

From the Superintendent...

I am writing this during that period between the town election and town meeting. There's a strange feeling permeating the halls of Sudbury Public Schools. On one hand we are honored, happy and excited that the override was approved by voters in the election; but at the same time, we are well aware that we must await the results of town meeting before knowing if we will be planning with the override budget or making the deep cuts if it is not approved. It is a feeling kind of like when I was in high school and I finally got up the nerve to ask Carol S. to the prom. She said yes, but told me she had to ask her parents if she could go with me.

During this year's budget process, we received a number of questions about the class size guidelines that we use in budgeting and staffing our schools. I call your attention to this month's newsletter article *From the School Committee*. Member Susan Iuliano provides a great explanation of the history, development and rationale behind our guidelines. It is worth printing and filing for future reference.

You know our tagline for the efforts to make Sudbury schools world class is Improving On Excellence. Continuous improvement is the hallmark of any great organization and continuous improvement dictates that complacency has no place in the system, and doing things because we have always done them is not an accepted justification. Over the last year or so, our schools and district have undertaken new initiatives or are in the process of reviewing current practices or programs to make sure they are effective uses of valuable resources and continue to serve our children well.

When doing the improvement work, we at times are asked by parents if they will have a vote on the decision or if we will survey parents to ensure they approve of the improvements being considered. The important message is that even if parents do not get to vote on changes in the system, hearing from you and knowing what is important to you is important to us all through the year.

Since Ed. Reform was passed in 1993, the responsibility for the basic operation and management of the school district was conveyed to the superintendent and school principals. The School Committee's role was limited to setting the policies of the system, hiring and evaluating the superintendent, and adopting the budget including bargaining with employee associations. So as you see, even the School Committee is often not asked to vote on curriculum, programs, staffing, activities, etc. Does that mean we don't care what they think or want their input into our work? Absolutely not. They are parents and members of the community and their input is valuable from that perspective. They also have great insight into the educational process and enrich the work we do. We often improve our decisions or processes after having a dialogue with them.

The same can be said for you. Not asking parents to complete a survey (we actually do on some occasions), does not mean we don't value what you have to say. To the contrary; impact on parents and community is a factor in almost everything we do. We are always driven by what is best for our students, and what is best for kids at times is not

perceived as best for adults—be it parents, teachers or administrators. So we may move forward even if we know a portion of the community will disagree with our decision.

My point here is that we listen and we want to hear from you. Attending a school committee meeting, a school advisory counsel meeting, a principal's breakfast, a PTO meeting, sending an email, making a phone call are all avenues for making your thoughts known. By the way, we do accept compliments as well as constructive criticism and suggestions. The impact of your call is certain; it may not be immediate or even connected to the issue you are contacting us about, but it will influence and inform our work, our decisions, and our school system.

So while we await the outcome of Town Meeting and I reminisce about going to the prom with Carol S., I hope you will continue to plug in to the system and help us Improve on Excellence.

John R. Brackett
Superintendent of Schools