

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

Parent Advisory Committee for Educational Equity

On May 1, Dr. Kalise Wornum and I hosted the inaugural meeting of the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) for Educational Equity. The 30-member PAC for Educational Equity is new this year and was established to support school leaders in our efforts to create and promote equitable practices, build inclusive school communities, and work toward closing opportunity gaps and achieving equitable outcomes for all students. The PAC provides the framework for parents and guardians to participate in issues of educational equity and we will call upon them to advise us in these important matters. At our first meeting we engaged in some group work to define the issues we want to address and learn more about. It was a very productive meeting with a dedicated and talented group of parents and guardians. Our next meeting is scheduled for June 18.

Update on Town Election

Following last week's Town election, I sent the attached letter to Brookline families, educators and community members to provide a brief summary of the current status of our building projects and enrollment challenges. As we work together to address these challenges I will continue to keep our families and staff informed.

School Visits and Community Events

I would like to thank the Lawrence PTO for hosting a Superintendent Forum with Lawrence School parents and guardians on Tuesday evening, April 30. It was an engaging and productive evening with an enthusiastic group of parents and guardians.

It was my pleasure to join the Brookline Asian American Family Network to celebrate Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month at their annual Asian American Student Essay Contest celebration. Held on Wednesday evening, May 8, at the Brookline Teen Center, the event was a wonderful celebration to recognize the amazing student essay award winners, including: Maiya Whalen (BAAFN Award), Iris Yang (Content Award) and Nina Bingham (Creativity Award).

In addition, since my last report I joined principals in visiting classrooms at:

Heath School	April 26
Lincoln School	May 1
Driscoll School	May 2
Lawrence School	May 3
Brookline High School	May 7

I also joined Pierce educators at their faculty meeting on Tuesday afternoon, April 30.

Ernest R. Caverly Award Recipients

This afternoon I had the pleasure of attending the Brookline Education Foundation's Celebrating Teachers reception at which I introduced this year's recipients of the Ernest R. Caverly Awards: Laura Vish, Speech and Language Pathologist at Runkle School and Mark VanDerzee, of the Brookline High School Performing Arts department. As always, the event was a testament to the strong ties we enjoy with the BEF and a fantastic celebration of our work together supporting Brookline's educators. Ms. Vish and Mr. VanDerzee are most worthy of the Caverly Award. I have attached my introductory remarks for your information.



The Public Schools of Brookline
Town Hall
333 Washington Street, 5th Floor
Brookline, Massachusetts 02445
617.730.2401

Andrew J. Bott
Superintendent

May 8, 2019

Dear Brookline Families, Educators, and Community Members,

In yesterday's annual town election, the Brookline community voted against funding the Baldwin School and Driscoll School Building Projects. While I am disappointed that the projects will not move forward at this time, the Public Schools of Brookline remains committed to our mission to provide an extraordinary education for every child.

There are challenges and hard decisions ahead which we will need to face together. Our K-8 schools will continue to have large class sizes. Programs may need to move. Without significant renovation or expansion in our district, our schools will continue to be overcapacity and our students and staff will continue to deal with compromised learning spaces and crowded common areas.

The success of our district is a team effort. Now, more than ever, we must work together to solve the enduring challenges of our K-8 schools. Based on the persistence and dedication I have seen in our staff, students, and families, I believe that we are more than capable of solving these challenges.

It is too soon to know what the next steps will be to solve our enrollment challenges. Deciding what's next regarding the overcrowding in Brookline's public schools will be up to elected officials and Town Meeting. I do know that every day, educators throughout the Public Schools of Brookline will work tirelessly to support your children, families, and this community in making our schools the best they can be.

My goal is to create a more equitable and enriching educational experience for all of our children, and I look forward to continuing that work with the Brookline community.

Sincerely,

Andrew J. Bott
Superintendent

2019 ERNEST R. CAVERLY AWARD RECIPIENTS

Introductory Remarks by Superintendent Andrew Bott

It's my pleasure to be here this afternoon to introduce the recipients of the Ernest R. Caverly Awards.

Since 1981 we have benefited from the generous and pioneering support of the Brookline Education Foundation. Joining forces with the BEF, we are able to support the development of master teachers in our district – and I am proud to be here today to recognize two educators who are certainly in that category.

I would like to thank the BEF Board of Directors, Board of Overseers, staff and donors for being such steadfast champions of Brookline's talented and exceptional educators.

Without further ado, please allow me to say a few words of introduction for our first Ernest R. Caverly Award recipient, Laura Vish. Laura, a speech and language pathologist at Runkle School, has been a Brookline educator for 20 years.

In their nomination of Laura, her colleagues – Lauren Tavares and Erica Landry – note that Laura truly embodies the values that form the core of our school district: innovative teaching, respect and appreciation for all learners, and collaborative teams. They note that *“among the excellent educators we work with on a daily basis....Laura stands out from the crowd”*.

