

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES OF

February 9, 2010

1. Call to Order

At 7:30 p.m., Mr. Pierce called to order, the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present included Ms. Bickford, Ms. Seibert, Ms. O’Gara and Mr. Hafer. Ms. Anne Dickinson Meltz, student representative, was also present.

2. Comments From Public

None.

3. Presentation: Math Department

Ms. Sarah Dorer presented the K-5 math program to the School Committee. She began by briefly reviewing mathematics on the National scene. Highlights of this background include:

- In 2006 President Bush created the National Math Advisory Panel which reviewed current math programming in the US.
- In March 2008, a final report was published from the National Math Advisory Panel. Number sense, streamlined curriculum in grades prek-8, automaticity of facts, and knowledgeable classroom teachers were some of the main recommendations.
- In 2006 the NCTM Focal Points allowed each state to set their own standards. (Massachusetts standards are at the very top.)
- In 2007 the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study concluded that the US scored 11th in the world for Grade 4 and 9th in the world for grade 8 math.
- Currently the national standards are just beginning to be created for grades Pre-K through 8.

Ms. Dorer reminded the School Committee that two years ago, the district went through a math curriculum review. She said the programs in the elementary level were favorably viewed. The number sense was solid. The review did ask for better communications between Lane and JGMS. Ms. Dorer and the teachers have worked very hard to improve in this area.

Ms. Dorer then reported on the math program at Davis and Lane. She noted that Bridges in Mathematics is now implemented in all grades at Davis School. The program has been receiving high praise from all of the teachers. She also said that the remaining teachers did not go through professional development but relied on the colleagues to help as mentors. Each day, students at Davis get 45 minutes of math instruction.

At Lane School, they are using Everyday Math. This past summer, Grade 3 teachers worked to revise the first two units of Everyday Math in order to transition the students to Every Day Math from Bridges. Everyday Math at Lane focuses on fact practice and fluency. There are end-of-unit assessments that include MCAS open response questions. Students receive one hour of math instruction daily.

Ms Dorer said this year, there is a strong focus on automaticity of basic facts. She said the new Math Tracks computer program is being piloted at Lane. She also noted that Professional Development in the fall emphasized additional strategies for students to automatize their math facts.

Ms. Dorer also spoke about the math presentation to the Boston families. She said it was well attended and families seem to appreciate the specific suggestions she gave them about practicing math at home.

Ms. Dorer has also worked with Lane School SPED Team to share research about math disabilities and successful graphic organizers for word problems. At Davis, she worked with teachers on an RTI model for intervention.

Ms. Dorer hopes to accomplish these other goals this year:

- Update end of unit assessments in grades 3 and 4
- Revise end of year assessment for grade 2 due to Bridges program
- Continue to improve communications with 6th grade teachers to see how students transition to new grade 6 curriculum.
- Post end-of-year assessments on Aspen for parent access.

Mrs. Dorer also hopes to continue to improve the use of data to inform instruction and looks forward to the possibility of having a math coach at Lane for the 2010-2011 school year

Ms. Christine Larimore presented the Middle School math program. She reviewed the course offerings. In 6th grade, all students take the same level of math. In 7th grade, students are in either Level 1 Pre Algebra or Level 2 7th Grade Math. In the eighth grade students take either Level 1 Algebra or Level 2 Pre Algebra. She noted that these are new names for the courses in hopes being more clear about the content.

Ms. Larimore said that technology is very important at JGMS. Math classes regularly use the Smartboard, T1 SmartView and Senteos. She also noted that math team competitions are a big part of the middle school math experience. Competitions include the Math Olympiad, AMC 8 and 10 and the Collaborative Problem Solving Contest.

Ms. Colleen Irving updated the School Committee on the math program at the High School. She reviewed the various course offerings at each grade and the typical pathways. She said that movements can cross the pathways but often students have to do some extra preparation in the summer to do so. For example, if a student started with Continuing Algebra/Geometry in 9th grade, they could still end up in Calculus in senior year, if they double up on math or take summer courses.

Ms. Irving also noted the students have many computer science course options.

