

**BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF**

November 17, 2009

1. Call to Order

At 7:30 p.m., Mr. Pierce called to order, the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present included Ms. Bickford, Ms. Seibert, Ms. O’Gara and Mr. Hafer. Miss Ann Dickinson Meltz, student representative, was also in attendance.

2. Comments From Public

Mrs. Vatcher, a member of the Special Education Parents Advisory Committee (SEPAC) and parent of students in the school system, spoke. She reported that last night, she attended a talk by Peg Dawson on Executive Function Skills. She said the event had a great turn out and that the attendees raised quite a few questions. Ms. Vatcher said that many of her questions have been answered but a few remain unanswered. She would like to know how to go about getting answers to these remaining questions.

Mr. Pierce suggested meeting with Dr. Crimmin. Dr. Crimmin agreed to set up an appointment with Mrs. Vatcher.

Mr. Kenney, a member of the Finance Committee, warned the School Committee to get ready for a difficult budget season due to the tight fiscal climate.

3. Personnel Report

Dr. LaCroix asked the School Committee to approve the Pathways to China trip scheduled for April 14-25th, 2010. She noted that due to travel time, students attending would miss several days of school. Dr. LaCroix explained that Bedford students in the Pathways program would join with other Pathway schools. The cost is \$3,200 per student.

Ms. Seibert made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the Pathways to China trip on April 14-25, 2010 for the Pathway to China students to travel at a cost of \$3,200 per student and no cost to the schools.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Dr. LaCroix also asked the School Committee to approve a job description for “Skills Center Teacher at the Middle School”. Dr. LaCroix said that this is a new description for this role. She explained that an individual has been in the position for several years, but a job description has never been written.

The School Committee reviewed the job description and gave Dr. LaCroix some edits. They agreed to vote on the final description at the next meeting.

Dr. LaCroix announced the resignation of Laura Hough, a teaching assistant at the Middle School.

4. Presentation: Social Studies grades 6-12

Christine Kirkpatrick, Program Administrator, gave an update to the School Committee regarding the Social Studies program in grades 6 –12.

She highlighted the scope and sequence as follows:

6th grade – World Geography, outside of North America

7th grade – Ancient Civilizations

8th grade – World History

9th grade – Foundations of American history

10th grade – Modern World History

11th grade – Modern American History.

Electives offered at the High School differ each year and are offered to 11th and 12th graders.

Ms. Kirkpatrick explained that the development of curriculum documents is underway. This work includes creating essential questions for each course of study as well as creating frameworks, assessments and resources.

Ms. Kirkpatrick thanked the School Committee for giving the Social Studies department time to work together and to collaborate within and between grade levels. As a result, a lot of the curriculum work has been documented and communications within the department has really improved. All in all, the curriculum documents are in good shape for the required courses and the teachers are now focused on documenting the electives.

Ms. Kirkpatrick said that this process has made the Social Studies team examine the best ways to teach critical thinking skills. Ms. Kirkpatrick explained that the course descriptions are content heavy, but in the classroom, students learn critical thinking skills and these skills build on one another.

Ms. Kirkpatrick also mentioned that there are lots of professional development opportunities. She also noted that there are many opportunities for Social Studies projects beyond the classroom in both the middle and high schools.

Ms. Kirkpatrick explained that the Program Review process for Social Studies has begun. Joe Casey, Karen Lerra, and Susan Nocera will join her on this endeavor. The plan is to have a visiting team come to Bedford in February 2011. The group has started to draft the department's mission statement and to identify strengths and needs of the Social Studies program in grades K-12.

Ms. Kirkpatrick also noted that the department website is being redeveloped.

She thanked the School Committee for their support over the years.

Ms. O'Gara asked about the status of the state frameworks. Ms. Kirkpatrick said that the frameworks are currently stable. She said that the MCAS test in Social Studies as a requirement for graduation is currently on hold until 2012.

Ms. O’Gara asked if Bedford’s curriculum matched the state frameworks. Ms. Kirkpatrick said yes.

Ms. O’Gara said it was great to see the numbers of Juniors and Seniors who take Social Studies electives.

Ms. O’Gara asked if the lower level students have the opportunity to learn critical thinking skills. Ms. Kirkpatrick said yes that this is the focus in all levels. She did note that the challenge is to figure out how to assess this skill.

Ms. Bickford asked if the Law class was running this year. Ms. Kirkpatrick said yes, Law level 4/5 is running but not the level 2/3. The “ Real World Social Studies” class replaced this lower level offering in hopes of attracting a broader audience.

Ms. Bickford asked if current events were covered in Social Studies curriculum. Ms. Kirkpatrick said yes and gave the example that right now in the Economics class, the focus is on the current financial crisis. “Gender Studies” and “Psychology” tend to run based on current events. Overall, current events are woven into all courses. Often, compare and contrast assignments are the best way to weave in current events.

Ms. Bickford asked if teachers have common midterm/final exams. Ms. Kirkpatrick said not quite. Informally, teachers have common exams due to sharing and collaborations. However the teachers like the flexibility to offer their own exam based on what is going on in their classrooms. (Ms. Bickford said she was happy to hear this.)

Ms. Bickford asked if there was any thought about doing a middle school National History Day competition. Ms. Kirkpatrick said that there has been some discussion on doing this. The concern is that the students may get burn-out in middle school and not pursue this in high school.

Ms. Dickinson Meltz said that history competitions are very time consuming and she did not think it would be appropriate for 8th graders.

Ms. Bickford asked that given the recent changes in scope and sequences, whether any indication if students are having trouble remembering information from past courses. Ms. Kirkpatrick said that it was truly too early to answer this question.

Ms. Bickford thanked Ms. Kirkpatrick for all of the collaborative work going on in the department. She said that it was great to hear that the Social Studies department is not static, that the curriculum is a work in progress.

Ms. Seibert asked Ms. Kirkpatrick for her hopes and dreams for the department. Ms. Kirkpatrick said she would like more paid summer curriculum work opportunities. She would love to go back and ask others in the department this question.

Mr. Hafer said he was pleased to hear about the critical thinking focus. Ms. Kirkpatrick said it was a good focus. She said the teachers are trying to use similar terminology in all grades and are collectively trying to give students more opportunity to write and to do other types of expression using technology.

Mr. Hafer asked Ms. Kirkpatrick to comment on the fact that there is no AP offering in Social Studies. Ms. Kirkpatrick said that AP courses are content driven and focus less on critical thinking skills. She said students do take AP exams and often do great. Teachers help students who want to take the AP exams.

Mr. Pierce thanked Ms. Kirkpatrick for thorough presentation.

Mr. Pierce asked how the longer class block is working out at the middle school. Ms. Kirkpatrick said that she sees teachers using more tools and hands-on resources in class.

Miss Dickinson-Meltz agrees that critical thinking has been the focus since 6th grade.

5. Superintendent's Report

Dr. LaCroix reported that the NEASC visit on November 1st – 4th was successful. The Chairperson made some brief comments to the faculty on the last day of the visit. She commended the high school with regards to its clear mission and expectations. She also complimented the outstanding leadership of Mr. Sills and noted that he is truly a collaborator. The Chairperson also commended the faculty on its commitment and the community on its support of the high school renovation and its support of education in general.

The Chairperson did mention some recommendations that would take Bedford to the next level.

- More work on rubrics
- More work on authentic assessments on student work

Dr. LaCroix explained that a draft report would be presented to Mr. Sills in about six weeks. The final accreditation decision will be delivered in March 2010.

Dr. LaCroix said. "All in all, it was a very positive four days." She said that she was especially proud of the following comment made by the visiting team: "Students were engaged, respectful and showed incredible pride in their school."

Dr. LaCroix said that after the Thanksgiving break there would be School Committee meetings on December 1, 8, and possibly the 15th.

6. Liaison Updates

Ms. O'Gara reported that Youth and Family Services have been very busy with a lot of emergency requests for help. She also reported that the new teen center, "The Corner", has become very popular with Middle School students.

Ms. Seibert mentioned that the Community Partnerships Committee is trying to raise money to provide enrichment to the schools.

Mr. Hafer said that the Bedford Education Foundation is very busy doing a variety of fundraisers for the schools.

7. Minutes for Approval

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the September 15, 2009 School Committee meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

8. Future Agenda

Ms. Bickford asked Mr. Coelho to clarify the Capital Budget balances. She said she would like to know this in order to consider applying these balances to any current requests. Specifically, she would like to consider applying the Lane and Davis balances to the wireless network request or possibly any other project on the Capital Budget Request report.

School Committee members agreed this was a good idea and decided to bring the balances to the C.E.C. attention.

Ms. Bickford would like an update on the status of BHS Live.

The School Committee agreed to send Mr. Coelho comments on the draft of the enrollment study.

The School Committee is waiting on an MSBA update on the audit and status of the final payment.

9. Adjournment

Ms Seibert made the following motion:

MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 9:10.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford

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

**EXECUTIVE SEESION
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