

**Sudbury Public Schools
Sudbury, Massachusetts
School Committee Regular Meeting
Wednesday, December 4, 2013
Fairbank Senior Center**

Present: Dr. Richard 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 & Finance; Angela Spirito, SEA

Open Session

Rich Robison called the Open Session to order at 7:05 p.m. He welcomed the public and explained the procedure for the Public Hearing on the budget. The meeting was taped for public access broadcast.

1. Public Hearing on FY15 Budget

Superintendent Wilson introduced the budget process and the current status of the preliminary roll-up budget. The roll-up budget keeps current staffing and programs in place. She reviewed the District's Theory of Action, which informs decisions and proposed programmatic enhancements, as well as the Strategic Objectives that reflect the Theory of Action. Dr. Wilson explained the three major budget drivers: enrollment; special education; and innovation and enhancements.

With respect to enrollment, Dr. Wilson stated that 87% of the budget goes to salaries and benefits. A commissioned enrollment and demographic study published last December has been updated two times, with projections consistently indicating that enrollment will continue to decline over the next few years. Superintendent Wilson shared information on the numbers of sections planned for each school and grade level, as well as comparative information if the number of sections was decreased by one in each case.

Sudbury Public Schools has made significant progress in building special education programs within the District. Although there are cost increases attributed to the increase in FTE's, the net effect is a cost-savings from a reduction in out-of-district tuitions and transportation. Moreover, there is a benefit to all students to educate students with special education needs within their home district.

Based on the numbers to date, the FY15 roll-up budget, which includes the FinCom-specified 2.5% increase, results in a deficit of \$544,838.

This budget does not incorporate factors from the third budget driver, innovation and enhancements. Dr. Wilson outlined the current areas of focus and desired areas of program expansion. These include the Curtis 1:1 technology, co-teaching, and problem-based learning programs, which are currently limited to only a portion of the school or grade level. Also included is the need for increases in FTE's for administrative support at Nixon and Haynes, math coaches, and lunchroom monitors.

Public Comments

Mark Minassian, Hadley Road, asked what factor NESDEC used to account for new students from proposed 40B developments, as well as which developments were included in the study. Dr. Wilson responded that the factor was greater than typical to account for the generally higher number of students per household in Sudbury. She referred Mr. Minassian to the NESDEC report, posted on the SPS website, for more specific information.

Dr. Wilson noted that throughout the District, moves in or out have been fluid among all of the schools and that no specific trends have been identified to which the District can respond in advance. Area realtors report that there are homes available in all neighborhoods and that the homes sold are very likely to house families with school-aged children.

Melinda Johnson, Village Road, stated her desire for a reduction in class size, particularly for the current Haynes fourth grade, which has classes as large as 26 students. Dr. Wilson responded that current enrollment data is incorporated in the projections for FY15; however, events between the end of June through the September start cannot be anticipated.

Scott Nassa asked when the class size guidelines were developed. Dr. Robison responded that they have been in place as long as he has been involved with the School Committee. He provided a brief explanation of the metric and how it has successfully served the District. Dr. Wilson added that Mary Will completed an assessment last year that compared class size scenarios with impacts on numbers of classrooms, teachers, and the resources that would be required under each scenario.

Mr. Minassian asked about the salary of the math coaches. Superintendent Wilson stated that they are paid according to the teacher's salary schedule and that the salary is a function of both experience and degree level. She specified that each coach must be licensed in math for Grades 1–6. Although the coaches are not responsible for day-to-day classroom activities or for providing individual instruction, they work with both teachers and students to enhance learning opportunities.

VOTED: On a motion by Scott Nassa, seconded by Lucie St. George, to close the Public Hearing on the FY15 budget. The vote was 4–0 in favor. The time was 7:26 p.m.

Rich Robison reconvened the Open Session at 7:34 p.m.

2. **Recognitions**

Superintendent Wilson praised the Curtis Math Team, which competed in the Intermediate Mathematics League of Eastern Massachusetts at the end of November and took first place. As an attendee, Dr. Wilson was impressed by the motivation and excitement of the students involved as they took risks to work through both individual and team-based problems. She acknowledged teachers Mike Del Greco (Grade 7), Elise Durgarian (Grade 7), and Andrea Hofius (Grade 8), who advise the Team. The students who participated are Jacob Donowitz, Caitlynn Feng, Luke Geel, Andrew George, Reshawn George, Noah Green, TJ Hall, Kenneth Ho, Jason Huang, Lucy Huo, Kevin Ji, Michael Kossuth, Piyusha Kundu, Avi Lepsky, Justin Lewitus, Chris Manente, Ben Morris, Derek Nielsen, Ari Roth, Sandeep Shankar, Edward Shi, Andrew Sledeski, Archie Stewart, Jesse Sun, Anthony Vuolo, Jackson Wallace, Steven Wang, Jessica Ye, and Max Zuo.

Superintendent Wilson also announced the grade-level winners of the Curtis Geography Bee: Justin Lewitus (Grade 6, Krypton), Connor Orr (Grade 7, Willow), and Connor Simmons (Grade 8, Cilantro). Grade 8 House Administrator Angela Menke oversees this event. Assistant Superintendent Todd Curtis moderated this round and Dr. Wilson will moderate the finals on Friday. Friday's winner will take a test to qualify for the State competition.

3. **English Language Arts (ELA) Common Core Update**

Curriculum Coordinator Jennifer Soalt and Loring Literacy Specialist Melissa Sarno-Dodge presented on the status of the ELA Common Core implementation. Dr. Soalt reviewed the specific areas of focus in FY13. Of note, genre maps created in FY13 were developed into genre units with common assessments for this year.

Melissa Sarno-Dodge spoke about the research-based classroom practice known as the Daily Five, a structure for organizing the literacy block that involves the following: read to self, work on writing, read to someone, word work, and listening to reading. She emphasized that the Daily Five is not a program or curriculum, but a structure. More specifically, it is a workshop model with several cycles. Ms. Sarno-Dodge shared photographs illustrating some of the Daily Five activities. She also outlined the students' and teachers' responsibilities for the Daily Five:

Students:

Read and Write for Extended Periods

Teachers:

Deliver Whole-Group Lessons

Build Stamina and Independence
Receive Differentiated Instruction

Teach Small Groups
Confer with Individual Students

Dr. Soalt highlighted the interface with professional development activities focused on facilitating the implementation of such supports as the Daily Five. She also elaborated on the continued focus on differentiated instruction, by example, outlining the use of several levels of text within the same classroom for the same assignment. Students choose the reading material they'll use to complete the assignments and the common assessment. Assignments require them to both draw evidence from the text and to form an opinion.

Scott Nassa commented that his daughter is a product of the Daily Five and that her development this fall has been impressive.

Rich Robison asked how current practices differ from the previously used curriculum frameworks. Dr. Soalt provided examples, including evidence-based arguments, opportunities to read narrative non-fiction, and the integration of topics across subject areas. More generally, Dr. Soalt characterized the genre units as a mechanism to ensure exposure to the appropriate range of texts. Todd Curtis added that considerable intentional effort resulted in identifying the specific elements of the Common Core that would be the focus of the particular genre units. Dr. Soalt also stressed the benefit of covering the listening and speaking standards of the Common Core, which will benefit the writing component.

Mr. Nassa asked how many of the classics continue to be taught relative to contemporary works. Dr. Soalt noted that the District already owned many of the classics and that she has supplemented with additional purchases to create a good balance. She added that the Common Core calls for providing access to the classics, but to create relevance. One way to create that relevance is to cross the classics with contemporary works.

Ellen Joachim commented that she is impressed with the ability of second-graders to express their opinions and use evidence from the texts. She also favors students having a choice of text, but asked how much choice is involved. Dr. Soalt responded that choice is controlled. In the lower grades, choice takes the form of text variety; whereas, in the upper grades, students have more flexibility in the level of text they choose. She applauded the District also for invoking a balance between choice and required reading.

4. 1:1 Technology Update

Assistant Superintendent Curtis reviewed the nine criteria established to gauge effectiveness of the technology, noting the areas that have been assessed by the staff. The parent survey was designed to expand on the evidence gathered by staff. Four questions were posed to evaluate the effectiveness of the technology in the enhancing the following areas: engagement and motivation, collaboration and communication with both teachers and peers, organization and material management, and involvement in innovative learning experiences. The results, based on a response rate of approximately 35%, have been posted at learninginsudbury.com. By and large, parents responded that the technology is an important part of enhancing their child's experience in the four areas.

Dr. Curtis also illustrated device flow—both Chromebooks and existing technology—and the timing of acquisitions as these relate to expanding the 1:1 program to all middle school grades. He also touched on the need for increased human resources to appropriately implement and maintain the program, as well as funding options for expanding the program.

Rich Robison asked about device durability, as well as insurance and replacement cost responsibility. Todd Curtis reported some problems with the hinge mechanism on the current devices. He also stated that viable insurance options exist that do not place an undue burden on families.

Scott Nassa asked who would oversee the expanded program. Dr. Curtis replied that for the short term, he would assume responsibility. The addition of the two technology FTE's to the Curtis staff will alleviate some of the burden on technology director Michael O'Brien. Mr. Nassa also

commented on the roll-up budget shortfall, suggesting that the investment in technology might be viewed as secondary to funding existing operational expenses. He recommended funding the rest of the sixth grade or only one of the two additional grade levels. Finally, Mr. Nassa asked about resources for families that cannot afford the fees, as well as who would own the device at the end of the middle school experience. Dr. Curtis noted that costs for families in need will be covered and that end-of-cycle disposition is an open question. He also noted that general school supply costs are anticipated to decrease by the use of the devices.

Mary Will stated that a technology fee could be handled through the already established student activity fee mechanism. Ellen Joachim expressed concern about push-back from asking parents to purchase the device for their children instead of allowing children to use previously purchased personal devices. She understands the need for the District to have all students using the same technology.

5. Preliminary Budget Projections FY15

Dr. Wilson presented the costs for anticipated needs/enhancements and their associated FTE's. The total for these needs is \$406,955. This total is in addition to the overage of \$544,838 in the roll-up budget discussed earlier in the evening.

The projected cost of 1:1 technology implementation in Grades 6 and 7 includes salaries for the professional staff, as well as with the hardware and management costs.

Additional needs include FTE's for Curtis co-teaching to allow for planning time and Curtis problem-based learning to allow for professional development. The requirements of the new teacher evaluation process drive the need for an increase in the FTE for assistant principals at Haynes and Nixon. Increasing the mathematics coach FTE by 1.0 will allow for each school to have its own coach. Increasing lunchroom assistants by 3.34 FTE's will allow teachers greater planning and professional development time.

Dr. Robison asked if an increase to 0.75 FTE for assistant principals at each of the two schools is feasible. Superintendent Wilson acknowledged that it will be a challenge to hire at this level, but that increasing to 1.0 FTE at each school is a larger expense.

Superintendent Wilson encouraged the Committee to recommend its priorities and to consider scenarios for reallocating resources as a function of enrollment. Scott Nassa opined that cutting classroom teachers should be the last option and he would be opposed to reducing the teacher count to fund other enhancements.

Ellen Joachim stated her desire to examine enrollment and base staffing needs on those numbers in order to maintain class size. Dr. Wilson emphasized that the recommendation is *not* to decrease the numbers of teachers or otherwise jeopardize what is already in place.

Mr. Nassa made some suggestions for decreasing the \$406,955 request by restructuring the 1:1 implementation and/or phasing the other enhancements in over two years. Director of Business and Finance Mary Will explained that the budget is still very fluid, with unknowns in expenses such as utilities, SPED, and insurance, as well as unknowns in projected revenue.

6. School Committee Report

SEPAC Liaison Report: Scott Nassa reported that he and Lucie St. George attended the SEPAC Board Meeting on December 2. The response rate to the parent survey was close to 40%. Responses included much positive feedback, as well as constructive criticism.

