April 2, 2014

Dear Pollard Community:

After an extensive and thoughtful search process, I am extremely happy to announce that Tamatha Bibbo has enthusiastically accepted my offer to become the new principal at the Pollard Middle School beginning July 1st. Ms. Bibbo, who currently is an administrator at the American School in London, is excited to lead the Pollard Middle School community and looks forward to working with students, staff, and parents.

Ms. Bibbo earned her BA in Political Science and English at Boston College where she subsequently earned her MA in Secondary Curriculum and Instruction. Ms. Bibbo continued her studies at Framingham State University where she also earned a MA in Curriculum and Instructional Technology. Prior to her work as an administrator in London, Ms. Bibbo served as an assistant principal at Needham High School and Franklin High School. She began her career teaching English in the Franklin Public Schools. Throughout her career, Ms. Bibbo has initiated several new programs in each of the schools in which she has worked. She developed a unique eighth-grade transition program at Franklin High School; she initiated a student leadership class at Needham High School that continues to thrive; and more recently she has created local and international partnerships in London as part of an extensive service learning initiative at the American School in London. Additionally, Ms. Bibbo has written extensively, including articles focused on professional development, recently published in Principal Leadership and The International Educator.

Ms. Bibbo was one of eight candidates interviewed for the principal’s position, out of 39 original applicants. She became one of two finalists who visited Pollard, each for one full day to meet with staff, parents, and students. Additionally, Ms. Bibbo met with administrators and other staff as part of the lengthy interview process. Those members of the Needham Public Schools and Pollard community who met Tamatha provided exceptionally consistent and strong feedback in their oral and written responses when asked about her candidacy.

A subsequent and virtual “site visit” to the American School in London conducted via Skype by members of the interview team was quite impressive. Students, parents, and staff were effusive about her leadership within the American School in London community, and they described her incredible ability to connect with students and their families in a way that is caring and sets high expectations for their learning and growth. Teachers and administrators praised Ms. Bibbo for her organizational ability, development of curriculum programs, and ability to problem solve and develop professional learning opportunities for teachers and staff. She was especially praised for her energy and capacity to build strong and positive relationships between and among staff, students, and parents. One of her colleagues stated that Miss Bibbo has “brought honor, dignity, integrity, grace, and good humor” to her role at the American School in London. And throughout the process, including the site visit, it was abundantly clear that Ms. Bibbo has developed warm and nurturing relationships with students.

Additional reference checking and a review of her portfolio demonstrated that Ms. Bibbo works collaboratively with teachers, encourages a high degree of ownership in student achievement, and has exceptional expectations for her staff, the students, and herself. It is equally clear that Ms. Bibbo’s values are consistent with the Needham Public Schools core values of Scholarship, Community, Citizenship, and Personal Growth.

Ms. Bibbo is very excited to rejoin the Needham community and believes she will learn a great deal from Pollard’s teachers, students, parents, and administrators who daily demonstrate a commitment to their learning and to one another. Her work with middle school students in London, both as a teacher and leading a middle school advisory, has convinced her that she belongs at the middle school level. I hope to invite Tamatha to visit Pollard before the end of the school year to meet students, parents and staff.
Many, many thanks to those staff and community members who attended afternoon and evening forums, provided written feedback, and participated in this important process. Special thanks to staff members, parents, and students who were on the interview team: Pollard staff Merle Berman, Holly Pacis, Christina Malinn, and Brook Hoffman; Parents Phil Huvos and Anne Weinstein; School administrators, including Directors Joanne Allen-Willoughby, Tom Denton, Terry Duggan, Tammy Ghizzoni, and Tom Campbell; Principals Mike Schwinden and Jessica Downey; and Needham Youth Services Director, Jon Mattleman.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to thank Dr. Lisa Chen for her leadership over the last three years at Pollard. Dr. Chen has worked exceptionally hard with the staff and parents to keep Pollard a wonderful place to learn. Under Dr. Chen’s leadership the school’s programs have grown, and the level of student improvement and achievement has been commended by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Throughout the search process Dr. Chen has been gracious and helpful, and she looks forward to assisting in the transition process. All of us wish her the very best!

Please join me in welcoming Tamatha Bibbo to the Needham Public Schools!

Sincerely,

Daniel E. Gutekanst

Daniel E. Gutekanst, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools