

The Public Schools of Brookline  
School Committee Meeting of Thursday, September 22, 2016

Andrew Bott  
Superintendent of Schools

### **Superintendent School Visits**

Since our September 8th School Committee meeting, I have been able to visit four schools: BEEP Putterham; BEEP Lynch; Heath School; and Driscoll School.

At BEEP Putterham and BEEP Lynch, I had the opportunity to visit every class and observe the exceptional early childhood teams at each of these locations. I saw center-based learning, class meetings, class read alouds, and individual student work. In each of the BEEP sites, we have exceptional early childhood educators who very successfully meet the individual learning needs of our youngest students. I am very much looking forward to my visit to our third BEEP site, BEEP Beacon, this coming Tuesday.

On Monday, Dr. Sevelius and I visited a number of middle school classes at Heath School. We observed history, math, and English/Language Arts, and I had the opportunity to see the new STEAM/Maker Space that the Heath team created with generous support from the Heath PTO. As one specific example of the great teaching at Heath, I saw 7th grade students responding to literature in creative and insightful ways. In each class I visited, there was a deep level of engagement, with students excited about their learning.

Earlier today I spent three hours at Driscoll School visiting the Language and Academic Home Base Program (LAHB). During this visit, I spent an hour in Ms. Hawkin's 5th grade class observing an incredibly rigorous math lesson where LAHB students were fully mainstreamed and supported. Then, after a short stop at a BEEP class at Driscoll, I observed the LAHB team delivering their sequential and multisensory language based literacy instruction. There was a remarkable level of support and individualization in every interaction between staff and students.

### **Entry Plan Update**

Over the past two weeks, I have continued meeting with Town Leaders identified in the entry plan process discussed at the July School Committee retreat. Last Thursday I had the opportunity to meet with Advisory Committee members Sean Lynn Jones, Carla Benka and Michael Sandman. Town Administrator Mel Kleckner and I have established a regular meeting schedule. Our work together is a critical piece of maintaining the strong Town/School partnership that exists in Brookline. Meetings still to be scheduled include the chairs of the Planning Board, the Building Commission, and the Park and Recreation Commission and Town Moderator Sandy Gadsby.

One of our priorities during my onboarding is to implement mentoring for new principals and support for all of our vice-principals. The principal mentors are meeting regularly with their mentees. Today, vice-principals had the first of their monthly meetings that are organized and led by Lesley Ryan Miller and Gabe McCormick. In addition, in the Office of Student Services, Deputy Superintendent Sam Zimmerman has collaborated with Gabe McCormick to develop yearlong professional development for Education Team Facilitators that are tied closely to our district goals. This professional development is already mapped out meeting by meeting for the entire year. Mr. Zimmerman is working with Christina Palmer, Director of Guidance and Counseling Services, to develop the same approach for guidance counselors district-wide.

### **PK-12 Office of Teaching and Learning Retreat**

The Office of Teaching & Learning brought together BHS Curriculum Coordinators, K-8 Curriculum Coordinators and Program Directors for two day to start developing a culture of PK-12 collaboration across the district, do some team building, and begin longer term planning. The first day, September 14<sup>th</sup>, these leaders worked with Outward Bound Professional on a series of team building exercises to deepen interpersonal connections, develop a stronger sense of colleagues' work styles, and learn about accepting change as a part of growth. Outward Bound Professional Director Ellen Harris facilitated this work. Ellen also facilitated the Outward Bound Professional experience in August for principals and senior leadership and was able to work on consistent themes with each group.

On the 15th, the OTL Team worked together on the year's priorities for the Office of Teaching & Learning. Nicole Gittens, Amy Martin, Lesley Miller, and Gabe McCormick facilitated the day, focusing on educator evaluation, collaboration, and goal setting.

Nicole led a session that allowed the team to review the prioritized elements of the DESE educator evaluation rubric. The team then generated a list of observable practices and behaviors related to these elements that can be seen across preK-12 classrooms. These practices will be the foundation of our continued work to identify district-wide instructional best practices.

Amy Martin facilitated the team in working with colleagues to complete a schedule for classrooms observations. The objective of this work was to establish a calendar for team classroom observations that will promote calibration of evaluators and refine the district's definition of effective instruction.

Gabe McCormick facilitated a collaborative goal setting protocol to develop an overall picture of our work together for this year and beyond. The team focused on individual work, topics for further learning and district issues to be addressed. Some of the issues identified included: not having a strategic plan to align work to across schools; the need to identify common instructional practices across the district; and using data to inform ongoing improvement of instruction.

