

The Public Schools of Brookline
School Committee Meeting of Thursday, March 14, 2019
Superintendent Report
Andrew J. Bott

Kindergarten Registration Update

The Office of Student Affairs (OSA) launched the 2019 kindergarten registration process in mid-January. Each year the OSA staff fine-tunes their outreach efforts to families who are new to the school district so that they reach as many of those families as possible. For example, this year OSA hosted 5 information sessions for incoming families to describe the registration process and answer questions. These information sessions attracted overflow crowds and really helped to spread the word. In addition to the community outreach, OSA also worked with all current BEEP families to streamline the kindergarten registration process for them. As of today, all BEEP students who will be attending kindergarten with us are registered.

All of these outreach efforts have paid off! Through March 11, 2019, we have 403 kindergarten students registered. This compares to the same period last year, when we had 346 students registered. We believe that this 16% increase in registrations represents a broader awareness among Brookline families of the registration window and doesn't necessarily reflect a larger incoming kindergarten cohort.

New Principal for Baker School

I am very pleased to announce that, following a comprehensive public search process, I have appointed Mr. Torrance Lewis as the new principal of the Baker School. I met with the staff at Baker School this afternoon to share the news. Mr. Lewis is currently the Head of the Upper School at the W.L. Chenery Middle School in Belmont. As part of the search process, a group of Baker teachers joined me on a site visit to the Chenery Middle School last week. We were amazed at the feedback from the team of Chenery teachers – they spoke at length about Mr. Lewis' commitment to students, families and staff, and detailed his collaborative approach to all aspects of his work. We are thrilled to welcome Mr. Lewis to Baker School and to Brookline! I have attached my letter announcing Mr. Lewis' appointment, which was shared with Baker School families and staff this afternoon.

I want to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the Baker School Principal Search Committee. Reviewing resumes, drafting interview questions, interviewing candidates – no matter the task, the staff, parents/guardians and students on the committee were generous with their time and expertise to ensure that we identified the best possible candidate.

I look forward to sharing news about our other principal search processes in the very near future.

Coolidge Corner School Renaming Process: Student Renaming Committee Update

On March 1, I shared an update with all Brookline families and staff about the Coolidge Corner School renaming process. I have attached that letter for your information.

We received 115 unique name nominations for the Coolidge Corner School. The student nominations committee - called the *Bee-lievers in Change* - is hard at work reviewing all nominated names against a rubric that includes the town naming criteria, the school's core values, and whether

or not the name meets any restorative justice criteria. The *Bee-lievers in Change* will narrow the list of nominations down to 10 or 15 semi-finalists. They will research these semi-finalist names and prepare presentations about each one. These presentations will be shared with the entire Brookline community at two Renaming Nights:

April 3 at Coolidge Corner School

April 11 at the Brookline Public Library's Hunneman Hall

The Renaming Nights are open to the entire Brookline community. We encourage members of the public to attend, interact with the student teams and learn more about each of the semi-finalist names. The students will collect feedback from the Renaming Night participants. After processing this feedback, the *Bee-lievers in Change* will reconvene and come to consensus on 3-5 names to send to the Brookline School Committee.

Complete details and a summary timeline can be found in the attached letter.

Brookline Education Foundation

The BEF hosted the 22nd Annual 5th Grade Spelling Bee on Sunday, March 10 at Brookline High School. Pierce School student Owen Bergstein walked away the winner after spelling “supercilious” in the ninth round. Congratulations to Owen on a job well done! I would like to thank Deputy Superintendent Nicole Gittens who acted as a judge at the Spelling Bee.

