

The Public Schools of Brookline  
School Committee Meeting of Thursday, December 15, 2016  
Superintendent Report  
Andrew J. Bott  
Superintendent of Schools

## Office of Teaching and Learning

### *Supporting Principals*

In our ongoing work to better support principals as instructional leaders, we have been actively working with them on their evaluation process and launching collaborative “learning walks”.

Learning Walks with Principals -- This week we completed our first “learning walk” with principals as part of our ongoing efforts to center principal work on instruction and classroom practice, help deepen collaboration among principals, and build greater understanding across all grade spans. We’ve divided the BEEP, K-8, and BHS principals into two groups. Each group will visit half of our schools with all principals visiting BHS in March. During each walkthrough we will visit between six and ten classrooms. These classroom walkthroughs will be informal: we won’t take notes, use any formal protocols, collect any data or write any reports. We will focus on the positive and look for the strengths in each classroom we visit. We are looking for the positives so that we can continue to better understand the strengths of our schools and classrooms across the entire district.

Principal Evaluation -- Over the past month, each principal has identified three preliminary goals that will serve as the foundation of their evaluation for the year. Each principal will have a student learning goal, a professional practice goal, and a goal connected to their School Improvement Plan. Deputy Superintendent Gittens, Deputy Superintendent Zimmerman and I are now reviewing these goals with each principal and providing feedback to be sure they are specific, attainable, and relevant, as well as aligned with district goals and School Improvement Plan goals. Once the goals are in place the primary evaluator will schedule a building walk with each principal where they will visit all classrooms and spaces in their schools, and also schedule upcoming visitations and support meetings.

### *Collaboration Among Coordinators*

Nicole Gittens, Lesley Ryan-Miller, and Amy Martin continue our work to deepen collaboration and connection between coordinators across PK-12 that focuses on instructional practices. This year is the first time the PK-8 and the BHS coordinators are meeting with each other regularly. At the Office of Teaching and Learning retreat in the beginning of the year the coordinators decided to visit classrooms together. One of the primary purposes of these visits is to start to look for commonalities in instruction that can be seen across grade levels, subject areas, and student support areas. Coordinators worked together to set up their “Dance Cards” -- classroom visits with colleagues. The only requirement is that each coordinator needed to have at least one classroom visit with a coordinator that they haven’t collaborated with before (e.g. a high school coordinator and a BEEP administrator) and one with a colleague they have a more logical connection with (e.g. K-8 social studies and 9-12 social studies). Others coordinators could join these visits so it was common to have three or four people visiting together. This week when the K-8 and BHS Coordinators met together they debriefed how these visits are going. Many people had already seen three and four classes with their colleagues, with those who visited more classrooms generally feeling the most positive about the experience. There was also a lot of interest in visiting ELL classrooms with Mindy Paulo. Other questions addressed during the group’s debrief included: What worked and what were the challenges in doing the visits?; what are my next steps to continue collaborating with my partner(s)?; and what do we need to support continued collaboration PK-12?

## **Brookline High School** *“Asking for Courage Day”*

Today at BHS, the Courageous Conversations Group, in collaboration with other staff and student leaders, organized “Asking for Courage,” a day of programming around race, identity, racism and privilege. The goals of this day are to build community, educate each other around issues of racism, and inspire members of our community to take action or continue working toward racial justice.

The organizers chose to call the day “Asking for Courage” in recognition of the fact that this work is challenging and requires courage. Small groups of students and faculty worked together to create an amazing day of programming for all of our students and put tremendous thought and effort into the topic areas, the presentations, the lessons, and the spaces and places that were used throughout the day. During the opening session called “Tell Your Story” a group of students shared their experiences with race and racism, speaking in front of the student body in the auditorium. Some of the other sessions included looking at the long history of immigration to America and its impact on current immigration from Latin America; a series of short films titled “Race Reels” that included films about families talking about race, Native Americans’ attempts to sustain their culture and language, and interracial adoption; and a panel of students and teachers discussing how “whiteness” is currently expressed in the United States.

In addition to the programming, the organizing group of students and staff made materials available to all teachers in order to help them preview, reflect and process the day.

