

From the Superintendent...

Happy New Year. It's the first day of 2007 and I have just returned to work from a week's vacation. What makes this vacation different from other breaks during the school year is that I did not check email and I did not work. I should say I could not check email or work. You see my five, soon to be six year old granddaughter Lauren spent the week with Ann and me. It was brilliant - her word for just about everything from her own artwork to hot chocolate to the Charlotte's Web movie. As they say, "if you play you pay;" well I'm paying dearly for a brilliant week away.

In lieu of a single focused newsletter, I would like to highlight a few important upcoming events that I hope you will note.

- On January 24th, the School Committee will be deciding on the 2007-08 school calendar, school times and the Improved Learning for All Plan (ILAP). If you want to share your thoughts about these important issues, please plan to attend. The meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. in the Sudbury Pines Room of the Senior Center.
- The town and school budget process is well underway. Every indication is that this will be a very difficult budget year. To help community members better understand the budget situation, the town Finance Committee is conducting a series of presentations. Each presentation is opened to the public but will also be televised and replayed on Channel 8. A complete schedule is posted on the town web site. I especially urge you to view the presentation on January 8th in which FinCom Chair Bob Jacobsen and Town Manager Maureen Valente will discuss the budget process, the revenue projections and the structural problems that are inherent in the budget picture for Sudbury. On January 11th there will be a presentation on the Town budget; then on January 18th we will present, along with L-S, the school budgets. The question we hear often at this point in time usually is "will there be an override?" While it is too early to predict, having information will help you understand why a decision, either for or against an override, is made.
- Having just experienced the warmest December in Boston's history, we may be hard pressed to think about snow and cold weather. I want to remind you that 1) it is highly unlikely that we will close because of cold weather, so it is important that your children are dressed appropriately for school. We understand fashion or peer pressure may cause some students to shun wearing a heavy coat, hat, gloves, boots, etc. but even short waits for the bus or short walks into the school can be harmful in extremely cold temperatures. Also, we are trying to control escalating energy costs so layers of clothing for the school day may be in order. 2) Our snow day policy is unchanged but please review the Emergency and Storm Response procedures we developed last year to deal with the possibility of an early dismissal or delayed dismissal due to extreme weather conditions. 3) Finally, the final decision of whether it is safe for your child to travel to and from school remains with you. If we make a decision to open school but you believe it is best to keep your child home, do so. The absence will be excused and any work can be made up.

- Finally, regarding safety, we continue to work cooperatively with the Sudbury Police and Fire departments, and town and state emergency officials to ensure that we are appropriately prepared to handle most types of disasters or emergency events (including pandemics). Members of our staff continue to attend training sessions and are in the process of updating and improving our multi-hazard school safety plans. You have likely been informed of changes in practices already put in place at each school, and more will be forthcoming. It is clear that to be effective when it comes to safety and emergency response, there is no plan; there is only on-going planning.

From my family to yours, we hope that your 2007 is healthy, happy and brilliant.