

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF
May 8, 2012
Bedford High School - Large Instruction Room

1. Call to Order

At 7:35 p.m., Ms. Seibert called to order the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present included Mr. Hafer, Ms. O’Gara, Mr. Pierce, and Ms. Bickford. Sam Markuse, student representative, was also in attendance.

2. Comments from the Public

None

3. Personnel Report

Dr. LaCroix asked the School Committee to consider approving a request for an out-of-state field trip from Mr. Sunderland for students to participate in the National History Day Competition at the University of Maryland in College Park, Md.

Dr. LaCroix explained that six BHS students won the opportunity to compete in the national competition in Maryland on June 10-14, 2012. Students will miss 4 school days. The cost of the trip is \$475 per student, which includes room, board, and transportation as well as contest registration fees. The school will not incur any costs. Teachers will make individual make-up exam arrangements with each student.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the field trip to University of Maryland in College Park, MD on June 10-14, 2012 for six BHS students who qualified to compete in the National History Day competition at a cost of \$475 per student and at no cost to the school department.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Dr. LaCroix announced the following information items:

Resignations:

Ken Lord	Director of Information Technology	System
Sarah Orlov	Assistant Director of Special Education	System
Laurie Zucker-Conde	ESL Teacher	Davis
Maria Garcia	Custodian	Davis

Appointments

Vera Corbett	Davis School Kindergarten Teacher
Jason Valdes Greenwood	Early Childhood Coordinator
Richard Herbst	Chemistry Teacher (BHS)

4. Policy Approvals

The School Committee voted on several policies that were presented at the last School Committee meeting.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the Wellness Policy (File ADF) as revised.

MOTION Seconded by Ms. O’Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Dr. LaCroix presented an updated version of the Social Networking Policy. She explained that the policy was originally approved in February. Since then, there has been some feedback from staff and the BEA. Therefore, the policy has been slightly changed to accommodate staff concerns.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the Bedford Public Schools Social Network Policy for Staff (File IJNDD) as presented this evening.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Members of the School Committee felt that the changes made to the policy were a definite improvement.

Dr. LaCroix presented an updated Attendance Policy. She explained that there was an effort to create a district-wide attendance policy. Each of the school’s handbooks however, will have more specific policy and procedures. Members of the School Committee reviewed the policy and noted a few concerns. One was that a parent now has to come into the High School to dismiss a student and wondered if it really made sense to have every parent excuse a tardy even if it is 5 minutes.

Ms. O’Gara made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the revised Student Attendance Policy (File: JH) as presented this evening.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

5. JGMS School Improvement Plan and 2012-2013 Handbook

Ms. Viladenis, Principal of JGMS, presented the 2012-2013 Strategic Plan for Improvement. She began the presentation by thanking members of the JGMS School Council for their hard work in preparing this plan.

She began by reviewing this past year. She explained that the focus of the 2011-2012 school year was on RTI, mapping curriculum with the Common Core, professional development in Math and English, data and diversity training. Ms. Viladenis made the following points:

- It is difficult to implement RTI service delivery. Therefore, the schedule will be reviewed to see if there is a way to revise it to accommodate this need.
- To date, Social Studies curriculum maps have been posted online. The other departments are still working on aligning the curriculum to the Common Core.
- The Data Team’s focus switched from building –based to district-wide goals.
- The school did a lot of great work in diversity and tolerance training with the students.

Ms. Viladenis then reviewed the goals for the 2012-2013 school year. She framed her discussion by using the four district wide areas of focus – Governance & Leadership, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment and Evaluation, and Academic Support.

Some of the major goals for 2012-2013 include:

Governance & Leadership

- Create a scheduling committee to study the current schedule to determine whether it meets current and future needs.

Curriculum and Instruction

- Create a study group to research future technology needs of the 21st century learner at JGMS in conjunction with building space usage.

Assessment and Evaluation

- Improve assessments to measure learning and to develop differentiated and enhanced learning experiences.
- Train data teams to identify and analyze factors or practices that support or impede student achievement.

Academic Support

- Improve transition communication between home and school regarding 6th grade reporting. JGMS will mail grades for all sixth graders and will work on getting parents to utilize Aspen.
- Create an Aspen tutorial training module for parents.

Mr. Hafer asked Ms. Viladenis about the mission statement and its focus on “flexibility”. He wondered what the intent was. Ms. Viladenis replied that flexibility is key to the middle school philosophy because it is so important to be flexible to be able to meet the needs of the middle learners.

Mr. Pierce asked if the schedule review would focus on the time of each class. Ms. Viladenis said no, that they do not want to change the length of each class but she does need to find time for intervention. Mr. Pierce was pleased to hear that the 50-minute class was not going to change.

