



On Marblehead's New Superintendent: By a Nantucket High School Student

JohnCarl McGrady

At the end of the 2019-20 school year, high school principal Dr. John Buckey will be leaving Nantucket High School (NHS) to become superintendent of the Marblehead school district. Buckey has been working as NHS principal since 2008, 12 years ago, and two years before Michael Cozort, the current superintendent of NHS, joined the staff. Cozort will also be leaving NHS at the end of the school year, though he is retiring, not seeking a different job.

A native of Ohio, Buckey earned his bachelor's degree in Spanish and Secondary Education from Asbury University. He then taught Spanish for a while at the Lexington school in Lexington, Kentucky. This experience in Spanish language education would go on to serve him well as principal of NHS, since the school has a large Hispanic and Spanish-speaking population that increases every year. According to the most recent district report card, which evaluates schools based on topics like demographics, MCAS scores, and access to the arts, NHS was nearly one-quarter Hispanic.

Of course, Marblehead does not have nearly as high of a Hispanic population, with the most recent report card for the district showing it is just over six percent Hispanic, but being principal of Nantucket High School isn't Buckey's only experience. Buckey got his master's degree from Harvard graduate school and then spent a year as Dean of Students at the Andrews School in Willoughby, Ohio. After that, he moved to Littleton, Massachusetts, where he was the assistant principal at Littleton High School for four years and then the principal for another three. He has also earned a doctorate from Northeastern, and when his experience at Littleton and Nantucket is combined, he has spent fifteen years as a high school principal.

Buckey is obviously highly qualified in the field of high school education, and his accomplishments at NHS speak to this. Since he arrived at NHS, he has had success in broadening the high school curriculum and providing more opportunities for students, as well as helping to raise the district's MCAS scores.

Though the English and Math MCAS scores for NHS have tracked relatively close to the state during his tenure, the Science scores have jumped dramatically, from 52 percent of students scoring in the top two categories in 2008 to fully 80 percent of students falling in those categories in the most recent year. That's a massive increase of 28 percent, well outside any margin of error. In fact, in 2008, fully 16 percent of students fell into the failing category for 10th grade Science MCAS. In 2019, only 2 percent of students were in that same category.

Buckey attributes the rise in MCAS scores to teacher and administrative stability, saying when he first arrived, the school had been through a lot of administrative change in the last few years but has remained fairly stable since then. He added that "there was a lot of turnover in teachers when I first got here, now there isn't...especially in the English department, all of those teachers have been here for a long time."

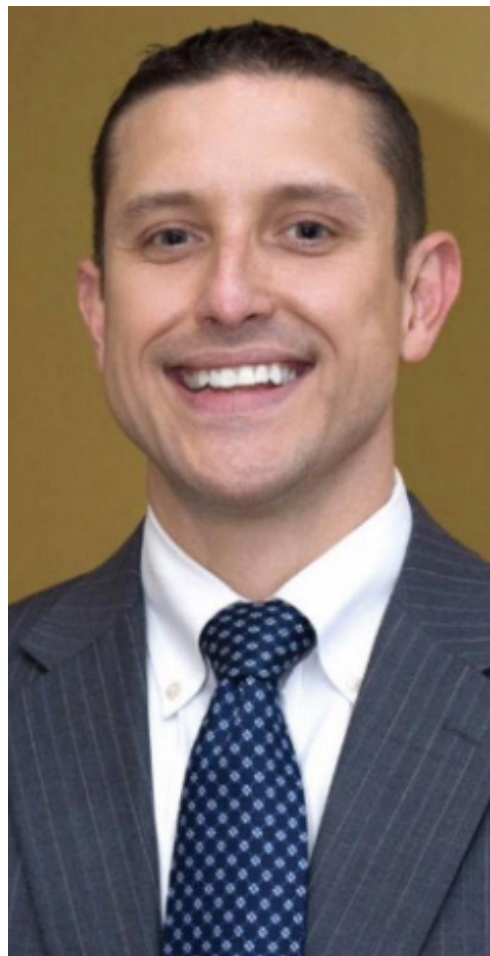
Still, Buckey didn't want to focus too much on MCAS scores. He didn't cite the school's success on the Science MCAS as his greatest accomplishment at the school, though Nantucket now easily outperforms the state as a whole on that metric. Nor did he cite the teacher stability to which he attributed the scores.

Instead, he talked about the curriculum. In fact, he turned to the increase in the breadth of NHS' curriculum several times, noting it has expanded in many different directions. He said he was proud of the increased vocational technical program offered at NHS, which was only a few classes when he first arrived. This program is important to the school since there is no accessible technical school on the island. He also mentioned the increased Advanced Placement (AP) offerings, saying "there just weren't many [AP] classes when I arrived."

And yet, it wasn't either of those things he pointed to as his greatest achievement during his long tenure at NHS. He also didn't turn to how he had managed the schools quickly increasing population, which has increased by nearly 30 percent while he has been principal. That growth has been especially concentrated in the Hispanic population, which went from under 10 percent of the school in 2008 to nearly 25 percent in 2020. Instead, Buckey brought up open enrollment.

Open enrollment is a policy meaning that students can decide to enroll in any class they think they can handle, even if that class is an AP class, without teacher recommendation. "The policy was very unpopular at first," Buckey said, "because it took that power from teachers. But I think they see now why it's good for the school."

He has argued that "open enrollment is the standard across the country," and believes it should be adopted by all schools. Open enrollment also means students can take classes at higher levels even if they aren't meeting prerequisite grades in lower-level courses. Buckey believes this is so important because it fights tracking, the idea that students who start taking one level of class will stay on that level, or track, for the rest of their careers in public education. He has spoken to this at length in past interviews, including references to his own experiences growing up, where students were



grouped at very young ages based on academic performance and were never really able to break free of those groups later in life, even if they were much stronger students then.

He has also argued that this is one way NHS can fight demographic inequality and allow students who aren't from certain kinds of families to still participate in higher-level classes. NHS faces some problems with this in regards to race even now, but Buckey says "it was so much worse before open enrollment." In fact, in recent years, black students have been evenly represented in AP classes, even though there is still a troubling underrepresentation of Hispanic students.

Buckey believes that his skill at curriculum building, as well as his long experience of building and managing teams, will be an asset for him at Marblehead. He wasn't considered for the superintendent position in Nantucket because of a lack of central office experience, but he doesn't see this as his main fear heading to Marblehead. He also isn't worried about Marblehead's size.

According to the district report cards, Marblehead's school district is over 56 percent larger than Nantucket's. However, Buckey has lots of experience in larger school districts from before he came to Nantucket, so that does not concern him.

What he does worry about is his lack of experience in elementary education. He has been working in public school administration for decades, but always either at the middle school or high school level. "Elementary school education is my biggest growth area," he admitted, "I just don't have much experience there." Still, he feels that there is a strong structure in place in Marblehead to help him learn, and believes he will be able to transition well.

Going Zero Waste: Part 2

Miranda Connolly and Olivia Spell,
Sophomores
OPINION EDITOR & REPORTER

As discussed in last week's article, we have decided to attempt to go zero waste, which is a lifestyle in which



one does not produce any trash. Pollution has plagued our seas since the very first industrial revolution, and it continues to do so now. As a result of pollution, there are multiple garbage patches floating in the Pacific Ocean composed of trash, plastics, and other forms of debris. When tasked with looking for ways to eliminate these patches, many people tell themselves: "What am I supposed to do about this? I already recycle, isn't that enough?" The answer is: no, it isn't enough, but it is a step in the right direction. People who are zero waste are able to buy products that they will either reuse or compost when done using. Since some of our recycled objects still end up in the ocean, they try to avoid recycling unless necessary. It seems impossible to produce absolutely zero trash, so we have decided to try this lifestyle out on our own.

For the past week, we have been collecting and taking notes on the trash we produced. We only counted trash that we produced, not our entire families, since that would get very messy very quickly. I, Miranda, collected a total of 37 pieces of trash, six gum wrappers, five tea bag wrappers, seven receipts, three pieces of foam, four dried up highlighters and 12 pieces of small nonrecyclable plastic. I, Olivia, collected a total of 53 pieces of trash. This included nine gum wrappers, 12 tea bag wrappers, 13 receipts, 11 on-the-go-cups, six packages of cafeteria snacks, and two lunch trays.

We quickly noticed that plastics made up a majority of the trash that we produced, with waxed or nonrecyclable paper coming in second. Although we didn't collect the same amount of trash that the average American produces, which is 4.6 lbs a day, we concluded that it was made up of similar materials.

Plastic is not completely evil; it is useful for many things, but it is polluting the Earth. You don't have to completely eliminate plastic from your life in order to become environmentally friendly. Instead you can at least try to maintain the level of plastic you use. Next week, we will be attempting to do just this, and we will be going zero waste. We plan on cutting down on plastic by using our own reusable containers and utensils whenever we can, and by always making sure that we are making conscious decisions when it comes to buying things. We will sadly need to quit our gum chewing habits, since there was quite a pile of wrappers piled up by the end of last week. We will also be making sure to drink tea that is loose leaf and comes in reusable containers.

For the next week, both of us will be collecting all of the trash (hopefully there will be none) that we produce, and then we will report back to you in our next article. Until then, you, too, can try going zero waste for a week with us.

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