

**BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF  
April 24, 2012**

**Bedford High School - Large Instruction Room**

**1. Call to Order**

At 7:35 p.m., Ms. Seibert called to order the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present included Mr. Hafer, Ms. O’Gara, Mr. Pierce, and Ms. Bickford

**2. Comments from the Public**

None

**3. Personnel Report**

Dr. LaCroix presented for approval revised job descriptions that were discussed at the last School Committee meeting.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

**MOVED: That the School Committee approve the job description of Early Childhood Coordinator as presented this evening.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara**

**MOTION APPROVED 5-0**

Ms. O’Gara made the following motion:

**MOVED: That the School Committee approve the job description of Educational Assistant – Student and Teacher Support as presented this evening.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford**

**MOTION APPROVED: 5-0**

Dr. LaCroix also presented an update to the job description of Assistant Superintendent of Schools. She explained that she wants to remove the requirement of a Director of Special Education licensure from the description as well as all special education responsibility. She feels that this requirement will be an impediment to finding an interim Assistant Superintendent. Dr. LaCroix said that this position originally did not have Special Education responsibilities.

School Committee members gave Dr. LaCroix some other minor edits.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

**MOVED: That the School Committee approve the Assistant Superintendent job description as amended.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce**

**MOTION APPROVED: 5-0**

Dr. LaCroix also presented a new job description of Network Administrator. This position is being revised because Ken Lord, current Network Administrator, is resigning. Dr. LaCroix decided to split the position into two distinct positions – a Network Administrator and a Data Compliance Specialist.

Dr. LaCroix asked the School Committee to review these two descriptions and approve to post them tonight in order to begin the search for replacing Mr. Lord, as he will be leaving in June.

Dr. LaCroix did note that the Master Schedule development piece of Mr. Lord's job still needs to be written up separately. She noted that the schedule will be 90% complete when he leaves. This responsibility may end up being a stipend position.

Mr. Pierce asked Dr. LaCroix about what was going to happen with the high school's iPad and wireless network infrastructure projects. Dr. LaCroix said that these projects are very important to Mr. Lord and he has agreed to come back in July to ensure the design for the wireless upgrade is correct. Marblehead Public Schools, Mr. Lord's new employer, has extended us this professional courtesy.

Dr. LaCroix explained that these new changes may end up being \$10-15,000 over budget and funds to cover it will come from personnel.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

**MOVED: That the School Committee approve the job description of Network Administrator 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 job description of Data Compliance Specialist as amended.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce**

**MOTION APPROVED: 5-0**

Dr. LaCroix announced the following informational items:

Jill Beers was appointed teacher at Davis School.

Susan Doan, Teaching Assistant from the High School and Pam Williams, Teaching Assistant from Davis School, resigned.

#### **4. Program Review: Art Department**

Aleta Devaney, Art Program Director, and Diana Adams, a member of the visiting team from Acton and Acton-Boxborough, presented the Visual Arts Program Review Visiting Team Report.

Ms. Devaney explained that the visiting team spent three intensive days in March working closely with Bedford's K-12 Art staff, administrators, support staff, students and parents as part of a comprehensive peer review of Bedford's K-12 Art program. There were six members of the visiting team and they worked in pairs, one pair each for elementary, middle and high schools.

Ms. Devaney and Ms. Adams reviewed highlights from the team's observations, commendations, and recommendations.

#### Davis and Lane Schools

Commendations include

- Dedicated Art Director that expresses strong support.
- Dedicated and passionate art teachers.

- Students who are engaged in learning and work with confidence.
- Parents who are knowledgeable about and supportive of the art program.
- Good teaching and learning spaces.
- Sufficient budget.
- Art Link support of the annual k-12 art show.

