

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF
May 22, 2012
Bedford High School - Large Instruction Room

1. Call to Order

At 8:00 p.m., Ms. Bickford called to order the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present included Mr. Hafer, Ms. O’Gara, and Mr. Pierce. Sam Markuse, student representative, was also in attendance. Ms. Seibert was absent.

2. Comments from the Public

None

3. Special Education Parents Advisory Council

Mrs. Fine and Mr. Watson, co-chairs of the Bedford SEPAC, presented an update to the School Committee. Mrs. Fine mentioned that the last time the group presented was in 2009!

Mrs. Fine began the presentation with a review of key SEPAC events. These events included:

- Met with parents at the BHS Freshman orientation in 2010
- SEPAC met with Ms. Oldham and special education staff every two months.
- SEPAC had a booth at Bedford Day.
- The new website was launched and is updated frequently to show new events and links to information.
- Networking meetings are held at Whole Foods every month.
- Worked with Mr. Sills on presenting the College Freshman Student forum as well as the College Planning for Students with Learning Challenges Panel.
- On March 5, 2012 an event was held with local emergency first responders to open lines of communication with families of children with special needs.
- Held a roundtable discussion on Autism at the end of November 2011.
- In March, 2012, SEPAC sponsored a discussion on understanding Special Education from school to school in Bedford.
- In April, 2012 SEPAC sponsored a panel discussion on Aspergers Disorder.
- Also in April 2012, Ms. Taymore explained targeted tiered intervention and how the process is data driven and tiered to allow all methods to be considered for improving skills.

Ms. Fine also pointed out that SEPAC held its first road race in May 2012. The goal of the road race was to raise awareness and funds to help with offering informative events for the community as well as to fulfill Special Education teacher wish lists and to create a scholarship award.

Ms. Fine has future plans to hold another workshop with “Ross Greene” and to offer it to free of charge to any teacher that wants to attend. She also wants to reach out to SEPAC donors to see if they can raise funds to purchase iPads for Special Education students. Another wish is to raise money for the “Dragon” transcription software to be used system-wide.

Ms. Fine and Mr. Watson then discussed some of their of their concerns. Concerns include:

- The change in administration.
- Would like to meet with the Superintendent on a monthly basis.
- Treat SEPAC as an advisory council and not a parent organization.
- Schools do not seem to refer parents to SEPAC.

Future plans include:

- Workshop with Ross Green
- Acquire iPads for Special Education students at the high school.
- Develop Special Education events for preschool and elementary students.
- Discuss homework policies with administration.

Mr. Hafer thanked Ms. Fine and Mr. Watson for their presentation. He said he was also concerned about all of the new administrators. He would like to understand more about the concern with homework.

Mr. Pierce said he thought it was a good idea to reach out to preschool and elementary parents. He told Ms. Fine and Mr. Watson to continue doing what they are doing.

Ms. O’Gara said she was amazed at the amount of work the group has accomplished and she hopes there are plans for sustainable leadership in the future. She also thinks that the website is very informative. She agrees that ALL parents should be aware of the targeted intervention strategies being adopted by the schools.

Ms. Fine said that a lot of hardwork and interventions go on behind the scenes at all of the schools and that the schools need to do a better job of communicating this to families.

Ms. Bickford thanked Ms. Fine and Mr. Watson for their hardwork in establishing such strong network support. She believes it really helps the Special Education process become less adversarial and that it is a great benefit to students. She appreciates the energy and passion of the SEPAC leadership.

Ms. Seibert (who recently joined the meeting) said she is pleased that SEPAC has grown so much over the years.

Sam Markuse, student representative, said that it is great that SEPAC is available to help families and he agrees that iPads will really help students with organizational issues.

Dr. LaCroix thanked Ms. Fine and Mr. Watson for their great accomplishments.

5. Proposal: Integrated Preschool Playground

Ilsa Gottlieb, chair of the Bedford Education Foundation, described an effort underway to create and fund an outdoor classroom for Bedford’s Integrated Pre-School. She said this effort started because a preschool teacher wrote a grant proposal requesting funding for an outside playground. In the mean time, Judy Mirel, Early Childhood Coordinator in Bedford for 35 years, announced her retirement. Ms. Gottlieb thought it would be a fitting honor for Ms. Mirel to help her complete her vision for the Integrated Preschool by creating and funding an outdoor space.

A committee was formed and an outdoor playzone was designed. It is designed to be an outdoor classroom in the adjacent courtyard to the preschool and CASE classrooms at the high school, a space that is currently in poor shape. Ms. Gottlieb presented a detailed plan of the desired playzone space. She estimates that the entire project will cost approximately \$65,000 - \$70,000. To date, approximately two-thirds of this cost has been raised through a variety of fundraisers.

Ms. Gottlieb said that tonight, she is asking the School Committee to consider approving the vision and to approve some infrastructure improvement work that is needed in the courtyard of the high school to move forward with the plans. The work is estimated to cost approximately \$19,700. The work to be completed will improve safety and accessibility in the courtyard. Mr. Jones has been involved in estimating the costs of the improvements.

Mr. Pierce asked if the work could be done by September. Mr. Jones said he believes it can.

Ms. O’Gara said she supports fixing up the courtyard even if the play zone does not get funded. She thinks the area should be safe and accessible to all.

Ms. Bickford said the entire project is a terrific vision.

Ms. O’Gara made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the use of a maximum of \$20,000 from the BHS Renovation Project Fund to address safety and walkway accessibility features at Bedford High School.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Ms. O’Gara asked if there were any security risks at the space. Ms. Gottlieb said there are some. The doors to the courtyard do lock, but every so often, people climb over the roof and could gain access.

Ms. Bickford asked if appropriate codes were considered. Mr. Jones said yes, that a building inspector has been involved in the plans.

Ms. Gottlieb reminded that Committee that it is NOT a playground but an outside classroom.

Mr. Kenney, a member of the Finance Committee in the audience, said he questions the use of left over building funds to be used on additional work at the high school. He feels funds should be used only on items in the original plan.

Members of the School Committee disagreed with Mr. Kenney and feel that the laws allow the funds to be used on other projects. For example, left over renovation funds were used to build the memorial flag plaza project in the parking lot of the high school.

Mr. Steele, also a member of the Finance Committee in the audience, asked if the School Committee was comfortable leaving only \$60,000 in the building renovation fund. Members said they were comfortable.

Ms. O’Gara made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve of the proposal to develop a play zone, as

an outdoor classroom, in the courtyard of the high school, to benefit the programs at the high school, as presented tonight;

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Ms. Seibert affirmed that the School Committee will accept the concept of the Playzone and will welcome the end result.

6. Lane School Improvement Plan and Handbook

Principal Robert Ackerman and Vice Principal Keith Kinney presented the Lane School Improvement Plan for the 2012-2013 school year. Mr. Ackerman began by showing a short video on a day at Lane School.

In terms of the plan for next year, Mr. Ackerman said the goals are to finish some of the work started this year and to simplify.

Instruction and Curriculum

- Continue to work on common assessments and strengthen teacher collaboration to improve student learning.
- Keep measuring the “right thing” or the “big ideas”.
- Six data coaches have been trained and are ready to lead monthly data meetings.
- Roll out new math program, “Envision”, for grades 3 and 4.

School Climate

- Always trying to improve.
- Continue with daily classroom morning meetings.
- Roll out new social-emotional curriculum through out the school.
- Friday Building Meeting will continue.
- New discipline plan will be implemented – something predictable and transparent. Data will be collected.

Response to Intervention

- Work will continue on Tier One instruction.
- Continue using the intervention block in the schedule (meets three times per week).
- Improve data collection.

Mr. Hafer asked if there were any concerns with the extra large third grade class coming into the school in September. Mr. Ackerman said no, other than space constraints.

Mr. Pierce asked for Mr. Ackerman’s observations on the 90 minute literacy block, which was added to the schedule this past year. Mr. Ackerman said that he has observed mixed results and he wants to make sure that this year, all classrooms are getting the most out of the literacy block.

Mr. Pierce asked about longitudinal data for each student. Dr. LaCroix said that Aspen will have individual data on each student and that it is the beginning of longitudinal data collection.

Mr. Pierce said he was happy to hear this. He believes that parents should be able to get a full picture of how his or her child is doing in school.

Dr. LaCroix added that this is a long term plan but the faculty has to get on board first.

Ms. O’Gara asked if rubrics were published and available to parents. Mr. Ackerman said not yet, since they are still being developed.

Ms. O’Gara asked what was cut from the schedule to make room for the intervention block. Mr. Ackerman said that the schedule has been condensed and unfortunately, it does feel tight. He is dismayed about this because teachers need and like flexibility.

Ms. O’Gara asked if teachers could do math and/or reading in the morning if they feel like it? Mr. Ackerman said that reading is scheduled and cannot be flexible because of special education needs and reading groups. Some teachers have it in the afternoon and this does take some adjusting.

