

**Sudbury Public Schools
Sudbury, Massachusetts
School Committee Regular Meeting
Wednesday March 12, 2014
Curtis Middle School**

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

Also Present: Dr. Anne Wilson, Superintendent; Kim Swain, Haynes Principal; Mary Will, Director of Business and Finance; Angela Spirito, SEA

Open Session

Rich Robison called the Open Session to order at 7:35 p.m. The meeting was taped for public access broadcast.

1. Recognitions

Superintendent Wilson thanked Grade 6–8 art students and teachers Scott Greenaway and Yael Kupiec-Dar for donations of student artwork to the Central Office. She also thanked Haynes teachers and parents for their part in today's successful Colonial Festival.

2. Open Forum

No comments.

3. Early Childhood Education Update (Linda Karpeichik, Director of Early Childhood Education; Donna Criswell, District Instructional Technology Specialist; Megan Bowhers, Early Childhood Technology Specialist)

Linda Karpeichik reported on the introduction of technology in the early childhood classroom, which began about six months ago. She thanked the students for their infectious enthusiasm and curiosity, families for allowing the children to participate in the presentation, and teachers for embracing the technology with enthusiasm. Ms. Karpeichik also introduced teachers Rebecca Goldthwaite, Jen Gionfriddo, Janet Hammonds, Laurie Triba, and Angela Spirito. Also introduced were Instructional Technology Specialist Donna Criswell and Early Childhood Technology Specialist Megan Bowhers, both of whom facilitated training and coaching. The presentation, utilizing ActivInspire, was a collaborative effort.

ActiVotes were distributed to those in attendance to illustrate graphical data representation. Ms. Karpeichik explained that the initial vision to supply one iPad and one ActivBoard per classroom included four criteria: professional development, both before and during equipment installation and use; instructional value; home-school connection; and teacher collaboration. She noted that Technology Specialist Megan Bowhers has been a critical presence in each classroom for PD. Ms. Karpeichik indicated that the home-school connection is in its very early phase and that collaboration has been fostered by the development of a cross-district website.

The interactive touch boards provide for multisensory lessons, differentiated learning, increased student focus and engagement, active learning, and real-time data collection via the ActiVotes. The iPads allow for digital storytelling, reading, writing and math workshops, and peer reflection and review. The presentation included clips of students involved with activities in reading, writing, and math.

Rebecca Goldthwaite highlighted some of the features of her classroom-based website that serves as a resource for parents. Ms Goldthwaite also promoted the teacher resources made available by Donna Criswell and Megan Bowhers via Wiki. These facilitate District-level collaboration. Janet Hammonds discussed grade-level collaboration at Loring. She stated that the kindergarten team

committed to reviewing existing District shared files, working with the District technology instructional specialist, and organizing the resources into four content areas. The team, which worked on its own time during a lunch period, then identified deficits to allow for the creation of additional resources and reviewed the SMART goals in both math and technology.

Jen Gionfriddo highlighted an iPad digital storytelling example from her classroom that involved collaboration with both Megan Bowhers and Math Coach Christine Grigsby. The Committee also saw examples of the use of ActiVotes in the classroom.

Linda Karpeichik discussed next steps, including a continued commitment to the coaching model. Additionally, there's an interest in expanding the number of iPads in each classroom, broadening curriculum resources, enhancing collaborations, and strengthening the home-school connection.

Bob Armour praised the use of specific examples to highlight the classroom technology experience, as well as the emphasis on strengthening connections utilizing technology. He asked if more than one student can utilize the Board simultaneously, which is possible. Mr. Armour also appreciates the positive aspect of collaboration and sharing between the students that is made possible in the absence of a 1:1 model. To his query about secure website access, teachers responded that access is controlled by invitation.

Lucie St. George expressed excitement about the home-school connection and the potential for enhancing collaborative efforts.

Scott Nassa commended the teachers for embracing new technology and also praised Donna Criswell and Megan Bowhers for supporting implementation across the four elementary schools. Mr. Nassa considers the iPads a good investment and recommended more broadly publicizing this initiative to the community. He also requested data on the costs associated with program expansion.

Ellen Joachim was impressed with student engagement and the possibilities for enrichment. She also noted the power of collaboration among teachers and the home-school communication.

Janet Hammonds commented that this vision to bring technology to the kindergarten classroom began six years ago with a visit to the Wellesley Public Schools. Ms. Karpeichik noted that Sudbury is now ahead of other districts in modeling the use of technology in kindergarten classrooms.

Rich Robison asked about possible down sides. Ms. Karpeichik stated that each ActiVote takes three AA batteries, representing a high demand. Donna Criswell mentioned the intensive classroom support and coaching this initiative has allowed teachers. She stated that this level of support is not currently available to other grades. Lucie St. George mentioned that the proposed return of lunch monitors might create additional opportunities for support and collaboration.

Superintendent Wilson praised the demonstration of collaboration, coaching, and the use of technology to enhance instruction.

