

August 20, 2014

To the Boston Latin Academy community,

I hope you are having a wonderful summer and are excited to start a new school year. I am writing today to update you on an issue we have been looking into this summer.

As you may know, a number of BLA faculty members raised questions about academic and professional standards at the school. Some students also reached out and contacted my office with concerns. In general, these concerns involved rigor, quality and alignment of the curriculum and the culture and climate in the school. We also received complaints about discrimination, harassment and intimidation.

Based on these concerns, I directed leadership from our Office of Academics and the High School Network, the Office of Human Capital and the Office of Equity to meet directly with BLA faculty and staff. We spoke with many people and listened carefully to what they had to say. While it is always difficult to raise sensitive issues such as these, it is vitally important. We must ensure that BLA is a place where all students can succeed and be prepared to excel in college and in life.

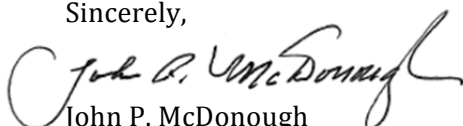
Teacher and student voice is crucial to this process. I want to thank those of you who took the time to sit down and talk to us. I am sure you understand the importance of protecting the confidential nature of our investigation. I cannot discuss some of the specific action steps that we are taking regarding individuals. I can share several of the steps we are taking now to address some of these concerns:

- I am assigning a dedicated leadership coach to work with Headmaster Pastor and the school team this fall. This person will work directly with staff to put professional development in place at all levels to help resolve the underlying issues.
- We are taking academic steps right now to strengthen curriculum standards and increase consistency and rigor across all areas at BLA.
- We are placing three program directors on administrative leave as the Academics team, Human Capital and Equity continue to look into these issues. We are identifying staff to fill these roles immediately on an interim basis and we will update you on specifics shortly.
- Additional changes remain a possibility. We will monitor the situation closely in the months ahead.

We are taking these steps so we can effectively address the concerns that have been raised by faculty, staff and students. Our work is not yet finished. Our Academics and High School Network teams will continue to work with school leaders and the Faculty Senate to turn curriculum recommendations into reality. Our Equity team will continue to have a presence at BLA to provide support to faculty and staff, and our Human Capital team will work to strengthen our hiring, development and retention practices at the school.

I view these efforts as collaborative and productive – not administrative or prescriptive. We share the same goal of ensuring that Boston Latin Academy continues to be a school that reflects BPS at our very best. We share your sense of urgency that requires us to make changes to position all students for success in a wide range of higher education opportunities. I hope that you, like me, will view these steps as a positive start.

Sincerely,



John P. McDonough  
Interim Superintendent

