

November 2005



BEDFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Superintendent's Bulletin

From the Superintendent of Schools

Recently *Phi Delta Kappa* released its annual poll results on the public's attitude towards public schools. Given the challenges we face in terms of the financing of public schools, the struggles around student achievement and standardized testing, and the varying opinions about school choice and charter schools, I thought you might find the conclusions interesting. Based on this poll, the researchers have suggested the following:

- Lack of financial support is solidly entrenched in the public mind as the major problem facing the nation's public schools.
- The high level of support Americans give to schools in their community is unchanged and support of the public schools grows in direct proportion to the closeness of respondents to those schools.
- The public's strong preference is for improvement that comes by reforming the current public schools rather than by finding an alternative system.
- The public opposes permitting parents and students to choose to attend private schools at public expense.
- The major reason cited for supporting private school attendance at public expense is the belief that achievement is better in private schools.
- A plurality of respondents support the idea of charter schools as long as they are accountable to the state in the same way as regular public schools and not be created if less funding is available for the public schools.
- The public believes that the amount of achievement testing in schools is just about right.
- The public is divided regarding the use of test scores for the purpose of evaluating teachers and principals.
- The public believes that the current emphasis on standardized tests will lead teachers to teach to the test and does not regard this as a positive outcome.
- The public approaches consensus on the importance of Closing the Achievement Gap, attributes the gap to factors other than schooling, believes parents and students have more to do with whether students learn than teachers, but still believes that it is the responsibility of the schools to close the gap.

You will also be interested in the report's suggestion that "The NCLB strategies are fre-

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quently out of step with approaches favored by the public.” That conclusion suggests to me that the public is beginning to understand that the laudable global intent of NCLB to *improve the achievement of all students* is compromised by the goal that *all students*, regardless of cognitive ability and challenges, will be proficient by the year 2014. Perhaps the public is beginning to understand the research such as the recent *MassPartners for Public Schools* (June 2005) paper which says the following about Massachusetts and AYP: “In 2004, 758 schools (48%) failed to make the Statutory AYP target; by 2014, 1567 schools (90%) are projected not to make Statutory AYP and by 2014, 1286 schools (74%) are projected to fail to make Statutory AYP and will be subject to federal penalties.”

At this juncture one just hopes that the intention of the federal mandate is soon moderated by the reality of what we can and must achieve in our schools.

Athletic Department by Chris Aufiero

Although the Bedford High School Athletic Fall Season is rapidly coming to an end, there are still a few important events left. The girls’ soccer and volleyball teams have qualified for the post season, and the cross country team will compete in the Divisional Meet. Also, the Varsity, JV and Freshman football teams still have three games left, including the traditional Thanksgiving Day game vs. Concord-Carlisle. For dates, times and location, please log onto the Bedford High School website and visit the athletic section.

Mr. Aufiero, Mr. Mangan and three members of the Captain’s Council will be attending the 12th Annual MIAA Sportsmanship Summit on November 18th at Gillette Stadium.

A steering committee is now being formed to select inductees for the first class of the Bedford High Athletic Hall of Fame. The induction ceremony will take place in March as part of the festivities celebrating the school’s 50th anniversary. The group that is currently organizing the Hall of Fame includes Mike Rosenberg, Harry Boghigian, Mark Sullivan, Wayne Braverman, and Al Dougherty. The group is accepting nominations until November 30th. Forms are available on the high school’s web site: www.bedford.k12.ma.us. For athletes to be considered, they must have left the high school at least five years ago. Coaches and other contributors may still be active. Due to the unique situation of Bedford High School’s Hanscom population, it is not a requirement that they graduated from BHS. Outstanding teams, coaches and other people who have played a significant role in building the BHS athletic programs will also be considered. Though it would help to provide the committee with as much supporting data as possible, the committee will do the necessary research to determine a nominee’s worthiness.

