

The Public Schools of Brookline
School Committee Meeting of Thursday, April 6, 2017
Superintendent Report
Andrew J. Bott
Superintendent of Schools

BHS Week of Activism: Jewish Identity, the Holocaust and Contemporary Anti-Semitism

This week marks a week of activism at Brookline High School for Jewish Identity, the Holocaust and contemporary anti-Semitism. As part of the week's events, I had the honor of attending an assembly at the high school on Wednesday morning. Rabbi Philip and Ruth Lazowski, grandparents to BHS students and Holocaust survivors, shared their stories with BHS students and showed their documentary, *Faith and Destiny*. Rabbi and Mrs. Lazowski have traveled around the world to share their experiences in an effort to ensure that people remember and that young people, in particular, learn from what happened. The assembly with the Lazowskis was a wonderful opportunity for us to consider the experience of Jewish students at BHS and the painful, ever present realities of anti-Semitism.

The assembly was just one part of the week's activities; during the week, students and faculty also considered the broader issues of contemporary anti-Semitism through MLK panel assemblies with local leaders and members of the BHS community, art work in the library and around the building, and in cross-disciplinary class study.

Special thanks to Jenee Ramos, BHS Dean of Faculty, for coordinating this important work and summarizing it for my report this evening.

Brookline ADL Peer Training Featured on National Public Radio

Coincidentally, the work of 30 Brookline High School students who recently completed the Anti-Defamation League's peer training program was featured this week on National Public Radio. You will recall that an enthusiastic group of BHS students volunteered to participate in the ADL's *A World of Difference* peer training program. NPR reporter Tovia Smith joined our students at their final training session at the Brookline Teen Center. As part of a broader story about anti-Semitism, Ms. Smith highlighted the compelling work that our students have started. We are incredibly proud of our students for stepping forward to become peer leaders and happy that their efforts could be acknowledged on the national stage.

You can listen to the story here:

<http://www.npr.org/programs/all-things-considered/2017/04/05/522705705>

Or, read the text of the story here:

<http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/04/05/522718288/fighting-hate-in-schools>

METCO 50th Anniversary Dinner

On Monday evening I joined a number of my colleagues at a dinner to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the METCO program in Brookline. Brookline is proud to be one of the seven school districts who joined the METCO program when it was first established. Our METCO parents hosted the dinner at the Bruce Bolling municipal building in Roxbury. In addition to Barbara Scotto, who represented the School Committee, joining me on Monday were Suzie Talukdar, Nicole Gittens, Anthony Meyer, Brian Denitzio, Chris Kelley, Warren Blair, Dave O'Hara, and Jen Buller. It was a great evening during which parents shared their individual stories and insights. I know I speak for the entire group when I say that it was a wonderful opportunity to look back and reflect on the outstanding history of METCO over the last half century.

Lawrence Principal Search Update

The thirteen other members of the Lawrence Principal Search Committee joined me today for the first block of candidate interviews; we will continue with two more blocks of interviews next week. We received over 35 applications, and we look forward to meeting a number of these candidates during first round interviews as we work to secure the next leader for Lawrence School.

Last Day of School

With the threat of snow days behind us, we have officially announced the last day of school: Friday, June 23, 2017. As you may recall, we had four snow days this year.

We are currently working with principals to set the dates and times for 8th grade graduations. We are holding Tuesday, June 20 and Wednesday, June 21 for these celebrations and we will confirm all dates and times with you very shortly so that we can arrange to have a School Committee member present at each one.

School Visits for MCAS

Monday, April 3, was the first day of MCAS English Language Arts testing across the district. Many of our grade 3, 4 and 5 students have already completed the 3-session ELA portion of the exam this week, with the exception of our grade 4 students at Baker, Heath, Runkle and Driscoll who will begin testing tomorrow. The grade 4 schedule was staggered so that district Educational Technology specialists and town Tech Support staff could be present at schools to troubleshoot any potential technology issues. Lesley Ryan Miller and I visited almost every school on Monday to check-in and offer our assistance. Without exception, principals, vice principals and teachers in every building had all facets of the testing under control. MCAS ELA testing for grades 6-8 will continue through May 3, and MCAS Math testing for grades 3-8 is scheduled for May 10 through May 25.

An incredible amount of planning and preparation goes into the successful administration of these tests. I want to especially acknowledge the hard work of vice principals across the district, who serve as Test Coordinators and ensure the tests are administered so seamlessly. Working closely with Lesley Ryan Miller and Director of Educational Technology Scott Moore, our vice principals ensure that DESE test administration protocols are met and tests are administered with a minimum amount of disruption to our students and faculty.