A few weeks ago – on February 27 - it was my pleasure to join the BEF Board of Overseers at their annual breakfast at the home of Kate Leness. School Committee Chair David Pollak, a BEF Overseer, also joined me. The breakfast was a great opportunity for me to thank the BEF – on behalf of the entire school district – for their unwavering support. System grants from the BEF this year are helping us to, among other things, build capacity among our educators in the Restorative Justice approach to discipline, as well as strengthen the math skills of K-5 teachers through a program called Developing Mathematical Ideas (DMI). Teacher grants from the BEF this year are supporting our educators in experiences as varied as a seminar in Finland for two Heath School 1st grade teachers (to study the Finnish educational pedagogy and best practices) to attendance at the annual conference of the Society of Classical Studies in California for a BHS Latin teacher (to present her paper on “Active Latin”). One of the hallmarks of our thriving school district is the robust support we enjoy from our families and the community-at-large. The efforts of the BEF are central to our mission and we are very grateful for their support.

127 Harvard Street Update

Tomorrow morning, School Committee Chair Pollak and I will be sending a letter to PSB families and staff with an update on the proposed Brookline Early Education Program (BEEP) lease at the 127 Harvard Street site.

As you know, a donor had proposed to build a home for the BEEP program on the 127 Harvard Street site. After negotiating in good faith with the donor, the School Committee and the Select Board signed a 20-year lease. The lease agreement would have required us to pay \$12.00 in annual rent, plus all operating costs for the building, estimated to be approximately \$100,000 per year.

Despite signatures from both Town boards, the donor never signed the lease and we were informed in mid-January that the donor was no longer interested in building a home for BEEP. Instead the donor has plans to build and open a private pre-school at the 127 Harvard Street property. We share in the disappointment of the BEEP staff now that the plans for the site unexpectedly changed.

The town's Newbury College Acquisition Advisory Committee is exploring whether a building on that site might serve as a home for BEEP. We are hopeful that a permanent home for BEEP will be identified. A copy of the letter that will be sent out tomorrow is attached for your information.

School Visits and Events

Since my last report, I had the opportunity to visit classrooms at Heath School on February 27, Driscoll School on February 28, Runkle School on March 13 and Lawrence School on March 14. I also attended the Heath School faculty meeting on March 13.

On March 7 I had the opportunity to join three amazing activities happening in the district:

- *Brookline METCO's Annual Boys to Men Leadership Conference.* Held at Emmanuel College, this annual event is always an inspiration – for the staff as much as for the students! A series of informative panels, including one led by BHS Seniors to help their younger peers navigate the academic and social landscape at the high school, marked a fantastic day.
- *Lincoln School Declamation.* This annual event at the Lincoln School includes all middle school students. Each student memorizes a piece that is meaningful to them and presents that piece to their peers. Many students choose to write their own poetry, monologue or memoir to present. This annual event allows students to celebrate their individuality and share their story, and it builds strong bonds among the middle school student body.
- *Spring Play of the BHS Drama Society: When the Rainbow is Enuf.* Directed by Summer Williams, this play was based on the classic piece by Ntozake Shange. It featured a compilation of monologues: stories celebrating women of color told through poetry and dance, sharing experiences about growing from girls into young women. This was the first BHS drama production with a cast made up entirely of women of color, many of whom had never before participated in a drama production. The performance was powerful and a joy to behold!



Andrew J. Bott
Superintendent

The Public Schools of Brookline

Town Hall

333 Washington Street, 5th Floor

Brookline, Massachusetts 02445

617.730.2401

March 14, 2019

Dear Baker School Staff and Families,

I am very pleased to announce Mr. Torrance Lewis as the next principal of the Edith C. Baker School. I appointed Mr. Lewis after a thorough public search process that included multiple interviews, staff and community forums, and a site visit to the W.L. Cheney Middle School in Belmont.

Currently, Mr. Lewis serves as the Head of the Upper School at the W.L. Cheney Middle School. The Upper School serves over 700 7th and 8th grade students. During his tenure, Mr. Lewis has led school-wide community building efforts, begun implementation of comprehensive social/emotional learning for students, overhauled the schedule to ensure both full access and appropriate supports for English language learners and students with disabilities, and built a comprehensive child study/academic support process.

Prior to joining the Cheney Middle School, Mr. Lewis served as vice principal of the Cyrus Peirce Middle School on Nantucket, was an interventionist in the Lexington Public Schools, taught 4th grade in Decatur, Georgia, and taught a variety of elementary and middle-level grades in both Curitiba and Brasilia, Brazil.

One of the challenges in searching for a principal for a K-8 school is that many candidates have experience in either elementary school or in middle school. In Mr. Lewis, we have a leader with strong, diverse experiences which will allow him to bring multiple, new perspectives to the leadership at Baker School.

The most impressive part of this search process was the site visit to Cheney Middle School. Joining me and Human Resources Director Lisa Richardson on the site visit were six educators from Baker School: Beth Curley, Kait Doherty, Sarah Harris, Joe Mitchell, Meredith Ritter, and Sara Zekri. During the visit, the Baker educators met with a large group of Cheney teachers. The response and feedback from the Cheney team was overwhelmingly positive. The Cheney team spoke at length of Mr. Lewis' unwavering commitment to students, staff and families. They detailed his collaborative approach to all aspects of his work, and his unyielding thoughtfulness, inclusiveness, and transparency. They described, in Mr. Lewis, the leader that the Baker School community said they were looking for when the process began.

I would like to acknowledge the committed efforts of the Baker Principal Search Committee and the many staff, parents, guardians, and students who participated in the search process. The active involvement of so many members of the community over the course of this positive and collaborative search process is what ensured its success.

Please join me in welcoming Mr. Lewis as the new Principal of the Baker School. We are thrilled to welcome Mr. Lewis to Baker and to Brookline.

Sincerely,

Andrew J. Bott
Superintendent



The Public Schools of Brookline
333 Washington Street, 5th Floor
Brookline, Massachusetts 02445
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Andrew J. Bott
Superintendent

March 1, 2019

Dear Brookline Families and Staff,

In May 2018, Brookline Town Meeting acknowledged that it is no longer acceptable to name a school after a person who held another human in slavery and they voted to change the name of the Edward Devotion School temporarily to the Coolidge Corner School while a permanent name can be identified. I'm writing to update you on the progress we're making in choosing a school name that better represents Brookline's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and to highlight the great work of our student nominations committee.

The window to nominate a new name for the Coolidge Corner School (CCS) closed on January 23. We received 119 unique nominations from over 250 entries. Since the beginning of December, our student group leading the nomination and initial selection process for new names has been engaged in weekly team-building sessions. These sessions have included an opportunity to learn from Deborah Brown and Anne Greenwald, community members involved in the initial Town Meeting warrant article petition to rename our school; Dr. Barbara Brown from Hidden Brookline; and Dr. Kalise Wornum, the Public Schools of Brookline's Senior Director of Educational Equity. In addition, the students have learned about decision-making by consensus; a skill which they used to select a new name for their group. They have named themselves the "Bee-lievers in Change - Students Making a Difference" in keeping with the school's bumble bee mascot.

We are very proud of these students. Each student has approached their role on the committee with dignity and thoughtfulness. They are stepping up, fully embracing their role as leaders, and are an example for all of Brookline of how to work together respectfully.

The Bee-lievers in Change are reviewing all of the 119 nominations to narrow the list down to 10-15 semi-finalist names for further consideration. Principal Jennifer Buller, Vice Principal Saeed Ola, and I are supporting the students' research and vetting of each of the submissions. The students are using a rubric that includes the town naming criteria, the school's core values, and whether or not the name meets any restorative justice criteria. As semi-finalist names are chosen, the students will research each nomination and develop short background summaries for each one. 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 at our Renaming Nights scheduled for April 3 and 11.

I also want to thank the working group that has been organizing the process and helping with planning and outreach. This diverse group represents many different points of view and has been a powerful force in ensuring we have an inclusive process that is open to people all across Brookline. This group includes parents, teachers, district administrators, town residents, and the original petitioners of the warrant article that launched this process.

We are only part way through this journey and hope that you and many other community members will engage in the process in the coming months. Please join us at the Renaming Nights in April to learn about the names being considered and to be inspired by the tremendous work done by the Bee-lievers in Change student group. There are also opportunities to submit comments, speak at upcoming public hearings, and take part when Town Meeting considers the final recommendation.