Ms. O’Gara thanked Ms. Viladenis for her clear and concise description of the goals and objectives. She agrees that sixth graders should continue to receive report cards in the mail. She said that often, it is the parents who need the transition more than the students. She also approves of the use of standard comments for teachers to use.

Ms. Bickford thanked Ms. Viladenis for her presentation tonight and noted that it would be her last since she is retiring at the end of June.

Ms. Bickford suggested that posting curriculum maps should be a goal of the School Improvement plan for 2012-2013.

Ms. Bickford also asked for more information on the pressures on the current schedule. Ms. Viladenis explained that there is a need for more RTI intervention – right now it is only available 1 time per 6-day rotation. Also, there is a need for multiyear classes in the Crossroads and Transitions programs. Also, Choice Classes and ELL classes (again across grades) add to the schedule pressure.

Ms. Bickford asked if Ms. Viladenis thinks there will be a radical change. Ms. Viladenis said she was not really sure. She thinks it is important to have a review done with a variety of points of view. She expects to have an initial report in January.

Ms. Taymore added that the staff at JGMS also thinks that it is a good time to revisit the schedule. She also added that RTI intervention should happen more often, at least 3x per rotation.

Ms. Bickford asked about the concerns with the building space constraints. Ms. Viladenis explained that the building is overcrowded but more importantly she does not think that the building space is being utilized in the best way. She wonders if building space changes could help with the scheduling pressures as well.

Ms. Seibert asked why parents do not use Aspen. Ms. Viladenis said that many parents commented that it is hard to utilize.

Ms. Seibert asked if parents would still be getting end of year report cards mailed home. Ms. Viladenis said yes.

Ms. Seibert thanked Ms. Viladenis for her hard work on doing the School Improvement Plan and wished her the best for the future.

JGMS Student Handbook

Mr. Chapman discussed the proposed edits and changes for the 2012-2013 JGMS Student Handbook. He outlined all of the proposed changes in a memo to the School Committee dated May 8, 2012 but discussed only some of the bigger changes.

One of the changes he discussed is the desire to add a description of the intention of the Enrichment periods. This has never been described in previous handbooks. Also, a paragraph will be added explaining why a student may not get a desired “choice” class. This is to help mitigate the confusion and concerns from students and parents.

Mr. Chapman said that the Handbook will adopt the new attendance language that is similar to the other schools. He is still working on the consecutive absences policy.

Also, he noted that this year on the early release Wednesdays, many JGMS students would ride the bus that went down Great Road. He said that this has become problematic leaving no room for the high school students on this bus. He would like to have language addressing this problem. He proposed not allowing students to ride different busses without a note from home.

Ms. Bickford commented that this change seems problematic. She thinks it is unrealistic for middle school students to have a note about where they go after school. She said the a policy requiring notes to change busses is against the mission of JGMS – a mission that stresses flexibility and growth of the middle aged students.

Ms. Bickford said that overall, she feels that the proposed changes regarding the busses is too restrictive.

Mr. Hafer agreed that requiring notes in middle school is unmanageable and unrealistic for JGMS.

Mr. Chapman said that every so often, the school will get a call from an upset parent wondering why their child did not get off of the school bus at dismissal. He explained that the administration is unable to help in any way because they do not track how students go home.

Mr. Hafer understands how this may make the JGMS staff uncomfortable, but feels that the parents need to figure out a different way to handle the problem.

Dr. LaCroix suggested to Mr. Chapman that he keep this out of the handbook.

Ms. Bickford agreed. She believes updating a policy document is not always the best way to solve a problem.

Mr. Pierce asked why there is a proposed policy change to prohibit wearing sunglasses in school. Mr. Chapman said he feels this is disrespectful to teachers. Mr. Pierce reiterated Ms. Bickford's concerns about having a handbook that is too restrictive.

Ms. Bickford suggested changing the name of "Choice classes" to something like "Exploration Classes". This may help mitigate the assumption that a student has the right to choose which class he or she wants. Also, the School Committee suggested having more teacher discretion in changing a choice class. Mr. Chapman and Ms. Viladenis were not convinced that this would be a good idea. Further discussions on this topic were held. The School Committee then wondered if the problem was that the class offerings were not interesting to most students. Ms. Bickford suggested looking into whether the courses should be changed so that the lack of flexibility is not so bad for the students.

Ms. O'Gara thanked Mr. Chapman and Ms. Viladenis for making music options a priority and realizes that this may put even more pressure on choice class flexibility.

Ms. Seibert asked if the changes to the locker decorating practice was to ultimately stop the tradition. Mr. Chapman said no, he would like to see it continued but under certain guidelines.

The School Committee members asked Mr. Chapman to share the final attendance policy with them at the next meeting. They suggested that the policy be explicit and to state exactly what the Massachusetts law is.

The School Committee decided to withhold voting on the Handbook tonight. They would like to review the changes discussed tonight and to review the final attendance policy.

6. BHS School Improvement Plan

Mr. Sills presented the 2012-2013 BHS School Improvement Plan to the School Committee. He began his presentation of the plan by briefly reviewing some highlights of the 2011-2012 school year. Highlights include:

- Implemented the new late start and early release schedule.
- Piloted and evaluated the one to one iPad initiative with all Freshmen.
- Met with college admission officers and explored better ways to position BHS students.
- Developed common and equivalent assessments across the curriculum.
- Trained in data analysis to improve instruction.
- Created and implemented the first annual Tenacity Challenge.

- Expanded in-house special education offerings and transitioned to a more clinical model of therapeutic support.
- Prepared for the new DESE evaluation system.
- Furthered metacognitive learning strategies.

Mr. Sills thanked the School Council for their work in preparing the plan for 2012-2013. He framed the goals and objectives using the main categories laid out by the district – Governance and Leadership, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment and Evaluation, Human Resources and Professional Development and Student Support.

Major goals and objectives for 2012-2013 include:

Governance and Leadership

- Support new principal's transition.
- Implement recommendation from final evaluation of iPad program.
- Implement new DESE teacher evaluation system.
- Continue to address educational equity issues.
- Implement new state nutrition standards. (This will be a big hit financially for clubs.)

Curriculum and Instruction

- Continue with Common Core alignment.
- Continue with metacognitive learning focus.
- Continue to develop and implement Tier II interventions for struggling students.

Assessment and Evaluation

- Pilot common and equivalent assessments.
- Create task force to examine midterm and final exams.

Human Resources and Professional Development

- Develop improved and coordinated communication vehicle and reporting mechanism for teacher collaboration days. (Teachers realize that this time is a gift, just need to figure out how to take advantage of all the offerings.)
- Continue providing professional development to support one to one initiative and thoughtful use of data to improve instruction.
- Continue with professional development with regard to students of military families, with social emotional issues and ELL.

Student Support

- Continue to examine how best to position our students for college admission.
- Continue to develop our wide range of special education programs and clinical therapeutic services.
- Continue to develop and implement targeted regular education interventions as well as the Mandatory Homework Help.
- Continue to explore ways to increase pride in and respect for the building and honest academic behavior.

Mr. Hafer thanked Mr. Sills for his presentation of the highlights from last year and next year's goals. He was especially pleased to see that college positioning work continues. He recognizes that a lot of work in this area has been done, but feels we need to do even more.

Mr. Pierce asked Mr. Sills about the trend in high schools to offer only unweighted GPAs. Mr. Sills said the Bedford will continue to offer both weighted and unweighted GPA because it is in our best interest to position ourselves in the best light. “We need to do a better job explaining who we are.”

Mr. Pierce asked Mr. Sills to consider using the MIAA rules used for athletics for all extra curricular activities. He does not understand why someone in athletics has to abide by stricter rules than someone in the play, for example.

Mr. Pierce asked to hear some pros and cons of the later start. Mr. Sills said he has anecdotal evidence that it is less stressful, but he will try to collect some more information.

Ms. O’Gara asked what the focus will be on the midterm/final review process. Mr. Sills said the big question may be to ask, do we need to do pencil/paper tests and does each department need to do it in the same way? Also, how much should the tests weigh?

Ms. Bickford said she believes the current midterm/final format is very good for college readiness.

Ms. O’Gara said she was pleased to see (in the SIP) that making school a safe place to come crosses all curriculum goals.

Ms. Bickford said that the 2012-2013 School Improvement Plan is a strong reflection of the school.

Ms. Bickford was also especially interested in following the goal to develop a sister school relationship with a school in West Africa and/or China. Mr. Sills explained that this opportunity started from a BHS alumni and he needs to get the ball rolling on the opportunity.

Ms. Seibert thanked Mr. Sills for a great review and plan.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the BHS School Improvement Plan for 2012-2013.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the JGSM School Improvement Plan for 2012-2013.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Hafer

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

7. School Lunch Prices

Mr. Coelho presented to the School Committee, a memo describing new lunch prices proposed for the 2012-2013 school year. Mr. Coelho explained that the proposal is to increase lunch prices at each school and for the salad bar and deli offerings at the high school. The high school would also offer a “premium lunch” beginning in September at a cost of \$3.50.

Ms. Bickford said that the food services program needs to be self-supported so she believes a price increase, such as the one proposed, is inevitable.

Sam Markuse, student representative, commented that it is hard on the high school students to keep having to come up with more money to buy the same thing.

