

The Public Schools of Brookline
School Committee Meeting of Thursday, January 19, 2017
Superintendent Report
Andrew J. Bott
Superintendent of Schools

Professional Development

Over the past several weeks, Director of Professional Development Gabe McCormick has been working with Facing History and Ourselves to provide professional learning opportunities related to discussing race with students. Topics will include both planned conversations about race (such as when racially charged topics are in the curriculum) as well as how to successfully facilitate unplanned conversations (which may arise as a result of local or national events). This work is being planned and provided in direct response to educator feedback from our November professional development day.

Mindy Paulo, Coordinator of the English Language Learner (ELL) program, developed a workshop for Brookline educators titled, *“Understanding Islam and Muslims: Beliefs, Practices and Common Misconceptions”*. The workshop has generated significant interest across the district. The workshop will be led by Barbara Sahli, founder of Muslim Youth Voices, and will include topics such as the current context of Islamophobia, demographics of American Muslims, basic beliefs and practices of Islam, an examination of common misconceptions, and strategies to support Muslim youth. The workshop will also feature an interactive opportunity for participants to read and respond to narratives by Muslim youth about their experiences in the United States.

As we work to develop a comprehensive, multi-year approach, we will continue to offer powerful and meaningful learning opportunities like these described above that continue to move this important work forward.

Learning Walks

Continuing our work to build collaboration and learn from the vast expertise in our school system, a group of principals including Heidi Cook, Brian Denitzio, AC Sevelius and Warren Blair spent time visiting and learning from the Lawrence School team today. The highlights of their visit included the opportunity to observe the following:

- Students had opportunities to turn-and-talk with one another to discuss academic work
- Classrooms were student-centered
- Relationships between students and staff are strong
- Lesson objectives were shared with students
- Lessons were focused
- Evidence of collaboration and curriculum alignment cross grade levels
- Good use of informal assessment of student learning
- Implementation of Workshop Model
- Specific vocabulary instruction
- Use of anchor charts
- Common use of word walls across classrooms
- Movement breaks for students
- Opportunities for student choice in classroom activities
- Students were asked to make connections from text-to-text and text-to-self
- Technology use in instruction
- Students' personal lives were reflected in the classroom
- Evidence of differentiation

Deputy Superintendent Nicole Gittens and Senior Director for Elementary Teaching and Learning Lesley Ryan Miller also participated in this important learning opportunity.

Heath School and Runkle School Principal Search Update

The search committees for both Runkle School and Heath School continue with their first round interviews of a very highly qualified group of candidates. The first round interviews will conclude early next week after which I and my Senior Staff will interview finalists. I anticipate having final candidates for both of these important positions to present to the School Committee at the February 9 meeting.

ADL Peer Training Program for BHS Students

Yesterday I had the pleasure of joining an enthusiastic group of 26 Brookline High School students at the Teen Center for the first of three workshops that are part of the Anti-Defamation League's *A World of Difference Institute Peer Training Program*. The peer training program "prepares young people to use the positive power of peer influence to promote respect and civility in their schools and beyond." We look forward to the positive influence that the BHS peer trainers will have in strengthening the supportive and caring environment that already exists at BHS.

I would like to thank Brendan Kobus, Interim Associate Dean, and Jen Martin, Social Studies teacher and coordinator of The Advisory Program, for their hard work coordinating this opportunity for our students. And, of course, thank you to the student volunteers for their commitment to this important work.

I have met with a working group of K-8 principals to develop a plan that will bring this work to the students in our middle grades.

9th Annual Young Women of Color Annual Retreat

Brookline's METCO program and African American Latino Scholars program (AALSP) hosted the 9th Annual Young Women of Color Retreat last Thursday at Emmanuel College. I was happy to be able to join the students during their mid-day break and attend the *Senior Panel* afternoon workshop. The retreat's goals "to empower, inspire and motivate our young women of color to excel in all aspects of their lives" were fully realized in the workshops, activities and panels presented over the course of the day.

I would like to thank Dr. Keith Lezama, BHS METCO Coordinator and Suzie Talukdar, METCO Director, for their hard work in making this retreat such a success.

