

**Sudbury Public Schools
Sudbury, Massachusetts
School Committee Regular Meeting
Wednesday, February 25, 2009**

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; Mary Mahoney, SEA

Open Session

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

1. Update on Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK)

A survey was mailed on Monday to approximately 300 families of prospective incoming kindergarten students. One hundred fifteen responses have been received to date. Dr. Brackett and Linda Karpeichik are responding to many voice- and e-mails. Additionally, Ms. Karpeichik has met with the staff of S.E.D. and the directors of private programs in town. She has also spoken with Department of Education representatives regarding tuition. Based on the parent survey responses to date, the primary concerns are how the tuition upper limit was determined and how the curriculum between the half- and full- day programs will differ. If the trend from the initial data continues, the administration believes that all interested students can be accommodated; however, it is too early to determine what level of tuition will be necessary to maintain a break-even program. The administration is not ready at this time to make a tuition recommendation.

The Committee wants a better understanding of the specific changes that must occur at each school in order to make space available for the program. It also wants to ensure that the desire for FDK at each school matches its ability to accommodate. Finally, the Committee wants information on break-even points as well as program adjustments that might be necessary if state grant funding is used. Jane Santinelli additionally asked about programming that ramps up over the school year to a full-day program. She is also interested in comparing data on extended-day and FDK programs if available.

Susan Iuliano reiterated the Committee's longstanding goal of creating a no-fee FDK program that is open to all, recognizing that such a program is not possible at this time. She also stated that the Committee recognized the need of some families for childcare; the Committee does not wish to undermine other available options. Finally, the Committee had discussed the idea of a revenue-generating program; if adopted, the revolving fund could be utilized within the first several years to purchase portable classrooms to accommodate enrollment of all children. This is a departure from the Committee's expressed philosophy of not charging users a fee beyond the cost of programming it is intended to support. The Committee prefers a fee level that results in cost neutrality.

Superintendent Brackett will prepare a more detailed outline of both direct and indirect costs.

To an inquiry by Jeff Beeler, Linda Karpeichik specified that she believes offering the literacy support option will add to the program costs, but is "necessary quality". She would not recommend running a lower-cost program without literacy support specialists.

S.E.D. Director Barbara Cole reported that she has been instructed by her board of directors to run the program next year. To date, 130 applications have been received. In response to questioning by Jeff Beeler, Ms. Cole reiterated that SED would be fine and the District should proceed as it believes is in the best interest of the students.

5. Open Forum I

Bettina Westerberg, Raymond Road, asked the Committee to consider approaches used in business that examine both monetary and non-monetary costs. Her opinion is that the cost of taking space away from existing programming represents a cost to the entire school community. She noted additional school-wide costs such as those associated with dining room scheduling and the burden on the front-office staff and nurse. Furthermore, she cited a study that demonstrated a leveling effect by fifth grade and in some cases, as early as third grade, when FDK attendees were compared with those from shorter-day programs. She also suggested communicating with S.E.D. staff to incorporate some of the reading and math curricula into their programming and looking at the top 20% of L-S graduates to see if there is a significant proportion of FDK attendees. Finally, Ms. Westerberg is concerned that parent classroom volunteers may not be available for FDK.

Bob Haarde, Belcher Drive, asked for confirmation that the survey was given only to prospective 2009-10 kindergarten parents. He offered that a program without a lottery or fee would be a "winner".

Tad Gozdeck, Barbara Road, thanked the Committee for its efforts to put FDK in place. He asked if a report had been prepared. The Committee referred him to the District website, which contains a report prepared two years ago. The

website is also being updated with currently collected information.

9. **Members' Forum**

Susan Iuliano reported that the Committee recently received a number of e-mails from parents. Jeff Beeler is responding to those concerning bullying and collective bargaining. Dr. Brackett is responding to an inquiry regarding recess.

2. **FY10 Budget Update**

Superintendent Brackett presented budget scenario summaries. He reported that stimulus money dollar amounts have been assigned, but procedures and the parameters for distribution and use have not been defined. Funds are not expected to be available until after June 30: one-half in July 2009 and the second half in July 2010. The District will receive some funds under the IDEA program, but not under Title I. Dr. Brackett reported that the non-override budget, which now stands at 1.78%, leaves a shortfall of just over \$700,000. He presented a summary of possible budget balancing cuts and a listing of possible specific program components that may be cut. Dr. Brackett indicated that he expects this downturn to run through both FY10 and FY11. At the next meeting he will present a detailed plan with specific recommendations to make up for the \$708K shortfall.