Policy Sub-Committee Report: Ellen Joachim reported that she, Lucie St. George, and Superintendent Wilson met to discuss a portion of the Policy Manual to identify items requiring revision. The sub-committee plans to present to the Committee at an upcoming meeting.

Finance and Budget Committee Liaison Report: Ms. Joachim also reported meeting with the FinCom liaisons to the School Committee on November 25 in order to provide responses to the FinCom's pre-circulated questions. The liaisons will present the responses to the FinCom on

December 16 at 7:30 p.m. at the Goodnow Library. Representatives from SPS will be present to provide additional information if necessary.

SEPAC Liaison Report: Lucie St. George reported attending a SEPAC workshop on December 3 entitled, *Social Thinking – What's It All About?* presented by Nancy Clements, the Executive Director of Social Thinking Boston. The workshop generated considerable excitement and interest, including some understanding of its implementation in our District.

7. Open Forum

Mark Minassian, Hadley Road (Haynes District), had two concerns:

Enrollment and Budget in Relation to Special Education Costs: Mr. Minassian asked for clarification in regard to the number of out-of-district students relative to the costs presented. Superintendent Wilson replied that the level and therefore cost of services per student varies depending on need and placement. Mary Will noted that at times the District can account for student movement, such as when a student advances to LS, but that there are other times when movement in or out of the District cannot be anticipated. The costs presented are based on current obligation.

Budget Question: Mr. Minassian suggested breaking out the costs for the 1:1 technology to attribute half to operating expenses and half to capital expenses. He expressed concern about hidden costs, the need for reserve devices, and improvements to infrastructure, and also suggested exploring leasing options. Assistant Superintendent Todd Curtis provided feedback on each of these points, noting that the Curtis infrastructure was previously upgraded, that the numbers include 25 reserve devices, and that there are no options to lease Chromebooks at this time.

Mr. Minassian additionally asked about costs associated with FCC compliance laws, including the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), and the Child On-Line Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). Dr. Curtis responded that we already work to be in compliance with these laws. He added that efforts are underway to update the parent handbook to provide clarity on compliance matters.

8. Superintendent Report

(a) Report:

FY 15 Calendar: Superintendent Wilson reported on the status of the FY15 calendar discussions at LS and in Lincoln. There is a desire for all three districts to coordinate; however, it likely requires postponing the SPS discussion. The Committee agreed by consensus to postpone the discussion until late January.

PARCC Testing: Dr. Wilson stated that the District was selected to participate in the field testing for the PARCC assessment and that each school is involved in some portion of the field test. No test results will be provided. For two Grade 4 sections at Loring and two Grade 7 sections, the field test includes a Performance Based Assessment (PBA) as well as an End of Year (EOY) Assessment and will be administered during the same window as MCAS testing. Dr. Wilson reported that the Administration has decided to have those students take both tests so that MCAS results will be available for all students. The MCAS testing will occur prior to the PARCC field testing in all cases.

Superintendent Chats: Dr. Wilson announced that she will hold the next Chat on December 12, from 6:30–8:00 p.m. After the New Year, she will solicit topics of interest in order to encourage participation; she has had no attendees to date.

(b) Bill Schedule

A Bill Schedule was presented.

(c) Personnel Actions

As outlined in the Personnel Packet.

9. Communications

As outlined in the Communications Packet. Additionally, Dr. Wilson reported receiving a letter from a parent regarding class size and the desire to keep the numbers as low as possible.

10. Minutes

Tabled.

11. Members Forum

Angela Spirito reported that the annual SEA Holiday Party will be held on December 12 at Lavender, from 3:30–5:30 p.m. Two Loring teachers will be recognized for 25 years of service: Diane Irvine and Celeste Morin.

Dr. Curtis acknowledged the work of Curtis House Administrator Angela Menke in organizing the Geography Bee. He also noted the participation of all students, as well as their support and respect for their semi-finalist classmates.

12. Executive Session

None.

13. Adjourn

VOTED: On a motion by Scott Nassa, seconded by Lucie St. George, to adjourn the December 4, 2013 Regular Session. The vote was 4–0 in favor. The time was 10:01 p.m.

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

Recorded by Karen Walsh
Submitted by Sheila Cusolito