

**Sudbury Public Schools  
Sudbury, Massachusetts  
School Committee Regular Meeting  
Wednesday March 27, 2013  
Nixon Elementary School**

**Present:** Dr. Rich Robison, Lisa Gutch, Ellen Winer Joachim, Bob Armour

**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 7:41 p.m. The meeting was taped for public access broadcast.

**2. Nixon PTO Welcome (Lauren Hochberg and Joyce Minkoff, PTO Co-Presidents)**

Joyce Minkoff expressed the pride in the Nixon School that is shared by many parents and students. She remarked that children love attending and parents love sending their children to the school. Ms. Minkoff noted that during the recent extended absences of both Principal Joni Jay and Assistant Principal Eula Walsh, things ran smoothly and students were not negatively affected. She characterized this as a testament to the strength of both administrators and teachers. Ms. Minkoff called the PTO the 'icing on the cake' in that it enhances students' school experiences. The PTO supports the school through a variety of activities, including fundraising, volunteerism, social events, and educational enrichment programs. An upcoming challenge for the school will occur at the end of this school year, when 58% of the fifth-grade families will graduate their youngest child. Ms. Minkoff commented that the challenge of this significant turnover also represents an opportunity for new families to become involved more actively in supporting Nixon. Ms. Minkoff named maintaining and enhancing technology and partnering with the school around social media use as two primary concerns of Nixon parents.

**1. Recognitions**

Superintendent Wilson congratulated the Science Olympiad students and coaches for their performance at the State competition at Assumption College on March 16. Curtis was one of 23 middle schools that participated. The school earned fifth place overall. Additionally, in more than half the events, Curtis students placed in the top six, earning multiple medals and ribbons. Medal or Ribbon recipients on the Varsity and Alternate teams were: Jack Doherty, Jacob Weinstein, Steven Yao, Kenneth Ho, Kathryn Pecjo, Max Zuo, Andrew George, Lucy Huo, Michael Zhang, David Abraham, Colton Chung, Tiffany Qin, Alicia Poulin, Piyusha Kundu, Jessica Ye, TJ Hall, Reshawn George, Aria Liu, Jesse Sun, Sam Anderson, Devon Atwood, Dan Guzi, Will Stone, Chris Manente, Sandeep Shankar, Alex Akopyan, Joseph Weinstein. Dr. Wilson remarked on the countless hours of hard work and energy that students, coaches, and parents put in since October, calling the enthusiasm and talent for science 'contagious'.

Dr. Wilson also commended the work of Noyes first graders for their efforts on a service project called Birthday Wishes. Lincoln Sudbury junior and former student of Pat Hartvigsen Jamie Wolfe coordinated Birthday Wishes to provide birthday party supplies to children who otherwise might not have a birthday celebration. Ms. Wolfe worked with the Noyes first-graders to assemble birthday "goody bags" filled with supplies purchased with funds the children raised by doing good deeds. Superintendent Wilson offered special thanks to Jamie Wolfe, teachers Ms. Carney, Ms. Donahue, Ms. Hartvigsen, and Ms. Raia, and all the first-grade students.

**3. Nixon State of the School Presentation (Joni Jay, Principal; Eula Walsh, Assistant Principal; Bobbie Benson and Joanne Bleiler, Nixon Lead Teachers)**

Principal Joni Jay asked Nixon staff and parents in attendance, many of whom serve on the School Advisory Council, to introduce themselves. Ms. Jay briefly highlighted some of the academic strengths at Nixon, including phonics and phonemic awareness, mathematics, MCAS growth of high needs students, a state commendation for the second year in student growth, and high science MCAS performance.

Ms. Jay commented that even with the high reading performance, the Common Core dictates continued focus, including teacher observations related to inferential thinking, writing about reading, and the use of more challenging texts. Nixon is utilizing a well-received readers' workshop model to develop independent readers. The model involves mini whole-class lessons and sharing, as well as small-group work and independent reading. Video clips of various activities within the model, as well as teacher reflections, were presented.

Nixon is continuing its focus on creating a safe and welcoming environment. Ms. Jay reported significant decreases in bullying and disciplinary incidents and significant increases in connection and positive actions over last year's data. School assemblies and goal-setting videos, as well as PTO sponsored programs, have been utilized to reinforce the Core Values, particularly around the differently abled. The PTO has also funded the purchase of books that support the Core Values.

