

LYNN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Patrick A. Tutwiler, PhD
Superintendent of Schools

Superintendent's Report September 12, 2019

I am pleased to announce that we are off to a solid start for the 2019-20 school year. We commenced the year in collaborative fashion at city hall with an educator convocation. The anecdotal feedback around doing so has been positive. While we only have one day to get oriented and prepared, it seemed prudent and necessary for us to come together, celebrate who we are, and shove off in the same direction. The opening days for students were fantastic! As is the case most everywhere, in the beginning, there were a few wrinkles that needed to be ironed. We have ironed them and I think we are poised for smooth sailing. Collectively, along with the deputy superintendents, we have observed arrival at one dozen schools. It is no surprise to me how warm and welcoming the school-based teams present to students. Reading, writing, and figuring is a major part of what we do, but nothing trumps the importance of relationships, and that was on full display in the opening.

I have a couple of substantive items on which to update you. Breakfast after the Bell has been a point of discussion for a few years now. As it happens, there is no legislation to speak of for the current school year. The approved FY20 State Budget included the same language as did the FY19 Budget relative to serving breakfast after the bell. Nonetheless, we have taken steps to be in compliance with the requirements. We have done so, first and foremost, because we believe that every student should have an opportunity to start the day with a healthy meal. Also, though there is no legislative mandate, we have made a move toward compliance out of an abundance of caution. Should the "recommendation" become a legislative mandate, we are solidly in compliance.

On July 23, 2019 Kevin Richardson called the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) regarding meeting the requirements of the budget language. Mr. Richardson discussed our existing model where some of our elementary schools students are offered breakfast prior to the official start of the school day and any student who is tardy is offered a "second chance breakfast". The DESE representative stated that our current model "offers both before and after the bell breakfasts so that is acceptable". This was followed up and confirmed in writing. Accordingly, we are not required to make any adjustments to our existing elementary breakfast program.

For informational purposes, I attached a list of our elementary schools and the model we currently use. Eight schools currently utilize the after the bell model and ten use the second chance model.

In the secondary schools, we will be implementing the second chance model starting on Monday, September 16, 2019. Students who arrive late will be allowed to go to the café and receive a breakfast prior to reporting to class. The cafés will remain open longer for breakfast. We will monitor this approach and offer an update at the midpoint of the school year.

Space has been a regular feature of discussion, at least since I have been here, and probably longer. We have successfully made some moves to alleviate overcrowding in some programs, but meeting the pre-kindergarten demands is a perennial challenge. Clear in the report on the entry plan submitted last June, we really want to make sure that we are partnering to the fullest extent for the benefit of our students and their families. That approach to partnership is beginning to bear fruit. We have an opportunity to access five classrooms on the third floor of the YMCA for pre-kindergarten programming. This summer, we visited the site and met with the current site director. We fully analyzed the security elements as well as the element of instructional fit with the space that is available to us. The five classrooms exist on the same floor, are completely secure, and sit empty during the school day. In total, we have determined that this space is both viable and ready, and we intend to proceed. The rental fee for the school year is \$9500.00. This will provide immediate relief for two pre-k classrooms currently at Lynn Vocational Technical Institute and will give us the flexibility to expand over the course of the year as I expect we will need to. Attached is a list of the security features at the site for your review. I am sharing this now, but I would like to take this up more formally with the Buildings and Grounds Sub-Committee at our meeting on September 26, 2019.

As partners working for the benefit of learning and growth of our students, I am committed to staying in regular communication with you as it relates to the substantive aspects of the work. Communication is a big part of that. Admittedly, I think there is a certain sweet spot for communication that can be elusive at times. There is such a thing as too much, in as much as there is too little. I am sure all members are aware of the Item article released on August 28th describing a formal complaint facilitated through DESE as well as other concerns and, in general, the steps that the district is taking to address issues in Special Education. While I am certain that the content of the parent concerns ring familiar, it is my hope that the response and plans, particularly as it relates to the FY20 budget also ring familiar. The rationale offered in the school committee meeting forum for the staffing additions in special education were identical to the response in the article. I found the article particularly balanced. It was both an acknowledgement of areas in need of improvement, but also a substantive effort to address them. I did not deem either of these elements ones with which the committee was unfamiliar and therefore did not offer a heads up that it was coming. That said, I will be sure to notify the committee in advance of articles of this nature going forward and will also keep you updated on trends as it relates to compliance.

Last but certainly not least, I invite all to attend the sixth annual Walk for Peace sponsored by Stop the Violence. The walk will commence this Saturday at 4:00 PM at English High School and end at Warren Street Park. This event is important no matter the year, but in particular this year due to recent events at Warren Street Park. It is my sincere hope that the turnout reflects the community's interest in and commitment to peace in Lynn.

Respectfully Submitted,

Patrick Tutwiler, PhD