my collaboration thus far with Dr. Grant and with Ms. Semonoff, and, um, and the city manager, uh, Mr, uh. Mr. Louis, I always never get this last time, right? Um, that - that we are strategic and we are thoughtful in how we approach this work is, you know, for us, um, there are a

lot of moving parts on both sides from, um, the school department and our control choice policies. There will be things that will be impacted by this. Those are things that are going to -- to -- to -- for us to need a long term strategy on how we're going to address this. So we can be in line with the timeline that has been put together, uh, by the work that we're doing in UPK. And so with that, you know, I just want to say that I'm excited about this work. Um, it's not going to be easy work, it's not work for the faint of heart. My experience with this has been that it's going to take all of us to pull our work and pull together. But, you know, I just want to stress that it's important that we have very thoughtful action plans, that we stay the course, that we're able and that we can be flexible in our thinking when it comes to the practices that we need to employ in order for us to really implement this initiative and implement it in a sustainable way. So with that, I just -- I'll turn it back over to Mayor Siddiqui. Thank you.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Move over to the city manager.

**CITY MANAGER LOUIS DEPASQUALE:** Okay. Thank you. So I'll just be quick. First of all, I think what you heard tonight and I really want to thank Ellen and Dr. Grant is a

real commitment to make sure this happens. And I know it's taken longer than a lot of people feel. We -- we -- we -- we should -- it's not from lack of effort and commitment. I think there was a real COVID setback, but I also want to say how excited I am to have Dr. Grant on board in this presentation, I thought was incredible and -- and having her leadership, I think will really help us move this forward. Working with Ellen. it's always a pleasure to work with the superintendent. I think this is a joint effort. You need both of us on board and I know you have both of us and I think the setting up of the steering committee will help move this forward. So I'm excited. We got a lot of work ahead of us. It's not gonna happen overnight. I want to thank everybody who's brought us to where we are today, but I think it's now time to head in this direction and really get this thing moving an even quicker pace. So thanks everybody for their effort and go from there. Thank you.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Well, we will open it up to questions. Uh, I know that we also have our deputy superintendent Dr. Turk or, uh -- and CFO Claire Spinner and, uh, Dr. Michelle Madera, our assistant superintendent

for elementary education with us as well. Um, so we can -- I know everyone, uh, may have questions. So we'll start -- I'm gonna go with the hand feature which I think is the easiest way to do it. Uh, and so we'll open it up to school com -- to the City Council and School Committee. I -- I want to try to kind of alternate the voices. Uh, I'll start with Councillor Carlone and then I'll go to someone from the School Committee or vice versa. Councillor Carlone.

**COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE:** Uh, thank you, Mayor. Um, I thought it was an excellent, uh, presentation. I'm sure we all felt that way and it was very clear that Dr. Grant loves what she does. And, um, boy, that's important. Um, so I have a question on two terms. Um, one is landscape audit and what that really means. Um, I -- I have a sense of what it means but maybe you could help us understand what you look for when you do that.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LISA GRANT:** Sure. So when I use the term landscape audit, I use it in reference to getting an understanding of the current state of the early childhood community in terms of things like where our programs located geographically within the city. Um, how many children are they currently serving? Um, many of our

programs are still, um, operating at a reduced capacity, not because of COVID, but because of staffing. So understanding, you know, the impact of -- of staffing on capacity, really getting an understanding of how many children they are serving in Cambridge versus, um, residents outside of Cambridge. So, you know, it is a moving target and data can change from day to day. But I think it's important to look at all of those factors when we're looking at the entire, um, landscape within Cambridge.

**COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE:** Uh, as part of that, uh, the need for facilities, the need for space. I -- I know we just list that without saying anything, but I'm hoping that we have a real strategy for many ways of getting space and, um, I don't know, Doctor if that falls on you, it falls on Ellen or falls on Mr. Louis. Oh, excuse me, the manager, uh, it -- or Dr. Greer for that matter. Um, but I hope that we really get into that because, um, we've discussed this over the years. I've been a councillor for eight years and we've been discussing the same issues. The program's getting stronger, the numbers are increasing. That's my last comment, is we never see numbers and I



realize COVID has affected staff. You just mentioned that, but it would be really helpful to know how many four year olds are being served, how many are not being served, and then three year olds and hopefully someday we'll even talk about two year olds. Um, but I don't expect those answers right at this moment, but a memo would be useful and, uh, we support this program enormously, the council, and I have no doubt all the school members and the members of the School Committee do as well. So we're there and just know that you're strongly supported even throughout the council. Thank you. I'll stop there now and I'll -- I might come back later, Mayor. Thank you very much.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Thank you. Councillor Carlone. We'll go to member Luis Rojas and then Councillor Zondervan.

**COMMITTEE MEMBER JOSE LUIS ROJAS VILLAREAL:** Thank you, Mayor. Yeah. Um, it was really interesting to-- to see the-- the-- the slide where you had all the green check marks the things that got done and the-- the other ones as far as things that are in process. Although the other ones I was interested in the explore options and decisions, impacting system development. I don't know if you could

just give us a preview of what-- I know that the decision has been made. But what-- what are-- what are the options that you're and decisions that we need to be considering?

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Lisa Grant.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LISA GRANT:** I-- I was gonna ask Ellen if she wants to speak to that particular point, um, because I know some of those decisions happened prior to my arrival, and so I don't want to speak out of turn.

**ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER ELLEN SEMONOFF:** Um, we can tag team on this. I can start and then, um, Lisa, you could take over. I think that, um, um, some of the kinds of decisions, um, have to do with first, is this a program that's expected to be, um, free to everyone or would it be a sliding fee scale there? As, um, Lisa was suggesting, there are, um, models for that in-- that operate in different ways around the country. And there's both the question of, is it free for the six hour school day? And then there's their sliding fee scale for a longer day and a longer year. Um, questions about whether you operate a program, um, funding per classroom or per child. Um, and, um, we can certainly say more about that if you're interested, but, um, there are, um, some significant

differences, some of which might be impacted by what we could do first versus what we might be able to eventually do. But there's, um, in this city, um, we have primarily outside of the school system. Most of the providers serve three and four year olds in the same classroom.

So it's not we don't have for the most part, individual four year old classrooms. So, decisions about, um, how one would operate a program which conformed to both a three and four year-old model or what changes might need, um, to happen as a result of that. Um, whether or not we would do, um, a unified enrollment system or whether there would be-- um, and Lisa could certainly say more about this, but whether families applied directly to programs or whether family would apply directly to a centralized place, which would place families, there are placed children, there are certainly strong arguments for either one of those. And that's certainly an area where our exploration with our families and caregivers, um, as well as with our community programs, uh, will be, um, incredibly important. Um, I'm not sure that I've exhausted all of the decision made, but those are, um, some of the critical decisions. And I think, um, the superintendent certainly, um, alluded

to another important one which has to do with the ways in which controlled choice might impact, um, and changes that might end up being made there. Lisa, I don't know whether you wanted to add to that.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LISA GRANT:** I think you actually covered the couple of key or most significant operational decisions that would need to be made.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Member Luis Rojas.

**COMMITTEE MEMBER JOSE LUIS ROJAS VILLAREAL:** Right. So that-- that was really useful and-- and interesting. Uh, and so just to clarify, I didn't hear next delivery or not next delivery within those choices. It sounds like we've already made a choice that it will be next delivery?

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LISA GRANT:** That is correct.

**COMMITTEE MEMBER JOSE LUIS ROJAS VILLAREAL:** Great.

Thank you.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Thank you, Member Rojas. We'll go to Councillor Zondervan and then Member Weinstein.

**COUNCILLOR QUINTON Y. ZONDERVAN:** Thank you, Madam Mayor. Through you, thanks for the presentation and the update. And, uh, I certainly echo my colleague's comments that, you know, we all support this program and-- and we're

clamoring for it to happen. Um, but I-- I-- I find myself impatient and frustrated every time we get an update because it doesn't seem to be happening fast enough and it's-- it's-- it's a little bit discouraging to hear about some of these decisions that need to be made when we've been talking about them for-- for many years already. And fundamentally, this isn't that complicated in, um, a program that we're trying to provide. We're-- we're trying to create space for-- for very young children to-- to learn to play in a safe supervised environment. And one of the things that I'm really confused about is that until tonight, we've been told there's not enough space and now tonight we're told actually there's plenty of space. So if-- if you could help me understand what's changed or what's different from-- from before that we suddenly have enough space.

**ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER ELLEN SEMONOFF:** You said-- do you want me to start and then I can let you continue? Um, I think, um, and thank you for your comments. Um, I think that, um, there the issue of whether or not and I-- I'm sorry if we misled you in the past. Um, because as a part of the early childhood associate study that was presented

back in, um, December of 2019, um, the issue of whether or not there were an adequate number of seats between the school department, the city and all of the early childhood programs that exist in Cambridge, whether there was adequate number of seats for four year-olds. Um, I believe we were sharing then that it wasn't a question of whether there were enough seats, but whether there were-- there were, um, seat-- enough seats for First Cambridge Children. Because many of the early childhood programs in Cambridge don't serve just, um, the, um, children who live in Cambridge, they serve the children of families of individuals who work in Cambridge, they serve, um, families who are affiliated with, for example, the universities.

So part of the issue is, um, we don't have the ability to snap our fingers and just say that we have enough seats for-- there are enough seats. The question is how many of those seats could actually be converted to serve Cambridge residents? So that's one issue. A second issue is there's a lot of evidence that, um, being served in a high quality program is a critical issue here and just the fact that there are seats doesn't necessarily guarantee that they are high quality seats. And so a lot of the work that birth to

third has been engaged in so far is working with programs around quality to ensure that there is enough. Um, second, when we were looking at the models and Member Rojas made reference a little bit to that when he was asking about the mixed delivery versus the school department. Um, we were very clear that there wasn't adequate space if we were gonna go with a school department model, um, that there wasn't adequate space. There were a lot of reasons beyond the space not to choose a solely school department model, but that was another area where we talked about the space. Um, the other piece here is we have been working on, um, the development of more spaces and we did speak about that. Um, I believe earlier as you know, um, we will be adding four classrooms at the Tobin, um, four classrooms in the area in the city where we most need, um, more seats which is in North Cambridge. Um, both with at just to start-- and we're looking with just to start and adding an additional two classrooms in the new street facility that they're building. Lisa, I'm not sure if there's more to add there.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LISA GRANT:** The only other thing that I-- I would add is that-- to Councillor Carlone's question from a couple of minutes ago, we have been as a

team collecting and compiling data around numbers. And so, um, you know, that's the key, you know, data point that we'll need in order to make decisions for UPK. Um, what I will say in evaluating where numbers currently are, the school department in the city are subsidizing significantly the care and education of four year olds in our community through the B3 scholarship, through DHSP preschools and their sliding fee scale, through the junior kindergarten program that is embedded, um, into the school department. And so, um, we already know that we are serving many of the four year-olds that we want to be serving. What makes it not universal pre-K is that there isn't alignment between the quality standards across those settings, the application processes and enrollment processes across those settings. And so, um to my earlier point, a lot of this work is about evaluating what our capacity is, um, within the structures we already have and are connected to and then thinking about how we align them all, um, to create this universal pre-K system. Um, so in my mind, it's less about creating something new because I feel like we're already doing a lot of the work already in this community. Um, and really kind of, um, reimagining how all of those



systems work collaboratively together to make sure that we're not, um, realizing any gaps in service to the children in this community.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Councillor Zondervan.

**COUNCILLOR QUINTON Y. ZONDERVAN:** Thank you. Through you. I-- I appreciate that. That-- that definitely helps. And I-- I guess, you know, I-- I'll-- I'll just say this, I-- I think we should subsidize it for everyone who needs subsidy in order to participate in this program. Decisions about, you know, should it be only six hours? Should it-- it doesn't make sense to me to even worry about that. Like people need child care from, you know, 8 o'clock to 6 o'clock and if they can't afford it, we should be subsidizing it. Um, so I-- I hope that we're-- that we're looking for a way to do that and, you know, may-- maybe we need to make it the law, you know, that-- that this will be provided. Um, so that it-- so that it really starts to happen because it's just-- it's just going way too slow and-- and every-- every year that we're not serving these children, we're losing a whole cohort of children who-- who could have been, um, in a much better situation.

So-- so again, thank you so much for all the work

you're doing. And, you know, I just really hope we can speed it up.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** We will-- thank you, Councillor Zondervan. We will go to Member Weinstein.

**COMMITTEE MEMBER DAVID WEINSTEIN:** Uh, thank you there. Uh, well, first I-- I really want to, um, thank Dr. Grant and Ellen Semonoff for the-- the presentation and for the work you've been doing. Um, you know, with Dr. Grant, I know you've really only been here for about a year. Um, and I think you've made a tremendous impact and it's been said before, but I think we're really fortunate to have you here, um, especially at this stage of the work. Um, so, um, and I think that was clear from the presentation. And I also want to thank Dr. Madera for her work together with-- with both of you. I'm moving this forward. I mean, I think it, obviously it has been challenging, you know, that time period from December 2019 'till today. Yes, obviously, the pandemic, um and, you know, transitions in leadership, you know, both, um, Dr. McDonald and, uh, Dr. Slim. And so, you know, it's understandable that that kind of, um, causes a-- a little bit of a delay maybe. But I-- I think it's really impressive, the amount of forward motion really that-- that

you've-- you've done both in response to the pandemic and just towards these goals, the quality piece.

Um, I think that point you just made is a-- is a great point about how much we're actually providing. Um, although still short of, you know, a comprehensive, you know, universal pre-K system where we can say, yes, we are meeting those goals. That's it. Uh, you know, I think as has been said by others, I mean, I support this plan and really my priority is to make sure that, you know, you have what you need to move forward, um, you know, as quickly as possible, you know, quickly as possible while, you know, continuing to, you know, emphasize the need for that quality for-- and I think the next delivery system, a lot of evidence that you've shared some of that, it's the way to go in part because it helps to preserve and support excellent work that's already happening in our community. Um, and also lets us move forward quickly without trying to create, um, things that already exist. So, you know, that said, uh, it seems to me from this presentation that what we really need at this stage is that governance structure that allows the decisions that need to be made to be made so that we aren't here two years from now, you know, with

the same kinds of questions with some progress made.

So I-- I want to sort of clarify that, that understanding is correct. And I-- I, you know, I know you recap exactly what that is. But I think that idea of that ad hoc committee with members of the School Committee and-- and, uh, City Council and others is kind of the key first point of that. So I support that or whatever it is that you're determined you need to do.

And if that's the case, uh, my other questions are-- are there implications down the line? We don't have to get all them for our JK program, possibly restructuring something where, you know, those four-year olds who are in JK are folded into something that's more preschool focused. So that's something that's a possibility that we're sort of thinking about it in this. And also is this where it needs to be in the budget, at least for the School Committee budget that we're working on? Are there things that we need to be looking for? Um, or that we should expect to be seeing in this budget that reflect what's needed next.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Madam Greer.

**SUPERINTENDENT VICTORIA GREER:** Sure, through you, Madam Mayor. Um, thank you for that question and for those

thoughts. Um, let me take the easier one first. Is there anything in the in FY '23 budget that we need to be looking at in the school department's budget for this? I would say, no, not at this point. Um, based on the-- the what we just shared with you, the governance structure is first and some of those other decisions are first. Wm, where we will be needing to have more conversations moving forward is around some of the things that you just said is around, um, the JKK split that we have right now. We have combined JKK-- JKK classrooms, um, that will be affected by this as well as, as I alluded to before in our control choice policy would also have an effect. Um, the way we look at the controlled choice piece is actually bigger than just the UPK, but you can't-- UPK is a, uh, a key driver around the controlled choice, uh, policy that we have.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Member Weinstein.

**COMMITTEE MEMBER DAVID WEINSTEIN:** Um, I don't have any further questions as long as you know, that understanding is correct. I'm just ready to support us moving ahead. Um, and if that's what it takes, um, you know, yeah, thank you.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Thank you, Councillor

McGovern.

**COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN:** Thank you, Madam Mayor. Um, uh, first the, uh, first, the sugar. Um, I appreciate the presentation and Dr. Grant welcome. Um, you know, I-- I-- it's clear that we've moved some things forward and that-- and that's great. Um, now the vinegar. Um, when I first got elected to the School Committee in 2003, I was sworn in, in 2004 and filed a motion to ask the school department in the city to create an Early Childhood Education Center to move us forward to Universal pre-K. That document I filed was 11 years old when I filed, I didn't create it.

And here I am again at another round table hearing how we have to be thoughtful and we have to be strategic and we have to make sure we're doing it right and we have to make sure we do this and we do that and we do this and we do that and all the time since 2004 kids are not being served. I'm done. It starts to sound like the teacher from Charlie Brown. I-- I've heard it all before and it's frustrating and we kick the can down the road and that can are our kids.

And, you know, even if you take 2014 as the starting

point of this new bite at the apple, the timetable says we're not gonna be there till 2026, 12 years. Somerville, you don't have to go to Chicago and-- and New York and Somerville, there is no waiting list right now in Somerville for families that want their kids in a pre-- in a pre-K program and they did it. Ellen, you and I went to Somerville 15 years ago. So, you know, I-- I'm sorry, I'm not the guy that comes out and, you know, bashes the city, you know, in public. That's not my style, but I just can't sit through another round table talking about how we're gonna get there in another 5 to 7 years because other things are gonna come up. This isn't-- yes. COVID is causing some problems now. COVID wasn't around in '14 and '15 and '16 and '17 or 2004 and 2005 and 2006. So what's the next thing that's gonna come up over the course of the next five years that's gonna be the delay?

We have the resources to do this. We do it already. Our city run programs are fabulous. We know it. We didn't go through all this when we created those programs. There was no 12-year process. We did it. And so why aren't we taking that model that we know is successful, we know is working and expand it? And I know it's more-- it's always

more complicated than I think. But I can't-- I cannot sit here and say, whoa, we got a plan in front of us that's gonna be another six years out. It's just-- it's not good enough and I don't know what we do the way our structure is set up. The City Council and the School Committee has very limited ability to do much of anything. I get asked all the time. What are you gonna do about it? And I'm like, I don't know, I don't know. I keep advocating, I keep telling people how important it is but I-- other than not voting for the budget, which I hate doing because there's so much good things happening, I don't know what else I can do to get across that. Six years is not-- is-- is-- is just not-- it's not okay with me. So I thank you. I-- I welcome you. I'm sorry that this is the first time Dr. Grant that you're hearing me talk about this. But I-- I really want-- it's frustrating. It's-- I mean, I'm literally was shaking during the presentation about, oh, you know, you know, it's gonna take, you know, we have to be-- we have to take this much time to do this and that one and all in my head I'm thinking about those kids, not my kids. Kids-- kids-- like me with my kids. I had four of them in the school system. They're fine. But I think of lower income kids, black and



brown kids, kids. How many times do we talk about--

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Your point is taken. Your point is taken.

**COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN:** Pardon me, Madam Mayor. This is 20 years of frustration.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** I get it, I get it. I-- I'm just looking at the time. I'm looking at the time as well.

**COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN:** Yeah. Well, fine.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** So obviously I-- I heard Councillor McGovern and, you know, I think we can-- I think rehashing the past, there's a lot of frustration there, you know, and this is a space we can talk about that and how do we move forward? So let's concentrate on some questions from the body and then, you know, we can-- we can talk a little bit about the some of this-- this timeline and next step. So after Councillor McGovern, member Wilson and then Councillor Nolan, uh, then we have a few others, but we only have until 7:30. So please keep your remarks brief and get to your questions. We'll go to member Wilson.

**COMMITTEE MEMBER AYESHA M. WILSON:** Thank you, Madam Mayor. And, um, thank you to Ms. Semonoff and Dr. Grant for the presentation. Um, you know, I do want to echo what my

colleagues have shared and also just really emphasize what, um, Councillor McGovern has just shared in terms of the level of, you know, frustration around timeline. And while there's been so many transitions around leadership, um, across the specific departments that would kind of spare, uh, head this work, you know, I think that's where a lot of this, you know, frustration comes from. And again, as we're talking about this, each and every year we're clearly graduating. Um, we're moving along a new set of young people across our-- our community, um, who's, um, not prepared to get into those next grades. And when we think about the opportunity versus the achievement gap, this is a clear opportunity for us, a clear opportunity that we need, um, in our-- in our community in order to-- to close the achievement gap. And so when we talk about this urgency and this major concern, you know, we can't play with our kids' lives and specifically our black and brown children and our children with specific learning needs, their lives, right? Are significantly in that state. And so my question really just stems from, when we talk about this timeline specifically, you know, as Dr. Grant spoke to, yes, there's the 2026 but then you said something about an 18 month, um,

timeline specifically. So if you can just elaborate on that Dr. Grant just a little bit more in terms of what do we hope to accomplish within 18 months.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LISA GRANT:** Thank you for your question member Wilson. So when I was reference-- referencing the 18 months, um, what I was referencing was the formulation of the governance structure, um, that was mentioned as well as the task forces, um, in service to three key components of a UPK system. So the model designed for UPK for our community, um, the capacity development, um, within our community and then, um, the policy implicate, uh, policy implications for, you know, universal pre-K. So those are things that I hope that with the task forces and the steering committee to be able to tackle in the next 18 months so that there's clarity around how, um, UPK should unfold in the years after that 18 month period. So, although the timeline we shared does go to 2026 you know, it isn't the expectation that it will be 2026 before we're implementing any version of UPK. Um, I think, you know, the easiest lift for us, um, in the immediate future, knowing that decisions around structural changes in the school department might take a lot of time is to think

about how do we begin to align all of the existing programs that are already serving three and particularly four year olds in our community, um, to make access, um, to the high quality preschools that we do have in our community more seamless for families. And I think that is the easier lift and-- and something that, um, we hope to be able to accomplish within, um, that shorter timeline that I shared.

**ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER ELLEN SEMONOFF:** Um, Mayor Siddiqui, could I just add one thing to that? I just want to say that, um, and I know Councillor Carlone asked about the numbers and it would be very useful for us to give you back information because I do think that there is, um, some considerable misimpression about the number of four year-olds and particularly low-income four-year olds who are actually currently being served in city community and, um, human service department programs. I'm not suggesting that we don't have a gap here for some children, but I will say that in running the, um, city's lottery in running the school departments, I mean, I'm not running the school department's lottery but in the school department running its lottery and in our, um, scholarship programs, um, we are not seeing an enormous gap in access for local-income

children. I would say that the affordability of programs for children and families at a slightly higher income is a critical issue and it's definitely one that we need to continue to look at and are working with the community programs around this as we recruit them to expand the number of children that they're serving at different income levels is gonna be critical. But I do think it will be important and you have a right to get more information from us because the idea that Somerville actually has no children, any no four-year olds in the city who are-- don't have an affordable program. I think there's an information gap that we can provide you with that would be helpful here.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Member Wilson.

**COMMITTEE MEMBER AYESHA M. WILSON:** Thank you. Um, thank you both for your response to that and I appreciate it. I will appreciate those numbers. I think it's definitely gonna help us with having the real full scope in the landscape where we are by having those numbers readily available. Um, my next question is around the, um, the partnership with Fisher College and thinking about the degree program for the early childhood, whether it's a

certificate or what have you. Um, so as we're thinking about again, this 18 month timeline, what are we able to move within that partnership so that, um, providers are able to get the qualification that they need so that we're up and ready and going. So we're not doing the work for 18 months and then needing providers to get qualified within another 18 months and then we're delaying this even further. And why aren't we talking about Leslie College, which is more right in our back door? So I just wanted to think, um, put that out there.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LISA GRANT:** Yeah, so I-- I can answer that question. So Fisher College was our existing partner when I, um, came to Cambridge. And so we've continued that partnership. I will say how we're leveraging that partnership right now, um, is in offering kind of the four key classes that folks need in order to become teacher credential to work, um, in early childhood classrooms. And so, you know, that's been a strategy that's been, you know, in place for a couple of years now and is definitely working towards building capacity in the workforce. Um, we actually are, um, in conversation with Leslie University and they're very interested in partnering with us, um, in

creating some professional pathways for early childhood educators, um, that would also include practical experiences that we do in partnership and alternative pathways to-- to degree attainment.

And so that's a partnership I'm very excited about. Um, and we continue to have conversations with them about that. Um, the other thing I'll add, um, I mentioned our, um, work with the Office of Workforce Development. And so the credential that we are, um, recommending that we utilize for that opportunity is a Child Development Associate, which is a National recognized credential that, um, provides, um, baseline education and knowledge, um, to-- to early childhood providers so that they can step in and be, um, assistant teacher qualified in a classroom. And so that credential with support and, and training is actually faster um for folks to attain. And so, um, is yet another strategy that we will deploy in order to build capacity in our community so that we have, um, you know, qualified lead teachers and assistant teachers in all of the classrooms that we're supporting.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Member Wilson.

**COMMITTEE MEMBER AYESHA M. WILSON:** Thank you so much,

Mayor. Um, and thank you, Dr. Grant. I think on that note, when we think about practicums and service and all that, and we think about the providers who will be doing this work and how underpaid they are. We want to make sure that this is a practicum that they can maybe do on site in conjunction with their work day. So it's not that they have to, I don't know, take a leave and, you know, have to figure out some other things. And my other pieces or just a piggyback on that is, would those programs be free to those providers that would be taking that or would that become a cost to them as well?

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LISA GRANT:** Yep. So at this point, all of the professional development that we're offering to the early child community is at no cost to them.

**COMMITTEE MEMBER AYESHA M. WILSON:** Okay. Fantastic. I mean, at this time again, I appreciate the answers to the questions. You know, again, we're chasing against time clock here. Um, that is critically important to all of us. I appreciate as a social work, the talk and emphasis around mental health and the partnership that we have with Riverside Care. I look forward to hearing more, um, in regards to that and look forward to continuing, um, this



work. Now, I just want to emphasize, you know, even Boston has been able to do this work, um, since 2019. And of course, you had mentioned New York City has been able to do this work in-- in a number of like two years. Um, and so, you know, I know Cambridge can do it. I mean, we have again the resources and I know that we have the capacity. I think we really just need to just get started. Um, and knowing that get started means we may not have to do back work that we have already know is-- is there and actually just move some-- some certain things forward so that we can, um, say that we have a program. Thank you.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Thank you. We will go to Nolan and then member Fantini followed by Vice Mayor Mallon.

**COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN:** Thank you. Is this microphone working?

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Yeah, I can hear you.

**COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN:** Okay. So, uh, I won't repeat everything but I totally understand and I know Dr. Grant you weren't even here. But what you do need to hear is that it literally has been 20 years. My kid was in kindergarten then, he was born April 3rd. You know what that means? Anyone in Cambridge knows what that means. He

missed JK by three days. And at that time when I talked, I wasn't on school. It was, yes, we're working on it. We're going to talk about it. There was like the Harlem Children's Zone. Councillor McGovern already mentioned the Capuano Center. So this is not new and it's not directed to-- to particularly you Dr. Grant, but it's to all of us to remind us of why you feel this frustration. So I won't go into any more of that. Um, but there's a-- a couple two, uh, questions on this space issue.

I also while I appreciate the answer to Councillor Zondervan's questions, obviously, a lot of the child care providers, I was on the board of one of them, you know, they-- they-- they have to provide for their employees who work in Cambridge. But space has always been talked about an issue. It's-- it's why there was a big controversy when we said maybe we shouldn't expand the Tobin Vase Lane. It's why I wish we owned the armory so we could put a separate, you know, our own couple on a center there. The idea of adequate space. I understand that that there may be technically some spaces, but it's-- it is the affordability and-- and-- and it, uh, I-- I remember some of the data we did see suggested that most four-year olds were already

being taken care of. I don't mind a hybrid model, that's fine. However, if it's not affordable, if you're stretching, if you feel like you have to move out of Cambridge in order to afford child care because you're a middle class family, that's not the same. We as a city should have universal, not pre-K, but universal preschool for all four year olds.

And the reason I worry about using pre-K is because I talked to a lot of early childhood educators as much as I love the school district, I wonder if-- back to member, uh, Weinstein's question, if-- if already kindergarten is like the old first grade, like if we make pre-K more like kindergarten, that play element, that social element, what all these early educators I respect most say, we will lose it and we will not actually see the quality we want. So I-- I-- I guess my two questions on the space issue, we really do have to look. I-- for many years, all of us have been saying we need more space. So if that's not the case, then show us the numbers on that because I don't see it. I am-- even though I'm not on School Committee anymore, I bet I know more about the availability of space, then I can challenge, uh, uh, Ms. Spinner to that understanding the

space needs of the district.

Um, and on the quality issue, it's totally thrilling to hear about it. However, I'm interested in your response to the fact that there was a very recent study on Tennessee, a controlled study that what we know is that quality does matter, that preschool alone doesn't matter. My question to you is how are we ensuring that-- that there's a little bit of teaser in the data that Dr. Grant presented saying we-- we sense that our data may be showing that.

I can say that the only data I ever saw on School Committee was that our data did not show that. But the kids who were in JK-- so this was in the school district, even just in JK, highly controlled, supposedly quality programs had-- were not actually necessarily any better than kids who-- who had only kindergarten, which suggested that it wasn't necessarily providing what we want.

So, uh, on two of those, just on the-- on the, um, space issue, I'm really curious about pushing forward on that and making sure that we on the council can do everything we can to provide the space and then the quality issue if you can't answer that now, how we're ensuring that

quality piece, also provide the data that you do have about what whether it is that, that these programs are providing, uh, quality.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Lisa Grant.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LISA GRANT:** So I can-- I was gonna say I can tackle, I think a couple of your questions. So in terms of space, and I know that we've kind of had this thread throughout this conversation, I think the question is about what type of space do we have and really answering some of these key questions around, you know, are Cambridge providers willing to allocate some of their slots for Cambridge students only or not? Um Are they high quality or not? Do we have enough teachers or not? And so it's really answering those questions in conjunction with our evaluation around capacity that will tell us, you know, if we're short on space and if so, how much? So I think that that's something that sharing numbers will-- will help. Um, you all get a better picture of and-- and sense of, um, as it relates to your-- your question around quality. And specifically that study in Tennessee, actually, our team was talking about that research study, um, just today.

And so, you know, one of the things I will say is

there's a lot of, um, discussion around the type of-- of high or what was considered high quality for the students that participated in that program. And there was, um, you know, and there's some school of thought around kind of like preschool being mini kindergarten and having like an academic pushdown to preschool and how long term those-- the-- the impacts of that model, um, can be detrimental. And so a couple of the things that-- that we've been doing internally to B3 to kind of mitigate that and how we consider or-- or what we consider high quality is, um, for example, looking at the pre-K and kindergarten standards that were, um, co-creator by Dessie and, um, EEC around, um, you know, high-- what's high quality approaches to learning and social emotional learning look like in preschool.

Um, we also are, um, I mentioned, uh, a framework for equity and so part of that, um, that's part of a larger framework, um, called Ideal Learning, um, by an organization called Trust for Learning that really, um, has outlined nine principles that, uh, indicate high quality and early childhood settings. Um, and some of those things, um, you know, talk about teacher child interactions using a

play based approach, um, you know, using, um, instruction that's personalized to each child and so forth. And so, um, you know, part of this work will be ensuring that all of the partners at the table can have a shared understanding of what high quality means. Um, and so that's why I think kind of bringing those folks together and-- and hammering that out and-- and having a task force, um, specifically around program quality is going to be really important.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Councilor Nolan.

**COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN:** Thanks. Yes. As I said, I-- I recognize that in effect. So for me, which I've on the record of saying for the last 10 years or 15 years separating out taking JK out of the school district to ensure that the early educators actually can-- can-- can provide that play based social learning, which I do believe in. But I also understand that's what the Tennessee study-- study showed. You know, the-- the other-- the star study didn't show paraprofessionals not work. It showed that untrained paraprofessionals don't work. So I'm pretty familiar, at least with some of it, but I'm not the expert that you are. Um, and-- and on the, um, on-- on the space issue, we should look at that because what I wouldn't want

to do is for the city to start to say, well, no, you can't. You know, there,-- there's kids all over the commonwealth who need that child care. And if I-- I mean, my kid went to a-- a preschool with kids whose parents worked there, so they needed that spot. So what we don't want to do is-- it-- is while we want to serve Cambridge kids, obviously, let's provide more space. Let's, you know, my dream and I think all of our dreams is universal preschool for all four-year olds and then eventually for all three-year olds. But-- but universal also means affordable. To me means free to everybody. Like we, you know, our-- our-- our model has to be high quality, um, for free and the hybrid I totally support also. I will just echo. My colleagues, um. actually pushed to say we can do this in a couple of years. We shouldn't need another five years. And, you know, all of us who were on there, you know, there was the Harlem children's own report, like let's use it. It's 20 years old that we've already been studying this. We don't need to reinvent the wheel. So-- so those are my two questions. Mayor Siddiqui, thank you so much. I know you're gonna push it on School Committee and we need to do more for more kids faster.



**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Thank you, Councillor Nolan.  
We'll go to member Fantini.

**COMMITTEE MEMBER ALFRED B. FANTINI:** Thank you. I'll be quick. Uh, thanks for the presentation. Um, just-- the first question is, um, the home-based childhood programs that, you know, that are home based, are they, um, are they, you know, I know that, um, are they eligible to receive, uh, you know, uh children who get scholarships and how do you see their role being played out in this whole, um, early childhood program?

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LISA GRANT:** Yep. So we do work closely with the family child care community on our quality improvement work. Um, they're an integral part of that work. We currently do not, um, provide scholarship slots at Family Child Care, um, uh centers currently for, um, logistical reasons that I don't know that I know all the ins and outs of, um, you know, from the city perspective and contracting and all of that. Um, but I do see family child care providers as a key component of a mixed delivery model. Um, it's why we have family child care coaches who are working specifically with that community to build their capacity so that they can be, um, active um members of

this, um, you know, universal pre-K ecosystem that we're trying to create.

**COMMITTEE MEMBER ALFRED B. FANTINI:** Okay. And I-- I hope we can find a solution to that because they-- they do, uh, they-- I know many of those and they do work very, very hard. Um, the other-- I guess the other question or the other observation, maybe somebody from the school department can jump in is I-- I don't know what role, um, our special start program has been expanding over the years. And so-- and-- and also, um, our, you know, three-year old program at the -- at the flesh made it. So I'm just curious how those two programs have impacted any thinking or-- or-- or-- because I know we're-- we have expanded the, um, special start program. You know, there are a lot of children that go to that program that are pre-k and-- and, um, so how does you know, any-- any thoughts on that or any observations, how that might play into, uh--

**SUPERINTENDENT VICTORIA GREER:** Through you, Madam Mayor to Mr. -- um, member Fantini. Um, yes, the, uh, all the work that we have been doing, I think one of the, uh, primary concerns initially when this work started so many years ago, uh, was around special start because the, uh,

the quality and the, uh, ability to provide inclusive education through our special start programs is that we have students, uh, uh, typical peers to play with students who have IEPs. And so it's extremely important. So all of the work and all of the planning have-- they have, uh, student services and our coordinator have been included in these discussions, in this work along with our other three year-old programs that we have in the district. Um, and-- and that is one of those, when Dr. Grant describes it as an ecosystem, it definitely is that and it's a very complicated ecosystem because from the perspective of the school department, we don't want to also cut off, um, some of our programs that have done well and are thriving and are needed as a result. Uh, when we specifically speak to special start in particular, it's extremely important that we're again, uh, very thoughtful and planful and how we ensure that-- that those programs are still accessed as well with typical peers, the peer and programs with students with IEPs.

**COMMITTEE MEMBER ALFRED B. FANTINI:** No, I appreciate that. And my-- my thought was, you know, can we make them full day programs? Because I know that they're not out,

that was my only, uh, query, I guess or-- or-- or thinking out loud in that area. But--

**SUPERINTENDENT VICTORIA GREER:** Right. Those- those are portions that-- I mean, we talked about that and we're talking about the capacity to be able to do that and what that would look like. Um, and-- and those are-- those are pieces that do require, uh, planning just because of the way special start has been, uh, designed, um, from very early on with ensuring that the students who have IEPs actually have the longer day, but it's definitely something that we will have to review as part of this, um, UPK.

**COMMITTEE MEMBER ALFRED B. FANTINI:** Good. Thank you. And, uh, thank you very much and, uh, Dr. Grant, welcome aboard. Thank you.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** We will go to Vice Mayor Mallon.

**VICE MAYOR ALANNA MALLON:** Thank you, madam Mayor. Through you. And, um, thank you to Dr. Grant and Ms. Semonoff for the, uh, presentation. I think I would just echo, uh, that having the data in front of us around, you know, number of students or number of children, three and four-year olds where they are just having those-- that data

so that we understand the scope and the scale every time we have one of these meetings, I think we will be really helpful. So since we didn't have it tonight, if there was a way to send that to us, um, afterwards, I think that would be really helpful. I think what you're hearing from a lot of my colleagues and I share it is, um, the fear that a year from now or 18 months from now that-- when we have this next conversation that we're gonna be sort of in the same place. Um, and I'm sure that you share that Dr. Grant, right?

