

**Sudbury Public Schools
Sudbury, Massachusetts
School Committee Regular Meeting
Wednesday February 1, 2012
Fairbank Senior Center**

Present: Jeff Beeler, Chairman; Susan Iuliano, Vice Chairperson
Dr. Rich Robison, Lisa Gutch, Ellen Winer Joachim

Also Present: Dr. Anne Wilson, Superintendent; Dr. Judy Malone Neville, Assistant Superintendent;
Mary Will, Business and Finance Director; Nicole Lamoureux, SEA

Open Session

Jeff Beeler called the Open Session to order at 7:34 p.m. The meeting was taped for public access broadcast.

1. Assistant Superintendent FY13

Superintendent Wilson introduced Todd Curtis, who will serve as the SPS Assistant Superintendent, effective July 1, 2012. Mr. Curtis currently serves as Principal at the Floral Street School in Shrewsbury, a position he has held since 2006. Previously, Mr. Curtis served as an Assistant Principal, as well as a special education teacher and a mental health counselor. He is in the final stages of his doctoral work in Educational Administration at Boston College. The Committee welcomed Mr. Curtis. Jeff Beeler distributed copies of the draft contract and commented that it is customary for the Committee to sign off on contracts for administrators, although only the Superintendent is actually hired by the Committee. He noted his intention to execute Mr. Curtis' contract with the District.

Later in the meeting, Mr. Beeler noted that it would also be appropriate for the Committee to vote its support of the hiring of Mr. Curtis.

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Susan Iuliano, to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to appoint Todd Curtis as Assistant Superintendent. The vote was 5-0 in favor.

2. Special Education Update

Special Education Administrator, Debbie Dixon, provided an overview of the District's special education program. The goal of the program is to provide skills and strategies to students with disabilities in order to promote their self-sufficiency and achievement. Ms. Dixon described the eligibility criteria and the District's obligation to provide all students with a Free, Appropriate, Public Education (FAPE). The District has seen an increase in the number of students identified with autism, as well as increases in students identified with both communication and emotional disabilities. The total number of special education students—427 as of October 1, 2011—is somewhat down compared with previous years.

The percentage of students with disabilities at both the elementary and middle school levels is low (less than 11% and 14%, respectively) compared with the state average of 16%. Out-of-District placements are at an all-time high, numbering 40 students. Within the District, the majority of students participate in full-inclusion placements, which involve less than 21% of time outside the general education classroom.

Ms. Dixon described the programs that are housed at each of the elementary schools, as well as those at Curtis. The District has been able to consolidate its programs within buildings,

resulting in greater efficiencies. Ms. Dixon also outlined the related services provided by the District, including speech and language therapies, OT, PT, transportation, and counseling.

Ms. Dixon expressed her appreciation of the special education staff and its quality. She outlined the trends in staffing from FY06 to the present, noting the diminished reliance on Assistants, largely in favor of Program Teachers. Staffing of Psychologists and Team Chairs, who are responsible for meeting deadlines and ensuring compliance, has also increased. Jeff Beeler asked about the consequences of missed deadlines. Ms. Dixon replied that missed deadlines represent a procedural violation that might be construed as a denial of FAPE. If the District does not adhere to procedural safeguards, the District's position in terms of relationships with parents, hearings, or litigation might be compromised. Ms. Dixon stated that Team Chairs spend 100% of their time on paperwork and compliance matters.

A six-year perspective on expenses, not including salaries, was also outlined. Out-of-District tuitions and transportation costs were cited as areas of concern. Jeff Beeler asked Ms. Dixon to describe the conditions that might lead to an out-of-District placement. Ms. Dixon responded that such placements are indicated when the District is unable to meet a student's needs. Reasons are varied and include a low-incidence population or a lack of programming at a particular grade level. Ms. Dixon also noted that the transportation expenses include both out-of-District and in-District costs. She stated that the District is a member of the CASE Collaborative. Of the 40 out-of-District placements, 20 are at CASE and 20 at private day schools. The Committee discussed the mechanism by which CASE assesses the District for tuitions: assessments are based on the number of participants two years prior to the year in which the payment is due. Out-of-District per-student tuitions range from \$32K to over \$100K, depending on the needs of the child at issue.

Program consolidation within one school was cited as not only resulting in cost-savings, but in enhancing the continuity and consistency of programming. Redistricting was one factor that permitted such program consolidation. Ms. Dixon also highlighted improvements to such areas as curriculum, co-teaching efforts in math, counseling, and responsiveness to parent queries.

Ms. Dixon concluded by reporting that the District has just begun its self-assessment. The state review commences next year. Susan Iuliano asked if there were any challenges anticipated with respect to the New Educator Evaluation. Ms. Dixon responded that the evaluation standards for special educators will be published and implemented on the same timeline as that for general educators.

3. FY13 Budget Update

Superintendent Wilson stated that the budget distributed is the same in terms of expenses as that previously voted by the Committee. Susan Iuliano noted that the budget will be presented to the Sudbury Finance Committee on February 9 and 13. Mary Will added that the kindergarten enrollment continues to increase. Dr. Wilson stated that, at this time, the configuration of Kindergarten classrooms is anticipated to be the same or very similar to the current year.

4. FY12 Budget to Actual

Mary Will provided an overview of the FY12 expenses to date as compared to the budget. She highlighted some anticipated savings in salaries that are largely due to five retirements, a negative balance in special education expenses due to unanticipated tuitions, and projected savings in utilities expenses. She requested the Committee approve the line-item transfers she outlined.

VOTED: On a motion by Ellen Joachim, seconded by Rich Robison, to approve the +/- Transfers as outlined. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

5. FY13 Calendar

Mr. Beeler began this discussion by noting that to his observation over the last five-plus years, the Committee has attempted to start school when it makes sense based on the calendar given where Labor Day falls in any given year. He noted that it appeared to him that when Labor Day fell on September 4 or earlier, the calendar tended to suggest a post-Labor Day start and that when it fell on September 5 or later, a pre-Labor Day start was indicated by the calendar. He also noted that the District was also always mindful of when LS High School would start because of a desire to start and end both school years at the same time. Last year, unlike LS, SPS opted for a post-Labor Day start in order to accommodate the anticipated construction timelines of the Noyes Green Repair project. Mr. Beeler noted that this was an intentional deviation from the usual practice of ensuring like calendars at LS and SPS that was driven by the Noyes project. Mr. Beeler also noted that the Committee received approximately nine emails from parents regarding the proposed pre-Labor Day start of school that was discussed at the last Regular Session. These emails indicated a strong preference for a post-Labor Day start. Subsequent to that meeting, LS voted on a start date of August 28 for freshmen.

Mr. Beeler noted that he had contacted LS School Committee Chairwoman, Nancy Marshall, to obtain more information about the LS decision to start pre-Labor Day. Ms. Marshall indicated that the pre-Labor Day start for FY13 was voted for a variety of reasons, including an end date in July, should all five snow days be used, with a post-Labor Day start. Mr. Beeler advised that LS also had concerns about some fall sports issues and administrative issues that are unique to it. He suggested that parents who wanted more information about LS's decision should contact the LS School Committee directly. Mr. Beeler further advised that he inquired as to whether the LS Committee would likely reconsider its start date should SPS opt for a post-Labor Day start. He was advised that this was not likely and noted that this was hardly surprising given the issues LS was attempting to address and the usual reluctance of any Committee to reconsider a decision viewed to be reasonable when initially made.

Susan Iuliano noted her observation that the desire to ensure a like start and end date at LS and SPS appeared to her to have been the driving factor in such decisions in the past. The School Committee has received strong parent input over the years arguing for coordination of the LS and SPS calendars. Dr. Wilson noted that parents had advocated for coordinated calendars during her entry plan meetings.

The Committee discussed the need to continue to communicate with LS early in the school year to develop a unified plan. Mr. Beeler noted his expectation following his discussions with the Chair of the LS School Committee that this would continue to occur.

The Committee also discussed the fact that cost savings associated with sharing buses with LS would be undercut if the school calendars do not coincide.

Superintendent Wilson noted that there is no clear evidence of benefit or detriment to either a pre- or post-Labor Day start, including any impact to starting the year with two shortened weeks. It was noted that historically, the bulk of parent input has suggested a desire to align not only the start and end dates with LS, but to have professional development days align as well.

VOTED: On a motion by Susan Iuliano, seconded by Ellen Joachim, to approve a school start date of August 28, 2012 and end date of June 17, 2013, with a 185th day of June 24, 2013 for the FY13 calendar. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

6. Fourth Grade Odyssey Trip Approval

VOTED: On a motion by Lisa Gutch, seconded by Ellen Joachim, to approve the fourth-grade Odyssey trip to Camp Bauercrest as presented. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

7. School Committee Report

(a) MAPC/ESCO

The Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MAPC) recently chose Ameresco as its regional Energy Services Company (ESCO). Sudbury is one of the towns that can participate in the first round of investment-grade energy audits on its municipal buildings, to be performed by Ameresco.

Mr. Beeler reported that the Energy Committee had requested that SPS support its desire to conduct, and fund, an investment grade energy audit of Sudbury’s schools and Town buildings. It was explained that the audit could be undertaken without further commitment to proceed with further contracting with the ESCO. Thus, at a minimum, obtaining the audit would provide SPS with a useful blueprint for directing further energy savings efforts.

It was noted that, currently SPS benefits from its energy-saving measures by its ability to retain those savings. In the event that SPS were to enter into a performance contract with an ESCO, such savings would go to pay for the associated capital improvements and to the ESCO. Mr. Beeler noted that this would require further processing through the usual Town processes. He noted that any future discussions should ensure that a mechanism is implemented to ensure that savings derived within SPS remain within SPS.

It was noted that the Energy Committee would finance the initial investment-grade audit, although it might involve a funding shortfall of \$2–3,000 that may need to be addressed by SPS.

The Committee agreed by consensus to support the efforts of the Energy Committee.

(b) Vehicle Mileage Policy/Green Committee

The Town of Sudbury was designated as a Green Community, which required it to adopt a Fuel-Efficient Policy in 2010. Recently, the DOER changed its fuel-efficiency regulations. In order to remain a participant in the Green Community funding opportunities, Sudbury needed to amend its 2010 Fuel-Efficient Policies to incorporate the new requirements from the DOER. The Committee’s approval of the updated policy would allow Sudbury to pursue funding for other ‘green’ initiatives.

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Ellen Joachim, to approve the Fuel-Efficient Vehicle Policy of 2012. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

(c) Communications/Public Relations

Lisa Gutch announced that the Pre-K coffees will occur on March 14 at 9:30 am in the Grange and 7:00 pm in the Curtis library. Topics will include the budget and full- and half-day kindergarten options. The Committee is planning to hold a separate coffee, tentatively scheduled for some time in the Spring.

8. Open Forum

No comments.

9. Superintendent's Report

(a) Educator Evaluation Update

Superintendent Wilson reported that several representatives from the District attended a DESE-sponsored webinar, and a subset of this group attended a workshop designed to facilitate the transition to the New Educator Evaluation process. As a Race To The Top district, SPS is required to implement the new system in September 2012. Dr. Wilson provided the Committee with copies of all available documentation and explained the three options (adopt, adapt, or revise) available to the District: adopt the process "as is"; adapt the process and add additional elements; submit the current system, revised to align with the model. Dr. Wilson noted that the pilot system SPS currently utilizes has elements that align well with the new requirements. She is assembling a Joint Labor Management Committee to make a recommendation regarding whether to adopt, adapt, or revise. In her view, DESE has provided a detailed model system, including implementation guidance, evaluation rubrics, and contract language.

(b) Donations

VOTED: On a motion by Lisa Gutch, seconded by Susan Iuliano, to accept with thanks a donation of 10 ActivSlates @ \$429 each and one ActivArena @ \$209, from Promethean, Inc. for use in the classrooms of those teachers who participated in an observation survey of how the Promethean technology is utilized in the classroom. The vote was 5-0 in favor. The Committee hopes that a peer model of sharing expertise will ensue.

(c) Bill Schedule

A Bill Schedule was presented.

11. Minutes

VOTED: On a motion by Lisa Gutch, seconded by Rich Robison, to approve the minutes of the January 18, 2012 Regular Session. The vote was 5-0 in favor.

13. Adjourn

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to adjourn to Executive Session for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to potential litigation, for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining with union personnel, and for the purpose of discussing contract negotiations with non-union personnel, as discussion in Open Meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating and/or bargaining position of the School Committee, not to return to Open Session. The vote was 5-0 in favor. The time was 9:46 p.m.

Yes Jeff Beeler
Yes Susan Iuliano
Yes Rich Robison
Yes Lisa Gutch
Yes Ellen Winer Joachim

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito, Recording Secretary