Appointment of Anthony Meyer as 17th Brookline High School Headmaster

Last week I announced the appointment of Anthony Meyer as Headmaster of Brookline High School. As I wrote in my announcement, *Anthony has dealt openly and honestly with challenges related to prejudice and hate. He has energized the high school expansion project and made tremendous strides in engaging school leaders, keeping faculty informed and working with my team to get this project on track. He clearly values the diversity of our student body and understands that we need to have a broad definition of what learning and success mean at BHS. Most importantly, our students experience every day how well he connects with them and respects them.*

The final page of this report has the full announcement letter; I look forward to having Anthony attend a future School Committee meeting.

Eight Grade Transition Events

Yesterday, Headmaster Anthony Meyer announced a series of transition events for 8th grade students and their families. The announcement, sent to all 8th grade families in the district, outlined the annual presentations that enable our students to bridge the distance from their elementary school to BHS with such success.

Starting on February 7 and continuing through March 14, six different events allow students and parents the opportunity to learn about the high school's academic program, curriculum, course offerings, special education services and programs, elective opportunities and athletic teams. These transition events are always eagerly anticipated by our 8th grade students and families and I would like to thank all of the BHS staff who work so tirelessly to make these events possible.

Brookline-Xi'an China Exchange (CHEX) Program

It was my pleasure to attend the Brookline-Xi'an China Exchange Program farewell banquet on Tuesday evening. I want to wish our visiting students from Gao Xin School a safe trip back to China; we truly hope that their time with us was enjoyable, successful and productive. The students, led by their teacher Ms. Helen Wang, represented their school with honor and distinction and it was our pleasure to have them in Brookline. I would also like to acknowledge the Brookline host families whose contributions form the foundation of the program's success. This year's host families were Karen and Dave Szeto, John and Nancy Abbott, Stefanie Greenfield and Mark Allen, Dan Bergman and KC Turnbull, Suzanne and Robert Boyd, Kevin MacDonald and Francesca Stark, Charlie Radin and Mugi Hanao, Tracy and Harlan Rieur, and Heidi Wells and Steven Shaffer.

I want to especially thank Steve Lantos, BHS Chemistry teacher and CHEX coordinator. It is because of his vision, leadership and tireless efforts that this long-standing and successful partnership continues to thrive.



Andrew J. Bott
Superintendent

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January 10, 2017

Dear Families and Staff,

I am very pleased to announce that I am appointing Anthony Meyer as the permanent Headmaster of Brookline High School.

Since Mr. Meyer became the Interim Headmaster of Brookline High School in June he has done a remarkable job of bringing together faculty, connecting with students, and engaging parents. He has rebuilt relationships and repaired trust in ways that are allowing our high school to move forward together.

I have been impressed by how well and how quickly Mr. Meyer energized the faculty and helped rekindle optimism and enthusiasm for BHS. He has dealt openly and honestly with challenges related to prejudice and hate. He has energized the high school expansion project and made tremendous strides in engaging school leaders, keeping faculty informed and working with my team to get this project on track. He clearly values the diversity of our student body and understands that we need to have a broad definition of what learning and success mean at BHS. Most importantly our students experience every day how well he connects with and respects them.

During many conversations and through a recent survey that 300 staff and parents responded to, members of our school community expressed in clear terms how they value the work that Mr. Meyer has done as interim headmaster and as dean. Staff and parents both speak of his open and honest communication and how he has quickly restored their faith in the direction and future of Brookline High School. Faculty members appreciate his collaborative style and his clear vision. Parents speak passionately of how he cares about and respects their teenage children.

Over the last two months I have seriously considered whether or not we should conduct a full search process for a new headmaster. During that time I have consulted with faculty, staff, students, parents, members of the school committee, community members, and mentors. These conversations, my work with Mr. Meyer and his leadership at BHS have strengthened my conviction that, in Anthony Meyer, we already have the strongest possible candidate for Brookline High School.

As Brookline High School Headmaster, Anthony Meyer will work with staff, students and parents to honor the strengths of our high school, embrace the challenges we face, and move us forward together toward an exciting future.

Please join me in welcoming Anthony Meyer as Brookline High School's 17th headmaster.

Sincerely,

Andrew Bott
Superintendent