BERLIN-BOYLSTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

ANNUAL REPORTS 2024

JANUARY 1, 2025
BERLIN-BOYLSTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
215 Main Street, Boylston, MA 01503 Phone: 508-869-2837

Berlin-Boylston Regional School Committee

Annual Report

2024

Mission & Vision Statement: Berlin-Boylston Regional School District

Our Mission: To support and challenge all students to achieve personal and academic excellence in a student-centered environment.

Our Vision: The Berlin-Boylston Public Schools will create a challenging learning environment to ensure that all students exhibit continuous improvement and pursue personal excellence and become active, engaged, independent learners and decision makers. As an inclusive school community, instruction will be provided in a caring, safe, and healthy learning environment, responsive to each student, in collaboration with families and the community.

It is our privilege to present the 2024 Berlin-Boylston Regional School Committee annual report. The members of this board, along with our supportive community, continue to maximize each dollar invested in our schools and the children they support. As we move into 2025 with an amazing staff and leadership in Interim Superintendent Albert Ganem, we are confident in our ongoing goals to provide a quality education and school experience.

Organization

This past school year, September 2023 – June 2024, the Committee was first led by Chair Michael Totman, and then by Chair Meagan Grill who assumed the Chair position after the annual election for Chair held in November. Members were Lori-Anne Hart who also served as District Clerk, Jessica Deglialberti and Lisa Mair.

The second ever biannual election for the Berlin Boylston Regional School District was held during the November 5, 2024, State Election. There was one contested seat from Boylston which saw incumbent Meagan Grill win re-election over James Waite with 1,891 votes in Boylston and 1,003 votes in Berlin to James's 793 votes in Boylston and 853 votes in Berlin. Previous committee member from Berlin, Julie Lee, did not run for re-election. Incumbent Lisa Mair and Elisabeth Mancini won their seats in Berlin uncontested.

At the November 2024 school committee meeting Michael Totman was elected as Chair for the coming year. Meagan Grill is the Vice Chair.

As of December 31, 2024 the subcommittees are:

A. Budget, Facilities, and Safety – Chair Meagan Grill, member Beth Mancini
B. Student Success and Technology – Chair Jessica Deglialberti, member Lisa Mair
C. Policy, Personnel, Negotiations and School Committee Effectiveness – Chair Michael Totman, member Lori-Anne Hart
D. Superintendent Evaluation - Chair Lori-Anne Hart, member Jessica Deglialberti

Principals and Curriculum Directors

John Campbell, Principal of Berlin Memorial School.

Cynthia Sykes, Principal of Boylston Elementary School.

Lisa Sequeira, Principal of Tahanto.

The district hired two assistant principals for Tahanto for this past school year; Richard Cameron and Renee Legendre. June 2024 completed their first year in the District and we are looking forward to their continued contributions to our schools.

Sally Stukuls, Curriculum Director for grades 6-12.

Superintendent

Carol Costello became the Superintendent on July 1, 2023 with a three year contract. Carol Costello ended her contract in July 2024 and was officially retired on December 23, 2024.

The District hired Albert Ganem as the interim Superintendent in August 2024.

Scholarships

The Moses Reed Tyler Scholarship enabled the School Committee to award 15 academic scholarships to institutions of higher learning for qualified Berlin residents in June of 2024. The fund allowed $20,892 to be distributed in tiers to all 15 students. The Committee remains grateful for the legacy of Mr. Tyler and to Julie Lee for serving as the liaison between both committees, as well as John Campbell, Carol Young and Rich Mariani for serving on the Scholarship Subcommittee.

Meetings and Attendance

In 2024, the Berlin-Boylston Regional School Committee held 20 posted meetings.

Member	Town	Attendance	Note
Jessica Deglialberti	Boylston	20	
Meagan Grill	Boylston	20	
Julie Lee	Berlin	20	
Michael Totman	Berlin	20	
Lori-Anne Hart	Boylston	20	

Lisa Mair	Berlin	20	
Elisabeth Mancini	Berlin	3	Elected Nov. 2024

Student Population

In the last year, we saw 1,112 students were enrolled districtwide including pre-school. This is a 0% increase over last year and is equivalent to the 2022-2023 school year.

Both towns continue to see robust growth in residential housing, and with additional housing comes a higher student population. The Committee is beginning to discuss necessary changes as our population grows. Our District Improvement Plan and budget requests continue to reflect some of these ideas, specifically the need for additional teaching and support staff.

