

The Public Schools of Brookline
School Committee Meeting of Thursday, January 31, 2019
Superintendent Report
Andrew J. Bott

Update on the Coolidge Corner School Renaming Process

The window to nominate a new name for the Coolidge Corner School (CCS) closed on January 23. We received 103 unique name nominations from over 200 entries. The Nominations Committee, comprised of current CCS students as well as Brookline High School students who graduated from CCS, has been meeting since early December to prepare for this important work. The students, using their new consensus building skills, renamed themselves “Bee-lievers in Change – Students Making a Difference” (in keeping with the school’s bumble bee mascot).

Their work now will focus on reviewing all of the 103 nominated names and narrowing the list down to 10-15 semi-finalist names for further consideration. The students will research these semi-finalists and develop a 1-page summary for each of them. In mid-March, the students who applied but were not selected to be part of the committee will be re-engaged. Working together, this larger student group will develop presentations about each of the semi-finalist names to share with the public.

This work will culminate in two Renaming Nights to be scheduled for mid-April. The entire Brookline community will be invited to attend the Renaming Nights to interact with the student teams, learn more about each semi-finalist name, and view the prepared presentations about each of the semi-finalist names.

Following feedback from the Renaming Nights, the Bee-lievers in Change will reconvene and come to consensus on 3-5 names to present to you, the School Committee.

Co-Principal Buller is preparing a detailed letter to share with the Coolidge Corner School community about the next steps, and we look forward to the continued support of our community partners as we rename the Coolidge Corner School.

Old Lincoln School Campus: Outreach to 7th and 8th Grade Families

In early December, BHS Head of School Anthony Meyer and Dean of Students Lisa Gilbert-Smith wrote to all 8th grade families to outline the annual “transition events” that are scheduled for the Class of 2023. These events for rising 9th graders and their parents/guardians are scheduled from mid-February through mid-March and will cover topics such as Curriculum, Special Education Programs and Services, Electives, and Athletics, among others.

This year, we are also planning for the use of the Old Lincoln School (OLS) campus for 9th grade students. This temporary use of OLS for 9th graders in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 is necessitated by the BHS expansion and renovation project. In their December 5 letter to families, Mr. Meyer and Ms. Gilbert-Smith were clear that Old Lincoln School would become part of the larger BHS campus. To that end, tomorrow the BHS team will be sharing specific details about the use of OLS directly with 7th and 8th grade families. The FAQ sheet will outline our “cohorted travel” model, through which students will travel in one direction (from OLS to 115 Greenough, or vice versa) once per day. This cohorted travel model will allow our 9th graders to take classes at both locations and be exposed

to the full range of electives and academic supports available at BHS. I will share the final FAQ sheet with you as soon as it has been sent to parents and guardians.

School Visits, Parent Meetings and Community Events

We hosted an evening meeting for Brookline's METCO families on Thursday, January 24 in the Coolidge Corner School auditorium. It was a great evening during which we discussed the BHS expansion project, Restorative Justice, Math Program Review, and the Coolidge Corner School renaming process. The forum ended with time for questions and answers. I want to thank our METCO staff, principals, BHS staff, coordinators and School Committee member Jennifer Monopoli for joining this family forum. Most importantly, I want to thank so many families for attending.

Since our last meeting, I have also had the opportunity to visit classrooms at:

Lawrence School on January 24
Baker School on January 25
Coolidge Corner School on January 30