Mr. Kenney, a member of the Finance Committee in the audience, said the increase is a 12% increase and that this seems like a big increase.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve, effective September 2012, the lunch price increases as follows:

	Current Price	New Price
Davis School	\$2.00	\$2.25
Lane School	\$2.00	\$2.25
JGMS	\$2.25	\$2.50
BHS	\$2.50	\$2.75
Salad bar	\$2.50	\$3.00
Deli	\$2.50	\$3.00
Premium Lunch		\$3.50

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

8. Bus Contract – Option Years

Mr. Coelho would like the School Committee to consider approving an extension to the existing bus contract. Mr. Coelho recommends agreeing to renew the contracts for another 2 years by renewing both renewal options. Mr. Coelho explained that Bedford Charter has done an excellent job with the changes to the schedule and with combining the JGMS and BHS routes. Mr. Coelho explained that the cost to renew one year would be \$948,456 and \$263,000 for the METCO bus route extension.

Ms. Bickford asked if there was a compelling reason to agree to renew both years right now. Mr. Coelho said no, that renewing the second year could be done in the fall.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee agree to accept Option Year 1 of the 2010-2012 Bus Transportation Contract with Bedford Charter Company for regular day transportation and late bus transportation at an estimated contract value of \$948,456.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Ms. Bickford also made the following motion:

MOVED: That the Bedford School Committee agrees to accept Option Year 1 of the 2010-2012 Bus Transportation Contract with Bedford Charter Company for METCO bus service as an estimated contract value of \$263,000.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

9. School Choice

Dr. LaCroix recommends that Bedford not participate in the School Choice program because she believes it is inequitable and we are facing space constraints at some of our schools.

Ms. O’Gara made the following motion:

MOVED: That the Bedford School Committee not participate in the School Choice Program for the 2012-2013 school year. Among the reasons for not participating is the belief that School Choice exacerbates or at least reinforces inequities between wealthier and poorer school systems; and we are at enrollment capacity at our middle school level.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

10. Donation

Mr. Coelho explained that the school department received a donation of some computer networking equipment from Mr. Talal Ali Ahmad, of Entrada Communications in Bedford. (He has two students attending school in Bedford.) Mr. Coelho recommends accepting this generous donation from Mr. Ali Ahmad. The Director of Information Technology will deploy the equipment as needed.

Ms. O’Gara made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee accept the donation of the following equipment from Mr. Talal Ali Ahmad to be used as necessary:

4 Dell Poweredge 2950 servers

3 Dell Poweredge 2850 servers

1 Dell Poweredge 2650 server

2 Dell Poweredge 1950 servers

1 Silkworm 200e Switch

1 Cisco DS-C9100 Switch

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

The School Committee thanked Mr. Ali Ahmad for his generous donation and will issue a letter expressing appreciation.

11. Superintendent’s Report

Dr. LaCroix congratulated the Art Department for another successful K-12 art show. She thanked all the many helping hands in our community that helped make this a success. She said that the show is “a real treasure”.

Dr. LaCroix also informed the School Committee that on May 10th, a pool of candidates for the Davis School Principal position will be interviewed and then site visits will follow on May 21st. She will know by the end of the month if there are any viable candidates.

Dr. LaCroix announced that Denise Oldham will be an interim Special Education Director. The district is still looking for an interim assistant superintendent.

12. Liaison Reports

Mr. Hafer reminded everyone that Bedford Education Foundation is holding a fundraiser at Barnes and Noble on May 10 and May 11th. He encouraged all to attend.

Mr. Pierce noted that the Finance Committee will be discussing financial policy next week.

13. Minutes for Review

Ms. O’Gara made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the March 6, 2012 School Committee meeting.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the Executive Session meeting of the March 6, 2012 School Committee meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the February 7, 2012 School Committee meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the February 14, 2012 School Committee meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the April 2, 2012 meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce

MOTION APPROVED: 4-0-1

Roll Call Vote:

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

14. Future Agenda

The May 22, 2012 meeting will begin at 8:00 p.m.

15. Adjournment

Ms. O’Gara made the following motion:

MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 11:15.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Hafer

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Roll Call Vote:

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

School Committee Secretary

Date

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

May 8, 2012

Exhibits/Documents

- Draft of Bedford Public Schools' Wellness Policy ADF
- Draft of Bedford Public Schools' Social Networking Policy for Staff IJNDD
- Draft of Bedford Public Schools' Attendance Policy JH
- Draft of JGMS Objectives and Strategic Plan for Improvement 2012-2013
- Memo of proposed changes to the JGMS 2012-2013 Student/Parent Handbook
- Draft of BHS School Improvement Plan 2012-2013
- Memorandum dated April 26, 2012 regarding Lunch Price Increase Recommendations.
- Draft of minutes from the March 6, 2012 School Committee meeting.
- Draft of minutes from the March 6, 2012 Executive Session School Committee meeting.
- Draft of minutes from the February 7, 2012 School Committee meeting.
- Draft of minutes from the February 14, 2012 School Committee meeting.
- Draft of minutes from the April 2, 2012 School Committee meeting.

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Executive Session
May 8, 2012