The Committee and school administration remain very conservative in recommending and approving additional school choice slots to ensure a balance between maintaining target class sizes and taking advantage of potential school choice revenue, while avoiding the need for additional staffing.

Community Support

The Committee, the school administration, teachers, staff and students greatly appreciate the continued strong support and commitment provided by the residents of Boylston and Berlin for our public schools. As we know, the fabric of the community is built in our youth and the community's sustained generosity and support allow us to develop great kids.

The Boylston Education Foundation (BEF) and Boylston Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) have now combined forces as the Boylston Education Collaborate (BEC). The Tahanto Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), Berlin LINK, and Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) continue to provide fundraising activities and community enrichment programs. Their work goes beyond funds. Their commitments and ongoing efforts to work together as groups during these unprecedented times continue to shine.

Financial

Massachusetts gives regional school district committees the sole authority "to determine the amounts necessary to be raised" for regional school district operating budgets. The BBRSD Committee and school administration want to highlight the collaboration efforts between the school district, the Boylston and Berlin Boards of Selectmen, Finance Committees and Town Administrators, who worked together to achieve a budget that is affordable for our towns and meets the educational needs of our students for FY25.

As the ever-evolving needs of our students and District change, it is often challenging to keep some budget items within requested limits from the member communities. The FY 2025 budget proved this more than any other, as Berlin votes did not initially approve the school budget at the May 2024 Town Meeting. This required Berlin to hold a special town meeting, scheduled in June 2024, to try to pass a school budget after additional conversations were held.

The school committee listened to voters concerns and agreed to remove some items from the budget request. The budget request was further adjusted just minutes before the Town Meeting vote as the school committee met with Berlin FinCom and Select Board to come to an agreement on school funding.

Throughout the process, the BBRSD School Committee listened to constituent concerns and worked to prepare a budget that would support all students and our District. Despite inaccurate information about the process that made its way into the public discourse, the BBRSD School Committee remains committed to working collaboratively with both towns while prioritizing a first rate experience for all students in our District.

The FY26 budget process has begun, and with our new Director of Finance and Operations Aaron Osborne and Interim Superintendent Al Ganem we have every confidence that this year will prove a must more rewarding experience for all involved.

Looking Forward

Our District continues to face significant change. We welcomed many new faces in our central office in 2024 and are excited to watch where these competent leaders bring BBRSD in the future. In the upcoming year we are first and foremost focusing on providing an excellent academic experience for our students, and working with the towns to build a budget that will allow growth and improvement across the District. We are hoping to make some significant facility improvements during 2025 as well. The Committee will continue to work closely with Interim Superintendent Ganem to achieve these goals.

There will also be a search conducted for a full time Superintendent, that process has begun.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Totman, Chair

School Committee Members:

Meagan Grill, Vice Chair

Lori-Anne Hart, District Clerk

Lisa Mair

Jessica Deglialberti

Elisabeth Mancini

Berlin-Boylston Regional School District

Interim Superintendent of Schools – Annual Report 2024

As the Interim Superintendent of Schools for the Berlin-Boylston Regional School District, I am proud to reflect over the last several months on the growth and achievement across all three of our schools: Berlin Memorial, Boylston Elementary, Tahanto Regional Middle/High School along with the Central Office of the BBRSD. Despite the challenges that education systems continue to face, I am pleased to share that our district is in a strong position, thanks to the dedication and hard work of our students, staff, families, and communities.

At each school, we are seeing strides in both academic and extracurricular opportunities. Our teachers continue to inspire and challenge our students, and our students are rising to those challenges with enthusiasm and commitment. Whether it's through innovative classroom experiences, engaging extracurricular programs, or the development of social-emotional skills, our schools are working hard to prepare students not only for college and career but for responsible citizenship in a rapidly changing world. Our Central Office has invested in high quality staffing to help lead our school district both financially and academically.

Our progress is also supported by a strong partnership between the Berlin and Boylston communities and the School Committee. The continued collaboration between our towns and the district will be instrumental in creating an environment where students can thrive. Together, we are not only addressing the immediate needs of our schools but are also planning for a future where our district continues to grow, adapt, and excel.

Looking ahead, we should be excited about the opportunities to continue building upon our successes and to further strengthen our schools as centers of learning and community. I am grateful for the ongoing support of the Berlin-Boylston Regional School Committee. I look forward to working together with the School Committee, town officials, faculty, and families to make our district a truly exceptional place for students to learn and grow.

There is still work that needs to be done, but working together the BBRSD will continue on the path toward becoming a district that not only meets the needs of all students, but inspires them to reach their full potential.

Respectfully submitted,

Albert G. Ganem Jr.
Interim Superintendent of Schools

Business Office Update – Annual Report 2024

The end of FY2024 presented challenges for the school department as the entire finance department turned over resulting in a gap in institutional knowledge. The district is finalizing the closure of its FY2024 books now, but overall the district came in within budget without extraordinary measures taken. The Committee and school administration would like to recognize the Berlin and Boylston Boards of Selectmen, Finance Committees and Town Administrators for their patience and understanding as well as their support of the FY2025 and now FY2026 budget process. We all hope to achieve budgets that are affordable for our towns and meet the educational needs of our students.

Moving into FY2025, we are entering contract negotiations with the Berlin-Boylston Educators' Association as well as putting our regular transportation contract out to bid. Teacher salaries and transportation costs are significant portions of the school budget, representing significant unknowns as we start the FY2026 budget process. Nonetheless, we are hopeful that we are budgeting accordingly and making every effort to reach responsible final agreements.

Respectfully submitted,

Aaron Osborne
Director of Finance and Operations

Annual Report 2024 from the Director of Curriculum and Grants, Grades 6-12

Grants

Grants that have been awarded to the Berlin-Boylston Regional School District this year were the ESSA Title I, IIA, and IV grants that award funds from DESE. ESSA funds allow Title I services to provide students with literacy and/or math support, fund online professional development to staff through companies such as Massachusetts Partnership for Youth, Primary Source, and The Art of Education, ArxEd, and also fund consultant work and professional development presenters.

In addition to the ESSA funds, we have been awarded a grant from the EOS Foundation called the "After the Bell Breakfast" Grant to help fund a breakfast initiative at the elementary level. We have also been awarded funds for a sixth year in a row through EDC/PACE, an organization that focuses on digital literacy and computer science which helps to fund activities, events, and supplies for our Computer Science Discoveries courses in the middle school and offerings for computer and coding based courses as electives for our high school students. This organization is also helpful in providing funds to help us run our yearly career fair in the spring at Tahanto Regional Middle High School for sophomores, juniors, and seniors.

Professional Development

We have had several full and early release professional development sessions for all staff that have provided them with strategies for instruction in the classroom. Among these offerings include: scaffolding, data analysis, and curriculum development and vertical alignment. Educators have also had the opportunity for more training in AI (Artificial Intelligence) in the classroom, using the MA Department of Education's new IEP (Individualized Education Plan) forms, Safety Practices and Protocols for the entire district, Safety Care Training, The "Year of Math" at the elementary level, and strategies for working with Multiple Language Learners.

Curriculum Review

Tahanto Regional Middle/High School's English department has adopted Common Lit as a resource for grades 6-12 in the curriculum. This platform not only provides lessons for grades 6-12 but also forms of assessment for progress monitoring. The counseling department has been continuing their work in the development and implementation of a Social-Emotional Learning curriculum in collaboration with Enjoy Life Education, who will also be coming into our middle school over the winter to provide a hands-on workshop for our middle school students on leadership skills. With the introduction of a new health curriculum frameworks released from the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education this past year, we have started to pilot curricular samples and trials to help us determine which materials to purchase that will align with the updated standards as we incorporate them into the current curriculum moving forward.

Strategic Planning

As our current District Improvement Plan is coming to an end, we are in the process of meeting with consultants to help us continue our Portrait of a Graduate work and develop a new strategic plan to outline our mission, vision, core values, theory of action, and goals for the next five years. We are planning to begin this work over the winter with a goal to have a new strategic plan in place by the midpoint of the next school year.

Wellness Committee

The Wellness Policy that was developed last year was voted into effect at the beginning of this school year. The committee has created a presentation that we have been giving to faculties of each of our schools, school councils, student groups and health classes, the Boosters Club and we plan to meet with the PTO over the winter. We also plan to hold student forums during lunch blocks at the middle/high school level.

STEAM Committee

This year we have started a STEAM committee with hopes to increase the number of high-quality STEAM opportunities for students, help students develop critical thinking, problem solving and innovation skills and to promote multidisciplinary collaboration between science, technology, math, and the arts departments. We will be brainstorming the organization of potential events which may include expos, fairs, or presentations in the future.

Respectfully submitted,

Sally-Ann Stukuls, Director of Curriculum and Grants, Grades 6-12

Annual Report, Department of Pupil Personnel Services
January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024

The Pupil Services department focuses on promoting and maintaining opportunities for student success in safe, accessible school environments where students experience belonging. We strive to have each child feeling successful and connected to their community.

