

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
April 12, 2016
Bedford High School - Large Group Instruction Room

1. Call to Order

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

2. Comments from Public

None

3. Personnel Report

Mr. Sills asked the School Committee to consider a few out-of-state field trip requests.

The first one is for Dr. Turner to attend a conference on June 26 – 29th at the International Society for Tech Ed in Denver, Colorado. Dr. Turner will be presenting his research findings about leadership and 1:1 school districts. Dr. Turner will share this research as a representative of Bedford Public Schools and will learn the latest thinking and practices around technology in education. He would like to use the \$2,000 allotment of Professional Development money as described in his contract. He will share information with the new BHS Principal and Donna Clements, Director of Technology.

Ms. Guay made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve Dr. Turner's attendance at the International Society for Technology Education Annual Conference on June 26-29, 2016 in Denver, Colorado at a cost of \$2,000 to be taken from the Professional Development fund.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Santiago

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Mr. Sills also asked the School Committee to approve a field trip for no more than 22 students from the Environmental Club and/or AP Environmental class to travel to Merck Forrest and Farmland in Rupert, VT on May 13-15, 2016. Mr. Griffin and Ms. Suprise will chaperone this annual trip where students will learn about sustainable farming techniques and energy conservation. Students will also participate in workshops and community service projects in the area.

Ms. Guay made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the trip for up to 22 students from the Environmental Club and/or AP Environmental class to travel to Rupert, VT to the Merck Forrest and Farm on May 13-15, 2016 at a cost of \$100 per student and no cost to the school.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Santiago

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Mr. Sills asked the School Committee to approve the annual 8th grade trip to Washington DC. He said that all students in the 8th grade are invited to attend and that there are scholarship funds available for those that need it. Mr. Sills also explained that special, local field trips will be planned for any student who is unable to attend the Washington DC trip.

Mr. Joe Casey has planned the trip again this year. It will follow a similar itinerary as past years. This trip is planned a little bit later in the year so that it does not conflict with graduation. Mr. Casey said that this time frame is better as it now acts as a culminating activity for the 8th graders.

Mr. Brosgol made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the annual field trip for the 8th grade class to travel by motor coach to Washington DC on June 6-9, 2017 at a cost of \$739 per student and no cost to the school department.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Santiago

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

4. JGMS Textbook Presentation

Ms. Christine Butler, Program Administrator for Social Studies, and Mr. Joe Casey, 8th grade history teacher, requested the School Committee to approve a social studies textbook purchase for the middle school.

Ms. Butler explained that Bedford's social studies curriculum for grades 6-9 has been revised. The previous curriculum was aligned to state frameworks in anticipation of the state rolling out a history MCAS exam. All in all, the curriculum was "unwieldy" and could not be covered in one school year. It was also difficult to incorporate critical thinking skills. All social studies teachers in grades 6-9 believe that it was time to revise.

According to Ms. Butler, the new curriculum applies ideas, provides opportunities to analyze primary sources, and gives way to many critical thinking opportunities. Essential questions for each grade level (6-8) have been established and are reflective on the new content emphasis and on building writing and critical thinking skills.

For example, in sixth grade the geography focus is on contemporary issues rather than location. In seventh grade, the focus is on global cultures and what happens when they interact. Eighth grade examines responsible citizenship – civil rights and identity. (A lot of Facing History content is emphasized here.)

Ms. Butler and Mr. Casey expect that the curriculum will engage more students and will have plenty of opportunity to work on critical thinking skills.

Ms. Butler said that 9th grade teachers now recognize the need to update its curriculum. Teachers have realized that there is a need to connect to the present and to bring in more diverse voices. Ms. Butler also noted that the 9th grade teachers recognize their need for more content expertise in social history. The department is currently exploring ways to gain this knowledge.

Ms. Santiago asked what was being done to bring in more diverse voices. Ms. Butler said that they will change the emphasis off of western civilization. Also, the Foundations of American History courses are reorganizing by type of change. For example Presidential impacts on history or judicial impacts on history, etc.

