

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
May 17, 2016
Bedford High School - Large Group Instruction Room

1. Call to Order

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

2. Comments from Public

None

3. Personnel Report

Mr. Sills announced:

Resignations:

Sheela Meyers	Special Education	Lane School
Gina Campo	Special Education	TA High School

Appointments:

Michelle Pietrangelo	Chemistry/Biology teacher	High School
Lauren McCarthy	Science – Gr. 6	Middle School
Melissa Hegarty	BCBA	Davis School

4. Davis School Improvement Plan

Beth Benoit, Principal, presented the School Improvement Plan for 2016-17. She thanked the Davis School Leadership team and School Council for help with developing this plan. Ms. Benoit said that the plan is not that different from the last plan but the activities completed under each initiative are a little different and deeper.

Ms. Benoit explained that the plan is based around the district wide strategic objectives. She gave examples of what was done this year under each objective and noted where the focus would be for next year.

Coherent, Higher Order Thinking

Davis uses “purposeful” play for learning with less stress. Ms. Benoit gave an example of a penguin project where the lesson integrated math, reading, research and informational writing. Ms. Benoit also reported that the focus this year in second grade has been on engineering and design. She gave an example of how students read the fairy tale of the three little pigs and then spent time problem solving on how to build a structure that would not be blown down by the big bad wolf. This type of work will continue in 2016-17.

Davis School teachers are looking at the established curriculum and finding ways to add elements such as engineering and design, social and emotional development, etc. They are looking at projects that allow deep exploration of learning expectations. This too will continue next year.

Equity and Diversity: Teaching All Students

Davis teachers are systematically weaving social and emotional development into all aspects of the school community. Children are taught themes of identity and diversity and this year Ms. Benoit tried to find ways to celebrate being unique and ways to find new friends. Ms. Benoit said the All School Assemblies this year have focused on work students have done. “What makes me strong? What are other people’s strengths?”

The next step will be to figure out how to teach students at Davis to take action. What can kids do in uncomfortable situations on the playground or in the cafeteria? Teachers will help children problem solve and resolve conflict.

Next year, the SAIL Program will continue to evolve. Ms. Benoit said she will focus on helping families and the community understand the Davis approach to SAIL students in school and when they are in the community.

Ms. Benoit will also focus on identifying the supports the Davis faculty needs to teach all types of students.

Collaborative Professional Culture

Ms. Benoit said the faculty is comfortable with the collaborative culture. The next step is to move to peer to peer coaching.

Cluster teams will continue in the 2016-17 school year.

Next year, Wednesday meetings will start off with a full faculty meeting for about 10-15 minutes and then everyone will break into smaller meetings. The Administrative team will assist each group with staying on topic.

Ms. Santiago thanked Ms. Benoit for a very informative presentation.

Mr. Pierce said that it was interesting to hear about the practice of teaching higher order thinking skills to the young students. However, he is wondering how the “mundane” facts and skills are being taught.

Ms. Benoit said that every day, Davis teachers teach skills – phonics, reading, math facts. However, these items were not put in the School Improvement Plan because this is the part of teaching that teachers are comfortable with. The School Improvement Plan focuses on applying skills in meaningful ways for kids – purposeful play.

Mr. Pierce said that teachers need to continue to communicate what skills students are not mastering. Ms. Benoit agreed. She also added that the new K-5 ELA Coordinator will help utilize longitudinal studies on each student to intervene on obstacles in learning.

Mr. Pierce suggested Ms. Benoit to encourage sharing this information with families and to continue to find ways to keep families coming to Davis school.

Mr. Brosgol said he likes that fact that Davis always has something going on. He agrees with Mr. Pierce's point that it is important to find ways to get key information to families.

Mr. Brosgol asked how the co-teaching is going at Davis. Ms. Benoit said that Davis has always done some form of co-teaching. The focus at Davis has always been to identify defects in learning and then use team teaching to figure out the best way to help.

Mr. Brosgol asked about space constraints in the building. Ms. Benoit said it is hard to get the entire school to together (600 kids). She also said that passing time is difficult. The staff understands that it is a form of "organized chaos". It is still difficult to find small group learning space.

Ms. Guay said that it is amazing to see that the students at Davis have such a wide range of skills.

Ms. Guay said that it is important to make sure teachers have a chance to give feedback on inclusion. She said that these conversations can be uncomfortable and that Ms. Benoit should seek consultants help in this area.

Mr. Pierce made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the Davis School Improvement Plan for 2016-2017 as presented tonight.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Brosgol

MOTION APPROVED:4-0 (Mr. McAllister was absent)

5. Lane School Improvement Plan

Mr. Rob Ackerman, Principal of Lane School, reviewed highlights of the past year and presented the School Improvement Plan for 2016-17.

