

The Public Schools of Brookline
School Committee Meeting of Thursday, January 3, 2019
Superintendent Report
Andrew J. Bott

Update on the Coolidge Corner School Renaming Process

In a December 10 letter to the Brookline community, we officially opened the process for community members to submit new names for the Coolidge Corner School (see attached). Nominations will be accepted through January 23, 2019. In addition to widely distributing this announcement to our families, the Brookline Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Community Relations and the Renaming Advisory Committee are actively conducting outreach efforts to the wider Brookline community to help spread the word.

The Student Nominations Committee has also been very busy over the past month. They met with the warrant article petitioners, Deborah Brown and Anne Greenwald, to better understand the process of writing a warrant article for Town Meeting and the impetus for their efforts to rename the former Devotion School. The students have also been engaged in activities designed to strengthen their ability to work together and reach a decision through consensus. The Student Nominations Committee is comprised of an extraordinary group of thoughtful and passionate students who are ready to confidently share their opinions and work together throughout this important process.

Update on PSB Building Projects:

Since our last meeting on December 6, we have reached two major milestones as part of our Three School Solution to address the district's enrollment and substandard space issues.

On December 13, Brookline Town Meeting voted to move both the Driscoll School and Baldwin School projects into the Schematic Design Phase. This support from Town Meeting authorizes \$1.5 million for each building project and allows the building committees and architects to further refine building designs and prepare the projects for a possible town-wide vote on construction funding in Spring 2019.

At their board meeting on December 12, the Massachusetts School Building Authority voted to move the Pierce School Building Project into their Eligibility Phase. In late Spring 2019, we will begin working with the MSBA to demonstrate our readiness to manage and fund the project. We are grateful for this vote of confidence from the MSBA for this very important project.

METCO Young Women's Leadership Conference

The Brookline METCO staff organized another successful Young Women's Leadership Conference on December 13. Generously hosted by the Fenway Sports Group at Fenway Park, the goal of the conference was to support young women of color in their academic and social growth and development. Through engaging panel discussions, workshops and other activities, over 200 students learned various strategies to achieve their fullest potential. I would like to thank METCO Director Dr. Keith Lezama and the BHS seniors who helped to plan and coordinate such a great event.

School Visits and Parent Meetings

Since our last meeting, in addition to parent and staff meetings at Lawrence and Coolidge Corner Schools as part of the principal search process, I had the following school visits and parent meetings:

Runkle PTO Parent Coffee	December 7
Pierce PTO Parent Coffee	December 14
Baker Classroom Visits	December 19
Runkle Classroom Visits	December 19
Lincoln Classroom Visits	January 3

Tomorrow morning, January 4, I will be meeting with Heath School parents at a PTO sponsored coffee; and next Tuesday, January 8, I will be meeting with Driscoll School parents at a PTO sponsored coffee.

Brookline High School:

Brookline High School Hosts U.S. Congressional Representatives

On Monday, December 17, Brookline High School 11th graders hosted four U.S. Congressional Representatives, including Joseph Kennedy III, who represents Brookline. Representatives Markwayne Mullin (Oklahoma), Rodney Davis (Illinois) and Lisa Blunt Rochester (Delaware) also participated in this special assembly. These representatives are members of the Congressional Study Group on American Democracy and Civics (ADC). ADC was created to bring together current and former members of Congress from both political parties with the common purpose of strengthening our democratic process through bipartisanship and civility, with an emphasis on increasing civic knowledge. This engaging student assembly was a great opportunity for our students to directly interact with elected officials and showcase their knowledge of civics and government.

Brookline High School – Whole School Learning

For the last several years, a small planning team at BHS has convened to construct a calendar of common-experience programming for our high school students. The goal of this intentional whole school learning – focused on identity and inclusion, diversity and appreciation - is to better include, support and connect all students at the high school. The overarching theme of this year's programming is *Interacting with Empathy*. The visit by the Congressional members of American Democracy and Civics was one part of this programming, demonstrating civility and bipartisanship in our democratic process. Another example is the annual *Asking for Courage Day*, held on December 11, during which students and adults from many different racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds bravely shared their personal experiences to shine a light on racism, bias and privilege.

Student Engagement: Brookline Sister City Project

As you may recall, Brookline High School students traveled on a school-sponsored trip to Quezalguaque, Nicaragua – Brookline's Sister City – in April 2018. This past fall, BHS sophomores Sophie Jelden and Willa Vish, who both participated in the trip, led efforts to create a BHS student club focused on supporting Quezalguaque and the Sister City Project. Starting with a fundraiser to sell reusable water bottles, the students plan to use the funds to support a clean water initiative in Quezalguaque. The School Committee regularly reviews field trip applications, so it is particularly important for you to see the local and international impacts of BHS-supported

travel. We know that our students benefit immensely from these international trips that serve to deepen their appreciation for the world beyond Brookline.

Taken together, these three updates about Brookline High School show the depth and breadth of the amazing work being done by a talented and dedicated team of BHS administrators and educators to create opportunities for authentic learning and growing.

