

The Public Schools of Brookline
School Committee Meeting of Thursday, June 1, 2017
Superintendent Report
Andrew J. Bott
Superintendent of Schools

Update from Brookline Town Meeting

On Tuesday, May 23, Town Meeting made significant and successful votes in support of the renovation and expansion of Brookline High School, the 9th Elementary School at Baldwin, and the FY 2018 school budget.

Town Meeting voted strongly in favor of moving forward the Brookline High School Renovation and Expansion project into the Schematic Design Phase. The 216 to 1 vote to allocate \$1.85 million allows the BHS Building Committee and architects to further develop Preferred Design "Option 4D". This design will maintain one, unified campus for BHS by adding a 9th grade building on Cypress Street, creating a new Science and STEM center on the corner of Tappan and Greenough Streets, and renovate existing classroom and common spaces in the main building. The additions will help create a small school feel for 9th graders as they transition from our elementary schools, while allowing them to access arts, athletic, and upper-level courses across campus. Upgrades at the main building will allow for state of the art science facilities, enable integration across disciplines and include collaborative spaces for all grades. BHS Building Committee Chairs Selectman Nancy Heller and School Committee Member Susan Wolf Ditkoff presented a strong case for moving forward and the current timeline for the project.

Town Meeting voted 185 to 32 in support of a motion to appropriate \$1.5 million to continue work on developing the design for the 9th Elementary School at Baldwin. Chairman of the Board of Selectmen Neil Wishinsky and School Committee Chair David Pollak made spoke in favor of moving the project forward. While this is a positive step, these funds cannot be expended and the Schematic Design Phase cannot begin until the Board of Selectmen, the School Committee, and the town's Advisory Committee receive additional legal guidance related to open space regulations and the Smith v. Westfield court case that is pending before the state's Supreme Judicial Court and another Town Meeting vote releases the funds. The vote does allow \$100,000 to be spent to complete the feasibility study and do further design work.

In a nearly unanimous vote, Town Meeting approved the town's budget including \$104 million for the FY 2018 public schools budget. Next year's budget allows us to maintain and build on the increased staffing that we have experienced across all schools over the past two years and continue the work begun this year to align programs, policies, and systems to better support students and teachers. The budget supports our core values of educational equity, high achievement for all, excellence in teaching, respect for human differences and collaboration while continuing to address our ongoing enrollment growth. The FY 2018 budget reflects a \$4,144,746 increase and includes a \$4,837,000 increase in personnel expenditures, a \$308,000 increase in services and cuts in supplies of \$172,843. As is the case every year, this budget is the culmination of significant work done by coordinators, principals, BHS department chairs and deans, and particularly Beth McDonald, Michael D'Onofrio, and Mary Ellen Dunn. Thank you to all who contributed to creating a clear and comprehensive budget that earned significant support from the Advisory Board and Town Meeting.

Driscoll School Principal Transition

As you know, on May 22 Driscoll School principal Heidi Cook announced that she has taken a new position with the Cambridge Public Schools. We wish Heidi all the best. I communicated with the Driscoll community on May 22 and followed up with the letter below on May 31 informing them that I will be appointing an interim principal for the 2017-2018 school year.

May 31, 2017

Dear Driscoll School Staff and Families,

I write today to let you know that I am currently working to identify an interim principal to lead the Driscoll School in the coming school year. Given the announcement of Principal Cook's plans at this late date in the year, there is insufficient time to permit a complete search that would attract a deep and diverse pool of candidates. Consistent with School Committee policy on filling interim positions, I am currently considering high quality candidates both within and outside of the system and will make an appointment within the next week.

In November of the coming school year, we will launch a comprehensive search process to identify a permanent leader for Driscoll School. This process will include a representative search committee that will select and interview candidates, a second round of interviews, in-depth reference checks, site visits, and candidate forums for finalists to be held at Driscoll.

Thank you for your patience while my team and I work to find an appropriate and talented leader who will support the entire Driscoll community through this transition.

Sincerely,



Andrew J. Bott
Superintendent

Town-Wide Orchestra, Chorus, Concert Band and Jazz Band

Every year our elementary school town-wide bands, orchestra and chorus culminate their work by spending a Saturday at the Music in the Parks Festival, at which school groups from around the area participate in performances followed by an afternoon of fun at Six Flags. On Saturday, May 20, our town-wide groups received the following awards and recognitions at the festival:

- Town-Wide Orchestra (Brookline Youth Orchestra - BSO) received 1st place, a superior rating, and best overall orchestra
- Town-Wide Chorus (Voices of Brookline) received 1st place middle school mixed choir with an excellent rating
- Town-Wide Concert Band received 1st place with a superior rating, and the overall middle school concert band award
- Town-Wide Jazz Band received 1st place with an excellent rating, and Lincoln School 8th grade alto saxophonist, Shingo Murata, received overall best middle school jazz soloist

Congratulations to our students, and a big thank you and congratulations to our town-wide directors Rick Stone (Concert and Jazz Band), Holly Ahearn (Chorus) and John Ferguson (Orchestra), and our assistant directors Colin Stack (Concert and Jazz Band), Chris Thoft-Brown (Concert and Jazz Band) and Gracie Lane (Orchestra), for all their hard work and dedication.

As you may know, we have two Town-Wide Orchestras, a Town-Wide Chorus, a Town-Wide Jazz Band, and a Town-Wide Concert Band. Students from schools across the district participate after school in these performing arts opportunities in addition to their regular Conservatory music classes during the school day.

John F. Kennedy 100th Birthday Celebration: *What JFK Means To Me*

On Friday, May 26, I had the pleasure of joining third grade students from the Devotion School at the Coolidge Corner Theatre for a celebration in honor of John F. Kennedy's 100th birthday. This event, organized by the John F. Kennedy National Historic Site, featured our students sharing their impressions and reflections of the president that they developed after a month-long biographical exploration of JFK's legacy. Devotion third graders have participated in this program for over three decades; this year's 100th birthday celebration was especially significant. Our students were incredibly well-prepared, poised and thoughtful and this is due to the amazing support they received from Devotion third grade classroom teachers and special educators, including Gretchen Albertini, Andrea Prikacki, Jennifer Driscoll, Christy Bordieri, Kim French, Alice Duket, Janice Gaudette, Jessica Falzone and Melissa Horowitz.

Brookline's Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month Celebration

May is Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month. I was pleased to be able to join Brookline's AAPI celebration on May 24 here in the School Committee Room. The celebration featured honors and awards for BHS students, including the winner of the "What does it mean to be Asian American in Brookline?" essay contest. The evening also featured an excerpt of the acclaimed new PBS documentary, "The Chinese Exclusion Act," with a discussion from Andrew Leong, Associate Professor in the Philosophy Department, and Asian American and Latino Studies at UMass Boston.

The winners announced at the celebration are:

Brookline Asian American Family Network (BAAFN) Award:

Title: *A Brookline Asian American: Myself*

Winner: **Elisabeth Hee Yun Rothman**, BHS, Grade 12

Best Content Award:

Title: *All It Takes Is One Class*

Winner: **Emily Zhu**, BHS, Grade 10

Best Creativity Award:

Title: *Family Photo*

Winner: **Rachel Percy**, BHS, Grade 11

Alternative Choices in Education Graduation Celebration

In advance of Sunday's high school graduation, last night I joined BHS Headmaster Anthony Meyer and School Committee member Helen Charlupski at the celebration for seniors who are graduating from the Alternative Choices in Education (ACE) program. As you know, ACE is Brookline High's competency-based program that provides a rigorous college preparation pathway in which students are placed in multi-age classes based on their skill levels, can proceed at their own pace, and graduate when they complete their content and skill competencies. Last night's celebration was incredibly moving for the graduating seniors and their families. It was clear to me that our ACE graduates are ready for the future and poised for success.

School Visits

I have continued my regular visits to schools; since our last meeting I have been able to visit Baker School, Brookline High School, and BEEP at Beacon. As always, these comprehensive visits are a wonderful opportunity to engage with teachers and students alike, observe collaborative and thoughtful teaching and learning, and see how our goals and values are truly manifested in classrooms across the district.

New Principal Reception

I have invited the new Runkle principal, Genteen Jean-Michel, and the new Lawrence principal, Allyson Hart, to join us on Thursday, June 15 at 5:30 for a brief reception. This is designed to be an informal opportunity for you to meet the newest members of our leadership team before they officially begin their tenure with us on July 1.