4. MCAS Update

Haynes Principal Kim Swain spoke on behalf of Assistant Superintendent Todd Curtis to present an overview of MCAS and the changes in reporting accompanying the 2012 move away from the No Child Left Behind model of accountability. The current focus is on closing proficiency gaps. She explained that accountability levels are assigned to each school, with the district's accountability level determined by that of its lowest performing school. Ms. Swain stated that the High Needs category was created in part because the student population in any of its three subgroups (students receiving special education or ELL services, or those from low-income homes) might be too small for accountability data to be captured appropriately. Under the current model, Haynes still does not reach the 30-student threshold population, but Ms. Swain stated that the school still examines the individual performance data of students in the High Needs cohort.

Principal Swain outlined MCAS scoring, including accountability measures CPI, SGP, and PPI. She noted that the CPI is useful for large-body data analysis, but that it is challenging to demonstrate advancement if the CPI starts high. She outlined the SGP and its focus on comparison to statewide academic peers with a similar test score history. She emphasized the focus on change in growth over time and that higher achieving districts might be challenged to demonstrate a change in growth over time by this measure as well.

The PPI composite combines the 'apples and oranges' of achievement and growth in the CPI and SGP, with significant variability embedded in the result as a function of standard indicators and other factors, such as success in closing the achievement gap. Ms. Swain stated that the percentage and composite scores must be examined both individually and collectively to provide the most useful information about where supports are needed.

Principal Swain noted that of 237 districts, there are five multi-school districts with a Level 1 designation. She went through the SPS results for the High Needs subgroups, and described the subgroups as federally determined and applicable to all districts. She reiterated the need to examine the data both individually and collectively to identify the specific needs of individual students. The specific identified challenges are in closing the proficiency gap for students from low-income families and closing the proficiency gaps in math and science for students with disabilities.

The District strategy includes maintaining the belief that all students are capable of high achievement if provided appropriate supports, invoking early interventions, providing outreach to families with low income, enhancing at-home literacy support, incorporating regular data discussions, reallocating social work resources, providing summer and Curtis after-school supports, and using diagnostic assessments that are tied to the standards to generate specific interventions.

Superintendent Wilson distributed a list of the Level designations for all schools in Massachusetts. She stated that this and all other information presented is on the DESE website. She reviewed the CPI, SGP, and PPI and how each district's path is unique and connected to its original starting point.

Dr. Wilson stated that percentiles reflect how we do in comparison to other, similar schools. She noted that 80% of schools in the state are Level 1 or 2; the 20% designated as Level 3 are the focus of the DESE. She described the performances of each school within SPS.

Dr. Wilson provided an example of Grade 3 student performance over time since 2006 to illustrate the value-added progression. The trend in ELA demonstrated a net increase in students in the Advanced and Proficient categories and consistently higher performance relative to the state. The trend is less consistent for math performance, but does demonstrate higher performance relative to the state.

Superintendent Wilson also presented some examples of district comparisons of CPI for Level 1 and Level 2 districts. The data show that the Level designation does not necessarily follow directly from the CPI. The data show the same variability in some cases between the CPI and the performance percentile relative to the state. Dr. Wilson noted that comparable school districts are those with similar grade spans, student populations, or total enrollment. On average, Sudbury performed in the mid-90th percentile overall, but with lower CPI in the High Needs subgroups, particularly the cohort of students from low-income households. The lower percentile ranking for this cohort is a primary focus within the District.

The gap in performance of the High Needs cohort in math is significantly greater than that in ELA, particularly for students from low-income households. Dr. Wilson commented on this year's expanded use of math coaches and the desire to increase the FTE next year. She also noted that this is the second year of Common Core. This has resulted in a compacted curriculum in the

middle school and enhanced rigor at the elementary level. She stated that it will take some time for student performance to adjust as a function of these changes.

Dr. Wilson presented an overview of middle school performance relative to comparable middle schools. The CPI for all Curtis students in ELA, math, and science corresponds to performance ranging from 94–97%; however, the data show room for growth in the CPI's and/or percentages for the High Needs cohort.

Superintendent Wilson tied the data overview to the District objective of meeting the needs of all students. She noted that District strategies are being implemented concurrently with the changes to the curriculum. Dr. Wilson enumerated some of the strategies particularly focused on special education, including co-teaching pilots, enhancing inclusion, development of in-District programs, and purposeful PD. Utilizing curriculum coordinators, math coaches, and the PD council is designed to enhance instructional leadership within the District.

Dr. Wilson closed with a summary of the specific efforts to analyze the data in mathematics. She shared details of the plan of action at both the middle school and elementary levels.

Scott Nassa highlighted some of the CPI rank changes over time and asked about opportunities for the schools to learn from each other. Dr. Wilson replied that sharing practices across the District is ongoing. She also noted that the year-to-year comparisons involve different groups of students; whereas, the District focus is on individual student performance. She referenced a longitudinal study undertaken by Debbie Dixson and Linda Karpeichik to track individual students over time.

Mr. Nassa asked if there are opportunities to confer with other districts that have a higher performing subgroup of students from low-income homes, given that the SPS cohort is relatively small. Dr. Wilson responded that such opportunities exist, but that enhanced performance requires focused strategies and resources to address the unique challenges of these students.

Ellen Joachim remarked on a graphic that illustrated the shortcomings in the NCLB model: it showed how, over time, high-performing districts would face increasing accountability challenges on the path to reaching their performance targets. Dr. Wilson added that similar concerns surround the current model, given the steepness of the trajectory to close performance gaps.

Bob Armour expressed support for the focus on MCAS, but reiterated his interest in the balanced score card approach to defining success within the District. He commented on the overall high performance of the District that follows students beyond SPS and added that efforts focused on the High Needs cohort necessarily involve the broader community.

Scott Nassa asked for data on the number of kids who are supported with outside help. Dr. Wilson replied that this information will be gathered as part of an upcoming broader survey.

Lucie St. George suggested the information be posted on the District website. She commented that MCAS is only one measure and that teaching should be to the Common Core standards, rather than the test. She noted that the transition to PARCC is upcoming. Dr. Wilson added that she is concerned about minimizing anxiety for both teachers and students.

Scott Nassa proposed a forum be held next year after MCAS results become available.

5. FY15 Budget Update

Mary Will presented updates to the budget. She highlighted a reduction of nearly \$129K in benefits costs, attributable to fewer new-hire participants and prior-year opt-outs that are expected to remain unchanged. Ms. Will noted that this will be the first year that the kindergarten revolving fund will include a defined funding level (\$60K) for health insurance benefits for FDK staff.

Dr. Wilson illustrated how the cost-savings could be applied to identified needs such as an additional math coach, an assistant principal, and 1:1 technology expansion.

Rich Robison commented that the state budget is still emerging. He asked if it would be helpful for the Committee to provide general guidance in the absence of specific dollar figures.

Dr. Wilson outlined enrollment trends and recommended some flexibility in the personnel line. After some discussion of priorities, Bob Armour asked about the longer range implications of committing to the additional headcount.

Scott Nassa suggested the option of pre-paying special education costs as has been done in the past. He specified that he is in favor of moving the benefits savings to personnel, but is not changing his position and vote on the budget itself.

VOTED: On a motion by Lucie St. George, seconded by Bob Armour, to move \$128,711 from the benefits line to the personnel line. The vote was 5-0 in favor.

Dr. Wilson announced that the FinCom meeting on March 17 will be at 7:30 p.m. at Town Hall.

6. Anti-Bullying Policy Update (First Reading)

Ellen Joachim presented the first reading, including changes that reflect changes to the law. She noted that Assistant Superintendent Todd Curtis updated the Anti-Bullying Plan, available on the District website.

7. School Committee Meeting Schedule

Tabled.

8. School Committee Report

Lucie St. George reported a scheduling conflict between the pre-school coffee at the Grange and the Noyes DARE graduation on April 3. She and Ellen Joachim plan to reschedule the coffee for 10:30 a.m.

Bob Armour reported on the well attended forum on the Fairbank Community Center. He commented on the enthusiasm for a community center, but also the concern with the scope of the project. He expects a report to be ready in April that will define realistic options. He stated that he is not aware of any specific changes in the approach regarding the Fairbank roof that relate to the Town Meeting warrant article.

9. Open Forum

No comments.

10. Superintendent's Report

(a) Report

Superintendent Wilson outlined the schedule of interviews and efforts geared toward collecting input for filling the Nixon Principal and District Assistant Superintendent positions. She stated that specific information will be confidential until the finalist stage is reached.

(b) Bill schedule

A Bill Schedule was presented.

(c) Personnel Actions

As outlined in the Personnel Packet.

11. Communications

As outlined in the Communications Packet.

12. Minutes

Tabled.

13. Members' Forum

Rich Robison reported on this weekend's Federation for Children with Special Needs conference that attracted approximately 1,000 participants.

Lucie St. George participated at the conference as part of a four-person panel discussing supporting special needs students.

Bob Armour attended his first EDCO roundtable. He noted that several districts are experiencing growth in enrollments. Related to technology, he recommends the Committee be better informed of security protocols where computer use is concerned. Dr. Wilson remarked that Michael O'Brien and Todd Curtis have updated the handbook and protocols to reflect changes in technology use.

Scott Nassa asked if there's any District liability with posting student photos online. Dr. Wilson noted that parents are asked each year for permission to use such images.

Mr. Armour continues to be interested in discussing the agenda and meeting schedule, particularly in terms of communications with families around certain topics. He also would like to have the Committee define its path for addressing its strategic long-term objectives and engaging legal counsel.

Scott Nassa stated an interest in discussing when and how individual Members communicate, either on the Committee's or the individual's behalf. Rich Robison noted that an upcoming workshop is being scheduled.

14. Adjourn

VO TED: On a motion by Scott Nassa, seconded by Ellen Joachim, to adjourn the March 12, 2013 Regular Session. The vote was 5-0 in favor. The time was 11:36 p.m.

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

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito