

**BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF  
November 8, 2011**

**Bedford High School - Large Instruction Room**

**1. Call to Order**

At 7:30 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. Matt Coughlin, and Sam Markuse, student representatives, were also in attendance.

**2. Comments from the Public**

None

**3. Personnel Report**

Dr. LaCroix asked the School Committee to approve the annual trip for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students to travel to Washington D.C. She noted that it was the 37<sup>th</sup> year for this trip. The cost is \$607 per student and there will be financial aid available for those in need. Mr. Casey, Social Studies teacher at JGMS, is once again organizing the trip along with the tour company, World Strides. Mr. Casey said that we have used this tour company for the last several years. There will be approximately 12 to 14 faculty and staff chaperoning as well as a paid nurse in attendance.

Mr. Pierce made the following motion:

**MOVED: That the School Committee approve the overnight field trip for eighth graders to travel to Washington D.C. from May 29, 2012 through June 1, 2012 at a cost of \$607 per student and at no cost to the schools.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara**

**MOTION APPROVED: 5-0.**

Dr. LaCroix announced the following personnel items:

*Appointments:*

Tamara Mead	Educational Assistant	Davis
Edwin Nadeau	Facilities Department	High School
Susanne McFarlin	Speech Language Pathologist	Davis & BHS Preschool

**4. Superintendent Applicant Discussion and Vote**

Ms. Seibert announced that it was time to reach a decision on the Superintendent’s search. She reviewed the process and opened the discussion about Mr. Sills’ candidacy for all School Committee members.

Mr. Hafer said that he has seen Mr. Sills’ track record and believes Mr. Sills has done his best for the students of Bedford. Mr. Hafer also thinks that Mr. Sills did very well in all of the interview forums explaining his accomplishments and criteria for the position. Mr. Hafer said he believes that in this case, Mr. Sills’ lack of Superintendent experience is not detrimental. Mr. Hafer said that he believes Mr. Sills will make a successful transition to Superintendent and Mr. Hafer is confident that he will do well in the role. Mr. Hafer fully supports Mr. Sills as Superintendent.

Mr. Pierce said that he agrees with Mr. Hafer. He has observed Mr. Sills during his twelve years at the high school and feels his work there has been exemplary. Mr. Pierce admires Mr. Sills’

connections he has with the students and sees this every year at graduation. He says that recruiting and retention at the High School is good. Mr. Pierce also commented that he has served on several committees with Mr. Sills and recognizes his hard work. Mr. Pierce believes Mr. Sills will carry on the traditions and values of Bedford Public Schools and that that he is happy to nominate Mr. Sills as Superintendent.

Ms. O’Gara said that Mr. Sills has fostered Bedford’s culture and is a dedicated educator. She likes that fact that he is continuing learner himself. She also likes that fact that he is deliberative in his decisions and appreciates his plan to step away from day-to-day leadership of the high school and to focus on the elementary schools. She also appreciates that Mr. Sills recognizes that Bedford is not broken but needs cultivation. She realizes that he lacks the budget experience but feels he has been active in town-wide budget discussions. She is prepared to offer him the Superintendent’s position and he has her whole-hearted support.

Ms. Bickford said that this is a historic moment for the School Committee as it is only the third time in 32 years that the Committee votes on a Superintendent. She believes that the community articulated very clearly that they do not want to see any drastic changes (a tribute to Dr. LaCroix). She believes Mr. Sills understands this and will continue to keep Bedford’s well- rounded education that serves all children. She also believes that Mr. Sills will be an approachable Superintendent and that he truly understands Bedford and where the schools have been and where they need to go. Ms. Bickford said that it was wise advice from the MASC to search internally for a Superintendent candidate.

Ms. Bickford also noted that the staff respects Mr. Sills and that this is very important. She believes that Mr. Sills is an optimistic choice for Superintendent – he loves the students, he knows Bedford and he is grounded in education. “He has an excellent skills set. We watched him grow into a great high school principal and we think he will grow into a great Superintendent.”

Ms. Seibert said she believes that Mr. Sills fills all of the qualities of the job description. She is pleased that he has articulated a clear desire to stay in Bedford. She likes his diverse experience and his appreciation of the value of technology to education. She is especially drawn to his commitment to equity for all students and his support of staff and staff development. She strongly believes that Bedford is lucky to have Mr. Sills as the next Superintendent.

Ms. O’Gara made the following motion:

**MOVED: That the School Committee appoint Jon Sills as Superintendent of Schools effective July 1, 2012 subject to successful negotiation of a contract.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce**

**MOTION APPROVED: 5-0**

## **5. ELA Action Plan**

Ms. Mary Lou Sallee, English Program Administrator, presented the ELA Action Plan as a follow-up to last year’s site visit. She noted that as the English department digested the visiting team’s recommendations, they realized that linking the curriculum to the Common Core standards makes sense. Therefore, 75-80% of the ELA action plan rests on the integration of and the alignment to the Common Core Standards.

Literacy for 6-12 Curriculum Development will include:

- Reading for literature

- Reading for informational texts (a new focus)

Writing for K-12 Curriculum Development will include

- Teaching the same concept but with more subtlety and nuance as students move on in school.
- Clarifying scope and sequence of speaking and presentation skills.

Ms. Sallee noted that all in all, Bedford has used Massachusetts's standards so we are in a good position because the Common Core Standards are based on many of the Massachusetts standards.

Ms. Sallee also noted that technology will help students communicate more effectively when writing and speaking.

Ms. Sallee discussed the Grade 9 I-Search project as an example as a good starting point for students to learn all the common standards that they will expand on throughout high school.

Ms. Sallee realized that students in grades 6 through 12 need more experience giving oral presentations.

Other action items include:

- Mapping strands of the curriculum.
- Developing common rubrics and assessments.
- Developing scope and sequence on speaking and listening skills for all grades K-12.
- Strengthening nonfiction and argument skills.
- Working with data and student work from assessments.
- Examining student work on benchmark assessments to determine progress from grade to grade.

School Committee members decided to listen to the Social Studies Action Plan Presentation before asking questions on the ELA presentation.

## **7. Presentation: Social Studies Action Plan**

Ms. Christine Butler presented the Social Studies Action Plan as a result of the visiting team's report last May. She began by reviewing the commendations including the following:

- Leadership is moving in the right direction with the early release schedule.
- K-12 Social Studies is important to the community.
- K-12 Social Studies teachers have the reputation for being especially flexible and cooperative.
- Commitment to professional development.
- Curriculum initiatives are integrated with improvement plans.
- Effective use of technology.
- Intense focus on critical thinking.

Ms. Butler said that the action plan for the current school year would focus on work on common assessments. She explained that the development of these common assessments involves incorporating Common Core skills for English Language Arts and History/Social Science as well as the Massachusetts Frameworks. Other specific steps include:

- Devoting two Wednesdays a month for teacher initiatives.

- Streamlining district goals.
- Continue with vertical teamwork.
- Make BHS/JGMS curriculum more available online in parent friendly language.

Ms. Butler also discussed action steps by school.

*Davis School's Action Plan*

- More time devoted to collaboration with specialists.
- The vertical teams need to prioritize frameworks and content.
- Determine the K-12 sequence.
- Add thinking objectives to each unit.
- Develop and implement common assessments.

*Lane School's Action Plan*

- Continue with team teaching.
- Create "power standards".
- Incorporate social studies common assessment into the literacy block.
- Integrate essential questions into instruction.

*John Glenn Middle School's Action Plan*

- Revise essential elements of curriculum so all students have same core content and skills.
- Help students to evaluate sources to use in their research.
- Arrange peer observations at Lane to learn more about how technology is integrated.
- Arrange peer observations for 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers at BHS to learn expectations.
- Learn new ways to integrate technology into curriculum.
- Develop teacher websites.
- Regroup students when ever possible to help with differentiation.

*Bedford High Schools Action Plan*

- Reorganize shared-drive for Social Studies department.
- Incorporate reading skills into Social Studies classes.
- Common assessments – design and implement.
- Continue to incorporate essential questions – does it make sense to use same essential question?
- Work with English Department to align research methods and projects.
- Continue to utilize technology for instruction.
- Continue to communicate value and meaning of homework.
- Continue identify ways to increase opportunities for broad participation in Social Studies enrichment activities.

Ms. Butler reiterated that the focus for 2011-2012 would be on common assessments and that this focus would help the district reflect on instructional practices. She also noted that the program review program helps increase communication between schools and validates work in the classrooms. It also shows how students, parents, colleagues, administration and the School Committee support and value Social Studies.

School Committee members had some questions and/or comments on both Action Plan presentations.

Mr. Hafer said that he was pleased to hear about the collaboration between ELA and Social Studies. He did ask if the action plans would become part of the district goals. Dr. LaCroix told him they would.

Mr. Hafer asked if rubrics were used with students and parents. Ms. Sallee said yes but standards are not distributed but are used to develop rubrics.

Mr. Pierce said he appreciates the comments on how the program review process is helpful and reflective.

Mr. Pierce also commented that he thinks the grades 3-5 rubric is a good basis for report cards. Ms. Sallee said that Linda Volpicelli has worked diligently on developing a K-5 rubric and is moving forward with the goal of making these rubrics more public. She noted that it is a very complicated process to develop common rubrics.

Ms. O’Gara said she appreciates the hard work of developing common rubrics and assessments. She also likes the fact that the focus is moving to expository writing skills. However, she does wonder what role creative writing has. Ms. Sallee said that the Massachusetts Frameworks still includes creative and narrative writing, thankfully. She said that this is another reason why the high school stays away from AP classes in English.

Ms. O’Gara said she applauds the effort to keep Social Studies in the elementary schools. She understands how difficult it is to find time.

Ms. Bickford said she is struck by the amount of communications and collaboration resulting from the Program Review Process.

Ms. Bickford asked about specific plans for ramping up the speaking and listening piece of the curriculum. Ms. Sallee said one example is that in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, there will be a big presentation assignment. However, there are still a lot of discussions on what to do in other grades.

Ms. Bickford said she would like to hear more about what JGMS is thinking about in terms of regrouping and wonders if there are really any opportunities for this, since it appears to conflict with the concept of team teaching.

Ms. Taymore said a lot of work needs to be done with the Common Core and common assessments by 2014. However, a lot of work has begun thanks to the teachers and Program Administrators. She said the work is and will continue to be cross-disciplinary.

Ms. Seibert asked if there is still enough flexibility in the standards. She fears losing the personalization of teaching and does not want to teach to the rubric.

Ms. Sallee reminded Ms. Seibert that there will be common assessments but not identical. They will be flexible based on the teacher and student needs.

Ms. Butler said that equivalent assessments is a better description rather than common.

Dr. LaCroix said that the new educator evaluation standards will require common equivalent assessments. She feels the district needs to get something in place to defend our judgments of teacher performance based on student performance.

Ms. Seibert asked why one of the action steps includes explaining the value of homework. Ms. Butler said that a visiting team member pointed out that most students did not understand the value of homework. She said most teachers were surprised by this comment so they decided to survey all the students by level. Data received was different than the visiting team's data. Therefore the Social Studies team will monitor to see if there is an accurate concern.

Sam Markuse, Student Representative, said that it would be very helpful if English and Social Studies line up together. He also suggested that Level 4 students receive more instruction on critical thinking skills that are taught to the Level 5 students. He thinks students who move up to Level 5 are at a disadvantage. Ms. Butler agreed and said that the department is already working on this.

Sam also said that the Socratic Seminar (as discussed by Ms. Sallee) did not really work too well in a large class. Ms. Sallee agreed that this does not work well in large groups.

Matt Coughlin, Student Representative, agrees that coordinating English and Social Studies would be beneficial since this is where students develop critical thinking skills and will help in the real world. He also thinks more explicit explanations on homework will help students understand why it helps.

Matt said that in general, the Social Studies and English teachers really connect well with students.

## **7. Superintendent's Report**

Dr. LaCroix reported that the Strategic Planning Committee will meet next week. She also noted that the next School Committee meeting is November 29, 2011, after Thanksgiving.

## **8. Liaison Reports**

- Bedford Education Foundation will meet on Wednesday, Nov. 9<sup>th</sup>.
- Mr. Pierce said he attended the APPLAUD Program and participants wondered if the schools should do more, like requiring parents to attend a session on drug use?
- Ms. O'Gara reminded everyone that Bedford was awarded "100 Best Communities" recognition.
- Ms. Seibert noted that the Fiscal Planning meeting is Monday, November 28, 2011.

## **9. Approval of Minutes**

Ms. O'Gara made the following motion:

**MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the September 27, 2011 School Committee meeting as amended.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce**

**MOTION APPROVED: 5-0**

Ms. O'Gara made the following motion:

**MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes from the October 11, 2011 Executive Session meeting.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce**

**MOTION APPROVED: 5-0**

Ms. O’Gara made the following motion:

**MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes from the October 23, 2011 Executive Session meeting as amended.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce**

**MOTION APPROVED: 5-0**

Mr. Pierce made the following motion:

**MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes from the October 24, 2011 Executive Session meeting.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara**

**MOTION APPROVED: 5-0**

#### **10. Future Agenda**

FY’2013 Budget Request.

#### **11. Adjournment**

Ms. O’Gara made the following motion:

**MOVED:** Motion to adjourn, at 10:15 p.m. to Executive Session for purpose of contract negotiation, not to reopen.

**MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce**

**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**

**November 8, 2011**

**Exhibits/Documents**

- **ELA Action Plan Presentation dated November 8, 2011**
- **Social Studies Action Plan Presentation to the School Committee dated Tuesday, November 8, 2011.**
- **Draft of September 27, 2011 minutes.**
- **Draft of October 11, 2011 Executive Session minutes.**
- **Draft of October 21, 2011 Executive Session minutes.**
- **Draft of October 24, 2011 Executive Session minutes.**
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**Bedford School Committee**

**Executive Session Minutes  
November 8, 2011**