One appreciative high school administrator noted that it was the most she had collaborated with PK-8 colleagues in her whole time working in Brookline. The OTL Team left the two-day retreat excited to continue developing our relationships and feeling that our shared work has set the stage for the development of the Office of Teaching & Learning's 5-year plan.

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| 1. Amy Martin        | 14. Kathleen Hubbard |
| 2. Arnie Marcus      | 15. Kenny Kozol      |
| 3. Barbara Maged     | 16. Lesley Miller    |
| 4. Dan Bresman       | 17. Mary Burchenal   |
| 5. Dawn Carney       | 18. Matt Rosenthal   |
| 6. Ed Wisner         | 19. Mindy Paulo      |
| 7. Gabe McCormick    | 20. Natalie Dean     |
| 8. Gary Shiffman     | 21. Nicole Gittens   |
| 9. Geoff Tegnell     | 22. Regina Watts     |
| 10. Janet MacNeil    | 23. Scott Moore      |
| 11. Jenee Ramos      | 24. Suzie Talukdar   |
| 12. Joanna Lieberman | 25. Tina Bozeman     |
| 13. Josh Paris       |                      |

### **Emergency Management Committee**

We have pulled together an Emergency Response Team for the district that is reviewing current emergency response practices, policies, and protocols and will develop improvements so PBS becomes up to date on best practices for ensuring student and staff safety. This team is organized by myself and the Deputy Superintendent for Administration & Finance and includes the Coordinator of Health Services, the Director of Operations, Brookline High School's Assistant Headmaster, Brookline High School's Interim Headmaster (as available), the Deputy Superintendent for Student Services, and the Lincoln School Principal. In the upcoming monthly meetings, the team will be:

- Developing annual trainings for school-basis crisis teams, police, fire, and other municipal departments that respond during school emergencies;
- Updating the required memorandum of agreement between the school department and the police department;
- Designing training for staff in preparation for active shooter scenarios;
- Reviewing and updating our emergency communications plan;
- Reviewing and updating emergency response procedures; and
- Reviewing district policy and procedures for passive surveillance of school and school buses to support student and staff safety.

As this team's work moves forward it will expand to include two Brookline police officers and the Deputy Fire Chief.

### **Elementary Literacy Assessment**

This week the administration of our only district-wide literacy assessment for grades 1-8, the Benchmark Assessment System (BAS), began. Last week I sent an email to all K-8 staff stressing the importance of literacy instruction and the role that the BAS plays in gathering important information about our students' literacy skills that help inform instruction. We are making a few important short-term improvements in the administration and reporting of the BAS. First we are using Google Sheets to make the distribution of the scoring sheets and the reporting easier than in the past. Instead of being shared in a mass mailing from the district, these sheets will be shared individually by the literacy coaches and specialists at each school so our literacy experts can follow up with teachers directly if they have questions. Once a teacher finishes doing the BAS with their class and enters the results in their Google Sheet, we will provide a report to each teacher within ten days that shows how their students did on BAS now and last year and will help them easily identify the range of levels of their students. This the first time the district is providing BAS reports directly to teachers.

And as I shared in my letter to staff, this fall we will begin to look at other possible improvements to BAS, the various ways we can assess students to gain nuanced understanding of their literacy profiles, and the processes for supporting literacy instruction throughout our K-8 schools. We plan to work with literacy specialists, classroom teachers, coaches, and school communities to fully understand what is working and where changes need to be made. Collaboration and teamwork will be crucial in this work as we move ahead.

### **MCAS and ACCESS Computer Based Testing**

In June, DESE announced the phase-in plan for MCAS computer-based testing. Their goal is to have "virtually all students" using computer-based testing (CBT) by 2019 with grades 4 and 8 implementing it this spring. While we have the option to have additional grades use CBT this spring, I have decided that we should follow DESE's recommendations and do a gradual roll out that allows our educators and administrators as well as our colleagues in the Town IT department focus on effective implementation with a smaller number of students. This week we participated in DESE's very first phone calls about the roll-out of CBT; one was about scheduling and process for administration and the other focused on the technology required of schools and districts related to CBT and other recent developments in online learning.

In the upcoming months, this effort will require strong collaboration between the Office of Teaching & Learning, the Office of Strategy & Performance and Town IT. We will build on the successes and challenges we faced during our initial trial of computer-based testing with ACCESS that occurred in January 2016. In the coming weeks, Kevin Stokes will join us at a School Committee meeting to update us on the significant improvements that have been made in in our technology and network infrastructure in anticipation of the continued growth of digital learning tools and the onset of computer-based state testing.