All students interested in participating in a winter sport must attend the pre-season meeting on November 10th in the auditorium during X block. The high school winter sport season will begin on Monday, November 28th. All required forms, including a physical given within the last 13 months, are due by November 21st. All forms are available on the Bedford High School website.

On Thursday, November 17th, the BHS Athletic Department in conjunction with Mr. Sills, will hold a mandatory parent athletic meeting for parents/guardians of winter athletes. The agenda will include: (1) why we decided to make the parent athletic meetings mandatory; (2) a review of the 2005-2006 Athletic Handbook; (3) the Bedford Athletic Association will speak about its role and the need for parent volunteers; (4) Officer Wardwell from the Bedford Police Department will speak about the relationship between the school and the police department regarding drugs and alcohol; (5) Mr. Sills will speak about a new parent-team initiative where each team will be required to do one off-the-field activity (cookout, attending college sporting events, movie night, etc.); and (6) Parents will have a chance to meet a member of the winter coaching staff and ask him/her questions. Attendance will be taken.

JGMS Winter Athletics:

The Middle School Winter Athletic Season will begin on Monday, December 5th. All required forms must be turned in before a student will be allowed to participate. These forms are available in the nurse’s office. If you have any questions, please see Mr. Steffen.



Art Department by Aleta Devaney

Starting with this issue of the *Superintendent's Bulletin*, you will notice the inclusion of student artwork. Our goal is to include examples of lessons taught in the K-12 art program in the Bedford Public Schools. You will see a variety of student responses to lessons that reflect their ideas, design sense, skill and effort! It will be a pleasure to be able to share work with the community throughout the year, and hopefully you will be able to view more art "up close and personal" at our annual K-12 show in May at the John Glenn Middle School.

For those of you who don't want to wait until May for a gallery experience, there will be an opportunity to view Bedford High School student work in Lexington this month. The following Bedford High School students will have their work exhibited in the Lexington Arts and Crafts Society's annual High School Art Majors Exhibit: David Ahern, Jordyn Budden, Erica Christin, Marybeth Corbett, Hillary Fish, Travis Johnson, Hyun Joo Lee, Audrey Lin, Katie Neff, Dan Park, and Evan Rosse. The opening reception is Friday November

4, 6-8 p.m. in the Parsons Gallery of the Lexington Arts and Crafts Society, 130 Waltham Street, Lexington. Refreshments will be provided by the Society. The exhibit is scheduled for Saturday, November 5, through Sunday, November 20, 2005. The show will include a variety of work created by students from high schools in communities contiguous to Lexington.



Kaylyn (age 16)

Music Department by Barry Low

The performing ensembles of the Bedford Public Schools Music Department are busy preparing for the winter concert season. The BHS Marching Band has been very busy performing at football games, and in the Massachusetts Instrumental Conductors Association marching band competitions. Most recently the marching band performed in Wakefield and received outstanding marks for its performance. The marching band performed in the MICA finals in Framingham.

On November 19th, thirty members of the BHS music department will travel to Marblehead High School to audition for the Massachusetts Music Educators Association's 2006 Northeast District Festival to be held in January in Lowell.

On December 2nd and 3rd the BHS Music Department will present the 17th annual "Madrigal Dinner". Ticket request forms were sent out November 1st and are due back on November 13th. If anyone did not receive one and would like to order tickets, you may call the music office and one will be sent out, or you can go to the school's website and download a form. The BHS instrumental ensembles will present a winter concert on December 14th in the high school auditorium featuring a wide variety of instrumental literature. The BHS vocal ensembles will present their annual winter concert on Wednesday, December 21st at 7:30PM in the BHS auditorium. These ensembles will also present a wide variety of choral literature, featuring The "Gloria in D" by Vivaldi. At JGMS the choral and instrumental performing ensembles are busy preparing for their upcoming concerts. The fall vocal showcase concert will be on November 17th in the JGMS auditorium at 7 PM. The instrumental concert will be December 15th. All concerts are free.

The Lane School chorus has been working on its annual winter concert scheduled for January. Curriculum work at the Lane School continues by enhancing the 5th grade rhythm unit with more songs using dotted rhythms, and enhancing the 3rd grade rhythm unit by adding pieces that were composed in BOTH duple and triple meter. At the Davis School the music curriculum will be enhanced with information gleaned from a Primary Source course "American Music - Roots, Innovation and Impact."

Reading Department by Susan Rozen

Make-A-Difference Reading Tutors Begins Its Third Year

For the third year, seniors from the high school began their tutoring at the elementary schools as *Make-A-Difference* reading tutors. These seniors, all of whom enjoy the satisfaction of teaching younger children and many of whom are interested in becoming teachers, work with classroom teachers, special education teachers, and reading teachers. Before going to the schools, they learn how to teach phonics and reading strategies. This year the program has been expanded to include the Hanscom elementary schools, and we are grateful to Susan Sullivan and Loretta Delasandro for their efforts. We are also grateful to Jean Thuma and Ann Hamel at Davis and to Linda Volpicelli and Susan Breslin at Lane.

K-12 Reading Team Scope and Sequence Planned

The K-12 Reading Team met earlier this month to discuss the reading program initiatives for this year, as well as issues that impact each school. One goal of the team is to develop a scope and sequence of skills program for students in reading K-12. The need for this has presented itself many times in the past years as it will help teachers and specialists in planning curriculum, in selecting and administering appropriate assessments for monitoring students and in making benchmark decision for progress monitoring. Early advocates of this goal are Andrea Salipante at Davis and the JGMS reading team, Sarah Crosby, Robin Talkowski, and Suz-

anne Alberich.

JGMS & Bedford High School are Recipients of Secondary Reading Grant

This past week we were fortunate to receive a Department of Education grant for \$26,939 to begin work on implementing a secondary school level initiative that will involve training classroom teachers in the teaching and assessing of reading skills. We appreciate all the work that the teachers and reading specialists that comprise the Reading Leadership Teams at the secondary level put into the assembly of the considerable data and for the research it took to win this competitive grant.

Facilities Department by Richard Jones

In order to provide more cost effective and timely service, the Maintenance staff is changing the way in which it provides services to each school. The new operating procedures establish a more systematic approach to completing repair, preventative maintenance and renovation work orders by focusing on one building at a time. All town buildings will now be serviced on a rotating basis approximately every eight weeks. Due to the amount of outstanding work the first rotation of this cycle is expected to be more time consuming than future cycles. Emergency requests will still be handled immediately. The schedule will be adjusted to accommodate high priority work in addition to emergencies.



Middle School Science by Bradd Smithson

In studying sound, sixth graders are using technology to collect data on sound levels all over the middle school. They will be analyzing their data and reporting their findings in lab reports. Students in grade 7 have built their own ecosystems from recyclable two-liter soda bottles. Some are aquatic, some terrestrial and some are both. Some eighth graders are studying weather, researching "extreme" weather events and the impact on the communities they affect. Other eighth graders are learning to be geologists...studying the structure of rocks and minerals with the use of Smartboard and Internet technologies.



K-5 English Language Arts by Linda Volpicelli

On October 18th thirty-eight teachers and specialists from K-12 attended the second full-day workshop, continuing their instruction on DIBELS, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills. Participants came ready to share the results from the benchmark testing they had completed on their students. During this workshop, teachers focused on the kinds of educational decisions that can be made with the DIBELS assessment.

At the Davis School, twenty-three senior citizens provide literacy development support to more than thirty kindergarten, first and second grade students. Throughout the school year, each student in the program meets with a senior tutor twice a week for 30-minute one-on-one sessions where they work together on reading and writing activities. Many of the tutors have been with the program since it began at Davis in 1998. This year, Davis reading specialists have trained seven new Senior Tutors, which has allowed the program to accommodate more students. Throughout the year, workshops for the Senior Tutors are held, which focus on specific literacy instruction and skill acquisition and enhance the tutors' skills. The Senior Tutor Program, which enriches the academic lives of the students and teachers at Davis School, is in its eighth year.

