



September 23, 2021 5:15 p.m. – 7:15 p.m.

Zoom: <https://cambridgema.zoom.us/j/92461748993>

Summary of Conversation Topics

- Language Justice 2020-21 Recap and Plans for 2021-22
- City and Cambridge Public Schools Language Justice Policy Orders

Present: Chair: Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui

Tina Alu, Ben Clark, Christine Elow, Michelle Godfrey, Kim Goldstein, Irene Hill, Liz Hill, David Kale, Alanna Mallon, Maria McCauley, Geeta Pradhan, Bridget Rodriguez, Ellen Semonoff, Ayesha Wilson, Rohan Kundargi, Shayla Simmons, Susan Breen, Victoria Greer, Christine Kim

Executive Director: Nancy Tauber

Cambridge Youth Council (CYC) Coordinator and Notetaker: Ty Ruwe

5:15 Meeting Starts

Welcome & Agenda Overview

Family Policy Council Business

- Adoption of Minutes (June 3, 2021)
- Public Comment
- Announcements
 - Good-bye to Ben Clark
 - Welcome Christine Elow, Victoria Greer, Susan Breen, Christine Kim, Ty Ruwe
 - Still looking for a Community at Large representative
 - Question from Vice Mayor Alanna Mallon: Is there a possibility that the CaL can be stipend to attract a diverse pool of applicants?
 - Mayor Siddiqui: in favor, but will have to be discussed further with the city management
 - Vice Mayor Mallon: Could it be piloted in this group?
 - The City Council passed a resolution supporting Senate Bill S.040 and House Bill H.3199, An Act Relative to Language Access and Inclusion sponsored by State Senator DiDomenico and State Representative Madero.
 - First CPS/Family Engagement Office Resource Fair, in front of King Open, Saturday

- Event to honor Bob Moses, Starlight Square, Saturday Sept 25th, 11am - https://www.typp.org/bob_moses_celebration_starlight_square
- Story time with Mayor Siddiqui, 11am in front of the library
- Education ReDesign Lab at Harvard is hosting a Student Success Planning webinar on October 6 <https://edredesign.org/events>
- Cambridge School Volunteers fundraiser at Lamplighter tonight (trivia!)

Get to know you activity- Zoom Commonalities

Round 1

- Introduce yourself (Name, Pronouns, Role on Family Policy Council, What you do when you are not here)
- Find **3** things you all have in common with others in your breakout

Round 2 (you will merge with another group)

- Introduce yourself (Name, Pronouns, Role on Family Policy Council, What you do when you are not here)
- Find **2** things you all have in common

Round 3 (you will merge with another group)

- Introduce yourself (Name, Pronouns, Role on Family Policy Council, What you do when you are not here)

Language Justice Recap 2020-21 and Plans for 2021-22

See presentation below

Discussion

- Questions
 - Might be important to involve the business associations at some point, perhaps at the end of the process
 - There is a connection with the Kendall Square association!
 - Co Urbanize has a language equity plan and should be reached out to
 - Will the group comprise FPC members as well as outside individuals?
 - Yes! If anyone knows anyone interested, they can be recommended/invited to join
 - Cambridge Health Alliance has a service that can help patients communicate in any language

Language Justice Policies

See below

Discussion

- Thoughts/Questions
 - Are we balancing inclusivity and language *within* the policy?
 - This policy impacts folks who have a primary language other than English and *also* impacts folks who have English as their primary language but require it to be in plain language
 - This is the beginning of a plan, not the final product, so it will be built on as we go forward
 - Could vote to accept the policy order with amendments that will come after it's been gone over with a fine-tooth comb

The Family Policy Council voted unanimously to recommend the City Council and School Committee adopt the Language Justice Policy Orders.

Next Steps

- Next Meeting is October 21st. The Language Access Coordinator from Denver will be coming to our meeting to share what they are doing.
- On October 6th - Tina Alu, Robin Harris, Nancy Tauber, Michelle Godfrey and others will be discussing Language Justice at Lori Lander’s Zoom breakfast

6:56 Adjourn

Language Access should be more than meeting legal requirements and technical assistance.

It’s about Language Justice 

Language Justice is....

The right everyone has to communicate, to understand, and to be understood in the language(s) in which they feel most comfortable.

Where we are

- What is Language Justice
- Formed Language Justice Working Group
- Launched Discovery Phase
- Continued Research
- Focus Groups

Timeline: Fall 2020, Winter/Spring 2021, Summer 2021, Fall/Winter 2021-22, Spring 2022, Summer 2022

- Cambridge Demographics
- Survey and Focus Groups
- Learned from others
 - Boston MA
 - Seattle WA
 - Greensboro NC
 - and more

Language Justice in Cambridge, Massachusetts

by Nancy Tauber, Cambridge Family Policy Council

Translation and interpretation are not the same thing as language justice. This is an important lesson learned from Cambridge’s citywide language justice initiative.