Like, I think the times we've talked about, um, universal pre-K and this project is, you know, you're really wanting a tight time frame-- a time frame, you really want deliverables and measurables. And if I think it's-- that's really important to you and I appreciate that about you. Um, uh, it's clear that we need to be having more regular conversations about this, um, and involving you and your team. And I-- I love the-- the mayor's idea of having a joint, uh, uh, an ad hoc or a working group between the School Committee and the City Council to have those conversations. So it doesn't feel like we're just gonna now go off into the void and what might happen. So

I'm gonna throw my support behind having something like that more regular so that we can keep to these time frames.

The one thing that, um, I really want to call out when we talk about space and I just-- I don't know why we don't talk about this more often is that, you know, if we're looking at 2026 for sort of -- a full rollout of whatever this is gonna look like. However, we decide the Long Fellow School on Broadway at that point will be empty, the Tobin School students will be returned to their schools. And, um, it has been a swing space for, um, schools that are being renovated. We currently have two swing spaces, one at the Kennedy Long Fellow and one at the Longfellow school. I think we won't be doing another double school again next. Right? Like I-- we have-- I haven't seen a plan but I'm wondering why we aren't looking at the Long Fellow school as a place to house all of our four-year olds. Um, much like Councillor Nolan said, um, you know, pulling them out of the pre-K and having it more play based. I just-- I-- I hope that this is something that we can talk about over the next 18 months as we're planning, we have an entire school. It seems to me it could solve a few of our problems. Um, so I-- I do hope when we have these space conversations that

we're being expansive in our thinking and really thinking about, um, how can we think out of the box? How can we really look at the-- at the spaces that we have? Um, so that's-- that's sort of a-- that's where-- that's where I'm headed. Um, but my one question really is around the cost that we're thinking about because I think I heard you, uh, Dr. Grant talk about affordable pre-K and I think some of my colleagues and myself might be thinking we're looking at free pre-K because half of our four-year olds actually receive free pre-K instructions. So, are we thinking about this as affordable and on a sliding scale like our other DHSP programs or are we thinking about this as being free or is that still something that's sort of up in the air?

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Go on.

**ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER ELLEN SEMONOFF:** Sure. Um, uh, what I would say is, um, there's a decision point here and I think we talked about, um, there's what is free pre-K look like, assuming it's free for a, um, you know, 8:30 to-- or a six-hour day. Um, we know that lots of families need longer days than that, even if that's not necessarily what they get all at the moment. And so I think that when we looked at this and again, two years ago, the rough numbers,

not including space related issues, were that it would cost about \$20 million annually. Um, and that assumed at that time that the six-hour school day would be a free program rather than a sliding fee scale program. So I think that just to give you a scale of what that's talking about. So the decisions about whether it's a free program, it's a sliding fee scale program and what affordability looks like as, um, Lisa described earlier when you look at what was included in the build back better bill if it ever comes to fruition and thinking about the state. Um, right now through, um, Department of Human Service Programs, we cap, um, for low-income families, um, 1%. Um, so it's \$1 a day, um, um, for preschool for our lowest income families. And, um, but that the cap is at 7%, which is the national, um, benchmark that families at the top of the income scale shouldn't be paying more than 7% of their income for preschool. Um, so what we actually do here ultimately is a policy decision about, um, whether we have sliding fee scale or free or sliding fee scale for a portion of the day.

**VICE MAYOR ALANNA MALLON:** Oh, thank you and thank you for reminding me, um, where we ended up that-- that \$20



million. I was not remembering exactly. I wrote down \$20 million, but I wasn't sure. I mean, if I'm looking at our DHSP programs, um, for a family that is making between 108,000 and \$130,000 a year, they pay over \$10,000 a year for the DHSP program.

Um, you know, and I'm thinking about Marc McGovern's Income Insecurity Report saying that, you know, you're-- you're pretty-- you're covered, you know, like you're a family of four needs to be making over \$108,000 a year just to get by. So, if we're thinking about sliding scale, sometimes, I think that our sliding scale doesn't always line up.

So, um, I, of course, would be a proponent of making sure that that six-hour day was free so that all of our four-year olds in the-- in the city, um, have the same advantages, uh, as the ones that are in our CPSG program. So, uh, I'll go back because I know we're short on time, but I-- I look forward to continuing this conversation and having a-- a deeper one over the next, uh, several months. Thank you.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** We will go to Vice Chair Rachel and then Councillor Turner.

**VICE CHAIR RACHEL WEINSTEIN:** Thank you, Mayor Siddiqui. And thank you all for the presentation and conversation. Um, the nice thing about going later on is that most of the questions have been answered. Um, I did want to chime in. I had the privilege of meeting to plan for this roundtable with Mayor Siddiqui and Superintendent Greer, um, Ms. Semonoff and Dr. Grant and this-- the Vice Mayor just referenced this. But the-- the idea behind this ad hoc was really to keep, um, visibility on what is moving and to have more frequent progress updates and, um, just transparency about it and-- and with the hopes that maybe even, um, some of these questions that are coming up where on the Semonoff has mentioned like that's a decision point that can come to this body in short order for-- for conversation. And so, um, that is our hope is that we won't be back at this roundtable format having to do catch up, but that our colleagues will be, um, driving and keeping the rest of us informed. So I wanted to share that, um, and endorse that idea as well. Um, I think I'm gonna leave it there, Mayor.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Thank you. Thank you, Vice Chair. Councilor Toner.

**COUNCILLOR PAUL F. TONER:** Thank you, Madam Mayor. Um, uh, the one, uh, thought I just wanted to add to the conversation. I'm hearing people talk about space and capacity and, um, similar to Vice Mayor Mallon's conversation about, uh, you know, uh, uh, capacity we have in our own buildings. I want to go even sort of in a little bit of a different direction. Um, you know, I'm a big fan of the, uh, wild, uh, Montessori, uh, programs, the wildflower schools and we have all sorts of empty retail space around the city. And I think most parents would rather actually have their children in a space that's close to home and they could walk to. Um, so, you know, whether we partner with Wildflower or we even just mimic their model. Um, if we're thinking about different space that might be quicker than waiting for a building to open up or uh transforming a building. So I just want to throw that in there for, uh, food for thought as we think about, uh, trying to roll it out, uh, to the most people, uh, that-- and have it be as convenient as possible for folks. Thank you. I yield.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Thank you, Councillor Toner. Anyone we haven't heard from on the Zoom who would like to

make or who has any questions or follow up? I see the hands that were up. Um, I'll just-- if you guys could take them down, that'd be great. Um, Councillor Carlone.

**COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE:** Thank you, uh, Madam Mayor. Um, I just wanted to comment on the budget. Um, we've talked about what 20 million means on taxes. It's \$3 per residence per week, average tax resident-- on residences per week, \$150 a year. There's no doubt in my mind that all four-year olds should go and maybe there is a sliding scale at a certain point.

But as the Vice Mayor called out, it's got to be more realistic, uh, given the economy, I hope we all know that kids of different ages learn from each other and I hope we really start talking about 3 to 4 year olds and before I move on to the next dimension, uh, hopefully heaven, we'll be talking about two-year olds as well. The studies I've read, I was a slow starter. I didn't have books in my house. Um, and it took me a while to catch up.

I did fine in life, but my point is, I would have loved having preschool early on. We all know kids learn half of what they're ever going to learn before kindergarten. And we have to broaden this four-year olds.

Focus is nice, but it's not enough. So let's really get on the focus here of-- of looking beyond doing the obvious. I hate to say it that way.

Um, I love the staff. I think Dr. Grant is a great addition and, um, we have to support her and-- and Dr. Greer and-- and Dr. Madera and everyone else and-- but push. If New York can do it, I'm done. If New York can do it, I'm from New York 50 years ago, but we certainly can do it. Thank you.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Member Rojas.

**COMMITTEE MEMBER JOSE LUIS ROJAS VILLAREAL:** Thank you. Um, um, yeah, just quickly going back to the timeline, um, like after the 18 months that we've talked about in 2023-- 2023. We have year one implementation. So can you just clarify to us what that means? I mean, we will be having the first year of universal pre-K of some-- at some level that year. That's what we're seeing that time?

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LISA GRANT:** So in theory, yes, I guess it depends on how quickly we can mobilize our constituents to form this governance structure and these task forces. Um, goes back to how we're defining UPK. So essentially, we want to make sure that every family has

access to high quality preschool. And so I think as-- as an easiest-- our easiest lift, as I mentioned, knowing that there are key decisions-- structural decisions that need to be made is beginning to-- to, um, align all of our existing four year-old programs. Um, looking at the numbers and looking at our capacity so that we're making it easy and seamless, um, for families to access information about their choices, enroll in their choice and pay for their choice, whether it's free or subsidized. And so I think that's something that we can reasonably accomplish, um, in our year-one timeline that we've laid out. Um, but of course, if we can be further along in the-- in the planning and implementation process, that would be wonderful.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** We'll go to Councillor Nolan and then we'll close up.

**COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN:** One sentence. Can we as the leaders of this city, please never say that those kids will be fine, those kids will be okay. You never know what's going on behind the scenes. I've just heard it a couple times. Yes, there's more kids with more challenges and more vulnerability and certainly I'm not diminishing the racial and socioeconomic issues, but no kid will

automatically define. They're all our kids. So let's make sure we never say those kids will be fine. We're only thinking about them. Thank you.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** So we have two minutes left and in that two minutes, um, I'll just say that, uh, I'm committed to moving this work forward. Um, as you can see that there's a lot of passion and, uh, a lot of commitment from both these bodies, uh, on this work. And there's an urgency here.

And I think COVID-19 has highlighted a number of things for our-- our world and one of which is the urgency in how we move things along. And I think, um, under Dr. Grant's leadership, I, you know, I-- I-- I was able to have very, you know, earlier conversations with her when she started and, you know, she's a product of Head Start. I'm a product of Head Start and we've-- we've been able to talk about, uh, the importance and I think really under her leadership, we will be able to, um, do this work. And so look to hear from us very soon about next steps.

Um, and, uh, and looking at this timeline and moving the work forward, um, we will do it. Um, under also Dr. Greer's leadership and her commitment, um, and the School

Committee's commitment, uh, we-- we-- we-- we'll do it. Um, there's a lot of work to be done, um, and it's-- it's going to happen. So you've heard the commitment here and, uh, I think there are some unanswered questions and some decision points and we will move forward on that. Um, you have my word.

So, um, with that, it's 7:30, so we have to end. Uh, so we will do a roll call on adjourn-- adjournment, but thank you, everyone, who joined and I'll be in touch very soon.

**City Clerk Anthony Wilson called the roll:**

On adjournment,

Councillor Burhan Azeem - Absent

Councillor Dennis J. Carlone - Yes

Vice Mayor Alanna Mallon - Yes

Councillor Marc C. McGovern - Yes

Councillor Patricia M. Nolan - Yes

Councillor Denise E. Simmons - Absent

Councillor Paul F. Toner - Yes

Councillor Quinton Y. Zondervan - Yes

Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui - Yes

Committee Member Bhambi - Absent



Committee Member Fantini - Yes

Committee Member Luis Rojas Villareal - Yes

Committee Member David Weinstein - Yes

Committee Member Rachel Weinstein - Yes

Committee Member Wilson - Yes

**CITY CLERK ANTHONY WILSON:** Motion passes, 7 in favor, 2 absent on the City Council and 5-- I'm sorry, 7 in favor, 2 absent on the City Council, and 5 in favor and 1 absent on the School Committee.

**COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE:** Thank you, all.

**MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI:** Goodnight. Happy Valentine's Day. Take care.

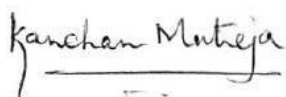
**COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN:** Goodnight. How was it for you, Mayor Siddiqui?

**The Cambridge City Council Roundtable/Working Meeting  
adjourned at 7:30 p.m. approximately**

# C E R T I F I C A T E

I, **Kanchan Mutreja**, a transcriber for Datagain, do hereby certify: That said proceedings were listened to and transcribed by me and were prepared using standard electronic transcription equipment under my direction and supervision; and I hereby certify that the foregoing transcript of the proceedings is a full, true, and accurate transcript to the best of my ability.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto subscribed my name this 4th day of May 2023.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kanchan Mutreja". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Signature of Transcriber