My visit to Baker School is of particular note. Eighth grade students had just finished reading *Almost Home* by Joan Bauer. The 12 year old protagonist in the book, and her mother, lose their home and are facing the complex, overwhelming and nearly insurmountable challenges of homelessness. As part of their study of the book, the Baker students had also traveled to The Makery in Coolidge Corner, a design lab and makerspace. The Makery visit allowed them to deepen their understanding of some of the themes in the book by engaging in hands-on activities. On January 25, the 8th grade students participated in a series of four parent-led presentations. Each of the parent presenters has professional experience around issues of homelessness, each from a different perspective: health care, legal, nutrition and advocacy. This interwoven lesson was an extension of the Disciplinary Literacy Initiative (DLI) work started at Brookline High School several years ago. DLI provides the framework for educators to focus on cross-content, cross-departmental projects and learning opportunities to deepen student engagement in, and understanding of, complex content and social issues. This was an incredibly powerful example of learning across the community – in our classrooms, at The Makery, and through parents with particular areas of expertise. Many thanks to the 8th grade educators at Baker School for developing and teaching this cross-disciplinary unit.

The Principal Interview Committees have also been busy over the last two weeks. The Baker committee met once, the Coolidge Corner committee met twice, and the Lawrence committee met three times. We are making great progress in these principal searches and I am indebted to the staff, parents and students who join me in this important work.

Driscoll PTO Parent Forum: Talking to Kids about Racism

Last night, despite the snow squall and bitter cold, a large group of parents turned out for a presentation hosted by the Driscoll School PTO. The featured speakers were Driscoll Principal, Dr. Suzie Talukdar, and Senior Director for Educational Equity, Dr. Kalise Wornum. Their presentation delved into the importance of having these conversations, outlined the developmental stages of children's understanding of stereotypes and cultural characteristics, and provided parents with useful tips on how to be proactive.

Anti-Defamation League Peer Leader Training

We continue to partner with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) to train students as peer leaders through the ADL World of Difference program. This month we launched a third cohort that includes students from Coolidge Corner School and Driscoll School. They join the other year 2 cohort of students from Baker and Runkle Schools, who completed their training in early January. In addition, we are in the midst of training a secondary group of students from our Year 1 cohort, with students from Heath, Lawrence, Lincoln and Pierce Schools. It has been a busy few months for all of these students!

World Language teacher, Zoe Kern, serves as the teacher leader for this work at Lawrence School. Following each training session, she shares an email with the families of the peer leaders to summarize the training and help them understand what their children are learning and doing. So that you can have a more complete picture of how the peer leader program works, I have included below some excerpts from Ms. Kern's family messages that she sent on January 18 and January 29:

The goals of these training sessions are to explore human differences and how we respond to them, to look at the nature of bias and prejudice and the impact of hurtful behavior on our school community, and to identify what we can say and do to address hurtful behavior, as well as know how to support classmates who are targeted.

The second training gave Peer Leaders more opportunities to work with each other in both a whole group setting and in small groups to explore in greater depth the issues that students might face in school and in greater community settings. Discussion topics included the role of stereotypes and the danger of unchallenged perceptions, impact versus intent (in terms of making jokes or using potentially offensive words and terms amongst friends), the formation of groups and aspects that might either unite or alienate people, how to talk about difficult topics when everyone doesn't share the same comfort level and finally, what to do when you encounter instances of offensive language or behavior.

In order to identify these problems, students worked in small groups to define different forms of discrimination and how negative attitudes about these areas might be present. These include: ableism, ageism, anti-Semitism, bullying, classism, cyber bullying, heterosexism/homophobia, Islamophobia, racism, religious bigotry, sexism, transphobia, weightism and xenophobia. After students had a chance to add examples and read through responses compiled by their fellow Peer Leaders, the group discussed which of these forms are most prevalent in their own schools. They also viewed two short videos called "Being 12" and "The Lie", and compared the experiences and comments shared by the students in the videos to those that might be found in Brookline schools.

I am so very grateful to the faculty leaders at each school for their dedication to supporting student leadership development in their school and in our community:

Baker School	Katy Sazama and Danielle Goldie
Coolidge Corner School	Scott Newman
Driscoll School	Maurene Doherty
Heath School	Kellee Terkla
Lawrence School	Zoe Kern
Lincoln School	Corey Clifford
Pierce School	Kate Sullivan
Runkle School	Rebecca Sneider