

**BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF
May 11, 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, Mr. Hafer and Anne Dickinson-Meltz, student representative.

2. Comments From Public

None

3. Personnel Report

Dr. LaCroix asked the School Committee to approve a field trip to Italy and France for high school students during the 2011 April vacation. The School Committee approved the concept of the trip at the last meeting. Dr. LaCroix explained that students and teacher chaperones would miss one day of school due to travel arrangements.

Ms. O’Gara made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the foreign language field trip to France and Italy during April 14-23, 2011 for approximately 42 students at no cost to the schools.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Dr. LaCroix announced the following personnel items:

Leave of Absences

Kimberly Jones	Elementary Teacher	Lane School
Justin Jourdan	English Teacher	High School

4. JGMS School Improvement Plan and Student Handbook

Ms. Jayne Viladenis, Principal of John Glenn Middle School, presented the 2010-2011 School Improvement Plan.

She began the presentation by thanking the School Council members – Peter Chapman, Vincent McGrath, Nicole d’Entremont, James Nagle, Susan Roos, Colin Valentine, Lella Donahue, and Lynne Dohaney. Ms. Viladenis noted that it was a great year working with the School Council.

Ms. Viladenis explained that goals for the current school year (2009-2010) focused on Phase 1 and 2 of a three-phase curriculum initiative that was initially developed in 2006-2007 using Professional Learning Communities as the model to develop, deliver and assess a coherent curriculum. Accomplishments for this year included:

- Improving transition practices from grades 5 to 6 and 8 to 9
- Creating curriculum maps in each subject and each grade levels
- Creating common assessments for each subject matter at each grade level

- Implementing a school-wide writing/scoring continuum
- Training middle school teachers in protocols for examining student work
- Creating JGMS “VoINet”, a volunteer network designed to increase parent/community volunteer opportunities
- Enhancing the electronic scheduling process

Ms. Viladenis then described some of the key goals of the 2010-2011 School Improvement Plan which will focus on the third phase of the curriculum initiative, Student Work.

Government and Leadership

- JGMS will support the efforts of the Bedford Education Foundation in educating the JGMS community of the Foundation’s goals.

Curriculum and Instruction

- Transition to the student support process of Response to Intervention (RTI). Staff will be trained and curriculum maps will be posted to help parents understand what students are doing in school.
- Train middle school teachers in protocols for examining student work to improve achievement. Data will be compiled and analyzed.

Human Resources and Professional Development

- Document examples of 21st century skills from the classrooms.

Student Academic Support

- Communicate student support processes and contacts to the middle school community.

Ms. O’Gara thanked Ms. Viladenis and commented that she appreciates hearing the parent voice in the goals. She thinks the BEF goal is unique. She also likes the idea of the VoINet network. Ms. Viladenis said that the Volnet project got a great start this year and she hopes to build on it next year.

Ms. O’Gara asked if RTI is new to JGMS this year. Ms. Viladenis said the process is new but the staff already does a lot of the basic interventions. Ms. Viladenis explained that RTI is a new model as it focuses on student needs and what actions can be done to help the student succeed. Ms. Viladenis said her staff is ready to learn the new process of helping improve academic achievement.

Ms. Bickford thanked Ms. Viladenis and asked a few questions relating to last year’s goals. Ms. Bickford asked for more details on how transitions were improved. Ms. Viladenis explained that there have been many meetings with Mr. Ackerman (Lane School Principal) and Lane School teachers. She is using a variety of electronic communications such as “enews” and the automated phone system to alert fifth grade parents of upcoming important events. Ms. Viladenis also described that the parent evening for fifth grade parents has been improved. She also noted that the Director of Curriculum, Dr. Crimmin worked with the 5th and 6th grade teachers to update and link the curriculums. Also common assessments are well underway.

Ms. Bickford commented that Ms. Viladenis takes on big goals and is happy to hear that many things related to these big goals are well underway. She understands that all of the goals are not met but clearly sees things are moving forward.

Ms. Seibert agrees that Ms. Viladenis has created very large goals and it is clear that they are evolving and moving forward.

Ms. Seibert did ask how the new schedule is going, now that it has been implemented for two years. Ms. Viladenis said it is now the norm for students and teachers.

