

June 18, 2026

SCHOOL CLIMATE SUBCOMMITTEE

School Climate Subcommittee
Thursday, June 18, 2026 at 4:00 p.m.
Broadcast from the Media Arts Studio
454 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02138

Called for the purpose of reviewing ongoing efforts across Cambridge Public Schools, including at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, to combat chronic absenteeism. The Subcommittee will also consider how improved student and family engagement may reduce chronic absenteeism and promote more consistent, meaningful participation in school communities. District, building, and community representatives will share experiences and recent data related to attendance efforts during the 2025–2026 school year, as well as ideas under consideration for the 2026–2027 school year.

Subcommittee Members Present: Vice Chair Dube (Co-Chair); Mayor Siddiqui (Co-Chair), Member de Paula Santos

Other Members Present: Elizabeth Hudson

Also Present: Leslie Jiménez, Director of Equity, Inclusion and Belonging; Allan Gately Gehant; Principal of CRLS; Jennifer Amigone; Director of Assessment & Accountability; Melissa Bolden, Director of Family Engagement

Co-Chair Dube began the meeting at 4:01 p.m. by welcoming the group and giving an overview of the agenda.

Co-Chair Dube shared the agreements for the meeting:

Agreements & Check-in

- Speak and Listen from the Heart (respect and compassion)
- Share the Air
- Keep Individual Names Private
- Expect and accept non-closure - this is a work in progress (bike rack for other important issues)

Co-Chair Dube opened the meeting by asking attendees to reflect on what makes students excited to come to school, either from their own experience as students or from students they have worked with.

Co-Chair Dube turned the meeting over to Leslie Jiménez, who presented on reducing chronic absenteeism in Cambridge Public Schools. The presentation can be found on this [website](#).

During the presentation, Leslie Jiménez, Jennifer Amigone and Principal Gately Gehant highlighted the following:

- Chronic absenteeism is defined as a student missing 18 or more school days
- Chronic absenteeism impacts students' academic outcomes, attendance habits, and social-emotional development
- Research shows that chronic absenteeism can be reduced and reversed when students receive consistent support
- CPS data shows a significant decline in chronic absenteeism rates since COVID
- The data was broken down by student groups, with continued concerns for low-income students and students of color
- School-level data showed improvements across the district, including notable decreases at Tobin and the high school
- The high school saw a significant decline in chronic absenteeism after implementing the no credit policy
- The no credit policy withholds credit when students exceed the allowed number of absences
- The importance of teamwork, consistent communication, and follow-up with students and families

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Principal Gately Gehant discussed adding more check-ins throughout the week through Falcon Block and student support teams. He also noted that students with attendance concerns receive goals and improvement plans. Ms. Amigone explained that attendance data is updated daily, shared through dashboards and weekly emails to school and district administrators as reminders.

Ms. Jimenez emphasized the importance of addressing chronic absenteeism and the ongoing work to mitigate it. She also mentioned the importance of professional learning and engaging in best practices. The Family Institute, led by Dr. Karen Mapp, is attended by key district members to learn and implement best practices. Ms. Jimenez continued that data analysis is being done at the district level to identify root causes and barriers and the goal is to define specific goals and a robust system of support to address chronic absenteeism. She discussed the importance of strengthening family engagement and communication. Ms. Jimenez emphasized that early warning systems are used to proactively follow up with students and families.

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

- Raised concerns about inconsistent attendance policies and expectations across elementary, middle, and high schools.
- Questioned whether students who are not performing at grade level are being advanced without being fully prepared academically or socially.
- Emphasized the need to maintain high standards for attendance, academic rigor, achievement, and accountability.

Principal Gehant and Ms. Amigone discussed concerns about grade inflation and the need for clearer feedback on student performance. **Co-Chair Dube** asked whether the district tracks the reasons for chronic absenteeism, such as school refusal, truancy, or other barriers. She emphasized that students may need different types of support but should always feel welcomed, challenged, and noticed when they are absent.

Principal Gehant explained that the NC appeal process helps identify students' individual circumstances and connect them with counselors, social workers, deans, families, and outside resources. Ms. Jiménez discussed using personalized, team-based support and sharing successful attendance practices across schools. She noted that the district is still developing a coordinated approach involving school and district staff. Ms. Bolden emphasized maintaining high attendance expectations while providing strong, coordinated support and helping families understand attendance data and advocate for their children.

Co-Chair Dube thanked the group and adjourned the meeting at 5:26 p.m.