Ms. Irving shared MCAS, AP, SAT results. She noted in 2009 90% students scored Adv/Proficient in Grade 10 math MCAS.

Ms. Irving also reviewed the many math clubs and activities at the High School and thanked Mr. McGowan for his guidance in these initiatives.

She also thanked the School Committee for their commitment to technology in the classroom. She showed many examples of how Smartboards, T1 Smartviews, Document Cameras, and Math Type software help students in math class and teachers prepare for math class.

Ms. Larimore updated the School Committee on the recent activities undertaken to meet Program Review recommendations. For example:

- Workshop time has been given for technology usage
- Training on Data Warehouse to help communicate MCAS analysis
- Grade 5/6 and Grade 8/9 teachers meet every year to discuss transitions
- Summer and school year workshop for UBD development helps ensure curriculum aligns with state frameworks
- Department meeting time is used to develop consistent policies with teachers across levels and courses
- Grade 6 to 12 teachers attended the NCTM conference in October to help with best practices for differentiation

Ms. O'Gara thanked all presenters for an interesting presentation. She especially liked Ms. Dorer's background information on how Bedford fits in with the rest of the world. She is also happy that there are lots of efforts underway to help 8th graders transition to the High School. She thinks renaming the middle school math classes is a good idea. She also congratulated the math team on the high level of MCAS scores.

Ms. Bickford said she is amazed that the State does not have Grade 1 standards and hope they will be developed soon. Ms. Dorer agrees but hopes they will be scaled down and not too broad.

Ms. Bickford asked Ms. Dorer if we have any end-of-year assessment data on Lane students. Ms. Dorer said yes that Mr. Ackerman collects this information in a database. She noted that RTI in math however, is just starting.

Ms. Bickford asked if the leveling criteria at the middle school would be changed as a result of the course name changes. Ms. Larimore said the numbers will stay the same but the recommendation will rely more on teacher feedback.

Ms. Bickford asked to look again at the SAT score data presented in Ms. Irving's PowerPoint and asked Ms. Irving to describe what she thinks the story of the data is. Ms. Irving displayed the slide and described the student's historical performance as "consistent".

Ms. Bickford asked if there was a consistent policy on test corrections. Ms. Irving said yes, now there is. Teachers in the same courses need to decide together whether to offer test corrections and most will usually do so on low averages. Ms. Bickford suggested not just offering test corrections in instances of low averages, but offering it in all cases as it helps students re-learn concepts that they may have missed rather than just filing the test away after it is returned.

Ms. Bickford asked Mr. Irving about the Program of Studies change in the Calculus Level 4 course for next year, including the change in prerequisite grade to an 85 or above in the Level 4 Pre-Calculus. Ms. Bickford thinks that if students are thinking

about taking Calculus in college, it would be beneficial for the students to take Calculus at high school, even if they do it as a pass/fail or have a 70 on the transcript, and that we should be encouraging- not discouraging – students from taking it. Ms. Irving described the changes that are planned for next year. Ms. Irving said that she is delivering the message to students that those in the 80-85 range can take Calculus but should be doing so because they really want to take it and not to take it to solely impress college admissions during the application process. She stressed that Calculus is a difficult course because the nature of the subject, and students need to be aware of this.

Ms. Bickford also asked about the options other than Calculus that solid math students have for a fourth year of math after they have completed Pre-Calculus Level 4? Ms. Bickford fears the Trigonometry portion of the Level 4 Trigonometry/Statistics course may be too much of a review as this material is covered in Pre-Calculus. Ms. Larimore does not feel this way but will survey the students. So far, the feedback has been positive.

Ms. Seibert said it was great to hear about the JGMS and HS collaboration.

Ms. Seibert asked if the department was saving money on paper given all of the technology that is in use. Ms. Larimore said yes, but she does not know the specifics.

Ms. Seibert asked if there was a common policy on calculator usage. Ms. Larimore said yes by department/course.

Ms. Seibert asked if there were common assessments. Ms. Irving and Ms. Larimore said the teachers of the same course/level work together, through the UBD process, to create common assessments.

Ms. Seibert asked if midterm and/or final exams go home. Ms. Larimore said no. Teachers reuse the exams and also adjust instruction based on how students perform on certain questions. Allowing teachers to keep exams help assess students on the same skills year after year. Ms. Seibert said she understands, but does not agree with the practice of holding exams. She would like to have further discussion about this at another time

Ms. Seibert asked Ms. Dorer if there are plans to change to Bridges at the Lane School. Ms. Dorer said that she was not in a position to recommend this. She explained that right now, 3rd grade MCAS scores are good and second and third grade teachers are working together so there is really no need to change right now. The focus should be on helping the students who are struggling.

Mr. Hafer asked if text book manufacturers help the teachers by providing new problems for exams? Ms. Larimore said yes, but for a cost.

Mr. Hafer asked if students struggle and spend a lot of time on learning how to use technology. Ms. Larimore said no, students are very technological savvy.

Mr. Hafer said he really appreciates all of the data that is interwoven into the presentation. He said it looks like our students do really well in math yet he hears from a lot of parents that their children are beginning to struggle.

Ms. Larimore said that often, children do well through Algebra II then the Precalculus/Calculus courses require more advanced study skills in order to do well. MCAS/SAT tests really do not go much beyond Algebra II.

Ms. Irving said that a lot of parents ask, "How can my child do well in MCAS/SATs and not do well in class?". Ms. Irving said she thinks a lot of it is due to the fact that tests are multiple choice and many students are savvy enough to choose the right answer.

Mr. Pierce pointed out how important it is to identify the math paths at the 7th and 8th grade levels so that the students are set up correctly in high school. He recognizes that high school students can change sequences but with a cost – either summer work or carrying an extra major.

Mr. Pierce asked about what opportunities are now available given the longer class block at JGMS. Ms. Larimore said that many teachers are adding a writing portion, investigations, and warm up exercises to their class routines. Also, there is more time to discuss and analyze wrong answers.

Mr. Pierce asked if either Ms. Larimore or Ms. Irving could describe what today's teaching style is in math classes today. Ms. Larimore said it really depends on the topic and class personality. Technology really helps the teacher introduce new material.

Mr. John Thorsen, a parent in the audience, asked what percentage of students in Precalculus Level 4 are recommended for Calculus Level 4. Ms. Irving said that it was a lower percentage this year due to the new Trigonometry/Statistics offering. She guesses about 75% move on to Calculus Level 4. Mr. Thorsen said he thinks the number is smaller and that this year many students in Level 4 Calculus came from the Level 5 AP Calculus class. He said he was concerned that the high school math teachers are moving fewer students into Calculus than in the past and that with the changes proposed for next year, the numbers will fall further. He thinks that it is unfortunate that teachers are not encouraging students to take Calculus. Ms. Irving said that the 85 grade cut off is not meant to weed students out but it is trying to be realistic.

Ms. Bickford said that in the earlier discussions regarding the Program of Studies, the Administration made it clear that the message to students in the 80-85 range will be that they can take Calculus but that they will be challenged. The changes in the course curriculum for next year should permit the pace to change so that it is appropriate for a Level 4 course, rather than following a set AP syllabus for a non-AP course, which should serve to lessen the anxiety about the course for the Level 4 students. The intent is not to discourage students, but to try to communicate a realistic message about the course expectations.

Ms. Picciuto, a parent in the audience, said that parents need to absorb a lot of information to figure out the best math pathway for their student and when to take the SAT etc. She would like to see the Program of Studies and the Policies do a better job articulating this information. She believes overall, the goal of the math team should not be more selective.

Mr. Thorsen said that the Program of Studies does indicate that students need to do some summer work to be prepared for upper level classes in other areas. He thinks that the summer packet and the pre-requisite of 85 requirement will discourage students. However, he is also concerned that many strong math students who have averages (in the 80-89 range in Level 4 Pre-Calculus) will not be challenged in the Trigonometry/Statistics course, which is the only other Level 4 offering after Pre-Calculus.

Ms. Irving said that the message is that students must truly reflect on their math ability in order to make a decision about moving into calculus. Calculus by nature, is a very different and very difficult course. She promises to continue to monitor the Trig/Stat class to see how it works with students.

4. Budget Discussion

Dr. LaCroix said that since the last Finance Committee meeting, the School Department's FY'2011 budget request is currently over the recommended budget request by \$129,780. Dr. LaCroix presented a list of reductions she recommends in order to meet the Finance Committee Guideline. The recommendations are as follows:

HS Supplies-Instruction	(5,428)
MS Supplies-Instruction	(6,600)
Lane Supplies-Instruction	(5,428)
Computer Replacements	(36,000)
OOD Tuition/Services	(68,896)
Davis Supplies –Instruction	(7,428)
Total	(129,780)

Dr. LaCroix said that there will not be any further elimination of personnel. This means that the School Resource Officer, the Library Aides, the Middle School Music teacher. The .4 Gifted Teacher position, High School staff and the Grade 2 Teacher will not be cut.

Ms. Bickford said that she calculates the supply cuts to be around 16% which is very deep. She also pointed out that the change in the computer replacement schedule pushes the overall migration plan back. She said that this cut will affect us in the future and suggested looking for local help to develop a long term plan to catch up. Dr. LaCroix agreed with this idea and said a lot of thought will be put into this.

Ms. Bickford pointed out that there are risks associated with the above recommendations. She said that this is especially true with the reductions in the OOD tuitions because we have no idea what will be happening.

Dr. LaCroix agreed with this statement and said she expects that schools will be taking on more of the social services burden since the state will be cutting back on these services.

Ms. Bickford thanked the Finance Committee for the enormous step they took to come up with a budget that shrank our reductions to \$129,000.

Ms. O'Gara said she is very grateful that no staff will be lost.

Mr. Hafer said he is grateful to Finance Committee and the Administration.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee will recommend a FY'11 school year operating budget request in the amount of \$31,968,135.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O'Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

5. Mandarin Report

Dr. Cindy Crimmin presented the findings and recommendations of the Mandarin Committee, which was formed last year to investigate the feasibility of offering Mandarin language in Bedford.

Dr. Crimmin thanked that Committee for their hardwork and she said that she hopes Bedford is able to offer Mandarin sooner rather than later.

Dr. Crimmin explained that the Committee was made up of foreign language teachers, community members, and a member of the School Committee. Together this committee determined the following reasons to consider Mandarin:

- As a response to shifts in the Global environment
- Cognition and general language development related to a character based language.
- Language transference
- Global awareness (culture)
- Offered locally in both public and private schools
- Perceived as offering an "advantage" to Bedford students

The Committee conducted a survey. Out of the 237 parents that responded, 64% were interested in a Mandarin offering. Forty percent of these respondents wanted to see Mandarin start in the third grade. It is widely understood that Mandarin is a difficult language so students would need the time commitment to be proficient (not fluent).

Some obstacles to adding Mandarin include budget and the complexity of the school's schedules given the small size of Bedford. Also, it is difficult to find qualified Mandarin teachers and a curriculum. Also, there is a risk that a non Romance language such as Mandarin may not be sustainable.

Dr. Crimmin presented four options to the School Committee:

Option 1

Begin as an elective in Grade 6, a natural transition point. This option offers a possible six year continuum with the possibility of AP in senior year. The biggest concern is scheduling pressure. Projected cost is \$15,797 for the first year class.

Option 2

Add Mandarin to the Lane School Foreign Language program. Estimated cost is \$27,136. Scheduling is a significant concern at Lane School, so much so that this is truly not a viable option.

Option 3

Replace one Foreign Language already offered at Lane. Cost for this option is \$7,336. The concern is that the French program at the upper level schools is already very small.

Option 4

Begin Mandarin as an elective at the High School. This offers a possible four year continuum. Again scheduling pressure is a concern. The cost is estimated to be \$20,030.

The Mandarin Committee recommended that Bedford consider the addition of Mandarin Chinese to the program of studies. The Committee believes the addition of this language would enrich our students academically and culturally and is in keeping with our goal to teach our students 21st century skills. Specifically, the Committee recommended pursuing either Option 1 or Option 4.

Mr. Chip Roth, a member of the Mandarin Committee, summarized the work of the Committee as follows:

"With or without Mandarin, Bedford has nothing to be ashamed of regarding the school system or its foreign language program. However excellence does not rest on its laurels. Introducing Mandarin to the Bedford Public Schools seems to us, given the times and circumstances we live in, the right thing to do. Further, introducing Mandarin will invigorate an already strong school system, causing it to look at itself, to develop curricula and resources which may spill over into other disciplines, to investigate new hiring and retention protocols and to position itself and its students to greet the changing face of the world."

Ms. O'Gara asked if there were any grants available to help the town move forward. Dr. Crimmin said that there are some grants but all require 50% matching funds. Partnering with neighboring communities is a possibility too.

Ms. O'Gara asked if the AP test was a listening test only. Dr. Crimmin said it was a test of listening and writing skills.

Ms. O'Gara asked if qualified teachers were at a premium. Dr. Crimmin said a lot of staff is available and can be trained. Sharing a teacher with another district is a possibility.

Ms. Bickford thanked Dr. Crimmin and the Committee for a thorough report. She asked Dr. LaCroix to keep looking at grant options since 63% of the parents are in favor of the program.

Ms. Seibert asked how this work fits in the with Foreign Language review process. Dr. Crimmin said this will be discussed during the review process.

Ms. Seibert asked what other languages are offered by nearby towns. Dr. Crimmin said Spanish, French, and Latin predominate.

Mr. Hafer asked if the FTEs needed were calculated. Dr. Crimmin said this depends on when you introduce the class and that it would be hard to predict enrollment.

6. Acceptance of Gift Donation

Mr. Coelho asked the school Committee to vote on accepting 2 donations.

Ms. O'Gara made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee gratefully accept the donation of a PC Computer from Mr. Mark Morwood as described as follows;

Intel core2duo 2.2ghz processor, 2gb RAM and two SATA hard drives – 250gb and 500gb.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee gratefully accept a donation from Summitt Health and Fitness of a set of used dumbbells to be used in the weight room at the high school, upon appropriate check of the equipment and suitability for use. The dumbbells are made by Intek and are rubber coated hex dumbbells that range from 5 lb to 80 lb pairs.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O'Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

7. Superintendent's Report

Dr. LaCroix thanked the Finance Committee recognizing the fact that they spent a lot of time trying to understand the school's budget needs. "It was truly a team effort."

Dr. LaCroix said that although the budget is stretched thin, the School Department really appreciates it.

8. Liaison Reports

Ms. O'Gara said the work of the Charter Review Committee is done and will be presented at Town Meeting in March.

Ms. Seibert said the Energy Task Force will soon be applying for State grants. An update will be given at Town Meeting in March.

Ms. Seibert announced that November 10, 2010 will be the next Bedford Unplugged day.

Ms. Seibert also told everyone to watch for details on an upcoming Cyber Safety presentation by the Middlesex DA's office in March.

Ms. Seibert said there are conversations starting about the possibility of moving the Prom Stroll to a different venue since it causes such a traffic problem in town.

Mr. Hafer said that there was no change in the CEC approvals.

Mr. Hafer reported that the Bedford Education Foundation is in the midst of its grant cycle.

9. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes from the September 29, 2009 School Committee meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara
MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the October 13, 2009 School Committee meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara
MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Ms. O’Gara made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the November 9, 2009 School Committee meeting.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford
MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Ms. O’Gara made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the January 6, 2010 School Committee meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford
MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

10. Future Agenda

A public Budget Hearing will be held on February 26, 2010.

11. Adjournment

Ms O’Gara made the following motion:

MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 11:05 p.m.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford
MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Pierce	Yes
Ms. Seibert	Yes
Mr. Hafer	Yes
Ms. Bickford	Yes
Ms. O’Gara	Yes

School Committee Secretary

Date

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

**EXECUTIVE SEESION
MINUTES OF**

February 9, 2010