Some recommendations include:

- Length of class periods needs to be consistent across the elementary level.
- Class sizes of 23-24 at Lane present difficulties for the teacher to support students individually.
- Ideally, classroom teachers and art teachers' work together to ensure students arrive on time.
- Ideally, there should be at least 5 minutes between art classes at the same grade level and 10-15 minutes for different grade levels. This allows art teachers to reflect on practice and to have time to set up and take down materials.
- Provide teachers training in UBD.
- Provide time for the two elementary art teachers to meet together to develop learning goals and develop common assessments.
- Provide more technology in the art classrooms to facilitate instruction and to help students create artwork.
- Provide staff training in instructional strategies for using technology.
- Administrators, teachers, parents and students need to be cognizant of language used in describing Arts. "Non-core" and "Non-Academic" send subtle, yet powerful messages about the value and role of Arts in education.

### Middle School

Commendations include:

- Art teachers are very cognizant of middle school learner needs and interests.
- Classroom atmosphere is welcoming and conducive to artistic risk taking.
- Students look forward to projects in the upper grades.
- Strong communication between the middle school art teachers.
- Piloting the use of UBD format for documenting curriculum.

Recommendations include:

- Develop curriculum maps – vertical curriculum flow is needed.
- Provide professional development on assessments to prepare for state's new requirement.
- Consider more technology for student use in the art rooms.
- It would be helpful to set up a transitional meeting with the new administration to clarify issues around assessment of art teaching and curriculum.
- The department needs to emphasize the connections between art lessons and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills.
- In the curriculum, artists could be placed in historical and cultural context.
- Consider moving ceramics to the regular art curriculum so that all students are able to have experiences with clay construction.

### High School

Commendations include:

- Strong administrative support for the Art program.

- Highly favorable reviews for the program by Guidance, Students, Parents.
- Flexibility by the department in scheduling to meet students' individual needs. For example, multiple sections of kids in one class are managed nicely by teachers. This is a great opportunity for students to choose what they want.
- Strong skills development in art courses.
- Regular peer reviews through critiques.
- Humanities course team-taught by art, music and English.
- Good class size.
- Excellent facilities and centralized located display area.
- Comprehensive art show is high praised by students, parents, teachers and administration.

Recommendations:

- Develop curriculum maps for each course.
- Create flowchart in Program of Studies.
- Continue with documenting curriculum in UBD format.
- Coordinate learning taught by different teachers of same course.
- Better communicate the value of the visual arts to the wider school community – its rigor and relevance.
- Promote the learning that takes place in the arts – how the thinking skills that are developed are beneficial to the general education of the student.
- Incorporate art historical/arts appreciation content to strengthen relevance of the discipline.
- Devise more interdisciplinary work.
- Update the computer lab.
- Incorporate the use of iPads.
- Develop an AP Art course to further the respect of visual arts.
- Improve clarity of the learning objectives – “the big WHY”.
- Provide more written feedback on student work (summative assessment) – clarity on why students receive the grades they did.
- Consider starting a Chapter of the National Arts Honor Society.

Mr. Hafer thanked Ms. Devaney and Ms. Adams for presenting such an impressive report. He thinks that there were some great suggestions for improvement. He thinks AP Art and the National Art Honor Society sounds like a good idea, especially for those who major and go on to study art.

Mr. Pierce said that the report is a great road map for our program. He agrees that growing class size at Lane is becoming a concern. However, Mr. Pierce said he would not want to see an increase in computers in the art classrooms especially at the elementary level. He would rather see kids use their hands at this developmental point.

Ms. Devaney agrees overall with this thought but thinks an introduction about technology/creativity would be good. She noted that students still like hands on art – more than 200 students signed up for ceramics at the high school next year. She does appreciate the availability of technology in the high school classroom and noted that “You Tube” is a great way to share art.

Ms. O’Gara agreed that this was a very detailed and helpful report. However, she recognizes that many of the recommendations will require more time and she is not sure how this will happen.

Ms. Bickford said that it is clear that the art department has a strong foundation and is a work in process and that this is a good thing. She also noted that it is clear how strong community support is. She does have the same concerns about computers in the elementary art classroom because she feels elementary students really need to focus on fine motor skills.

Ms. Seibert agreed that the report is a guide and that there is no expectation on her part that changes will happen overnight.

