

**Sudbury Public Schools
Sudbury, Massachusetts
School Committee Regular Meeting
Wednesday September 22, 2010**

Present: Susan Iuliano, Chairperson; 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; David Jurewicz, SEA

Open Session

Susan Iuliano called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. at the Loring Elementary School. The meeting was taped for public access broadcast.

3. Approve Music Trip to New York

Orchestra Director Nat Erde provided an overview of the proposed middle school music trip to New York, scheduled for April 29–May 1.

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to approve the Curtis Middle School Music Department Trip to New York, scheduled for April 29–May 1, 2011. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

1. Israel Loring PTO Welcome (Lisa Armour and Michelle Titus)

PTO Co-Chairs Lisa Armour and Michelle Titus started by thanking Principal Dees, Assistant Principal Ieong, Loring teachers, and parent volunteers for their contributions to the Loring community. They also thanked the School Committee for approving the use of Federal jobs funds to hire an additional fourth-grade teacher. The Co-Chairs provided an overview of the activities of the PTO, which span social events as well as fundraisers. Of note was the purchase of a new audiovisual system installed in the Loring dining room.

2. The State of the Loring School with Principal Jeffery Dees and Assistant Principal David Ieong

Principal Jeffery Dees provided a grade-by-grade summary of progress made on closing the achievement gap. The focus in kindergarten and first grade has been on literacy and utilizing interim assessments as measures of individual student progress. Literacy programming has involved collaboration with Tufts for kindergarten and Ideal Consulting for both grades. Additionally, Math Curriculum Specialist Joy Cooke has made use of materials from Kathy Richardson to perform interval assessments and ensure that the needs of learners at both high and low ends of the spectrum are met.

Second-grade teachers have also benefitted from input from Ideal Consulting and Joy Cooke. Additionally, there has been a renewed focus on creating a more cohesive team, particularly with respect to implementing the TERC Investigations curriculum. Principal Dees acknowledged teacher Diane Irvine for taking a leadership role in developing a team approach.

Principal Dees displayed summary data from the Spring 2010 MCAS results for Grades 3–5, where the team concept was also enhanced. The trend from 2007 to 2010 is an increase in the Composite Performance Index, CPI, which is a measure of the extent to which students are progressing toward proficiency in the test subject areas. In fact, the data show that Loring is now the District's highest performing school.

Another measure of MCAS performance is the Student Growth Percentile, SGP, which measures an individual student's performance relative to a peer group comprised of students throughout the state. The SGP data show continued progress with individual student performance; however, there are some areas where growth from the proficient to the advanced category merit continued study.

In all grades and for all cohorts, Loring met AYP for both math and ELA and was listed as one of 187 Commendation Schools by Governor Deval Patrick.

Mr. Dees emphasized that Loring is committed to striving to be a great school beyond what is measured by its test scores. This encompasses the school's core values, anti-bullying efforts, leadership team-building, as well as enhancing the school and the school community's "self-identity".

Jeff Beeler, a Loring parent for 10 years and a Committee Member for 4.5 years, commented on the contrast between this Loring State of the School presentation and one from just two years ago, before Principal Dees and Vice Principal Jeong were in place. The previous message, only two years ago, focused on what *couldn't* be done and why it couldn't be done. In contrast, today's message focused on *how* it was done. He called the turnaround in the last two years at Loring nothing short of extraordinary. He thanked Jeff Dees and David Jeong for the dramatic, palpable change in atmosphere at Loring, including the buy-in of the entire staff. Mr. Beeler also asked Mr. Dees to describe the role that resources – in addition to the classroom teachers – were used to achieve these results.

Principal Dees emphasized the value of resources such as Ideal Consulting, Tufts, Literacy Support Specialist Susan Laufer, and teacher Diane Irvine in allowing classroom teachers to maximize their effectiveness and produce results such as those achieved on the MCAS. He is concerned that budget constraints that remove such supports will preclude continued progress.

Mr. Dees also commented that it would have been difficult to provide a quality education to the fourth grade if the classroom size had not been reduced from 29 to 22 by the addition of a new teacher. In addition to relieving teacher and parent stress levels, he noted a palpable change for the children, all of whom were involved in the hiring and transition process. He reiterated that it will be impossible to perform at a high level if the classroom size reverts to 29 in subsequent years. In addition to the classroom supports, Mr. Dees stated that the school cannot afford to lose any teachers.

Assistant Superintendent Bob Milley stated that with 29 children in class, "double-dosing" for students in need of extra support becomes difficult and the District would likely see a drop-off in performance.

Rich Robison expressed congratulations and appreciation. He highlighted the improvement in math scores for special education students. Principal Dees noted that the special education teachers have been working in the classroom to meet the needs of such students, rather than pulling them out. While it is not a model for co-teaching, classroom and special education teachers must form a high functioning partnership in order to be effective.

Assistant Principal David Jeong, who has been at Loring since it reopened, commented on the high quality teaching staff at the school. He believes the administrative team's success is attributable to establishing a shared vision that has all teachers working in a unified way toward the same goal.

Lisa Gutch commended the high level of leadership that allowed the teaching staff to believe in themselves and work together toward the same goals to benefit the students.

7. Preliminary Report on Spring MCAS Results

Assistant Superintendent Bob Milley provided summaries of District and individual school performances, noting the small number of students in the warning and failing categories. He also noted the progress in the CPI and how the individual schools' performances contributed to the District's CPI.

Mr. Milley elaborated on the SGP, stating that it measures where a student starts and how that student progresses over a year's time. He noted that higher performing districts may attain high MCAS scores, but show no individual student growth. This year's reports to families will include the SGP. An effort will be made to inform parents how the SGP is generated and what types of students are represented in each performance category. Additionally, it will be emphasized that it measures relative growth from one year to the next, rather than cumulative growth over all years.

4. Open Forum

Debbie Howell, Victoria Road, asked for clarification on the Loring Grade 5 student distribution growth. Ms. Howell also noted that her son was moved to the new fourth grade classroom and was thrilled to be part of the transition process.

Kevin Matthews, Haynes Rd, a member of the LS School Committee, asked how teacher performance can be assessed, given that SGP data is based on peer groups of students from throughout the state. Superintendent Brackett stated that the information is not available yet and likely must be generated within the District. Rich Robison noted that each classroom represents too small a group to generate accurate data. Assistant Superintendent Milley stated that individual schools would have to examine the SGP data to determine the factors at play and how to address them.

Mr. Matthews also commented on the results of the Grade 8 Science and Technology MCAS, where scores are very low across the state. He asked if the test is ahead of the curriculum. Assistant Superintendent Bob Milley stated that there isn't a curriculum standard that describes what will be taught each year. He noted that the District has made adjustments in the topic sequence at the elementary and some middle school grades until more well-defined frameworks are developed.

Lisa Armour, Brookside Farm Lane, asked if the SPED cohort represents any student on an IEP.

4. Approve FY10 Final Budget

Director of Business and Finance Mary Will provided an overview of the transfers made in order to finalize the FY10 budget. She noted that the District saved significantly on utility costs and was able to put the savings back into maintenance. Additionally, budget projections were more conservative than actual results, allowing the District to purchase curriculum items for both FY10 and FY11, as well as prepay CASE assessments. In total the District returned \$9,800 to the Town.

VOTED: On a motion by Rich Robison, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to approve the adjustments to the FY10 Adopted Budget as presented. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

Mary Will also distributed a sheet summarizing the SFSF grant accounting. Funds went to two areas: restoration and innovation. She noted that this is one-time money that the District is not relying on. Superintendent Brackett noted that these Stimulus Funds were given to each of the schools to utilize for resources such as the support personnel that Loring Principal Dees reported on.

6. School Committee Report

Public Communication—Parent Coffee

Lisa Gutch presented the idea of increased communication with the public via informal coffees. The Committee agreed to the concept and additionally to the idea of linking the coffees to other school events, such as PTO meetings. Michele MacDonald added that other members of the community might be reached if the coffees were held at locations other than the schools, such as the library and the Senior Center.

Michele MacDonald also suggested adding Patch.com and the *Town Crier* to the District's updates mailing list.

8. Superintendent's Report

(a) Donations

None.

(b) Recognitions

Superintendent Brackett reported that Curtis Science teacher Michal Mueller and Ivory Team students were recognized at a River Day celebration at the Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge by Congresswoman Niki Tsongas. The students received congressional recognition awards for caring for endangered Blanding's turtles and tracking them once they were released at Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge.

(c) Bill Schedule

A Bill Schedule was presented.

(d) Personnel Actions

As outlined in the Personnel Packet.

9. Minutes—Regular Session September 1, 2010

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to approve the minutes of the September 1, 2010 Regular Session. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

10. Communications

None.

11. Members' Forum

Rich Robison reported that his organization was asked to generate focus groups to determine if parents would understand the new performance analyses in the MCAS parent reports. His organization published a parent guide aimed at increasing parents' understanding, both in terms of achievement and individual student growth. He also noted that SPED reporting is somewhat different from that for regular education.

Dr. Robison also suggested that some of the team teaching approaches implemented at Loring might be beneficial for system-wide implementation.

Lisa Gutch reported that she attended the first of three EDCO new member orientations. She mentioned that another town school committee conducts tours of its schools for members of other town committees and suggested that SPS could do the same to show the strengths, resources, needs, and constraints of the individual schools.

Superintendent Brackett reported making a phone inquiry about the recently submitted SOI for the MSBA Green Repair Program. He was told that review would start on September 23 and Districts can expect notification in a couple of weeks.

Susan Iuliano will follow up by email about changing the October 6 meeting to October 13.

Jeff Beeler acknowledged the efforts of Permanent Building Committee Members Mike Melnick and Bill Braun, Energy Committee Member Robert Morrison, Town Building Inspector Jim Kelly, and SPS Superintendent Brackett in making a timely SOI submission for the Green Repair Program. The District stands to receive up to 35% of the costs to replace the roof, boilers, and windows at Noyes if it is selected. Mr. Beeler also reported that the Noyes small solar array is scheduled to be installed when school is closed over the Columbus Day weekend. Additionally, SPS will receive funding due to the Town's designation as a Green Community. This might be matched by funds from NStar. Funds will be distributed to the Town and Mr. Beeler asked that Superintendent Brackett follow up to coordinate this process.

Michele MacDonald attended the LS School Committee meeting on September 21. One of the biology teachers spoke about a teacher externship program that places teachers in local companies. The goal is to bring the experience back to the classroom in order to encourage students to consider the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math.

Assistant Superintendent Bob Milley attended the Curtis ILAP program involving the SPED and math teachers. The program was facilitated by EDCO.

12. Executive Session

VOTED: On a motion by Susan Iuliano, seconded by Michele MacDonald, to move to Executive Session to discuss strategy in preparation for negotiations with non-unit personnel and collective bargaining, given that having this discussion in Open Session would have a detrimental effect on the Committee's position, not to return to Open Session. The vote was 5-0 in favor. The time was 10:10 p.m.

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

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito, Recording Secretary