

BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES

REMOTE MEETING DECEMBER 14, 2021

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: January 5, 2022
TIME: 2:39 PM

Present: Ms. Amy Checkoway, Chair
Ms. Meghan Moriarty, Secretary *until 8:50*
Ms. Kate Bowen *until 8:00*
Mr. Ralph Jones
Mr. Jamal Saeh
Mr. John Phelan, Superintendent
Ms. Janice Darias, Assistant Superintendent
Mr. Anthony DiCologero, Director of Finance, Business and Operations

1. OPENING BUSINESS

1.1 Call to Order

Committee Chair Amy Checkoway called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm

1.2 Citizens' Concerns

These meeting minutes may include statements by members of the public. Although the School Committee tries to reproduce these statements faithfully, the School Committee does not necessarily endorse the opinions expressed in these statements and cannot guarantee that the information contained in these statements is accurate.

Alshad Kasumov- Asked whether teachers and school staff are being regularly tested and was interested in the rationale for take home tests, metrics for at-home testing, and percentages of properly labeled and registered test tubes.

1.3 Adjustments to the Agenda

Approval of Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee minutes will occur after Superintendent's report and agenda item 3.6 Superintendent's Goals will be moved up to accommodate School Committee members who need to leave early.

1.4 Chair's Report

- Chairperson Checkoway informed members of the SC and the public about developments concerning the Town's eligibility to receive all of initially marked ARPA funds due to updated revenue figures (debt exclusion issue). This was already discussed at the last Select Board meeting and will impact the budget planning.
- The Traffic Working group will present a plan for traffic and parking. Chair Checkoway encouraged students and parents to participate in a community forum on Thursday Dec 16 at 7 pm and share their thoughts/concerns. The start date for a pilot of the plan is set for January, 1, 2022 if it is approved.
- Chair Checkoway reminded people about the FBE STAR awards which are given to exemplary staff, teachers or community members at this time of year. Information for how to gift one of these awards can be found on the FBE's website.

1.5 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Phelan introduced Danielle Betancourt, Principal of the Butler Elementary School who will be leaving BPS to move abroad. Principal Betancourt showcased some of the many good things happening at the Butler School, which enrolls 344 students (334 + 10 LABBB). Demographically, twenty-three percent

(23%) of Butler students are eligible for ELL services and 24 different primary languages are spoken, twelve percent (12%) of students have IEPs or 504 plans. (SC Document: Butler_Elementary_SC_Presentation_12_14_21). Betancourt noted three major areas of focus for the 2021-2022 school year: safety; diversity, equity and inclusion; and a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS), which has been occurring in literacy at Butler but is now expanding to all areas of learning. Butler's many community partnerships were acknowledged including with firefighters (helping fix the Butler flagpole), Elks Club (donation of dictionaries to third grade students), veterans (receiving cards from students), and a gift card donation drive for Butler families in need (raised \$3000). A spotlight on learning touched upon STEM units. Principal Betancourt finished the presentation with an update about recent activities: Walk to School Day, Pool Testing with National Guard, the Annual Butler Fun Run, Virtual Author Visits, and a PTA Virtual Art Night.

Chair Checkoway and Superintendent Phelan thanked Principal Betancourt for creating a wonderful community at Butler over the last five years.

2. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

2.1 No unfinished business

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee minutes of February 5, 2021
- Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee minutes of February 25, 2021
- Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee minutes of May 17, 2021

On a motion offered by Mike Crowley and seconded by Kate Bowen, it was VOTED on a roll call vote (2-0-0) to accept the Curriculum & Instruction minutes of February 5, 2021 and February 25, 2021.

Bowen and Crowley - aye

On a motion offered by Kate Bowen and seconded by Meg Moriarty, it was VOTED on a roll call vote (3-0-0) to accept the Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee minutes of May 17, 2021.

Bowen, Moriarty, Saeh - aye

3. MAJOR BUSINESS

3.1 English Language Education Annual Report

Director of English Language Education, Lindsey Rinder, offered an update on the Belmont English Language Education Program that included student and family experiences, services provided, achievement, and some challenges. Currently, the program services 390 English learners (309 Elementary, 55 CMS, and 24 BHS students) and monitors 432 former ELE learners. Services offered include small group instruction with listening, speaking, reading, and writing. (SC Document: *English_Language_Education_Annual_Report_12_2021*)

Rinder reported over 60 different languages are spoken throughout BPS. ELE students make up 9% of the student body and FLNE students (speak a foreign language but proficient in English) are at 19%. While the national average of students' duration in an ELE program is 7 years (MASS max 6 yrs.), Belmont's average is 2-3 years. Over the last 5 years, the ELE program has seen a growth of 27%.

Two parent testimonials were heard from Carmen Espina Chacin and Zhonghui (Jenny) Ou. Chacin's family had a wonderful experience with learning English and stated BPS is effectively helping integrate children to the education system and community. OU spoke to the second -generation impact of the program. Ou's

family felt a sense of belonging from the summer camp experience and as a member of the English Language Parent Advisory Council.

Rinder next reported on ELE Achievement: Access testing was completed before the shut down in 2020. Belmont recorded 94% of students making adequate progress for program completion compared to the 49% statewide average. For 2021, those results dropped as anticipated due to the impact of COVID on schools. Still, Belmont recorded 86% of students making adequate progress for program completion with only two other districts having reached that mark. Content area achievement (MCAS) scores were shared for Math and English Grades 3-8, along with former English learner students (FELS) students test scores. While ELs typically score lower than their peers, once students achieve English language proficiency, they match and even outscore others on MCAS scores.

Noted challenges with the English Language Program include interruptions due to COVID, increases of English learners with disabilities, supporting classroom teachers, and families with a digital divide.

SC members and Superintendent Phelan thanked Director Rinder for her thorough presentation and her role in welcoming multiple cultures in to an ever-increasing program.

3.2 FY22 Reallocation of Funds (vote)

Guided by the SC directive from the November 30, 2021 Finance Subcommittee meeting, to reallocate funds, school administrators met with building principals to prioritize additional school building needs. Superintendent Phelan presented each principal's list of requested positions and associated costs. (*SC Document: FY22_Reallocation_of_Funds_SC_12_14_2021*) The following is the cost breakdown by grade level:

High School- \$102,000

Middle School-\$109,000

Elementary-\$198,900

District-wide- \$7,000

School Committee members asked questions of the presented needs.

High School requests ranged from social worker to a security person who would be a presence in the building during the day and at evening functions as well as athletic events in the pool and field house. Due to an increase in mental health situations this year an additional social worker is requested. After member Crowley suggested an additional increase, Superintendent Phelan confirmed one additional FTE is the correct ask for the current year.

At the middle school level, positions requested were for music where all classes are currently oversubscribed, math, reading, and a social worker. The majority of positions for the elementary level were building substitutes and math specialists with some partial FTE increases in other positions.

Member Jones asked if many students were below level in math. Assistant Superintendent Darias explained that some students are behind due to the pandemic, but a gap has grown over the years without existing supports. If approved, it will be the first time with math specialist at those levels. School Committee members reiterated the funding would come from within the existing FY22 budget and available federal funds and that the Finance Subcommittee recommended a full SC vote on these needs. The full time equivalent needs for now until end of year are elementary -5.9 FTE; middle school -2 FTE; high school -3 FTE. Member Moriarty encouraged the district to track if these additions are effective in helping with district needs.

Chair Checkoway took questions and comments from the community.

Joe Bernard – Asked about the HS security position (job description), and whether a physical presence is needed during the daytime and while students are being released from school.

Mariola Marivoch- Stated she believes that teachers have indicated adding specialists at the elementary level would help with burnout as would additional high quality professional development.

Heather Rubeski – Noticed elementary level asks were very academic but is concerned about social emotional needs of students.

Chair Checkoway reiterated the exercise came about due to a realization of unmet needs from last year. The requested positions are building based needs prioritized by the Principals for the day to day running of school to meet students' needs and for all to feel safe.

On a motion offered by Mike Crowley, seconded by Meg Moriarty, the SC voted (5-0-0) to support the reallocation of resources of FY22 as presented in slides with specified funds source and FTE.

3.3 Superintendent's 2021-2022 Goals (vote)

Superintendent Phelan provided an overview of the goals along with applicable Superintendent Rubric standards, outcomes and examples of artifacts (*SC Document: Superintendent_Goalspresentation_12_14*).

Goal 1: District Improvement: Lead Effective Strategic Financial Planning

In order to improve our ability to effectively meet both the academic and social-emotional needs of every Belmont student, I will lead the district through a strategic fiscal planning process that supports the 2023, 2024, and 2025 fiscal years. By June 2022, the district will have a three-year budget forecast that aligns with our students' needs in terms of programming, supports, and staffing solutions, inclusive of community input.

Goal 2: Improve Student Engagement, Learning and Support

In order to ensure that every one of our students experiences a positive transition back to the 2021/22 school year and receives support for their academic and social-emotional needs, I will prioritize supporting principals and their school-based needs on a daily basis. I will do this by facilitating two-way communication at least weekly, responding to their requests and concerns in a timely manner, advocating for additional resources where necessary, and prioritizing school-based situations that arise throughout the year

Goal 3: Enhance Professional Practice and Leadership

In order to ensure our district continues to make progress in its diversity, equity, and inclusion work, by June 2022, we will analyze and define clear takeaways from the district-wide audit results and design a corresponding strategic plan that includes school and community feedback.

Superintendent welcomed any discussion on the work for the goals moving forward. In spring, the Superintendent will present a narrative document and artifacts to the School Committee for evaluative review.

Chair Checkoway read comments from member Bowen, stating the goals were appropriate going forward and appreciated the acknowledgement to climate action plan under goal 1. Several SC members voiced their support of the revised goals and appreciated the reformatted outcomes. Member Saeh asked whether a specific number of diverse hires could be added as an outcome for goal 3. Other SC members suggested doing so next year, as it would be appropriate for future permanent hiring.

Superintendent Phelan commented that diverse hiring practices have been an unmet goal the past few years, and indicated BAR meets monthly with human resources. This year's target may coincide with audit recommendations and focus on the hiring process by increasing the pool of candidates in spring.

On a motion offered by Amy Checkoway, and seconded by Jamal Saeh, the SC voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the revised goals with addition of benchmark focused on structure for spring hiring season.

Checkoway, Crowley, Jones, and Saeh - aye
Bowen and Moriarty - absent

3.4 Health and Testing Update

Chair Checkoway suggested the health update be pushed to the January 4, 2022 meeting. Superintendent Phelan indicated he would email the presentation to families as community members may have questions and will be able to find some answers in the document (*SC Document: Health_Updates_SC_12_14_21*).

3.5 Follow Up to Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Chair Checkoway suggested a follow up meeting with Lisa Gibalerio, the Wayside Group and SC members in mid-January with the possibility of an additional presentation/discussion at future SC meeting. Members Crowley and Jones voiced interest in participating in the meeting.

4. SUBCOMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES (as needed)

Member Ralph Jones will be the SC representative on Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee. A recent meeting covered the BHS program of studies for 2022-2023 which will be presented at the January 4, 2022 SC meeting.

Equity Subcommittee meeting was held with a LGBTQ group proposal on how to promote safe schools and improve communication after hate incidents and responses to them. They offered to partner. DEI Director Washington gave an update on tools being created for incidents reporting, the audit timeline, a formal report out/community forum (March), and the strategic plan (June).

Finance Subcommittee- Committee reviewed the additional positions for the remainder of the school year. Quarterly reports on spending is typically done and now including a monthly review on some items. Community budget forum will be January 18, 2022.

High School Building Committee – The committee is identifying lessons learned from the 9-12 wing. Public meetings #134 and #135 will be in January 2022.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 Consent Agenda - none

5.2 Personnel Items - none

5.3 Business Items - none

5.4 Approval of Minutes

- School Committee minutes of October 28, 2021
- School Committee minutes of November 9, 2021
- *School Committee minutes of November 23, 2021 – moved to future meeting*

On a motion offered by Amy Checkoway and seconded by Jamal Saeh, it was VOTED (4-0-0) on a roll call vote to approve the SC minutes of October 28, 2021 and November 9, 2021.

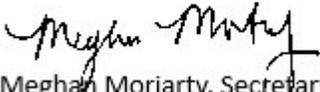
Checkoway, Crowley, Jones, Saeh -aye

Bowen and Moriarty, absent

6. ADJOURN

On a motion offered by Jamal Saeh and seconded by Mike Crowley, it was VOTED unanimously (4-0-0) on a roll call vote to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by:


Meghan Moriarty, Secretary