

**Sudbury Public Schools
Sudbury, Massachusetts
School Committee Regular Meeting
Wednesday, May 9, 2007**

Present: Susan Iuliano, Chairperson, Jane Santinelli, Vice Chairperson
Members: Rich Robison, Bill Braun, Jeff Beeler
Also Present: Dr. John Brackett, Superintendent, Robert Milley, Assistant Superintendent, Dixon, SPED Administrator, Mary Mahoney, SEA

Susan Iuliano called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m.

Open Forum I

No comments.

II. Superintendent's Report

A. Curriculum Updates

3. Field Trips - Odyssey

Dr. Brackett explained the process for looking at the 4th grade Odyssey trip. A decision will be made before the end of this school year regarding the future of the Odyssey. Bob Milley reported on the history of the trip. Bob explained that several factors have caused us to look at the trip. One is No Child Left Behind and the increased accountability on the part of schools. Our curriculum has become very standards-based, instructional time is precious. There have been on-going parental concerns regarding the age-appropriateness of the overnight component of the trip. Ever increasing medical and developmental issues challenge the staff to include all students. Teachers are not able to make the personal time commitment.

The amount of time to plan, prepare and implement Odyssey has encroached on instructional time.

Expanded responsibilities and liabilities are an issue. Anxiety among parents and children all year long is an issue. The overall objective of the trip, as stated by teachers, is to create a bonding experience, build self-confidence and get hands-on experiences in a natural environment.

4th grade teachers believe in the purpose of the trip but feel it can be done with another model. Teachers feel the experiential learning is important and should be maintained in any re-design of the trip. Grade level teachers report spending over 60 hours during the school day and 40-50 hours outside of the school day beyond the actual week of the trip.

School Nurses are very concerned about health, safety and medication issues. Nurses spend about 10 hours in preparation, many of them actually attend the trip.

School Administrators are concerned about the disruption to the entire school community. The conflict with MCAS testing is problematic. Administrators spend a tremendous amount of hours on Odyssey activities. The coverage at the school is compromised when administrators attend the trip.

Preliminary recommendations include a re-design of the trip to include having it remain at grade 4, conduct the trip in the month of June to avoid MCAS testing and preparation, and make it be experiential in nature to include a study of the environment, but be closer to Sudbury. The program should be reviewed to align with the curriculum and the district's overall goals. Overnights may be reduced or eliminated.

Next steps will be to have a parent questionnaire on-line to get input from the parents. Input will be collected from the students after this year's trip. A parent forum will be held Thursday, June 14 at 7:00 p.m. to discuss the values and goals of the program, preliminary recommendations and get additional suggestions for a re-designed program.

A planning team will work this summer to work on a re-designed program.

Ed Shashoua, Goodman's Hill Road, heard a lot of negatives, not a lot of positives. Teachers do a lot in preparation but when on Odyssey, the students are supervised by the parents. Why does it need to change?

Susan explained that the decision will be an administrative decision and will not require a vote of the School Committee. At least four school Committee members have gone and had children attend the trip.

Abby Ward, Old Lancaster Road, asked if Odyssey is self-supporting. Parents cover all expenses with some PTO assistance.

Bob Rice, felt the presentation was extremely negative. Asked if there were any positive comments from the teachers.

Allie Domar, Brewster Way, was a chaperone, and had a great time last year. SERF had given schools money to develop an alternative curriculum for students who don't want to attend the trip.

Beth Farrell, Rambling Road, doesn't know much about Odyssey but hears how wonderful it is. Her kids are missing out on traditions. She feels very disenfranchised about the process.

Diane Metzger, Spring Pine Road, has older kids who went on the Odyssey and believes it's a fabulous program. Day trips don't allow for bonding time.

Ellen Gitelman, Raynor Road, has missed all the traditions at her school. What do you plan to tell the upcoming third graders? What is the rush to make a decision before the end of school? Bob Milley stated that the summer would be used to plan a re-designed program.

Bob Milley reported that the data gathered will be looked at, an on-line questionnaire will be developed for parents and get suggestions for a re-designed program, a parent forum will be held in June, a planning team will meet over the summer based on the input that is gathered.

Dr. Brackett clarified that a decision will be made regarding what the overall parameters of the program will be. Within that, the planning team will translate that into a detailed program.

Jim Logan, Robert Best Road, feels the decision has already been made. MCAS has homogenized our schools. Bill Braun responded that this is the first School Committee discussion about Odyssey this year. Staffing the trip is an issue.

Sarah Ostrow, Brewster Road, wants her little sister to go. Everyone she knows loves the trip. She feels very few people want to stop Odyssey.

Pooja Desai, Old Lancaster Road, felt it was a great opportunity to learn another side of her friends. She felt the trip was a nice way to end the school year.

Elaine Kleifges, Spruce Lane, feels that the report was negative because the intent is to change the trip.

Mary Mahoney spoke about teacher concern about pressure on the part of teachers to cover the curriculum. Family obligations are an issue.

Martha Reid, Forest Street, asked if meeting notes would be available. Notes will be available on the District website. School Psychologists should be involved in the process. She is very happy with MCAS scores and would like to see it de-emphasized and feels we should pay more attention to the emotional well being of our students. She feels students are not as anxious as portrayed. Many 8th graders report that the Odyssey trip was their most memorable experience.

Karen Baker, Moore Road, understands the staffing issue. Noyes hires 4th grade teachers who are excited

about the trip. Do the other schools hire staff that don't want to go? Susan reported that the staffing issues are much broader than just new teachers not wanting to go. Staffing issues include other staff that attend the trip including other classroom teachers, administrators, school nurses, etc.

JoEllen Samojla, Atkinson Lane, stated it's a program that makes Sudbury different from other communities, without the perks, we're just like Framingham or Marlboro. If there are staffing issues, they can be worked out. She feels it is fine to have subs for four days for the other teachers who go. A parent forum will just be a "free for all." The survey is a good idea. An anonymous survey should be taken from the teachers. Bob reported that the data collected is from all 4th grade teachers independently.

Abby Ward, Old Lancaster, said Loring has teachers from every grade level who attend Odyssey. She wants to be sensitive to teachers needs when it comes to time. Parent volunteers could handle the hours the teachers need to spend on the trip. There are ways to simplify the process for the teachers.

MaryJo Samojla, Atkinson Lane, during Odyssey she learned a lot and made friends. Everyone had a great time. She reported that during Odyssey she learned a lot of what was on MCAS.

Katie Casey, Woodberry Road, said MCAS was very stressful and the Odyssey was a way to relax. It was a way to get to know people and have fun.

Pooja Desai, said some kids dislike school because sitting in a classroom is boring. Going on the Odyssey, kids love to learn and love going to camp. It's a more fun and interesting way to learn. The Odyssey is an educational sleepover and brings kids a lot of enjoyment.

Bob Milley explained that MCAS has expanded to grades 3-8 and testing time is expanded.

Jim Logan, Robert Best Road, asked why is it so urgent to make a big change by the end of the year. Dr. Brackett explained that the Odyssey has been a conversation every year. Changes have been made to the program in the past. It is a significant time and resource factor and learning experience for students. A lot of work and conversation has already been had. The staffing issue is a significant one. Staffing must be adequate and provide safety for students. A very thoughtful and informed process will be followed and a decision will be made regarding the parameters of the trip. The summer will be used for planning.

Ed Shashoua is still unclear what the problems are. Parents are owed a list of all the problems. The decision should not be made without input from all parents.

Ellen Gitelman, said the same thing happened two years ago at Noyes with Japan Day. It was stopped for a year then started again. Five weeks is too short of a time to get parent input.

Ali Domar asked Dr. Brackett for his word that a decision has not been made that we are converting to day trips. Dr. Brackett explained that the current position is to have a significant reduction in or elimination of overnights. He is significantly concerned about providing adequate staffing for the trip.

Jeff Beeler clarified that school committee members are always accessible to the community.

Jane Santinelli explained that the School Committee has to approve overnight trips. The Superintendent and the administrative staff are responsible for making curriculum decisions.

Katie Casey, said that when Japan day was cancelled, her sister was upset. That will happen again if the Odyssey was cancelled.

MaryJo Samojla reported that while on the trip the teachers and students bonded and got to know one another better. She wants her sister to have the same experience. Third graders would not want the trip cancelled.

Laura Casey, Woodberry Road, said her third grader spent more time on the bus than at the site of a recent

day trip.

Beth Farrell wants to be part of the problem solving process.

JoEllen Samojla asked if the conversation was prompted by the incident at the high school. No, the two are not related. This issue has been discussed for years.

Sarah Ostrow, feels it is unfair, and in learning about the Bill of Rights, she learned not to give one person too much power. Kids have a lot to say and can help solve the problem.

Pooja Desai, wants to help keep the Odyssey and has great memories of the trip.

JoEllen Samojla said whatever decision is made must be in the best interest of the students.

3. Field Trips – Middle School

Kathy Codianne, Curtis Principal, reported that an on-going evaluation of the Nature's Classroom field trip has been completed. The program has changed significantly. It's a "canned" program that does not necessarily supplement or enrich the school's curriculum. The facility cannot accommodate the entire 6th grade and the cost is becoming problematic. The teachers felt that the program is not consistent with Sudbury's standards. Recent curriculum efforts such as Impact Math and a focus on writing, and enriching the curriculum, are putting more demands on time. However, the teachers want some experience for sixth graders that focuses on team building and experiential learning. The staff feels that the experiences can be replicated closer to home. Next year, the teachers will explore some other programs.

Kathy Codianne reported on the 8th grade Sergeant's Trip that typically happens at the end of the year. Scheduling around MCAS is an issue. There has been a lack of supervision on the part of the camp staff. The program was lackluster. This year, the 8th graders will have an "8th grade week" at the end of the school year.

The upcoming French trip to Quebec is a student-initiated activity to learn the language. There will be a nurse and an administrator on the trip.

1. ILAP

This item will be discussed at the next meeting.

2. ELL/Title I

This item will be discussed at the next meeting.

B. SPED Programming for 2007-2008

Debbie Dixon reported that the FOCUS Program will be housed at Nixon School for a cluster of 5-6 elementary students with significant emotional or mental health issues. It will be staffed by a Teacher, one or two assistants and a part-time clinical staff person.

Debbie reported on a cluster of preschoolers with significant developmental delays who require a full-day program with significant support. This Program, the Foundation Program, will be staffed with a teacher, an assistant, and an ABA teacher. It will be housed at Noyes.

II. School Committee Report

A. Bill Schedule

A bill schedule was presented.

B. School Committee Liaisons, Subcommittees and Delegate to MASC

VOTED: On a motion by Jane Santinelli, seconded by Jeff Beeler, to accept the School Committee Liaisons and Subcommittees, and Delegate to MASC as presented. The vote was 5-0 in favor.

Open Forum II

No comments.

III. Communications

As outlined in the Communications Packet.

IV. Minutes

VOTED: On a motion by Jane Santinelli seconded by Jeff Beeler, to accept the minutes of the April 25, 2007, minutes as presented.

V. Personnel Action

As outlined in the Personnel Packet. Dr. Brackett announced that the position of Loring Assistant Principal has been offered to Scott Bazydlo.

Member's Forum

Mary Mahoney reported that the SEA's Softball Bonanza is May 18 and invited all Committee members to attend.

Jane Santinelli reported that the 4th and 5th grade concert held tonight was wonderful.

Dr. Brackett reminded members that the next meeting is at Curtis Middle School.

VOTED: On a motion by Jane Santinelli, seconded by Jeff Beeler, to adjourn to Executive Session, not to return to Open Session, for purposes of collective bargaining. The vote was 5-0 in favor. The time was 11:15 p.m.

Yes Bill Braun

Yes Jane Santinelli

Yes Rich Robison

Yes Susan Iuliano

Yes Jeff Beeler

Submitted by Joanne Bleiler, Recording Secretary