Special Education: During the 2023-2024 school year, the Berlin-Boylston Regional School District provided special education services to approximately 250 students ages 3-22. The majority of students receive services in a full-inclusion program.

The 2024 Extended School Year (ESY) program provided special education services to approximately 40 eligible students for 5 weeks. ESY programs are designed to prevent a loss of skill for students with disabilities, or to provide therapies (speech, occupational therapy, or physical therapy) that may be necessary to maintain student skill levels throughout the summer. Historically, the location of the district's ESY program has rotated between the elementary schools. For the first time, ESY was held at Tahanto in the summer of 2024 to accommodate planned building work and cleaning schedules at the elementary schools.

Our Special Education staff is committed to providing specialized academic and behavioral instruction and services to students with disabilities. We aim to engage them in high-quality instruction that challenges and prepares them to be well-rounded, active citizens. Designing quality and individualized programming for students is a team effort, achieved only through positive collaboration with parents and continuous assessment, discussion, revision, and re-assessment.

The Berlin-Boylston Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) is a group of parents who are available to support other parents of students with disabilities. Meetings and informational programs are scheduled throughout the year, including a meet-and-greet with school staff in the Fall, a Basic Rights in Special Education presentation in the Winter and a yearly scholarship for a deserving senior. SEPAC is an important part of the school community.

Preschool: The Boylston Preschool continues in its location at Tahanto Regional Middle/High School in a dedicated early childhood learning. Three preschool classes, each 2.5 hours per day, are scheduled. In addition, Tahanto High School students have an opportunity to take child development electives in the Tahanto Preschool. A pathway to pursue a private preschool teacher certification through the Department of Early Education and Care is also available.

Multilingual Learners: Our community of Multilingual learners continues to thrive. New students who need English Language services have moved into the district, and other students have successfully passed the state Access tests and no longer need services. Portuguese continues to be the most prevalent home language. Additional languages spoken in the homes of our multilingual families include Arabic, French, Gujarati, Hindi, Malayalam, Pashto, Russian, Spanish, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu.

Education Stability Services: Pupil Personnel Services oversees the provision of educational services and support for students who are homeless, in foster care, and whose families have active-duty military members. Our work is to ensure that children and youth have full access to a

consistent public education. We coordinate and collaborate with other state agencies and community providers to support students experiencing these circumstances.

Health Services: School nurses function as a part of the school's multidisciplinary team to bridge health, wellness and learning. Working with parents, health professionals, and school staff, the school nurse provides services for students that promote conditions for optimum health for academic success. The school nurse provides the expertise to identify, assess, plan, implement and evaluate the health needs of the school community. The program emphasizes disease prevention and health promotion, utilizing health services, health counseling, and health education. School nurses support their attending school and help reduce interruptions to their learning. They also identify and provide plans and treatments for students with special health needs, including gastrostomy tubes, catheters, and insulin dependence, so that all children may attend school. School nurses play an integral role in assisting families to access health care for their children. The nurses provide state-mandated hearing, vision, BMI, postural, and substance use (SBIRT) screenings for students in various grade levels. Each school has a full-time school nurse. With the support of a two-day per-week float nurse and substitute school nurses, the school nurses provide the day to day Health office operations, screenings and medically necessary student support on field strips.

Respectfully submitted,

Jannel Fitzpatrick
Director of Pupil Personnel Services

BERLIN MEMORIAL SCHOOL

Annual Report - 2024

It is my pleasure to submit this report for 2024 on behalf of the Berlin Memorial School, where we remain committed to our mission statement, which is, "to empower each student to achieve personal excellence by fostering respect, responsibility and resourcefulness with the support of the entire school community."

As 2024 began, we had 220 students enrolled in our school from PreKindergarten through Grade Five. This represented another small increment of growth, continuing a pattern that we have seen over the past few years. While the over-all growth in terms of numbers of students is small, we are starting to see individual grade levels with class sizes of twenty or more students.

With the arrival of spring our students in grades three through five participated in the annual MCAS testing cycle. All three grades are tested in math and language arts, and fifth grade students also are assessed in the area of science/technology/engineering. I am delighted to share with the community that our students continue to shine in these assessments. 68% of BMS students scored in the "Meets/Exceeds" rating in language arts. (The state-wide number is 39%.) In math, 64% of students scored in the "Meets/Exceeds" category. (The state-wide number was 42%.) As a result of these strong results, we were ranked 111th best elementary school in Massachusetts by US News and World Report and 114th best by the SchoolDigger website. That is out of 916 rated elementary schools throughout the Commonwealth.

