

**BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF
April 9, 2013
Bedford High School - Large Instruction Room**

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 Mr. Hafer, Mr. McAllister, Ms. Seibert and Ms. Guay. Mr. Ben Driscoll, student representative, was also in attendance.

2. Comments from Public

None

3. Personnel Report

Mr. Sills presented two new positions for the School Committee to consider approving.

Director of Student Achievement

Mr. Sills explained that this was a redefinition of an existing position. The position will now be responsible for student achievement in grades 6 through 12. The job is to plan, organize and supervise Response to Intervention programs at the high school and middle school and to supervise all instructional programs in the Support Centers. It will also provide system wide analysis of MCAS and other achievement data.

The School Committee did not have any questions regarding this position.

Skills Center/MCAS Coordinator – Middle School

This position is responsible for fostering the academic and social/emotional development of students through both direct service and supervision of assistant Skills Center teachers. This position was created in the 2014 budget and will mirror the MCAS support center at the high school.

Ms. Seibert asked for clarification on the responsibility of “assessing student learning needs”. Mr. Sills explained that this person reviews and analyzes all data including MCAS. They will not be adding new assessments, only monitoring the ones we currently used. Mr. Sills said he would clarify this responsibility in the final version.

Ms. Seibert made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the updated job description of Director of Student Achievement as described tonight.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Guay

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Ms. Seibert also made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the Skills Center/MCAS Coordinator – Middle School position as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Guay

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Mr. Sills presented the School Committee with a draft of the Bedford Public Schools Motor Vehicle Idling on School Grounds policy. Mr. Sills said that this policy is necessary in order to

meet state regulations. Mr. Hafer said he thought we already had a policy that was updated recently. Ms. Seibert said she remembers discussing a policy in the past.

Mr. Sills said that MASC (Mass. Association of School Committees) suggest adopting this particular version.

Mr. Pierce said he has concerns that the definition of “school grounds” could run into private property.

Mr. Sills agreed to look at this further.

Mr. Sills announced the following informational items:

Appointments

| | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Renatta Leavitt | Teaching Assistant | Lane School |
|-----------------|--------------------|-------------|

Returning from LOA

| | | |
|-------------------|------------|---------------|
| Libbey Hunneywell | PE Teacher | Middle School |
|-------------------|------------|---------------|

LOA

| | | |
|------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Arthur Lew | Science Teacher | High School |
|------------|-----------------|-------------|

Resignations

| | | |
|-------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| Peter Chapman | Assistant Principal | Middle School |
| Elizabeth Goldman | Adjustment Counselor | Middle School |
| Catherine Murray | Physics/Math Teacher | High School |
| Beth DiIorio | Elementary Teacher | Lane School |
| Jennifer Belanger | Social Studies Teacher | High School |
| Theresa Wiggins | Elementary Teacher | Lane School |
| Lindsay Castner | Computer Lab Assistant | High School |

Retirements

| | | |
|-----------------|------------------------------|---------------|
| Sara Buttrick | Kindergarten Teacher | Davis School |
| Terry Kuhlmann | Kindergarten Teacher | Davis School |
| Marcia Hall | Elementary Teacher | Davis School |
| Janet Tortora | Instruction Technology Teach | Lane School |
| Jane Franklin | Elementary Teacher | Lane School |
| Angela Allen | Foreign Language Teacher | High School |
| Linda Gustafson | Special Education Teacher | High School |
| Whitney Davis | Art Teacher | High School |
| Joan Collins | Librarian | Middle School |

Coaching Appointments

| | |
|----------------|---------------------------|
| Meghan Harris | Varsity Girls' Lacrosse |
| Sean Waldron | Baseball – Freshman |
| Angelo Colucci | Baseball – Junior Varsity |
| Justin Brooks | Baseball – Middle School |

4. Presentation: Bedford High School Integrated Preschool Program

Jason Valdes Greenwood, Jayme Szymczak, and Denise Oldham gave an overview of the preschool program at the high school.

Mr. Valdes Greenwood gave a brief history of the program. It started in 2008 with the intent to bring preschoolers back to Bedford from outside special education programs. The program has grown considerably. In 2008, there were 4 students on IEPs and this year, there are 12 students on IEPs. Next year there will be three classrooms with 21 students on IEPs and 24 typically developing students.

Mr. Valdes Greenwood showed a video that showed a typical day the preschool, with the students engaged with teachers and Bedford High School students.

