

BEDFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ANNUAL REPORT FY15
Approved: November 3, 2015

MISSION:

The Bedford Public Schools will develop skillful, reflective, lifelong learners who think critically and creatively and who are informed, responsible, and productive global citizens. The school community will provide a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment in which the unique intellectual, social, ethical, and emotional growth of each learner will be realized.

POPULATION

Bedford's student body has grown increasingly complex during the past several years. In FY14, our total school population was 2509, with 587 at our K-2 Davis School, 535 at our grades 3-5 Lane School, 530 at our middle school, JGMS, and 869 at Bedford High School. Students from low income families comprised 13.2% of the population, non-White students 28.8%, students receiving special education services 16.8%, and English language learners, 5.5%

KUDOS

Boston Magazine ranked the Bedford Public Schools as the fifth best district in the Greater Boston area. Niche.com ranked Bedford High School 17 in the state and in the top 2% nationally. While affirming that we are an excellent school system, the disparities between the Boston Magazine ranking and the Niche.com ranking remind us of the importance of interpreting these assessments and their differing methodologies as positive indicators rather than as hard science. Neither the complexities of public education nor the value of our rich thinking-based curriculum can be captured by standardized test scores or aggregate class size averages that are impacted by the number of small classes required, for example, for special education instruction.

OPERATIONS

The Bedford Public Schools district consists of two elementary schools, a middle school and a high school. In addition, the Bedford Public Schools is a member of three special education collaboratives (EDCO, CASE and LABBB). Moreover, the town of Bedford is one of five founding members of the Shawsheen Valley Technical High School. The student body reflects an increasing diversity with students from Bedford, Hanscom Air Force Base, and Boston (through our participation in the METCO Program), a growing ELL (English Language Learner) population, and in recent years, a significant homeless population living in a local hotel. The school system also offers an Integrated Pre-K special education program. The day-to-day operation of the Bedford Public Schools is under the supervision of the Superintendent, Jon Sills. The policy-making body for the Bedford Public Schools is the Bedford School Committee. The Bedford School Committee consists of five (5) elected members, for terms of three (3) years. Members of the Bedford School Committee are: Brad Hafer, Chairperson; Mike McAllister, Vice-Chairperson; Ann Guay, Secretary; Dan Brosgol and Ed Pierce.

The goal of the Bedford Public Schools is to provide a well-rounded balanced education that is child-centered. The curriculum of the schools aligns with the Commonwealth's guidelines. To effectively meet the needs of each child and deliver the 21st century education program to our children, we establish goals for maximum class size. Effective budget development enabled us to move closer to our class size goals and significantly reduce the number of classes exceeding our guidelines.

	# of Students Per Class Goal	October 1, 2013 Average	October 1, 2014 Average
Kindergarten	18	23	21
Grades 1 and 2	21	21.4	21.5
Grades 3	22	22	21.5
Grades 4-5	24	22	21.5
Grades 6-8	<25	21 classes (8 cores) over guideline	9 classes (1 core) over guideline
Grades 9-12 Introductory and College Prep	≤ 18	12 majors over guideline	7 majors over guideline
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Honors and High Honors/AP	25	22 majors over guideline	5 majors over guideline
Professional Staff		260.89 FTE's*	274.85 FTE's*
Non-professional Staff		63.5 FTE's	71.65 FTE's
October 1 Enrollment		2,509	2,494
Post Secondary 4 Year College		90%	82%
Post Secondary 2 Year College		6%	12%

SELECTED SYSTEM HIGHLIGHTS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2015:

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

- Academic Core. Engaging all students as active, critically thinking learners, Bedford's K-12 curriculum and instruction incorporated key elements of the Common Core/Massachusetts Frameworks as well as Bedford's own learning objectives. These K-8 learning objectives, expressed as end-of-year learning goals, have been added to the district's website, www.bedford.12.ma.us/
- To ensure that all students achieve these objectives, teacher teams continued to develop and implement common assessments that measure students' understanding of key concepts, subject-based skills, and cross-disciplinary thinking skills.
- Teaching higher order thinking skills through student-centered, "minds-on" instruction, teachers across the four schools created learning experiences that were highly engaging. For example:

