

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

Driscoll School and Pierce School Principal Search Updates

The Principal Search Committees for both Driscoll School and Pierce School have been very busy over the last several weeks.

The Driscoll Search Committee completed a review of all applications, selected candidates to interview and, during the weeks of February 5 and February 12, conducted all first round interviews. They subsequently chose candidates to advance to the second round of interviews. Those second round interviews, conducted by myself, principals, deputy superintendents and coordinators, are also complete and I am pleased to report that we have named two excellent candidates as finalists: Ms. Lynne Blumer Beattie and Dr. Suzie Talukdar. Public interviews with parents were held earlier this week: Ms. Beattie on Tuesday morning and Dr. Talukdar on Wednesday morning. The staff public interviews were scheduled for Wednesday afternoon but, due to the weather, we postponed them to tomorrow.

The Pierce Search Committee also finished their review of applications and conducted first round interviews during the weeks of February 12 and February 26. The committee recommended three candidates for second round interviews, and those interviews have been ongoing this week. I expect that we will be able to announce finalists for the Pierce School Principal position to parents and staff by tomorrow, with public interviews to be scheduled as soon as possible.

Kindergarten Registration Update

Kindergarten registrations continue at a brisk pace at our Office of Student Affairs on Webster Place. Between 12 and 15 registration appointments are held each day. The registration appointment is the final administrative step in the process: parents arrive with student and residency documents and are added to our student database for enrollment in September. As of 3/7/18, we have 337 students registered for kindergarten.

The kindergarten registration numbers are down somewhat compared to a similar point in time last year. As of 3/2/17, last year, we had 345 students registered.

We also plan to enroll 20 METCO students in kindergarten next year. Dr. Keith Lezama is working closely with the METCO central office to review applications and interview families. We have also received 17 requests for kindergarten placement through the Staff Materials Fee program.

School Visits

Since my last report, I have visited Lawrence, Driscoll, Runkle, Heath and Pierce Schools. I regularly include updates on what I experience and observe when I visit our schools. Tonight I want to share the details of three classroom visits which capture so well the spirit and creativity of educators across the district. These visits also capture the ways that our educators are able to so effectively use the instructional autonomy that is such a long-held value in our schools.

Runkle School:

As part of Eric Lass' 8th grade math class, students were learning from a guest teacher, a traffic engineer. On March 5, I was able to observe as, first, students were given an overview of critical safety concerns to be considered in traffic intersections. Students then learned how to apply the algebra skills they had studied in class to determine the safest, most efficient timing of traffic lights for an intersection. This real-life application of algebra, embedded in the work of a traffic engineer, with the goal of providing the most efficient and safest traffic flow through an intersection, brought mathematical learning to life in an authentic and deeply engaging way.

Heath School:

As a part of our earth sciences curriculum, 7th and 8th grade science teacher Mark Goldner has partnered with Boston College to pilot a geology curriculum titled, "Pulse of the Earth". As a part of this project, an earthquake simulator called *Room Quake* has been set up in his class. The simulator runs in the background of class lessons; as students are working on their study of plate tectonics, earthquakes randomly pop-up. Students stop what they are working on, analyze the wavelengths captured by the seismograph in the simulator, and plot the epicenter of the earthquake. Students then map the epicenter points on the maps located throughout the class. I was able to observe in Mr. Goldner's class on March 1, and he reported that during the first several days of having the simulator running in his class students were having powerful conversations about how seismic data is collected, the uncertainties that can be a part of scientific work and research, and how to mitigate these uncertainties. This is yet another example of the real-life application of classroom learning which deeply engages our students.

Pierce School:

On Wednesday, March 7, Jamie Yadoff's 7th grade students had an exhibition of their Companion Books. In Companion Books, students write chapters on characters, character conflict, symbolism, and structure. The Pierce 7th grade writing included all of this – and more! Ms. Yadoff extended the lessons of this unit to involve options for creative writing, through which students could re-write scenes or develop an alternate ending for their book. The quality of student work, the depth of analysis, and the clear sense of accomplishment that each student showed all capture so well the power of this literacy work.

Superintendent's Parent Forums

I have finished a full series of open parent forums at each school. On Friday, February 16, I met with parents at Heath School and on Friday, March 2, I met with parents at Runkle School. These meetings are an incredibly valuable way to share district information and priorities, as well as hear directly from parents and guardians with questions and concerns.

Emergency Preparedness

Following the tragic shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, parents and staff alike had many questions about our preparedness for emergency situations. On March 1, I wrote to all parents and guardians to share information about our emergency preparedness; a copy of that letter is attached for your information.

Dr. Nicole Gittens

I know you will join me in congratulating Deputy Superintendent Nicole Gittens, who, as of last Friday, is now *Dr. Nicole Gittens*. Last week, Dr. Gittens vigorously and successfully defended her thesis, “Leadership Practices that Affect Student Achievement” at Boston College, earning her Ed.D. through the Professional School Administrator Program.

BHS Mock Trial Team Moves on to the Elite 8

Last Sunday, the Brookline High School Mock Trial team won both of their trial competitions and has advanced to the Elite 8! The Elite 8 trials will be held on March 14 at the John J. Moakley Courthouse. Noah Gronlund-Jacob, BHS History Teacher and advisor to the team, reports that during the morning competition the team presented the defense, arguably the harder of the two sides, and won the contest on points, allowing them to move on to the afternoon trial. During the afternoon trial, the team switched roles and acted as the plaintiff. They successfully argued a contract case, once again winning the argument on points. Please join me in congratulating the BHS Mock Trial Team members on their fine work, and wish them continued success at their next competition!

Brian Bechler
Levi Cannon
George Ericsson
Ari Filler
Aerin Foley
Andrew Gerber
Phineas Hilliard

Nathaniel Liberman
Adi Mayer
Phia Mitnick
Lisa Radin
Alexa Ribatt
Devin Roberts
Jocelyn Zhou

***The Sagamore*: Highlighting Students from Puerto Rico**

As you may recall, following the devastating hurricanes that hit Puerto Rico last September, the district enrolled several students through emergency disaster registration procedures. Three of those students, all enrolled at Brookline High School, were featured in a recent article in *The Sagamore*. Two of the students, brothers Darwin and Lenny Fernandez de la Cruz, credit BHS social worker Paul Epstein with giving them a warm welcome to BHS and going above and beyond to ensure their continued success. Support from educators in our English Learner program, as well assistance from Steps to Success program advisors, has also been instrumental in the students’ successful transition into our school community. The article is available at this link: <https://thesagonline.com/>