Laura's dedication to her colleagues, to her profession, and most of all to her students, make her a natural leader among her peers. Her wealth of knowledge within her field has profoundly impacted every speech language pathologist who has been a part of the district team for these past 20 years. She has implemented innovative techniques in our classrooms in her tireless work to support ALL students. Lauren and Erica so aptly summed up their nomination by confiding that even in a district known for excellent educators Laura stands out from the crowd. Laura *“is a shining example of what dedicated teachers and specialists strive to be.”*

Laura's special education colleagues observe how Laura is able to use humor, practicality and deep knowledge of the curriculum to

support students and collaborate with colleagues. When engaging with students, she is caring, respectful, direct and fun. She has a large repertoire of strategies in her tool belt that help her students succeed. In weekly meetings with special educators and classroom teachers, Laura works closely with her colleagues to decide together how best to accommodate all learners in the classroom.

Laura is a trusted and valuable mentor to her colleagues. She is a willing listener, and generously uses her knowledge to help others strengthen their practice. As Shira Schwartzberg, Runkle social studies teacher noted, *"it takes an extremely special and talented person to be someone who both teachers **and** students flock to for advice. Laura Vish is that person."* And, with each passing school year, Laura's wisdom radiates and grows as she mentors and guides new educators.

Parents warmly describe Laura as a member of their child's "team", and her genuine faith in her students' abilities is obvious. To parents, it is clear that they have found a true partner in Laura.

In the spirit of the executive functioning strategy "Get Ready, Do, Done", Laura's "Done" might be that all of her students are able to

successfully navigate the academic and social/emotional demands of school; the “Get Ready” would be the amazing curriculum and resources that Laura would marshal from her very organized and labeled lime green binders; and the “Do” is what Laura actually makes to look so effortless – the skillful co-teaching and collaborating with colleagues so that all students are able to succeed.

Please join me in congratulating Caverly Award Recipient

Laura Vish!

Our next Caverly Award recipient is from Brookline High School: Mark VanDerzee. Mark has been a teacher in the BHS Performing Arts department for 18 years.

Mark's work as a teacher of Drama, Stagecraft, Sound and Lighting Design, and as the Performing Arts Tech Director, means that he interacts with students from across all three Performing Arts disciplines: Music, Drama and Dance. In each and every area, he supports his colleagues and their students with a seemingly endless supply of both energy and patience.

In his nomination letter, Performing Arts Coordinator Kenny Kozol notes that Mark's impact at Brookline High School is far-reaching. Whether modeling and demonstrating his passion for student learning, extending his work-day long into the evening to assist hundreds of students in over 30 productions each year, or coming to the rescue of teachers and community members alike who find themselves panicking in the BHS auditorium unable to run the equipment – Mark always responds and assists with a smile on his face!

To his colleagues, Mark is a beloved collaborator, mentor and friend. His performing arts colleague, Mary Mastandrea, who co-nominated Mark for this award, encourages you to visit BHS and see for yourself: when you mention Mark's name you will inevitably hear, "He's awesome!", "He's so helpful", "I love him" and "He's the best".

Mary notes that Mark is "fearless, patient and trusting and his students, in turn, mirror those sound habits back to him." What else could explain the fact that throughout years of teaching the *Backstage* course at BHS, not one student has ever been injured while working with power tools! Mark patiently guides his students, answers questions, and gives them the time and space to hone and improve their skills.

Mark is a workhorse, collaborating on more than 30 high school performances each year. He is well-known for his creative problem solving and is always willing to lend a hand. His work elevates every BHS production.

Mark's mentoring and guidance of students is also the stuff of lore. A 2014 graduate said it best when he said, *"I had a lot of favorite teachers at Brookline High School, and Mark wasn't one of them. But, let me explain!...Mark guided our learning with passion, so it seldom crossed my mind that he was actually teaching!"* Other former students wax on about how Mark pushed for their success every step of the way with kindness, humor, and respect, while others remember that it was Mark who encouraged them to move outside of their comfort zones and take risks. One former student noted that he entered class thinking *"that acting was all about him, as a way to stand out and get applause"*; but that, thanks to Mark, he left high school beginning to understand that *"performance is a giving act, it's about your fellow scene partners, and how you can support their performances ahead of your own."* It is clear that many former students recognize their good fortune at having had Mark as a teacher.

Colleagues and students are not alone in praising Mark; many parents also recognize the gifts he brings to the BHS community. One parent noted that Mark teaches students how to work with others and how to respectfully recognize what others bring into the conversation, both onstage and in real life. Mark teaches his students to “love the bomb”, that is, to not be afraid to fail because there was so much to learn from doing so, especially if you’re “failing” in the supportive atmosphere that Mark had helped to create.

Mark’s passion for teaching, his steadfast support of his colleagues, and his ability to show his students how to enjoy the creative process, aptly sum up why Mark is a natural choice as the recipient of the Caverly Award.

Please join me in congratulating Caverly Award recipient

Mark VanDerzee!