### ***Strengthening Instruction and Supporting All Students at BHS***

Over the past couple of months, BHS has devoted both faculty meeting and Administrative Council meeting time to difficult and important conversations about how we change instruction in order to better engage and support struggling students. These discussions are related to the high school’s collective focus on tightening and raising the safety nets for all high school students. They also provide opportunities for the high school faculty to convene in small groups and talk about their most important work, teaching, with colleagues across departments, programs, and other high school silos. Beyond these collaborative meetings, BHS educators are working to re-envision Student Intervention Teams (a high school version of Child-Study Teams) and a tutorial-plus pilot, two important pieces in helping us monitor and support high school students.

### **Performing Arts**

In the first few months of the school year, we have had a number of wonderful student achievements in Performing Arts in Brookline:

- The Brookline High School Camerata Chorus and Chamber Orchestra were selected as semi-finalists in the "Youth and High School" division of The American Prize for their performance of the Vivaldi "Magnificat" and modern-day premiere of the Ingegneri/Zelenka "Dixit Dominus." The American Prize is a non-profit organization that "provides evaluation, recognition and reward to America's finest performing artists, ensembles and composers, based on recorded performances."
- The following Lawrence School students were recently accepted into the All-State Treble Chorus:
  - Ayush Gupta, Grade 6
  - Natalie Tulipani, Grade 4
  - Arnica Khalilneejad, Grade 4
- The following BHS students were recently accepted into the Senior District Ensembles for the Eastern Region of Massachusetts. Those students with \* next to their names also received a nomination to audition for the upcoming All-State Ensembles):

#### **Senior District Orchestra**

Brandon Chin\* - Cello  
Evan Hsu\* - Cello  
EuJin Kim\* - Violin  
Sam Weinhouse\* - Clarinet

**Senior District Chorus:**

Carolyn Fahrner  
Alexa Lane\*  
Rachel Percy\*  
Sam Russo  
Noah Sesling\*  
Ranna Shahbazi  
Louis Sokolow\*

- The Heath School Grade 5 Chorus and Grade 6-8 Chorus sang the national anthem at the Providence Bruins hockey game on December 9 in front of a crowd of 7,000 people.
- BHS students, and brothers, Wilson and Evan Hsu have had multiple successes this Fall. Wilson Hsu was accepted into the All-National Honor Symphony on viola, and in November he participated in and performed with other top high school musicians from around the country in the three-day National Association for Music Education Festival in Dallas, Texas. Wilson Hsu (violinist/singer) and Evan Hsu (cellist) also participated in From the Top, where Wilson recently recorded the following song and video as a singer: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dk0vHQHTUII&feature=em-share\\_video\\_user](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dk0vHQHTUII&feature=em-share_video_user)  
As part of their work with From the Top, Wilson and Evan Hsu engage in a great deal of community service, performing and teaching music to other students around the Boston area.

**Project 351**

Please join me in congratulating Brookline's 2017 Project 351 Ambassadors: Jake Perdue (Driscoll School) and Maya van Overbeeke-Costello (Runkle School). Project 351 is a prestigious leadership and service program for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students from across the state; its name derives from the 351 cities and towns in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Ambassadors, nominated by educators in their school, are selected based on their commitment to service in their school or community, their leadership potential, and their embodiment of the program's values of kindness, compassion, humility and gratitude. Maya and Jake will participate in the Project 351 launch in January at a day of service hosted by Governor Baker. We are so pleased that Jake and Maya will represent our school district and wish them all the best in this wonderful opportunity.

**Human Resources and Hiring**

Recruiting and hiring the best teachers and staff are vitally important to the sustained success of school districts such as the Public Schools of Brookline. To that end, our Human Resources office has been hard at work preparing to launch Recruit & Hire, a new and improved version of SchoolSpring, our online recruiting website. Recruit & Hire is a comprehensive applicant tracking and hiring management system that will help facilitate the hiring process. The new and improved technology is more customizable and streamlined than the version of SchoolSpring we have been using and will allow hiring managers to more easily find and follow-up with the best candidates. We will launch Recruit & Hire in the spring of 2017, just in time for the 17-18 hiring season.