In response to queries from the Committee, Ms. Jay noted that the work with anti-bullying expert Stan Davis provided the impetus to rearticulate the Core Values. She added that the fifth graders continue to help the younger students through the safety patrol; book buddy; and kindergarten, reading, and math helpers programs.

Chairman Robison asked Ms. Jay to speak to the use of outside consultants, rather than relying on internal expertise. Ms. Jay responded that Stan Davis has the expertise and overview to make recommendations tailored for the school and the District and that the data shows tremendous progress under his guidance. Nixon has also made use of the expertise of Teaching and Learning Alliance. She characterized the use of outside consultants as 'incredibly valuable and cost-effective'.

Assistant Principal Eula Walsh spoke of the richness of a model that involves observation and discussion. She believes it is a strength to know the limits of internal expertise and seek outside help when necessary. Lisa Gutch commented that in some cases, it is a better use of staff time to bring in outside experts. Assistant Superintendent Todd Curtis added that our internal expertise is strengthened by our work with such outside consultants. Rich Robison noted that during times of crisis, such as the recent absences of the building administrators, it becomes apparent that programs and practices are effective. He acknowledged the significance of the level of support expressed by parents for Nixon staff.

**4. FY14 Budget Update**

At the March 13, 2012 Regular Session, Superintendent Wilson reported that the health benefits increase is projected to be 3.5%, yielding a cost-savings of approximately \$194,000 over the 7% increase used to formulate the budget. She announced the priority decisions, given that the budget is short by about 19K, to add staffing FTE's identified in the level staff plus budget: 1.00 FTE in each of four positions: psychologist, intervention specialist, math coach, and front office staff. The FTE for front office staff identified in the level staff budget is 3.15; if greater savings are realized, this FTE will increase.

A revised estimate will be possible when the open enrollment period ends at the beginning of May; however, it might not be established in time for Town Meeting.

## **5. METCO Presentation Follow-Up**

Superintendent Wilson addressed the METCO funding query that was made at the March 13, 2013 Regular Session. She started by explaining the per pupil expenditure, which for FY12, was \$12,893. This total comprises Chapter 70 funds; federal, state, and private grants; circuit breaker; and local taxes. The METCO grant provided \$5,515 per pupil for program staff, transportation, and materials. Chapter 70 funding totals \$1,426 per pupil. Dr. Wilson affirmed the District's commitment to the METCO program and to sharing our excellent school system while benefiting from enhanced diversity in the system.

Rich Robison reiterated his previous comments that the METCO grant is unrelated to the Chapter 70 reimbursement. The grant stands alone and provides the support services that are needed for the program operation. The per-student cost and Chapter 70 reimbursement are the same for any SPS student, whether they live in Boston or Sudbury. Dr. Wilson added that the METCO grant also funds the salary for 0.4 FTE Director, Janine Dailey.

Bob Armour asked if the goal was for an even distribution of students throughout the District. Dr. Wilson responded that a cohort at each school is desirable. The District also tries to accept students as early in their education as possible.

The Committee discussed the complexity of considering how including additional students into existing programming does not necessarily add cost. Dr. Robison noted that the METCO program was established under a limited-growth model in order to avoid additional costs. Ellen Joachim added that the per pupil expenditure is misleading because it does not reflect the actual cost of adding an additional student.

## **6. FY14 School Committee Meeting Calendar**

The Committee discussed modifications to the proposed schedule of meetings at the five schools. Dr. Wilson will confer with building administrators for their input.

**VOTED:** On a motion by Bob Armour, seconded by Ellen Joachim, to approve the schedule of dates for School Committee meetings for the 2013-2014 school year as presented. The vote was 4-0 in favor.

## **7. School Committee Report**

Ellen Joachim outlined the schedule for completing the Superintendent's evaluation, with a target date of April 24. Members will have one week, April 5-12, to develop their individual assessments. She and Lisa Gutch will consolidate these assessments over April vacation. The summative evaluation will be presented at the April 24, 2013 Regular Session.

Superintendent Wilson will provide each Member with a binder of evidence. Ellen Joachim and Lisa Gutch will distribute more detailed procedural information when the binders are ready. Ms. Joachim recommended a focus on those elements related to the Superintendent's primary goals.

Lisa Gutch reported that the bids for the Nixon roof project will be opened tomorrow. The lowest qualified bidder will be announced following reference checks.

**VOTED:** On a motion by Ellen Joachim, seconded by Bob Armour, to approve Lisa Gutch to continue in her role as the School Committee's representative on matters relating to the Nixon roof project. The vote was 4-0 in favor.

Bob Armour reported that the Fairbank Task Force has reconvened to clarify two articles for Town Meeting: a study of use and needs for a community building and a proposal for interim repairs to the existing building. The Task Force is considering raising private funds for the study and will be focusing on building awareness and buy-in within the community. Mr. Armour expects the study results to be available in early 2014. Chairman Robison commented that the

School Committee should consider taking a formal position after reviewing the wording of the articles.

Rich Robison announced that Park and Recreation representatives will present to the School Committee at its April 24, 2013 Regular Session.

## **8. Open Forum**

No comments

## **9. Superintendent's Report**

### **(a) Report**

Superintendent Wilson announced that the last day of school will be Tuesday, June 25. The Administration is working with Principals on end-of-year activities, with a goal of minimal disruption to families.

### **(b) Bill Schedule**

A Bill Schedule was presented.

### **(c) Personnel Actions**

As presented in the Personnel Packet. Dr. Wilson explained that the mid-year teacher resignations correspond to teachers who are currently on leave and have notified the District that they would not be returning.

## **10. Minutes**

**VOTED:** On a motion by Lisa Gutch, seconded by Bob Armour, to approve the minutes of the March 13, 2013 Regular Session. The vote was 4–0 in favor.

## **11. Members' Forum**

Assistant Superintendent Todd Curtis reported that he and Michael O'Brien distributed a parent communication regarding [sudburystudents.org](http://sudburystudents.org), which links to online resources students use at school. He also announced that the District is moving toward electronic report cards. The first of these will be available to Curtis parents on April 4. One-to-one and STEM activities are ongoing.

Rich Robison commented on the challenge of keeping current with such a small technology group, noting that technology is high on the Committee's list of areas to support. Dr. Curtis commented that the activities underway must be done, and that no matter how we proceed there will be a need for increased technology staffing and support. The need for support and for keeping current will be discussed at the next Regular Session. Ellen Joachim reported that parents have expressed appreciation for the informational email describing [sudburystudents.org](http://sudburystudents.org).

Ellen Joachim reported that she and Lucie St. George attended an EDCO School Committee roundtable at which there was neither a set topic nor a facilitator. The new educator evaluation system was a primary topic. Ms. Joachim reported that SPS is doing very well in implementing the process. Another topic was the structure of School Committee meetings. Ms. Joachim gave examples related to the placement of the Open Forum. Rich Robison noted that SPS tried a variety of Open Forum formats before settling on the current mid-meeting model.

Rich Robison raised the idea of holding an orientation following Town Meeting in anticipation of the transition in membership. He recommends a half-day format and asked the Committee to consider if a facilitated session is preferred.

Bob Armour believes guidelines communicated between school and home around the use of email and texting as communication tools might be useful, especially given the growing number of options for such communication. Some Members expressed that it's preferable to leave the

communication mechanism to the teacher or staff member. Rich Robison commented that District policies include those related to internet use.

Mr. Armour expressed appreciation for the insights Nixon Principal Joni Jay shared regarding the school's approach to reading. He asked if there was an agreement with teachers about their being videotaped. Superintendent Wilson stated that a formal agreement would be necessary only if taping were to be used in an evaluation process. Mr. Armour believes videotaping is a valuable tool in professional development.

Mr. Armour asked how the decision is made to announce the activities of particular student groups, for instance the Science Olympiad vs. Destination Imagination. Dr. Wilson responded that the timing of receipt of announcements determines what she reports on and that she very much wants to highlight all activities.

Director of Business and Finance Mary Will announced that the Strategic Planning Committee is very close to printing its final report in preparation for a meeting on April 4 at 7:30 p.m. in Town Hall. Representatives from each cost center will be present. The Committee has met regularly since last fall.

#### **11. Adjourn**

**VOTED:** On a motion by Bob Armour, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to adjourn the Regular Session. The vote was 4-0 in favor. The time was 9:56 p.m.

Yes	Rich Robison
Yes	Lisa Gutch
Yes	Ellen Winer Joachim
Yes	Bob Armour

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito