

**Sudbury Public Schools  
Sudbury, Massachusetts  
School Committee Regular Meeting  
Wednesday March 7, 2012  
Fairbank Senior Center**

**Present:** Jeff Beeler, Chairman; Susan Iuliano, Vice Chairperson  
Dr. Rich Robison, Lisa Gutch, Ellen Winer Joachim

**Also Present:** Dr. Anne Wilson, Superintendent; Dr. Judy Malone Neville, Assistant Superintendent;  
Dr. Robert Mealey, SEA

**Open Session**

Jeff Beeler called the Open Session to order at 7:36 p.m. The meeting was taped for public access broadcast.

**1. Discussion of New Law Related To Collaborative Operations (Dorsey Yearly, Executive Director of EDCO Collaborative)**

The District is a member of three educational collaboratives, including EDCO. Collaboratives primarily provide special education services, as well as professional development opportunities. A new state law—the result of uncovering a misuse of funds at one of the state’s 30 collaboratives (one not involved with the SPS)—went into effect on March 2. The EDCO Collaborative has both a private, not-for-profit arm, the Education Collaborative of Greater Boston, Inc. (ECGB) formed in 1969, as well as a public arm, the Education Collaborative (EDCO) formed following enabling legislation. The two entities share the Executive Director and members of their Boards of Directors, as well as administrative and operational support. EDCO Executive Director Dorsey Yearly provided an overview of the current Collaborative’s structure, the implications of the new legislation, and the proposed revised structure that will be voted upon by the respective Boards on March 8.

The legislation dictates that any collaborative with a related not-for-profit arm must reconfigure to separate structures, including separate Executive Directors, Boards, and management systems. Ms. Yearly stated that an ad hoc committee recommended consolidating the two agencies under a single administration by dissolving the not-for-profit arm. She indicated that school districts should experience no apparent change.

The decision to recommend moving all programs and services under the public arm was reached by the ad hoc committee after seeking an opinion from the state Ethics Commission concerning the ability of overlapping Boards to make such decisions without conflict of interest. The Commission determined that the Boards, being comprised of individuals from each member district, would be able to make decisions in the best interest of member districts, without conflict of interest. Moreover, the Commission determined that there is no conflict of interest relating to funds management or contracts.

Dissolution of the not-for-profit arm, the ECGB, requires transferring its assets, as well as its programs and services, to the public arm, EDCO. The programs currently supported by ECGB are the Seefurth Fund, which promotes the study of Thoreau, serving as the fiscal agent for the Boston Public Schools relative to Title I funding provided to the Archdiocese of Boston, and administering Wrentham Habilitative Services, a program of the Department of Developmental Services for adults.

The transfer of these programs and services to EDCO will align the Collaborative with the new law, as well as provide some overall cost efficiencies for program administration.

Following the March 8 vote by the Collaborative Boards, member district school committees will be required to vote to dissolve the ECGB. Further action will require the votes of both Collaborative Boards on May 10, 2012.

In response to Susan Iuliano's question about types of contracts, Ms. Yearly indicated that 50% of funds derive from tuition and fees and 50% from contracts. Rich Robison asked if the legislation addresses issues of providing adult services. Ms. Yearly responded that the Secretary of Education must form a commission to address such questions as the appropriate scope of services, but that the law allows for all existing programs to be grandfathered. Dr. Robison also asked about complications of receiving gifts, such as the Seefurth Fund. Ms. Yearly described a process whereby the ECGB Board must vote to move the funds to EDCO. The EDCO Board must then vote to accept the funds and accept responsibility for fund management.

In response to Dr. Robison's inquiry about downsides of consolidation, Ms. Yearly commented that the ECGB employees currently are not eligible for retiree benefits. Following consolidation, a transfer of some of the ECGB assets to the public retiree benefits trust will be required. This will increase the trust's obligation; however, the assets of the private arm are sufficient to fund this obligation with a one-time transfer of funds. Ms. Yearly also described the pay scales and bargaining structure of the employee groups.

Susan Iuliano asked if any opposition from member districts is anticipated, to which Ms. Yearly responded that the Collaborative was concerned about a lack of understanding, especially in light of the recent negative publicity surrounding accounting practices. She noted that the EDCO Collaborative has always maintained separate funding, books, and audits, and that its governance and funding management have never been in question. She added that the Collaborative has made efforts to communicate with member districts in a highly transparent manner.

Noting that the proposed consolidation must be approved prior to the close of the fiscal year, and effectively, by the May 10, 2012 meeting at which the Collaborative Boards are slated to take a final vote, Jeff Beeler asked if sufficient time is available to member districts to vote on the dissolution of the ECGB. Ms. Yearly responded that the Boards will craft language immediately following the March 8 vote for transmission to member districts.

By way of full disclosure Rich Robison noted that his agency, the Federation for Children with Special Needs, is a programming partner with the EDCO Collaborative. Dr. Robison also reported that he has been assigned to serve on the Secretary of Education's Evaluation Commission, which will review the program over the next year in order to make recommendations.

## **2. Update of FY13 Budget**

Tabled.

