Gmail

Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org>

BES Principal

5 messages

Erin Kane <erinpatriciakane@gmail.com> Sun, Apr 6, 2025 at 6:14 PM
To: nbilotta@bbrsd.org, Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org>, mgrill@bbrsd.org, lhart@bbrsd.org, jdeglialberti@bbrsd.org, lmair@bbrsd.org, emancini@bbrsd.org, Albert Ganem <aganem@bbrsd.org>

Dear Members of the School Committee, Interim Superintendent Ganem,

I am writing to urge you to leverage everything within your power to retain Mrs. Cinthia Sykes as Principal of Boylston Elementary School. In the nearly two years that she has been the leader of BES, our school community has seen an incredible change. I will try to address some of this, as well as sharing a personal story of how she has impacted my family.

From her very first day on the job, Mrs. Sykes has expressed an interest in how she can strengthen the school community. Prior to beginning her tenure as principal, she met with families in the BES library. She introduced herself to students, parents, younger siblings, and expressed an interest in learning more about our community. She asked what we wanted from our next principal, and how she could support our students. She listened, and has worked every day since then to make that a reality.

Mrs. Sykes is a hands-on type of leader. She is a part of everything that takes place at Boylston Elementary School, and our community is better, and stronger because of it. On any given day at BES, you can see Mrs. Sykes doing what she loves best, working with students. She is greeting them at drop off with Math on the Move, she is visiting them in classrooms to recognize and reward their accomplishments, she is walking the halls with them discussing what math they can recognize in their own school, she is eating lunch with a small group in the conference room to recognize Artists of the Month, or a newspaper club, she is in the cafeteria teaching students the lyrics to “Sweet Caroline,” she is outside at recess playing basketball, she is running enrichment groups like Science with Mrs. Sykes, and she is singing and dancing at dismissal. Mrs. Sykes is there for all of it.

While impressive, that doesn’t take into account all of her meticulous planning. Mrs. Sykes engages in constant, meticulous planning in order to strengthen our school. Look no further than our recent Grade 3 MCAS for an example. Mrs. Sykes has worked throughout the year to ensure our students are prepared and comfortable. Weekly, she added challenge problems or MCAS problems into her weekly newsletter, this helped boost student confidence, and allowed parents to see what their children were expected to know. My children look forward to these problems each week. Not for the prize that Mrs. Sykes gives them for completing the problem, but for the recognition she provides when they do. She sees each child and makes them feel important. Beyond the challenge problems, Mrs. Sykes helped to prepare third grade students for their first MCAS by giving them an assembly, just for them, to make them feel empowered and ready to show what they know. This assembly was followed by a school wide parade, where the entire school

community came together to show support for our youngest MCAS takers. All of BES lined the halls with posters and cheers as third graders walked by. My son told me it made him feel "...awesome, and ready to take the MCAS!" But she wasn't done there, the next day students arrived at school to see her "bigheads" all over the school with encouraging messages, telling students they could do it. This is the type of detail and planning she brings to every single day.

Mrs. Sykes loves working with children. Each year, she has worked to ensure my son is appropriately challenged at school. My eldest son is twice exceptional. He is gifted and AuDHD. He finds grade level work to be incredibly easy, and has not yet been challenged by grade level standards. Mrs. Sykes sees this, and recognizes the need to give him something different. Last year he participated in Science with Mrs. Sykes. As a second grader he learned about cohesion, adhesion, combustion, rockets, thrust, and coding. He can hold academic conversations with students well above his age. Mrs. Sykes encourages him and does not limit his growth. This year, when her meeting schedule changed and she was no longer able to hold enrichment groups during the school day, she still found a way to reach children. Mrs. Sykes meets with a group of fifth graders after school on Tuesdays. The purpose of the group is to give them some additional instruction and help empower them with the skills and knowledge they need to be successful in the classroom. While this group is aimed at fifth graders, Mrs. Sykes invited my third grader to join as well. She is flexible and adapts to best meet the needs of all students. It is my son's favorite part of the week.

Mrs. Sykes takes the time to get to know all of her students. It is important to her that every student feels like they have "a person" at school, someone who they know and trust, someone who they look forward to seeing each day. When Mrs. Sykes was new to BES, my son was struggling to make social connections. He didn't have a strong relationship with his teacher, and he had little social engagement with his classmates. We noticed fairly early in the year that he was struggling with his teacher. Things seemed to be getting worse. We learned that my son was engaging in self-injurious behaviors at school. This had never happened anywhere else. Then we learned, he had asked about taking his own life. I met with Mrs. Sykes and shared my concerns. I was nervous, I didn't know her, and I didn't know how I would be received. Mrs. Sykes made it her mission to become my son's "person." She checked in with him every day. She asked him about his interests, and she recognized his achievements. She made him feel seen, and she empowered her team at BES to do the same. Now, a little more than a year later, thanks to their love and support, my son loves school. He has friends. He loves his teacher. He loves his principal. He literally runs to the door at the start of each day. Mrs. Sykes has saved his life. She would do the same for any one of your children.

Mrs. Sykes teaches our children that there is power in their voices. She teaches them to stand up for what they believe in. This is a lesson that we could all use right now. I am urging you to do everything in your power to retain Mrs. Sykes as principal of Boylston Elementary School. Use your voices to stand up for what is right. Start by asking her why she is really leaving. She has mentioned many times that she loves our community and hopes to retire here. Look at all of the love she has poured into our school. Look at all of the additions she has made, Bobcat Lane, parking spots for teachers, the speakers used to play music at arrival and dismissal, the weekly prize box prizes, changes big and small were all made, investments in her future

at BES, investments in our children's education. Ask yourselves what changed for her this year. Start at the top. Use your voices. Do not let our students lose their biggest asset in their education.

Sincerely,

Erin Kane

BES Mother of Two

Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org> Sun, Apr 6, 2025 at 6:14 PM
To: erinpatriciakane@gmail.com

Thank you for your email. I'm currently away from the office and focusing on various projects but will be sure to respond when I return. thank you.

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Michael Totman, Chair
Berlin Boylston Regional School Committee
508.386.5000

Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org> Sun, Apr 6, 2025 at 6:17 PM
To: Erin Kane <erinpatriciakane@gmail.com>
Cc: nbilotta@bbrsd.org, mgrill@bbrsd.org, lhart@bbrsd.org, jdeglialberti@bbrsd.org, lmair@bbrsd.org, emancini@bbrsd.org, Albert Ganem <aganem@bbrsd.org>

Hello, thank you for your email. Mrs. Sykes has made her decision and noted that it is personal in nature and does not wish to discuss it further. We are going to respect her request. Thank you.

Michael Totman, Chair
Berlin Boylston Regional School Committee
508.386.5000
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Erin Kane <erinpatriciakane@gmail.com> Sun, Apr 6, 2025 at 6:33 PM
To: Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org>
Cc: nbilotta@bbrsd.org, mgrill@bbrsd.org, lhart@bbrsd.org, jdeglialberti@bbrsd.org, lmair@bbrsd.org, emancini@bbrsd.org, Albert Ganem <aganem@bbrsd.org>, Cinthia Sykes <csykes@bbrsd.org>

Mr. Totman,

My sincerest apologies. I did not realize you were speaking for her. I will add her to this communication to ensure she is in the loop.

Respectfully,
Erin Kane
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Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org> Sun, Apr 6, 2025 at 6:35 PM
To: Erin Kane <erinpatriciakane@gmail.com>
Cc: nbilotta@bbrsd.org, mgrill@bbrsd.org, lhart@bbrsd.org, jdeglialberti@bbrsd.org, lmair@bbrsd.org, emancini@bbrsd.org, Albert Ganem <aganem@bbrsd.org>, Cinthia Sykes <csykes@bbrsd.org>

I am not speaking for Mrs Sykes, I'm referencing her public statement. You asked us to do what we can to change her mind and as the chair of the school cmte I stated that we are respecting her decision.

In no way do I speak for her and that should be clear.

Michael Totman, Chair

Berlin Boylston Regional School Committee
508.386.5000
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