

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
May 19, 2015
Bedford High School - Large Group 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 Mr. Pierce, Ms. Guay, Mr. McAllister and Mr. Brosgol. Miss Sophia Kyrou, student representative, was absent.

2. Comments from Public

None

3. Personnel Report

Mr. Sills asked for approval of a field trip request for six BHS students to compete in the National History Day competition in Washington DC on June 14-18th. Students will make arrangements to take final exams while away which will be proctored by chaperones.

Mr. Sills explained that Mr. Sunderland will be accompanying these students to the competition. However, he has a very important personal matter that will require him to leave early. The other chaperone will stay and Mr. Sunderland has made arrangements with a colleague who will also be a chaperone at the competition to help watch our students as well. Mr. Sunderland provided information on the chaperone.

Ms. Guay made the following motion:

MOTION: Moved that the School Committee approve the National History Day trip to Washington DC on June 14-18, 2015 at no cost to the schools provided students can take their final exams.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. McAllister

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Mr. Sills asked for approval of a new job description, "Instructional Coach". This new job will replace the Instructional Technology positions. The new job will have a broader scope and will support student focused learning. Mr. Sills explained that the shared Davis/Lane Instructional Technology position will continue as is. There will not be a budgetary impact with this change.

Ms. Guay made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the Instructional Coach position as described on the May 19, 2015 agenda.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. McAllister

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

4. Davis School 2015-2016 Improvement Plan

Ms. Beth Benoit, Principal of Davis School, presented the School Improvement Plan for next year. She reminded the School Committee that Davis's vision grounds everything Davis School does. The vision is:

"Davis School, in partnership with families and the community, will foster respect, responsibility, and readiness for learning in students as they become passionate, courageous, knowledgeable, skillful, reflective and collaborative life-long learners."

District Goal: Governance and Leadership

Ms. Benoit said the 2015-2016 school-year will focus on grade level leadership. This year, it was on small clusters but next year, the school will broaden its perspective and focus on good decisions that affect the entire grade level.

District Goal: Curriculum and Instruction

The 2015-2016 school year will use integrated projects (science, social studies, math and ELA) in studies and play that purposefully engage students. Work will continue in social studies – civic learning standards, social and emotional development, multi-cultural content. Also, adjustments will be made in STEM. Oral story telling and writing will also be used to deepen student's use of vocabulary, engagement, and communications. Each grade level will read the same book.

District Goal: Assessment & Evaluation

Ms. Benoit explained that Davis has reduced the number of assessments give to children at Davis School. The new assessment in reading for example, is less of a snapshot of skills and more of a conversation. Writing will continue to be a focus at Davis School. Teachers will follow the Writers Workshop model and use a rubric to understand what works and what needs more work.

Math assessments will focus on math story problems.

Davis students are also starting to learn how to critique one another.

District Goal: Student Support

Ms. Benoit said this year, Davis collaborated with Lane School on four-quarterly themes – Identity, Diversity, Justice, and Action to be fair. Guidance and the Music teacher also worked together to incorporate songs and social emotional work to connect to these themes. School assemblies were used to ensure everyone was on the same page. This type of collaboration will continue next year as well.

Ms. Benoit said next year, the focus will be on incorporating the new special education programs at Davis into the school culture.

Mr. Brosgol said that Davis is “a jewel of love and support” and he thanked Ms. Benoit for sustaining this culture. He asked her if the squeeze on space in the building was going to effect the culture at Davis School.

Ms. Benoit said that space constraints are difficult and an important issue. For example, she has no meeting space for an entire grade level to get together at one time. She will be working the Administration and the grade level leaders to find ways to deal with this issue.

Mr. Brosgol applauded Ms. Benoit for reducing the numbers of assessments for Davis students.

Mr. Pierce asked about the effect of social-emotional issues. Ms. Benoit said teachers at Davis have always considered the whole child and have always tried to have a focus on play. They will focus on finding different ways to teach in order to reduce stress in the kids at Davis.

Mr. Pierce asked how classes are structured at Davis. Ms. Benoit explained that classrooms are balanced with supports as needed. The clusters are the resources and are set up based on the teacher's strengths. Teachers get the support they need for their classroom with the cluster model.

Ms. Guay commented that teachers must appreciate the cluster model. Ms. Benoit agreed that they did.

Mr. McAllister said that the School Improvement Plan seems reasonable and achievable. He would like to see however, at least one Davis and Lane goal for the second to third grade transition. Ms. Benoit thought this was a good idea.

Mr. Hafer appreciated the fact that the presentation shows that kids are learning in a child-friendly and developmentally appropriate way.

Mr. Sills commented that instructional play at Davis School is a very deliberate process.

Ms. Guay made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the Davis School Improvement Plan for 2015-2016 as presented tonight by Ms. Benoit.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. McAllister

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

4. Presentation: Lane School Improvement Plan 2015-2016

Mr. Rob Ackerman, Principal of Lane School, presented the School Improvement Plan. He began the presentation by commenting that Lane School does have similar themes with Davis School and that the School Improvement Plan is aligned with district goals as well.

Mr. Ackerman shared some highlights of the 2014-2015 school year.

- Veteran's Day celebration at Lane with the community was a very memorable activity.
- Women in Science Day was a success as a variety of women scientists visited Lane classrooms.
- The Lane School garden is being enhanced by a visit from the show "This Old House".
- The fifth grade Invention Convention was launched with most work on projects done in school (not home) and was very inclusive to all students.
- Foundations, the new phonics curriculum, was very successful in grade three.
- Teachers enjoyed the Facing History professional development day at Lane.

Mr. Ackerman said that in the 2015-2016 school year, work will continue on many of the goals and initiatives – there will not be a lot of new things.

- The school will refocus on social-emotional learning
- Common Assessments are tied to Learning Expectations but this year, the staff needs to reach an agreement on the priorities of standards at each grade level.
- Lane has started aligning its curriculum to the new State science standards and ensuring that teachers know the content.
- There will be a new report card that moves away from letter grades. The goal is to have a standards based report card with specific standard based descriptions tied to learning expectations.
- Lane will have a Professional Development day titled, "Building Collegiality". The staff has asked for help with difficult conversations with one another.
- The Steering Committee will be re-established so teachers from both Lane and Davis can talk with one another at least three times a year.
- After School Support will roll out.

- A Foreign Language Committee will be established to review/discuss, among other things, when students should NOT be scheduled for foreign language.
- Co-teaching training will happen this summer.
- Need to figure out how to help students who do not do well on end unit assessments. Ground rules for teachers need to be set up.

Mr. Brosgol said he was pleased to hear about the evolution on the report card. He was especially pleased to hear that the staff has agreed to not have “exceed standards” as the goal.

Mr. Brosgol asked how 6th grade placement went this year given the fact that JGMS did away with learning groups for grade 6. Mr. Ackerman said it was much easier and he has not heard much from JGMS at this point.

Mr. Pierce said he applauds the report card changes. He asked if there were any social-emotional standards on there. Mr. Ackerman said yes, about twelve sections are tied to social-emotional standards. For example one such standard is, “My Child interacts well with adults.”

Mr. Pierce said he sees technology really enhancing skill development at the elementary level and he hopes that it is still used this way. Mr. Ackerman said it is used this way with students and technology really helps the teachers with data collection.

Ms. Guay complimented Mr. Ackerman on the community outreach work that the Lane School has done. She too is happy to hear about the report card changes.

Mr. McAllister said it is good that the teachers are working on deriving power standards. He also said it is impressive how creatively technology is used at Lane School.

Mr. McAllister also noted that it is good to take goals off of a School Improvement Plan as new ones are added.

Mr. McAllister also said that it will be very important to communicate the changes in the report cards to parents.

Mr. Hafer said the plan was good. His only suggestion is to focus more on the transition years.

Ms. Guay made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the Lane School Improvement Plan for 2015-2016 school year as present tonight.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Brosgol

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

6. FY’16 Budget

Mr. Sills said he would like to reinstate the funding for Destination Imagination in 2015-2016. He believes that the program is robust and attractive to many kids in town and should be available to all. Mr. Sills said he would move \$2500 earmarked for professional development to Destination Imagination. Typically, the money is used for fees and competitions. Mr. Sills said not vote was needed for this change.

7. Superintendent’s Report

Mr. Sills said that he has been working with several other Superintendents from the Mass. Association of Superintendents to reduce the amount of standardized testing in Massachusetts. He said that all the Superintendents believe a new generation of testing is needed and it is time to move beyond MCAS. Mr. Sills said he thinks that testing should only be done every other year, though not all Superintendents agree. This is a point of discussion.

Mr. Pierce said that testing should focus on the basics – math and English. Mr. Sills agreed.

Mr. Sills also reported that the DESE has reached out to Bedford High School to host a visit with some urban school leaders. This happened the other day and the school leaders were very impressed with BHS. They especially liked how teachers here take ownership of the learning process. They also liked the Tenacity Challenge.

Mr. Sills said that this year, many BHS students have been honored. For example, Andrea Ning has been awarded the Presidential Scholar. Also, Erin Dietz and Linda Bittenson were awarded the Superintendent's Honor Award.

Mr. Sills noted that the Cultural Proficiency Committee has come up with a needs assessment survey to help them with next year's professional development in this area.

8. Liaison Reports

Ms. Guay reported that Youth and Family Services has been discussing the Pedestrian and Bike Path plans.

9. Minutes

Mr. McAllister made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes from the March 31, 2015 School Committee meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Brosgol

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Mr. McAllister made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes from the April 14, 2015 School Committee meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Guay

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

10. Future Agenda

Bedford High School will present its School Improvement plan on May 26th.

Mr. Sills will present District Goals on June 9th.

11. Adjournment

Mr. McAllister made the following motion.

MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 9:15 pm to Executive Session to discuss teacher contract language modification, not to reopen.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Hafer Yes

Mr. Pierce Yes

Mr. McAllister Yes

Ms. Guay
Mr. Brosgol

Yes
Yes

School Committee Secretary

Date

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

May 19, 2015

Exhibits/Documents

- Davis School Improvement Plan for 2015-2016
- Lane School Improvement Plan for 2015-2016
- Draft of March 31, 2015 School Committee meeting minutes
- Draft of April 14, 2015 School Committee meeting minutes