

Belmont School Committee

Accomplishments 2006 - 2007

The following is a listing of goals for the 2006-2007 school year for the School Committee and Superintendent. Under each goal heading and action steps is a brief progress report.

Curriculum Instruction and Assessment

- **Establish Committee to review current reporting systems and assessment techniques and make recommendations for possible changes in reporting system.**

Although a Committee to review current reporting systems and assessment techniques was not formed this year as outlined, discussions did take place on the topics of reporting systems and assessment techniques. Initial discussions with school administrators revealed the need to separate the discussions into two topics: report cards and system wide assessment. Currently, two reporting documents are being piloted with some success at the middle school and at grade 2 for music and art. More study and review needs to be done to determine the usefulness of each. Next year teachers of grades K-4 will be asked to review existing report cards to determine if the report cards align with classroom practice and the standards from the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Middle school teachers who are piloting a new report card will be asked to include more information on student progress as measured against performance standards.

Discussions with the elementary principals, Director of English Language Arts, the Language Arts Specialists, the Director of Student Service, and the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction took place to determine possible assessment tools for reading and reading readiness in kindergarten. While the school system chokes on the number of required tests as part of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System, these tests do not assist teachers and administrators with the implementation of Response to Intervention (RtI), a process by which students are assessed, provided additional support in a timely fashion, and exposed to a system of intervention strategies prior to a referral for special education services.

In addition, elementary principals agreed to complete a survey of all assessment tools in use, both formative and summative, in their buildings. The goal is to collect enough information to determine the usefulness of available tools, attempt to adopt the same tools for use across the system, and then to consider areas that require new assessment tools.

- **Work with administrators to establish data-driven decisions regarding changes in curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices.**

Although the work on this action step can be listed as accomplished, administrators will continue the practice of using data to make decisions in the future and will continue sharing with colleagues the results of school based projects. This year Belmont High School principal Mike Harvey included all of the high school departments in a professional development program on the ways in which data can inform instruction. In addition, all administrators during their meeting time shared data use peculiar to their programs as well as their review of data

Of special interest is the way data is being used in a number of professional development programs that focus on the collaborative study of student work. Teachers identify an instructional issue/practice to address, based on data. They plan their collective strategies to address the issue.

The concept is to implement a plan and then collect data to determine the success of the plan. This use of data to inform instruction is at the heart of accomplishing this goal.

My evaluation of principals always mentions their use of data-driven decision making and my encouragement for them to continue to use this practice with teachers.

Student Life

- **Advocate for the addition of a Director of Guidance and Testing for the Belmont Public Schools.**

Throughout the budget process both the School Committee and I advocated for this position. However, funding was available only for a level service budget and the two enhancements proposed for consideration were not included in the FY 2008 budget. For the future, this position is vital for the Belmont Public Schools to manage more effectively the guidance personnel and to analyze and use assessment and other data more extensively.

- **Work with teachers and administrators to insure that all students have access to both challenging academic programs and extra curricular activities.**

During administrative meetings throughout the school year, I directed discussions on “the best curriculum for all students” and reviewed with administrators the results of what has become an annual “Access Report” of Student Groups at BHS. The data from this report indicates that minority students and special education students do not have access to some of the higher level courses offered at Belmont High School.

The Administrative Council continues to work as a unit and with teachers to find ways that allow access of more students to more challenging programs. Administrators are expected to include in teacher evaluations, teacher efforts to differentiate instruction. In addition, administrators at both Belmont High School and the Chenery Middle School have instituted tutorial support for students particularly in the area of mathematics. Curriculum directors have shared test data and enrollment data with department members to call teacher attention to the issue of broader access to challenging programs.

Both the Director of Athletics, Physical Education, and Student Activities and the Director of Fine and Performing Arts maintain data on student participation in extra curricular programs. Participation rates for students in athletics, student activities, and music programs are very high. Over 70% of the Belmont High School population participates in extra curricular activities. Still, outreach efforts continue. For example, this year a special mailing was sent to the families of METCO students inviting them to participate in the Saturday morning music program. Both the administration of Belmont High School and Curriculum Directors participated in a special meeting with Boston parents to outline programs and to answer questions.

School Management and Leadership

- **Continue to use the Challenge Paradigm to develop and publicize information for all groups of Belmont residents about the challenges facing the Belmont Public Schools, the ways in which the schools are addressing those challenges, and the resources needed to meet them.**

The Administrative Council has reviewed the Challenge Paradigm and reinforced its message in various discussions, especially regarding budget issues. Meetings have been held with the PTO

presidents to remind these leaders of the needs of students in the system, the accountability demands of NCLB and MERA, and the inadequacy of current funding to address these concerns. Budget meetings with the PTOs have also restated the themes in the Challenge Paradigm.

