

**Sudbury Public Schools
Sudbury, Massachusetts
School Committee Regular Meeting
Wednesday, November 18, 2009**

Present: Susan Iuliano, Chairperson; Jeff Beeler, Vice Chairman;
Dr. Rich Robison (7:45 p.m.), Jane Santinelli (via Skype, 8:50 p.m.), Michele MacDonald

Also Present: Dr. John Brackett, Superintendent; Bob Milley, Assistant Superintendent; Mary Will, Business and Finance Director; MaryKate Gentile, SEA

Open Session

Susan Iuliano called the meeting to order at 7:38 p.m. at the Nixon School. The meeting was taped for public access broadcast.

1. General John Nixon PTO Welcome (Ellen Joachim and Gretchen Findlay)

Co-chairs Ellen Joachim and Gretchen Findlay outlined the programming and fundraising efforts of the PTO. The primary objectives are educational enhancement and community building. Forty percent of the PTO budget supports grade- and school-wide enrichment programs and 30% goes toward classroom, specialist, teacher, and administrator support. For several years, the PTO has sponsored two family fun nights, the Monster Mash in the Fall and Bingo Night in the Spring. It also sponsors an annual science fair. Several years ago, the PTO moved toward two fundraising events, a direct appeal, and an auction, both of which were successful. This year, the PTO is sponsoring the direct appeal as well as a number of smaller fundraising efforts instead of an auction.

2. The State of Nixon School with Principal Joni Jay, Assistant Principal Eula Walsh

Principal Joni Jay reported that parent feedback indicates satisfaction with the balance between enrichment and core academics, as well as grade-wide consistency. She noted that the school has moved toward block scheduling. Among the advantages, this streamlines specialist and special education service delivery, allows for flexible student groupings, and provides teachers with common planning time.

This is the first full year utilizing the new TERC Investigations curriculum, with pre-assessments at the lower grades. Many parents surveyed indicated they thought the curriculum was too easy; in fact, parents were not aware that instruction is differentiated. Two parent workshops were held this Fall.

Reading assessments are being conducted three times over the course of the year, with regular guided reading for each student. Many parents surveyed indicated they thought the books their children brought home were too easy. The administration and staff believe that this is appropriate—that the reading in school should be more challenging than that at home.

First-grade teacher Debbie Warner described the new Foundations phonics-based spelling program for grades K-3. She noted that new rules are added each year, supplemented by essential (sight) words. The Words Their Way program used in Grades 4 and 5 includes “no excuses” words, which students are required to correct on their written work.

Kindergarten teacher Jennifer Faber reported that the kindergarten teachers work closely to ensure curriculum consistency between the half- and full-day programs.

Principal Jay identified the following challenges: aging computer technology, space constraints, and increasing financial burdens for families. Additionally she noted the significant demands on teachers’ time, the challenges associated with meeting individual children’s needs, and a need to utilize resources more flexibly. Adequate Yearly Progress on MCAS was achieved except by the special education cohort in ELA. As this is the first year, the school will not be designated for Improvement status; however, each child’s IEP is undergoing review and student progress is being monitored bimonthly. Nixon is considering providing more in-class services as well.

Anti-bullying programming continues to receive support. Incidents reported by students differ somewhat from those reported by parents or confirmed by staff. Students report more bullying occurring in unsupervised areas such as the bus and at recess. New initiatives to encourage positive behaviors are being developed.

3. Follow-up Discussion on Redistricting

Superintendent Brackett continued the discussion of redistricting by presenting an overview of the factors under consideration for a redistricting decision as well as the guiding principles for such a plan. Unlike in previous years when redistricting was considered, overcrowding relative to school capacity and class size parity are not issues at this time. Moreover, redistricting is unlikely to result in significant cost savings or changes in school culture. Because of

the small size of Haynes, enrollment trends, and projected real estate trends within the District, the primary drivers at this time are parity of the educational experience across the four elementary schools and operational efficiency and efficient use of resources. Superintendent Brackett recommends redistricting now rather than waiting: although resources could be reallocated, such a tactic would be with an increased cost.

Dr. Brackett provided an example proposal in which a total of 166 students would be required to change schools. The net effect is a decrease in enrollment at Loring and Nixon and an increase at Haynes. Noyes enrollment would remain approximately neutral.

Rich Robison commented that none of the schools is in need of improvement. He also commented that school culture might take significant time to establish, noting that Loring opened ten years ago and is only now stabilizing, and that Nixon also stabilized after some time in terms of culture. Dr. Robison also expressed concern with a redistricting plan that will likely be followed in FY12 with a budget dramatically more negative than the interim two fiscal years. In his view sharing resources between schools would be preferable to moving children. He suggested the possibility of school choice. Additionally Dr. Robison considers it more realistic to project a five year solution, rather than 6-10 years.

Susan Iuliano questioned if redistricting now would actually provide some advantage in terms of flexibility under such future budget constraints. Jeff Beeler opined that parity and operational efficiency, the two most compelling drivers, would continue their current trending, regardless of budget conditions.

Jane Santinelli requested comment on the influence of redistricting on full-day kindergarten, possibilities for cost savings with consolidation of District-wide programs, and the pros and cons of moving students before a financial downfall with the prospect of having to move them again should a school closing be necessary. She also noted she would prefer to match resources to specific needs.

Former School Committee member Bill Braun, who served on the Blue Ribbon Redistricting Committee, offered that the need to redistrict will likely get more critical, as will the financial picture. He characterized it as a chronic issue that could be corrected with a modest approach.

VOTED: On a motion by Susan Iuliano, seconded by Jeff Beeler to direct the Superintendent and Redistricting Committee to develop a redistricting plan. The vote was 4–1 in favor; Dr. Rich Robison dissented.

4. Approval For Revolving Funds: Transportation and Music for FY11

VOTED: On a motion by Michele MacDonald, seconded by Rich Robison, to approve the continuation of the District's Bus Revolving Fund at \$400,000 and Music Revolving Fund at \$75,000 for FY2011. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

5. Budget Report

The Committee will address the FY10 Quarterly Budget-to-Actual Financial Report and will have a preliminary discussion of the FY11 budget at its next Regular Session.

6. School Committee Report

Mary Will reported that the District received an energy conservation grant of approximately \$22,500, which will fund the installation of a small solar array and data acquisition system at Noyes. Three quotes were received via the public procurement process. The low bid of \$18,975 by New England Breeze was accepted.

Formalized paperwork was submitted to the Board of Selectmen to meet a November 30 filing deadline. Funds are expected within 60 days.

It is not clear if funds can be used for personnel costs related to maintenance.

7. Open Forum

Lisa Gutch, Silver Hill Road, commented that the redistricting scenario presented involves 17% increase in the Haynes School population and asked that the Committee keep in mind that some resources at Haynes are outdated.

Jack Martin, Spruce Lane, hopes for an opportunity to participate in discussions of redistricting plan implementation. He believes that academically redistricting will benefit students, but disagrees that social or school culture changes will not be significant. He suggested that perhaps the redistricting could be done in phases.

8. Superintendent's Report

(a) Out of country field trip approval

VOTED: On a motion by Rich Robison, seconded by Michele MacDonald, to approve the proposed Grade 8 French trip to Quebec City, scheduled for May 29-June 1, 2010. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

- (b) Donation
VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Rich Robison, to accept with thanks a donation of \$1,020 from the Intel Matching Grant Program. The vote was 5–0 in favor.
- (c) Recognitions
 Assistant Superintendent Bob Milley announced that Curtis technology teachers Frank Byrne and Dave Jurewicz received an award recognizing their program as the leading technology program in the state.
- (d) Bill Schedule
 A bill schedule was presented.
- (e) Personnel Actions
 As outlined in the Personnel Packet.

9. Minutes—Regular Sessions, October 21, 2009 and November 3, 2009

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Rich Robison, to approve the minutes of the October 21, 2009 Regular Session. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Michele MacDonald, to approve the minutes of the November 3, 2009 Regular Session as amended. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

10. Communications

As outlined in the Communications Packet. Additionally, Susan Iuliano received a copy of a memo from the Board of Selectmen to L-S requesting that L-S consider the option to utilize the building currently housing the White House Pre School for SPS administrative purposes.

11. Members’ Forum

Rich Robison reported on the federal grant program, Race to the Top (RTTT), which embodies significant educational reform and will obsolete the No Child Left Behind act. Applications for the first round of funding are due in January. States must commit to continue funding program objectives. He also reported attending a recent Sudbury Special Education Advisory Council meeting.

Assistant Superintendent Bob Milley, along with Math Curriculum Specialist Joy Cooke, Curtis Principal Stephen Lambert, and Curtis teacher Nancy Casey recently attended a special education/math workshop.

12. Adjourn

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Jane Santinelli, to adjourn the Regular Session. The vote was 5–0 in favor. The time was 11:35 p.m.

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

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito, Recording Secretary