Ms. Szymczak spoke about how the preschool looks like a typical preschool, but explained it is much more. She said the program is a diverse multiage preschool for typical Bedford preschoolers as well as for special education preschoolers. There are Special Education teachers and many specialists in the classroom including Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, and Speech Therapists. Ms. Szymczak also explained how valuable the high school student interns are to the program. Some of the older LABBB students (located nearby in the LABBB classrooms) also help out in the preschool class.

The curriculum at the Integrated Preschool follows Massachusetts's guidelines for pre-learning as well as the state frameworks and Common Core. Various lessons incorporate these curriculum guidelines but are tweaked according to the students' interest.

Next year, Ms. Szymczak will work on defining goals and assessments. She will be looking into purchasing an assessment program to help with assessments on numeracy and literacy. In the past, the students were assessed three times a year and the assessments were tied to curriculum and IEP goals.

Ms. Szymczak uses portfolios for the students. The portfolio will move with the child as he or she moves from a three-day program to a five-day program to kindergarten. Ms. Szymczak emphasized that all assessments are done in developmentally appropriate ways with the ultimate goal of getting each student ready for kindergarten.

Ms. Szymczak said that she has approximately 80 to 100 high school student interns. Many interns move to Early Childhood majors/minors and then on to Davis School Practicum. Some do go on to a career in teaching/education.

There is also a successful before school and after school care program.

Ms. Szymczak said that the program has been very successful:

- Three students have been discharged from special education.
- Five students are successfully included, with support, in elementary classes.
- Six students have joined the Davis School Integrated classroom.
- Four students have returned to our district from our collaborative partners.

Ms. Denise Oldham, Special Education Director, discussed the cost savings that have resulted from having the Integrated Preschool Program.

Ms. Oldham compared the costs of a LABBB outplacement for fifteen students (\$820,000) with the cost of having these students in the Integrated Preschool program (\$232,000). She discussed

the assumptions used for this analysis. She also discussed the revenue generated from the program (\$115,000). After looking at the costs and revenues the following was presented to the School Committee:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| Total Revenue from Preschool | \$115,524 |
| Total Expenses of the Preschool | \$232,533 |
| Total Cost to School Department | \$117,009 |
| Total Estimated Cost for ODD | \$820,000 |
| Cost Savings to School Department | \$703,071 |

Ms. Oldham acknowledged that one problem with this analysis is that there are no half-day ODD programs so the costs for ODD is based on a five-day, full-day program. She will look to see if she can find a half-day ODD program to analyze further.

Ms. Oldham noted that the future of the Integrated Preschool Program will be continued refinement in areas of data collection to help inform instruction. The program goals will also be realigned for a seamless transition to Davis kindergarten.

Ms. Guay thanked the presenters for a wonderful presentation. She asked if Ms. Szymczak would consider offering extended day for students on IEPs. Ms. Szymczak said she would consider it but right now there is no need. Ms. Guay asked what would happen if a preschool student's IEP said they needed a full day program. Ms. Szymczak said that the student would have to go to another program, out of district.

Mr. McAllister asked how did it work out that some positions at the Preschool are benefited positions but others are contract. Ms. Oldham explained that the program had to grow and grow fast and contract positions are the most efficient way to add staff. She said that we have been lucky because the contract positions have been stable. This is an issue that will have to be addressed in the future with Mr. Sills.

Ms. Seibert said she is impressed with the program growth and with the wonderful community that has been built as a result.

Ms. Seibert asked Ms. Szymczak about her wish list for the future. Ms. Szymczak said it would be for a separate early childhood building/center that would offer a full day program that would allow Bedford to keep all students in-house.

Mr. Hafer asked if there was full capacity enrollment, would additional staff be required. Ms. Szymczak said no.

Mr. Driscoll noted that many students are on the waiting list to help in the classroom. It is a very popular choice.

Mr. Pierce asked if only typical students pay tuition. Ms. Szymczak said yes.

Mr. Pierce asked what grade the first preschoolers are in now. Ms. Szymczak said third grade. Ms. Guay asked about the decision criteria used to determine who goes to a five-day LABBB program versus the Integrated Preschool program. Mr. Valdes Greenwood said that there is a lot

of testing that is done on each child. Usually students who require more specialized services (like ABA) or smaller ratios end up going to a five-day (LABBB) program.

Ms. Sills congratulated the team on having such a great preschool program.

