Gmail

Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org>

Concerns Regarding Leadership Turnover and Stability at BES

18 messages

Lindsay Tierney <lindstierney@gmail.com> Thu, Apr 3, 2025 at 12:48 PM
To: mtotman@bbrsd.org, mgrill@bbrsd.org, lhart@bbrsd.org, jdeglialberti@bbrsd.org, lmair@bbrsd.org, emancini@bbrsd.org

Dear Boylston School Committee Members,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the ongoing leadership turnover at Boylston Elementary School, particularly with the recent announcement of Principal Cindy Sykes' departure. This marks the fourth principal for BES, and the continued instability raises serious questions about the working environment for our teachers and the learning environment for our children.

Given this pattern of turnover, I would like to formally request an exit interview from Mrs. Sykes and for that information to be shared with BES parents. Understanding her perspective could provide valuable insights into any underlying challenges within the school's leadership and administration.

Additionally, I would like to understand the rationale behind the timing of this announcement, which was made in the middle of MCAS testing—a period already stressful for both teachers and students. Was this decision advised by the Superintendent, or was it made independently by Mrs. Sykes?

There are broader concerns that I, along with other parents, would appreciate clarity on:

- What steps does the School Committee plan to take to ensure stability within BES leadership moving forward?
- What updates can be provided regarding the search for a permanent Superintendent? The last publicly available information dates back to January.
- Can the Committee provide a timeline detailing leadership turnover at BES, including who the key decision-makers were in these transitions?
- There have also been reports that an Interim Superintendent visited a third-grade classroom, and after an energetic response from students, recess was taken away. Could clarification be provided on this incident?
- I am concerned that critical programs, such as Girls on the Run, are being disrupted for emergency meetings due to administrative decisions. What measures are in place to minimize the impact of leadership changes on students' daily experiences?

The repeated departures of dedicated and qualified administrators are troubling. I want to ensure that decisions are being made in the best interest of the students and staff. I would appreciate transparency regarding the factors contributing to this ongoing turnover and the actions being taken to address it.

I look forward to your response and any information you can provide.

Sincerely,

Lindsay Tierney - Parent of 3rd Grade, Kindergarten at BES

140 Sewall Street, Boylston, MA

Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org> Thu, Apr 3, 2025 at 12:48 PM
To: lindstierney@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.

--
Michael Totman, Chair
Berlin Boylston Regional School Committee
508.386.5000

Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org> Thu, Apr 3, 2025 at 2:40 PM
To: Lindsay Tierney <lindstierney@gmail.com>, Albert Ganem <aganem@bbrsd.org>
Cc: mgrill@bbrsd.org, lhart@bbrsd.org, jdeglialberti@bbrsd.org, lmair@bbrsd.org, emancini@bbrsd.org

I've added the interim superintendent to this email for his information.

Thank you for your concern. I believe I can speak for the committee that we are also emotional how Mrs. Sykes is leaving, but respect her decision as it seems to be based on personal reasons for her. This is a personnel matter so we won't be able to comment much more on that.

To address your concerns, the principal search is in its infancy as this news has only come out this week, more information will be coming.

The superintendent search was addressed as recently as March 11 at our meeting. We are looking to have the initial search completed in April with a full search starting in September.

While a more detailed analysis can be done, recently at BES Ace Thompson took a new job in 2022, Dawn Marie was hired by Jeff Zanghi as an interim principal and Carol Costello hired Cindy in 2023. These are people with careers, they sometimes choose to move jobs for personal reasons as any employee might.

I'm unaware of a recess issue, where do you see these reports? Please contact me directly if you have additional facts to share about that.

Decisions are always made with the staff and students in mind.

thank you.

[Quoted text hidden]
[Quoted text hidden]

Lindsay Tierney <lindstierney@gmail.com> Thu, Apr 3, 2025 at 2:52 PM
To: Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org>
Cc: Albert Ganem <aganem@bbrsd.org>, mgrill@bbrsd.org, lhart@bbrsd.org, jdeglialberti@bbrsd.org, lmair@bbrsd.org, emancini@bbrsd.org

Thank you for your prompt response! It’s been unsettling, as a new resident, to have three back to back new principals.

I’d like to understand the plan to retain talent.

1) Will Cindy get an exit interview?

2) Will our interim Superindendent be able to provide insight as to why a qualified principal is leaving so quickly after being permanently hired?

3) How can we better retain talent at BES?

4) What is the difference in steps and investment of time and resources between ‘initial search completed in April’ and ‘with a full search starting in September?’

5) Is the current Interim Superintendent planning to retire again after the completion of the search?

6) How and why did the information about Cindy leak to the point of her needing to hold an emergency meeting disrupting key programs?

7) What is the school committee and Superindendent planning to do to make this transition of a third principal in three years smooth?

8) It was brought to my attention that we have a new IT Director and that our current IT director is on contract through the summer. Is this true and are we paying for two salaries during the overlap?

