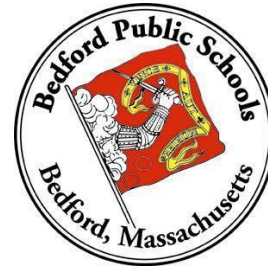


Bedford Public Schools

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Dear Bedford School Community,

Last night at the school committee meeting I announced my intention to retire at the end of the 2022-2023 school year. It has been my honor and privilege to serve as the superintendent of the Bedford Public Schools District over the past three years as we navigated the COVID-19 pandemic. It was with very mixed emotions that I announced my intention to retire.

While my tenure as superintendent might not follow the traditional pattern of longevity for superintendents in Bedford, I believe we can agree that, in my three years, what might be lacking in longevity, we made up for in intensity. It was the honor of my professional life to come to this wonderful community and work with so many individuals committed to the betterment of the children of Bedford. It has been the most exhilarating, challenging, and exhausting opportunity of the 30-plus years of my professional life in education. Each of you has given me an opportunity to learn and grow every day and through every encounter, and for that I am grateful.

Prior to my arrival in 2020, educators talked about a great number of wonderful things; about teaching and learning, culture, making sure that we include all students in our plans, and that we provide positive growth-oriented experiences for all of our students within an equitable, and inclusive learning environment where students learned from as diverse a group of adults as possible. One thing that we did not talk too much about was COVID-19.

Since July 2020, we have talked about little else and rightfully so, the pandemic became the focus of our work. We made plans for hybrid and remote learning, instituted a program of remote learning for our students by our teachers, teaching our curriculum, and we ensured that our schools were physically safe. Then we focused on the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of our students, families, faculty, staff, and administrators. We did it in concert, working closely with the teachers association, the town manager, the finance committee, the police and fire departments, the department of public works, and the department of health and human services. We also coordinated our efforts with all of the state-wide agencies that have jurisdiction over the various aspects of our school days, curriculum, buildings, and learning models. The good news is that the conversations we had in February and March 2020 continuously guided that work. The bad news is that it has been exhausting. And as it has for many of you, it has taken its toll.

I think that Governor Baker said it well in November of 2021 when he announced that he would not seek re-election. He said, "Done right, these jobs require an extraordinary amount of time and attention." Which is true for a superintendency too. and Like the Governor, I have, "Loved doing it." As with any crisis, the pandemic offers an opportunity to refocus our priorities and I know this is the time to be with my family for all the moments 'big and small'.

It was the honor of my professional life to come to this wonderful community and work with so many individuals committed to the betterment of the children of Bedford. It is the most exhilarating and exhausting opportunity to learn of my professional life.

In the near future, the School Committee will announce the process of conducting a search for the next superintendent for our schools. They will create a representative screening committee ensuring that all constituent groups are represented.

This is a wonderfully supportive community and I am confident it will attract many high-quality candidates. Be assured that I will do everything I can to ensure that we continue the work we have started, while simultaneously preparing for a transition to a new superintendent.

I look forward to making the very most of the remainder of this school year and trust that our school committee, community members, administrators, teachers, and students will find someone who can continue to strengthen the Bedford Public Schools and therefore the entire community.

With immense gratitude,



Philip Conrad
Superintendent

As we prepare for our next chapters, I leave you, as I often do, with a poem.

[Adios](#) by [Naomi Shibab Nye](#)

It is a good word, rolling off the tongue
no matter what language you were born with,
Use it. Learn where it begins,
the small alphabet of departure,
how long it takes to think of it,
then say, then be heard.

Marry it. More than any golden ring,
it shines, it shines.
Wear it on every finger
till your hands dance,
touching everything easily,
letting everything, easily, go.

Strap it to your back like wings.
Or a kite-tail. The stream of air behind a jet.
If you are known for anything,
let it be the way you rise out of sight
when your work is finished.

Think of things that linger: leaves,
cartons and napkins, the damp smell of mold.

Think of things that disappear.

Think of what you love best,
what brings tears into your eyes.

Something that said adios to you
before you knew what it meant
or how long it was for.

Explain little, the word explains itself.
Later perhaps. Lessons following lessons,
like silence following sound.

“Adios” by [Naomi Shihab Nye](#). From [Words Under the Words: Selected Poems](#) (Far Corner Books, 1995).