

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
March 17, 2020
Large Group Instruction Room, Bedford High School

1. Call to Order

At 7:49 p.m., Ms. Santiago called to order the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. All members of the School Committee were present. There were no student representatives this evening.

2. Comments from Public

None

3. Superintendent Finalist Interview

The School Committee conducted an interview of Superintendent finalist Ms. Nan Murphy, M. Ed., Leader, Statewide Systems of Support Assistance, MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and former Administrator, Lowell Public Schools.

Ms. Santiago began the interview by outlining the process to the candidate. She said that there is a total of 90 minutes allotted to each candidate for the interview, which meant that there is about five to six minutes time allowance for each question. Each member of the School Committee took turns asking his or her assigned questions to Ms. Murphy.

Ms. Santiago then asked if Ms. Murphy to tell the School Committee about herself and why she would like to become the next Superintendent of Bedford Public Schools.

Ms. Murphy started by saying that she is a lifelong educator. She lived in Havelock, North Carolina on a military base as a spouse of a military member. Ms. Murphy said that as a teacher on the base there, she had firsthand experienced with transitioning students and that she has an understanding of the unique needs of these families. She went on to say that, she taught for sixteen years in Wilmington Public Schools and was a Principal in the Lowell Public School system. Ms. Murphy also highlighted her accomplishment of bringing a high needs level three school to a successful level within four years. She said at this time, she works for the Department of Education and Secondary Education (DESE) helping underperforming schools. She would like to return to a district as she misses the school environment and the work that it entails.

Ms. Murphy was asked why she would like to be in Bedford and she responded by saying that she believes that Bedford is anchored in all the things that she believes is right for kids.

The School Committee began their interview questions.

Ms. Santiago: What do you see as the most important roles of a superintendent in a town like Bedford?

Ms. Murphy said that the superintendent is the educational leader, the person who is out building the relationship, the problem solver and the person who connects the vision of BPS to

the problem solver. She said that that the superintendent is the overall advocate for Bedford Public Schools.

Mr. Brosgol: Tell us about an encouraging education innovation that you are aware of. Why is it innovative, what value could it bring to the Bedford public schools and what steps would you take to implement it?

Ms. Murphy said that she has been exposed to some great schools and great professional learning. She thinks the values that could be brought are deeper learning, innovation in education and looking to improve the outcome for the students and the steps that she would take involved attaching materials to human themes, engaging students in material, using strategies to connect and empower students and finally, partnering with other communities.

Mr. Morrison: What is your understanding of the role of the school committee? What do you see as the most important element of a strong and successful relationship with the board? In addition, how might you address some of the areas where the role of school committee and the authority of the school committee are blurred?

Ms. Murphy believes that it is important to have a good connection with the school committee and said that she sees the school committee as a team elected by local stakeholders to make informed decisions around the budget and education. She said that an important element of a strong relationship with the school committee is to help develop, establish and amend policies. Ms. Murphy said that it is imperative that the school committee team communicates transparently, that they have trust, experience and that they have a shared value of what is best for the students.

Ms. Scoville: What role would you envision playing in the hiring and retention of teachers, specialists, school administrators and the central office personnel? What are the questions you ask of candidates you interview?

Ms. Murphy thinks the first initiative is to ensure that there is a culture set up for individual success no matter what the role. She thinks that all staff members should be given the tools to perform their job well, with effectiveness along with a pathway of communication and support. She said that school administrators should be made up of people who have demonstrated that they can lead; they are motivators who are balanced and organized. Teachers and specialists should understand the role of teaching, the desire to continue to learn and the ability to connect with students and families. She would ask that potential candidates develop a statement of what it takes to teach in Bedford, listing their qualities, proficiencies and she would provide an alignment of expectations for the candidate.

Ms. Santiago: Have you ever developed or assisted with the development of a complete school budget? Are you familiar with how the funding formula for the Commonwealth works, including Circuit Breaker and Chapter 70 local funding? What do you know about how Bedford receives funding for education of Hanscom Air Force Base students?

Ms. Murphy said, as part of senior leadership while at Lowell Public Schools and part of the collaborative process working with a \$142M dollar budget. She understands that the budget is made up of local funding and that Chapter 70 is used for gap coverage. Ms. Murphy also spoke

about Circuit Breaker and its use for supporting students with needs. She was also aware that the Hanscom Air Force base funding was based on a formula from the state and this was of particular interest for her and talked of trying to advocate for an update to that formula.

Mr. Morrison: How have you used data to inform your decisions? Please explain to what extent data can be relied upon in contrast to other factors that should be considered in assessing student performance, administrator performance and overall district success and strategic and budget planning.