Highlights

- The recent parent survey indicated that overall, 98.5% parents feel performance at the Lane School is "excellent" or "good".
- This year, the 4th grade science curriculum was enhanced to include outdoor exploration. The students had a lot of fun exploring the school grounds.
- Lane School has a new chicken coop and will be raising chickens!
- The Grade 5 Invention Convention is another example of Lane's uniqueness. Usually science fairs have kids do work at home. Work and projects for the Invention Convention is done at school and kids are very proud of their own work (and not their parents.)
- The new standard based report card was implemented.
- This summer, work will be done on rolling out the science standards based report card, based on the new science standards adopted.
- Co-teaching was trialed at Lane. Overall it was a positive experience especially for the students. It will be expanded. More teaching training is planned.
- The library has moved from being a traditional library to a "maker space". A lot of robotics work and other hands on project happens here. The Librarian is doing an excellent job introducing these new projects to the students.

Next Year

The following initiatives will be underway as they support the three district wide strategic objectives (Develop Higher Order Thinking; Ensure Students Meet Learning Expectations; Nurture a Professional Culture):

- Focus on teaching non-fiction reading
- Find ways to integrate social studies and science into the reading block
- Bring coding into the curriculum. Right now Lane will be piloting a curriculum for the DOE and if successful, it will be rolled out to other Massachusetts schools.
- Use picture books to teach diversity and to help create a more inclusive environment. All teachers will share the same books.
- Continue with after and before school support.
- Use positive behavior support – teach students skills to behave well in the cafeteria and on the busses.
- Look into ways to help Lane students acclimate to recess at Lane which is different than Davis School. The goal is to lessen adult intervention and support. This is especially important for the special education students. Special Ed families from grade 2 will be invited to Lane in June to discuss this.
- Teachers in grades 2 and 3 and 5 and 6 will continue to meet with one another to see and share what's going on in these key transition years.
- Manage the Lane construction project and communicate concerning issues with families (such as when the playground will be taken down etc.)

Ms. Santiago asked for an explanation on standards-based report cards. Mr. Ackerman explained that grade level standards have been set. The report card shows where an individual student is on the continuum to meeting this standard. No letter grades are given. Mr. Ackerman said that students in the elementary level really do not need letter grades. In the past, Lane has had a report card that was part standards-based and part letter grade.

Mr. Pierce said he is pleased to hear that the report card is now standards based. Mr. Pierce and Mr. Ackerman then discussed how much information the school should share with parents since there are a lot of assessment scores and internal measure. Mr. Ackerman said he really needs to think about this issue more carefully.

Mr. Brosgol was pleased to hear that many parents are pleased with the new report card format. He also thanked Mr. Ackerman for his creative and diverse means of communicating with parents – videos, blogs, etc. He loves that Lane is unique.

Ms. Guay asked how many parents responded to the last survey. Mr. Ackerman said about 150-170 which he thinks is a good response rate.

Mr. Brosgol made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the Lane School Improve Plan for 2016-2017 as presented tonight.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Santiago

MOTION APPROVED: 4-0 (Mr. McAllister was absent)

6. Math Program Overview

Ms. Sarah Dorer, Math Program Administrator for K-5, presented an update to the School Committee. Since 2007, Davis School uses the Bridges math program. Ms. Dorer believes it is a comprehensive program and is good for the whole class lesson as well as small group lessons. Classes have a math lesson for one hour every day. The goal is to build number sense and to provide plenty of hands-on, age appropriate activities.

Lane School uses the Envision program since 2012. It is based on the common core standards. It is comprehensive and extremely well scaffolded. Students have math for one hour each day at Lane as well.

Ms. Dorer explained that problem solving skills begin at the kindergarten level. Higher level problem solving happens at Lane. All students receive core curriculum and common assessments. Heterogeneous classes exist until fifth grade. In this grade, flexible grouping is the model. Remedial support happens in class and in pull out groups. Ms. Dorer still offers enrichment curriculum to students based upon teacher request. Lane offers an afterschool math program.

Ms. Dorer said that there are challenges. For example:

- The transition to grade 3 or grade 6 needs to be better.
- There is an overall need to narrow the focus of the curriculum.
- Support is needed for struggling students.
- State assessment at Lane (MCAS and PARCC) is a challenge. Students are taking 7 to 9 tests all within one month. It is very unfair for the students

Ms. Karen Burstein, the grades 6-8 curriculum coordinator gave an update on the math program at JGMS. She said that the curriculum is aligned to Massachusetts standards. Ms. Burstein also noted that the new Skills Center has been very helpful with math. Students love it. Teachers see great results.

Ms. Burstein reported that this was the first year of the “Calculus Project”. Math teachers have made an effort to get more students on track to end up taking Calculus in senior year. An Algebra 1A class was created as a way to do this. So far it has been very successful.

Ms. Burstein said she is proud of the collaborative nature of the math department at the middle school.

Mr. Patrick Morrissey, Program Administrator for Math for grades 6-12, presented the various pathways for getting to Calculus. He also noted that the High School now offers

Calculus AP AB and BC. He expects the Calculus AB to have double the number of students next year (around 60). The BC class is also very popular.

According to Mr. Morrissey the BHS math department has been busy finalizing course expectations and determining the most important learning objectives. Teacher days have been used to examine student work and to figure out ways to address gaps. The department develops their own math problems.

Mr. Morrissey said that last year, there were a lot of course changes in math in the first three months of school. He has since met with 8th grade teachers to review placement strategies and has established opportunities for the high school teachers to meet with the middle school teachers to figure out ways to be better at math placement in 9th grade.

Math teachers at both JGMS and BHS use technology to engage students and to help with “in the moment assessments”. It helps to find new ways to get students to think about problems and tasks teachers give them while in the classroom.

Mr. Morrissey also complimented the work of Justine Flora of the Business Department. She has been successful in building up the business classes – they are very popular at BHS.

Mr. Morrissey mentioned that there are 25 students in the middle school Calculus project who are coming to BHS next September. He assured the Committee that BHS will track how these students do in high school.

Mr. Morrissey said he is excited about the new co-taught STEM class being offered at the high school next year. It will be a 6 day class that is taught by a math teacher and a science teacher.

Mr. Morrissey also reported that the work he and Ms. Morrison have done with MCAS data has been very beneficial. There will now be a math support class to help students who are new the BHS build skills to pass the MCAS exams.

Mr. Morrissey said that Statistics will be offered again at BHS.

Mr. Morrissey outlined the following challenges for the 2016-17 year:

- The math department reputation needs to be addressed. The community thinks that the assessments used in the math department are designed to trick the students. Mr. Morrissey thinks the assessments are not set up this way deliberately but they should be reviewed.
- Parents seem to feel that math tutoring is necessary for students to succeed. Mr. Morrissey disagrees and thinks that students should get any extra help from teachers. He would like to be able to set up the math department office to be a drop-in place for students to get help.
- Mr. Morrissey thinks that sharing math classrooms is detrimental.

Looking ahead, Mr. Morrissey would like to more opportunity to analyze student work and to support more co-teaching opportunities. He would also like to develop a true shared collaborative work room for the department while also serving students who drop in for help on a math problem or homework.

Ms. Santiago asked if the Calculus Project and MCAS support efforts are truly reaching the right students. Mr. Morrissey said yes especially now that students have been added based on teacher recommendations. He will work more closely with Ms. Morrison to improve.

Mr. Pierce thanked Mr. Morrissey, Ms. Dorer and Ms. Burstein for the program review. He said that there is so much information to take in for such an important topic. He wishes there was more time on the agenda for it.

Mr. Pierce asked if we know if students who have lived in Bedford since elementary school are proficient at MCAS math tests. Mr. Morrissey said yes we do know this. Mr. Pierce said then we are doing a good job.

Mr. Pierce was pleased to hear that the Business classes are popular and that Statistics is being offered again. He believes these are practical classes for high school students. He really likes the Algebra 1A class offering at the middle school as a way to help kids get on track for Calculus. He thinks it will pay off. Mr. Morrissey said he will track its performance.

Mr. Brosgol asked what the year-end goal is at the high school. Mr. Morrissey said he would like enough offerings at senior level for students to have choices and to be challenged. There is no magic number.

Ms. Guay said that all schools in Bedford do a good job in identifying and helping struggling students. She said everything we do is done in attempt to help students succeed in math. She applauds the efforts district wide.

7. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Sills said he will make his comments about the math department report at a later date.

Mr. Sills announced that he is pleased that Ms. Galante will be the next high school Principal.

8. Future Agenda

Bedford High School Improvement Plan and Handbook updates will happen on May 24th. He will present the Superintendent's year in review at this meeting as well.

9. Adjournment

Ms. Santiago made the following motion.

MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 10:45 p.m., not to reopen.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Brosgol

MOTION APPROVED 4-0

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. McAllister	Absent
Ms. Guay	Yes
Mr. Brosgol	Yes
Mr. Pierce	Yes
Ms. Santiago	Yes

School Committee Secretary

Date

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

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Exhibits/Documents

- Presentation: Davis School Improvement Plan 2016-17
- Presentation: Lane School Improvement Plan 2016-17
- Presentation: K-12 Math Department