5. Gift of Playzone to School Department

Ms. Ilsa Gottlieb and Ms. Melinda Macht-Greenberg came to the School Committee meeting to gift the Playzone (the outdoor play space at the Integrated Preschool for use by the Preschool, the CASE Collaborative Program, the LABBB classroom and the students of BHS) to the School Department. Ms. Gottlieb and Ms. Macht-Greenberg reminded the Committee on the journey of developing the Playzone and the incredible town-wide support of the initiative. Ms. Gottlieb thanked the many, many people from Bedford who gave their time and monetary support to the project. A few organizations she named were the Facilities Department, the DPW, the Police Department, the Fire Department, teachers, the Rotary Club, New England Nurseries, the Boy scouts, Boston Bobcat, Finnerty Construction and Santos Construction. Ms. Gottlieb concluded that we are all truly lucky to live in Bedford.

Mr. Pierce thanked Ms. Gottlieb and Ms. Macht-Greenberg for their commitment to this ten-month project.

Ms. Seibert thanked them for having the vision.

Ms. Seibert made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee accept the gift from the Bedford Education Foundation of the Playzone, which is located outside of the Bedford High School Integrated Preschool to the School Department.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Hafer

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

6. BHS Air Conditioning in Server Room and High School Kitchen

Mr. Richard Jones, Director of Facilities, explained that there is a need for air conditioning in the BHS Server Room. The air conditioner in the room recently failed which caused damage to the server. He would like to replace it with a larger air conditioner to avoid problems and to support future equipment purchases.

Mr. Jones also requested adding some air conditioning to the kitchen in the high school. He explained that this would be a small project but would be greatly appreciated by the kitchen staff. The cost would be approximately \$4,500.

Mr. Jones suggested that funding for these projects could come from a \$73,000 building funds balance (from the renovation of the school).

Mr. Sills mentioned that he has hired a consultant to review the entire Network. Mr. Pierce therefore wondered if it would make sense to hold off on upgrading the air conditioning in the server room until the consultant had a chance to review the Server room as part of its overall review. Mr. Pierce said he was concerned about spending \$14,000 on air conditioning while a Network review was about to start. Mr. Sills said that the review would start tomorrow, but did not know how long it would take to complete. He will go back and discuss with the Technology Department to see how long the review will take and the School Committee can decide on the request after they have more information.

Mr. Pierce suggested that Mr. Jones set up alarms that will notify us if the existing air conditioning fails again. Mr. Jones agreed.

Ms. Seibert made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee allocate up to \$4,500 from the BHS Building Fund in order to air condition the kitchen office area at the high school.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Hafer

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

7. Presentation: Superintendent's Entry Process and Observations

Mr. Sills reported on his deliberate process of becoming Bedford's new Superintendent of Schools. He gave a brief overview to the School Committee and agreed to post a detailed report on the website (which he shared earlier with the School Committee).

Mr. Sills said that in order to understand the school system, he spent a portion of the last six months reviewing materials, observing classes, and meeting with a wide-range of individuals and small groups. Mr. Sills thanked everyone who took the time to meet with him over the last several months.

In summary, Mr. Sills believes that the mission of the Bedford Public Schools should drive everything the school department does. As a result of this process, he identified the strengths and challenges in the instructional core of Bedford Public Schools.

Strengths:

- Talented, hardworking, and collaborative teachers
- Leadership focus on higher order thinking and student-centered learning
- Growing focus on coherence
- Innovative district

Challenges:

- Common definition of rigor and standards-based instruction. Work needs to be done on building this culture.
- Full integration of minds-on instruction where students do the thinking.
- All level classes should be enriching.
- Elementary level (K-5) needs well-articulated curriculum.
- K-5 needs agreed upon learning outcomes.
- Use "Understanding by Design" planning to identify outcomes first, then figure out assessments, then create the learning experience.
- Need for constant assessment to enhance learning and teaching. Constant feedback is required.
- Increase integration of technology at the elementary and middle school levels.

Mr. Sills noted that the Schools are committed to students' growth as whole people. Approximately ten years ago, the District began to hire adjustment counselors and created a wide range of special education and regular education programs to meet the needs of increasingly complex students. However, some challenges still exist. More time is needed at the kindergarten level so that there is time for play and social-emotional development while meeting the Common Core curriculum demands. Also, there are increased academic expectations at all levels and there is competing demands on limited common meeting time for teachers.

Mr. Sills also noted that there is excessive student stress, particularly at the high school despite professional development and the availability of support personnel.

