

**Sudbury Public Schools
Sudbury, Massachusetts
School Committee Regular Meeting
Wednesday, November 12, 2008**

Present: Susan Iuliano, Chairperson; Jane Santinelli, Vice Chairperson;
Rich Robison, Jeff Beeler, Michele MacDonald

Also Present: Dr. John Brackett, Superintendent; Robert Milley, Assistant Superintendent; Mary Will, Director of Business and Finance

1. Open Session

Susan Iuliano called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. at the Loring Elementary School.

2. Loring PTO Welcome Susan Smith and Robin Cavanaugh

PTO Co-chair Susan Smith praised the new administration for the enthusiasm they bring to the Loring School community. The PTO is maintaining all of its traditional fundraising activities. Last year for the first time, the PTO hosted an auction that exceeded the fundraising goal of \$25,000. This year's auction goal remains the same; however, unlike last year, maintaining existing programming requires proceeds of at least \$15,000. The PTO is interested in providing financial support for after-school programs and continuing support for technology initiatives. Co-chair Robin Cavanaugh noted that a teacher wish list is also being compiled.

3. The State of the Loring School with Principal Jeffery Dees

Principal Jeffery Dees praised Assistant Principal David Jeong and the PTO for their contributions and support. Mr. Dees highlighted three goals for this year: honoring students and staff, teaching, and closing the achievement gap/AYP.

The administration is taking steps to ensure a positive school climate. It has coined the term “paw”some—a hybrid of the term *awesome* and a characteristic of the school mascot, the Loring Leopard—to convey positive messages. In addition, the school community starts and ends its days with music, messages, and anecdotes, and celebrates core value leaders at its community celebrations.

Principal Dees is using the book *Fierce Conversations* by Susan Scott as a template for engaging staff in discussion about the school culture and its goals for collaboratively enhancing the learning community.

To address the intra-district achievement gap and AYP, the school is modifying both the type and frequency of administration of language arts assessment tools, with particular focus on grades K-2. Mr. Dees presented MCAS and literacy assessment data that showed strong overall MCAS performance as well as areas in literacy that will be targeted for improvement. Mr. Dees indicated that bringing back the assistants that had been cut in these earlier grades would be of assistance.

In an effort to move toward a Response to Intervention (RTI) model, the school is also modifying its mechanisms for evaluating at-risk general education students and deploying staff to meet the needs of such students. Like special education service delivery, services for such at-risk general education students will be structured to supplement, rather than supplant, classroom instruction. Efforts will also focus on improving MCAS open responses.

Jeff Beeler thanked Mr. Dees for the forthright discussion of the achievement gap issues and requested that Principal Dees keep the Committee apprised of specific areas of need that can be taken into consideration during budget discussions. He noted that only with such information can the Committee make the best decisions possible when it is required to balance competing interests such as the maintenance of non-teacher supports, such as the assistants that were cut last year on the one hand, and cutting core classroom teachers on the other with a resultant increase in class sizes.

7a. Open Forum

Karen Darmer, Wagonwheel Road, requested an explanation of RTI, DIBELS, and Instructional Support. The Committee provided a general outline of the RTI process, described the DIBELS literacy assessment tool, and noted that the Instructional Support Team replaces the FOCUS (Faculty Offering Colleagues Useful Strategies) approach. The Instructional Support Team allows for a research-based approach to meeting student needs.

Christina Granahan, Shadow Oak Drive, asked if all kindergarten children are assessed. This was confirmed. She also asked if educational opportunities for students performing at or above grade level are compromised by the increased focus on lower performing students. Principal Dees assured that all students are challenged by a differentiated instructional approach.

Superintendent Brackett commented on the many meaningful conversations among the building administrators and with District administrators.

4. FY10 Budget

Superintendent Brackett presented three budget scenarios, including: a non-override budget, the FinCom recommended budget CAP, and a SPS recommended “restore quality” budget. The first two must be presented to FinCom; Dr. Brackett asked the Committee to advise him about presenting the third scenario. The Committee concurred that the SPS “restore quality” budget should be presented; however, the Committee recommended this prototype be relabeled the “needs” budget as it relates to the goal of improving on excellence.

The Committee recommended costing out additional items, such as those for RTI, curriculum specialists, and classroom aids. Jeff Beeler raised a particular concern with the reduction related to the Wellness Coordinator in light of the importance of the Anti-bullying Programming. It was suggested that the state of the school presentations be reviewed for more specific needs and that staff be queried further for their input. Dr. Brackett noted that the reduction of a half-time secretary at Curtis has had a significant impact.

7b. Open Forum

Fred Floru, Alta Road, asked for a breakdown by type of the total number of SPS employees. Kathy Reck, Alta Road asked if parents could be trained to teach, particularly reading at the kindergarten level. Anne Silva, Peakham Road, who serves on the Loring School Council, asked who would determine how kindergarten assistants were utilized if those positions were restored. Dr. Brackett suggested the possibility of using such assistants in both the classroom and for literacy support in kindergarten.

Ms. Silva also asked how the impact of increased class size will be communicated. Dr. Brackett indicated that a single year’s data is insufficient to quantify the impact. He also noted that research on achievement indicates no benefit to student achievement levels on standardized tests but that other benefits are realized when class size is reduced to 15 or 16 students.

Joellen Samojla, Atkinson Lane, asked why the Town Budget distribution is based on percentages rather than needs. Susan Iuliano explained that the distribution is the outcome of internal discussions and reflective of relative needs; the percentages are historical averages. Ms. Samojla asked what the community can do. It was suggested that interested community members contact the FinCom and Board of Selectmen.

Ms. Samojla commented that her middle-school-aged daughter wanted to understand why teachers were cut, but new computers had been installed. Assistant Superintendent Bob Milley explained that technology is replaced, either because it is obsolete or cannot be repaired.

5. Goals for Redistricting

Superintendent Brackett outlined the rationale for considering the development of a redistricting plan. He provided the Committee with a report outlining goals and processes. He asked the Committee to consider if an appropriate redistricting effort could be completed for FY10, or if implementation should be considered for FY11, which is his recommendation. A consensus was not reached on the timing of implementing a redistricting plan. The Committee will continue the discussion at its next Regular Session.

6. School Committee Report

None presented.

8. Superintendent’s Report

a) FY10 Calendar

The Committee agreed in principle to starting the school year before Labor Day and on the merits of a calendar that coincides with the L-S calendar. The discussion will be continued at the next Regular Session.

b) Bill Schedule

None presented.

c) Personnel Actions

As described in the Personnel Packet.

9. Minutes –Regular Session October 15, 2008

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Jane Santinelli, to approve the minutes of the October 15, 2008 Regular Session, as amended. The vote was 5–0.

10. Communications

As described in the Communications Packet.

11. Members’ Forum

Rich Robison will not attend the November 17 FinCom meeting. He reported that the Budget Review Task Force (BRTF) expense subgroup is recommending consolidation of administrative functions that will require regional agreements to be renegotiated.

Dr. Brackett presented the Town Report report for signature.

12. Executive Session

None.

13. Adjourn

On a motion by Jane Santinelli, seconded by Jeff Beeler, to adjourn the Regular Session. The time was 11:25 p.m. The vote was 5–0.

Yes Susan Iuliano
Yes Jane Santinelli
Yes Rich Robison
Yes Jeff Beeler
Yes Michele MacDonald

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito, Recording Secretary