

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
May 23, 2017
Bedford High School - Large Group Instruction Room

1. Call to Order

At 7:35 p.m., Ms. Guay called to order the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present included Ms. Santiago and Ms. Scoville. Mr. McAllister and Mr. Brosgol were absent.

2. Comments from Public

Ms. Emily Mitchell, parent of a JGMS student, spoke about her desire to have the JGMS Dress Code updated to eliminate some of the “arbitrary” rules. Specifically she does not think language such as “revealing, inappropriate dress is distracting” should be used. She wonders why the students are responsible for other people’s reactions. She would like “distracting” removed from the dress code.

Ms. Guay thanked Ms. Mitchell for sharing her thoughts tonight.

3. Personnel Report

Mr. Sills reported the following:

Leave of Absences

Christina Avis	Reading Specialist	Davis School 2017-18
Megan Leonard	Teacher	Lane School 2017-18

Mr. Sills presented some policy updates.

Web Policy

Mr. Sills said that this policy was discussed back in 2014 but a final policy was never brought forward to the Committee for approval. He explained that today, schools increasingly rely on the web to communicate and to share work. The former policy is very restrictive. The new policy will be that parents need to annually notify the Principal in writing of their right and desire to deny school’s right to post a student’s picture, name and/or work on the internet. If parents do not do this, then schools can assume that permission has been granted and may act accordingly. The School Committee agreed to wait and vote on accepting this updated policy at the next meeting.

Ms. Santiago asked that parents be given enough time to respond to this request.

Mr. Sills agreed to ensure that it is clear that an annual notification is required.

Bullying Prevention Policy

Mr. Sills explained that Bedford Public Schools has been engaged in a disagreement with the DESE over whether an allegation that a teacher bullied a class must be treated as a bullying (an individual) complaint and DESE protocol must be followed. Mr. Sills explained that he did investigate this incident and that any demeaning or degrading adult behavior to a class (or individual) is intolerable to the District’s values. However the District did not use the bullying reporting form and must now take corrective action. This action is to inform administrators of the “requirement to conduct and document a bullying investigation in writing in accordance with the District’s revised Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan.” Also, the District will investigate any and all complaints of bullying – class or individual - whether they are deemed viable or not.

Mr. Sills presented updated language to the Bullying Prevention Policy. The new policy language removed the word “viable”. It also included the following:

Bullying a Class

By the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s definition, if a teacher is accused of bullying his or her class, then the District must implement the same investigative procedures that it would use if, as the laws states, an allegation is made that an individual has been targeted

Ms. Guay said that the School Committee will take a vote on accepting this language at the next School Committee meeting.

Mr. Sills said he will notify staff after the vote has been taken.

Mr. Sills asked the School Committee to revote on the School Calendar for 2017-18 because there was a mistake on the previous one. The correct last day of school for the 2017-18 school year is June 13, 2018.

Ms. Santiago made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the revised School Calendar for the 2017-18 school year as presented tonight.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Scoville

MOTION APPROVED: 3-0

4. AP Spanish Service Project Presentation

Ms. Taub, AP Spanish teacher, explained that the AP Spanish classes joined WE.org – a service learning organization for students. The organization integrates content specific knowledge and skills and then has the students participate in a related community service event. The students take a leadership role in deciding what to learn and what community service project to support in a local and global level.

The students this year focused on poverty and the effect it has on education. The AP classes traveled to New York City to participate in WE Day – a day with motivational speakers and an opportunity to discuss the service learning projects.

Several students from the AP class were present at the School Committee meeting to discuss their projects. For example there was a team that was raising money for the Save the Children organization. Team members discussed the various fundraisers they were going to hold and a book drive they are undertaking to help a school in Boston. They hope to send funds raised to Save the Children in Guatemala.

Another team reported that they will be showing a documentary during X Block on the use of children labor in harvesting crops and raising awareness about Fair Trade. They will also be holding fundraisers to help the Food Pantry in Bedford.

Ms. Taub also explained that the WE organization will be sending a representative to our school to discuss the projects and what to look forward to doing in the future.

Mary Manning, student representative, said it was great to hear about the projects and to see each team’s passion. She asked if the projects helped with their Spanish skills.

Christine Lee, a student who was working on supporting immigrants in Somerville, said the experience did allow her plenty of opportunities to use Spanish. She said she recommends participating in the WE organization to other students.

Ms. Scoville said it was nice to learn about this project because so often, AP classes just teach to the test.

