

The Public Schools of Brookline
School Committee Meeting of Thursday, May 31, 2018
Superintendent Report
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Brookline Delegation to Xi-an, China

During the week of May 14, 2018, I had the distinct honor of representing Brookline as part of a delegation visiting our longtime China Exchange partners at the Gaoxin No. 1 High School and the Gaoxin No. 1 Middle School in Xi'an, China. Joining me as part of the Brookline delegation were: Anthony Meyer, BHS Headmaster; Nicole Gittens, Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning; Steve Lantos, BHS Chemistry teacher and CHEX coordinator; Susan Wolf Ditkoff, Brookline School Committee; Barbara Scotto, Brookline School Committee; and Karyn Wang, Driscoll School parent and dedicated CHEX Steering Committee member.

The Brookline High School - Gaoxin No. 1 High School Exchange Program started 18 years ago, founded and launched by Dr. Claire Jackson. Since its inception, each year students from Xi'an have spent a semester living with Brookline families while enrolled full-time at BHS, and then our students have spent the following semester living with host families in Xi'an while attending the Gaoxin School.

During the time we spent in Xi'an we were able to learn firsthand of the importance of this partnership to the Gaoxin Middle School; they select the Xi'an students who enroll at BHS. We learned of the importance of this partnership to the Xi'an International Studies University (XISU); they are responsible for recruiting and training the Mandarin teachers who work with our students over the course of the exchange. The Shaanxi Provincial Government holds the exchange in the highest regard and considers it a model for any school in the province hoping to begin an exchange program. And, most importantly, this exchange is highly valued and deeply important to all members of the Gaoxin No. 1 High School community.

In Xi'an, we worked closely with Principal Wang, the leader of Gaoxin No. 1 HS, to agree on ways to strengthen our exchange program. Working with the middle school, we began the discussion to consider opportunities for middle school exchanges between Pierce and Driscoll Schools and the Gaoxin No. 1 MS, which would last between 10-14 days. Lastly, we met with the leaders of XISU to discuss options for semester-long teacher exchanges. I am optimistic that through continued dialogue with our counterparts we can make real these exciting ideas.

During our trip we had the opportunity during our stay in Xi'an to get to know one another, learn from one another, and strengthen the links between two communities that are half a world apart. While there are many differences between us, a common bond is our deep commitment to our students. This was clear in the expectations that our counterparts have of their students, the opportunities provided by and through the school, and the connection forged between educators and students, despite class sizes north of 60. We were able to observe this commitment to students during middle school English class, in high school classes ranging from Philosophy to Chemistry, in performances by the school's orchestra, chorus, dance team, acapella group, and traditional Chinese instrumental ensemble, and as we toured the school's clubs and athletic offerings, ranging from robotics to painting, and from basketball to calligraphy.

In our final meeting, Mr. Meyer and I asked Principal Wang what we could do to strengthen the exchange program. She replied that her one wish is for our students to fully consider themselves to be *her* students during their time at Gaoxin No. 1 HS. There are simple logistical changes that we can make which will facilitate this. More importantly, we know Principal Wang is a school leader who considers our students to be her own, who will watch over them on our behalf, and who will ensure that the China Exchange remains the exceptional program it has been for countless students yet to come.

While all of the work done to strengthen and potentially expand our partnership was meaningful and rewarding, the true joy of the trip was having time to spend with the BHS students currently in Xi'an. In so many ways, it is simply remarkable that our BHS sophomores and juniors move half-way around the world, live with a host family, and attend a new school. This type of exchange is challenging for college students and yet our young people handle it with exceptional energy and grace. Hearing about their academic and personal growth was the most important reminder of why we have supported this exchange for the past 18 years. It is a unique and life-changing opportunity afforded to students at Brookline High School.

It goes without saying that I am deeply grateful to the CHEX Steering Committee for their unwavering support of this program. I look forward to our continued partnership for many years to come.

Kindergarten Enrollment Update

As of May 29, 2018, a total of 525 kindergarten students have registered or are in the process of registering for September 2018 enrollment. This enrollment is similar to enrollment patterns over the past two years. Based on the June 1 – September 1 kindergarten registrations in the summers of 2016 and 2017, we anticipate approximately 100-120 additional kindergarten registrations over the summer. Current enrollment is as follows:

School	Total # of K Students Registered (as of 5.29.18)	% Full	Class Size Target (22)
Baker	55	62.5	88
Devotion	98	89.1	110
Driscoll	63	95.5	66
Heath	48	72.7	66
Lawrence	77	87.5	88
Lincoln	64	96.9	66
Pierce	64	81.8	88*
Runkle	48	72.7	66

*see #2 below

There are several important pieces of information to consider when reviewing the above numbers:

1. Hancock Village Renovations: We are presently awaiting information from Chestnut Hill Realty about the status of units currently under renovation, so as to be prepared for the timing of the impact that this will have on enrollment at Baker School.
2. Earlier this year, the School Committee asked staff to consider whether the number of kindergarten sections at Pierce School in 2018-2019 could be reduced from 5 to 4. With this request in mind, staff have been effectively using buffer zone assignments to manage enrollment at Pierce. Were school to open today, Pierce could open with only 4 kindergarten sections.