2024 was also our second year taking our fifth grade students to Nature's Classroom, where they shared time, space and learning adventures with their fifth grade counterparts from Boylston Elementary. The goal of this trip is to introduce students to each other prior to going to Tahanto Middle School, as well as serve as a capstone for their time at BMS!

By the fall of 2024 our student population had grown again, increasing to 224 children. While BMS was saddened at the departure of Superintendent Carol Costello, Mr. Al Ganem had joined us as a new interim Superintendent of Schools and jumped right in as we began planning anew for a positive learning experience for all our children.

Berlin Memorial School is extremely grateful for the tremendous community support we continue to receive on behalf of our children. We would like to acknowledge our out-going Superintendent, Carol Costello, as well as our Interim Superintendent, Al Ganem, the Berlin-Boylston Regional School Committee, and partnerships with the Berlin Police and Fire Departments, Recreation Department, Highway Department, Board of Selectmen, Historical Society, and Worcester County Sheriff's Department. We also wish to thank our dedicated School Council members and PTL parent volunteers for the countless hours of support they have provided to us this past year.

Respectfully submitted,

John F. Campbell, Jr.

Principal – Berlin Memorial School

Tahanto Regional Middle/High School Annual Report 2024

Tahanto welcomed 517 students across grades 6-12 and 9 new faculty and staff members at the start of the 2023-2024 academic year. Now in their second year as an administrative team, Lisa Sequeira as Principal, Richard Cameron and Renee Legendre as Assistant Principals, continue to focus on fostering academic rigor, enhancing school safety protocols, and expanding opportunities for students. The team remains committed to building upon Tahanto's strong tradition of educational excellence and continues to unite the community with the theme "Better Together".

Local and National Recognition

The US News and World Report highlighted Tahanto's excellence in it's school rankings identifying Tahanto as #4 among the Worcester Metro area schools, #33 in all of Massachusetts and #800 among National Rankings. These rankings reflect opportunities for students to take advanced coursework, their performance on state assessments, graduation rates and how well prepared our students are for college. This is a tremendous achievement and honor for students, faculty, staff and community members.

Class of 2024

The Superintendent's Award for academic excellence went to Shoi Amin, honored in the spring at the Worcester County Superintendent's Association's Annual Scholars Luncheon Ceremony for 2024. The Principal's Award was awarded to Antony Germain this June on Graduation Sunday. Seventy six percent of 2024 graduates are attending four-year colleges, nine percent are attending two-year colleges, nine percent entered the workforce, another three percent will be continuing with career and technical training and one student graduated while enlisted in the military. The Class of 2024 headed off to 18 different states from Maine to Florida, North Carolina to California, covering the country and attending 47 different institutions of higher learning. Congratulations to each of the 76 graduates of Tahanto's Class of 2024!

Academic Highlights

During May 2024, 144 Advanced Placement exams in 15 different subjects were administered to Tahanto students in grades 10-12. Students who sat for these exams have the opportunity to earn college credit based upon their exam scores, which become available in July. 26 Tahanto Students earned the distinction of AP Scholar signifying that each of these students took at least 3 AP exams and scored a 3 or higher on each one. During the Academic Awards Ceremony in May, 26 students in the Class of 2024 were presented with College Book Awards. These students were recognized for their hard work, leadership, and commitment to the school and community.

In November 2024, 21 students were recipients of the John and Abigail Adams Scholarships based on their high academic achievement on the MCAS exams. This is a great achievement for which these students should be very proud.

Athletics

Tahanto continues to have a strong and competitive athletic program. The 2024 winter sport highlights included the girls and boys Varsity Basketball teams competing in the state tournament and additionally earned Central Mass Championship titles. Spring sports were highlighted as 18 Tahanto athletes were named Mid Wach All Stars in Baseball, Softball, Girls Lacrosse and Track & Field. Our girls Lacrosse team won the Central Massachusetts Championship, and both Girls Varsity Lacrosse and Softball teams competed in the State tournament with Softball making it to the Final Four!! We are thrilled to announce that Cordell Holden won the State Title for 110 M Hurdles. In the fall of 2024, our girls varsity soccer team displayed incredible sportsmanship as they became the Central MA Champions and competed in the Final Four for the State Tournament. The football team won the state title for the THIRD year in a row! Tahanto athletes comprised a significant portion of the West Boylston Lions Football team which won the Division 8 MIIA Football Championship over Randolph with a score of 22-16!

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Sequeira, Principals