

The Public Schools of Brookline
School Committee Meeting of Thursday, February 13, 2020
Superintendent Report
Ben Lummis
Interim Superintendent of Schools

Meetings with Parents

As you may know, over the course of the year Parent Teacher Organizations in each school have graciously invited me to join one of their monthly parent meetings. These meetings, usually over coffee, are a great opportunity for me to share district priorities, news and updates with parents, and directly hear their questions and feedback in return. In addition to school-specific parent meetings, SEPAC and METCO also arranged for me to meet with their parent communities this year.

On February 4, I had the pleasure of meeting with METCO parents for an evening meeting in the Coolidge Corner School multipurpose room. Joining me were Dr. Keith Lezama, METCO Coordinator, and Dr. Nicole Gittens, Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning. I shared an update on the FY21 Budget Recommendation, and then parents asked questions of the three of us. We enjoyed a robust discussion that allowed us the chance to address questions and concerns specific to the METCO community.

On Friday, February 7, Heath School invited me to join parents for a coffee hour meeting in the school's auditorium. I provided an update on the district priorities we've been focusing on this year and the budget. Principal Sevelius also provided a short update on the planning that is underway for the development of an additional strand to support students with complex needs including those with autism spectrum disorder. Dr. Sevelius explained how Casey Ngo-Miller, Melissa Devine and Runkle staff are working with Heath to support teacher and community learning about the RISE program.

My remaining meetings include Lawrence School (2/25), Baker School (2/28), and the BHS PTO Executive Board (3/25).

These parent meetings in each school are in addition to my meetings with PTO leaders from across the district held monthly in Town Hall. During these regular meetings with parent leaders, I am able to share the latest district news and also use the opportunity to showcase a district initiative or program area. For example, Dr. Kalise Wornum presented about the district's Cultural Proficiency work, Kathleen Hubbard presented about our K-8 Mathematics Program, and Casey Ngo-Miller will be presenting about the district's Social Emotional Learning work. The meetings also allow PTO leaders to learn from each other by sharing information and practices to help them build and sustain active and thriving school communities.

School Councils

We are presently drafting updated guidance documents for school leaders regarding School Councils. The new documents, to be consistent with Massachusetts Law and School Committee policy, will be shared with principals at our regular Leadership Team meeting on February 24.

We will incorporate the input and feedback from principals and share the final documents with School Committee for your review before the new guidelines are rolled out. In the interim, I have instructed principals to maintain their current School Council membership and meeting schedule and continue their work as planned while they await this new guidance that will help them to strengthen their School Councils.

Bay Cove Academy Evacuation to Coolidge Corner School

Earlier today, about 25 students and staff from Bay Cove Academy (located at 156 Lawton Street) were evacuated to Coolidge Corner School. A gas leak in the street directly in front of Bay Cove was causing a strong natural gas odor and, out of an abundance of caution, it was suggested that they evacuate their building. The Bay Cove principal reached out to Principal Buller at CCS, and Principal Buller and her staff were more than happy to oblige. CCS made the visitors at home in the library, gave them lunch in the cafeteria, and supported the Bay Cove staff as they contacted their parents to make arrangements for student pick-ups.

The gas leak was localized to the immediate area on Lawton Street and there was never any concern about CCS, which is about a ½ mile away from the area of the gas leak. Principal Buller reached out to CCS families to let them know what had transpired, and all Bay Cove students had been picked up by their parents by 1:00pm.

I would like to thank Principal Buller and her team - Vice Principals Ola, Simolaris and Burke - for their quick action. Without a moment's hesitation they provided assistance, managed the needs of the unexpected visitors, and kept everything at CCS running smoothly without even a hint of interruption.