

The Public Schools of Brookline
School Committee Meeting of Thursday, October 24, 2019
Superintendent Report
Ben Lummis
Interim Superintendent of Schools

Anti-Defamation League Peer Leader Update

As you may know, since the 2016-2017 school year we have been partnering with the Anti-Defamation League in their World of Difference Peer Leader program. In that first year, we trained a peer group of high school students. For the last three years, we have also trained groups of 7th and 8th graders from our elementary schools. The training workshops for the 2019-2020 school year started this week at the Brookline Teen Center.

The World of Difference Peer Leader program teaches students about issues of identity, race, privilege and bias. The students work, learn and practice together to be upstanders and leaders when challenging issues arise. This is just one way that the district works to support our students as they build and practice the leadership skills they need to lead in our schools, in our community, and in our society.

We are indebted to the teacher leaders who make this all possible, including: Corey Clifford, Maureen Doherty, Danielle Goldie, Zoe Kern, Brendan Kobus, Jen Martin, Katy Sazama, Rebecca Sneider, Kate Sullivan, and Kellee Terkla.

ADL Parent Workshop: *How to Talk To Your Kids About Racism*

On a related note, I am pleased to share information about an important parent workshop being held next month. Working with the Lawrence DICE (Diversity, Inclusion, Community and Equity) group, experts from the Anti-Defamation League (Danika Manso-Brown, Associate Education Director and Karen Schwartz, Assistant Education Director) will facilitate a discussion of concepts and strategies for engaging young people of all ages in conversations around race and racism. The workshop will be held on Tuesday, November 19 from 7-8:30pm in the Lawrence School Auditorium. The workshop is free and open to parents and guardians across the district, but pre-registration is required:

<https://forms.gle/ZagobJb1BJhAvmJX9>

Staff Updates

I am pleased to announce several new hires to our team. Please join me in welcoming:

- **Michelle Herman** is our new Director of Professional Development. She joins us after five years as Director of Teacher and Leader Development in the Salem Public Schools. She brings over 25 years of experience in teaching and providing professional development for teachers and principals to her new role. She has also worked for the Hudson, MA and the Jefferson County, Kentucky school systems.

- **Donna Chisholm** is our new Budget Analyst and Accounts Payable Manager. She comes to Brookline with over nine years of experience as an Assistant School Business Manager, including experience in the school districts of the Town of Medway and Town of Norfolk.
- **Lynnette Williams** is our new Human Resources Generalist. She previously worked with the non-profit organization TILL (Toward Independent Living and Learning). She will be overseeing many HR processes related to hiring, recruitment, and onboarding. She also serves as the unofficial greeter and question-answerer in our offices on the 5th floor because of where she sits.
- **Rob Mullin** will serve as Project Manager for our building projects, emergency planning, and long-term capital planning. He will also support the school assignment work as it gets underway. He is taking on some of the responsibilities I had before I became the Interim Superintendent, and will be with us until the end of the school year. He currently serves as a member of the School Committee in the Town of Tyngsborough, including as a member of their Capital Asset Management subcommittee.

School Visits

- I recently visited the Pierce School to work with Principal Lesley Ryan Miller and visit classes with her. We saw middle school and upper elementary school classrooms, toured the cafeteria, observed the 3rd grade and 1st grade lunch, and met quickly with our colleagues who put together the great meals at the school. Later that day I returned for Pierce's faculty meeting during which the math specialists led their colleagues in learning about intervention blocks. The specialists explained that the purpose of the intervention blocks is to make sure we provide equitable opportunities for all learners by having a set aside time for every child to work on "just right" math. The teachers met in grade level bands (K-2, 3-5, and 6-8). They shared guidance on how to use this time for workshops or centers; differentiated small groups; and math identify or mindset activities which include longer term projects or open-ended tasks with multiple entry points that are accessible to the full range of learners. The specialists also shared strategies and resources that teachers can use in each of these areas. I applaud Principal Ryan Miller for providing the opportunity for teachers to have leadership roles and for teachers to learn with their colleagues.
- The Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) invited me to their most recent meeting (October 11) and I also attended a parent meeting hosted by the Driscoll School PTO this week (October 22). At both meetings I shared my focus on positive and civil leadership, and provided an update on our long-term capital plan and building projects. At the SEPAC meeting I shared an update on the Coolidge Corner naming process and our district-wide professional development on cultural proficiency, restorative practices, and math instruction. At Driscoll, I focused primarily on the school building project, giving parents an update on the process to put funding for the new school on the town-wide ballot, the projected timeline, and a quick refresher on the design. In both meetings, parents and family members were warm, welcoming, and positive about our schools. My next parent forum is Friday, November 1 at Coolidge Corner School.