

Ms. Simmons gave the following examples of private programs that parents may not know about:

- Freelance Players – A private entity in Jamaica Plain that provides drama programs to the schools.
- Churches provide Vacation Bible School, sometimes during the weeks when other camps are not open.
- More information about school department programs such as the Campers program and Summerbridge.

Councillor Simmons said that she sees the task force as doing fact finding about afterschool programs.

Ms. Wong suggested that the feedback from parents referred to by Councillor Simmons could be coordinated with the parent feedback piece of the Agenda for children.

Ms. Walser said that to get parent feedback quickly the committee should take the private sector approach of a statistically valid survey. She said that she knows someone who does this professionally and tries to ask no more than four to five targeted questions.

Councillor Simmons expressed her concern that a certain type of person answers surveys, so a survey could miss some important parent feedback.

Ms. Keegan said that with regard to parent engagement, the Community Schools program does surveys. They reach out to parents and get the surveys completed through a personal approach.

Councillor Simmons emphasized the need to get as broad a representation of views as possible and to work to include parents in Area Four, Walden Square and Jefferson Park, where parents' views are often under-represented in traditional surveys. Ms. Shoy said that in surveys, to get a diverse response, you need to use more than one type of instrument and method. She agreed that it is important to reach a diverse group.

Ms. Semonoff reviewed other activities that DHS is undertaking with regard to assessment, coordination and support of the out-of-school-time programs. The Agenda for Children has a grant for looking at parent feedback and community engagement. Through the work of Susan Richards Scott for the Agenda for Children, there is now a network of forty-five different programs, twenty DHS programs and twenty-five private nonprofit programs. A representative from the staff of each program has been participating in a couple of different ways. One area is the work being done around quality and cross training. Ms. Richards Scott convened a group of the directors of the programs to discuss issues that the programs share. Another area is information and referral. Ms. Richards Scott is working together with resource programs such as the Underground Railroad Theater and the Algebra Project under the umbrella of the Agenda for Children to begin to get at knowing what programs exist. A database is being developed on resources and DHS programs with an emphasis on afterschool programs.

The database is intended to be accessible to public and parent liaisons at the schools when it is completed.

Ms. Semonoff explained that the Agenda for Children – Community Engagement project is connected to the literacy goals to ensure that the programs are reaching all of the communities that need the services. There is funding for the community-based organizations to connect to parents in under-served populations. As a part of this effort, the Agenda has been looking at the possibility of using a survey.

Ms. Semonoff described a couple of other surveys undertaken by other organizations that might have information that this committee would like. *Mass 20/20*, commissioned Bane & Company to do a statewide survey that could give results relevant to this committee's inquiries. DHS has been working with the Child Care Resource Center regarding a survey being done by the UMass Boston Research Center to find out who is in care and what are the barriers. There are a number of challenges related to this project. It would be easiest to work with close collaboration with schools.

Ms. Semonoff noted that the School Department has its own out-of-school-time committee. Lenora Jennings is the Chair.

Susan Richards Scott said that she looks forward to working with the committee. She welcomes additional support for collaboration and communication among the programs and between the schools and the DHS.

Ms. Shoy said that as summer comes up, she will get lots of calls from parents. There are lots of programs – that is not the issue. The issue is the time between the close of school and the start of camps, and between the end of camp and the opening of school. Private camps are beginning to start earlier in June, but hardly any go through the last two weeks in August. There is a problem in finding staff – most camp staff are college kids and the kids go back to college. Ms. Shoy said that we need to engage parents to take some responsibility for covering these gaps.

Ms. Walser said that she agrees. The parents coop model keeps parents involved.

Councillor Simmons summarized afterschool issues that she wants to look at and report to the City Council:

- Staffing
- Sites
- Times of operating – gaps in coverage
- Resources and how to find out about them

Ms. Semonoff said that while all the city programs could not stay open to fill the summer gaps, it might be possible to have some programs that cover those gaps. Councillor Simmons reiterated that the City of Cambridge cannot do it all.

Ms. Scott Richards said that one big area of concern in afterschool programming is middle school kids. Middle school youth are not taking advantage of existing programs, like Summerbridge. More information is needed as to where they are and what is the culture. She also suggested the need for "social marketing" to reach the kids and get them interested.

Councillor Simmons said that these kids have been in programs since infancy. They think they are old enough to be on their own and they don't want to go to programs. Ms. Scott Richards agreed and emphasized the statistics on the danger and the academic failure experienced by middle school kids left on their own afterschool.

Councillor Simmons said that the issue of middle school kids is very important but it is probably too big to be a part of the agenda under discussion.

Ms. Walser said that she is more interested in looking ahead to the next five years than in spending time looking at the current resources. She stated that most of those present already have a good idea of what we have. She said that the task force should look at research on different models for afterschool and decide what model Cambridge should adopt.

Ms. Shoy described some of the ways that community schools try to address some of the gaps. She noted that there are some programs that begin at 7:30 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. to give parents an alternative to 8:30 a.m., which, parents have said, is too late. There are also three eight-week camps. She added that they may try to have some sites open for an extra week in August.

Ms. Shoy also said that with regard to middle school programming, the kids have bought into a culture where they have more control. We need to figure out a program so different that they want to be there. It should not be in a school building.

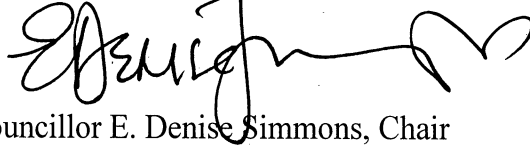
Eileen Keegan stated that her staff has heard from lots of parents at the Fitzgerald School about concern for middle school kids. Only one middle school program, the Young Women's Club was very successful - until it let fourth and fifth graders in and failed.

Ms. Shoy noted that there are some middle school success stories. The Cambridgeport "Odyssey of the Mind" has been a success. Also the girls' science club has worked. Middle school leadership programs have potential as well, programs in which the kids are coaches and tutors to younger kids.

Councillor Simmons stated that the committee's outcomes will be policy recommendations to the City Council and School Committee. She suggested more thought as to who it will be important to have on the task force. She stated her desire to have a task force to meet early in May.

Councillor Simmons thanked all those present for their participation. The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 p.m.

For the Committee

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Denise Simmons', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Councillor E. Denise Simmons, Chair

City of Cambridge

HUMAN SERVICES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Councillor E. Denise Simmons, Chair

Councillor Marjorie C. Decker

Councillor Anthony D. Galluccio

In City Council April 29, 2002

The Human Services Committee held a public meeting on April 4, 2002, beginning at 9:06 A.M. in the Ackermann Room. The meeting was held for the purpose of discussing the work of the committee for this term.

Present at the hearing were Councillor E. Denise Simmons, Chair of the Committee, Councillor School Committee Member Nancy Walser and City Clerk D. Margaret Drury. Also present were Ellen Semonoff, Deputy Director of Human Services, Eileen Keegan, Division Head of the Community Schools Division, Department of Human Services (DHS), Roslyn Shoy, Program Director, Community Schools, DHS, Mary Wong, Director of the Kids' Council, Susan Richards Scott, Agenda For Children.

Councillor Simmons convened the hearing and explained the purpose. She began the discussion with the issue of afterschool programs. She stated that she and Ms. Walser have been interested in discussing a task force that would involve the City Council and the School Committee. Councillor Simmons emphasized that she does not mean just public programs. The City cannot and should not be the only afterschool care provider.

Ms. Walser said that she is excited about the idea of collaborating with the City for afterschool programs. Her own experience in trying to patch together the afternoon programs for her children have shown her how confusing it can be. This is an opportunity to bring the schools and City together to maximize resources.

Ms. Walser added that on the School Committee, there is a great deal of pressure to improve programming for the middle schools. There are real gaps in afterschool programs in this age group. She would like to see a task force work this through so the school buildings could be used for more hours.

Ms. Simmons listed the following issues and areas where additional information would be useful:

- Parental feedback – What do parents think of the programs?
- Workplace information – Information from the staff at the programs who are working with the families.
- More Information about private programs in light of the projected \$6 million shortfall for state revenues in the FY03 budget.

S-125

Committee Report #2

Committee Report from Councillor
E. Denise Simmons, Chair of the
Human Services Committee, for a
meeting held on April 4, 2002 for
the purpose of discussing the work
of the committee for this term.

In City Council April 29, 2002

**REPORT ACCEPTED.
PLACED ON FILE.**