

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
February 7, 2017
Bedford High School - Large Group Instruction Room

1. Call to Order

At 7:40 p.m., Ms. Guay called to order the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present included Mr. Pierce, Mr. Brosgol and Ms. Santiago. Tracie Lewis, Student Representative was also in attendance. Mr. McAllister was absent.

2. Comments from Public

None

3. Personnel Report

Mr. Sills announced the retirement of Suzanne Mellon, Administrative Assistant at Davis School.

4. STEP Program Presentation

Michelle DellaValle, Special Education Program Administrator at the high school, introduced the STEP Program to the School Committee. STEP ("Succeeding Through Experience Program") is a special education program that helps at risk students graduate from high school and also helps prepare them to be successful members of the community. Ms. DellaValle explained that the STEP program is a substantially separate program at the high school that aims to support students through their social and emotional challenges.

Ms. Victoria Breslin, Special Education Liaison and Mr. Shawn Daley, Therapist, introduced themselves and showed the School Committee a presentation on the program. The presentation featured very personal testimonials from some of the current students.

Ms. Breslin explained that there are currently 14 students in the program (much larger than the past). The goal of the program is to have the teachers and staff make connections and lasting relationships with the students so that they feel safe at school and are open to learning. The program has dedicated special education staff and also has regular education staff come into the classroom to teach. The curriculum is tailored to each student. Many STEP students participate in regular education classes outside of the STEP classroom whenever possible. Recently, one student has transitioned out of the program and attends mainstream classes only.

After the presentation, members of the School Committee had many questions.

Ms. Santiago asked what the criteria is for a student to be part of the STEP program. Ms. Breslin explained that the student must have an emotional disability and is on an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Often, this student has gone through many other interventions and that the STEP program is the last option tried to keep the student in school.

Mr. Pierce asked if the goal is to push the students into the mainstream classes. Ms. Breslin said it really depends on each individual student and what the vision and goals are on the IEP. Some students do want to move into the mainstream classes and others just want to graduate. Some do focus on college. Other times, the goal is emotional stability.

Mr. Pierce asked how long the program has been operating. Ms. Breslin said that this was the third year and that it was the only one in Bedford Public Schools. Mr. Sills said that JGMS has a Bridge program, but nothing like STEP.

Mr. Pierce thanked Ms. Breslin and Mr. Daley for showing the student's point of view and for being so dedicated to the students.

Mr. Brosgol asked Ms. Breslin to review the staffing. She explained that there are four general education teachers who come into the class to teach. There are two teaching assistants and two math support instructors who work full time in the STEP classroom.

Mr. Brosgol asked if the STEP students participate in extracurricular activities at the school. Mr. Daley said that the kids are encouraged to do so. However, it is often difficult for the students to make the commitment and often to complete something they start.

Mr. Brosgol said it was very touching to hear the testimonials.

Ms. Guay agreed and congratulated the students for giving the personal testimonials. She also asked about the types of therapy offered and whether the students have been in outside programs.

Mr. Daley said that the kids get a wide range of therapy – emotional support, help with a resume, help with keeping a job, and practicing life skills. Ms. Breslin said that these kids have been in outside programs but they have all transitioned well into STEP.

Both Ms. Breslin and Mr. Daley shared how much they interact with the families. Mr. Daley said he is surprised at how complex the family system can be.

Ms. Guay asked how the high school community reacts to the program. Ms. Galante, Principal of the high school, said that the mainstream students are very respectful and that she believes that the STEP students feel safe at the school and many have friends outside of their program. Ms. Galante also noted that the teachers really respect the work and dedication of Ms. Breslin and Mr. Daley.

Ms. Tracie Lewis said that she is pleased to learn about this program. She understands how stressful school can be for students without emotional issues, she cannot imagine how hard it can be for those who do not have emotional stability. She is pleased this program offers such a supportive environment.

Mr. Pierce commented that it is important that the School Committee and Administration support the teachers in this program (and others like it). Mr. Sills agrees. He said that these are “burn out” types of jobs because they are so consuming. He believes that he can help by providing the appropriate level of staffing. He has also brought in consultants to help develop staff.

5. Bedford High School Program of Studies

Principal Heather Galante and Assistant Principal Kate Boynton, presented proposed changes to the Bedford High School Program of Studies for 2017-18. They distributed a memo that had all of the changes and discussed some of the more substantial changes.

Ms. Galante reported that one change is that the ADD/DROP procedure has been clarified and deadlines for course changes have been published. (Now 6 weeks from the midpoint of the term).

The goal is to make the schedule change process a little bit more deliberate in attempt to cut back on the number of changes. Extenuating circumstances will always be considered. Ms. Galante also noted that the majority of schedule changes will be handled prior to the start of school on “Arena Day”. This is a day before the start of school when teachers and Guidance Counselors will be available to make schedule changes in hope that most students will start school with their desired schedule.

Ms. Galante also introduced the following new course offerings for the 2017-18 school year (none require new teachers):

- Ballet – This will be part of the Theater Department. Ms. Faulstich is qualified to teach this class. She believes that many students who want to pursue Theater Arts after high school need to have a basic dance class in their background.
- Astronomy/Space Explorations
- Forensics/Forensic Media
- Dropping Introduction to Engineering – covered in the Robotics/Computer course
- Personal Finance is now Business Math – this meets colleges’ expectations. Financial literacy is the focus.

