

# South Kingstown Public Schools

District Newsletter

electronic edition

April, 2009

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## **Say Hello to Our New Superintendent – Kristen Stringfellow**

***Attend the Public Welcoming Reception at Peace Dale on May 6***

At its February 24 meeting the School Committee appointed Kristen Stringfellow as the next Superintendent of the South Kingstown schools. Kristen is currently the Assistant Superintendent for the Scituate schools and will officially take over here on July 1. Earlier in her career she worked as a school based administrator and an elementary school teacher. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Rhode Island College in Psychology and Education. She completed two Masters of Education programs, one in elementary and early childhood curriculum at Rhode Island College and the second in education administration at Providence College. She holds a Doctoral degree from Johnson & Wales.

Kristen was chosen after a search process that began back in October when the School Committee first advertised the position. Eleven candidates applied for the position and a panel of community members was appointed to review their resumes and supporting materials. With the panel's input, the School Committee conducted preliminary interviews and chose three finalists.

The finalists came to South Kingstown and met with town officials and interviewed with school administrators, the community screening panel, and the public. School committee members also conducted site visits for each finalist. With all that information gathered, the School Committee deliberated at length and offered Kristen the position.

Transition work is also underway. This task is assigned to the Professional Development subcommittee, which has been meeting regularly to design and oversee the transition process. It is expected that Kristen will actually begin work in the district in June in order to ensure a smooth turnover.

**A welcoming reception is scheduled for our community to meet the new Superintendent in the Peace Dale Elementary School Library on Wednesday, May 6, from 7:00 to 9:00 in the evening. Please come to meet and greet her!**

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## **How Should We Measure The Success Of Our Schools?**

*Please Take a Survey and Let Us Know*

Our school system has a report card and a set of indicators by which progress is measured. The School Committee wants to know whether you think the things we measure are the right ones and developed a survey to find out. The current set of indicators can be found on our district report card, available at [fc.skschools.net](http://fc.skschools.net).

Last year the School Committee surveyed the community to find out what it is doing well and where it needs to improve. An area in need of improvement was engaging the community in identifying outcomes. As a result, the School Committee's Accountability Subcommittee developed a survey to find out how you think our outcomes should be measured.

Our accountability system is based on three core questions: (1) How well are students in our school doing? (2) How well do we support teaching and learning in our schools? And (3) how well is the school district managed? The survey is designed to get your thinking about what data to gather on these questions. The survey is open-ended to get the widest range of possibilities and not to limit or restrict answers. It also asks demographic questions so we can know a little about what is most important to different areas of the community.

The survey is web-based and can be reached through the following link. We ask that you complete it by April 17 so that we can begin the work of analyzing the results and reviewing our indicators. The link is also at the district website [fc.skschools.net](http://fc.skschools.net) and is being sent out through our list serves.

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=cc4T\\_2fjNFjOt6U9K9uSsyGg\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=cc4T_2fjNFjOt6U9K9uSsyGg_3d_3d)

On that same topic, some changes were recently made to our report card. There are three notable updates:

1. The communities against which we benchmark ourselves were changed in order to "raise the bar." Over the past two years our schools met most of their targets, so we needed to become more rigorous. The communities that now form our demographic cohort include Chariho, Lincoln, North Kingstown, and Portsmouth.
2. Targets are now set by ranking. From among the five communities (South Kingstown plus the four communities noted above) our goal is to rank first or second. This is seen as much simpler and easier to understand than the prior method that used a formula to calculate a target number.
3. We now report the percentage of proficient students instead of the state proficiency index. Each year's proficiency percentage is available six months before the index so we can keep the report card more current and is a more easily understood number.

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## **School Committee Approves Middle School Reorganization**

*Step to Save Costs While Maintaining Programs*

At its March 10 meeting the School Committee approved the reorganization of our middle schools as a cost saving measure. Under the new plan, all 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders will attend Curtis Corner Middle School and all 6<sup>th</sup> graders will attend Broad Rock Middle School. The move allows the district to capture staffing efficiencies to save approximately \$600,000 while keeping programs virtually intact. This change was the topic of discussion at two budget hearings and a School Committee meeting.

The reorganization is driven by the declining enrollment combined with the state of the economy that has reduced state and local revenues available to support schools. When the two middle schools opened, they were designed for up to 600 students and had nearly that many. Each middle school now has fewer than 450 students. The combined grades 7 and 8 school will have 580 students and grade 6 school just under 300.

The program in the grades 7 and 8 school will look just like that in our current middle schools with the same unified arts and team structure. However, we will no longer need to have split grade teams with three teams for each grade level and can establish looping teams as well. While there will be only one set of sports teams at the middle level, we will add additional teams to maintain high participation levels.

The grade 6 school will be a hybrid model, combining elements of middle and elementary structures as a transitional support. There will be content specific teachers and a goal is to increase mathematics instructional time, which drops between elementary and middle grades as other subjects take on additional curricular importance. An intramural after school program will be incorporated as part of the school's program.

The transportation schedule will remain similar to what it is now, but will require additional transfers. Grade 6 through 8 students will ride busses to the high school and there transfer to either Broad Rock or Curtis Corner, repeating the process in the afternoon. Additionally, students living near the high school will be able to walk there and board their transfer bus directly.

As enrollment declined we were able to proportionally reduce the number of classroom teachers, but have not been able to make proportional reductions in support and unified arts staff. For example, we still have the same number of guidance counselors, administrators, and music teachers given our two school structure. In the reorganized model we are able to capture proportional savings in those areas. The staff savings are detailed in the table below.

<b>Current vs. Reorganized Staffing</b>				
<b>Area</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Gr 7/8</b>	<b>Gr 6</b>	<b>Save</b>
Reading	6	3	1	2
FCS	2	1	0	1
Art	2	1	0.6	0.4
Music	4	2	1.5	0.5
Computer	2	1	0	1
H/PE	6	3	1.2	1.8
Language	2	1	0	1
Added subject	0	1	0	-1
Admin	4	2	1	1
Guidance	4	2	1	1
Library	2	1	1	0
Nurse	2	1	1	0
Special Needs	14	8	5	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>13.3</b>	<b>9.7</b>

Scheduling and organizational work is underway, including transition planning for students and families. A public presentation is planned for the April 28 School Committee meeting to bring the community up to date on our work and to solicit feedback before details are finalized.

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## **School Budget at \$59,611,962, a 0.43% Decrease from the Current Year**

*Public Hearings April 6 and 7 at 7:00 PM at Town Hall*

In a very difficult fiscal climate, the school funding now before the community as part of the overall South Kingstown town budget is \$255,071 less than this year. The drop comes from a decrease in available revenue in state aid and level town funding. As a result, the schools are eliminating 25 positions from the current budgeted staffing level. A large part of those reductions come from the middle school reorganization described above.

At this time, it is still very uncertain what will occur with state aid. The Governor's budget allocates \$1 million in federal stimulus money to South Kingstown, but makes a corresponding reduction in state support. Our budget is built on the overall state support in the Governor's proposed budget. This amount is \$10,364,027, a decrease of \$184,671 over this year's budgeted aid.

Even at this date, we still do not know how much aid we will actually receive this year (2008-2009) as it is still being considered by the legislature. The schools are holding back on expenditures in anticipation of a possible state aid cut given the state's deficit position.

Over the course of the budget process the School Committee reduced the budget in stages as the depth of the economic situation and the level of available revenue became clearer. These reductions were reviewed at several budget workshops and regular meetings. Details and presentation materials are available at [fc.skschools.net](http://fc.skschools.net).