Ms. Seibert asked if grade level lunches were implemented this year. Ms. Viladenis and Mr. Chapman (Assistant Principal) said they were implemented and that they have received a lot of positive feedback from the Counselors. Overall, the feel at lunch time is less stressful. Students can find friends easier and more quickly.

Mr. Hafer asked for more information on the “protocols for examining student work”. Ms. Viladenis explained that teachers need to be able to look at an assignment and the student work and determine if the objective was met. Colleague’s constructive feedback is the key. This initiative helps teachers focus on the goal and answer the question, “Did the assignment meet the goal?” Ms. Viladenis further explained that the first step in this initiative was to set expectations, which was done last year. Now it is time to determine if objectives are being met.

Mr. Pierce asked for more information on the plans to document 21st Century skills. Ms. Viladenis explained that she hopes to work with Ken Lord to be able to creatively display all kinds of examples on the web.

Ms. Anne Dickinson-Meltz asked if students were involved in setting protocols for examining student work. Ms. Viladenis said no that it is the teacher to teacher discussion that is really the key. However, teachers ask and receive feedback on student assignments and projects.

Ms. Dickinson-Meltz suggested starting a JGMS Student Board for the BEF since the High School Student Board has been so successful. Ms. Viladenis thought this was a good idea.

JGMS Student Handbook Changes

Mr. Peter Chapman, Assistant Principal, discussed the changes to the 2010-2011 JGMS Student Handbook. He reminded the School Committee, that last year, the Handbook was completely reorganized. This year, the changes are not as extensive. Highlights include:

- Clarifying homework expectations. Each grade level provided a clearer explanation of homework expectations.
- The 8th grade field trip to Washington D.C. was revised to include wording that students who have been suspended at any time or who have illustrated that they do not have a good pattern of school citizenship at any time during the eighth grade year are in jeopardy of not attending the trip.
- Student drop off/pick up from school has been updated to reflect the new practice of using the back parking lot.

- Pass/Fail Grade option will allow some students to participate in a class on a modified basis without penalty. Often, some students need a lot of support classes and as a result may not be able to fully participate in a class such as art. This change will allow them to still take the class.

Mr. Chapman also redefined “bullying” and defined “cyber bullying”. Mr. Chapman explained that this change is necessary due to the pending new state legislation on bullying and heightened awareness of the topic.

Mr. Chapman also created a statement on social networking and electronic communications. The statement is a recommendation that middle school students not use social networking sites such as Facebook, Buzz, etc. due to their overall immaturity. The statement also recommends that parents monitor use of electronic communications such as texting, email and instant messaging.

Ms. O’Gara thanked Mr. Chapman and thought his bullying language was very clear and in line with what bullying is. She also acknowledged that social networking is a difficult issue and the statement seems like a good conversation point for families.

Ms. O’Gara agrees that a pass/fail option for some students and some classes is needed.

Ms. Bickford agreed with having a pass/fail option as long as the handbook clearly stated that it was for noncore classes. She also suggested clarifying how it may affect honor role determination.

Ms. Bickford asked if the bullying language was the same as the state legislation.

Dr. LaCroix said that she will recommend printing the full state legislation language and printing the JGMS version too.

Ms. Bickford wondered if it would make sense to meld the two together since the district will be mandated to include the State language in September.

Ms. Bickford also suggested ensuring the JGMS offenses match the High School handbook offenses and state law.

Ms. Seibert asked Mr. Chapman to clarify the homework time expectations. She said she interprets the time estimate to mean 25-30 minutes for each subject each night. Mr. Chapman agreed that this was not the intent and he would clarify the language.

Ms. Seibert is thankful a statement on social networking sites has been developed and included in the Handbook.

Mr. Hafer suggested further elaboration that the Washington DC field trip is a privilege and not a right for each student.

Mr. Hafer said he likes the bullying definition and the social networking statement. He believes the bullying language will help when talking to parents and is satisfied that that social networking is a statement and not a policy.

Mr. Pierce likes the bullying language clarification but expects that this definition will be revisited often.

