

**Sudbury Public Schools
Sudbury, Massachusetts
School Committee Regular Meeting
Tuesday July 24, 2012
Fairbank Senior Center**

Present: Dr. Rich Robison, Lisa Gutch, Ellen Winer Joachim, Bob Armour, Lucie St. George

Also Present: Dr. Anne Wilson, Superintendent; Dr. Todd Curtis, Assistant Superintendent; Mary Will, Director of Business and Finance

Open Session

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

11. Superintendent's Report

(a) Donations

Haynes Organization of Parents (HOP) Co-Chair Natalie Massarotti presented an overview of recent goals and efforts for the Haynes playground. Last year's installation of the infinity web addressed climbing activities. This year's focus addresses overhead and movement activities. The HOP proposal includes the purchase and installation of three items: a spinner, a bouncer, and overhead parallel bars. In addition, equipment removed last year to make way for the infinity web will be reinstalled and maintenance on existing equipment will be performed.

VOTED: On a motion by Bob Armour, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to approve with thanks the HOP donation of playground equipment as presented. The vote was 5-0 in favor.

1. New Educator Evaluation Implementation Update

Superintendent Wilson provided an overview of the features of the evaluation process that the Committee approved at its June 6, 2012 Regular Session. Dr. Wilson reported that the collective bargaining language has been submitted to DESE and that she anticipates its approval within the next week or so.

The District will migrate to the new process over two years. Those teachers with Professional Teacher Status (PTS) who are in their evaluation year will start this year. Those PTS teachers who are in their reflection year will start in the 2013-2014 school year. All non-PTS teachers will start this year.

Administrators will be trained in August on new software that will be utilized to collect and organize evaluation data. Administrators will then train staff at the individual schools. The common assessment development will occur in tandem with the common core implementation.

Bob Armour asked if the expectation, or "bar", for an exemplary rating is the same regardless of the number of years of teaching experience. Dr. Wilson responded that "the bar is the bar": there is a standard measurement for distinction and reaching the exemplary level is very difficult. Mr. Armour also asked if newer teachers who perform at a high level will have opportunities to be assisted in attaining even higher performance levels. Dr. Wilson indicated that the SMART goals are designed to help accomplish this.

Lisa Gutch asked about the reporting requirements established by the State, as well as what help is being provided. Dr. Wilson responded that there is an expectation of reporting the ratings for each teacher, but the details have not been released yet regarding when or how.

2. Professional Development Update

Assistant Superintendent Todd Curtis noted the tie-ins between professional development (PD) efforts and other work within the District. Dr. Curtis stated that a primary concern of teachers surrounding PD is time. In response to this concern, the District will maintain an effort focused on the three main areas outlined in the District Goals and Strategies approved at the June 20, 2012 Regular Session: implementation of the Common Core; informing instruction through the use of data; implementation of the new educator evaluation.

Dr. Curtis outlined research that identified the attributes of effective PD. Successful PD is collaborative, sustained, job-embedded, and purposeful. Dr. Curtis reported on the establishment of a PD Council that is drafting a summary report of meaningful PD experiences and a PD sequence for the upcoming year. Opportunities for collaboration among faculty members and across grades will be available. Additionally, the District will capitalize on its in-house expertise for training.

Lisa Gutch asked about priorities other than the stated goals. Mr. Curtis replied that aspects *within* each of the broad objectives are the priorities. By way of example, he noted that the ELA Common Core views all teachers as teachers of reading; SPS has a responsibility to ensure that teachers in all disciplines are supported and given the tools to carry this out. Dr. Curtis also noted that curriculum gaps must be closed, in part by preparing teachers to teach new materials or modified sequences. As examples, he cited a new focus on non-fiction in ELA and the addition of topics in Algebra I that have historically been covered in Algebra II.

3. Appointment of School Committee Representative on ACCEPT Board of Directors

Superintendent Wilson stated that appointments to the Board of Directors of each Collaborative are made annually, with the Superintendent traditionally representing the School Committee. She stated that each Board meets six times per year.

VOTED: On a motion by Ellen Joachim, seconded by Lucie St. George, to appoint Dr. Wilson as the School Committee representative on the ACCEPT Board of Directors. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

4. Appointment of School Committee Representative on CASE Board of Directors

VOTED: On a motion by Lisa Gutch, seconded by Lucie St. George, to appoint Dr. Wilson as the School Committee representative on the CASE Board of Directors. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

5. Appointment of School Committee Representative on EDCO Board of Directors

VOTED: On a motion by Ellen Joachim, seconded by Lucie St. George, to appoint Dr. Wilson as the School Committee representative on the EDCO Board of Directors. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

6. Appointment of School Committee Representative on EDCO Advisory Council

VOTED: On a motion by Lisa Gutch, seconded by Ellen Joachim, to appoint Lucie St. George as the School Committee representative on the EDCO Advisory Council. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

7. School Committee Approval of Membership in ACCEPT Collaborative for Needham

VOTED: On a motion by Lisa Gutch, seconded by Lucie St. George, to approve the membership of Needham Public Schools in the ACCEPT Collaborative. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

8. School Committee Approval of Membership in ACCEPT Collaborative for LSRHS

VOTED: On a motion by Ellen Joachim, seconded by Lucie St. George, to approve the membership of Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School in the ACCEPT Collaborative. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

9. School Committee Report

(a) Communications/Public Relations

Lisa Gutch reported that Ellen Joachim is sharing the job of writing the email communications.

10. Open Forum

Joanne Topham, Concord Road, asked about drug testing for teachers, administrators, or other District employees. She wants assurance that those who teach her kids are drug free and believes this needs to be addressed by the Committee, as well as the Superintendent. Ms. Topham also asked if Dr. Wilson was notified of an ongoing relationship at the Noyes school, stating that teachers, the administration, parents, *and* students are aware of it. Ms. Topham then welcomed Dr. Curtis. Regarding his comments about teaching reading, Ms. Topham stated that the District recently let go the greatest teacher of reading. She suggested that if the former Superintendent were still here, Mrs. Donahue would still be here. Ms. Topham asked if Dr. Wilson had ever visited Mrs. Donahue’s classroom.

Mary Mahoney, Grindstone Lane and Grade 8 teacher, has growing concerns about the teacher evaluations. She was not aware that evaluations will be submitted to the state and suggested that standards might vary across districts. She worries that teachers who do exactly as the evaluating administrator asks will be rated higher than those who are creative. Using herself as an example, Ms. Mahoney stated that other countries look to the United States for its expertise in teaching and working collaboratively. Superintendent Wilson clarified that only the ratings will be submitted to the state and that discussion is ongoing surrounding reporting. Dr. Wilson also emphasized that SPS has no intention of moving in the direction of rote, “cookie cutter” teaching.

Molly Gilmartin, Hudson Road, understood that the evaluations are going to the state because Sudbury is a Race To The Top (RTTT) district. Rich Robison clarified that all districts will submit evaluations to the state as a result of change in the law. Because Sudbury is a RTTT district, it is phasing in the new evaluation process a year in advance and over two years. Ms. Gilmartin also asked for an Open Forum to follow the Superintendent’s report on the July 9 meeting with Noyes parents.

Brenda Shepard, Lakewood Drive, has a daughter in third grade at Noyes. Following a terrible kindergarten year, Mrs. J helped turn things around in first grade. The kids love Mrs. J and love to learn because of her. Ms. Shepard believes a huge mistake has been made and SPS is losing a tremendous teacher, which she considers a shame.

Mary Michael Merhige, Pheasant Avenue, reiterated the desire to have an opportunity to comment after hearing the Superintendent’s report on her meeting with Noyes parents.

The Committee agreed by consensus to hold a second Open Forum following the Superintendent’s Report, provided comments are not personal attacks on staff, including the Superintendent.

11. Superintendent’s Report

Superintendent Wilson expressed condolences to the family of Steven Santomenna, father of two former SPS students, who passed away unexpectedly this weekend.

Dr. Wilson welcomed Assistant Superintendent Todd Curtis and her new Executive Assistant, Karen Walsh, who is filling in as Recording Secretary. She also reported that she and Town

Manager Maureen Valente extended an offer to current Town Building Inspector Jim Kelly to work as the joint Facilities Director. Mr. Kelly will start by meeting with staff and touring the schools, as well as working on a five-year plan.

(b) Recognitions

Superintendent Wilson visited the Loring School summer program and observed engaged and excited students. Summer programs were held at Loring, Noyes, and Haynes. Dr. Wilson commended the staff and students for their efforts.

(c) Meeting with Parents

Superintendent Wilson held a meeting with parents on July 9 to discuss procedures and communication when a teacher is out of the classroom unexpectedly and/or for an extended period of time. Also participating were School Committee Member Ellen Winer Joachim, SEA President Dr. Robert Mealey, and Noyes Principal Annette Doyle. Dr. Wilson expressed appreciation to parents for their time and input. She noted that the administration is continuing to evaluate processes and procedures, with a primary focus on what is best and least disruptive for the students. Dr. Wilson stated that an unplanned/extended absence will be addressed through communication with parents; providing a consistent, qualified substitute; providing—and communicating the availability of—appropriate resources, both in and outside the classroom; and providing opportunities to meet with parents.

Superintendent Wilson emphasized that the Administration understands that it can learn from all of its experiences and will do so in its ongoing effort to “improve on excellence”. She reiterated that the Administration will not waver from its focus on what’s best for students and is thankful for having parents as partners in this effort.

Bob Armour asked if the discussion extended to other aspects, such as policy. Ellen Joachim responded that other aspects were not addressed at this time. She added that the interests of students is the primary focus of the School Committee.

10. Open Forum

Christine Hogan, Blueberry Hill Lane, stated that her husband attended the July 9 meeting and was told that questions surrounding lesson plans could not be addressed because they relate to personnel issues. Ms. Hogan stated that she had asked on both June 6 and June 20 about the policy surrounding lesson plans, as well as that on interviewing young children without notifying parents. Ms. Hogan indicated that she has not received a response and is concerned with what will happen in the future. She asked how the children are being considered first if lesson plans are not provided to substitute teachers. She asked if it becomes the superintendent’s responsibility to provide lesson plans if the principal has not done so, stating that her daughters were without lesson plans for three weeks, despite their receipt by both Principal Doyle and Superintendent Wilson. Dr. Wilson responded that this issue had been addressed and a plan is in place. Chairman Robison advised that he is taking note of the comment. Ms. Hogan also asked if the School Committee or Administration had engaged any legal counsel since May 1 besides those firms previously disclosed. Dr. Wilson responded that additional legal counsel has not been sought.

Molly Gilmartin, Hudson Road, summarized that concerns about lesson plans arose because Mrs. Doyle had said that she has emergency lesson plans for all teachers, then later said that she had none for Room 15. According to Ms. Gilmartin, Principal Doyle then acknowledged on July 9 the sense of distrust between parent community and the school. Ms. Gilmartin noted that Dr. Wilson’s report did not address how we’ll move forward with the healing process. Ms. Gilmartin also commented that Dr. Wilson stated to the community that the children’s education was not impacted, but had acknowledged to Ms. Gilmartin on July 9 that education *is* impacted when these issues arise. She believes that stating otherwise is unfair and misleading. Superintendent Wilson responded that she has met with the Noyes PTO co-chairs on ways to help the community

move on and feel more positive. She has also met with Principal Doyle about steps to take with staff. She stated that discussion will continue into the new school year.

Louise Noce, Beckwith Street, stated two areas of concern. First, she noted that there was a lot of publicity about abuse and the abuser at the Noyes school, but that nothing had been said about the reporter's response to observed abuse. She believes this needs to be addressed as part of the healing process. Ms. Noce would also like to see a public statement that the abuse report was dropped. Dr. Robison stated that the Committee is unable to discuss the DCF report or personnel matters. Ms. Noce's second point concerns the fact that Mrs. Donahue went to school one day and was asked not to return, marking the last time she was able to communicate with Superintendent Wilson or Mrs. Doyle. She would like to see a statement in support of teachers.

Mary Michael Merhige Pheasant Avenue, thanked Dr. Wilson for reporting on the meeting. She believes a lot of positive discussion resulted. She reiterated Ms. Gilmartin's point that as inaccurate as it is to make a blanket statement that the children's education *was* impacted, it is equally inaccurate to state that it was not. Ms. Merhige finds it unsettling that the Superintendent's statements suggest that all steps taken were excellent, provide no admission of any missteps, and suggest that only Room 15 parents were dissatisfied with the Administration's response. She believes that the many comments made at both School Committee and other meetings illustrate otherwise and that it is wrong not to acknowledge this. She cannot fathom what could have happened to make it in the best interest of the children to remove their teacher and completely change their routines. She would like wrong/poor decisions to be admitted—for the School Committee and Administration to acknowledge publically that they could have done better. Ms. Merhige stated that the District's response did not meet her standard of "good".

11. Superintendent's Report

(d) Bill Schedule

A Bill Schedule was presented.

12. Minutes

Tabled.

13. Members' Forum

Todd Curtis thanked everyone for welcoming him and noted the launch of many exciting projects. He noted that Judy Malone Neville was on site today for the start of a new mentoring program she developed with teacher Sara Zawadzkas.

Lisa Gutch reported that we have three liaisons from the Finance Committee: Jamie Gossels, Joan Carlton, and Mark Minassian. Ms. Gutch also reported that she and Lucie St. George attended a July 19 meeting surrounding prospective uses for the Melone property on Route 117. The Town has hired consultants to recommend best uses. There will be a presentation at a future Board of Selectmen's meeting.

The Committee agreed that it would be helpful to have Town Planner Jody Kablack make a presentation to the School Committee.

Lisa Gutch also noted that the District is awaiting word from the MSBA regarding its acceptance into the MSBA's Accelerated Repair Program for the Nixon roof. Superintendent Wilson interjected that a phone conference with the MSBA is scheduled for tomorrow to discuss design.

14. Executive Session

VOTED: On a motion by Lisa Gutch, seconded by Lucie St. George, to adjourn to Executive Session for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to litigation, as discussion in Open

Meeting may have a detrimental effect of the litigating position of the School Committee, not to return to Open Session. The vote was 5-0 in favor. The time was 9:16 p.m.

Yes Rich Robison
Yes Lisa Gutch
Yes Ellen Winer Joachim
Yes Bob Armour
Yes Lucie St. George

Recorded by Karen Walsh. Submitted by Sheila Cusolito