

Date: May 8, 2018

To: The Belmont Working Group

From: Dr. Mike Ananis, Executive Director
Rindge School of Technical Arts (RSTA)
Cambridge Rindge & Latin School

Re: Responses to your questions

1. Academic, social-emotional, and student life factors

1a. Is there any additional information about the RSTA curriculum that you would like us to review? RSTA is the career and technical education Department of Cambridge Rindge and Latin school. The RSTA Department offers 12 Chapter 74 - approved career and technical education programs to students enrolled in CRLS. All chapter 74 **programs** include a three-year sequence of courses, most of which begin at grade 10 and many are full-year courses and many are double or quadruple block courses. RSTA also offers a number of one semester elective courses that are related to or connected with a chapter 74 program.

1b. What is the explanation for the two sets of CVTE courses? What has been RSTA's experience with the non-chapter-74 courses? Do most RSTA students take one or more of them during their high school years? The mission of RSTA is to provide CTE programs that will offer students at CRLS access to knowledge and skills as detailed in the Massachusetts DESE Chapter 74 regulations, and the vocational frameworks, through a sequence of three courses as referenced above. Some students at CRLS either miss the normal grade 10 entry point for a program, or decide they want to try out a one semester course that may lead into a chapter 74 program. The philosophy at CRLS is to encourage choice among students. Some of the students who enroll in a one semester, non-chapter 74 program, decide to continue in the next most appropriate course within a sequence in a particular program, and some students decide to enroll in a non-chapter 74 course in a different program, and some students decide to enroll in no other RSTA courses. Approximately 70% all CRLS students have enrolled in an RSTA course at least once during their high school career.

1c. What is the proportion of students in each Exploratory program? Can you characterize the differences between the students who choose the BE-IT versus those who select the Technical Arts Exploratory? We had offered a choice of two exploratory courses for freshmen for about 10 years up until the current (2017-2018) school year. Beginning in 2018 – 2019, we will offer only one exploratory class for ninth graders. As was always the case with exploratory, students will have the opportunity to “explore” all programs available at RSTA, and will be scheduled for five class sessions with the RSTA career counselor to support individual career planning activities.

1d. What are the key Special Education components at RSTA? The percentage of students with IEP's who and role in RSTA courses and programs closely approximates the percentage of

students with IEP's in the general population of CRLS. Every student with an IEP or 504 plan is assigned a liaison in addition to receiving direct or indirect services from the office for special education (OSE) as per the IEP. Additionally, there is a full-time special education teacher who is assigned to RSTA who works with RSTA teachers, to support their work to accommodate and make modifications within their teaching learning classes.

1e. Can you help us understand both the benefits and challenges of having a “school within a school”, as offered by RSTA? To what extent is the RSTA student life experience different from that of the Cambridge Rindge and Latin non-RSTA student? It is important to understand that RSTA is not a school within a school, it is a Department of CRLS – there is really no distinction organizationally or administratively between a CRLS student who enrolls in a RSTA program or course, and a CRLS student who doesn't. The only difference is that virtually all RSTA classes, labs, and shops are physically located on the ground floor of the Rindge (Main) building on the campus. Students who enroll in RSTA are all full-time CRLS students, and their participation in RSTA is no different than students at CRLS who might enroll in the visual and performing arts department, for example. Every CRLS student is assigned to one of four Learning Communities (for administrative convenience and manageability) , each student is assigned a guidance counselor within that Learning Community for academic, post-secondary, and scheduling purposes, and every student is free to participate in any level of academic coursework or co-curricular activity as he or she deems desirable and appropriate.

1f. Do you have any specific observations about how non-resident students adjust to enrollment at Cambridge Rindge and Latin? For instance, are they as likely to engage in sports and club activities as resident students? Each year for the past 10 years, between four and 10 non-resident students have enrolled at CRLS for the purpose of taking a chapter 74 program which was not available in their home school district. Although I have not maintained records of these students' participation in school activities, I have observed that these students have frequently participated in athletic teams, drama productions, musical activities, and other co-curricular clubs and teams.

2. Space and Enrollment factors

2a. Assuming that Belmont applicants scored competitively with respect to RSTA's admission criteria, what assurances, if any, can RSTA offer Belmont that its students could expect to enroll at RSTA? According to our School Committee's Admissions Policy, opportunity for non-resident students to enroll in a chapter 74 program is afforded only when there are available seats after all Cambridge students have made here course requests. In the early spring, Cambridge students in grades eight through 11 request courses for the following year; by late March, we identify those courses which have available seats, and consider nonresidents who have applied for those seats, by April 1. Once a non-resident student has been admitted to a sequence of courses for a chapter 74 program, it has been our practice to allow students in good standing to remain enrolled until their completion of the program and graduation.

That having been said, in the spring of 2018, while assessing the effect of enrollment projections of 2000 pupils on a CRLS building with limited physical capacity to expand, school and district administrators made the decision to accept no new non-Cambridge resident students to CRLS for the coming school year. Even in cases where there were openings in RSTA courses for which nonresident students had inquired or apply, because such students also populate academic courses and participate in all other components of high school life year, we decided to suspend enrollment of new non-resident students for at least 2018-2019.

2b. From RSTA's perspective, is the idea of Belmont students taking specific chapter 74 courses at RSTA while remaining enrolled at Belmont High School something worthy of consideration? While we are willing to consider specific requests that might support Belmont students in the suggested manner, my initial concern is the coordination of schedules between the two high schools. Unlike Minuteman and many regional vocational schools, we do not operate on a "week about" schedule. Our chapter 74 courses are taught every day during virtually every block period, depending upon the course. The challenges of synching up the timing of courses between the two schedules, and relying upon the vagaries of transportation, even between Cambridge and Belmont, could prove insurmountable.

3. Financial Considerations

3a. What other charges, such as Special Education charges, should Belmont anticipate if it were to send students to RSTA as non-member students? District administrators and I are looking at the DESE formula for determining non-resident tuition charges for Cambridge. It appears that the \$11,726 is what the DESE determines to be the cost of the CTE portion ONLY of a student's enrollment. Consideration for charging an outside school district for the academic and other support costs associated with enrollment at CRLS has not been completed.

4. Long Term Strategic & Sustainability Factors

4a. Are there current examples of collaborations around professional development or course development between RSTA and its member districts that have relevance for Belmont? Cambridge is a member of the Shore Collaborative, along with Boston, Somerville, Medford, and Waltham. Within that collaborative, the five schools mentioned all offer chapter 74 programs. In 2003, the superintendents of these districts establish a "collaborative within a collaborative" called SOLVED, which permitted students in these districts who wish to enroll in a chapter 74 program not available in their home district to enroll in that program, If space were available, in another SOLVED high school, at no cost. Transportation is the responsibility of the sending district. This arrangement made many more chapter 74 programs available to students in our respective districts.

4b. ***Is there any consideration of developing on-line courses? If so, what would that entail? Are there other initiatives for new uses of technology in the works?*** At this point we have not made any plans to develop online courses.

4c. ***What is RSTA current and intended future profile and participation in public-private partnership efforts to improve CTE?*** RSTA enjoys robust partnerships with many various institutions and businesses in the Cambridge area in support of our CTE programs. As per regulation, all of our chapter 74 programs include active and well represented program advisory committees (PACs) that include individuals who represent prospective employers as well as institutions of higher learning in the fields in which we have programs. In addition, we have an active cooperative education program which provides employment during school time for qualified seniors who have already completed the first two years of a program. These cooperative education employers include more than three dozen businesses and institutions within Cambridge and Boston. The city of Cambridge has several offices within city government which support the mission of the school and RSTA, including an office for STEM learning, workforce development, and community service. RSTA actively partners with Harvard and MIT in providing not only cooperative education opportunities but other learning activities specific to our students and the programs they are studying.

I hope these responses are of value to your Working Group. While Cambridge continues to address issues related to the near capacity of our high school, we remain open to the possibility of exploring creative solutions to educating the Career & Technical Education students of our respective school districts.

Please feel free to contact me with additional questions and updates on your work.