9) The classroom that the alleged incident happened in is Mrs. Porter. I do not have all of the facts and heard this from another parent. I know it violates the Wellness policy, so am hopeful it's just been misconstrued.

[Quoted text hidden]

Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org> Thu, Apr 3, 2025 at 2:56 PM
To: Lindsay Tierney <lindstierney@gmail.com>
Cc: Albert Ganem <aganem@bbrsd.org>, mgrill@bbrsd.org, lhart@bbrsd.org, jdeglialberti@bbrsd.org, lmair@bbrsd.org, emancini@bbrsd.org

Thank you. Your questions will be answered publicly in due time.

If you do not have facts about the recess issue I would respectfully ask that you help by not spreading any rumors. I am not aware of this issue but if facts do come to me I will address it.

Thank you.
[Quoted text hidden]

Lindsay Tierney <lindstierney@gmail.com> Thu, Apr 3, 2025 at 2:59 PM
To: Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org>
Cc: Albert Ganem <aganem@bbrsd.org>, mgrill@bbrsd.org, lhart@bbrsd.org, jdeglialberti@bbrsd.org, lmair@bbrsd.org, emancini@bbrsd.org

My intention is not to spread rumors but to inquire and ask for facts. It's being researched as we speak.

Will all of these questions be answered and when is due time?
[Quoted text hidden]

Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org> Thu, Apr 3, 2025 at 3:00 PM
To: Lindsay Tierney <lindstierney@gmail.com>
Cc: Albert Ganem <aganem@bbrsd.org>, mgrill@bbrsd.org, lhart@bbrsd.org, jdeglialberti@bbrsd.org, lmair@bbrsd.org, emancini@bbrsd.org

The committee regularly meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month.

Michael Totman, Chair
Berlin Boylston Regional School Committee
508.386.5000

[Quoted text hidden]

Lindsay Tierney <lindstierney@gmail.com> Thu, Apr 3, 2025 at 3:04 PM

To: Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org>
Cc: Albert Ganem <aganem@bbrsd.org>, mgrill@bbrsd.org, lhart@bbrsd.org, jdeglialberti@bbrsd.org, lmair@bbrsd.org, emancini@bbrsd.org

What else is on the agenda for this Tuesday—will all of these questions will be answered this Tuesday or over the course of several meetings?

I have not been to any meetings, as I'm at capacity—but will make a concerted effort to be present to learn more about what is happening in at BES and across the district.

Again, thank you so much for taking the time out of the day to address my concern, however, I'm looking for answers and hopeful that we get there.
[Quoted text hidden]

Lindsay Tierney <lindstierney@gmail.com> Thu, Apr 3, 2025 at 4:25 PM
To: Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org>
Cc: Albert Ganem <aganem@bbrsd.org>, mgrill@bbrsd.org, lhart@bbrsd.org, jdeglialberti@bbrsd.org, lmair@bbrsd.org, emancini@bbrsd.org, nbilotta@bbrsd.org

Hi, I believe Nicole Billota needs to be CC''d as well, so I am looping her in here.

Nicole, please see below for public record. Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.

Lindsay Tierney
[Quoted text hidden]

Lindsay Tierney <lindstierney@gmail.com> Thu, Apr 3, 2025 at 4:29 PM
To: Lindsay Tierney <lindstierney@gmail.com>
Cc: Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org>, Albert Ganem <aganem@bbrsd.org>, mgrill@bbrsd.org, lhart@bbrsd.org, jdeglialberti@bbrsd.org, lmair@bbrsd.org, emancini@bbrsd.org, nbilotta@bbrsd.org

I also have another concern; which I've been meaning to have addressed.

There was a man asking children questions on school property. The third grade students mentioned it and police were present. Why was it decided that the parents of BES should not be informed of an incident of this nature — even if there was no threat present? How is the safety of our students being communicated to parents when a police presence is required in order to mitigate a situation?

I've been told not to start rumors, so I'd like some facts about this situation as well. Thank you!

Lindsay Tierney

> On Apr 3, 2025, at 3:04 PM, Lindsay Tierney <lindstierney@gmail.com> wrote:
>
> What else is on the agenda for this Tuesday—will all of these questions will be answered this Tuesday or over the course of several meetings?
>
> I have not been to any meetings, as I'm at capacity—but will make a concerted effort to be present to learn more about what is happening in at BES and across the district.
>
> Again, thank you so much for taking the time out of the day to address my concern, however, I'm looking for answers and hopeful that we get there.
> [Quoted text hidden]

Lindsay Tierney <lindstierney@gmail.com> Fri, Apr 4, 2025 at 8:58 AM
To: Lindsay Tierney <lindstierney@gmail.com>
Cc: Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org>, Albert Ganem <aganem@bbrsd.org>, mgrill@bbrsd.org, lhart@bbrsd.org, jdeglialberti@bbrsd.org, lmair@bbrsd.org, emancini@bbrsd.org, nbilotta@bbrsd.org

Will the School Committee Meeting Minutes be updated before Monday's Meeting? I am unable to access the notes regarding 'The superintendent search was addressed as recently as March 11 at our meeting.'
[Quoted text hidden]

Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org> Fri, Apr 4, 2025 at 11:55 AM
To: Lindsay Tierney <lindstierney@gmail.com>
Cc: Albert Ganem <aganem@bbrsd.org>, mgrill@bbrsd.org, lhart@bbrsd.org, jdeglialberti@bbrsd.org, lmair@bbrsd.org, emancini@bbrsd.org, nbilotta@bbrsd.org

School committee minutes are updated in accordance with OML. I'm not clear about which meeting on Monday you are referring to, there are at least four public meetings in member towns that I'm aware of. Regardless, the school committee is not scheduled to meet before Monday.

