

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
December 5, 2017
Bedford High School – Large Group Instruction Room

1. Call to Order

At 7:30 p.m., Mr. McAllister called to order the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present included Mr. Brosgol, Ms. Santiago, Ms. Scoville and Ms. Guay.

2. Comments from Public

None

3. Presentation – Co-Teaching

Several teachers were present to give a presentation on co-teaching initiatives underway at the High School and Davis School. Teachers present included Sarah Kane (BHS English teacher), Casie Hinz (BHS Special Educator), Kim Petersen (Davis School 2nd grade teacher), Kevin Smaldone (Davis School 2nd grade teacher) and Jess Kirby (Davis School Special Educator). Kim Comeiro, Instructional Coach was also present and helped describe the co-teaching model.

Ms. Comeiro explained that co-teaching is a way of teaching for long-term inclusion. It optimizes the skills of special educators as they team up with regular education classroom teachers. “It brings together experts.”

The model used in Bedford is flexible and is driven by the students. It is a team approach. Teachers collaborate, communicate, use critical thinking, and creativity to plan and deliver lessons to all students. It is an approach that benefits all students and the teachers themselves. All of the students have the same end goal. Co-teaching allows for students to get to the end goal in different ways.

“Common planning time for the teachers is critical for Bedford’s co-teaching model.”

(Ms. Comeiro shared a video testimonial from students in different co-taught classrooms in the district).

Benefits of co-teaching include:

- Truly inclusive feeling is created in classroom
- Students confidence is strengthened
- Students set higher expectations of themselves
- Teaching model is very flexible
- More personal time with students due to small group instruction
- Heterogeneous groups are used too
- Peer models are valuable to all students
- Groups are changed often based on lessons and students’ abilities

Challenges of co-teaching include:

- Teachers sharing control of the classroom
- Change of teacher focus from content to teaching strategies
- Learning to take risks and trust one another
- Need to spend a lot of time with one another planning, communicating, looking at data

Ms. Kane and Ms. Hinz described their experience at the high school. They explained that they follow universal design for learning – help all students get to the same place but in different ways. They also agreed that peers often motivate each other to work hard and to set high expectations. The teachers use flexible groupings and also do a lot of one-to-one support. A big part of their day is spent looking at student data and problem solving. Both said that having time to reflect is very important.

Kim Petersen, Kevin Smaldone, and Jess Kirby also spoke about their co-teaching experience at Davis School. They agreed that a key to success is to have mutual respect and trust with their co-teachers. Lots of planning and communication is required. They agreed that there is a lot of data on the students and it's good to have colleagues to look at it together.

Jess Kirby noted that it has been especially beneficial to have professional development days devoted to co-teaching as well as common schedules and support. The summer work days were also very helpful. She said that the classrooms are very connected and both Ms. Petersen and Mr. Smaldone know what's going on in each classroom.

Mr. Sills said that inclusion is the model for all of Davis School. Ms. Benoit, the Principal, has created inclusion and cluster models. The co-teaching described tonight is an extension of this inclusion model.

Ms. Guay asked if there was any data showing that this is working. Ms. Kirby said yes and that the data is really carefully monitored since there are three teachers involved.

Ms. Guay asked if something went wrong in the classroom, do the regular education students know what is going on? Ms. Petersen said yes. If something happens in the classroom, the whole class processes the event and she reminds the children that we are a “community of different learners”.

Ms. Hinz agreed and said that a sense of community is key. Students are compassionate with one another in her classroom. All feel accepted.

Ms. Scoville said that she feels that most parents (of students in a co-taught class) do not know much about what is going on. More information should be communicated to parents. Ms. Guay agreed. She said this is especially important for “new” parents who do not know how many different learners exist in our schools.

Ms. Santiago asked how this model differs from substantial separate settings. Ms. Hinz said that a separate setting typically means the same students are together for the entire day and typically do not have positive role models. Expectations are often lower.

Mr. Brosgol asked if students have a hard time going into non-co-taught classrooms. Ms. Kane said that right now, the co-taught classroom is for 9th and 10th graders. The teachers try to teach the students skills and tools to advocate for themselves.

Ms. Benoit, Principal of Davis, said she is curious how typical students do when they leave a co-taught classroom. She will gather information.

Mr. McAllister asked if students on an IEP know that they are placed in a co-taught classroom? Ms. Benoit said that it would be discussed during an IEP meeting, but maybe not using the co-taught language.

Mr. McAllister asked if parents of typical students express concerns that their child is in a co-taught classroom. Ms. Benoit said she does have many conversations with parents and she needs to remind all that all classrooms in all grades have the same learning expectations.

Mr. McAllister asked Ms. Vines, Director of Special Education, what the vision is for the co-teaching model. Ms. Vines said that she hopes to have it available at every grade level in the district.

Mr. McAllister said that it is a little disappointing that not all teachers will get to teach kids on IEPs. He also recommends that more communication be done on what a co-taught classroom is and how it can benefit all learners. Reinforce that learning expectations are the same for all

Mr. Sills agrees that communication is key and will update the website. "Every classroom has a wide variety of learning needs".

Mr. Sills asked the regular education teachers what they have learned from participating in a co-taught classroom. Both Ms. Petersen and Ms. Kane said that they have gained a lot of teaching skills from the special education teachers. Mr. Smaldone said he learned how important it is to share and collaborate.

4. Personnel Report

Mr. McAllister reported that the Town Treasurer gave the School Committee a Financial Policy document to review and presumably to sign. Mr. Coelho explained that this policy was created several years ago because the Town wanted to set financial guidelines. Auditors look for this as do rating agencies. He believes that the School Committee is included because they are the largest piece of the town budget. The town wants the School Committee to understand the guidelines. He said the School Committee reviewed the document several years ago and acknowledged reading and understanding the guidelines, but School Committee members did not sign the agreement.

Mr. Sills said he is concerned about the policies contradicting something the schools want to do. He wonders if it is really the schools' place to sign because the School Committee is not a financial board.

Mr. McAllister said he believes that the School Committee's purpose is not to manage these financial planning guidelines.

Ms. Guay, Ms. Scoville, Ms. Santiago, and Mr. Brosgol said that the School Committee's priority is to teach the children but to do so under the town's financial guidelines. They all agree that it is important to understand the guidelines. They agreed that it is the School Committee's role to acknowledge and follow the guidelines.

Ms. Scoville made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee acknowledge receipt of the Town of Bedford's Financial Policies.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Santiago

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

5. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Sills responded to a couple of questions from the Finance Committee:

- Currently there are 12 students of nonresident faculty enrolled in Bedford Public Schools.
- The financial impact of hiring 4.5 new staff members in January is \$27,000.

Mr. Sills also reported that METCO, Inc. will soon be announcing a new Chief Operating Officer.

6. Adjournment

Ms. Guay made the following motion.

MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 9:25 P.M.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Scoville

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. McAllister	Yes
Mr. Brosgol	Yes
Ms. Santiago	Yes
Ms. Scoville	Yes
Ms. Guay	Yes

 2/13/2015
School Committee Secretary Date

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
December 5, 2017
Exhibits/Documents

- Town of Bedford Financial Policies