



The Public Schools of Brookline
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Ben Lummis
Interim Superintendent

June 14, 2020

Dear PSB Families,

Last Sunday I was pleased to be able to witness a most remarkable Brookline High School graduation. What it lacked in large crowds and speakers it made up for with family pride, an exuberant staff celebration gauntlet, and individual displays of accomplishment as, one by one, each graduate received their diploma and posed for photos in front of the BHS main entrance. Thank you to the graduates for their perseverance through a most challenging senior year. Thank you to families for supporting your students in so many ways to help them reach this milestone. Thank you to the BHS educators and staff who taught and advocated for each one of the graduates. And thank you to Anthony Meyer, Hal Mason, Lisa Redding and many others who organized the day and made it run incredibly smoothly.

Update on PSB Budget and Staffing

Starting last Tuesday, we began rescinding layoff notices and notifying teachers and administrators that they had positions for the upcoming school year. Between Tuesday and Friday, we notified more than 300 staff members that they will return to positions in the PSB next year.

As School Committee Vice Chair Suzanne Federspiel and then Chair Julie Schreiner Oldham communicated twice over the past two weeks, we have been doing everything possible to rescind teacher layoff notices as quickly as possible. The first step was for the Town and Select Board to approve an additional \$2 million in funding for the school district. At their meeting on June 4, the School Committee made [very difficult decisions](#) to reduce a large budget deficit. Then, on Thursday, June 11, the School Committee voted to maintain all existing Brookline Early Education Program (BEEP) classrooms and add one more. These three significant decisions have provided enough certainty in the budget and our staffing that we have been able to rapidly rescind the layoff notices that teachers and administrators received two weeks ago.

We are not done yet and expect to rescind more layoff notices and return more teachers in the coming days as we finalize staffing for BEEP and continue the scheduling and staffing process at Brookline High School. The complexities around staffing, scheduling, program, licensure, and related contractual obligations mean that these final steps will go more slowly. We are aiming to have all decisions finalized by a week from now.

This has been an incredibly difficult two weeks for our entire school community. Borne out of the financial challenges the pandemic is causing with the schools and Town budgets, and the many unknowns about how to do school next year, the layoff notices have been incredibly disruptive. Through the difficult decisions by Town and school leaders, the advocacy of many, and the work of PSB staff, the budget was finalized with additional revenue, greater clarity was created for BEEP, and we've been able to move quickly to recall our staff and provide much stability. I am grateful for the hard work of so many that has allowed us to support our staff and provide answers as quickly as possible.

Planning for the 2020-2021 School Year

As communities around the Commonwealth await initial draft guidance from the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education about how school will operate in September, PSB's planning is already underway. Deputy Superintendent Dr. Nicole Gittens, Senior Director of Educational Equity Dr. Kalise Wornum, and Deputy Superintendent Casey Ngo-Miller are leading our three planning teams which include principals, special education and student services leaders, guidance counselors, nurses, and psychologists. The planning teams have been working since the middle of May to address three major areas of focus: Academics, Health & Safety, and Operations.

This past week these planning teams began collaborating with a group of educators and staff organized by the Brookline Educators Union. In addition the School Committee has organized four Advisory Panels made up of community members to provide guidance in the areas of public health and safety, addressing the needs of the whole child, educational excellence and equity, and remote learning.

Our planning efforts are taking into account the challenges and successes from the last three months. They are using input from the school level, department level and the data from our May family surveys. We also expect to survey families by early summer to gather input on likely scenarios.

Because we do not know what the public health situation will be in the fall and what DESE will require for schools, our plans must remain flexible. Protecting student and staff health and safety will be essential. Any combination of remote learning and in-person learning will need to be flexible enough so we can adjust as the public health situation evolves throughout the school year.

In closing, it has been a long and trying spring for our schools and our community. There have been few easy answers as we dealt with a global pandemic, switched our schools to remote learning, and attempted to address the myriad consequences of massive economic challenges. I continue to be grateful for the PSB educators, staff, and leaders who have seen their way through so many challenges and the community efforts to maintain Brookline's high standards.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'BL', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Ben Lummis
Interim Superintendent