Ms. Devaney explained that she will use the report to formulate an Action Plan that will be shared in the fall.

Ms. Taymore said she appreciates the visiting team's input and Ms. Devaney's commitment to the program review process.

## **5. Presentation: Math Common Core**

Sara Dorer (Elementary Math Coordinator), Karen Burstein (Middle School Math Coordinator), and Christine Larimore (High School Math Coordinator) reviewed important changes in the Massachusetts Math frameworks and Common Core State standards.

Ms. Dorer explained that Massachusetts began to revise the existing curriculum frameworks but in 2010, the state adopted the Common Core Standards so the two initiatives came together. As a result, full compliance to the new Common Core is expected next school year (2012-2013).

Overall, math content topics have been reduced, but the depth of study has increased. Ms. Dorer does not expect a lot of changes in the K-5 level. However, there will be a lot of change at the middle school level. The push is to teach Algebra to all 8<sup>th</sup> graders. In High School the biggest change will be an emphasis on modeling.

Ms. Dorer explained that as a result of this curriculum change, state math assessments will also change. In 2014, there will be an entirely new math MCAS test. Ms. Dorer further explained that there is a lot of uncertainty in the field about what and who will be developing the math assessment for 2014. Right now, there is a consortium of 25 states committed to "building a next generation assessment system" for elementary and secondary schools.

Ms. Dorer explained that the Common Core has eight standards for mathematical practice:

1. Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
2. Reason abstractly and quantitatively.
3. Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
4. Model with mathematics.
5. Use appropriate tools strategically.
6. Attend to precision.
7. Look for and make use of structure.
8. Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

Ms. Dorer then explained some specific curriculum changes expected at the elementary level: For example, at Kindergarten, there are two critical areas – number sense and geometry (shapes). In grade five, students will develop fluency with addition and subtraction of fractions. There will be an increased emphasis overall on having students prove their answers. Also, there will be a

focus on automaticity of basic facts, something Bedford has already incorporated into its curriculum.

Ms. Burstein discussed some of the changes planned for the middle school level. For example in sixth grade, students will be getting ready for Algebra. By eighth grade, all students will have exposure to Algebra. One critical area in grade eight is to understand and apply the Pythagorean Theorem.

Ms. Dorer and Ms. Burstein described some of the implications of all of these changes in the math curriculum.

At the elementary level:

- Professional development needed of the new frameworks.
- Align Bridges to the Common Core Standards.
- Adjust scope and sequence of curriculum.
- Redo beginning, unit and end-of-year assessments.
- At Lane align assessments with what will be assessed on MCAS.
- Lane is looking to adopt a new curriculum that is aligned with Common Core.

At the middle school level:

- Ongoing alignment of units and prioritizing with what will be on MCAS.
- Standards previously in grades 5,7 and 8 have now moved to grade 6.
- Grade 8 curriculum will include a significant amount of Algebra.
- Grade 8 Algebra 1 course will have to cover more content.
- Considering flexible grouping or leveling in grades 6.
- Adding an Algebra 1A course in grade 8 – a slower paced Algebra 1 class. This will be targeting students to take Continuing Algebra in High School.
- Also looking at ways to offer summer work to students to help students retain math in the summer. That way, the next year can start offering new material quicker.

Ms. Larimore addressed some of the changes in store for the high school. She said that the changes in the middle school will have a big effect on the high school math classes. For example, she expects many more students to enroll in the Continuing Algebra class. Also, she is thinking about removing the Trigonometry/Statistics course and replacing it with an Introduction to Calculus class. (Statistics will be covered in middle school and will be embedded in other high school math classes.) She is also concerned about not knowing what will be assessed on MCAS in the high school.

Ms. Larimore also discussed two new partnerships at the high school – Wolfram and ASSISTments. BHS is working with Wolfram, a platform that can be used to develop our own math text books. BHS is also working with WPI and testing their product named “ASSISTments”. This product can be used for formative assessments and will give instant feedback to students. For example, ASSISTments can be used on the iPad and can immediately let the teacher know how many students got question #2 wrong. The teacher can then tell this group of students to work on material related to question #2. ASSISTments can also be used for nightly homework.

Ms. Taymore said that the math team has been very nervous about the challenges they face in 2014. She said that the goal of tonight’s presentation is to keep the School Committee abreast of all the changes coming to the math department in all of Bedford’s schools.

Mr. Hafer asked about the math team's overall feeling about the changes. Ms. Larimore said that the answer is different for each grade level. Many grades will do OK with the changes but others, like those in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, are very concerned about the number of changes. The team is not sure the kids in the middle school are truly developmentally ready to take on the new material.

Mr. Hafer commented that it is obvious that the rigor of the material is increasing but he thinks the amount of the content is overwhelming, especially if scaffolding is not there.

Mr. Hafer also commented that he hopes the assessment tools will be used to adjust teaching and not used to penalize the students (and not effect report card grades).

Mr. Hafer noted that with the intersection of new curriculum and use of technology that it will be important to remember that the Bedford Education Foundation can be a good resource for help.

Mr. Pierce asked whether the future will be MCAS assessments or something else. Ms. Dorer said that this is truly the big question. She is trying to stay on top of what's happening because there are lots of unknowns with lots of implications.

Mr. Pierce said that Statistics is probably the biggest everyday use of math for adults and he is concerned that it is getting lost. "Algebra is not always used after school but probability and statistics are."

Mr. Pierce asked whether Bedford should be thinking about a summer math program similar to a summer reading program. Ms. Burstein said that we would definitely need parent support for this type of program.

Ms. O'Gara pointed out that public libraries play a big role in keeping literacy skills sharp during the summer and there is no such support system for math.

Mr. Pierce asked if the changes in the MCAS assessments will be even tougher for the students who transfer to the High School. Ms. Larimore said ideally, the assessment will be based on national common core standards so everyone should be getting the same curriculum at the same time.

Ms. O'Gara said that it is interesting to note that a lot of content is being pushed down and that we have lost the developmental focus. She said there is a need to recognize and understand children's development.

Ms. Bickford pointed out that Algebra is based on the ability to understand the abstract and that this ability happens at different times for different kids. She is worried that all kids will need to get through Algebra in middle school and it may not be the right thing developmentally.

Ms. Bickford asked if Bedford students would benefit overall from these changes.

Ms. Dorer said yes and that Bridges has already done a good job building a solid foundation in math.

Ms. Burstein said that it is great that the elementary students are getting a solid foundation in math sense and this will help with the rigor the standards are striving for.

Ms. Larimore also agreed that the strong math sense will really help at the high school level too. She is afraid of blips along the way and concerned about the amount of time for math.

Ms. Seibert commented that it seems that assessments are driving the curriculum and she is not sure that this is the right way to do things.

Ms. Seibert is very impressed with the use of technology in math.

Dr. LaCroix is very pleased with the work Ms. Larimore, Ms. Burstein and Ms. Dorer have done. She said they impressed WPI and made WPI want to work with us on the ASSISTments project. She is also proud of the work done on developing our own textbook.

## **6. Policy Presentations**

### **Wellness Policy Update**

Jackie Suprise explained that our current Wellness Policy (File ADF) requires updating due to new Massachusetts General Law. In 2010, Massachusetts passed a new law relative to school nutrition and this new law will be effective in October 2012.

The new law is aimed at helping students make healthy choices and cultivate life long healthy eating habits. It basically tells schools to offer healthy foods only. It affects students only and affects competitive foods and beverages, not the school lunch program.

Ms. Suprise explained that competitive foods covers a la carte items sold in the cafeteria, school stores, bake sales, snack bars, vending machines, concession stands and food served in classroom. The law goes into effect 30 minutes before school starts until 30 minute after school ends.

As a result of this state law, Ms. Suprise and the Wellness Council updated the school policy. The revised policy encourages the use of foods that meet the standard beyond the 30 minute window (i.e. concession stands, school events). It also eliminates food celebrations for individual students and develops resources for non-food celebrations.

Ms. Suprise presented the new policy draft to the School Committee for review.

Mr. Hafer asked who serves on the Wellness Council. Ms. Suprise said the school nurses, a pediatrician, several parents, and various staff members.

Mr. Hafer asked if Lane School could continue selling ice cream. Ms. Suprise said yes, as long as it is on the acceptable foods list.

Mr. Hafer asked why the Wellness Council recommended eliminating food celebrations for students. Ms. Suprise said that it is too hard to meet nutritional standards and it too hard to enforce so the Council opted to eliminate them altogether.

Mr. Pierce said that he believes it is important for children to learn how to make healthy choices. He thinks the law is ridiculous and wrong for the government to tell us what we can and cannot eat. He also feels that it is important to offer flavored milk to students as long as possible because it is often the only way many children will drink milk.

Ms. O’Gara said she hopes that food and dairy vendors figure out a way to make products that meet the new standards.



Ms. Seibert asked how the Wellness Council felt overall about this new law. Ms. Supprise said it was mixed.

Ms. Bickford asked if this would affect student fundraisers. Ms. Supprise said yes, it will have a big (negative) effect.

The School Committee agreed to vote on the Wellness Policy at the next School Committee meeting.

## **7. School Lunch Prices**

Mr. Whittier, Food Services Director, presented a proposal to increase lunch prices for next school year.

Before the presentation started, Ms. Bickford asked Mr. Whittier why the new standards discussed earlier regarding competitive foods do not affect school lunch.

Mr. Whittier explained that school lunch is a National Program and follows federal regulations. The new standards are state law and affect a la carte items sold in the cafeterias only.

Mr. Whittier updated the School Committee on some new Federal laws regarding school lunch. For example the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act requires schools to increase the portion size of fruit, vegetables, and grains. Also calorie minimums and maximums have been set for each grade level. Sodium levels are also required to be reduced.

Mr. Whittier said that Healthy Students Healthy Schools is a Massachusetts law. This law requires that water be available wherever food is served. This will be an issue because facilities will have to ensure that all of our cafeterias have water fountains. (Not all do.)

Mr. Whittier explained that these new regulations will affect our costs and guidelines will affect where we set the pricing. Mr. Whittier recommends raising prices about .10 to .25 per meal and to raise prices of the high school salad bar and deli or offer a premium meal at a high price on certain days.

Mr. Whittier also noted that Bedford is seeing a rise in the numbers of free and reduce lunch meals.

Mr. Whittier explained that Bedford offers lowers lunch prices compared to neighboring communities.

Mr. Hafer asked what our participation rate is. Mr. Whittier said it is 40% district wide.

Mr. Hafer asked how this number compares to other towns. Mr. Whittier said he assumes that it is inline with other towns. Mr. Hafer commented that it is hard to tell if the decline in participation is based on price or maybe quality.

Mr. Whittier said he is not sure either but the fact is that we have raised prices ( a couple of years ago) and participation has since declined. He would like to try offering a premium lunch at the high school to see if it is successful. He does feel that in general, most lunch programs are not doing well.

Mr. Pierce said that trying the premium meal offering sounds like a good idea.

Mr. Pierce asked if it is true that if we do not make any changes to the lunch prices then the food services program will lose money which will have to be covered by reserve accounts. Mr. Whittier and Mr. Coelho said that this is true.

Ms. O’Gara said that a \$ .25 increase sounds reasonable. She did ask if we could use the “swipe card” system at other schools. Mr. Whittier said yes it would be ideal, but we would have to pay at least \$8,000 in upfront fees per school to get the system going.

Ms. Bickford asked why labor costs are over budget. Mr. Whittier said that the major reason is due to sick time – there have been a lot of surgeries etc.

Ms. Bickford said that she too thinks a \$.25 rise in prices is reasonable. She would however, like to review an analysis at the next meeting. Mr. Coelho agreed to provide.

Ms. Seibert agrees that it makes sense to review an analysis of a .25 increase at the next meeting before voting.

#### **8. Vote: Approval of the Strategic Plan**

The School Committee reviewed the Strategic Plan last meeting. Ms. O’Gara made the following motion:

**MOVED: That the School Committee accept and approve the Strategic Plan for 2012-2017.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Hafer**

**MOTION APPROVED: 5-0**

#### **9. Bus Contract – Option Years**

Mr. Coelho recommends that the School Committee approve picking up the two option years (FY’13 and FY’14) on the current transportation contract. He said that Bedford Charter has been an excellent business partner and really worked hard to make the new route and time changes effective.

Ms. Bickford agrees but would like to make a motion that has the actual dollar amounts in it so she suggests presenting this information at the next meeting. Mr. Coelho agreed.

#### **10. Superintendent’s Report**

Dr. LaCroix reminded the School Committee that at the last meeting after a long discussion, a decision was made to continue offering the multiage classrooms at Davis School next year. However, the two multiage teachers have since asked for reconsideration. They do not want the multiage classroom to continue next year and will do a grade 2 looping for the current 1<sup>st</sup> graders in multiage. Dr. LaCroix asked the School Committee to consider this change.

Ms. O’Gara asked that if this change is truly driven by the teachers. Dr. LaCroix said yes, that the teachers now understand more about the need for collaboration and data collection and they have concerns that they will be an isolated team.

Ms. Bickford asked how parents would be told of this change. Dr. LaCroix said that the teachers would write a letter explaining that they initiated this change and that the Principal will honor the request.

Mr. Hafer pointed out that the original thought of the Principal and Assistant Superintendent was to suspend the program but the School Committee decided against this change based on the strong show of support from parents. He does not feel that the School Committee should now change its decision because the two teachers feel differently. He said that the parents were very supportive of the program.

Mr. Pierce said that he feels that parents should have the opportunity to listen to the reasons why there is now a change in direction. He would like to see it on the next School Committee agenda. He is concerned that parents walked out of that meeting thinking that the multiage program was going to move forward and that it would be studied for a year. He would like to be respectful of the parents.

Dr. LaCroix said that she understands Mr. Pierce's and Mr. Hafer's point of view. But, she really cannot force teachers to do this. She said the multiage program has been voluntary from the start and to force teachers to do this would go against the culture of Bedford Public Schools. She acknowledged that it is very uncomfortable for all. However the students will not be distressed because one teacher will remain with them through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. Also, the placement process is underway and she hates to delay this process further.

Ms. Bickford agrees that we need to communicate this change to the parents. She said she basically feels that the program is no longer open for discussion if we do not have two teachers willing to teach it.

Mr. Hafer said that the communication to parents needs to be very clear that the teachers feel that the program will no longer be beneficial.

Ms. Bickford said that Davis School and the School Advisory Council should examine the program next year to see if the model makes sense. Also, she said that the School Committee will be open to discussion the issue again in the future in parents want to.

Ms. Seibert said that the Davis School Improvement Plan should have multiage discussion as a goal.

#### **11. Minutes for Review**

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

**MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the April 10, 2012 School Committee meeting as amended.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce**

**MOTION APPROVED: 5-0**

The School Committee decided to review the other minutes at the next School Committee meeting.

**12. Adjournment**

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

**MOVED:** Motion to adjourn at 11:35.

**MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara**

**MOTION APPROVED: 5-0**

**Roll Call Vote:**

<b>Ms. Seibert</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Mr. Hafer</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Mr. Pierce</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Ms. Bickford</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Ms. O’Gara</b>	<b>Yes</b>

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School Committee Secretary

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Date

**BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**April 24, 201**

**Exhibits/Documents**

- Art Curriculum Review Presentation
- 2011 Massachusetts Framework and the Common Core Standards presentation
- Wellness Policy Review and Update Presentation
- Bedford Public Schools Lunch Program Presentation
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- Draft of minutes from the April 10, 2012 School Committee meeting.