Ms. Galante also explained that the Academic Achievement Center will replace a lot of the support classes. Students will be assigned to the Academic Achievement Center and Mrs. Morrison will move them in and out of the appropriate classes within the Achievement Center, This will cut down on schedule changes throughout the year.

All interns will be grouped together under Mr. Mangan since most require Early Childhood as a prerequisite.

Ms. Santiago asked Ms. Galante to be sure to announce the date of Arena Day early and often so that families can take advantage of it. Ms. Santiago feels it may go unnoticed since it happens in the summer.

Ms. Santiago asked why the unleveled classes (new this year) are termed “heterogeneous”. Ms. Galante explained that the term was selected based on college admissions feedback.

Ms. Santiago said that it seems like the Computer Programming classes are overwhelmingly male focused. She hopes that girls are encouraged more to take the class. She also heard it was hard to get on student’s schedule. Ms. Galante agreed to help promote this class.

Mr. Pierce said he was concerned that a day in the summer (Arena Day) was the only opportunity for students to change schedules. Ms. Galante assured him that there is ample opportunities for students to see their Guidance Counselor to make changes during the first few weeks of school.

Ms. Guay asked if a student withdrew from a class, would they be able to retake it another point in time as way to remove the “W” from their transcript. Ms. Galante said no.

Mr. Brosgol made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee accept the changes for the Bedford High School 2017-2018 Program of Studies as described in memo dated January 31, 2017 and as presented tonight.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Santiago

MOTION APPROVED: 4-0 (Mr. McAllister was absent)

6. Open Budget Hearing

The public FY'18 budget hearing opened at 9:00 P.M. Mr. Sills reviewed the FY'18 budget process and proposal. Here are highlights:

- Community Expectations drive the overall budget for the schools.
- Enrollment changes in regular and special education have required additional staffing needs this year. Funding this year came from out-of-district placement savings and hiring cost differentials. However, these positions need to be accounted for in the FY'18 budget.
- Overall, budget planning begins in September with a needs assessment. In November, the School Committee receives a budget overview. On December 1st, the Finance Committee issued guidelines.
- The School Committee deliberates on the budget from mid-November until late January when it votes on a budget request to present to the Finance Committee. Throughout January the School Committee reviews several budget scenarios. CASE and LABBB credits are finalized.
- This year, the FY'18 Budget Request was voted on January 25, 2017 and came in at a 3.5% increase over last year meeting Finance Committee guideline. Mr. Sills said that the schools were able to meet financial guidelines due to savings from in-house special education programs and careful deliberations.

FY'18 Budget Request

- \$39,061,561 total request – 3.5% increase
- Maintenance of Effort budget \$38,577,073 -2.22%
- \$1,320.858 total increase request

Budget Cost Centers

- Salaries 75.47%
- Instructional materials, texts, technology 6.11%
- Regular and Special Education transportation 4.56%
- Out-of-district placements 8.36%
- Offsets 5.5%

Key Drivers

- Enrollment – size and complexities. JGMS had large growth and resulted in need for arts and wellness staff. Also, there is a need for additional 4th grade staff.
- A need for additional custodian to cover additional space, to cover absences, and summer help.
- In-house special education including preschool expansion and SAIL program at Davis (and Lane in FY'18)
- Additional salary needs in math skills at BHS, Teaching Assistants for the Academic Achievement Center at BHS, summer math help at JGMS, additional ELL teacher at Lane, and coaching stipends.
- Technology – language lab contracts, data storage, math licenses, Ipads for Davis, Lane, and JGMS (half will be off-lease purchases)

Mr. Sills noted that the entire FY'18 budget will be posted on the web site for review.
Mr. Pierce said he is pleased that the district will finally be moving forward on longitudinal analysis of students.

Mr. Brosgol said that given the new developments currently underway in town (i.e. Evergreen, Cottages on South Road and new homes on Fox Run) the schools really need to stay on top of enrollment projections.

The Public Hearing on the budget closed at 9:35 P.M.

7. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Sills reported that 83 students and chaperones from China spent the day at the middle and high school. It was a very successful visit and a wonderful experience for Bedford and Chinese students.

Mr. Sills said he was in the midst of teacher contract negotiations and that overall things are going well.

Mr. Sills and the Equity and Diversity Committee are trying to increase the diversity of school staff. The Committee has reached out to 20 local colleges and invited the Practicum Leaders to come to BHS to learn about our schools. A video is also being produced by Bedford students to help.

Mr. Sills mentioned that Ms. Sallee is feeling better and will hopefully return to work in March.

8. School Committee Meeting Minutes

Mr. Brosgol made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minute of the January 3, 2017 School Committee Meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Santiago

MOTION APPROVED: 4-0 (Mr. McAllister is absent)

9. Adjournment

Ms. Santiago made the following motion:

MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 9:40 p.m.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Brosgol

MOTION APPROVED 4-0

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. McAllister	Absent
Ms. Guay	Yes
Mr. Brosgol	Yes
Mr. Pierce	Yes
Ms. Santiago	Yes

School Committee Secretary

Date

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

February 7, 2017

Exhibits/Documents

- Presentation: STEP Program
- Memo: Proposed Program of Studies Changes for 2017-18
- Draft of minutes from the January 3, 2017 School Committee meeting
- Hand out – Superintendent’s FY’18 Budget Request