

The Public Schools of Brookline
School Committee Meeting of Tuesday, June 19, 2018
Superintendent Report
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Superintendent of Schools

Tree Planting at Lincoln School

On Tuesday, June 12, I had the solemn honor of joining with Lincoln School 7th and 8th grade students for a tree planting and dedication ceremony in memory of former student, Jeremy Cohen. Jeremy passed away unexpectedly in December 2014 at only 10 years of age. His peers at Lincoln School worked together to plan a special celebration in the Lincoln Auditorium that included a slide show, student reflections and words from Jeremy's mother, Dr. Amy Ship, and Jeremy's father, Dr. Robert Cohen, followed by a student procession past the autumn flower cherry tree planted in his memory in front of the school. Students placed their hand-painted rocks around the base of the tree as they walked past. It was a moving and heartfelt ceremony and I was honored to take part.

School Visits

Since our last School Committee meeting on June 7, I was able to visit classrooms at Pierce School with Principal Lesley Ryan Miller and visit classrooms at Brookline High School with Head of School Anthony Meyer.

I also joined the 8th Grade Portfolio Day at Upper Coolidge Corner School on Friday, June 15. I was able to be a part of two student presentations of their capstone project. I first joined Jaida Kelley in her portfolio presentation. Jaida had a commanding presence, skillfully engaging all members of the audience throughout her presentation. Most powerful were Jaida's reflections on her learning and growth, as well as her plans for how she will apply this learning to her time at BHS. Following Jaida's presentation, I joined Madhav Krishna. His presentation included samples of his writing, reflections on his learning, and a powerful conversation about belief systems. Madhav explained how he uses magic to help him understand the belief systems of those around him. All of the student presentations on Portfolio Day were thoughtful and engaging, and truly reflected the hard work that students and teachers engaged in over the last the course of this school year.

I was happy to join the 5th Grade Windows and Mirrors presentation at Lincoln School on Monday, June 18. Students invited their parents into the school to showcase the work they had done on this project. Through this unit, student used literature to better understand their own experiences in, and perspectives of, the world. Students selected scenes from literature that moved them and acted out these scenes as part of Monday's presentation. After performances in the library, students shared projects which captured how they identified "windows" (insights into people not like them) and "mirrors" (ways that their identities were reflected) from the books they had read. It was a powerful and inspirational morning, where a literary unit served as a means to expand students' understanding of themselves and the world.

Lawrence School Hiring Update

Over the course of the spring, Interim Principal Monica Crowley and her team have been working hard to fill the two vice principal vacancies at Lawrence School. I am pleased to announce that Maisha Rounds and Peter Cipparone have been hired as vice principals for the coming year.

Mrs. Rounds comes to Brookline with 17 years of experience as a teacher and school leader, coming most recently from the Charleston County School District. Mrs. Rounds' North Star is her belief that all students deserve equal access to educational opportunities. She believes strongly in collaborative leadership and in the need for culturally responsive learning opportunities for all students.

Mr. Cipparone comes to Brookline with a wide range of experiences. He taught English in Spain as a part of the Fulbright program, trained at the Shady Hill School in Cambridge, and taught 4th grade in New York City. Mr. Cipparone helped co-found the NYC Math Lab, a professional development workshop for elementary and middle grade educators.

I am very pleased to welcome both Mrs. Rounds and Mr. Cipparone to the Public Schools of Brookline. Included with this report is a comprehensive update that Mrs. Crowley sent earlier today to the Lawrence community. This includes additional information on both Mrs. Rounds and Mr. Cipparone, along with information about other teachers joining the Lawrence community. I also want to thank Mrs. Crowley for her unwavering leadership. While finishing the year at the Upper Coolidge Corner School, Mrs. Crowley has been able to meet with, listen to and learn from close to 60 Lawrence staff members. Mrs. Crowley also joined me for a listening session with Lawrence parents and guardians on Wednesday, June 13. The time Mrs. Crowley is spending with the Lawrence community is invaluable, and she has committed to sharing back all she has learned with the community so everyone can move forward together in September.

Coolidge Corner School Renaming Process

Since the last School Committee meeting, Ben Lummis and I have met with PTO representatives and several parents from the Coolidge Corner School to discuss possible paths for the Coolidge Corner School renaming process. In these meetings, there has been a common, strong theme: students of the Coolidge Corner School should play a key role in the process through which a new name will be selected. The decision to remove the Devotion name from the school was made because the name of a school holds a special status in the life of students and the life of a community. As I wrote on May 30, 2018, "We ask our students to form a deep connection to their school and school community: to root for its sports teams, to wear the school's name on their clothes, and to take pride in representing their school to the larger community. The name of the school is the symbol of this pride and, as such, the name should represent the spirit, virtues, and the soul of the community." Having made this decision for our students, we should now embrace the opportunity for our students to be civic leaders, to learn leadership skills, and to use their voice in the process of renaming their school. With this idea as a foundation, I have three possible pathways for the committee to consider. Each option involves significant student involvement and leadership in the renaming process and the selection of names for the Town to consider. I have provided the Committee with a brief overview of each possibility, and look forward to a discussion and possible decision on the path forward at the July workshop.