- Kindergarteners created a simulated community through their annual Bedford Town, a cross curricular learning project.
 - Second graders wrote persuasive essays using evidence to support their arguments.
 - Fourth grade students created digital portfolios of their learning and reflected upon their progress each week.
 - Fifth graders devised creative solutions to technical problems through their annual Invention Convention.
 - Seventh grade technology and math students used their math to plan and construct bridges that were required to bear a certain weight.
 - Eighth grade art students researched social issues and created visual public service posters depicting their perspectives.
 - Ninth grade English students wrote I-Search papers through which they recorded and reflected upon their own process of research.
 - Tenth grade social studies students translated research into documentary videos.
 - Eleventh grade foreign language students created documentaries about their families using their target language.
- Davis and Lane had their third year of Running Records transition from Rigby to Fountas and Pinnell with its greater emphasis on reading comprehension.
 - Utilizing the new educator evaluation system, teachers set improvement goals for their own practice and for student achievement. By organizing around a few common focus areas, like increased “just-in-time” assessment to monitor student understanding, the whole district moved forward on a common path.
 - Extra-curricular. Beyond the classroom, a majority of students participated in extended learning opportunities through our robust athletics program, our annual K-12 Art Show, special interest and service clubs, talent shows, musicals, plays and concerts. In addition to the annual eighth grade Washington, DC trip, scores of students enjoyed travel experiences to Costa Rica (environmental), the Dominican Republic (service) and Europe (cultural).

ACCOUNTABILITY

Bedford continued, as a district, to meet the federal guidelines of No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top. Bedford High School earned a Level 1 rating and the district as a whole earned a Level 2 rating in the state’s new Progress and Performance Index (PPI) rating system.

- Without our teaching to the MCAS test or narrowing our curriculum, Bedford High School students scored 99% Advanced or Proficient in ELA on the state-wide assessment and BHS. In math, 95% of our 10th graders scored Advanced or Proficient, with a full 76% scoring Advanced.
- Additionally, Lane’s 3rd graders scored 91% Advanced and Proficient in math, our JGMS 6th graders scored 88% and our 8th graders scored 91% Advanced and Proficient in ELA; and our third graders scored 91% Advanced and Proficient in math. At the same time, we identified areas in need of improvement, especially in our elementary and middle school special education students’ MCAS math scores.
- Bedford’s graduates were well-prepared for college and other post-secondary pathways and were admitted to a wide range of private and public universities, military academies and the armed services. A sample list of colleges Bedford’s 2015 graduates are attending may be viewed at

http://www.bedford.k12.ma.us/images/stories/pdfs/bhs/counsel/college_profile.pdf. This year our percentage of two year college enrollees increased by 6% and our four year college enrollees declined by 8%.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND INITIATIVES

- Coherent, Global, Higher Order Thinking Curriculum/Minds-on Learning
 - With global content already imbedded in grade 2, 6, 7, 8 and 10 social studies curricula, in the 12th grade Global Voices and AP Environmental Science courses, and throughout the foreign language curriculum, the schools continue to seek additional ways to integrate global learning.
 - Our students' higher order thinking skills are developed through engagement with challenging multi-step analytical, research and reasoning tasks, problem-solving challenges, and project-based learning that requires planning, collaboration and creativity.
- Equity: Teaching All Students
 - Equity and Diversity. Significant work was done across the district to promote equity and diversity including, but not limited to: reviewing all literature to ensure that students are exposed to different cultural perspectives; rewriting the essential questions and enduring understandings for the 6th and 7th grade social studies curricula and transforming the 8th grade social studies curriculum (previously European middle ages to Renaissance history) to focus instead on civics and civil rights (with an examination of identity and social responsibility using Facing History and Ourselves curriculum materials and tying in with greater relevancy to the end-of-year Washington, D.C. trip); implementing the Teaching Tolerance social emotional curriculum in grades K-2; conducting intensive professional development (through the Equity and Diversity committee) in cultural proficiency; training the high school peer leaders in cultural proficiency practices; integrating new texts into the K-2 read aloud curriculum; and exploring commonalities and differences and practicing empathy exercises in grades 3-5.
 - Special Education. Two important new special education programs were created during the 14-15 school year for implementation in FY16: the STEP program (a sub-separate program for students with significant social emotional challenges including school refusal) and SAIL (an autism program for grades K-2). Meanwhile, during the FY15 school year, we transitioned from the practice of pulling students with moderate special needs out of classrooms for support to "pushing special educators into" the classrooms to support the students' learning. This was done extensively at Davis utilizing a new "cluster" model of support staff organization, in which reading, English Language Learner teachers and special educators are clustered with three classroom teachers. Similarly, a full inclusion model for children with Down Syndrome was implemented at Lane School, and plans were made to significantly increase "push in" services in FY16 at Lane and JGMS.
 - At the same time, seeking ever better ways to serve our out of district students, the district leadership began working colleagues belonging to the EDCO, CASE and LABBB special education collaboratives to explore areas for increased collaboration up to and including some form of merger.
 - Support Programs. Throughout the district, work on regular education interventions continued, with the creation of new programs like the Lighthouse Program for students transitioning back to the high school from hospital stays or coping with concussions, or the increased staffing of the

Skills Center at JGMS, or the budgeting for an FY16 after school homework help program at Lane School.

- Student Stress and Policies. JGMS and BHS paid close attention to student stress, with JGMS holding its second annual Stress-Free day, and BHS responding to student survey information by creating a committee to re-examine class rank.
- Effective Communication with Parents and Community
 - Responding to parents' calls for increased communication, the Davis School regularly communicated the social-emotional curriculum's learning objectives and activities used to advance them; Lane and Davis improved their consistency in notifying parents when their children are recommended for Tier 2 and 3 interventions; the Library and Technology department published a bi-monthly newsletter highlighting technology and organized our second annual Technology Showcase which was open to the public; the district published its first bi-annual Progress Report and mailed it to all Bedford residents .
 - K-5 Learning Expectations in math, English, science and social studies were completed and posted on the web. Work on exemplars began.
- Collaborative Professional Culture
 - The district continued to provide time for teacher teams to develop common assessments, share instructional strategies, review student work and achievement results, and plan instructional improvements. Teacher teams met during the summer to engage in curriculum work. And on teacher Wednesdays, they used their release time for professional development and additional collaborative work (interdisciplinary curriculum planning, sharing instructional strategies, calibrating common assessments, and discussing individual students and their learning or social-emotional needs).
 - Technology. The technology department coordinated the second annual Technology Showcase to educate the public about Bedford's transformative uses of instructional classroom technology. As with the school-based showcases, students demonstrated the student-centered instructional uses of the various technologies. The district took initial steps towards developing and implementing a K-12 programming sequence. All elementary and middle school students and many high school students took part in an Hour of Code, a national initiative to introduce students to technological problem-solving skills, and more in-depth work is being integrated into all four schools.

MEETING MANDATES AND ADDRESSING EXTERNAL DEMANDS

- McKinney-Vento. The district dedicated significant time and resources to following McKinney-Vento regulations for educating the children of homeless families. Our teachers worked hard to integrate approximately 25 students many of whom have had significant interruptions to their education. At the same time, the central office dedicated a major portion of one of our executive assistant's time to coordinating homeless transportation for approximately 50 additional students. Our guidance counselors and administrators worked closely with agencies and families to address their needs.
- RETELL. Approximately one third of our teachers who have at least one English Language Learner in their classrooms took the mandated graduate level course, RETELL, in order to learn how to better meet the needs of ELL students, to comply with regulations and to maintain their licensure.

- Common Core. Under the guidance of our principals and curriculum leaders, all teachers integrated Common Core/Massachusetts Frameworks standards into their teaching.
- PARCC. The district administered the PARCC assessments to grades 3 through 8, which required an extensive amount of our administrative and technology staff extensive planning and in-the-moment adjustments. Simultaneously, the district contributed to a Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents' position paper on standardized assessment that, while agnostic on which is the best new generation assessment, argued:
 - that the purpose of standardized assessments should be instructional improvements rather than accountability,
 - and delineated clear criteria for how to roll out such assessments in ways that support rather than detract from teaching and learning time.
- New Educator Evaluation. The district implemented the third year of the New Educator Evaluation System in a manner designed to advance district goals: building curricular and instructional coherence around higher order thinking and conceptual understanding; addressing the individual learning needs of every student; and integrating instructional and communication technology to advance these learning goals.
- Restraint Training: Our own trainers provided both initial and refresher training to teachers, counselors and administrators.
- Anti-bullying Programming and Training: Adding to extensive anti-bullying education work that has long been a hallmark of social emotional learning at JGMS and has been strongly present in the other schools, the district added new reporting protocols to meet state requirements.
- NEASC: The district leadership continued to provide leadership to the work being done across New England to reform of accreditation process.

