

**BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF
October 26, 2010**

Bedford High School - Large Instruction Room

1. Call to Order

At 7:30 p.m., Mr. Hafer called to order the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present included Ms. Seibert, Ms. O’Gara, Mr. Pierce and Ms. Bickford.

2. Comments From Public

None

3. Personnel Report

Dr. LaCroix asked the School Committee to approve the Occupational Therapist job description which was previously discussed.

Mr. Pierce made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the Occupational Therapist job description as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Dr. LaCroix asked the School Committee to consider approving the annual 8th grade field trip to Washington D.C. Mr. Casey is once again organizing the trip and will be using the same tour company. This year, 12-24 adult chaperones will attend. The itinerary will be similar to past years. The cost is \$599 per student.

Mr. Pierce made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the overnight trip to Washington D.C. on May 31 – June 3, 2011 for the eighth grade class at a cost of \$599 per student and no cost to the school department.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Mr. Pierce thanked Mr. Casey for organizing the trip and he thanked all of the teachers for volunteering to be chaperones.

Ms. O’Gara said that this trip is a great tradition for Bedford Middle School.

Ms. Seibert said it was impressive that the per pupil cost has stayed relatively stable for the last few years.

Mr. Hafer said that it looks like a great trip and he hopes everyone has fun and stays safe.

4. Skills Center Presentation

Ms. Deb Sakelakos gave an update on the High School’s Skill Center. Prior to the beginning of the presentation, Dr. LaCroix thanked Ms. Sakelakos for her dedication to helping students succeed at Bedford High School.

Ms. Sakelakos began her presentation by saying she is excited about the district adopting the Response to Intervention model for academic intervention. The Skills Center will be a Tier 2 RTI support. She also thinks that using RTI in the High School will result in improved communications.

Ms. Sakelakos explained that the Skills Center offers Academic Intervention, MCAS Support and the Excel Program. Currently there are 165 students enrolled in the Skills Center which is about 30% of the high school population.

The mission of the Skills Center is:

“... to create a learning environment that supports the academic needs of our diverse student population. Through differentiated programming we nurture success, self-esteem and confidence always striving to support the academic individual needs of each student, knowing that all students can achieve academic excellence.”

Ms. Sakelakos explained that a diverse student population is served. She believes that all students are capable of learning and achieving academic excellence is expected.

Academic Intervention

This program helps students with the following:

- Remedial work on identified areas of concern
- Class lectures and class note taking
- Long term assignments
- Examining errors on prior assignments and tests
- Homework completion

Programs in the Academic Intervention include first level intervention for students who begin to falter in one major subject. There is also a second level of intervention for those students who are failing more than one major.

Excel Program

This program is for students taking level 2 or 3 classes who want to move up to a level 3 or 4 course for the first time. This program emphasizes successful academic practices needed to support a student with the academic rigor of a higher-level course expectations.

MCAS Support

This program applies strategies for answering MCAS questions and helps students demonstrate academic expertise in order to successfully pass the MCAS test. This support also helps new Juniors and Seniors get ready to pass MCAS in order to graduate. The Skills Center helps with material and timing of tests.

Ms. Sakelakos explained the new state competency determination requirements beginning with the Class of 2010. Students must meet or exceed a scaled score of 240 on both the Grade 10 ELA and Math MCAS exams or 220 scaled score and fulfill requirements of an Educational Proficiency Plan. Ms. Sakelakos has approximately 30 Educational Proficiency Plans to manage.

Looking to the future, Ms. Sakelakos thinks electronic RTI forms will be helpful. Also, MCAS data will be delivered to teachers so they can use it to examine current practices, revising instruction and curriculum as a result.

Ms. Sakelakos also spoke about applying for a Federal grant (i3 Grant) which is a very complicated process but offers the potential for a significant amount of money. This will be her second time applying for this grant. If successful, she will use the money to hire highly skilled teachers (especially retirees) to work as teaching assistants in the Skills Center.

Ms. Sakelakos will also explore summer school options at Bedford High School.

Ms. Sakelakos ended her presentation by thanking Dr. LaCroix and Mr. Sills. She said that she sees so much improvement in students that it is truly “overwhelming”.

Dr. LaCroix said that the District will be looking into online courses/virtual learning centers as away to help students with credit recovery. Dr. LaCroix said she sees this opportunity as a win-win. It will give some BHS teachers the opportunity to teach in an online environment while helping students make up some credit work.

Dr. LaCroix also noted that Deb Sakelakos proves that one-on-one instruction helps students succeed.

Mr. Pierce thanked Ms. Sakelakos for everything she has done for the students of Bedford. He asked if the programs – Academic Intervention and MCAS Support - overlap for many students. Ms. Sakelakos said not really.

Ms. O’Gara said that it is great to see that data is really used to support a student. She also said that it was good that Bedford High School students can easily find their way to the Skills Center for help. Ms. O’Gara was also pleased to hear that students take ownership of their goals when in the Skills Center.

Ms. O’Gara asked Ms. Sakelakos how she manages to engage all of the students in the Skills Center. Ms. Sakelakos said that it often requires making a connection with the student and this is often accomplished by “looking through the student’s lenses”. She said that there is also a lot of emotional support available for those who need it.

Ms. Bickford said, “Thank you so much, BHS students are truly lucky to have this program.” She asked if some students still fall through the cracks. Ms. Sakelakos said yes, this does happen but feels RTI will help with early intervention.

Ms. Bickford asked if the twenty new Juniors and Seniors come from Hanscom. Ms. Sakelakos said yes, all but three. Three of the students come from another town in Massachusetts and therefore have MCAS scores. The Hanscom students do not.

Ms. Seibert asked how students are referred to the Academic Intervention Program. Ms. Sakelakos said usually through RTI and the Student Assistance teams.

Ms. Seibert asked Ms. Sakelakos about other ideas she may have for the program. Ms. Sakelakos said that she wants to continue to find ways to show students that they are capable of greatness. She also thinks that data use will really drive some great new instruction ideas.

Mr. Hafer said Ms. Sakelakos’ quote, “Success is a wonderful motivator” is a good quote for all Bedford High School students.

Mr. Hafer asked to see data on the Skills Center results since numbers tell such a compelling story. Ms. Sakelakos agreed to work on this.

5. Public Comment

Mr. Michael Culhane, resident, asked to make a public comment. He informed the School Committee that his son was hurt recently on the field at the Middle School. He said he was on a field near the tennis courts and fell on a steel crate and broke his arm. Mr. Culhane said he notified the Athletic Director several weeks ago and to date, nothing has been done to fix the field. He feels it is very dangerous and does not want others to get hurt. He is here tonight to bring it to the School Committee's attention.

Mr. Hafer thanked Mr. Culhane for the information and said that he would bring it up at the upcoming Field Usage Committee meeting. He hopes his son gets better soon.

6. Update: Response To Intervention (RTI)

Cyndy Taymore, Assistant Superintendent, gave an update regarding implementation of RTI. Ms. Taymore said that the District is committed to implementing RTI at all of the schools. To date, staff has been very positive and responsive to the initiative.

Ms. Taymore explained that RTI is based on an early intervention model. Intervene early, correctly and often, then remediation will likely result. RTI assumes that 80% of academic challenges can be addressed in the classroom, 15% need additional targeted strategies and 5% need further intensive intervention.

Ms. Taymore explained that each school has a different focus on the RTI implementation. Davis School is focused on behavior interventions while Lane School is focused on math. The middle school is concentrating on data collection.

At Davis, Special Education staff is using RTI data in the Special Education evaluation process. Also, related-service specialists and teaching assistants have been trained in RTI interventions and are implementing a positive behavior intervention approach.

At the Lane School, staff introduced math interventions focusing on automaticity and word problems. Also flexible teaching assistant schedules are used to incorporate more interventions with students.

At the Middle School, RTI language and data collection has been integrated into practice, using a data collection form developed by the Special Education staff.

The High School has gotten off to a slower start with RTI implementation because of the NEASC review last year. However, RTI has been embraced by the Skills Center. Mr. Sills has begun discussions about RTI with the Student Assistant Team.

Ms. Taymore explained that as a District, Bedford needs to find new methodologies to help students and to find ways to give teachers adequate time to discuss strategies. To date, district-wide, Tier I and Tier 2 practices have been identified. The Director of Reading and the Director of Special Education have collaborated to determine best ways to provide reading interventions. There has been some district training on collecting and using data to make decisions.

Ms. Taymore said this year each school has adapted a Referral to RTI Form for use. Also, further discussions will occur at the High School. Overall, the district will focus on establishing benchmarks, common assessments and data collection.

Ms. Taymore highlighted her RTI goals for the 2010-2011 school year. Goals include:

- Identify Tier I and Tier 2 interventions is use.
- Identify professional development needs.
- Support RTI teams in developing capacity to problem solve, develop plans and collect data.
- Continue to develop common assessments.
- Begin discussion of reasonable benchmarks by grade by content.
- Provide information to families about RTI and building level supports that are available.

Ms. Taymore reminded the School Committee that teachers are already doing RTI – they don't let students fail. The difference now is that RTI is a formalized process and data is collected and analyzed. It is an overall shift to an intervention stance and not a reactive one.

Ms. Taymore asked the School Committee to review the proposed RTI description for the website and to give feedback to her.

Mr. Pierce thanked Ms. Taymore for her informative presentation. He asked what part of the curriculum RTI currently focuses on. Ms. Taymore said Math and English skill development.

Ms. Bickford said that she is trying to understand the pathway to SPED referral now that RTI is being implemented. What happens when a parent asks that their child be tested, do we say no now that we have RTI?

Ms. Taymore said that schools will still honor Special Education evaluation requests but the testing will include an RTI process too. Results of the RTI and the evaluations will be discussed at a Team meeting and RTI will be part of determining eligibility for Special Education.

Ms. Bickford said that she is concerned that the RTI interventions will delay the Special Education referral and diagnosis process.

Ms. Taymore said that she understands this concern but does not feel that RTI will slow down the Special Education process in general. She sees RTI as a way to help students who are struggling and who do not qualify for Special Education. Ms. Taymore also commented that there is an increase in Special Education diagnosis at Lane School because that is when curriculum becomes content demanding.

Ms. Taymore commented that often Special Education is a negative label and she sees RT I as a good alternative. Ms. Bickford said she disagrees with this comment. Ms. Bickford said that Bedford has made a lot of progress over the years so that students and families do not fear the Special Education label. Therefore, Ms. Bickford believes parents will need a lot of reassurance to have the confidence that RTI is helping their student and not pushing off a Special Education route.

Ms. Seibert asked if 504 plans would be affected by RTI. Ms. Taymore said no because accommodations in a 504 plan is different from instruction modification.

Ms. O’Gara pointed out that having RTI interventions during a Special Education evaluation will actually get help to the student earlier in the process. Ms. Taymore agreed that this will happen and is a good thing.

Mr. Hafer thanked Ms. Taymore. School Committee members agreed to review the material for the web site.

7. Review of Financial Policy Document

The School Committee reviewed a draft of the Town of Bedford Financial Policies document. Members noted that the question of who should sign a financial policy document is still outstanding. They also did not really understand the purpose or who will be using the document. Ms. Bickford said that it would be good to have consensus on the wording of the document in case the School Committee needs to vote, accept or sign the policy sometime in the future.

School Committee members reviewed the Financial Policies document with their collective edits page by page.

Ms. Bickford asked why the policy contained sources of funds for capital and suggested that this concern be forwarded to the Finance Committee.

Ms. Bickford agreed to make all of the discussed changes and edits and Mr. Hafer agreed to send them to the Fiscal Policy Planning Committee and Mr. Peter Naum.

8. Superintendent’s Report

- Dr. LaCroix was proud to announce five semi-finalists for the National Merit Scholars and fourteen National Merit Scholar Commendations.
- The ELA Visiting Team will be visiting schools on November 2 –4th.
- Thank you to St. Michael’s Parish for allowing the middle school staff to park at the church lot on election day, Tuesday, November 2nd. This will be a big help to voting residents.
- Special Town Meeting will be on Monday, November 8th. The School Committee will give an update on the Space and Enrollment studies at this meeting.

9. Liaison Reports

- Ms. O’Gara reminded everyone to attend the BEF fundraiser, Bedford’s Got Talent, on Saturday, October 30th from 3-5pm.
- Ms. Bickford reported that Mr. Coelho and Mr. Jones did a good job at presenting the Space and Enrollment study at the CEC meeting. The explanation of why we are brining Special Education programs in-house was especially informative to the CEC.
- Mr. Hafer reported that the Finance Committee is working on the financial model to be used in upcoming budget guidelines.

10. Minutes

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the October 12, 2010 School Committee meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 4-0-1

11. Future Agenda

School Committee meetings for November are scheduled for November 9th and 30th. Budget discussions will begin at the November 30th meeting.

12. Adjournment

Ms Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 10:11.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Pierce	Yes
Ms. Seibert	Yes
Mr. Hafer	Yes
Ms. Bickford	Yes
Ms. O’Gara	Yes

School Committee Secretary

Date

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

October 26, 2010

Exhibits/Documents

- Job description - Occupational Therapist
- Out-of-state field trip request for 8th graders to travel to Washington, D.C.
- BHS Skills Center presentation
- Response to Intervention presentation
- Town of Bedford Financial Policies – draft version showing collective School Committee member edits
- Draft of minutes from the October 12, 2010 School Committee meeting

Bedford School Committee

**Executive Session Minutes
October 26, 2010**