## **3. Update of Kindergarten Registrations**

Superintendent Wilson reported that kindergarten registration currently stands at 236 students, including 199 registrants for full-day (FDK) and 37 registrants for half-day (HDK) programs. The FDK wait list consists of 8 students from the Noyes district. The priority is to minimize transitions for students by keeping them in their home schools for kindergarten. Secondary to this goal is to maintain the class size guideline and to accommodate the preferences for FDK or HDK.

Early Childhood Director Linda Karpeichik provided an overview of the registration and decision-making processes. She noted that the District is heading into its fourth year of offering FDK. Although enrollment is down compared with previous years, the percent ratio

FDK:HDK increased as follows: FY10 55:45 (287 students; 8 FDK classes/8 HDK classes); FY11 70:30 (297 students); FY12 87:13 (260 students; 11 FDK classes/2 HDK classes); FY13 to date 84:16 (236 students). Ms. Karpeichik noted that classroom space requirements and the FTE count have remained relatively constant.

Ms. Karpeichik characterized kindergarten enrollment as a year-long process. Identified families receive a preliminary mailing in October, at which time, area pre-schools are also contacted and information is posted on the District website. In November, families are sent a link to the registration packet. A pre-school coffee was also hosted in November and the “Kick-Off to Kindergarten” event was held in December. If registrations for FDK exceed available slots, a lottery is held in February. Three lotteries were required for this academic year and the wait list for next year has steadily diminished from a high of 30 to the current level of 8 Noyes students waiting for FDK. The District anticipates being able to accommodate the 8 waiting students and expects to communicate its decision within the next week.

Jeff Beeler recalled his involvement six years ago with an assessment of available classroom space, which, at the time, in addition to inadequate funding, was an obstacle to offering FDK. He remarked on the impressive growth of the program, commenting that the trends in numbers for FDK and HDK are as anticipated by the Committee. He thanked Ms. Karpeichik for managing the process and for efforts to accommodate all requests for FDK.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Karpeichik outlined some of the factors under consideration in this final week of decision-making, including the locations and enrollment numbers for HDK and anticipated changes from moves into or out of the District. She reiterated that the priority goal is to move the smallest number of students possible. Superintendent Wilson added that staffing changes relate to reductions in enrollment and the number of kindergarten sections at each school.

#### **4. School Committee Report**

##### **(a) Communications/Public Relations**

Lisa Gutch announced that two pre-school coffees are scheduled for March 14, one in the morning at the Grange and one in the evening at Curtis. These events have been publicized through local media channels. She suggested that Linda Karpeichik present the information just provided to the Committee. Ms. Gutch reported that the School Committee coffee is tentatively scheduled for May 5.

#### **7. Open Forum**

Chris McClure, Pennymeadow Road, stated that he is the parent of a child on the FDK wait list. He found the presentation very informative, thanked Ms. Karpeichik for her patience in fielding phone calls and email inquiries, and asked if there is anything he can do to facilitate the process. Superintendent Wilson responded that the final decision-making involves logistics and asked for families’ much-appreciated continued patience.

#### **8. Superintendent’s Report**

##### **(a) Bill Schedule**

None.

##### **(b) Personnel Actions**

As outlined in the Personnel Packet.

## 9. Minutes

**VOTED:** On a motion by Lisa Gutch, seconded by Susan Iuliano, to approve the minutes of the February 15, 2012 Regular Session. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

## 10. Members' Forum

Rich Robison reported attending a Sudbury Special Education Parent Advisory Council meeting last night. The award-winning documentary, *Including Samuel*, was shown, followed by a Q&A with Dr. Joseph Petner, the former Principal of the Haggerty Elementary School in Cambridge, featured in the film. Although attendance was low, Dr. Robison characterized the event as important and thought-provoking. Special Education Administrator Debbie Dixon also attended and discussed some aspects of the placement process.

Dr. Robison also reported that negotiations continue.

With respect to the state budget, Dr. Robison reported that the House budget is expected in the first week in April and the Senate budget in early May. He recently spoke with State Senator Jamie Eldridge, who, along with Representative Tom Conroy, would be happy to attend a School Committee meeting. Jeff Beeler suggested the possibility of scheduling this for April.

Superintendent Anne Wilson reported on her participation in the Read Across America event this week. She and other District and community members visited classrooms to read favorite Dr. Seuss books.

Assistant Superintendent Judy Malone Neville also expressed her enthusiasm at participating in the Read Across America event. She also noted that she attended the Grade 3 Colonial Fair and was equally impressed with students' knowledge and enthusiasm.

Bob Mealey announced that the annual Softball Bonanza will occur on May 11 at the Curtis field. Proceeds go toward scholarships. Dr. Mealey also announced that some of the District's music groups will perform at the Fairbank Senior Center on March 14 at 1:00 p.m. at a St. Patrick's Day luncheon. He also reported that a subgroup of the SEA is working on the new teacher evaluation process and that negotiations are ongoing.

## 11. Adjourn

**VOTED:** On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Susan Iuliano, to adjourn to Executive Session for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining with union personnel, as discussion in Open Meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the School Committee, not to return to Open Session. The vote was 5–0 in favor. The time was 8:53 p.m.

Yes    Jeff Beeler  
Yes    Susan Iuliano  
Yes    Rich Robison  
Yes    Lisa Gutch  
Yes    Ellen Winer Joachim

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito, Recording Secretary