

School Committee Update:

The beginning of the year - with the return from Covid - has not been without challenges expected and unexpected. What follows is a breakdown of where we are.

At Greenfield High School:

Our faculty and staff has been working under challenging circumstances presented by the pandemic. Much like other businesses, we have not been able to find enough staff to fill our vacant positions and this has admittedly impacted our work.

We have filled the second assistant principal position last week. We have also added a School Counselor position and that staff will be starting next week. In addition, we have added new monitor positions. The permanent Greenfield High School principal position has been posted with a desired start date of January 2022. With this new appointment, I would retain three Associate Principals for the remainder of this year to support students and staff.

We have added the stipend for Restorative Practice Facilitator, which is filled by Mr. Pratt, our new MS Associate Principal. This position will help us write a strong social/emotional learning curriculum that will meet the challenges our students are facing, especially at the high school level.

We are updating or revamping our programs for students with special needs and this work has already started.

We are utilizing progressive discipline as outlined in the handbook to help students transition of a more normal school year as needed after Covid.

Questions have been raised about the use of shelters-in-place. Shelters-in-place have been used for a number of years as part of the typical safety and security protocols. They are used to identify that we need staff and students to remain in their classrooms and will be used for a variety of reasons including responding to medical issues, mental health responses or at times, student situations. There have been 8 shelters used at GHS since the start of school, related to the topics I noted. The situations are complex but can still create disruption and increase anxiety.

We have not needed nor practiced our security protocols at the same frequency since March 2020 and we are working with Trooper Carmichael from the State Police and Sgt. Greene from Greenfield Police to begin reviewing and practicing our safety protocols, as we did prior to Covid. We are also working on ways to communicate more effectively with parents when the need arises for using these protocols.

We are working with student groups, including the Social Justice Club, Anti-Racism, and the National Honor Society to address and include student concerns and solutions.

The Greenfield Police Department has been a valuable partner with the Public Schools. School staff has been able to address the situations to which the police were called. As we build new procedures and provide new resources, staff and other members of the community, will continue to rely on resources with which they are comfortable until the new becomes part of our normal response. We greatly appreciate the relationship and support from the GPD.

At Greenfield Middle School:

We are experiencing a staff shortage at Greenfield Middle School as well. We have also heard the rumor that all of our fifth grade staff has resigned. A number of grade 5 staff are out or will be leaving on anticipated and unanticipated medical leaves. We have one staff who transferred to GHS. We have one staff leaving before the winter break to move out of state but the position is posted. We also did not have an assistant principal at the start of the school year but were successful in hiring one in late September. This has allowed us to provide additional support to our struggling students and to help respond to discipline referrals.

In the meantime, we have added counseling staff as in-district staff and two CSO staff— one housed at GMS - and will be adding another at GMS. We have been working to implement best practices for our middle school special education programs and we continue to offer additional support for our most struggling students.

Some student challenging behavior is completely expected and comes with transition to middle school from elementary school. We realize there has been some concern about behavior issues in our 5th grade and at the middle school in general. In the past two weeks, we have had 56 discipline reports across all grade levels with only 4 being related to physical behavior. We are continuing to work with educators regarding ways to respond to inappropriate behaviors. We have met with staff and are beginning to provide additional training and supports. I was able to spend several hours at GMS today and to visit a number of classes. Our staff and students were working hard on academics and, while some students do need added supports, most of our GMS students are ready to learn but it has taken some time.

I am also applying for Mental Health grant to provide additional counseling and TLC support staff with a focus on middle school, high school and students identified as needing added supports at elementary

At all levels, elementary, middle, and high school, we are working with families regarding educational opportunities to best meet each student's needs be they academic, social/emotional, or behavioral.

Our elementary schools continue to push on, and while they too have reported an uptick in behavior/discipline issues, they have overall settled in and continue to make progress.

As a district, we continue to vet candidates and fill positions with the best candidates we can find. We have filled the assistant special education director position. We are interviewing for a Director of Behavioral Services position. We continue to work to fill staff openings, including Instructional Assistants, Registered Behavior Technicians and some classroom teachers.

We share all of this to show you the progress we are making, big steps in some areas and incremental progress in others, and that while much is still to be done and challenges await us, we are moving forward.

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Superintendent