Ms. Santiago asked the students if they will continue supporting the local or global projects. The students all answered yes.

Ms. Guay said it was too bad that this project was only for AP Spanish students. Ms. Taub said the We organization offers it to all students and that the Foreign Language Dept. will try to see if there is a way (and an interest) to roll it out to the whole school.

Mr. Sills thanked Ms. Taub and the students for supporting local and global projects. He was impressed with the projects and thought this was a great model.

Ms. Taub reminded everyone that everything done with project was done in the Spanish language!

5. JGMS FY'18 School Improvement and Handbook Revisions

Handbook

Matt Mehler, Assistant Principal, presented the proposed changes to the JGMS Handbook for the 2017-18 School Year. He explained that the biggest change was the change in the dress code policy.

Mr. Mehler explained that students and parents have recently been discussing the dress code and many thought it was time to revise the language. Libby and Izzy, two JGMS students representing the Egalitarian Committee, shared their opinions on the current policy.

The girls said that the current dress code seems to objectify girls and therefore should be revised. Also, they felt that the “fingertip rule” to determine the length of girl’s shorts or skirts, was complicated and hard to fairly implement. Both girls thought it was important to have a dress code that allows JGMS students to express themselves. They also thought that common sense should prevail and strict guidelines were unnecessary. Shopping to meet the current guidelines was difficult.

Mr. Mehler said that he agrees that the current dress code is arbitrary. The school would like to have a dress code that prohibits anything that is inappropriate or disruptive.

Mary Manning, student rep., said she was proud of the girls coming tonight to advocate for themselves and others.

Ms. Scoville asked what the difference was between disruptive and distracting. Mr. Mehler said disruptive is more of a legal term. Distraction is a reaction.

Ms. Santiago said she is aware of how much thought JGMS students have put into this dress code proposal.

Ms. Guay asked if any males participated in the discussions. Mr. Mehler said yes there were several on the Committee.

Mr. Sills asked if the Egalitarian Committee served any other purpose other than updating the dress code. Mr. Tracey said the Committee has a broader perspective and is there to help ensure policies at JGMS are fair, just and enforceable. Mr. Nagle is the Advisor.

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

School Improvement Plan

Mr. Tracey reviewed highlights from this year. Highlights from the 2016-2017 school year at JGMS include:

- New representative structure of student government rolled out this year.
- A social-civic school wide expectation was drafted and will be rolled out in the fall 2017. “JGMS has H.E.A.R.T”
- Faculty has read and discussed “Whistling Vivaldi” to learn about the implications of stereotyping on learning.
- The first middle school level Tenacity Challenge was held and more than sixty students participated!
- Working towards hiring more diverse staff and faculty.
- The 6th grade heterogeneous classes were successful as were balanced 7 & 8th grade teams.
- SPED and regular ed. collaborated to redesign special ed. assignments enabling co-taught sections in ELA and math across all three grades.
- Planning is underway for rolling out unlevelled ELA in 7th grade.
- Looking to redesign the schedule to accommodate new staff in the unified arts and ways to implement the enrichment block. Also, would like to be able to offer cross-grade leveled sections based on proficiency in foreign language.
- Learning expectations are published on the website.
- Technology curriculum has been expanded to include coding, Lego Robotics and 3-D drafting.
- The Skill Center is providing interventions for more than 100 students.
- BHS/JGMS tutoring and ambassador program has been developed to help with the transition to 9th grade.

Mr. Tracey then presented the School Improvement Plan for 2017-18. He explained that it is a working document and will be updated throughout the year.

Coherent, Higher Order Thinking Curriculum

1. Refine and implement middle school literacy-based curriculum by focusing on reading comprehension and writing across the curriculum.
2. Continual focus on instructional best practices.
3. Focus on technology as an effective means to enhance and extend student learning.

Equity and Diversity – Teaching all

1. Foster positive and inclusive culture so students will take intellectual risks and grow
2. Review services to group and support students in regular and special education.
3. Expand academic support to promote greater equity and access to all.

Collaborative Professional Culture

1. Analyze student data to improve instruction
2. Review Guidance Curriculum and implementation of our student support team

Mary Manning said that she is so impressed with all that is going on at JGMS.

Ms. Scoville said she was impressed with the social and civic responsibility focus at the middle school.

Ms. Santiago appreciated that the plan is a working document. She has heard great things about the Calculus project and the Ambassador program for the transitioning 8th grade students. She is pleased that middle school kids can advocate for themselves.

Ms. Guay is happy to see student achievement is being reviewed and thinks the unlevelled ELA in 7th grade is a good thing to try. She too is pleased with the focus on social civic initiatives.

Mr. Sills said that the clear vision of Mr. Tracey and Mr. Mehler comes through and that they make a great team.

Ms. Guay made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the JGMS School Improvement Plan for 2017-2018 as proposed tonight.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Santiago

MOTION APPROVED: 3-0-0

6. Minutes

Ms. Guay made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes from the April 25, 2017 School Committee meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Santiago

MOTION APPROVED: 3-0-0

7. End of Year District Goal Update

Mr. Sills presented the End-of-Year District Goal Update. He went through each strategic goal and graded accomplishments under each.

How to Improve Student Performance/Goals

- Developed a successful budget for FY'2018. A
- Supported new personnel – 25 new faculty and a new High School Principal. A
- Lane School construction project is on budget and on schedule. A
- Davis School space needs review and updated enrollment projections completed. A
- Teachers' contract finalized. New contract underway for TAs and EAs. A

Key learning challenges identified - Reading comprehension and writing improvements needed especially in certain subgroups

- Problem analysis B
- Orienting faculty B+
- Planning a professional development – underway
- Visiting other schools – postponed
- Evaluation Goals B

Coherent, Higher Order Thinking Curriculum

- Developed student's capacity for self-direction **B**
- Review common assessments to meet expectations **B+**
 - data management system being vetted
 - K-2 curriculum integration – more authentic and efficient. (Also at Lane)
- Continue to integrate technology and further develop K-12 coding curriculum **A-**

Equity and Diversity-Teaching All

- Develop process to hire educators of color **A**
- Complete work of Religious and Cultural Holidays Task Force **A**
- Focus on Antibias Curriculum **A**
- Systemically analyze achievement data and student work to make curriculum adjustments **C+** (Bedford tends to look at intervention rather than changes in curriculum so need some work here.)
- Continue to develop in house Special Ed programs- full inclusion, increased push-in and sub separate where needed. **A**
- Systemically weave social and emotional development into all aspects of the school community including curriculum **B**
- Update DCAP and provide development in differentiation **C+**

Collaborative Professional Culture

- Explore opportunities for teachers to observe each other's practice. **B**
- Strengthen teams collaborative work through improved scheduling of early release days. **A**
- Have all teachers develop evaluation team goals regarding student achievement.
- Continue to push back at the state level against mandates that impede effective teaching and learning. **A**

Strengthen Communication and Deepen Community Support

- Convene representative task force to modify five year strategic plan – postponed until June.
- Involve students in production of brochure/video **A**
- Create a technology advisory panel **C-**
- Increase opportunities for teachers and students to present work to School Committee **A**
- Update and maintain website **B+**

Ms. Scoville said that the Technology Showcase was terrific. She suggested using more signage so the community can navigate around the show better.

Ms. Santiago said this is an ambitious plan and great progress has been made.

Ms. Guay thanked Mr. Sills for an honest self-assessment and that she really enjoys seeing the teachers and students at the school committee meetings.

8. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Sills reminded the School Committee that the senior's last day was May 19th and they left without any disruptions/pranks. He was also pleased to learn that the Junior Prom occurred

without any issues. He also reminded the group that the graduation will be at the Lowell Auditorium this year on June 1st.

Mr. Sills also reported that swastikas have been found at the high school and middle school. He has notified police and will send home notifications. He said that this is sad and that there have been a rise in such incidents throughout Massachusetts. He still believes the town's hard work in this area is still fruitful despite this set back.

Ms. Guay thanked Mary Manning for her work on the Committee this year.

9. Adjournment

Ms. Guay made the following motion:

MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 10:15 P.M., not to reopen.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Scoville

MOTION APPROVED: 3-0

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. McAllister	Absent
Ms. Guay	Yes
Mr. Brosgol	Absent
Ms. Santiago	Yes
Ms. Scoville	Yes

School Committee Secretary

Date

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

May 23, 2017

Exhibits/Documents

- Revised School Calendar for 2017-2018
- JGMS School Improvement Plan 2017-18
- Presentation: JGMS School Improvement Plan and Student Handbook revisions
- 2016-2017 District Goals Year End Review presentation
- Draft of School Committee meeting minutes April 25, 2017