

From the Superintendent...

My newsletter this month is late. Actually, more of my newsletters miss the posted deadlines than should, but this one is really late. I had the topic in mind, had mentally outlined the message and was just looking for the time to type it. Then came January 19; the day when our world, our community, our schools, and our families felt the shutter of a tragedy that we, if we're honest with each other, felt would never happen here. It did.

Like many, I am sure I operated on adrenaline, instinct and experience for some time. I worked with our administrators and school staff as they put their own emotions on hold, as they cared for and protected their students. I am so proud to be their colleague. I watched with admiration and deep respect, John Ritchie, the LS staff, school committee and the caregivers provide the leadership, comfort, assurance and safety to the LS community. Having formerly been a K-12 superintendent, I fully appreciate the complexity and uniqueness that a high school and teenagers/young adults present. I applaud Dr. Ritchie's leadership and can tell you there may not be anyone who could have provided the type of leadership he did during the long hours and days following the early morning of January 19.

I can not pretend to understand the pain the Alenson and Odgren families must be experiencing. I know there are no good words in these situations, so I'll just offer what is in my heart---"I am so sorry for your loss."

This is a community tragedy and we at SPS have an obligation to contribute to, and provide leadership in, the healing process. Over the days and weeks ahead, we will continue to ensure that every one of our students in grades pre-K through 8 is supported and assured that their schools are safe and happy places. We will support the parents of our students by providing information and education on ways to guide their sons and daughters through the grieving, or reactive times following the incident. We also pledge to be transparent in our actions and forthright in providing information and answering questions (when able) that people might have and need to allay fear of the unknown or uncertainty. We will be examining a variety of our procedures, policies, and practices to ensure that we are as prepared as possible for any crisis and that our schools are safe places to learn and work. Finally, our belief is even stronger that every student who attends Sudbury Public Schools is our student, who's success is our responsibility, who must be made to feel a part of the school and who must be honored for his or her unique contribution by students and staff alike.

I urge you to contact your school principal or me if you have any questions, concerns or suggestions. There is no monopoly on good ideas.

By the way, the topic I intended to address this month was the Odyssey trip. Preparations are well underway for this year's experience. As part of our continuous improvement of learning and achievement goal, we are currently examining Odyssey to determine whether it continues to "fit" our elementary program, if its objective is clear and remains viable, and if it is an effective, appropriate and affordable educational experience. A

recommendation will be forthcoming in the upcoming months so that any modifications can be in place for the 2007-08 school year.

Dear Editor,

Please excuse John for being late, I hope he will be on time next month.

s/John's Wife