

Tom Taylor's Report on the Somerville Public Schools
November 8, 2012

➤ **Community Forum on Education**

More than 75 members of the Somerville community participated in the **Community Forum on Education – Supporting All Learners** on Sunday, November 4, 2012. Guest presenter Debbie LeeKeenan, Director of the Eliot Pearson Children's School at Tufts University, led a presentation and discussion on Differentiated Instruction and Learning. This was the second in a series of Community Forums on education which began last March as a collaborative effort organized by the District's Somerville Family Learning Collaborative, Progress Together for Somerville and the Somerville School Committee. The Forums are sponsored by the Mayor's Office, Somerville Administrators' Association, the Somerville Council of PTAs, and the Somerville Teachers Association.

➤ **Update on Early Learning Challenge Grant**

As noted in my last report, Somerville was one of only 5 communities across the state to be awarded a Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant. An Alignment Coordinator position has been posted and applications are being reviewed as they are received. Initial work on designing and developing a database to support mapping efforts as part of this grant is expected to start within 2 weeks. As part of the grant, the District will also be participating in a study of communities that are implementing strategic plans to address the "Birth to Grade 3" alignment, and is coordinating with the EEC (Early Education and Care) on this study.

➤ **Pakistan Visitors**

On Thursday, November 1st, Somerville Public Schools hosted three Public Administrators from Pakistan as part of the Massachusetts Municipal Association's "U.S. Pakistan Professional Partnership Program". Guests were:

- Ms. Rehana Farid, a social welfare officer with the Social Welfare Organization, Special Education and Women's Empowerment Department;
- Ms. Iram Saba, Assistant Director (Veterinary Officer) with the Livestock and Dairy Development Department, Government of Balochistan; and
- Ms. Saima Najam, a Judge with the Family Court Hub Chowski.

The guests had an opportunity to visit the Argenziano School; sit in on a District Data Planning Team meeting; get a tour of Somerville High School from Mr. Oteri, 3 high school students and Mr. DeSimone; participate in a Social Studies class where they addressed questions from students for the entire class period; and observe a Strings class and a Chorus rehearsal. The Culinary Arts program hosted them for lunch at the Highlander Café.

➤ **MTA President Visits Winter Hill School**

MTA President Paul Toner visited the Winter Hill School, Somerville's FIRST Innovation School, on Wednesday, November 7th at 11 a.m.

➤ **The Visiting Mexican Artists Program**

Students from the Kennedy School and the Winter Hill School benefited from an Artist in Residence program called "*The Visiting Mexican Artists Program: The Dancing Chickens of Ventura Fabian.*" Master woodcarver, Mr. Ventura Fabian, from a village near Oaxaca, Mexico was joined by his son Norberto in teaching students about this intricate craft. Aside

from learning about the art of woodcarving, students also had the opportunity to explore the language, history and culture of Mexico.

➤ **New Salad Bars Open**

Students at the Healey School and the West Somerville Neighborhood School have ANOTHER healthy lunch-time option. The Healey Salad Bar opened on November 1st, and the West Somerville Salad Bar opened this past Monday.

➤ **The SFLC's Early Childhood Fair: Family Literacy Celebration**

The annual Early Childhood Family Literacy Celebration will be held on Saturday, November 17th, at the Healey School Gymnasium from 10am to noon. A number of community partner organizations will be on hand at this FREE event with activities for children, and information about the many resources available to Somerville families with young children.