Rich Robison noted that other districts chose to consolidate schools rather than make programming cuts. He also commented that the administration should make it clear which items under consideration for cost-cutting are not open to debate by the public, *i.e.*, those elements that are part of bargaining negotiations. Jeff Beeler suggested that the Committee consider making major structural changes this year, rather than wait until next year when it will be forced to do so.

3. **FY09 METCO Budget**

Assistant Superintendent Bob Milley outlined two rounds of budget cuts that have occurred this year. Last Fall, the District absorbed \$1,300 in cuts. Recently the District was asked to cut \$18,500 in additional funds. The administration is spreading this cut over three cost centers: the elementary school MAST program, which provides before- and after- school programming, the middle school afternoon buses, and METCO staffing. The MAST program budget will be reduced by ending the program earlier in the school year. The early bus in the afternoon at the middle school will be eliminated on the two days when a late bus is provided. The METCO tutor at the middle school will be reduced from 1.0 FTE to 0.9~FTE. The METCO director's work year will be reduced by five days and secretarial support will be reduced from 3.5 days/week to 3 days for the rest of the year. The administration will look at outcomes in seven or eight weeks. Administrators from SPS, Lincoln, and L-S continue to discuss options for consolidations or collaborations that might reduce costs. A 10% cut is anticipated for next year.

4. **School Committee Report**

(a) E-mail archive

Susan Iuliano asked that e-mails be copied to a district address to ensure that they are archived. The Committee will discuss this further at a future date.

(b) School Administration Consolidation Task Force

Susan Iuliano reported that the working group will continue to meet. She and Michele MacDonald met with Christine Lynch of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Information concerning governance was provided and follow-up information has been received. Ms. Lynch is available to work with the working group and outlined three general possibilities for consolidation.

5. **Open Forum II**

Paul Fuhrman, Henry's Mill Lane, asked why the Committee has not pushed more for L-S to consider consolidation, particularly in light of Jeff Beeler's comments about considering significant structural changes this year, rather than next. Jeff Beeler clarified that his comments were directed at dismantling the middle school model in favor of the less-costly and lesser quality junior high model. He advised that he was not speaking about consolidation or a Superintendency Union. He added his views that while consolidation was, and should be carefully and thoughtfully considered, he was concerned that such changes would have a detrimental impact on the SPS, which educates its students at a lower cost per student than about 2/3 of the districts in the state. In Mr. Beeler's view, this success is in large part due to the undivided attention that the District enjoys from Dr. Brackett who, under some proposals, would be tasked as the Superintendent of both L-S and SPS. Mr. Beeler noted that the qualitative impact of such a change needs to be carefully considered. He furthermore noted the differences in pay scales between L-S and SPS, with the SPS teachers being paid less, on average, than their L-S counterparts. Mr. Beeler noted that consolidation efforts would lead to discussions of wholesale consolidation of the SPS with L-S. One of the assumptions being made by some is that the L-S teachers' union would agree in connection with such a consolidation to accept the lower SPS pay scale. Mr. Beeler voiced his concern that it was at least as likely that the SPS teachers' union would push for the higher L-S pay scale. In the event that were to come to pass, any cost savings achieved by consolidation would likely be lost many times over due to increased labor costs—to the ultimate detriment of the Town of Sudbury. Accordingly,

he advised that the first step is to have the towns of Lincoln and Sudbury vet consolidation at the level of the Boards of Selectmen—where it is properly happening with the support of the SPS. The Committee also expressed a need to collect hard data, which is the function of the consolidation working group. It emphasized that a change could not be implemented for the next school year.

Bob Haarde, Belcher Drive, indicated that the working group was formed because the L-S and SPS committees did not make a decision on consolidation. He noted that consolidations are currently happening all across the state and that such measures were outlined in the report of the Budget Review Task Force (BRTF). Larry O'Brien was asked to clarify why the consolidation working group was formed. Mr. O'Brien indicated that the BRTF report generated some questions that led to the February 2 meeting of stakeholders from Lincoln and Sudbury (including the SPS and L-S School Committees), at which the working group was established. He indicated that there is complete cooperation among stakeholders and that the working group will expand to include "citizen teachers".

6. Superintendent's Report

- (a) EDCO Legislative Forum
Not discussed.
- (b) Bill Schedule
A bill schedule was presented.
- (b) Personnel Actions
Not discussed.

7. Minutes

Not discussed.

8. Communications

Not discussed.

10. Executive Session

On a motion by Jane Santinelli, seconded by Rich Robison, to adjourn to Executive Session to discuss union and non-union personnel matters, not to return to Open Session. The vote was 5–0 in favor. The time was 10:35 p.m.

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

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito, Recording Secretary