Congratulations

The Massachusetts Secondary Schools Athletic Directors Association has selected Pete Rittenburg as the District C Athletic Director of the Year. This annual award is presented to an athletic administrator who has displayed outstanding leadership and meritorious achievement in interscholastic administration. Mr. Rittenburg has certainly done that, and more, for Brookline. I know you join me in congratulating him on this well-deserved honor.



Andrew J. Bott
Superintendent

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December 10, 2018

Dear Members of the Brookline Community,

I am pleased to announce the official call for nominations for the new permanent name for the Coolidge Corner School. Nominations can be submitted using an online form available [here](#). Paper nomination forms will also be available in the main office of each school, at the three branches of the Brookline Public Library, at the central office of the school department on the 5th floor of Brookline Town Hall, and in the Brookline Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Community Relations, 11 Pierce Street (Public Health Building). Nominations will be accepted through Wednesday, January 23, 2019 at 5:00pm.

In May, 2018, Brookline Town Meeting voted, 171 to 19, to change the name of the Edward Devotion School. Town Meeting approved The Coolidge Corner School as the temporary name for the school and initiated a process to identify a permanent name. While the name of the school has changed, the school remains the same vibrant and inclusive community where families and educators are deeply committed to the success of every student.

We ask our students to form a deep connection to their school: to root for their sports teams, to wear the school's name on their clothes, and to take pride in representing the school to the larger community. The name of the school is the symbol of this pride and should represent the spirit, virtues, and values of the community. Historical records confirm that Edward Devotion was a slaveholder. We could no longer ask our students to take pride in the school's name knowing it was named for a person who held another human in bondage. According to Hidden Brookline, one-fourth of Brookline households in the 18th century held enslaved people; Edward Devotion was one of them. Yet, other town residents opposed slavery and actively worked to abolish it. They upheld the dignity of every human. Having moved away from honoring Edward Devotion, our community now has the chance to choose an individual worthy of having the school named for them.

The opportunity to rename the former Devotion School is another step in the Town of Brookline's continuing efforts to recognize the strength of its diversity and the contributions of people of color to the town's history. Since 2006, when the [Hidden Brookline Committee](#) was established, community members have been working to better understand and bring to light the history of slavery and freedom in Brookline. In 2012, Hidden Brookline's work led to Town Meeting's passing a warrant article called "A Resolution Regarding Slavery in Brookline" that acknowledged the history of slavery in Brookline and pledged "vigilance against all practices and institutions that dehumanize and discriminate against people." Also as a result of Hidden Brookline's work, the Public Schools of Brookline 3rd grade social studies curriculum contains a unit about slavery in Brookline that includes the history of Edward Devotion's role as a slaveholder. More recently, in 2017, the Town entered into a compact with the [Government Alliance on Race and Equity](#) (GARE). This compact commits the Town to strive toward racial equity in all facets of its operations and policies and to work with community partners to reduce racism in all of its forms. The renaming process of the former Devotion School is yet another step in this important process.

Since our schools belong to our students, the process to select a new name honors their role. A Nominations Committee comprised of 18 students, including 14 current Coolidge Corner Students and 4 current Brookline High School students who are Devotion School alumni, has been formed. The

Nominations Committee will review all of the nominations submitted by the members of the public and is responsible for bringing forward 5 names to be considered further by the School Committee. Details about the Nominations Committee's process and timeline can be found [here](#). Additional details about the application and selection process for the Nominations Committee can be found [here](#).

While students will take a significant role as part of the Nominations Committee, adults will continue to be a major and necessary part of the process by submitting nominations, providing input through public meetings and hearings, and participating in Town Meeting. Additionally, the Nominations Committee will host a Renaming Night in April, 2019. Information about the semi-finalist school names will be presented during Renaming Night and members of the public will vote on their preferred name.

Parallel to the student-led Nominations Committee work, and with the support of the Brookline Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Community Relations, a town-wide advisory group - the Renaming Advisory Committee - is planning outreach and educational events for the entire community. Brookline teachers are developing a curriculum about the renaming process to be incorporated within the District's broader commitment to anti-racism, equity and restorative practices.

The Brookline School Committee will ultimately submit a recommended name to the Town of Brookline Naming Committee, which will, in turn, submit a recommendation to Town Meeting. The Naming Committee considers several criteria when acting on a proposal to name or rename a public building:

- A person/organization of excellent reputation and character who/which has set an example of outstanding citizenship and/or has made an exemplary contribution of time, service, or resources to or on behalf of the community
- A national noteworthy public figure or official
- An event of historical or cultural significance
- A significant donation or bequest, establishment of a trust, or other similar action

Brookline Town Meeting has final authority to change the school's name.

The Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) will provide regular updates throughout this exciting and important process. You can also find more information about the renaming process on the PSB website: www.brookline.k12.ma.us.

Our town has a historic opportunity to come together and, through a collaborative process, right an injustice that has been overlooked far too long.

Sincerely,



Andrew J. Bott
Superintendent