

**Sudbury Public Schools
Sudbury, Massachusetts
School Committee Regular Meeting
Wednesday May 26, 2010**

Present: Jeff Beeler, Vice Chairman;
Dr. Rich Robison, Michele MacDonald, Lisa Gutch

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

Open Session

Jeff Beeler called the meeting to order at 7:37 p.m. The meeting was taped for public access broadcast.

1. METCO Reorganization

Superintendent John Brackett reported that Lincoln has decided to take a year to consider other options in addition to consolidation. SPS administrators held an additional meeting in Boston and also met with the current METCO directors. The underlying goal remains to move more funds toward direct services for students. Currently, transportation costs account for more than 50% of the METCO budget and administration costs nearly equal educational service expenses.

Dr. Brackett presented a two-district SPS and L-S reorganization proposal, focusing on the SPS features. Under this proposal, a METCO Regional Director would report to the Superintendents or their designee. The Director will be supported by a part-time administrative assistant at LS and receive in-kind support from SPS. Responsibility for the Director's salary will be in proportion to the number of students in each district. A parent advisory board will be formed and will provide its input by way of the regional director. A lead METCO and middle school advisor will play a critical role in advocating for students, as well as in maintaining direct contact with parents. At the elementary school level, new academic advisor positions are proposed, one shared by Loring and Nixon, and one by Noyes and Haynes. The role of these advisors is envisioned to go beyond tutoring and other academic involvement, to include building relationships with students and holding them to high standards. The current directors strongly recommended including an adjustment counselor in the proposal; however, with a two-district consolidation, there is not enough of a savings. The existing School & Family Social Worker will serve SPS students. The number of SPS buses will drop from three to two and include a monitor for each bus.

Dr. Brackett noted that this reorganization does not represent a final answer, but that it does reduce transportation and administrative costs in order to funnel more money to direct student services. He noted that the plan would be evaluated after one year. Additionally, efforts will be made to consolidate transportation by the G4 next year, with additional savings anticipated.

Members' Comments

Rich Robison characterized the evolution of the reorganization plan profound, noting the very apparent inclusion of stakeholders' comments in the current proposal. He is impressed that program costs are focused on the classroom and that bus safety is addressed by including monitors on all buses. Where special education students are concerned, he emphasized the need to hold students to a high standard of academic achievement, rather than simply providing behavioral support.

Dr. Robison asked about the credentials sought for the academic advisor positions, noting a need to commit to identifying people of color in the hiring process.

Lisa Gutch asked how the program will be evaluated. Dr. Brackett responded that pre- and post-assessments will probably be performed and that changes may be made through the year based on feedback, including from parents.

Assistant Superintendent Bob Milley emphasized that a significant measure of success involves closing the achievement gap.

Michele MacDonald commented that going from three to two buses will increase travel time. Dr. Brackett confirmed that travel time will increase somewhat. He also reported that a training session will occur before school starts for both the driver and monitor and that behavioral expectations for students will be established at the outset. Dr. Brackett also noted that some districts combine the monitor and academic advisor positions and that he is open to that.

Lisa Gutch inquired about the logistics of determining which students travel on which bus. Curtis and Loring students will probably travel together, with the other three elementary schools sharing the second bus. Any down time will be

spent in before and after- school programs, which may be used for homework or for advocacy.

4. Open Forum

Pamela Jones, of Boston, asked for clarification of the administrative structure outlined in Dr. Brackett's proposal. She also recommended that in the future the District present such major restructuring proposals to the public earlier in the school year.

John Shandorf, Associate Director of METCO, Inc. expressed concern with the timeline for identifying a candidate for the regional director position. He noted that it could take at least eight weeks to find a qualified candidate of color, emphasizing that it merits looking at the existing directors. Mr. Shandorf stated that he hopes the proposal is an interim structure based on funding coming back. He mentioned developing and expanding relationships, expanding programming and fundraising, and educating staff within districts around cultural competency as key responsibilities of the director. Additionally, Mr. Sandorf emphasized the role of the director as a liaison/advocate to the community, not just in the classroom. He stated that it is often the directors who challenge administrators, noting that the original tenets of program are becoming lost over time. Finally, he asked that the impact of the program on resident students be considered.

Debbie Howell, Victoria Road, noted that the salary for the new regional director (150 students) is at level of the current L-S director, whose responsibilities are to some 90 students. She also emphasized the need to consider social time for the students, in addition to the focus on academics.

Cheryl Antoine, of Boston and Chairperson of the Boston-Weston METCO Parent Organization, can't see how the program will function without a director. She sees a shift from academic improvement to a focus on the Director Nicole Stewart and her salary, characterizing this process as a sham. Ms. Antoine also noted that fundraising, which was suggested at a previous Open Forum, has not been incorporated into the METCO program's activities.

Anthony Fortunato, Moore Road, called himself a huge proponent of METCO and asked how benefits for the 11.75 FTE are accounted for. Superintendent Brackett responded that like most districts, the SPS do not fund benefits from the METCO grant. He further explained that the METCO students generate c. 70 funding for the SPS that exceeds the benefit costs related to the program. Under the proposed restructuring, the declining METCO grant is utilized to cover all direct costs.

Emily Fagan, Woodmere Drive, supports the District and is glad for the present discussion. She believes the benefits to her two children outweigh those to the students from Boston. Furthermore, she believes the renewed effort to establish a parent advisory board will benefit the larger community of Sudbury.

Rich Robison commented that there is no position in town with direct involvement in fundraising and that the District only supports positions for which there is a continuing revenue stream. Assistant Superintendent Milley noted the exception of the School and Family Social Worker, a position that was initially grant-funded, but that has since come to be funded by the District budget.

Jean McGuire, METCO, Inc. Executive Director, clarified that students typically fundraise with social events. Some towns fundraise for late buses, scholarship funds, senior trips, or sports equipment. She explained that fundraising also builds a sense of community.

Debbie Howell, Victoria Road, noted that fundraising is also a way to get parents involved, as well as a way to educate the wider community.

Nina Torgerson, Willow Road, stated that she is honored to be in the presence of Jean McGuire. Given all that she's heard and the tasks that must be completed, and given that Lincoln will delay its decision, she asked if the District could simply look at transportation costs now and examine the program over another year. She is concerned about the impact of teacher loss through budget cuts combined with restructuring METCO. Superintendent Brackett commented that this was discussed, but that it would only delay improving the program, prolonging the upheaval. He also noted that the financial picture a year from now will probably not be any better.

2. FY11 Goals, Continued Discussion

The draft goals presented at the last Regular Session were revised based on the Committee's input. The updated draft was then circulated to all staff.

Concerns expressed by staff included the expansion of the RTI goal at upper grade levels, given reduced staffing and resources and the addition of RTI for math at the lower elementary grades; the emphasis on academic goals, rather than social, emotional, and behavioral development at the early elementary levels; technology that is not sustained at the upper grade levels; and the disappearance of a goal to develop enrichment programs.

Rich Robison cautioned on appropriate assignment of efforts to RTI, noting that the use of the term does not always make sense. Dr. Brackett concurred that the original tenets of RTI should not be diluted due to budget constraints, but that goals focused on Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions are appropriate. Dr. Robison would prefer to limit program grade levels or focal points rather than expand to upper elementary grades. Assistant Superintendent Milley commented that doing RTI well will reduce the demand for intervention. Rich Robison offered that students must be able to sustain their successes and that some supports are outside the realm of RTI, but may be masked as related to it.

With respect to enrichment programming, Dr. Brackett noted that funding is not available, but also that clubs such as that for math provide enrichment; in fact, the number of students performing in the advanced category on the math MCAS has increase since the club's inception.

The Committee discussed the goals for finance and budget and concurred that information should be distributed in a consistent, ongoing manner, with an emphasis on accuracy and accessibility. Lisa Gutch commented that she would like to hear from public on what it wants.

Jeff Beeler commented on the significant discrepancy between Sudbury's high ranking in MCAS performance compared with its low ranking in teacher compensation. In his view, it is essential to provide this information to the public in a consistent and continuous manner.

