

The Public Schools of Brookline  
School Committee Meeting of Thursday, September 8, 2016  
Superintendent Report

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Superintendent of Schools

### **Opening Days**

Over the past five days, I have been able to visit each of our PK-8 schools once and had the opportunity to visit Brookline High School twice. Each of our schools had incredibly successful openings.

A special congratulations to the Edward Devotion school community for two successful moves, into the temporary Lower Devotion School at 30 Webster Street and the Upper Devotion School at Old Lincoln. On September 1st, I spent several hours visiting Lower Devotion, starting the day with parents at a start of school coffee in the rear play area. I then toured the school with Mrs. Buller and Mr. O'Hara. Within the first hour of school, students were immersed in learning and were excited about the start of school. I want to deeply thank the entire Lower Devotion team for so successfully moving grades K-4 into the 30 Webster Street building. The success of the move and the way in which teachers, staff and administration transformed the building captures the deep level of commitment Devotion staff have to each and every Devotion student and family.

Equally impressive and not to be overlooked is the opening of Upper Devotion, grades 5-8, at the Old Lincoln School. I had the opportunity on Friday September 2nd to tour Upper Devotion with Mrs. Crowley. We observed science classes in full swing, fifth grade students fully engaged in literacy work, seventh grade social studies, and much more. I want to thank the Upper Devotion team for their work over two years designing a school, managing the opening of grades seven and eight last year and very successfully adding grades five and six this year. Like with Lower Devotion, the commitment of teachers, staff, and administrators at Upper Devotion is clearly evident through the remarkable work done to open a building and maintain the high quality educational experiences so important to the Devotion community.

Brookline High School also had an incredibly successful opening. On Thursday, ninth grade students entered the high school from Cypress Field into the quadrangle passing through the welcoming, cheering throng of BHS teachers and staff. As Headmaster Meyer noted in a letter to the BHS community, "our ninth grade processional was a beautiful sight. . . it is the best way for us to begin the school year: demonstrating our unity as a faculty and, more importantly, showing our new students how excited we are to work with

and support them. A terrific assembly followed with inspirational speeches by the ninth grade deans Lisa Redding and Melanee Alexander as well as some brief words from several junior mentors.”

I had the distinct pleasure of seeing the junior mentors leading our freshmen on tours of the BHS campus. I was struck by both the pride our junior mentors showed for the BHS community and was deeply impressed by the level of support they gave to a group of 493 freshmen, many who started the day with very nervous faces. By Friday, after only one day at BHS, the same group of freshmen was all smiles and seemed right at place in our high school.

I want to thank some of our community partners for the integral role they played in BHS’s successful opening. Thank you to the Brookline Rotary and B-Good for sponsoring a welcome barbecue for all ninth graders, new tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade students. This is a wonderful example of the strong link between our schools and community groups in Brookline.

On Friday September 2nd, through the generous support of the BHS PTO, ninth, tenth and eleventh grade students experienced Dr. Mykee Fowlin’s performance entitled “You Don’t Know Me Until You Know Me.” Both an actor and psychologist, Dr. Fowlin describes the mission of his work as follows: *“to create an atmosphere of worldwide inclusion, not just tolerance, towards all people.”* Deputy Superintendent Nicole Gittens and I were able to attend this incredibly powerful performance along with BHS tenth and eleventh grade students. The message of inclusiveness and respect for differences that are at the heart of Dr. Fowlin’s presentation will be key tenants of Brookline High School’s work in the year ahead.

### **Building a Strong and Cohesive Leadership Team**

Over the course of the summer, Senior Staff organized five leadership days to identify priorities, engage in collaborative work and prepare for the new school year. Below are summaries of each day, who participated and what we accomplished.

August 8 and 9, on August 8th and 9th, principals and senior staff engaged in two days of work with the goals of: agreeing on how the leadership team will work together as well as the leadership team focus for the current school year; developing a plan to work collaboratively across all our schools and programs to achieve the four goals of the Public Schools of Brookline. The work of the day included the role of principals as instructional leaders, how to improve the evaluation process so it better supports teachers, and how we will continue to address educational equity.

On August 16th, through the generous support of the Brookline Education Foundation, principals, senior staff, our BHS Headmaster, and our Dean of Faculty participated in a day of team building on Thompson Island. The work of the day included a number of opportunities for senior leadership to work together in a variety of problem solving scenarios, one of which included climbing a ninety-foot alpine tower. The day allowed our team to get to know individual leadership styles and provided the opportunity for the group to develop a problem solving approach where all voices are heard and all perspectives are valued.

On August 23rd, 2016 thirty-five Brookline Public Schools leaders participated in an all-day Title IX investigator training designed for public elementary and secondary school administrators to refresh their knowledge about the risk of gender-based harassment in schools, review relevant law, guidance and regulations related to Title IX, and discuss how to respond to allegations of harassment. The training covered a number of topics including understanding the difference between discrimination, harassment and bullying; undertaking investigations; interviewing techniques; and how to draft an investigatory report. Principals and vice-principals from all Brookline K-8 schools, Brookline High School administrators and system-wide leaders participated in the training led by Attorneys Trina Ingelfinger and Kate Upatham of the Law Office of Elizabeth Sanghavi, LLC in Brookline.

Attendees reviewed case law related to Title IX, the 2010 Office of Civil Rights (OCR) of the Department of Education letter addressing the similarities and differences between bullying and harassment, the Dear Colleague letter released by the OCR in 2011, and the OCR's 2014 Questions and Answers on Title IX. The group also discussed key resolutions from the Office of Civil Rights and other recent cases.

The training concluded with the trainers guiding participants through a hypothetical investigation during which participants had the opportunity to conduct case planning, interview parties and witnesses, and discuss how to use the information from the hypothetical investigation to draft a report.

Next steps for the group include attending a Title VI (race, color, national origin) investigator training, to be scheduled this fall, finishing the development of consistent district-wide complaint procedures related to discriminatory harassment and review of training needs.

On August 25th, more than 70 of our administrative leaders from across all of our schools met at Wheelock College to kick off the school year together. I opened the meeting by sharing some data including survey data, student learning data, and my impressions of what I've heard over the past few months through listening to and learning from teachers. We broke the group into two and each person participated in two sessions; one on

educational equity led by Dr. Suzie Talukdar and myself; and the other on evaluation led by Nicole Gittens and Lesley Miller. In the Education Equity session, our administrators shared personal reactions and stories based on prompts related to diversity and equity. In the evaluation session, administrators discussed and provided input on the evaluation planning for the new year. In the afternoon, the BHS leaders worked together on the Educational Plan for the high school's expansions while PK-8 leaders and Curriculum Coordinators made progress on school-based professional development planning for this year.

### **Brookline High School Identity Curriculum**

Brookline High School launched the Identity Curriculum this summer and it is already having an impact on faculty and classrooms. The mission of BHS's Identity Curriculum is to cultivate students' and faculty's understanding of race, power, and identity as a basis for empathy, scholarship, and action. It will support teachers to tailor lessons and units in their already-existing curriculum to support this mission. The Identity Curriculum will support departments in integrating four themes into their practice through on-going professional development: Identity; Identity & Community; Identify Race and Power; and Making Choices. Deans Jenee Ramos and Brian Poon are leading the development and implementation of the Identity Curriculum and have already created learning objectives that support each theme and led professional development related to the Identity Curriculum. On opening day for faculty and staff they led a powerful session that put the goals of the Identity Curriculum within the context of recent race- and power-related incidents across the nation and in Brookline and worked with faculty on developing empathy for others and how empathy can lead to action. During this two-hour session, staff first shared personal experiences about identity. Teachers then worked on strategies to incorporate discussions of identity into their lessons as they begin the school year. Next they agreed on norms for classroom conversations about race and identity and then adopted these norms to be universally used for all classroom conversations. Students closed this session by speaking about how powerful it was for them to see the entire staff working on issues of race, power and identity in order to build empathy with and for students. They also shared how they are beginning to see changes as the conversations are now leading to action. I am very thankful for Jenee's and Brian's leadership, the support from Headmaster Anthony Meyer and the faculty's commitment to this essential work.

### **Entry Plan Updates**

Both Nicole Gittens, Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, and Sam Zimmerman, Deputy Superintendent of Student Services have recently submitted their Entry Plans to me. Both plans are designed to allow them to begin developing the relationships, and an understanding of people, programs, and services across the schools and district that are essential to their positions. Both Nicole and Sam are meeting with a wide variety of stakeholders within and outside of their departments as well as reviewing documents to help them learn quickly and identify both the short-term steps and the longer-term priorities within their respective offices.

In their initial work, Sam and Nicole have also jumped in, leading our administrative leadership retreat days, analyzing staffing and budgets, participating in hiring as needed and helping their departments open the school year smoothly.

*For the Office of Teaching and Learning, Nicole has identified the following initial areas of focus:*

1. In collaboration with Deputy Superintendent of the Office of Student Services, begin development of a district-wide professional development plan.
2. Support the teacher observation, feedback and evaluation process so that it is aligned with our four district goals.
3. Begin aligning work between curriculum coordinators and principals to create coherent district-wide expectations for proficient instructional practices.
4. Build a cohesive team with among all curriculum coordinators.

*For the Office of Student Services, Sam has identified the following initial areas of focus:*

1. Connect with staff, faculty, and district leaders and parents including SEPAC to support relationship building
2. Identify areas of focus for the district after meeting with department teams
3. Assess the Student Service division operational and organizational strengths and weaknesses
4. Engage community stakeholders in reflective and transformative planning to identify the components of a five year plan
5. In collaboration with Nicole Gittens, Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, develop an aligned district wide professional development model

In November, both Deputies will provide me with a summary of what they have learned during their Entry Plan process and their identified priorities.

**New Administrators for 2016-2017**

***Sam Zimmerman, Deputy Superintendent of Student Services***

Mr. Zimmerman comes to Brookline after serving most recently as Deputy Director of Specialized Instruction for the New York City Department of Education. As Deputy Director, Mr. Zimmerman led the special education team responsible for 251 schools and a total enrollment of 126,000 students in Brooklyn. He worked for the New York City Department of Education for 15 years as a special education teacher, an Administrator of Special Education, and Deputy Network Leader in the New Visions Network 563. Mr. Zimmerman holds a B.A. from the Rochester Institute of Technology and a Masters Degree from Long Island University. He grew up in Grand Rapids, Minnesota.

***Wendy Ryder, Director of Special Education, Brookline High School***

After serving as PSB's Special Education Administrator for Specialized Programming Ms. Ryder is now the Director of Special Education for Brookline High School. Prior to coming to Brookline in 2015, Ms. Ryder worked as Special Education/Student Services Administrator for City on a Hill Charter Public Schools Network where she established special education/student services departments for the opening of two new high schools within two years. She also served as Special Education Administrator for Howe Manning Elementary School in Middleton, MA for four years and for nine years in the Beverly Public Schools as their Early Childhood Coordinator and Team Chairperson. Wendy started her career in healthcare, working as Director of Rehabilitation Services at Union Hospital in Lynn, MA.

***Lisa Redding, Interim Dean of Students, Brookline High School***

Lisa Redding has been named Interim Dean of Students at Brookline High School for the 2016-2017 school year. Ms. Redding has been Associate Dean of Students at BHS since 2013. Prior to becoming Associate Dean of Students she was a math teacher at BHS since 2001 teaching Pre-Calculus, Algebra, Geometry and Trigonometry and working with the Calculus Project. Ms. Redding was also a member of the Faculty Council and the BHS Legislature and received the Ernest R. Caverly Award in 2011. Prior to working in Brookline, she taught math at Chelsea High School. Ms. Redding earned a Bachelor of Arts in mathematics from Boston College and a M.Ed. in mathematics curriculum and instruction, and a M.Ed. in policy, planning and administration, both from Boston University. Ms. Redding will serve as Dean of Students, filling the position of Anthony Meyer as he serves as the Interim Headmaster for BHS.

***Kathleen Hubbard, Interim Curriculum Coordinator, K-8 Math***

Kathleen Hubbard has been named the Interim Curriculum Coordinator for K-8 math for the Public Schools of Brookline. Ms. Hubbard has been a math specialist at the Baker School since 2011 and has been a public school educator since 2000. Prior to joining Brookline in 2011, Ms. Hubbard was a Math Specialist for the Boston Public Schools. She has also been a kindergarten, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher in Franklin, MA and Waltham, MA, and a Math Enhancement teacher in Franklin. Ms. Hubbard began her career in education as a teaching intern at the Lawrence School in Brookline. She has a B.A. from Fairfield University and a M.Ed. in early childhood education from Lesley University.

***Jenee Palmer Ramos, Dean of Faculty, Brookline High School***

Ms. Ramos worked for many years as an English teacher at Boston Latin School before coming to Brookline to teach at the Lincoln School and BHS. In her nine years in Brookline, Ms. Ramos has led various learning and teaching initiatives including the Literacy Project, Content-area Reading Initiative (CRI), and Identity Curriculum development for grades 9-12. As the Dean of Faculty, Ms. Ramos will serve as the point of alignment for professional development activities, including those associated with race, equity, and diversity hiring, building-wide. In consultation with the Headmaster, Central Office staff, department chairs, and teachers, she will support building-based professional learning, including the development and support of collaborative learning teams to address top priorities such as cultural proficiency, literacy across disciplines, and instructional best practices to support all students.

***Isabel Gunther, Vice-Principal, Lincoln Elementary School***

Ms. Gunther joins the Public Schools of Brookline after serving for 10 years as an elementary teacher and an assistant principal in New Hampshire. Most recently she was Assistant Principal and Co-Principal at the Hillsboro-Deering Elementary School in Nashua, New Hampshire. Prior to becoming an administrator, Ms. Gunther was a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher at the Crisp Elementary School also in Nashua and the Beach Street School in Manchester, NH. She began her career as a Title I teacher, teaching small groups of students in need of additional support. Ms. Gunther grew up in Lawrence, MA

***Brendan Kobus, Interim Associate Dean, Brookline High School***

Brendan Kobus takes the role of Interim Associate Dean after successfully filling a variety of roles at Brookline High School. Most recently, Mr. Kobus was a special education teacher from 2010 until 2016. Mr. Kobus is also director of the Summer School for BHS. He has served as the Chair of the BHS After School Supports Group, the Co-Chair of the National Honor Society, and the leader of the Special Education Department Advisory Council. Mr. Kobus will serve as Interim Associate Dean while Lisa Redding serves as Interim Dean for Brookline High School.

***Dr. David Lemmel – Lead Teacher, African American Latino Scholars Program***

Dr. David Lemmel joins the Public Schools of Brookline after five years as the director of University of Massachusetts-Boston's Urban Scholars Program. As the director, Dr. Lemmel supervised the year-round gifted and talented pre-collegiate program that serves 120 urban and first generation students from the Boston Public Schools, and their intensive seven-week Summer Institute on the UMass Boston campus. He was also responsible for developing partnerships with agencies, universities, corporations and foundations to strengthen the wrap-around services for the program's students. Prior to working for Urban Scholars, Dr. Lemmel was the National Director for the Big Picture Company in Providence, RI and served on the Educational Diversity and Inclusion Team with Jones and Associates in San Diego. Dr. Lemmel is the father of 8<sup>th</sup> grade twins who attend school in Brookline.

***Seph Bartholomew, Special Educator Director for Specialize Programs***

Seph Bartholomew comes to the Public Schools of Brookline from the Boston Public Schools where he was Assistant Director of Special Education and Student Services. As Assistant Director, Mr. Bartholomew developed and led system-wide improvements for programming and supports for students with disabilities. Prior to working in Boston, Mr. Bartholomew worked as a Regional Coordinator for the May Institute and an Educational Team Supervisor at the Evergreen Center in Milford, MA. He also is an adjunct instructor for UMass/Boston. Mr. Bartholomew grew up in North Carolina and began his career there as a Life Skills teacher.

***Dr. Tina Bozeman, K-12 Curriculum Coordinator for Physical Education & Health***

Dr. Tina M. Bozeman has worked as a teacher and administrator for more than 20 years. In 2005, she became the first high school lifetime wellness and physical education teacher to earn National Board Certification. Dr. Bozeman served as the Coordinator for Health, Wellness, Physical Education and JROTC for Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools. Prior to moving into administration, Dr. Bozeman taught 10 years at Martin Luther King Magnet High School in Nashville. In 2011, she returned to her beloved Martin Luther King Magnet High School to once again serve as a Lifetime Wellness teacher.