Ms. Murphy said that she sees data at the forefront and that it drives decision-making. She thinks that it is important to be mindful of data points because they tell a story. Ms. Murphy said that it is important to stop and assess the data to decide and improve upon practices for students. She said that growth is a good indicator. Data points can show how the teachers move and achieve set goals. She said that bad data is also useful to improve direction, sometimes it shows where the district may need to shift and refocus.

Ms. Scoville: Bedford Public Schools have made a significant commitment to implementing a co-teaching model at all schools within the district. What experiences and understanding do you have with co-teaching, specifically in the areas of staff training, implementation and evaluation of its effectiveness in the classroom?

Ms. Murphy said that she has had a significant amount of experience with the co-teaching model. She talked about her experience as an inclusion teacher in Wilmington Public Schools. Ms. Murphy said that she believes that teachers must take part in a significant amount of targeted professional development for working in a co-teaching model as well as curriculum coaching and it must be a shared vision. Teachers must have shared ownership and mutual accountability and this takes time. The students should not know which is the teacher and which is the co-teacher, it should be a fluid blend.

Mr. Brosgol: What are some recent or emerging curricular innovations that excite you? Explain what they are and how they would improve student successes. What do you think about when you assess the need or likelihood of changing or updating curricula?

Ms. Murphy said that she really enjoys updating curriculum. She wants to know where the “why” in it is and who the voice is behind the “why” and how many voices are behind the “why” and then engaging in a collaborative, collective decision around the change in the curriculum. Engaging all of the people who are part of implementing that curriculum should have a voice in the change and the adoption of that curriculum change. She said once she did disagree with the change of curriculum when she did not think that the students were ready for this change.

Mr. Brosgol: Discuss your success in improving test scores for all learners including high-performing students and subgroups at either high school or elementary school level?

Ms. Murphy said that she feels that she can stand on the work that she has done in the past at other schools. She said that she has been successful at helping students who cannot reach and has pushed kids who are ready for the next level. Ms. Murphy talked about helping diverse learners get to their potential and she believes all students “can”, if they are taught correctly. She said students need a multi-tiered system of support.

Ms. Guay: A very large percentage of Bedford High School graduates go on to attend college. There are, however, a number of students who do not plan to attend college and are interested in beginning work after graduation. How should the district curriculum be split between college prep and vocational programs?

Ms. Murphy said that she was aware that there are conversations happening around regulations at the state level about broadening the programs currently offered at the high school level. She thinks that there needs to be purposeful planning forward for these kinds of shifts. Ms. Murphy thinks that the schools should start at the middle school level to look into where the students see themselves then help these students prepare for these jobs. She believes there should be dual exposure for all students giving every student an opportunity to explore

Mr. Morrison: Our town's educational priorities include equity, social emotional support for students, and quality in district special education programming. How might you deliver on these priorities to three distinct student populations?

Ms. Murphy said that when we say "all", we really need to mean "all"; the commitment should be for all students. She feels that this is an issue not only throughout the Commonwealth, but also throughout the country. Bedford has led the way in equity starting with the METCO program in the 1970s. Ms. Murphy thinks that conversations should continue about kids' experiences, that we should continue to tap into the student experience, and listen to what are kids are telling us. She feels that sometimes it goes beyond social and emotional and we need to partner with additional agencies and behavioral experts. She also feels that students who struggle with social and emotional, disabilities, academic or behavioral issues should be given opportunities to learn and express their learning in multiple ways.

Ms. Guay: What is your experience advocating for education resources at the town, state or federal level?

Ms. Murphy talked about a situation that she had experienced where there was some unsafe flooring in one of the school buildings where she worked and there was a work order in process for quite some time. She said that she took it upon herself to advocate for student safety to the superintendent, the director of finance and the city manager. Ms. Murphy said that she was able to elevate the priority of the work order and the floor was repaired within a week. Ms. Murphy said that she would do the same in Bedford. If there were a situation that needed to be elevated, she would advocate for the need the right way, until there is a resolution. She also said that she would advocate for state and federal funding that she believes Bedford may be eligible for leaning on her experience at DESE.

Ms. Santiago: How will you go about deciding on a snow day? A 45-second answer will suffice.

Ms. Murphy said that she would consult with the Department of Public Works and that she would network with other superintendents in the area. She would make a final decision based on the safety of the students and the staff.

Ms. Santiago: Each morning, almost 2700 students arrive at one of our four schools to learn. Some walk, some drive their own cars, others ride a bicycle, or are dropped off by their parents. Many students arrive by bus, coming from Bedford, Boston or Hanscom Air Force Base. Some of

our students are from families that have lived in town for three generations, others have moved here from other states and other countries. Some of our students have private tutors to help with schoolwork, while close to nine percent are economically disadvantaged. Sixteen point six percent are on IEPs, eighteen percent of our students' first language is not English and close to seven percent are English Language Learners. Finally, some of our students' educational needs are so complex that they require an out of district placement. What are your experiences working with families with different needs and expectations regarding public education? What have you learned from your experience and how would you make those experiences work for you in Bedford?

