

**Sudbury Public Schools
Sudbury, Massachusetts
School Committee Regular Meeting
Wednesday October 23, 2013
General John Nixon School**

Present: Dr. Rich Robison, Ellen Winer Joachim, Lucie St. George, Scott Nassa

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

Open Session

Rich Robison called the Open Session to order at 7:36 p.m. The meeting was taped for public access broadcast. He asked for a moment of reflection at the loss of two teachers to violence during the past week.

1. Recognitions

Superintendent Wilson recognized the PTO co chairs and parent volunteers, stating that we wouldn't have the community we have without the support of our parent volunteers.

2. Nixon PTO Welcome (Lauren Hochberg and Doreen Neale)

Lauren Hochberg introduced Co-Chair Doreen Neale. She called Nixon a 'home away from home', praising the talented and caring staff. Ms. Hochberg characterized parent volunteers as the 'piece that supports all others', citing the mission of the PTO to advocate and promote the education and welfare of students. The PTO sponsors educational enrichment programs, as well as school-wide programs that promote community. It also provides teacher stipends, communications, and volunteers for library, lunch, recess, and grade-level programs.

Two areas of struggle in the recent past were recruiting and the budget. Ms. Hochberg stated that the PTO has enhanced its outreach to ensure a welcoming atmosphere. It has also revised the budget and looked for ways to increase revenue. Both new family outreach and new fundraising efforts have had a positive effect.

3. Nixon State of the School Presentation (Joni Jay, Principal; Chase Eschauzier, Assistant Principal)

Principal Joni Jay introduced the Nixon School attendees, many of whom serve on the School Advisory Council. Some of the highlights from last year's goal-setting include grade-level data teams that met or exceeded their goals and successful implementation of Common Core, particularly with the reading workshop. Name calling around ability has also decreased. This year, the focus continues to be on implementing the Common Core, as well as data-driven instruction, with each grade considered a data team. All grades are making use of data coaches and the math and literacy specialists.

In terms of school connectedness and culture, Ms. Jay reported a high level of connection and low level of aggression. The effort to reduce name calling, particularly with 'invisible' disabilities, will continue. Staff are undergoing training in social thinking and having difficult conversations. Ms. Jay remarked that teachers have a lot on their plates. School-wide focus also includes executive functioning, the concept of elapsed time, technology integration, and collegial observations.

Every couple of years, Nixon parents participate in a survey to target the parent-school partnership. As in previous years, the most recent survey indicated a need to encourage parents to refer struggling students to teachers for help, instead of having parents attempt to teach content.

Also of note is the need for families to promote reading at home. The highest requested parent workshop topic is anxiety, and then math, homework, and home reading. Specialists have been encouraged to communicate directly with families.

Data show that although students exit Nixon performing at a high level on MCAS, there remains a gap in performance between non-high-needs and high-needs students. The gap is larger in math than in ELA.

Assistant Principal Chase Echauzier highlighted school connectedness data that show students believe things do get better or at least stay the same when they tell an adult. An effort to encourage parents to report on behalf of their children is underway; most children report that they think adults *should* do something.

Fourth-grade teacher Jeff Kotkin spoke about the SERF-funded stand-up desks that promote movement and that have proven to be very popular with students. He and other teachers report appreciating being able to utilize peer leaders from LS once or twice a week for varying periods of time.

Scott Nassa stated his appreciation for the energy in the room, remarking on the strength of the parent-school partnership, the focus on anti-bullying, and the attention to both the school's strengths and its weaknesses. Lucie St. George acknowledged the emphasis on social thinking, which she believes will help in understanding others' ways, given that our community is somewhat of a 'bubble' for students. Ellen Joachim asked what the Committee can do to be supportive. Ms. Jay responded that it means a lot to have the Committee's appreciation and advocacy. She commented that resources are always a challenge, with Nixon sometimes receiving less than its proportional share. Rich Robison noted that Sudbury teachers have embraced Common Core integration, despite all their other commitments, unlike in many communities.

4. Metrowest Adolescent Health Survey (Betsy Grams)

Wellness Curriculum Specialist Betsy Grams outlined the Coordinated School Health Program, an initiative of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that links health to education. The emphasis is on creating opportunities for schools, families, and other community stakeholders to communicate and collaborate. The creation of a school wellness advisory committee was part of that focus. This committee has reviewed policies related to nutrition and wellness, as well as sought ways to introduce more varied vegetables to students and reduce middle school stress. A parent wellness committee was responsible for the recent walk/bike to school day, which had more than 500 participants.

The Community Resource Awareness Network, CRANE, was recently established by the collective effort of community organizations in both Lincoln and Sudbury, including the schools, parks, and police departments, as well as the interfaith councils. The purpose of the Network is to provide a clearinghouse of resources for youth and family wellbeing. A drug disposal event is being sponsored this Saturday. Ms. Grams also cited Parent Education in Sudbury, PES, a resource of educational opportunities for parents. The group sponsored the viewing of the film *Race to Nowhere*, as well as talks that raise funds for the organization. Ms. Grams recognized long-time parent chair Betsy Whipple, who recently stepped down.

Every other year, SPS middle school students participate in a health survey designed to monitor trends in health and risk behaviors. For the last few years, the District has participated in the MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey, (MWAHS); however, from its previous surveys, it has 16 years of data. Ms. Grams highlighted the 92% participation rate, as well as the downward trend of all substance use risk behaviors. Bullying behaviors, except cyberbullying, are also down over the 2010 data. There is evidence that cyberbullying is underreported in Sudbury, given the high rates of school attachment reported. The middle school curriculum is under review, with an eye toward creating web-based home learning activities for parents to do with their children. Also being

considered is the formation of student focus groups to try to identify the causes for the underreporting.

Statistics on mental health issues indicate increases in all categories except attempted suicide. As in previous surveys, risk behavior incidence increases with grade level and school homework continues to be identified as a significant stressor.

Ms. Grams commented that the health class sequence has been modified based on the survey results. Additionally, a fitness web-based data storage system is being implemented.

Scott Nassa asked if the District had ever hosted someone to speak about how substance abuse had affected their life. Ms. Grams stated that there are likely programs at the high school level. She also outlined some of what is covered by Will Slotnick, who gives a SERF-funded presentation to eighth graders, in which he shares some of his personal experience with substance abuse.

Mr. Nassa was concerned about the survey results in regard to student mental health. He commented that the schools cannot do this alone and wondered how best to engage parents. Parent Sean Bevan, October Road, asked what adaptive techniques are utilized in the physical education curriculum. Ms. Grams stated that adaptive techniques are embedded in the general curriculum and supplemented by physical and occupational therapy if necessary.

5. Residency Policy (Second Reading)

VOTED: On a motion by Scott Nassa, seconded by Lucie St. George, to accept the Residency Policy as presented. The vote was 4–0 in favor.

6. FY14 Budget to Actual

Mary Will stated that this presentation is about 20 days earlier than usual, which means that there's less known about expenses other than salaries than is typical for this period. That said, she stated that the trend is similar to last year's. Ms. Will stated that the circuit breaker was the largest reimbursement she's seen, in part due to the restoration of 9C cuts last May. The effect is also due to changes in the number of in-district students who qualify for reimbursement. The savings through circuit breaker reimbursements must be balanced against the increases in salary associated with having the programs and staff within the district to support these and other students. Also of note are the increases over last year in maintenance and equipment, largely due to dismantling the Consumer Science rooms at Curtis.

7. 1:1 Pilot Update

Assistant Superintendent Todd Curtis reported on the preliminary success of the 1:1 Pilot, which has been typified by personalized learning, differentiated instruction, and enhanced student engagement. Other observations include enhanced access to primary source information, improved student workflow, and a decreased emphasis on technology as a discrete learning topic.

Parents report an increase in students' responsibility and sense of ownership, the individualization of learning and the ubiquitous opportunity to learn. Dr. Curtis noted that iPads, which have some complementary applications, are also in use, but that Chromebooks are growing in both capacity and cost-efficiency. Data collection is ongoing, as is assessing options for expanding the program. Possibilities range from expanding to all sixth-grade teams to all three middle school grades. Dr. Curtis believes the best balance might be to expand to sixth- and seventh-grades.

In terms of funding, some districts have reallocated their existing technology funds, implemented technology fees, utilized community donations, or some combination of such resources. Dr. Curtis emphasized that the more critical costs are those for the human resources required now and those that will be required if the program is expanded.

Dr. Curtis outlined other considerations, including insurance options for families, reallocation of existing hardware, maintenance of computer labs, the need for digital projectors, and end-of cycle disposition. The Committee agreed that some thought must be given to how an expanded program would be funded.

8. Review Resolutions for MASC Conference

The Committee agreed by consensus that it is unnecessary to take a position on any of the resolutions.

9. School Committee Report

None.

10 Open Forum

No comments.

11. Superintendent's Report

(a) Report

Superintendent Wilson reported on Monday's meeting with the FinCom, which both she and Mary Will attended along with Ellen Joachim. School Committee members Scott Nassa and Lucie St. George also attended the meeting as members of the audience. The FinCom was particularly interested in what it would look like to close or decrease the size of one of the elementary schools, given declining enrollment. Dr. Wilson invited FinCom Members to tour the schools and examine floor plans to understand how space is utilized. She also emphasized that although FDK and special education programs have increased the demand for space, both provide a benefit to the District, with the special education programs additionally saving funds in the long run. Dr. Wilson also presented the areas of focus for the coming year, including technology, maintaining and enhancing special education programs, maintaining reasonable class sizes, and enhancing instructional leadership.

On Tuesday, Superintendent Wilson, Business Director Mary Will, and Chairman Rich Robison attended a PBC meeting at which the Town Hall renovation and potential move of SPS offices was discussed. All possible options are being explored, with the goal of relocating Central Office from Fairbank.

(b) Donations

VOTED: On a motion by Ellen Joachim, seconded by Scott Nassa, to accept with thanks a donation of \$1,000 from an anonymous Nixon parent to the Literacy Center. The vote was 4-0 in favor.

(c) Bill Schedule

A Bill Schedule was presented.

(c) Personnel Actions

As outlined in the Personnel Packet.

12. Communications

Superintendent Wilson reported on the receipt of a letter from the SEA, relevant to the Executive Session topic.

13. Minutes

Tabled.

14. Members' Forum

No comments.

12. Executive Session

VOTED: On a motion by Scott Nassa, seconded by Lucie St. George, to adjourn to Executive Session for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to negotiations with union and non-union employees, as discussion in Open Meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the School Committee, not to return to Open Session. The vote was 4–0 in favor. The time was 11:23 p.m.

Yes	Rich Robison
Yes	Ellen Winer Joachim
Yes	Lucie St. George
Yes	Scott Nassa

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito