October 19, 2026	CURRICULUM AND ACHIEVEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

Virtual Curriculum and Achievement Subcommittee Report
Monday, October 19, 2026 at 4:30 p.m.
Broadcast from the Media Arts Studio
454 Broadway, Cambridge, MA

Called for the purpose of discussing academic challenge, leveled courses, course labeling, and methods for meeting a wide range of student needs, including targeted academic support and advanced learning opportunities. The objective of this meeting is to describe the current course and staff configuration, and to review the district's history, including previous approaches, changes that have been made, and what has brought us here. Future meetings will focus on discussion and next steps to improve our ability to meet the needs of every student.

Subcommittee Members Present: Member Hudson (Co-Chair), Vice Chair Dube (Co-Chair)

Other Members Present: Member de Paula Santos

Also Present: Jennifer Amigone, Director of Data & Accountability; Heather Francis, Chief Academic Officer; Allan Gately Gehant, CRLS Principal; Chad Leith, Chief Accountability Officer; Tamara Stras, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Schools

Co-Chair Hudson started the meeting at 4:33 p.m. by confirming the call of the meeting and welcoming the group.

Co-Chair Hudson opened the floor for public comment. Given the time constraints, each speaker was allotted three minutes. The following caregiver and community member, Nina Mitchell shared the following sentiments:

- Discussed the need for greater flexibility in middle school advanced learning opportunities, particularly in math and world languages, and encouraged the district to consider more adaptable scheduling models similar to those used at CRLS

- Emphasized that students with advanced learning needs should have opportunities for acceleration and differentiated instruction without barriers related to scheduling logistics

Co-Chair Dube turned the meeting over to Dr. Heather Francis who provided a presentation on Academic Challenge which can be found on this website.

During the presentation, Dr. Francis shared the following highlights:

- The MTSS framework provides universal core instruction, targeted interventions, and enrichment opportunities based on student needs.

- Elementary schools utilize literacy and mathematics coaches and WIN Blocks (What I Need) for differentiated instruction.

- Upper schools implement Flex Blocks, accelerated Illustrative Mathematics, and differentiated science instruction.

- CRLS offers Honors, Advanced Placement, Early College, and Dual Enrollment opportunities, along with the Level Up model to expand access to rigorous coursework.

- High school mathematics pathways allow students to accelerate through courses using a semester-based schedule.
- Advanced learning identification incorporates multiple measures, including student work, assessments, and teacher observations, to promote equitable access.

Co-Chair Hudson questioned why achievement gaps persist despite existing resources and emphasized the need for consistent implementation and clearer communication with families. Dr. Leith acknowledged that successful practices exist throughout the district but have not been implemented consistently across schools.

The group discussed challenges related to differentiated instruction, equitable access to advanced coursework, middle school mathematics pathways, and transitions between elementary, upper school, and high school.

A caregiver raised concerns regarding a student who earned an A+ in Honors Physics but struggled on the MCAS assessment. Principal Gehant acknowledged that certain physics topics, including waves, had previously received insufficient instructional coverage due to disruptions during the COVID-19 transition. The discussion highlighted the importance of curriculum alignment and examining relationships between classroom grades and assessment results.

The group identified the following areas for continued review:

- Examine mathematics pathways and opportunities for acceleration, including comparisons with other districts.
- Review high school physics curriculum coverage and discrepancies between classroom grades and MCAS performance.
- Evaluate advanced learning identification practices and educator capacity to differentiate instruction.
- Strengthen academic transitions between schools and improve communication with families regarding available supports and pathways.
- Develop a plan to inform incoming CRLS students and families about academic support structures and advanced learning opportunities.

The group concluded with an emphasis on ensuring equitable access to academic challenge, strengthening consistency across schools, and using findings to inform future planning.

Co-Chair Hudson concluded the meeting by thanking the team. The meeting concluded at 6:00 p.m.