Ms. Murphy stated that all parents want what is best for their child. She said that she is accustomed to working with diverse students and parents and the conversation would need to be framed around the parent to whom she would be speaking. She would make translation available to parents and students who require those services. Ms. Murphy believes that it is important to build relationships and navigate discussion in order to have a constructive conversation with the parent or student. She believes that often there are gaps in understanding, which is sometimes overlooked. Ms. Murphy said that parents sometimes need time reflect and process and she believes that they should be given the opportunity to circle back with questions. She said that she would also provide forums facilitated by educational experts for students and parents.

Ms. Guay: What is your view of the role of dissent, disagreement and even conflict in the leadership of a school department? Can you tell us about a situation where you intervened to address conflict and what was the outcome? What did you learn from it?

Ms. Murphy said that she believes conflict can be productive and it can help you grow in your thinking as long as it is grounded in respect. She gave an example with a deficit model budget where each department advocated for themselves and noted that it was a very challenging time. There were high emotions and one colleague dismissed herself from the meeting because she did not like the way that the conversation was going. Ms. Murphy suggested a break because her belief is that all should be included in the discussion and all departments represented at the table. They returned to the meeting including the person that had dismissed herself and together they embraced a collective decision.

Ms. Scoville: What is your experience working with School Resource Officers? What are your thoughts on the role of restorative justice in the school setting and how it impacts school discipline?

Ms. Murphy feels that the resource officer should be looked at as a member of the faculty. She said that the resource officer should develop relationships with students and staff and should be used for guidance in a positive way. Ms. Murphy said that the resource officer is sometimes an asset that is sometimes underutilized. Her thoughts on restorative justice are that it should be grounded in what is best for the students and that criminal mistakes can follow a person forever. She believes that alternatives should be provided where possible which can help begin a repair process. Ms. Murphy stated that this can take time and that it involves a lot of skill and training. Students should learn and know what an effective apology is and the need to learn and teach better decision making is important.

As the interview ended, the School Committee gave Ms. Murphy an opportunity to ask questions of the School Committee and then was given an opportunity to give her closing remarks.

Ms. Murphy talked about the school survey that was given to the district about what the community, staff and students were looking for in a new superintendent. She said the top five things that resonated with her were:

- Excellent communication
- Experience in curriculum development
- Experience in a diverse population
- Experience in teaching
- Understanding and recognizing good teaching

Ms. Murphy said that she hopes that she has demonstrated that she has grown these characteristics, she feels confident and realizes that she can grow with the district and she is willing to continue to learn. She believes that it is important to respect the past, honor the present and build the future, a phrase that she credited to Harvard University.

Ms. Murphy thanked the School Committee for the time, consideration and all that they have done to have such an inclusive and thorough process.

The School Committee thanked Ms. Murphy.

4. Bus Video Camera Policy – Second Reading and Vote

Mr. Sills read some slight amendments to the original Bus Camera Policy to include custodial security of the recorded footage.

Ms. Guay asked if the video cameras were eventually going to install video cameras on all of the Bedford school buses.

Mr. Sills said that this was a pilot program and that we are not budgeted to install video cameras on all of the buses at this time.

Mr. Brosgol made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee vote to approve the Bedford Public Schools Bus Video Camera Policy

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Scoville

MOTION APPROVED 5-0-0

Mr. Brosgol	Yes
Ms. Santiago	Yes
Ms. Scoville	Yes
Ms. Guay	Yes
Mr. Morrison	Yes

5. Personnel Report

- Job Descriptions First Reading
 - JGMS Art Teacher
 - Lt. Job Lane Elementary School Art Teacher

Mr. Sills expressed that due to the current focus on the Covid-19 crisis, he asked to postpone the first reading of the job descriptions until the next School Committee meeting.

6. Adjournment into Executive Session to Conduct Strategy Sessions in Preparation for Negotiations with Non-Union Personnel, a Candidate for Superintendent, not to reopen.

Mr. Morrison made the following motion:

MOVED: Motion to adjourn to Executive Session at 9:32 p.m. not to reopen.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Scoville

MOTION APPROVED 5-0-0

Mr. Brosgol	Yes
Ms. Santiago	Yes
Ms. Scoville	Yes
Ms. Guay	Yes
Mr. Morrison	Yes



School Committee Secretary



Date

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
March 17, 2020
Exhibits/Documents

- Personnel Report for March 17, 2020
- Job Descriptions
 - JGMS Art Teacher
 - Lt. Job Lane Elementary School Art Teacher
- Bedford Public Schools School Bus Video Camera Policy