As Executive Director of Cambridge’s Family Policy Council, I strive to be a catalyst—coordinating the resources of multiple city departments to deliver a more powerful impact for children, youth and families than any of these departments could deliver on their own. The Council is chaired by the Mayor and includes family and youth representatives who contribute alongside elected officials and top decision-makers including our Assistant City Manager for Human Services and Finance, Chief Public Health Officer, Police Commissioner, Director of the Public Library, Superintendent of Schools, and representatives from business, philanthropy, university, and state agencies.

This powerful collaboration produces policy and program recommendations with built-in support from those who will be charged with implementing them.

Our current focus is language justice—the right to communicate, to understand and to be understood in the language(s) in which a person feels most comfortable. This includes the communication rights of individuals with preferred languages other than English as well as persons with communication-related disabilities.

By focusing on language justice as a City, we believe we will see an increase in the number and ways in which people in Cambridge interact with and are connected to their local government, schools, health

<https://cortico.ai/news/language-justice-in-cambridge-massachusetts/>



Target Audience

Persons with Disabilities (PwD)
Our initial focus is to address the needs of those who have **hearing and sight disabilities**.

Language Preferred Other than English (LPOE) Individuals
Address the needs of those for whom English is not the preferred language for communication, either **verbal or written**.

By addressing the needs of PwD and LPOE individuals, **ALL** community members will be **better understood, valued, and have equitable access** to all available services and resources in Cambridge.

Key Learnings (Research, Survey, and Focus Groups)

- Language justice cannot be an afterthought - it must be a **primary thought**.
- By focusing on language justice, we will
 - Increase the number and ways people **engage**
 - Provide more **meaningful** and **equitable access** for ALL - especially those who are from underrepresented and underserved communities
- **It's the law**
- Data from our discovery phase showed **it's needed**
- People who took the survey and participated in our focus groups want to **know more, share resources, and work together**.
- Currently, there is **limited infrastructure** for language justice.
- Staff play a central role but are **not** necessarily **trained or compensated**.

The burden of understanding information and navigating systems is often placed on community members who need the most help.

- What resources are available?
- How do I find them?
- Are they for me?
- Am I eligible?
- How do I access them?

What we can do now!

- We need to focus on excellent **customer service** - smile, speak slowly, active listening, be patient, etc.
- Prioritize **cultural translation** - the practice of translation while respecting and showing cultural differences
- Use **plain language!**

A Cambridge Health Alliance Interpreter shares her experience: <https://app.lvn.org/highlight/3557229>

What is needed for 2021-22



Language Justice Working Groups 2021-22

Are you or someone you know know interested in joining one of these groups?

1. Draft Language Access Plan

Includes

- FY23 Budget
- Staffing
- Implementation Timeline
- Evaluation
- Resources
- Toolkits/Guides

2. Language Access Technical Assistance

Includes

- **Research Vendors** (equipment, translation systems, Computer Assisted Translation (CAT) tool, on demand language interpretation services for phone, in-person, or virtually)
- Write a report of recommendations

Language Justice Working Groups 2021-22

Are you or someone you know know interested in joining one of these groups?

3. Plain Language

Develop

- Plain Language Guide and Training
- Implementation & Communications Plan
- February CET Networking Event [Language Justice Part 3](#): Best practices on developing outreach material with a focus on language access.

4. Language Access Pilot for Nonprofits

Design a Pilot

- Work with the Cambridge Nonprofit Coalition to determine what would be most valuable to nonprofits in Cambridge
- Translation system
 - Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT) tools
 - Interpretation tools
 - Equipment

Language Justice Working Groups

1. Language Access Plan
2. Language Access Technical Assistance
3. Plain Language
4. Language Access Pilot for Nonprofits

- Crystal and Nancy will support each group
- Working groups will meet October - February
- Each group will determine meeting times for their group
- Approximately 4-6 people per working group
- Each member will
 - Attend all meetings
 - Complete work between meetings
 - Provide feedback in between meetings on proposals, ideas and draft documents.

Where we are and where we want to go... Timeline 2020-22



Breakout Group Conversations: Policy Orders and Plans for 2021-22

1. How might this policy impact families and residents of Cambridge?
2. How might this policy impact your work?
3. Would you or anyone you know be interested in joining one of the working groups?
 - Language Access Plan and FY23 Budget
 - Technical Assistance
 - Plain Language
 - Nonprofit Language Access Pilot
4. Do you have any ideas for upcoming Family Policy Council meetings?
5. Any other thoughts about the policy or plans for this coming year?

Draft CITY Language Access Policy Order

WHEREAS: Language justice is the fundamental right every person has to communicate, to understand and to be understood in the language(s) and method in which they feel most comfortable, which includes the communication rights of individuals with preferred languages other than English as well as person with communication-related disabilities; and

WHEREAS: Language justice provides an opportunity for communities to reframe their commitment to residents by ensuring that all individuals, regardless of the way they communicate, are valued, respected, and have the opportunity to participate fully in the democratic and social processes of the community; and

WHEREAS: The City of Cambridge is dedicated to improving the quality of life for everyone in our community and ensuring all residents have meaningful and equitable access to programs, services and stakeholder engagement, especially for underrepresented, underserved communities, and the most vulnerable residents, including, but not limited to, communities of color, persons with disabilities, and individuals for whom English is not the preferred language for communication, either verbal or written; and

WHEREAS: About 8% of the Cambridge population does not speak English very well as defined by the American Community Survey, and that linguistically isolated individuals are twice as likely to be technologically isolated as the overall population, with at least 18% of those who are linguistically isolated also lack any access to the internet or computers at home according to the 2015-19 American Community Survey; and

WHEREAS: Plain language in all forms of written communications gets information across in the shortest time possible, allows more people to quickly understand the message, simplifies translation into other languages, and helps make information more accessible to wider audiences; and

WHEREAS: Language justice is needed to effectively engage with families, and the City Council has already adopted a [resolution](#) to its commitment to family engagement; and

WHEREAS: The COVID-19 pandemic underscored that language justice is critical for effective and equitable communication about public health, and the City of Cambridge translated essential materials and set up a phone system with 7 language lines to support residents who preferred to communicate in a language other than English in applying for Mayor's Disaster Relief and Housing Stabilization funds; and

WHEREAS: It is essential to the entire community's health and safety to broaden language justice practices in order to support all Cambridge residents in getting the information they need to stay informed and healthy; and

WHEREAS: Over the last year the Family Policy Council established a Language Justice Working Group comprised of representatives from the City, schools, and community partners that gathered information from those who live and work in Cambridge, reviewed existing demographic data, researched what

Cambridge and other communities are doing to address language access issues, and developed recommendations; and

WHEREAS: The Family Policy Council continues to collaborate with and learn from other cities (i.e. [Seattle WA](#), [Denver CO](#), [Boston MA](#)); and

WHEREAS: By focusing on language justice as a city, the City can increase the number and ways in which people in Cambridge interact with and are connected to their local government, schools, health systems, nonprofits and other essential services; and

WHEREAS: Implementing a language justice policy is an important step in the path towards language justice in the City of Cambridge and will result in a stronger community with increased engagement, partnership, belonging, and trust; now therefore be it

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and is hereby requested to direct appropriate staff to design a Language Access Plan in conjunction with the Cambridge Public Schools, which includes a shared template, unified strategy, phased roll-out, timeline, budget, staffing, and goals to ensure Cambridge advances language justice and is a welcoming and just city; and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Manager is requested to provide the City Council information about the appropriate funding needed to support the implementation of the Language Access Plan as part of the FY23 budget process.

Draft CPS Language Justice Policy Order

WHEREAS: Language justice is the fundamental right every person has to communicate, to understand and to be understood in the language(s) and method in which they feel most comfortable, which includes the communication rights of individuals with preferred languages other than English as well as person with communication-related disabilities; and

WHEREAS: Language justice provides an opportunity for the Cambridge Public Schools to reframe their commitment to students and their families by ensuring that all individuals, regardless of the way they communicate, are valued, respected, and have the opportunity to participate fully in the democratic and social processes of the community; and

WHEREAS: About 6% of Cambridge Public Schools students are English Language Learners according to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and 5% of persons 5-17 lack access at home to a computer, the internet or both according to the 2015-19 American Community Survey; and

WHEREAS: Plain language in all forms of written communications gets information across in the shortest time possible, allows more people to quickly understand the message, simplifies translation into other languages, and helps make information more accessible to wider audiences; and

WHEREAS: The Cambridge Public Schools is dedicated and continues to work on improving family engagement and ensure everyone has meaningful relationships and equitable access to information, resources, and services, especially for underrepresented, underserved communities, and the most vulnerable students and their families, including, but not limited to, communities of color, persons with disabilities, and individuals for whom English is not the preferred language for communication, either verbal or written; and

WHEREAS: Language justice is a critical tool to effectively engage with families, and the School Committee has already adopted a [resolution](#) to its commitment to family engagement; and

WHEREAS: The Cambridge Public Schools has made significant progress and investments in language access in recent years as part of its ongoing work to be more inclusive, welcoming, and effective in family communication practices; and

WHEREAS: Over the last year the Family Policy Council established a Language Justice Working Group comprised of representatives from the City, schools, and community partners that gathered information from those who live and work in Cambridge, reviewed existing demographic data, researched what Cambridge and other communities are doing to address language access issues, and developed recommendations; and

WHEREAS: By focusing on language justice, the Cambridge Public Schools can increase the number and ways in which families in Cambridge interact with and are connected to their schools, as well as improve students' engagement, sense of belonging, and overall performance in school; and

WHEREAS: Implementing a language justice policy is an important step in the path towards language justice in the Cambridge Public Schools and will result in a stronger community with increased engagement, partnership, belonging, and trust; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the Superintendent be and is hereby requested to direct appropriate school department staff to design a Language Access Plan in conjunction with the City, which builds off of the work already in progress, and includes a shared template for the City, unified strategy, phased roll-out, timeline, budget, staffing, and goals to ensure all Cambridge Public School families will be understood, valued, and have equitable access to all available services and resources; and be it further

RESOLVED: The Superintendent is requested to provide the School Committee information about the appropriate funding to support implementation of the Language Access Plan as part of the FY23 budget process.