

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

May 5, 2011

Dear teacher,

I wanted to sincerely thank you for taking time after school last week to join me, Lesley Ryan and Bethany Wood at Madison Park. As a teacher myself (I'll always think of myself as a teacher), I know how intellectually and physically exhausting the day can be and the effort you made to bring your voice to the conversation speaks volumes about your dedication to your students and to our school community.

During our conversation, I learned more about how to best support your work and I thought you offered very reflective and informed comments about performance evaluations and professional development. I think we agree that no one element is sufficient; teachers and leaders should have shared accountability; and any performance review must include multiple measures and contain some measurable evidence of whether students are learning. What I heard most clearly from all of you is that evaluations must be done *responsibly* and *thoughtfully*, be conducted by people who understand your role in the classroom and the students you are teaching, and always with an eye toward supporting professional improvement that increases student learning.

It was also meaningful to hear your thoughts on student feedback. The initial constructive feedback tools developed by BSAC have offered some useful and meaningful information to secondary teachers, and they could become powerful guides to help all our teachers improve. However, we must be careful to use this information correctly and in ways that would enhance student learning. I remember one comment in particular – that students see you every day, and because they know you better than anybody else, their feedback could be the most constructive of all.

We also had an excellent conversation about the quality of professional development in BPS. One thing in particular I heard – which I plan to act on – is your preference that we provide more opportunities to learn from each other. I absolutely agree that there is tremendous talent in the Boston Public Schools and we must redouble our efforts to share our strengths with one another.

Sometimes the media portrays the state of urban education as “administrators versus unions” or “schools vs. central office,” and in some cities, this may certainly be true. I am hopeful that this is not the case in Boston. We have only made progress because of our collective efforts. Your dedication and your clear commitment to students were evident both to myself and to the many central office staff who joined us on Tuesday night. I look forward to continuing this important conversation where we continue to hear your perspectives and concerns.

Again, many thanks for your precious time and meaningful feedback!

Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carol R. Johnson".

Carol R. Johnson
Superintendent

cc: Richard Stutman, BTU President
Irvin Scott, Chief Academic Officer
Michael Goar, Deputy Superintendent