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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE • OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL

To: Ms. Donna P. Lopez, City Clerk
From: Councillor Craig Kelley
Date: April 16, 2014

Please include the attached letter that I sent to the School Committee regarding surveys, as part of the record for the upcoming meeting on Monday, April 28th, 2014 under the heading of Communications and Reports from City Officers.

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CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

Craig A. Kelley
City Councilor

April 16, 2014

Dear School Committee Members:

I am sorry I cannot make today's meeting about surveys, but I have some thoughts on how to best carry surveys and to conduct an overall assessment of the District. As always, I would be more than willing to help as the more eyes on a survey and the more conversation about how to prepare it, the more useful any survey or assessment tool is likely to be. Please let me know how I can be useful.

It is not clear from today's meeting announcement or from our Roundtable what, exactly, the survey(s?) will cover. A survey asking people why they left CPS for a Charter School may be different from one that asks why people left for a private school, moved to Lexington, never even thought of the District schools and so forth. One survey of one specific population given once is unlikely to be as useful as a more comprehensive system of questionnaires, exit interviews, mailed surveys and so forth administered as part of a continuing plan to assess perceptions of our District.

I hope we can design an assessment system, not necessarily just one survey of one group of people looking at one issue. Such a system, perhaps done through a combination of formal surveys, exit interviews and forth, could provide an ongoing barometer of how families feel about school climate & classroom management, academic rigor, transportation (some charter schools, for example, are not responsible for transportation and some parents feel strongly about having their kids spend a long time on a bus twice a day), start times, out-of-school options of all stripes, teacher training, mandated assessments and so forth.

While the Council's most direct concern is the money we spend on Charter schools, I feel a truly useful survey, or system of surveys and other assessment tools, would go beyond why people are sending their children to Charter Schools but also help us learn why people stay in the District, why they move, why they go to private schools and so forth. Teachers, staff and members of the general community would also have useful insights that could be gathered as part of a comprehensive self-assessment system.

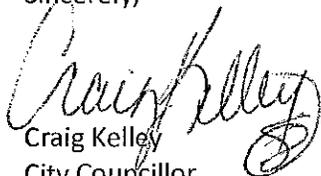
Also, perhaps as important as anything is understanding why people move within the system itself, as a moving students from school to school within the district can make building a strong classroom and school community more challenging.

Again, as always, I would be happy to help on this issue by reviewing the survey(s) and providing insights, by brainstorming about what information we might find useful and thinking of how to find it and any other ways that could be relevant. It is difficult to provide more specific insights without actually seeing the proposed survey itself and I would welcome the chance to do that. Things as simple as the wording of a question, which can vary from language to language, can often sway the answer and the more input on that wording the better. Overall, the more people who review and provide insights on a complex survey like this one(s), the more accurate and relevant the information we get is likely to be.

I am best reached via email at CKelley@Cambridgema.gov. My cell phone is 617-631-4224.

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Craig Kelley
City Councillor
8th & 11th grade parent