I have included a summary timeline below. For complete details about the process, including the full list of nominations, please visit the Coolidge Corner Renaming website at www.brookline.k12.ma.us/renameccs

Sincerely,

Andrew J. Bott
Superintendent

Coolidge Corner School Renaming Process Summary Timeline

Nominations Accepted: December 10, 2018 - January 23, 2019

- Nominations accepted through web-based form and nominations forms available at all schools, public libraries, and Town Hall

Nomination Review and Selection of Semi-Finalists: February - March 11

- The Bee-lievers in Change student committee reviews all nominations and identifies 10-15 semi-finalist names
- Semi-finalists names are further researched for viability by several members of the Public Schools of Brookline leadership staff

Semi-Finalist Phase: March 11 – April 1

- All the students who originally applied to be part of the student renaming committee will be re-engaged and invited to participate in Semi-Finalist phase
- Teams of 4-5 students research and develop presentations for each semi-finalist name with each team being led by 1-2 members of the Bee-lievers in Change
- The teams will develop printed media and presentations for each semi-finalist name. The media and information about each of the semi-finalists will be displayed at the *Renaming Nights* and posted on the Public Schools of Brookline website

Renaming Nights: April 3 and April 11

- The *Renaming Nights* will be open to the public, and the community-at-large will be invited to both events
- Families and community members will be able to interact with the student teams, learn more about each of the semi-finalist names, view the printed media created about each semi-finalist, and provide feedback about their preferred name(s)
- The student committee will use input from participants when reviewing the semi-finalist nominations
- The *Renaming Nights* are scheduled for:
 - **April 3** at the Coolidge Corner School, Multipurpose Room
345 Harvard Street, 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
 - **April 11** at the Brookline Public Library, Hunneman Hall
361 Washington Street, 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Finalists Selection: April 24

- The Bee-lievers in Change committee will reconvene, process the feedback from the *Renaming Nights*, and come to consensus on 3-5 names to send to the Brookline School Committee

School and Town Board Consideration – May and June

- The School Committee will consider the finalist names submitted by the Bee-lievers in Change; following a public hearing, the School Committee will vote to recommend one name to the Townwide Naming Committee as Town bylaws require
- Following Town bylaws, the Townwide Naming Committee will consider the School Committee's recommendation, hold a public hearing, and decide whether to submit a warrant article to Town Meeting with the recommended name
- Town Meeting considers warrant article recommending permanent name (likely November 2019)



Andrew J. Bott
Superintendent

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March 15, 2019

To the Families and Friends of the Public Schools of Brookline,

We are writing to update you about the proposed Brookline Early Education Program (BEEP) lease at the 127 Harvard Street site.

In the fall of 2017, the Town was approached by a donor interested in building an early childhood center at 127 Harvard Street, Brookline. The donor proposed that the building be leased to the Public Schools of Brookline for a period of twenty years. The School Committee and the Select Board negotiated in good faith with the donor and signed a 20-year lease agreement, provided by the donor, in November 2018.

The lease signed by the School Committee and the Select Board required that the Town pay annual rent of \$12.00 and all annual operating costs for the building, totaling approximately \$100,000 per year. Despite the signatures of the Town boards on the lease, the donor never signed it and in mid-January, 2019, we were informed that the donor was no longer interested in building a home for BEEP. Instead, the donor has plans to build and open a private pre-school at the 127 Harvard Street property.

The School Committee is pleased that the Newbury College Acquisition Advisory Committee is exploring whether a property on the Newbury College site could, if acquired, serve as a town-wide BEEP center. Siting a BEEP center there would eliminate the need to rent classrooms for the BEEP program, as we currently do. Creating a permanent home for the Brookline Early Education Program would also serve to demonstrate the importance of the program to our schools and our town.

Sincerely,

Andrew J. Bott
Superintendent

David Pollak
Chair, Brookline School Committee