The 6+1 Trait Writing Program is up and running at Lane School. The six writing traits include: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. The +1 component of this program is the presentation of the writing assignment. Teachers meet monthly, during staff meetings, to discuss one of the six traits, share student samples, and assess student writing using 6+1 Trait Rubrics.



Brenna (age 16)

JGMS English Language Arts by Brendan Desilets

The Massachusetts English Language Arts Frameworks describe a set of twenty-seven goals for language arts instruction in the Commonwealth. The current frameworks document, available at <http://www.dow.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html>, divides these goals into four strands, called “Language,” “Reading and Literature,” “Composition,” and “Media.” Most of the frameworks are eligible for testing through the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System, but only eight of the goals were specifically addressed on the last English Language Arts MCAS test of middle school students.

The curriculum guides for English at John Glenn Middle School address the frameworks at some length. One section of each guide, as written by English teachers in the summer of 2005, offers an overview of the implementation of each framework at JGMS. Another section offers more detailed and specific examples, showing how various classes sometimes address the various strands and goals.

If MCAS results are any indication of frameworks implementation, John Glenn Middle School has clearly worked toward the Massachusetts goals. Most recently, more than ninety-three percent of JGMS seventh graders scored in the top two of four MCAS categories. Over a period of three years ending in 2001, JGMS eighth graders scored first, second, and eleventh among all schools in the state.

English Department by Maureen Sullivan

Writing:

All students enrolled in English courses maintain a writing portfolio (folder), in order to chart progress, annotate patterns for skill development, and identify strengths and weaknesses in composition. Teachers keep these folders throughout the year, yet students may reproduce completed pieces, and/or bring writing home for sharing, or continued reflection. Several colleges now require graded examples of student writing as part of the admissions process, and recent studies cite reflection as an essential skill for improving communication. The department will be exploring the feasibility of adopting electronic portfolios in the future.

The four genres that students are expected to develop proficiency with include expository, literary analysis, persuasion, and creative/expressive. In addition to consistent MCAS and SAT practice, English teachers are creating lessons to engage our eclectic student body. Senior teachers Dan Niven, Jane Harvey, Lisa Danaher, and Kristen Tocci instructed students in the art of drafting (multiples), of *The College Essay* early in the term. Dan's *Humanities* students also focused upon Huxley's theme of technology, how it impacts human beings, and the theme of isolation in *Brave New World*. Additional topics addressed the definition of art, and *Modernist* themes. Jane's seniors have been conducting *Medieval* research, writing about *Beowulf*, and the characters of Igraine and Uther from *Malory Morte D'Artur*. Kristen's classes connected summer reading to **Greek Tragedy**, *A Critique of Ideology*, and **Apollo and Dionysus**. Lisa's freshmen have been probing themes from *Of Mice and Men* by using journals to help them develop thesis ideas.

Kelly Sullivan's ninth graders have been busy analyzing the themes of prejudice, *blind spots*, and "standing in someone else's shoes," in relation to *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Christy Walker's writing emphasis includes responses to the ending of *The House on Mango Street*, (**text to self**) writing about identity and names, and creating original vignettes based upon the novel. Chris Zellner's sophomores are completing *Othello* essays and rehearsing pivotal scenes from the drama. Justin Jourdan's tenth graders drafted essays on *Identity* that required focused correction areas for assessing. Andy Moore's juniors traced Hawthorne's symbolic style (*The Scarlet Letter*), by citing evidence to defend their chosen theses. Bill Berlino recently completed *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* theme essays, and his students are currently exploring style, in relation to the concept of the *Hemingway Hero*. Maureen Sullivan's classes completed *A Lesson Before Dying* and *The Grapes of Wrath* essays that integrated literary criticism and close textual analysis. Juxtaposing the novels invited students to learn about the tragic plight of Depression era migrants, and those who are victimized by forces beyond their control.

