



Buckingham Browne & Nichols School

(Note: This update is excerpted from the Head of School's letter to the BB&N community on April 24, 2009)

Update on October 2008 Outreach Regarding Washburn Era

Lastly, I want to bring you up to date on progress we have made in respect to my October 2008 letter regarding abuse committed by Ted Washburn, the establishment of a process to help any alumni/ae adversely impacted by the events of the Washburn era, and a series of action steps that I proposed to help ensure the safest possible environment at BB&N now and in the future. As I noted in October, these initiatives are all very much works in progress and we expect to be working on this for some time.

In respect to our goal of fostering a healing process that will benefit the entire BB&N community, you will recall that we set up a referral system which can be contacted anonymously by any member of our alumni/ae community seeking assistance for emotional injury arising out of experiences relating to Ted Washburn. This service remains very much in place and can be accessed at any time through my October letter, which resides on the alumni/ae page of the School website. ([Click here to access the letter.](#))

In the area of concrete steps moving forward, our quest to create a permanent, confidential reporting system for abuse or neglect has not yet turned up a suitable third-party provider. We have been quite intrigued by one company that features a web-based reporting system. However, their school-based experience to date has been solely with colleges. We are exploring whether their software system can be adapted to accommodate the goals and needs of a preK-12 environment. If not, we will likely implement a more conventional "hot line" service.

We have hosted two sessions with child abuse experts for our professionals. In February, Jetta Bernier from the Massachusetts Citizens for Children worked with critical response personnel (counselors, psychologists, nurses, campus directors, and the dean of students). In November, pediatrician and national expert Eli Newberger led a workshop for our Lower School faculty on child abuse prevention. He also reviewed the Lower School's new health curriculum, which he found to be comprehensive, developmentally appropriate, and a positive step forward for LS students.

A faculty committee has met with me and BB&N's consulting psychiatrist to offer recommendations on how the School can best foster optimal communication and openness among faculty, administration, and students in reporting and responding to potential abuse. Among the issues that were discussed at our first meeting included the importance of faculty training around this topic and the need to ensure that any policies or processes which may get established are supple enough to work well at each of our three campuses. Another area that merits careful attention is a revisiting of School rules and guidelines for appropriate student-faculty interaction, particularly in light of the ever-growing use of social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace. I look forward to meeting again with this committee before the end of the School year to continue this dialogue.

Last week, the Upper School Student Council shared with the Dean of Students and me their views about improving communication channels at the School. Their suggestions include identifying to students the faculty/staff who are available to respond to student concerns around the issue of inappropriate faculty behavior, and organizing workshops for students on the topic of abuse, not specifically related to BB&N. All of this is very good grist for the mill as the faculty, deans, counselors, and I continue to discuss these issues in the months to come. By the end of the first term in the 2009-10 academic year, I will post to the School website an update about developments on these action steps.

Sincerely yours,

Rebecca T. Upham
Head of School