

April 8, 2026

**SPECIAL EDUCATION & STUDENT SUPPORTS
SUBCOMMITTEE**

Special Education and Student Supports Subcommittee
Wednesday, April 8 at 4:00 – 5:30 p.m.
Broadcast from the Media Arts Studio
454 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02138

Called or the purpose of discussing family engagement in special education. This meeting is expected to end on or before 5:30 p.m.

Subcommittee Members: Member de Paula Santos (Chair); Vice Chair Dube

Other School Committee Members Present: Member Hudson

Also Present: Dr. Heather Francis, Executive Director of Academics; Dr. Karyn Grace, Assistant Superintendent of the Office of Student Services; Kevin Mundt, Director of Upper and High School Special Education; Desiree Phillips, Executive Director of Special Education; Siobhan Reardon, Director of Special Education Pre K-5; Shelagh Walker, OSS Director Pre K-5

Chair de Paula Santos started the meeting at 4:00 p.m. She welcomed the group and read the call of the meeting. **Chair de Paula Santos** opened the floor for public comment.

Desiree Phillips introduced herself and her team. Ms. Phillips who shared the following presentation which can be found on this [website](#).

Highlights of the presentation include:

- Overview of the Office of Special Education leadership structure and team organization, including case managers and school-based supports
- Family engagement priorities focused on building trust, reciprocal communication, and connecting engagement to student learning
- Introduction of new family engagement tools, including a caregiver pre-meeting questionnaire, a common meeting agenda, and a special education meeting feedback form
- Goals and next steps for implementation, including gathering feedback from SEPAC and CFCC, translating materials, partnering with family liaisons, and planning for rollout in Fall 2026

Following the presentation, **Chair de Paula Santos** opened the floor for public comment.

Given the time constraints, each speaker was allotted three minutes. The following caregivers and community members—Tina Lieu, John Summers, Anne Coburn, Ulric Alfred, Nina Jeffrey, Jonah Badanes-Katzman—shared the following sentiments:

- Raised concerns about the complexity and length of IEP reports, emphasizing the need for clearer summaries and better understanding of the special education process for families
- Highlighted the importance of providing families with more accessible information and context before meetings, as well as improving communication and connections among special education families

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- Expressed concerns regarding student support and accountability, including monitoring out-of-district placements, use of restraints, effectiveness of services, and ensuring appropriate support for neurodivergent students

Ms. Phillips responded to public comment, addressing questions related to the status of the bus monitor and emphasizing the importance of supporting neurodivergent students. She acknowledged the need for continuous improvement and noted that the feedback shared would be taken into consideration.

Chair de Paula Santos discussed next steps, including a draft plan for both short-term and long-term improvements. Proposed areas of focus included adding restraint data to school climate reports, improving the Office of Special Services (OSS) website, and strengthening coordination with CPAC. She also discussed future meeting planning, emphasizing the importance of establishing a consistent schedule, providing early notice, and ensuring meeting times are accessible for families.

Chair de Paula Santos thanked all participants. The meeting concluded at 5:34 p.m.