Ms. Bickford asked if the bullying information would still be placed after the code of conduct. Mr. Chapman said yes.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the 2010-2011 JGMS School Improvement Plan as presented tonight.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Seibert

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the changes to the 2010-2011 JGMS Student Handbook as amended tonight.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O'Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

5. Bedford High School Handbook

Mr. Jon Sills proposed changes to the 2010-2011 Student/Parent Handbook. Mr. Sills said that there are no significant changes this year. He presented a memo dated May 3, 2010 with all of the recommended changes. He discussed only some of the changes including:

- Clarification and consolidation of language in Code of Conduct regarding controlled substances. The new Massachusetts marijuana law was also added as an addendum.

Ms. Bickford commented that it is important to tie in the new law to school policy on school property. Mr. Sills agreed and noted that the state law is different than the BHS Code of Conduct and Bedford's Town Meeting law.

- Clarification of the Diversion Program (for drug offenders). Mr. Sills said the language explains that suspension could be mitigated if the student takes the Town Diversion Program (for first offenders only). The goal is to get more offenders to take the program.
- Clarification of penalties on bullying and malicious teasing. Students found guilty of this infraction must take counseling along with the suspension.
- Will include the state's language on bullying.
- Will consider using the JGMS language on bullying but will include language on malicious teasing too.
- BHS Honor Code will be added to the last page of the Code of Conduct.

Ms. Bickford said to remove examples from the Code of Conduct or make examples more clear.

Ms. O’Gara asked if there was an Honor Council established to help implement the Honor Code. Mr. Sills said not yet, that the focus is still on establishing standards.

Ms. Anne Dickinson-Meltz said that the Honor Code is still being developed and she feels that the examples will really help everyone understand the expectations. She agrees that it is too early to have an Honor Code Council.

Mr. Sills said he would add information on the Bedford Education Foundation Student Board and the Superintendent’s Council to the appropriate place in the Handbook.

Mr. Sills also update the Student Government sections of the Handbook in order to accurately reflect current practices from the last few years.

Ms. Seibert made the following motion:

MOVED : That the School Committee approve the changes to the 2010-2011 Student/Parent Handbook as presented (memos dated May 3, 2010 and May 7, 2010) and amended tonight.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

6. School Choice

Dr. LaCroix asked the School Committee to take the annual vote on whether Bedford should accept School Choice for the 2010-2011 school year. She explained that historically, Bedford has opted not to accept School Choice. She also said practically speaking, Bedford schools are limited in space. Dr. LaCroix does not recommend accepting this option.

Ms. O’Gara made the following motion:

MOVED: That the Bedford School Committee not participate in the School Choice Program for the 2010-2011 school year. Among the reasons for not participating is the belief that School Choice acerbates or at least reinforces inequities between wealthier and poorer school systems; and we are at enrollment capacity at our middle and elementary school levels (three out of four schools).

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

7. Donations to the Computer Department

Mr. Coelho recommended that the School Committee accept two computer donations.

Ms. Seibert made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee accept the computer donations from Ilsa Gottlieb and David Darby as described in memo dated May 5, 2010 and discussed tonight.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

The School Committee thanked Ms. Gottlieb and Mr. Darby for their generous donations.

8. Superintendent’s Report

Dr. LaCroix noted that the School Committee would have two more meetings – May 25th and June 15th. Also, there is a meeting next month with the Finance Committee where they will be debriefed on the School’s space study report.

9. Liaison Reports

Ms. Bickford said at the recent Finance Committee, Mr. Richard Jones and Mr. Rich Warrington discussed upcoming capital projects. It was very informative on what is needed for capital maintenance and what is needed to maintain buildings at appropriate levels.

Ms. Seibert reported that the Walkability Workshop is being held this Friday.

10. Minutes

Ms. O’Gara made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the April 13, 2010 School Committee meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

11. Future Agenda

Mr. Hafer would like clarification on the State’s anti-bullying requirements.

Ms. O’Gara would like a follow-up on the reorganization of the Special Education Department, Response to Intervention and new programs.

12. Adjournment

Ms O’Gara made the following motion:

MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 10:30 p.m. to Executive Session for discussing strategy on nonunion contract discussions, to reopen.

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**

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