Mr. Pierce said he pleased to see efforts to teach this material in different ways. He does wonder if some of today's current events are age appropriate for 8th grade students.

Mr. Casey said that the teachers are sensitive to this. They start the year off talking about identity and being responsible citizens which means recognizing and listening to different opinions. Respect is established in the classroom. He feels 8th grade is a good age to bring some of the different point of views into the classroom.

Mr. Casey said that the teachers in the middle school are pleased with the civics curriculum. It allows civil discourse at a time when differences amongst the students really start to become apparent.

Mr. Pierce also said he thinks the new 9th grade essential question, "How do individuals and groups impact history?" is appropriate and thoughtful. Ms. Butler explained that teachers state it explicitly with the students and continually go back to it after lessons. It also informs teacher's practice and students' work.

Mr. Brosgol said that the new curriculum is so relevant for today.

Ms. Guay said that as our district becomes more and more diverse, it is more important to teach different points of view.

Ms. Guay asked if anyone has given students the US Citizenship exam. Mr. Casey said yes, that it is given to 8th graders in the spring and they do well. He does not believe they would pass at the beginning of the year.

Mr. McAllister said he remembers talking about the 8th grade social studies curriculum about 10 years ago. He is pleased to see where it is going today. He said that it is clear that all the teachers are engaged in the new curriculum and that they seem very excited about it.

Mr. McAllister did acknowledge that there is some risk with adopting this change because the State may adopt a history state exam and we may not do as well since we have moved away from the frameworks. He does not personally believe this will happen and feels we are better off with the new curriculum.

Ms. Butler said that if this was to happen, students' geography skills will be weak. She also noted that some of the US history frameworks have moved to the 8th grade. Ms. Butler also noted that she is involved in MCAS discussions with DESE so she will know if a history test ever becomes a reality.

Ms. Santiago said that the new textbooks were very engaging.

Mr. Brosgol asked if the textbooks met diversity goals. Mr. Casey answered that the books are a starting point and Facing History curriculum is intertwined with the book.

Mr. McAllister said that the book seems like a foundational text. Mr. Casey agreed and said that middle school kids need the structure especially as a starting point.

The School Committee agreed to vote on adopting the text book at the next School Committee meeting.

5. Bedford Public School Curriculum Overview

MaryLou Sallee, Assistant Superintendent, presented an overview of the curriculum and how it is linked to the district-wide improvement plan. Ms. Sallee presented the goals and gave examples of some initiatives that are underway to meet these objectives.

I. Coherent, Higher Order Thinking/Student Centered Learning

- At Davis School, Davis Town continues and is now a culminating event after a year-long study. It develops student inquiry while integrating math, science and ELA skills and lessons.
- Integration of the new Science Standards where students use the same processes as scientists and are taught material using a spiral approach.
- STEM Technology integration is bringing coding opportunities across the district.
- The revised Social Studies curriculum integrates civic expectations and cultural proficiency.
- Common assessments are becoming more important to us as we monitor student progress. This process helps integrate reading, writing, and speaking into all subjects.

II. Equity and Diversity – Teaching *all* students

- Davis School's use of Open Circle morning meetings is an example of creating safe learning environments in every classroom.
- Social-emotional learning is integrated into elementary curriculum. Teachers use the same preselected books to help with lessons.
- Intervention beyond special education is incorporated into each school.
- Every learner is challenged. Frequent formative assessments are used in elementary schools. Work is analyzed to inform instruction.
- Greater inclusion is in all schools.

III. Collaborative, Professional Culture

- Having a collaborative and professional culture allows all of the above to happen.
- Summer curriculum projects are greatly appreciated.
- New emphasis on instructional coaching is also appreciated by all teachers.
- New K-12 Curriculum leadership team will be very beneficial.
- The Equity & Diversity Committee is valuable

Ms. Sallee also noted that there are some areas that need to grow in the 2016-17 school year. These areas include:

- Deepening the cultural proficiency curriculum
- Articulation and prioritization of the K-12 curriculum
- ELA Curriculum for K-5 needs to be aligned and integrated, especially in the second to third grade transition.

Ms. Sallee thanked the School Committee for supporting many of these initiatives during the budget process. She also said that her role as the Assistant Superintendent feels right and she is excited to continue to move forward next year.

Ms. Santiago said she was surprised to learn that her 9th grade daughter was only one of three girls in the high school coding class. Ms. Sallee agreed that this number needs to grow and she thinks it will.

Mr. Pierce said that the goal of “supporting and challenging every learner” is a key goal. He said it is up to us to push kids to engage. He is pleased to see the emphasis on early intervention to keep kids engaged throughout all of their school years.

Mr. Brosgol thanked Ms. Sallee for showing the video of the second grade students at Davis School. He is also pleased to see the focus on the transitional years like the second to third grade move.

Ms. Guay thanked Ms. Sallee for presenting the big picture and the long view of the curriculum.

Mr. McAllister said that our kids are lucky to be in Bedford. “We are focusing on the right things.”

Ms. Sallee said that the district focus on three priorities really helps all schools to focus on the priorities. All staff know what is important. She also noted that, “We have extraordinarily talented staff at all buildings and that each one rises to the occasion and does what is right for students.”

6. Superintendent’s Report

Mr. Sills thanked Ms. Sallee for her presentation and thanked the School Committee for their positive comments. He also thanked the town boards for their incredible support.

Mr. Sills said that Ms. Sallee is leading the effort to find a new high school Principal. He also thanked Ms. Guay and Ms. Santiago for participating on the search committee. Mr. Sills said that there are four finalists and that each one will be vetted publicly with parents, students, and staff.

Mr. Sills said the district is facing a challenge with religious holidays. He would like to be more sensitive to cultures without major interruptions. He will be forming a task force with a School Committee member, a local Rabbi, teachers, students and parents to discuss.

Mr. Sills reported that the Lane School project was approved at Town Meeting with “wonderful town support”. He also said that the Capital Plan was also approved. A Building Committee will be formed for the project.

Mr. Sills said that Lane School enrollment for next year is turning out to be a challenge. Third grade may need additional Special Education support and the fifth grade has high numbers due to recent move-ins. Davis School however seems to indicate that there is not a need for another section of kindergarten at the moment. Mr. Sills will wait until he knows of any additional retirements before he looks for more funding to accommodate the Lane School needs.

Mr. Sills said that in the future, schools will be expected to screen students for drugs. He is watching the new legislature unfold before he figures out what will be needed for our schools to do this.

7. Liaison Reports

None

8. Meeting Minutes

Mr. Pierce made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the February 9, 2016 School Committee meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Guay

MOTION APPROVED: 4-0-1 (Ms. Santiago abstained)

Mr. Pierce made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the February 23, 2016 School Committee meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Guay

MOTION APPROVED: 4-0-1 (Ms. Santiago abstained)

9. Future Agenda

- Safe Routes initiative
- Lift for Press box

Mr. Pierce commented that he is disappointed with the MIAA schedule changes because it means that the community aspect of Thanksgiving football games is now gone just for play off opportunities.

10. Adjournment

Ms. Guay made the following motion.

MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 9:35 p.m., not to reopen.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Santiago

MOTION APPROVED 5-0

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. McAllister Yes

Ms. Guay Yes

Mr. Brosgol	Yes
Mr. Pierce	Yes
Ms. Santiago	Yes

School Committee Secretary

Date

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

April 12, 2016

Exhibits/Documents

- Presentation - Curriculum Revisions in Social Studies in Grades 6-9
- Presentation – Bedford Public Schools Curriculum Overview An Age of Integration
- Draft of minutes from the February 9, 2016 School Committee meeting
- Draft of minutes from the February 23, 2016 School Committee meeting