Thank you.
[Quoted text hidden]

Lindsay Tierney <lindstierney@gmail.com> Fri, Apr 4, 2025 at 2:04 PM
To: Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org>
Cc: Albert Ganem <aganem@bbrsd.org>, mgrill@bbrsd.org, lhart@bbrsd.org, jdeglialberti@bbrsd.org, lmair@bbrsd.org, emancini@bbrsd.org, nbilotta@bbrsd.org

The minutes have not been updated since 1/24, and I believe OML requires a reasonable timeframe, within days, not months, but, I could be wrong and I have only viewed the OML training videos online, I have no personal experience in public office navigating such concerns. Does it typically take the committee several months to update?

I have submitted an OML complaint with the Attorney General, submitted the form to you directly, and the municipal town clerk. The meeting minutes were not updated for the February or March meeting.

When I asked about the timeline for the superintendent interim job posting, I was given no dates or information. When I watched the playback, there appeared to be a vote that the job would be posted this week, April 8th would be the date to pick candidates and interviews held right before April break on April 15th.

Why were you unable to give me this information? Why was it not publicly available through meeting notes? I thought anything that involved a vote like this would be captured that way.
[Quoted text hidden]

Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org> Fri, Apr 4, 2025 at 2:22 PM
To: Lindsay Tierney <lindstierney@gmail.com>
Cc: Albert Ganem <aganem@bbrsd.org>, mgrill@bbrsd.org, lhart@bbrsd.org, jdeglialberti@bbrsd.org, lmair@bbrsd.org, emancini@bbrsd.org, nbilotta@bbrsd.org

I responded to this answering your question before seeing your OML complaint. As an OML complaint has now been filed, the committee will respond in a timely manner after following the process.

Good day.

Michael Totman, Chair
Berlin Boylston Regional School Committee
508.386.5000
[Quoted text hidden]

Lindsay Tierney <lindstierney@gmail.com> Fri, Apr 4, 2025 at 5:30 PM
To: Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org>
Cc: Albert Ganem <aganem@bbrsd.org>, mgrill@bbrsd.org, lhart@bbrsd.org, jdeglialberti@bbrsd.org, lmair@bbrsd.org, emancini@bbrsd.org, nbilotta@bbrsd.org

Noted, thank you.
[Quoted text hidden]

Lindsay Tierney <lindstierney@gmail.com> Sat, Apr 5, 2025 at 11:56 AM

To: Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org>
Cc: Albert Ganem <aganem@bbrsd.org>, mgrill@bbrsd.org, lhart@bbrsd.org, jdeglialberti@bbrsd.org, lmair@bbrsd.org, emancini@bbrsd.org, nbilotta@bbrsd.org

I have rescinded my OML complaint.

I happened to have flexibility this week, with time off, so it was a scenario where I could spend time researching and asking more questions. We all want the best for our children in Berlin and Boylston. I know that we will get there eventually, even though the road is currently a bit bumpy it will get us there.

Toodles.

Lindsay
[Quoted text hidden]

Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org> Sat, Apr 5, 2025 at 3:56 PM
To: Lindsay Tierney <lindstierney@gmail.com>
Cc: Albert Ganem <aganem@bbrsd.org>, mgrill@bbrsd.org, lhart@bbrsd.org, jdeglialberti@bbrsd.org, lmair@bbrsd.org, emancini@bbrsd.org, nbilotta@bbrsd.org

We take these matters seriously, as soon as it was received we began the process to pay for the attorney to review and advise. The matter has been sent to the Districts attorney and a response will be provided within the applicable timeframe.

Thank you.

Michael Totman, Chair
Berlin Boylston Regional School Committee
508.386.5000

[Quoted text hidden]

Lindsay Tierney <lindstierney@gmail.com> Sat, Apr 5, 2025 at 3:57 PM
To: Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org>
Cc: Albert Ganem <aganem@bbrsd.org>, mgrill@bbrsd.org, lhart@bbrsd.org, jdeglialberti@bbrsd.org, lmair@bbrsd.org, emancini@bbrsd.org, nbilotta@bbrsd.org

Great, it is true that it would have been a non issue if the notes were updated and you answered my questions. I'm glad you will all apply learnings from this.

Thanks.
[Quoted text hidden]