

## *December 2011 School Committee Open Meeting*

Thank you to the parents and teachers who attended the School Committee Open Meeting on December 1st. It was a great opportunity to ask questions, discuss concerns, and brainstorm about possible changes. Over the next several weeks, School Committee will be publishing the topics discussed along with the answers to questions posed at the meeting.

### **I. REPORT FROM FATHER BOB**

#### **A. Library Renovation**

Father Bob reported that the Parish completed the main part of the Changing Lives Together campaign and raised over \$1 million in pledges. The Parish intends to renovate the library with some of these funds. One option under consideration is to move the library to the Youth Room.

#### **B. Parish Music Director and Youth Minister**

Father Bob also noted that the Parish is interviewing for a new Music Director. The Youth Minister is also leaving, so once a new Music Director is hired, the Parish will look for a new Youth Minister.

### **II. REPORT FROM MRS. CIOLINO**

#### **A. School Band Program**

Mrs. Ciolino announced that Emily Borus has been hired to direct the SLS instrumental music program. Students in grades 4 through 8 can join the school band. Classes will be held on the stage on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:00-8:45 a.m., and the band will hold a concert in June. Parents are invited to an informational meeting on Thursday, December 15 at 7:00 p.m. in the Social Hall, when representatives from Marshall Music will fit students with instruments. Mrs. Borus also plans to hold band camp over the summer.

#### **B. Traveling Chalice for Vocations**

Mrs. Ciolino reported that second grade families will be invited to take home the Traveling Chalice for Vocations for a week at a time. Families would take home the Chalice from a weekend Mass and return it at the following week's School Mass. During that week, the host family will offer prayers for vocations.

#### **C. SLS Christmas Program**

The St. Lawrence Christmas Program will be on December 14 in the Church. Parents are also invited to attend the dress rehearsal during the afternoon of December 14.

### **III. PARENT QUESTIONS**

#### **A. Limits on Availability of Accelerated Reader Tests**

1. *PTO pays for a very broad Accelerated Reader contract. However, several thousand tests were removed this year, and SLS students can no longer take all the tests that Accelerated Reader offers. No list is available for parents or students as to which books are available for testing. If a parent permits a child to read a book, that book should be available for A/R testing purposes. If a student has to request that a test be added, the student has to wait to test on a different day.*

**Certain A/R tests were initially removed due to the subject matter of the books that they were testing. However, if a parent permits a child to read a book, that child may take the corresponding A/R test. Mrs. Ciolino has already asked that all the books be added back onto the SLS account.**

2. *The Accelerated Reader system shuts down at 4:00 p.m. each day. Is there any way to keep it open so that students can take A/R tests after school? Some students simply need more time to test.*

**The administration will look into this problem.**

#### **B. After School Pick-Up Procedure**

1. *The morning drop off procedure seems to be working well. However, there are problems in the afternoon when parents who pick up at the U Door do not follow the proper directional flow of traffic that was announced at the beginning of the school year. Parents attempt to leave the U Door parking lot via the entrance ramp to the O Door parking lot. Perhaps parents need a reminder concerning parking lot directions and etiquette. The signs used last year to indicate which driveway was the entrance and which was the exit would also help.*

**Parents parking in front of the K of C Hall should exit along the fence adjoining MNP's property, and parents leaving the U Door lot should exit on the north side of that parking lot (through the exit closest to the Church). The administration will look into using signs to help remind parents which way to proceed in the parking lots. In addition, once the U Door lot is resurfaced, the arrows on the ground will be reversed so that parents will know which way to exit that parking lot. Mrs. Ciolino will seek additional help from the staff to control traffic better. Teachers are parking in the front row along Utica Road to prevent parents from leaving over the curb, which should also help improve traffic flow.**

2. *Some parents drive up along the safety zone to pick up their children from the O Door. Others permit their children to wander unattended through the parking lots, looking for their cars. Children are placed in danger when this occurs.*

**Parents need to park their cars and walk over to the safety zone to pick up their children. In addition, parents need to keep their children by their side for safety purposes. Children**

who are unattended should not leave the safety zone by the O Door or the sidewalk by the U Door.

### C. Publication of School Committee Meeting Minutes

*Can School Committee begin publishing the minutes from its regular meetings?*

School Committee publishes its Open Meeting reports in NNN shortly after the meetings are held. School Committee does not publish its monthly meeting minutes. At these monthly meetings, which are not open to the public, the administration often seeks advice from the parent members on issues that have not been finalized. School Committee will consider publishing a summary of those issues it addresses that the administration has finalized and is prepared to make public.

### D. Indoor Recess

1. *Supervision in Classrooms – Why aren't parent volunteers and supervisors present in each classroom during indoor recess? Perhaps the room parents can solicit volunteers to cover each classroom on indoor recess days.*

There should be an adult in each classroom during indoor recess. The administration will look into using the room parents to get volunteers to cover each classroom during indoor recess.

2. *Games and Toys for Indoor Recess – Children need additional games and toys to use during indoor recess. Perhaps parents can donate money for toys and games in their children's classrooms.*

Parents can certainly volunteer to donate toys and games that their children like.

### E. Teacher Aides in Grades 1-3

*Why doesn't SLS have aides for the lower elementary classrooms with 30 students in them?*

The teachers do not feel that they need help. Whenever they have a project that requires assistance, they put out a call for help to the parents. SLS has never had any trouble getting parent volunteers to assist on an as-needed basis.

### F. Lunchroom

1. *Overflow Table – Why are younger children prevented from using the overflow table to finish their lunch unless they are eating hot lunch? Those who bring their lunch to school may need additional time to eat.*

Everyone will be allowed to use the overflow table, regardless of whether they have hot or cold lunch. Some children simply need more time to finish their lunch. Children should not be discouraged from talking, but they should be encouraged to eat.

2. **Lunch Fund** – *Can SLS keep a change jar to assist those students who are missing their lunch money?*

Most teachers already lend money to students who forget their lunch or milk money. The School Office also has money available for students who forget their money. A change jar can be placed by the register so cashiers have change readily available for anyone who needs it.

3. **Food service provider** – *Has the food service provider changed? Students complain that the food tastes different and that they are no longer permitted to purchase two pieces of pizza on pizza days.*

SLS is under contract with Ovations, the same food service provider that it has had for several years. Salt shakers are no longer available in the lunchrooms, but the food is the same. Students can order two pieces of pizza on Wednesdays for \$3.10 or one piece of pizza as part of a complete meal for \$2.85. SLS is trying to put the lunch program on Headmaster so that students can swipe a card to buy lunch. Parents would still have to send in a check to cover lunches.

#### **G. Remodeling School Bathrooms**

*Can anything be done to update the School bathrooms? The faucets and tile need to be updated, and the bathrooms never seem to smell very good. Can any part of SLS's fundraising proceeds go toward remodeling projects at the School?*

The new cleaning company has done a great job on the bathrooms this year. Mrs. Ciolino will have an architect look at the bathrooms and assess what can be done to improve them. She suggested adding automatic faucets and jet towel hand dryers that dry hands in about 10 seconds. Mrs. Ciolino will have a plan and budget to assess this project in January or February. Nothing prevents the School from holding fundraisers to remodel the bathrooms.

#### **H. National Junior Honor Society**

*What is the status of NJHS? A number of 8<sup>th</sup> graders were inducted two years ago.*

The administration is looking for a teacher representative to run NJHS and hopes to start meetings in January. While all students who graduate with a 3.5 g.p.a. or higher will now receive cords, something additional will be given to NJHS members at graduation.

#### **I. Accommodation for Students with Special Dietary Needs**

*Can SLS make a microwave available in the lunchroom for those students with special dietary restrictions who cannot eat hot lunch?*

Yes. A microwave can be added to the storage area near the freezers where these students can heat up their lunches. Parents will have to let the lunchroom supervisors know that their children have special dietary restrictions so that their children can use the microwave.

## **J. Problems with SLS E-mail**

1. *What is the problem with the SLS e-mail system? Notices sent out recently seem to get to some, but not all, parents.*

**The IT Department is looking into the problem. It appears to be a problem caused by either Headmaster or the SLS internet service provider.**

2. *Can notices e-mailed to parents be published on the SLS website?*

**Yes. That way, parents can check the website for new information sent out by SLS.**