

The Public Schools of Brookline
School Committee Meeting of Thursday, November 8, 2018
Superintendent Report
Andrew J. Bott
Superintendent of Schools

District Professional Development Day: Friday, November 9

Tomorrow is our annual Professional Development Day for educators across the district. This year's PD Day activities are school-based and were created by principals with input and feedback from educators and district administrators. Here is a sampling of just a few of the work sessions scheduled for tomorrow for our PreK-8 educators:

- Everyday Anti-Racism: Knowing Students as Individuals (*Coolidge Corner School*)
- Learning About Restorative Justice Circles (*Runkle School*)
- DataWise: Digging Into Data (*Pierce School*)
- Beginning Courageous Conversations About Race (*Baker School*)
- Student Panel: Listening to Student Voices on Race, Stereotypes, Income and LGBTQ Issues (*Lincoln School*)
- Examining our Classroom Libraries and Materials for Missing Perspectives (*Pierce School*)
- Restorative Circles (*Heath School*)
- Closing Outcome Gaps by Focusing on Tier I Instruction in Literacy and Math to Ensure Differentiated Instruction for All Learners (*Lawrence School*)
- Using RTI to Benefit High Needs Students (*Brookline Early Education Program*)
- 7 Norms of Collaborative Conversations (*Driscoll School*)
- Hidden Brookline Tour (*Coolidge Corner School*)
- Hidden Curriculums: How Does Your Bias Impact Your Decisions? (*Heath School*)
- The Reggio Emilia Approach: Student Centered and Experiential Learning for Preschool Students (*Brookline Early Education Program*)
- Using Restorative Practice Circles to Process and Understand Student Experiences (*Lincoln School*)

At Brookline High School, the staff will continue their work around *Difficult Conversations* with input from a BHS student and parent panel. These questions will guide the discussion with the panelists:

- What is the value for you in BHS educators engaging deeply and actively in anti-bias and anti-racism work? What does that work look like, day-to-day, in your mind?
- What is your experience with "Hot" moments* at BHS? Do you have any memories or awareness of times when they were handled in helpful ways or not so helpful ways? What was the impact on you of those responses?
- What are your thoughts on how our community – students, faculty, and families – can come together to be better in this important work of speaking up, being allies to one another, educating and support each other?

*At BHS, staff have been focusing on "Hot" moments this year. "Hot" moments are unanticipated bias incidents that happen in our community and culture on a daily basis.

The common theme in the Professional Development Day work across our schools is educational equity. We greatly value this time set aside for educators to share, to think and to work collaboratively to improve our collective practices.

Ongoing Professional Development for Paraprofessionals

In addition to participating in tomorrow's Professional Development Day, our paraprofessionals also engage in professional development activities throughout the year. This year, the approach to PD for paraprofessionals has been created in direct response to feedback from them. They asked for more differentiated opportunities, as well as sessions that allow them to implement their new skills and strategies immediately.

We have enhanced the PD model this year with a mix of in-person interactive trainings and online modules. In September and October, special education directors and Dr. Mary Brown delivered PD sessions at different school sites. The first topic was a primer - an overview of Special Education. The second presentation covered topics that lead to effectiveness in the paraprofessional role (accommodations v. modifications; major characteristics of and learning strategies for most common disabilities, etc.).

For the remainder of the year, on dates when students are released early for parent teacher conferences, paraprofessionals will engage in online modules developed by ACCEPT Collaborative. Below are the professional development modules that are offered:

- Overview of Disabilities and Learning Styles
- Managing Challenging Behaviors
- Social-Emotional Learning and Supports
- Academic Accommodations & Modifications
- Building Self-Determination
- Trauma 101: Trauma Informed Treatment in Schools
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) in the Classroom
- Supporting Struggling Readers

Working with the Town's IT Department, the Office of Student Services will provide each special education paraprofessional with a Chromebook to use for the rest of the school year so that they can easily access the online modules.

Participation in the Excellence Through Social-Emotional Learning (exSEL) Network

I am pleased to announce that the Public Schools of Brookline is one of 19 school districts across the Commonwealth partnering in the exSEL Network to help students build the social and emotional skills they need for success after graduation. As part of this work, Brookline will identify new and additional ways to help create positive learning environments and support students in developing skills like self-regulation, social awareness and persistence.

Social-emotional skills have a significant impact on students' academic performance and persistence in school, as well as their lifelong health and well-being. We look forward to building our knowledge of social-emotional learning practices. Working with other districts in the exSEL

Network, we will multiply our ideas, expertise and resources to bring SEL into our schools and classrooms for the benefit of our students.

The exSEL project is led by the Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy, Transforming Education, and the exSEL Coalition whose members include the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives, and Massachusetts School Administrators Association.

School Visits, Faculty Meetings and PTO Forums

Since our last meeting, I have had many opportunities to visit classrooms and schools, and to meet with parents, including:

BHS PTO Executive Board	October 30
Lincoln School PTO Forum	November 2
Pierce School Classroom visits	November 5
Baker School Classroom Visits	November 1 and November 7
Pierce Faculty Meeting	November 6

David Pollak and Julie Schreiner Oldham joined me at **Runkle School** on Tuesday morning, October 30, for a parent meeting about special education and inclusion. The meeting, led by Principal Genteen Jean-Michel, Director of Autism and Inclusion Programming Melissa Devine, and other staff and parents, was a wonderful opportunity to share information about inclusion at Runkle School and answer community questions.

It was my pleasure to join School Committee members at their PTO coffee at **Driscoll School** on Tuesday morning, November 6.

Parent and Staff Communication: Tree of Life Synagogue Shooting

On Friday, November 2, following the shooting massacre at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, I sent a letter to all families and staff. The letter was sent in reaction to the tragic shooting, but it was also as an affirmation of the basic human values that our school district holds dear. Our school district will always stand against hate, and will steadfastly defy anti-Semitic, racist, xenophobic, anti-LGBTQ, and anti-Muslim rhetoric at every opportunity. Attached is a copy of the letter I sent to families.

Senior Director of Educational Equity: Dr. Kalise Wornum

I am thrilled to announce that Dr. Kalise Wornum joined our staff this week as Senior Director of Educational Equity. I shared this news with staff and families yesterday (letter is attached). Dr. Wornum is a dynamic educational leader and she is ready to take on the challenge of organizing, leading, and supporting educational equity efforts across the district. I look forward to introducing Dr. Wornum at a meeting of the School Committee in the near future.



Andrew J. Bott
Superintendent

The Public Schools of Brookline
Town Hall
333 Washington Street, 5th Floor
Brookline, Massachusetts 02445
617.730.2401

November 2, 2018

Dear Brookline Families,

The United States is no stranger to anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitic acts have long plagued our country and yet, over the past several years, we have seen a significant increase in these incidents of hate and bias. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) reported a 60% rise in anti-Semitic incidents in 2017 over 2016, and the number of anti-Semitic incidents in K-12 schools and colleges nearly doubled in this same period. This past Saturday we saw the clear and devastating effects of this rise in anti-Semitism when a gunman massacred 11 worshippers at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh.

The growing hatred in our nation is not limited to expressing itself through anti-Semitic acts. We see this hatred manifested in racist acts on a daily basis, from voter disenfranchisement to murder based solely on the color of a person's skin. Attacks on the LGBTQ community are on the rise, yet the federal government is contemplating erasing civil rights protections for transgender people from federal law. Xenophobia and anti-Muslim hatred are reported with frightening regularity by the press.

As a public school system, it is our responsibility to help our students navigate their world. Sadly, in this day and age, they come to our classrooms too often with the need to discuss, make sense of, and even grieve senseless acts of hatred and bias. We need to support them by providing a path forward where we work together to speak up against and combat hatred and bias in all its forms. If we fail to do so, we risk normalizing the anti-Semitic, racist, xenophobic, anti-LGBTQ, anti-Muslim, hate driven attacks that now occur with shocking regularity

Taking on this work is not easy. The ADL has developed a number of resources to support families and educators in having these difficult conversations. These resources include specific lessons that can be used in the classroom to talk about the Tree of Life Massacre and tools that can be used to respond to and combat anti-Semitism. We have shared these resources with our teachers and want to make families aware of them, too. Links to four different resources developed by the ADL can be found below.

- [Empowering Young People in the Aftermath of Hate](#): Tools, tips and strategies for what educators and family members can do to help young people discuss and deal with the aftermath of hate-inspired events.
- [Shooting at a Pittsburgh Synagogue](#): Table Talk about the shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in the context of anti-Semitism.
- [5 Tips for Talking with Children about the Shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue](#): Tips for talking with young people about this incident.
- [Helping Students Make Sense of News Stories About Bias and Injustice](#): Strategies and resources for talking with students about important stories in the news about bias and injustice.

In this moment, I am taken back to a conversation I had with Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum on Election Day 2016, which was also Brookline's annual Professional Development Day. In that conversation, Dr. Tatum reminded me that the most powerful and lasting changes that have happened in our country started locally - in neighborhoods, cities and towns - where the state of affairs was no longer accepted or embraced. No matter the form of hate or bias that confronts us, we will continue to work as a community to reject it and change it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Bott', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Andrew J. Bott
Superintendent



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Superintendent

The Public Schools of Brookline
Town Hall
333 Washington Street, 5th Floor
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617.730.2401

November 7, 2018

Dear Colleagues,

The Public Schools of Brookline is deeply committed to maintaining high expectations for all students, and to eliminating persistent opportunity and outcome gaps among students based on race, ethnicity, language, income and disability. Given the Public Schools of Brookline mission to *ensure that every student develops the skills and knowledge to pursue a productive and fulfilling life, to participate thoughtfully in a democracy, and succeed in a diverse and evolving global society*, the district is committed to recruiting and developing a diverse group of educators, ensuring proper emphasis on and support for culturally responsive instruction, and examining our policies, programs, practice and documents to ensure they support all students and our mission.

It is my deep belief that the work of educational equity is the work of everyone in the Public Schools of Brookline. It is the responsibility of each and every one of us to ensure we are supporting all of our students, and systematically working to overcome the opportunity gaps which lead to our outcome gaps. While this work is the responsibility of all staff, it is critical to have one person who organizes, leads, holds accountable, and supports all of us - educators, students, families, and community members - in our efforts.

To that end, I am thrilled to announce Dr. Kalise Wornum has been selected as the new Senior Director of Educational Equity. Dr. Wornum will provide direction, support and coordination for the District's priority of eliminating opportunity and outcome gaps. She will work directly with educators, students, families, and community members in our collective efforts to address issues of educational equity across the district. Dr. Wornum will be a member of my Senior Leadership Team.

Prior to joining Brookline, Dr. Wornum was the Director for the K-12 METCO Program in the Wellesley Public Schools for 15 years. She also served as Executive Director for Empowering Multicultural Initiatives (EMI), a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the academic achievement of students of color and promoting culturally relevant practices.

A graduate of the Lexington METCO program herself, Dr. Wornum has worked with numerous institutions across the Commonwealth and the New England area and has made it her lifelong passion to confront racism through education. She earned her Bachelor of Arts at Bradford College, a Masters of Arts from the University of Vermont, and a Doctorate from Capella University.

In September, Dr. Wornum was appointed by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to serve on the Racial Imbalance Advisory Council. The council advises the Commissioner of Education and the Board of Education on matters pertinent to the

development and maintenance of school desegregation/integration in public schools within the Commonwealth.

We look forward to Dr. Wornum's guidance in recognizing the complex intersections of race and learning, as well as her work in helping our students succeed in a diverse and evolving society.

Dr. Wornum's first day was yesterday, and her office is on the fifth floor of our Town Hall offices. She can be reached at kalise_wornum@psbma.org or 617-730-2404.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew J. Bott', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Andrew J. Bott
Superintendent