Ms. Bickford said she is still concerned about the changes in the foreign language program (reduction in the frequency of the meeting times). Mr. Ackerman said the foreign language teachers would like to meet more frequently but he had to prioritize and can’t accommodate this desire.

Ms. Bickford suggests comparing end of year assessments in Foreign Language to see if the schedule change is negatively affecting results. Mr. Ackerman agreed to do this.

Ms. Bickford noted that the recent Art Program Review pointed out that some classes in Lane are shorter than others and that there is not a lot of transition time between classes. She asked Mr. Ackerman to consider these concerns when scheduling.

Ms. Seibert said that teaching social skills at morning meetings is a great idea and an important life skill to learn.

Ms. Seibert asked about tracking discipline on Aspen. Mr. Ackerman explained that although it is child specific and online, only Administrators can go back and review old records. Teachers do not have access to this.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the Lane School Improvement Plan for 2012-2013.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

The School Committee reviewed the Lane School Handbook change memo and had only a few questions. Ms. Seibert questioned the use of detention at Lane School. Mr. Ackerman said that this is now a new option and would only be used if the parent agrees that it may help. Mr. Ackerman said that he is limited in consequences for patterned misbehaviors. He wants detention to only be an option.

Ms. Seibert said that the proposed language is very strong and in her opinion, not appropriate for Lane School-aged students. She suggested putting the topic of detention in context and to make it very clear that it is discretionary.

Ms. Seibert asked if the Attendance policy was the same in all handbooks. Mr. Kinney said yes, the same message but age appropriate.

7. Davis School Improvement Plan

Principal Nancy Peterson and Vice Principal Andrea Salipante presented the Davis School Improvement Plan for 2012-2013.

Ms. Peterson began the presentation by thanking Dr. LaCroix for the incredible enriching time she has had working as a Principal at Bedford Public Schools.

She quickly reviewed some highlights from the current school year, including:

- A before-school sports program was established at Davis School.
- Implementation of the K-2 writing rubric.
- Implementation of the 90 minute literacy block.
- Implementation of phonics program.
- Incorporated new Bridges math lessons in order to correlate with the common core.
- Developed and identified common assessments across the curriculum.
- Established academic and behavioral RTI teams to review student progress and recommend interventions.

Mrs. Peterson reviewed highlights from the 2012-2013 Improvement Plan for Davis School:

Governance and Leadership

- Support new principal's transition.
- Implement new teacher/administrator evaluation system.
- Implement new federal nutrition guidelines.
- Create new teacher collaboration teams (4 grade level teachers plus support)
- Create and implement a new building schedule which provides common planning time for collaborative team members.
- Utilize Aspen for attendance, student data and reporting. (Will need teacher training)

Curriculum and Instruction

- Continue developing Tier II and III interventions for struggling students.
- Implement Lucy Calkins writing program (new).
- Share and research best practices in the 90 minute literacy block and the 30 minute intervention block.

Assessment and Evaluation

- Pilot and further develop common assessments. (Ms. Peterson noted that this causes rich discussions with teachers.)
- Begin systemic review of student assessment data to inform instruction.
- Develop a calendar for sharing and analyzing data.

Human Resources and Professional Development

- Provide training in Aspen.
- Complete RBT data training.

- Provide development for Educational Assistants and Teaching Assistants on supporting teachers during the literacy block.

Student Support

- Implement a monthly all school meeting to strengthen school culture. (Build into schedule.)
- Support the development of a diversity day.
- Investigate the creation of “diversity bags” in each classroom (learn about literature, culture, etc.)

Mr. Hafer thanked Ms. Peterson for her presentation. He thinks it is a well-thought out plan. He is impressed with all of the goals that were met last year.

Mr. Hafer asked if Ms. Peterson thought that the new teacher evaluation system would be more difficult to implement at the elementary level. Ms. Peterson said no. It will not cover every subject though. She thinks the new evaluation system is good because teachers need to learn to self evaluate.

Mr. Pierce thanked Ms. Peterson for the year she spent with Bedford as interim Principal.

Ms. O’Gara said the idea of classroom “diversity bags” is good because the town is becoming very diverse. She thinks it is important to acknowledge the different cultures.

Ms. O’Gara asked how the teachers were reacting to the extra time to collaborate. Ms. Peterson said that there will be a culture shift as teachers realize that it is important to discuss data.

Ms. O’Gara said she was pleased to see the plans to train the educational and teaching assistants. She said that these folks are very valuable to the school.