Given that there are still many active months of registration before school opens, and given that Lawrence School is already 87% full and that Lincoln is already 97% full, all new registrations from these buffer zones will need to be assigned to Pierce. Therefore, I anticipate Pierce needing 5 sections of kindergarten for the 2018-2019 school year.

Brookline Education Foundation

It was a pleasure to have BEF Executive Director Liz Ascoli here tonight along with the two winners of the Ernest R. Caverly Awards: Beth Greenwood, 3rd grade teacher at Lincoln School and Liz Gorman, World Language teacher and yoga/climbing instructor at Brookline High School. It was with much regret that I had to miss this year's Celebrating Teachers event, as I was in Xi'an at the time.

Lincoln Principal Denitzio introduced Ms. Greenwood as she accepted her award and noted, most aptly, that the fruits of Beth's amazing teaching skills are quietly woven into the daily life of her classroom in Room 304. Beth herself is always learning and is deeply passionate about learning. Her colleagues note that if you are looking for an expert, Beth is probably who you should turn to. Boston history? Colonial life? Why do we have daylight savings? Turn to Beth and she'll explain it, without making you feel silly for asking. Most impressive is a comment shared by a parent who has had three children in Beth's class over the years. The parent explained that there is nothing more wonderful than sitting across from a teacher to discover that she really understands your child – *really, truly understands their child* – in a way that perhaps only parents and a few others do. The deep way that Beth gets to know her students as learners, and as individuals, is amazing.

BHS Dean of Faculty Jenee Ramos introduced Ms. Gorman as she stepped forward for her honors. Summarizing some of the effusive praise that accompanied Ms. Gorman's nomination, Ms. Ramos noted that there is not a more worthy – or humble – recipient of the award. Ms. Gorman is compassionate, creative and thoughtful, with an eye toward the whole student. Liz has spearheaded the Mindfulness initiative at BHS, and colleagues describe her as an "inimitable leader of teachers!" Ms. Gorman challenges her colleagues to think critically about their practice, to be focused on their goals, and to take of themselves so they can then take care of their students. She is expert at creating engaging curriculum that both challenges and inspires students. This honor for Ms. Gorman is well deserved and represents a small thanks for the life-lasting impact she has had on so many members of the BHS community.

The BEF also announced that Janet MacNeil has been selected for the Robert I. Sperber Award for Administrative Leadership. As you know, Janet is our preK-8 Science Curriculum Coordinator. She has been instrumental in revitalizing the science curriculum in our elementary grades, with a special emphasis on hands-on and interdisciplinary instruction that is accessible and engaging for all students. We eagerly look forward to celebrating Janet's accomplishments with the BEF at an event in the fall.

This is the time of year when we also celebrate the generous support that the BEF provides to our individual teachers and to the district as a whole. For the 2018-2019 school year, the BEF announced their decision to fund 18 Teacher Grants, totaling \$38,042, for everything from participation in a global educator's conference in Finland, to a summer program at the Landmark School to address the needs of students with language based learning disabilities, to a summer workshop at Nu Vu Studio in Cambridge for makerspace classroom setup and implementation.

The BEF has also funded 8 Collaborative Grants, totaling \$77,693, for work as varied as the Mathematical Mindset School Initiative at Lincoln School to leadership training for the Pierce Equity Action Team.

And, finally, the BEF has funded 6 System Grants, totaling \$59,830, which will allow us to initiate and deepen many important district initiatives. For example, funds through these system grants are earmarked for the implementation of a Restorative Justice program in the District. This powerful alternative approach to traditional school discipline focuses on repairing harm through inclusive processes that engage all stakeholders. In addition, the BEF has provided funding to support professional learning for specialists and curriculum coordinators to develop a plan for using school and student data in meaningful, thoughtful and productive ways that will strengthen outcomes for all students. The BEF also generously funded an initiative for K-5 math content support, which will be used to train four math specialists as facilitators of math content professional development for K-teachers who use the Developing Mathematical Ideas model.

We are extremely grateful to the Brookline Foundation for the tremendous support they provide to us year in and year out. We truly value this partnership that allows us to realize many innovative ideas and programs that serve to distinguish our school district.

Driscoll School Spring Fair

The Driscoll School PTO hosted their annual Spring Fair on May 23. It was my pleasure to attend - and to sit in the dunk tank for 30 minutes. Unfortunately for me, many of the students and parents at Driscoll have great aim, and I was dunked repeatedly - all for a good cause! The Spring Fair was a terrific success and really a great community building event for the entire Driscoll community.

Brookline Asian American Family Network (BAAFN) Essay Contest

On Wednesday, May 23, the BAAFN hosted a reception in Hunneman Hall to honor this year's winners of the 2018 Asian American Student Essay Contest. BHS Headmaster Anthony Meyer, and his BHS colleagues including Brian Poon, Lihua Shorter and Fu-Tseng Chang, attended and all remarked on the thoughtful and amazing student voices in this year's essays.

Organized this year by BAAFN member Hsiu-Lan Chang, the essay contest is only in its third year. BAAFN has made a conscious effort to broaden participation and accentuate diversity in a number of ways. For example, this year they had more than double the number of entries from last year, and entries were received from a diverse group of students including those who are Korean, Chinese Japanese, Filipino, Sri Lankan, French, and Jewish.

Congratulations to this year's contest winners!

Lana Chang	Grade 9	Content Award
Yiming Fu	Grade 10	Creativity Award
Jocelyn Zhou	Grade 11	Creativity Award
Rachel Lee	Grade 10	BAAFN Award

BAAFN has posted the student essays and photos from the awards ceremony on their website at this address: <https://baafn.weebly.com/2018-essaywinners.html>

What JFK Means to Me: Essay and Poetry Program

On Friday, May 25, I joined 3rd graders from the Coolidge Corner School at the John F. Kennedy National Historic Site for the annual “What JFK Means to Me” ceremony. This program engages our 3rd graders in a month-long exploration of the life and contributions of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy, culminating in this public ceremony acknowledging their essays and poems. Coolidge Corner School 3rd grade teachers Kim French, Gretchen Albertini, Andrea Halverson, Christy Bordieri and Jennifer Driscoll did an amazing job getting their students ready for this important day, and it was a wonderful morning to celebrate the student’s hard work.

Department of Public Works (DPW) Day

The Brookline Department of Public Works hosted their annual DPW Day for our 3rd graders on May 22 and, once again, it was a smashing success. Not only does the DPW maintain our school playgrounds and ready our schools after a snow storm, each year they open their doors at the Municipal Service Center so that almost 700 Brookline 3rd graders can get an up close and personal view of how they make it all work. Students get to see how street signs are made, get to try surveying equipment, and get to see and climb on some of the trucks and other equipment. The Brookline DPW is a wonderful partner and we are grateful for all that they do to support our schools.

Brookline Community Iftar Event

It was an honor to be asked to participate in the Brookline Community Iftar Event on May 24. Co-sponsored by Brookline Muslim Friends and First Parish Church of Brookline, the evening marked the ending of the fast that takes place every day in the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. This event was powerful in that it brought together a community so that assumptions could be dispelled, understanding could be fostered, and the person-to-person connections critical for a well-functioning society could be forged. I left the evening filled with optimism about the future, based on the spirit and energy of everyone present.

Norton Award for Outstanding Director: Summer Williams

Brookline High School drama teacher Summer Williams was honored with the prestigious Norton Award for Outstanding Director recently. In addition to her fantastic work teaching and directing so many of our students throughout the year, Ms. Williams also directs professionally outside of school. The Elliot Norton Awards are given by the Boston Theatre Critics Association to honor the outstanding achievements of the Boston theatre community. Congratulations Ms. Williams!

In addition to this honor, Ms. Williams and Mark VanDerzee, BHS teacher of drama, improv, and stagecraft, received two Norton Awards for a play produced and debuted by Company One (a Boston theatre company of which they are both founding members). The play, *Hype Man*, was awarded for Outstanding Production and Outstanding New Script. Congratulations Mr. VanDerzee and Ms. Williams!

Finally, a Norton Award for Outstanding Ensemble was presented to the Wheelock Family Theatre for their production of *In the Heights*, which features Brookline High School Senior Ceci Cipullo (who is in Mr. VanDerzee’s Needs *Improvement* class at BHS). Congratulations Ms. Cipullo and Mr. VanDerzee!