The Committee concurred that this is a public relations issue, and at the suggestion of Dr. Brackett, an appropriate District leadership and planning goal will be drafted related to this issue for discussion at the next meeting.

Bob Mealey commented that people may mistake the pay scale of L-S with that of SPS. He also stated that he prefers this as a District goal, as it permits SEA involvement.

Dr. Brackett also called attention to a new document format that mirrors that which will be used for future School Improvement Plans.

3. School Committee Report

(a) Reorganization of the Assignment of Liaisons, Subcommittees, and Delegate to MASC

Lisa Gutch suggested that Jeff Beeler serve on the Finance and Budget Committee, as well as the in the Budget Assignment. Ms. Gutch agreed to serve as an alternate.

VOTED On a motion by Michele MacDonald, seconded by Lisa Gutch to adopt the Liaison, Subcommittee, and MASC Delegate assignments as amended. The vote was 4-0 in favor.

(b) Discussion of the 2010-2011 School Committee Calendar

VOTED: On a motion by Michele MacDonald, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to approve the 2010-2011 School Committee calendar as presented. The vote was 4-0 in favor.

5. Superintendent's Report

(a) Recommendation to increase music lesson fees for FY11

VOTED: On a motion by Michele MacDonald, seconded by Rich Robison, to increase fees paid for music lessons as follows: private, 30-minute lesson from \$30 to \$35; semi-private, 30-minute lesson from \$20 to \$25; no change in private, 40-minute lesson; one-time registration fee from \$40 to \$50 per student. The vote was 3-0 in favor. Lisa Gutch abstained.

(b) Donations

A donation of several items from the Haynes Organization of Parents to the Haynes School inspired a discussion of parity issues, tracking donations, budgeting for core vs. supplementary curriculum materials, and discrepancies that might arise with variations in the fundraising success of the individual parent organizations.

With regard to the donations to Haynes, the Committee will request additional information on the purchase of a traverse climbing wall.

VOTED: On a motion by Michele MacDonald, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to approve the donations to the Haynes School from the Haynes Organization of Parents, with the exception of the climbing wall. The vote was 4-0 in favor.

(c) Recognitions

Superintendent Brackett commended Jeff Beeler and former Committee Member Bill Braun for their efforts in Sudbury's recent designation as one of 35 green communities in the state. This designation permits the Town to apply for up to \$1M in grant funds. Jeff Beeler praised the work of the technically-trained members of the Energy

Committee who put a lot of work into applying for the designation and the Board of Selectman for recommending the formation of the Energy Committee. He noted that by being one of the first communities so designated, Sudbury put itself in a position to maximize its access to grant funds, which will become more difficult to obtain as additional communities become Green communities.

(d) Bill Schedule

A Bill Schedule was presented.

(e) Personnel Actions

As outlined in the Personnel Packet.

6. Minutes—Regular Sessions, April 28, 2010, May 12, 2010

VOTED: On a motion by Michele MacDonald, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to approve the minutes of the May 12, 2010 Regular Session. The vote was 4–0 in favor.

VOTED: On a motion by Rich Robison, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to approve the minutes of the April 28, 2010 Regular Session. The vote was 4–0 in favor.

7. Communications

None.

8. Members' Forum

Bob Mealey reported that the Softball Bonanza raised \$6,300. Four scholarships, each valued at \$1,000, will be given on Wednesday. The goal for next year is to increase each scholarship to \$2,000.

Sheila Cusolito reported that she has had to modify the schedule for circulating draft minutes and will be distributing them over the weekend rather than mid-day on Friday.

9. Adjourn

VOTED: On a motion by Rich Robison, seconded by Michele MacDonald to adjourn to Executive Session to discuss negotiation and litigation, not to return to Open Session. The vote was 4–0 in favor. The time was 10:07 p.m.

Yes	Jeff Beeler
Yes	Rich Robison
Yes	Michele MacDonald
Yes	Lisa Gutch

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito, Recording Secretary