Ms. Bickford asked for information on the Lucy Calkins writing program. Ms. Peterson said that it is a writing program for grades K through 2. Students learn to write about the “small moments”. They do not learn lesson by lesson but learn common structure and language. It is aligned to the Common Core.

Ms. Bickford asked where the multiage classroom stands. Ms. Peterson explained that Ms. Davies will teach second grade (and will have all of the 1st grade multiagers). Ms. Houston will teach first grade and will be next door. There will be opportunities for the second graders to help with first graders. Also parents have been updated and no feedback has been received.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the 2012-2013 School Improvement Plan for Davis School.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

8. Presentation: Grade 3 and 4 Math Textbooks

Ms. Dorer asked the School Committee to consider approving the adoption of Envision Math textbooks for grades 3 and 4. She highlighted benefits of this new program:

- Comprehensive
- Aligned to Common Core

- RTI component
- Introduction video using animation is very engaging
- Lessons are scaffolded
- Focus is on visual models
- Activity centers are hands-on
- There is an online assessment option, which is great for data analysis.

Ms. Larrenaga and Ms. Venuti tested the curriculum this year and both teachers really liked it. Students liked it as well.

Ms. Dorer is a little worried about it being too traditional because it is more “skill and drill”. However, she thinks this may be a good thing for third and fourth graders. Overall the program is engaging to all learners – low and high.

The plan to implement the program is :

- June 6th introduction
- Early September – Ms. Larrenaga will do an in-house training session.
- Fall – Ms. Dorer will hold a parent meeting.
- September – A representative from Envision will spend a day at Lane to meet with teachers.

Mr. Hafer asked if this purchase was doable within our existing textbook budget. Mr. Coelho said yes.

Mr. Pierce asked if it was too expensive to include grade 5. Ms. Dorer said yes but is very comfortable rolling it out to grades 3 and 4 first.

Ms. O’Gara asked if the program was overly wordy and if this would become an issue for special education students. Ms. Dorer said that there seems to be support structures to help.

Ms. O’Gara said overall, it looks like an interesting program.

Ms. Bickford asked why Bridges was not selected. Ms. Dorer said that Bridges curriculum in grades three, four and five is not aligned to the Common Core.

Ms. Bickford asked if we will regret not having Bridges Math K-5, once it is aligned? Ms. Dorer said she does not think so. She thinks the online assessment feature of Envision offers great possibilities and will be important.

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

9. Approval: JGMS Student Handbook

The School Committee was presented with a revised Middle School handbook.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the proposed 2012-2013 JGMS Student Handbook as reflected in the May 8 and May 13, 2012 memorandums.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

10. Personnel Report

The School Committee approved several job descriptions.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the job description of Data Coordinator.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Ms. O’Gara made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the job description of Director of Finance.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Ms. O’Gara made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the job description of Finance Office Supervisor/Payroll Benefits Manager as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Mr. Coelho explained that there have been a significant change in responsibilities and this description accurately reflects the job today.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the job description of Network Administrator as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

The School Committee also reviewed two new job descriptions – Program Administrator for Special Education Grades 6-12 and Program Administrator for Instructional Intervention and Data Analysis. These descriptions are brand new. Committee members passed along some minor comments and agreed to vote at the next meeting.

Dr. LaCroix made the following announcements:

Appointments (for 2012-2013)

| | | |
|------------------|--|--------|
| Denise Oldham | Interim Director of Special Education | System |
| Stacy Grillo | Assistant Director Special Education – out of district | System |
| Claire Jackson | Interim Assistant Superintendent | System |
| Jamie Hebert | Elementary Teacher | Lane |
| John Glynn | Special Education Teacher | Middle |
| Kathleen Boynton | Assistant Principal | High |

11. Adjournment

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 11:45.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Roll Call Vote:

| | |
|---------------------|------------|
| Ms. Seibert | Yes |
| Mr. Hafer | Yes |
| Mr. Pierce | Yes |
| Ms. Bickford | Yes |
| Ms. O’Gara | Yes |

School Committee Secretary

Date

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

May 22, 2012

Exhibits/Documents

- **Bedford SEPAC presentation 5/21/2012**
- **Presentation on Playzone 5/16/2012**
- **Lt. Job Lane School Improvement Plan 2012-2013**
- **Davis School Improvement Plan 2012-2013**
- **Request for Adoption of envision Math Texts presentation 5/6/2012**
- **Draft Data Coordinator Job Description**
- **Draft Director of Finance job description**
- **Draft Finance Office Supervisor/Payroll Benefits Manager**
- **Draft Network Administrator job description**

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Executive Session
May 22, 2012