



PUBLIC SCHOOLS of
BROOKLINE 

Superintendent's Update

October 10, 2024



October is National Principals Month

We take this opportunity to celebrate our outstanding School Principals:

Baker - Saeed Ola

BEEP - Margaret Eberhardt

BHS - Anthony Meyer

Driscoll - David Youkilis

FRR - Candice Whitmore

Lawrence - Vanessa Billelo

Lincoln - Brian Denitzio

Pierce - Jamie Yadoff

Roland Hayes - Asa Sevelius

Runkle - Donna Finnegan

MTSS/Literacy Initiative

This is a brief introduction to our 2024-2025 MTSS/LITERACY district initiative – a commitment to excellent and equitable literacy teaching and learning for all our students!

DESE had previously identified our district as having a significantly disproportionate number of Black and African American students with a Specific Learning Disability (SLD). While we no longer have that identification from DESE, disproportionality still exists in our system. To rectify this situation, we are engaging in a multi-year plan to build a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) that will become our shared:

- comprehensive framework of tiered support for all students
- process designed to maximize student achievement
- method to deliver effective interventions earlier and efficiently
- focus on outcomes
- commitment to student progress and well-being

MTSS/Literacy Initiative

Because this is a long-term, deep, and far-reaching undertaking, this year we are starting with grades K-5 and focusing on literacy. We want to make every effort to align this work with all of our district priorities, as defined in our strategic plan and the day-to-day work of teaching and learning in our schools. Our goals for SY24-25 are to:

- establish District and School-Based MTSS Teams,
- develop a shared understanding of Tier 1 literacy instruction, and
- self-assess our current state regarding academic, behavioral, and SEL supports in literacy

To meet these goals, we will engage in various formats of MTSS/Literacy professional learning and ensure the input and involvement of all PSB community members. As we try out and build our MTSS framework, processes, and methods this school year, we will set ourselves up for success with other content areas and all grade levels the following school year.

Staffing Update



PSB is currently seeking a Senior Director of Clinical Services and Non-Discrimination Initiatives. In the interim, we extend a warm welcome to **Rebecca Shuster**, who will be providing on-site support and consultation to ensure a safe and supportive school environment for all students.

For the past nine years, Becky has served as the Assistant Superintendent of Equity for Boston Public Schools. Previously, she served as the Director of Training at the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination for 15 years. Under her leadership, Boston's strategies to prevent and address incidents of bias-based and sexual misconduct were recognized as a model for the Commonwealth and the nation.

Health and Wellness

The PSB Wellness Policy was updated last year. This year, the Wellness Committee will review how well the Policy is being implemented, and will identify areas of focus in order to improve compliance across district schools.

PSB will continue our collaboration with a School Wellness Coach for DESE's *Massachusetts School Wellness Coaching Program: Implementing Initiatives* for the 2024-2025 school year. This coaching will help us complete an assessment of the implementation of PSB's written wellness policy, identify priorities, and create action plans for implementation based on the assessment.

Districtwide Communications

As always, PSB strives to support building-based initiatives to ensure all students have a sense of belonging within the unique culture of their home school. As a reminder, special education students who are placed in specialty programs outside of the PSB district remain valued members of their home school communities.

To ensure that all children are offered equal opportunities to participate in sports, nonacademic, extracurricular, and after school programs as their district peers, communications from the child's home school will continue.

Focus on Social-Emotional Learning

The Public Schools of Brookline has partnered with **Care Solace** to support the well-being of students, staff, and their family members. Care Solace is a confidential care coordination service that can help you quickly find mental health or substance use treatment options matched to your needs regardless of circumstance. Care Solace can be accessed in the following ways:

- Call 888-515-0595 available 24/7/365 in any language.
- Visit www.caresolace.com/brookline and either search on your own OR click “Book Appointment” for assistance by video chat, email, or phone.



The screenshot shows the Care Solace website interface. At the top, there are three icons with labels: 'Anonymous', 'Confidential', and 'Free Care Connection'. Below this, the main heading reads '24/7/365 Mental Health Care Coordination Service for Public Schools of Brookline Students, Staff, and their Families'. A subtext states: 'Getting help can be a daunting process. Let our Care Companions™ find the help you need for depression, anxiety, stress, and more.' At the bottom, there are two buttons: 'Call Now' (purple) and 'Search On Your Own' (white with purple border). Below the buttons, it says 'In partnership with Public Schools of Brookline.'

Universal Social-Emotional Screening

This month, the Public Schools of Brookline will administer a Universal Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) screening survey to all students in grades 3 through 12 (except for families who opt-out). The survey measures school belonging, supportive relationships, emotional regulation skills, pleasant feelings, and unpleasant feelings. For students in grades 6 to 12, the survey includes the PHQ-4, which is a brief screening tool for anxiety and depression. The survey does not measure or ask questions about engagement in risk-taking behavior (e.g., substance use) or safety.

In addition to providing students with additional support, the information gathered through these surveys will be used to review and evaluate Brookline's SEL programming. Staff and families have the right to inspect the survey, and we encourage them to do so.

The survey is available for students to complete in English, Spanish, Russian, Hebrew, Japanese, French, Korean, Arabic, and Chinese. Students will be provided time to complete the survey at school and an adult will be available to answer questions and provide support. Most students complete the survey in about 5 to 10 minutes.

Completing the Universal Screening is optional for all students. Families that are not comfortable with their child completing the surveys will be allowed to opt them out.

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THANK YOU