



Acton-Boxborough Regional School District

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Peter J. Light
Superintendent of Schools

Superintendent's Update August 23, 2018

New Website

You may have noticed that A-B has a new website! I would like to take this opportunity to thank Amy Bisiewicz for her work in getting this up and running. It was an enormous undertaking to migrate the previous website into the new format. The work included the efforts of numerous staff across all schools and at the district level. In the coming weeks and months, we will continue to evaluate the new format and the accessibility of information so that we can make sure the site is responsive to the needs of the community. We encourage you to take a look at www.abschools.org.

Beginning of Year Family Communication

We recently initiated a series of communications with families in order to provide them with information relative to the start of the school year. This began with an introductory letter from me, followed by information about changes to our school bus transportation. The information included an overview of the changes, as well as a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document. We also released bus route information via Powerschool on Monday, August 20th. In the coming days and weeks families will receive school-specific information regarding the opening of school including student schedules and class placements.

Massachusetts Primary Election September 4, 2018

The Massachusetts Primary Election is scheduled for Tuesday, September 4th, which is also our first day of school. As in the past, our Junior High and Conant School will be used as Acton voting sites. We anticipate that this could be a challenging day from a traffic-management perspective given normal first day of school traffic, the election, and new bus traffic patterns associated with the start time changes and single-tier bus service. We have met with Acton Police representatives to develop plans to ensure the smoothest possible experience for students, families and community members. We have also been in contact with Acton officials and our administrators will continue to communicate with police and town officials until the first day of school. We ask for everyone's patience and attention to new traffic patterns especially on the first day.

Central Administration Office Move

We have moved! As you know, for the past few years, the Central Administration has been located in various buildings across campus. This summer, space in the Administration Building underwent

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renovations to allow the entire district administrative staff to become centrally located. All district offices are now located at 15 Charter Road in the Administration Building. When you enter the building, community education is now to the left and district offices are now located on the right-hand side, upper level of the building.

Although much of the work is complete, there is still finishing work underway that will likely continue into mid-September. Once everything is done, we plan to host an informal open house so faculty, staff and school committee members can stop by and see the new space. Thank you to Finance Director Dave Verdolino and all of the facilities staff for making this happen.

Facilities Thank You!

While J.D. Head will be presenting in more depth regarding the Capital Improvements made across the schools at the school committee meeting, I want to recognize and thank J.D. and his entire staff for the tremendous work that has been accomplished this summer. It is an extraordinary undertaking to manage almost \$1M in capital improvements while simultaneously making sure all schools are thoroughly cleaned and ready to open.

Senior Leadership Team/ District Leadership Team Retreat

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT), which consists of Principals and District Administrators participated in the annual retreat held at Endicott College on August 1st and 2nd. This was a wonderful two days of professional learning for the group and our work focused on examining equity data for students in our district. This work will inform next steps in our equity goal included in the Long Range Strategic Plan. The retreat was also an opportunity for me to introduce myself formally to the team and for the group to reflect on its practices over the last year and look ahead into the coming year.

We held a follow-up retreat day on August 8th, but expanded the group to include assistant principals and department leaders from across the district. This day provided an opportunity for those administrators who had not previously participated in the Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (S.E.E.D.) Training to begin this work, and the remaining team met to discuss topics which included the implementation of the single tier bussing service and later start times. Additionally, we discussed how we can continue the district's work around equity in light of the hate-incident on the high school campus in June. Finally, we discussed the student death by suicide this summer, plans to continue to support students, staff, and families as they return to school, and strategies to work with our community-based organizations to continue this discussion with families.

I would like to thank Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis and Dawn Bentley for the tremendous work they did throughout the Spring and Summer in order to plan an effective retreat.

Fostering Racial Justice Group

On July 18th, our School Committee Chairperson Diane Baum, Marie Altieri and I met with the Fostering Racial Justice Group at the Boxborough Community Center as part of a forum to discuss strategies the district uses to support inclusive practices and eliminate bias in our schools. The forum was held in response to a hate-incident that occurred on the high school campus in June and another bias-based incident from earlier in the school year. This was a wonderful opportunity to hear from community members and also share information about practices currently in place. In particular, we were able to highlight the S.E.E.D training the administration has completed and the goal to train all district faculty within three years. We also discussed a variety of clubs and activities at the high school, the seventh grade social studies curricular focus on examining bias in history, and examples of literature at various grade levels that support this goal. We agreed to continue these discussions with the group about ways we can partner to support this important work.

Entry Plan

I am pleased to provide you with the final copy of my entry plan into the A-B Schools. You may recall that I presented an overview of this plan at the June 21st School Committee Meeting. The plan consists of three phases. The first phase allows me to learn about the unique history and culture of A-B and also hear from stakeholders with regard to their perspectives on the strengths, opportunities and challenges facing the schools. The second phase of the plan focuses on me verifying and interpreting trends and patterns in the data in order to develop a formal report of entry findings. The final phase of the plan includes working with the leadership team and school committee around key ideas in the report of entry findings to inform the future growth and development of the District's Strategic Plan.