Professional Development:

Bill Berlino recently participated in a *Differentiated Instruction* workshop that afforded him the opportunity to update English colleagues. This paradigm is generated by a teacher's response to learner's needs, based upon matching depth, pacing, complexity, and novelty to lesson design.

Technology:

Kristen Tocci and Andy Moore are actively involved in implementing the latest technology in their teaching. As new members of the B.H.S. *MEET* team, they are in the throes of completing training with Sue Collins. The current project involves *Word-Video*, that incorporates all the basic features of *Windows MovieMaker2*. Andy has also been instrumental in introducing the application, Moodle, to create on-line courses here at B.H.S.

Extra-Curricular:

B.H.S. Spirit Week was a huge success due to the indefatigable efforts of senior class advisor, Lisa Danaher. In the words of vice principal, Brian Reagan: "Despite the weather, the crowning ceremony for Homecoming King and Queen was well organized and executed, and the dance was a great success. The Spirit Games were the best we have ever had."

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Tournament of Plays:

Mark your calendars for Friday, 11/18, (7:00 p.m.)! Kristen Tocci and Bill Berlino are directing student written, productions for grades 10 and 11. Students are overseeing the set design and construction and all the other technical aspects of the show. They have organized bake sales for fund raising, and they are taking responsibility for designing t-shirts for cast and crew.

Schools to Careers Program by Marcia Burns

As part of the School-to-Careers Program, a six week Speaker Series on the theme of Criminal Justice began in September. Bedford High School students with a career interest in Criminal Justice have had the opportunity to hear first-hand about the entrance requirements, the duties, responsibilities, and opportunities in Local Police, State Police, and the FBI. An Assistant District Attorney also spoke to the students. A highlight of taking part in this series was an invitation extended to the students, by Police Chief Hicks, to attend the Police Academy Graduation Ceremony at Fanueil Hall, in Boston. Attending the ceremony was especially meaningful, as one of the Academy Graduate had attended Bedford High School and is now a member of the Bedford Police Force. All of the speakers wel-



Kristina (age 16)

comed questions from the students, which was a wonderful opportunity. Because she was so impressed by the questions the students asked, the Assistant District Attorney has invited them to tour the Concord District Court House and the DA's office. If they so desire, they will also have the opportunity to sit in on some Criminal Justice classes at U. Mass., Lowell.

Elementary Mathematics by Sarah Dorer

In elementary math, all the teachers have administered the Beginning-of-the-Year assessments which have proved helpful in informing instruction and in setting a baseline for each class' performance. All teachers are well under way in teaching math everyday. The elementary math curriculum is based on five strands of mathematics: Number Sense, Patterns and Relationships, Geometry, Measurement and Data and Statistics.

Davis teachers are focusing on teaching the big conceptual ideas about number that are crucial for early mathematical development (Counting, One-to-One Correspondence, Cardinality, Hierarchical Inclusion, Compensation, Part-Whole Relationships), as well as practicing basic skills and problem-solving skills. Lane School teachers are continuing to put a lot of emphasis on Problem-Solving Skills - organizing information and problem-solving strategies, along with the basic number skills of multi-digit addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Teachers will address all strands of the math curriculum as the year progresses.

Title I Math has started at Lane and Davis Schools, but with half the funds that were allocated last year.

Middle School Mathematics by Kim Comeiro

Curriculum Work

During the past summer, Kim Comeiro began working on aligning the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade curriculum to the Massachusetts state frameworks for each course at each grade level. During the 2005-06 school year, the Math Department will be creating curriculum maps for each of the courses. The Math Department will also be updating and clarifying the course descriptions for each of the courses at JGMS. Once this work is complete, we will be creating assessment pieces that are used by all of the teachers at each grade level.

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MCAS:

Of the 165 students at JGMS who took the sixth grade MCAS exam last May, 58% scored in the Advanced and Proficient ranges, while 32% scored in the Needs Improvement range, and 10% of the students failed. Of the 186 students at JGMS who took the eighth grade MCAS exam last May, 64% scored in the Advanced and Proficient ranges, while 23% scored in the Needs Improvement range, and 13% of the students failed.

In response to these MCAS scores, we have decided to invest in an online program titled “Study Island” for all students at JGMS. This program is aligned with the Massachusetts state frameworks and learning standards. The program has children take a pre-test and then work at their own individual pace on lessons that are designed to help review and prep for the MCAS exam in May. The program is well liked by the students who have already started using the program. The program will be used during class time, flex time and will be available to students via any computer with internet access.

Foreign Language Department by Kim Heno

Focus on Advanced Latin:

"To whom do I give this charming new little book, just recently polished with a dry pumice stone?" With these words, the Ancient Roman poet Catullus began his work, approximately 2,000 years ago. This fall, the BHS Advanced Latin class began with those words of introduction to Catullus' work. Now in its second year, the revised BHS Advanced Latin curriculum exposes third- and fourth-year students to some of the most intriguing and challenging literature of Ancient Rome. In this year's Advanced Latin Poetry, students are exploring Catullus' lyric poetry, Ovid's stories of mythological change, and Vergil's *Aeneid*, the great Roman national epic poem. Our current juniors will have the opportunity next year in Advanced Latin Prose to study the Catilinarian conspiracy, a political crisis in the Late Roman Republic, via the history of Sallust and the speeches of Cicero. They will be joined in that course by the current Latin 2 students, who will begin reading Roman literature this spring as a bridge to the Advanced curriculum. This innovative approach asks older students and younger students to work together in the same classroom, bringing their accumulated experience and their fresh ideas to bear on literature that is new to all. Teacher Kim Heno designed the two-year system with the goals that students would learn from each other, build skills over a longer period of time, enjoy a wide variety of literature, and be able to study Latin for four years, if they begin as freshmen. Work is also ongoing to redesign the Latin 1 and 2 curriculum with an increased focus on reading ability, in preparation for the Advanced literature classes.

So far, this year's Advanced students are enjoying Catullus' intense emotions, pithy style, and clever wit; the unanimous current favorite poem among the class invites Catullus' friend Fabullus to dinner, only to inform him that he must bring the food and entertainment because Catullus' wallet is "full of cobwebs". In exchange, however, Fabullus is assured that he will receive a perfume so sweet that he will "ask the gods to turn him into a giant nose!" In addition to translating the poetry at home and in class, students also analyze poetic technique and rhythmical patterns, experiencing the poetry's aural impact as the Romans would have through out-loud readings and recitations. This is challenging work for even the brightest students, but their reward for the energy they devote inside and outside of class and for the years they have spent learning Latin is the chance to meet the Romans on their own terms, understanding their thoughts, passions, silliest jokes and deepest human insights as they were expressed 2,000 years ago.



Tony (age 16)

Senior Project by Jon Sills

Thirty high school seniors are pioneering a new course this year that puts a premium on student independence, resourcefulness and creativity. The Senior Project Pilot is designed to provide time, mentoring and academic credit to seniors interested in researching a burning question or creating a long term project of great interest. Pursuing their passion, students will engage in an interdisciplinary, culminating intellectual experience that will involve both academic and field research, structured written reflection, and some combination of an oral defense and/or exhibition of their learning. One student has developed a proposal around his interest in medical ethics and intends to write an extensive paper on a number of controversial questions; another, historically curious about small town teenage behavior, will write and record a music CD reflecting his findings; and yet another will design and make her own clothing, produce a fashion show and give the money to charity.

The product of a year's worth of committee work by a team of teachers and administrators, the project draws on research into similar efforts to ensure ever better use of the senior year. Students who are enrolled in this course are granted a minor course worth of time which they may use as they see fit to work on their project. They may come and go from campus to do research, conduct surveys, consult with experts, participate in internships, or engage in any number of related activities.

Partly funded by a generous grant targeted at providing enrichment opportunities to high school students, the Senior Project Pilot is an exciting addition to the high school course of studies.