Through the many public meetings with the Selectmen, Warrant Committee, the Warrant Committee Subcommittee on Education, and the Capital Budget Committee, the School Committee focused public attention on the challenges facing the system and the need for more adequate, sustainable, and predictable funding.

Human Resource Development

- **Mentor new members of the administrative team, including an Interim Principal, BHS Assistant Principal, Assistant Director of Student Services, and Interim Director of Social Studies.**

Mentoring is an accepted practice for the Belmont Public Schools. This year Pat Aubin and I scheduled weekly meetings with the Principal of Belmont High School. Pat and I also met on several occasions with the new Assistant Director of Special Education and have scheduled weekly meetings with him in his new role in 2007-08. The Principal of Belmont High School held regular meetings with his administrative team, including a new Assistant Principal, Director of METCO, and School Resource Officer. Pat met on a weekly basis with the Interim Director of Social Studies and the new Director of METCO.

All meetings provided time for discussion of weekly events, short and long range planning, problem solving, and questions on process and/or policy. In addition, the Belmont High School principal and the Interim Director of Student Services for 2007-2008 currently work with an executive coach who was formerly a high school principal and is now a consultant.

Communication and Community Relations

- **Revise the Belmont Public Schools brochure.**

Thanks to funds secured from the Watertown Savings Bank by Scott Stratford, the newly revised Belmont Public Schools brochure will be sent to the printer this summer and will be available for distribution during the 2007-2008 school year. I think that the School Committee and the public will be pleased with this revision of the first brochure which was produced in 2002.

- **Revise Crisis Manual for Belmont Public Schools.**

Under the direction of Pat Aubin and me and members of the Belmont Police Department, an administrative team worked to revise and update the Crisis Manual for the Belmont Public Schools. We expect to send the manual to the printer this summer and have copies available for all staff at the beginning of the 2007-2008 school year.

- **Continue to develop methods of reaching out to and involving the citizens of Belmont as more active members of the public school community.**

This year the School Committee and I initiated a new system for parent meetings around the budget process. Bringing together the parent groups from the four elementary schools worked especially well. In addition to these meetings, central office administrators met on two occasions with the PTO presidents of all six schools.

A major avenue for reaching out to the citizens of Belmont comes from School Committee members' participation on other boards and committees, such as the Warrant Committee and the Capital Budget Committee, and serving as liaisons to other organizations. Each meeting of the School Committee provides an opportunity for School Committee members to update the entire Committee on events, activities, and actions of these groups.

The following is an incomplete listing of the boards and organizations which include School Committee members: Wellington Building Committee, Advisory Council on the Future Building Needs of Belmont High School, ESCo Energy Conservation Committee, Information Technology Advisory Council, Community Education Board, Council on Aging, Health Advisory Committee, Vision 21 Committee, Youth Commission, EdCo Board of Directors, and the Foundation for Belmont Education.

Facilities and Finance

- **Continue to advocate for adequate, predictable, and sustainable funding for the Belmont Public Schools.**

Beginning in October, the School Committee, Gerry Missal, and I presented information on the budget needed to provide adequate service to the students of Belmont. At a variety of meetings with the public as well as with the Warrant Committee and the Board of Selectmen, School Committee Members and central office administrators advocated for adequate, predictable, and sustainable funding for the Belmont Public Schools.

The budget which will be voted by the School Committee at its Public Hearing on June 5, 2007 is a level service budget with no program enhancements.

- **Continue to work with the Board of Selectmen and the Wellington Building Committee to support a new Wellington and the renovation plan for Belmont High School.**

Committees for both of these projects continued throughout the school year. Both projects have submitted Statements of Interest to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), which is the first step for funding consideration. One major change occurred with plans for Belmont High School. The High School Superintendent's Advisory Committee is in the process of submitting a partial proposal to do a modified Phase I of the Master Plan, which includes a new science wing and upgrades to the heating and electricity head-end equipment. This first phase is not meant to replace the full Master Plan, but recognizes the need to address critical work while waiting for the MSBA to consider funding the full project at a later date.

- **Advocate for a full day kindergarten for the Belmont Public Schools.**

Principals, teachers, and Central Office Administrators presented a strong rationale for the establishment of a full day kindergarten for the Belmont Public Schools. Despite this advocacy, the program was not funded for the 2006-2007 school year. This program was discussed at several School Committee meetings, Warrant Committee meetings, public and private conversations with the Board of Selectmen and with parents. The need for full day kindergarten will be presented at School Committee meetings and a forum in the fall and winter to build support and answer questions about the importance of such programming.