Mr. Sills pointed out that there has been a paradigm shift to standards-based education. Bedford has embraced the belief that all kids can and should master our educational program. Teachers are expected to differentiate their instruction to meet the multiple learning needs in each classroom. Bedford is committed to equal and equitable access to educational opportunities and success and offers a welcoming and inclusive environment that recognizes commonality and respects individual differences. Bedford schools have created numerous programs and practices such as the Skills Center, Tiered Intervention, the Gifted and Talented Program, and robust in-house special education programs to name a few.

Mr. Sills noted that data shows that not all students are succeeding. Goals include:

- Ensuring all students reach number fluency and are able to read by third grade.
- Level four and five classes have a very large gap in some courses and this needs to be remedied.
- Unintentional tracking results especially in the middle school.
- Continue to increase the numbers of African American students in level 5 classes.
- ESL needs to be increased in the elementary schools
- Need more minority teachers.

Mr. Sills also concluded that Bedford has a long history of nurturing a positive, professional adult culture in schools. Across all four schools, he sees uncompromising professionalism, collaboration and commitment. However a few challenges exist.

Organizational and School Culture Challenges:

- The IT Department faces significant challenges following the departure of the long-time network administrator.
- The schedule at JGMS has constrained interventions and caused some unintended grouping.
- The elementary schools struggle to integrate science and social studies into learning time.
- The 90-minute literacy block with its requisite coordination of specialists creates a structure that many elementary teachers find to be too rigid.
- Many teachers are struggling to meet the disparate needs for remediation and enrichment.
- Teacher coordination of early release Wednesdays needs to be improved.

Finally, Mr. Sills discussed external opportunities and challenges. Challenges with technology include making it more available at the lower grades and the distractibility on thinking and social media. Also major mandates that are impacting teaching and learning include the new Educator Evaluation System, RETELL, the Common Core and the new PARCC assessments. Bedford is trying to use parts of these initiatives to the best of its ability without derailing local work.

Moving forward, Mr. Sills intends to focus on the instructional core. He will strive to identify root causes of the areas of challenge so he can make recommendations for improvement. He will also review the Strategic Plan and make any recommended modifications to the School Committee.

Mr. McAllister suggested that Mr. Sills share the twelve-page report with all teachers.

Ms. Seibert said that Mr. Sills made some very good observations as the report captures many the School Committee concerns.

Mr. Hafer thanked Mr. Sills and the amount of work he put into the process. He asked Mr. Sills to comment on his leadership team. Mr. Sills said that it is a very strategic team and all have the same vision and goals. It is a very powerful and talented group.

Mr. Hafer said that we always talk about the challenges of those students who struggle. He said that we should not overlook all the kids that do well.

Mr. Pierce suggested that the School Committee needs to do a better job of explaining how different education is today (i.e. higher order thinking) especially at Town Meeting. He feels that the community needs to understand why we are striving for these goals.

Mr. Sills said that Bedford is unique and is very successful despite this uniqueness. Students need to know something and understand it and then do something with it. But now, all students need to do this. Years ago, teachers taught a lesson and some students got it and others did not. It is very different today.

8. Vote: School Choice

Ms. Siebert made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee not participate in the School Choice Program for the 2013-2014 school year. Among the reasons for not participating is the belief that the School Choice acerbates or at least reinforces inequities between wealthier and poorer school systems and we are at enrollment capacity in at least two of our buildings.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Hafer

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

9. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Sills noted that Lane School is involved in the Cradles to Crayon project. Also, BHS's annual Shakespeare festival is happening this week.

10. Liaison Reports

None

11. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Seibert made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the January 22, 2013 School Committee meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Hafer

MOTION APPROVED: 3-0-2

Ms. Seibert made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the January 29, 2013 meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Hafer

MOTION APPROVED: 3-0-2

12. Future Agenda

Mr. McAllister would live to see the savings of in-house preschool program compared to another like program rather than the LABBB program. Mr. Sills agreed to have Ms. Oldham work on this.

13. Adjournment

Mr. Hafer made the following motion:

MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 10:50 pm, not to reopen.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Seibert

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Hafer **Yes**

Mr. Pierce **Yes**

Ms. Seibert **Yes**

Mr. McAllister **Yes**

Ms. Guay **Yes**

School Committee Secretary

Date _____

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

April 9, 2013

Exhibits/Documents

- Draft Job Description for Director of Student Achievement
- Draft Job Description for Skills Center/MCAS Coordinator – Middle School
- Draft BPS Policy “Motor Vehicle Idling on School Grounds”
- Presentation: Bedford High School Integrated Preschool
- Presentation: Playzone
- Presentation: Superintendent’s Entry Report dated April 9, 2013

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Executive Session
April 9, 2013