PERSONNEL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Contract. The administration and the Bedford Educators Association representing the administrative assistants entered into contract negotiations.
- New Special Education Director. The district appointed Marianne Vines, formerly interim director, to the position of Special Education Director.
- Teacher Professional Development. Teachers participated in a wide range of professional development learning opportunities across the district attending workshops, teaching each other, and both attending and contributing to conferences. A few examples include:
 - Teachers at the high school created their own educational conference and used one of the district's three professional days to teach each other on topics ranging from technology integration to engagement strategies. A second professional day was devoted to district-wide professional development around a range of diversity related topics.
 - Teachers participated in state-mandated trainings for English Language Learners, restraint, bullying prevention, as well as district-mandated training in anti-racism.
 - Teachers across the district took advantage of professional development offerings at EDCO, Harvard Teachers as Scholars, Facing History and Ourselves, MASSCUE, EdCamps, discipline specific conferences, and a wide range of graduate programs. All new teachers attended a new teacher induction course and were paired with mentors. The high school principal and the superintendent co-led workshops at the annual METCO conference and the annual Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents conference.
 - Teachers used their Teacher Collaboration Early Release Wednesdays to meet together to: create cross-disciplinary units; develop common rubrics for assessing writing; bring special

- education and regular education teachers and assistants together to address the needs of individual students; participate in instructional technology workshops led by our IT staff; etc.
- Over the summer and during faculty meeting time, the district's own curriculum experts as well as outside consultants conducted teacher training workshops and led curriculum development work, for example, in: English Language Arts literature audits, special education/regular education co-teaching, calculus, chemistry, Spanish and social studies.

PARENT AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- The FY15 budget enabled us to significantly reduce the number of overpopulated classes and add classes to accommodate the enrollment surge at Davis School. Our budget enabled us to continue to provide a well-rounded education for all students, with rich curricular offerings in the core academic subjects, the arts, technology and physical education. We were able to move to a full inclusion program for a student with Down Syndrome and further reduce the number of students out of district Special Education placements through the development of in-house programming. We took steps to close the technology gap at Davis and Lane with major infrastructure projects and modest increases in instructional technology hardware and software. Through a wide range of interventions and unique programs, we continued to work to close achievement and opportunity gaps at all four schools.
- We are so appreciative of the financial support received from our parent associations (BEST, MSPA, BHSPA, POMS, Artlink, BAA and team-based parent associations) and the Bedford Education Foundation (BEF) which helped fund Hokki stools, portable word processors, Sphero robotic balls, an Ion Air Pro Camera, student agendas, DC Chaperone Bags, Nature's Classroom scholarships, DC Trip scholarships, 3D printer supplies, Tenacity Challenge scholarships, teacher luncheons, and teacher appreciation gifts to name a few. Parent volunteers provide important staffing support in our libraries and at recess.

FACILITIES

- Capital Planning. The district worked closely with the other town departments to create a six year capital plan. Key components of the schools' six year planning include:
 - Annual technology budgeting to include cyclical replacements of infrastructure equipment, large scale hardware like interactive projectors, and desktop and laptop computers (previously addressed in the operating budget).
 - Placeholders for building project additions and temporary modular classrooms at Lane, Davis and JGMS
 - Closing the technology gap at Davis, Lane and JGMS: last phase of the wireless infrastructure project at JGMS and the first of two phases at Davis and Lane.
- Enrollment. Commissioned an enrollment study using NESDEC, the New England School Development Council, to provide data relevant to a decision about long term facilities planning for Davis, Lane and JGMS.
- MSBA: Submitted Statements of Interest to the Massachusetts School Building Authority for small additions at Davis, Lane and JGMS.
- Modular Classrooms: Installed two modular classrooms and a linking hallway at Davis School.
- Security. Installed shatterproof film on glass doors at all four buildings per the recommendation of the Security Task Force.

- Energy Efficiency. The Facilities Department continued to promote energy efficiency projects in the four schools.
- Space Modifications. A small number of school-based facilities projects were completed in FY15: for example the modification and repurposing of teacher preparation space at JGMS to accommodate the SAIL special ed program.
- Athletics: Work began to replace the press box at Sabourin Field.

FISCAL MANAGEMENT

- Developed a six year capital plan for the schools in conjunction with the other town departments and established the importance of providing sufficient resources to maintain our technological infrastructure, our student information services, our digital communication capability and our technology reliant instructional modalities.
- Implemented a budget designed for programmatic changes and additional personnel needed to:
 - Maintain expected level of educational excellence, rich curricular offerings and needed academic and social emotional support programs
 - meet state and federal mandates (Common Core, ELL/WIDA, the New Educator Evaluation System, the impending PARCC assessments, and McKinney Vento),
 - address a fast growing population at Davis School, and
 - expand and create cost-saving in-house special education program