Brookline Education Foundation Year-End Board Meeting

The Brookline Education Foundation (BEF) hosted their end-of-year board meeting on Monday evening, June 11 at the home of Devon Powell and it was my pleasure to attend. I was happy to be able to thank the dedicated BEF board members - in person - for their unwavering support of the district's initiatives and their steadfast support of our educators, year in and year out.

28th Annual Brookline High School Scholarship Breakfast

I have attached the Brookline Community Foundation's press release with highlights of the 28th Annual BHS Scholarship Breakfast, held on graduation morning. Scholarships totaling \$298,200 were awarded to 142 graduating seniors, thanks to the tireless efforts of Dean Scott Butchart and BHS Registrar Linda Wentzell. Four years ago, the Dean Butchart worked with the BCF to create the Brookline Community Fund Scholarship Fund for BHS, seeking to raise \$3.7 million over the next ten years to double the scholarships provided to our most deserving students. With the generous support of several community members and institutions, including Brookline Bank, The Country Club, and Bo Winiker and the Rotary Club of Brookline, the BCF is well on the way to meeting its fundraising goal.

Brookline High School Deans of Students

Yesterday, Brookline High School Head of School Anthony Meyer announced the successful conclusion of the school's two searches for Dean of Students. Below is an excerpt of Mr. Meyer's announcement to the BHS community.

As final exams and summer approach, I share exciting news: Lisa Gilbert-Smith and Lisa Redding will serve as Brookline High School's Deans of Students beginning July 1. Dean Gilbert-Smith and Dean Redding will work together to support teachers, families, and most of all, students, to learn, grow, and achieve, at and beyond BHS.

For Lisa Redding, this means continuing in a role she has held for the last two years. We finally subtract "interim" from Lisa's title and benefit more permanently from her leadership. Dean Redding is an excellent teacher and administrator who provides candid feedback, robust support, and tenacious love in setting high expectations and helping all of us, young people especially, to meet and exceed them.

Lisa Gilbert-Smith comes to Brookline High School with a wealth of leadership experience in the Boston Public Schools. For the last three years, Lisa has served as the Headmaster of Dearborn STEM Academy in Dorchester. Before coming to Dearborn, Lisa was both Dean of Students and Headmaster of Another Course to College in Brighton. Throughout the process, Lisa impressed everyone with her intelligence, student-centered approach, and humble confidence. Rachel Skerritt, current Headmaster of Boston Latin School, wrote in her reference that Lisa has "the ability to connect with young people, hold them accountable, partner with families, and contribute visioning and future direction." We are excited to have Ms. Gilbert-Smith join the BHS team, and I know she, too, is eager to learn about and begin contributing to Brookline High School.

I am grateful to the interview committee for winnowing candidates, conducting interviews, and delivering four strong finalists. The interview committee included Assistant Head of School Hal Mason and English Curriculum Coordinator Mary Burchenal led a diverse team of BHS stakeholders: Spanish Teacher and Innovation Fund Liaison Astrid Allen, Associate Dean Alexia Thomas, Dean of Faculty Jenee Ramos, parent Ginny Friedman, junior Caroline Kaplan, Steps to Success Advisor Melissa Sirin, Registrar Linda

Wentzell, and Guidance counselor Eric Schiff. Huge thanks to these members of the BHS community for serving on this important interview committee.

As a part of this announcement, Mr. Meyer also announced to the BHS community a new school leadership position for BHS. As you will remember from the budget development and override process, 2.8 FTE for educational leaders have been budgeted for BHS over the next three years, with 1.0 of this increase allocated for FY19. With Mr. Meyer's leadership, BHS has now begun an important search for a Dean of Student Support Systems. Mr. Meyer described this position as follows:

This is a new role at Brookline High School and one that I am excited to develop in collaboration with many. We have long needed a leader to help BHS establish and share common, predictable, and transparent interventions and practices across classrooms and student support domains. Our Dean of Student Support Systems will focus on early warning systems to help struggling students, school-wide anti-bias education, school-based investigations, restorative practices, and systematized general education interventions and support. As you can imagine, our Dean of Student Support Systems will work closely with Deans Gilbert-Smith and Redding.