

SUDBURY TOWN CRIER**COLUMN: Please support L-S technology improvements**

the Lincoln Sudbury Regional District School Committee

Published 1:26 p.m. ET April 30, 2014 | Updated 1:26 p.m. ET April 30, 2014

On any given day at Lincoln Sudbury Regional High School, a student wants to log into the school's internal network to review material on course Wikipages or to collaborate on team homework, but cannot do so reliably. One academic department is not preparing lesson plans that use technology, because valuable class time would be lost trying to connect to both the internal school network and the external Internet. Administrators' work takes longer as they wait to reach external servers or to the aging in-house servers. These are some of the things that students and staff would like to do today at L-S, but cannot.

At other area high schools, students and staff accomplish these things without so much as a thought. Moreover, they are able to do things that L-S can only dream about. A student or a teacher who cannot be in the classroom at some of these other schools can nonetheless participate fully from a remote location. A sick day no longer means an absent day. Students are able to collaborate with others anywhere in the world and present their work in conferences. With devices approved by the school, all students have access to exactly the same material whether they are at school or at home.

At this point, some may ask, are these schools pursuing technology for technology's sake, or is technology being used smartly with an unrelenting primary focus on education? The answer ought to be that, at a school, technology is in service of education, and not that education is in service of technology. A student with a good teacher can study "Hamlet" from a book and learn a lot. But when the classroom learning is aided by an online snippet of Sir Laurence Olivier or Sir John Gielgud playing the Danish prince, with a teacher's expert commentary and a vignette from an online course by a literature scholar, the level of insight and connection to literature increases. When software such as GeoGebra is used to teach mathematics and science in a dynamic manner, not only do the concepts come alive in a vivid fashion, but the method also engages those who benefit more from visual

learning.

A lot of students in Sudbury and Lincoln are going from technology-rich homes to a technology-poor high school. All of us have updated our home computers, devices and phones, along with the Internet connection, at our homes since 2003. But at L-S, that has not happened. L-S was leading the area schools in educational technology use in the late 90's. We then moved to the new building in 2004. Since then, first because the technology at the high school was new, and later due to budgetary constraints (which included staffing reductions), we no longer attended to our technology on an annual basis. Now, we are lagging behind because of an obsolete technology infrastructure including a poor network backbone.

An independent consultant retained by L-S to evaluate the educational technology at the high school has called the infrastructure "below sub-standard." Starting this year, L-S would like to begin upgrading the technology infrastructure at the high school. This year, we want to upgrade the network backbone and some critical servers. Network backbone would include rebuilding a robust network foundation, augmenting Wi-Fi accessibility throughout the campus, and securing a firewall to provide threat and content filtering. We also want to upgrade some critical servers used for academics and administration. In future years, we want to address educational technology in the classroom, continue to upgrade critical servers where necessary, and return to funding annual scheduled updates of the educational technology infrastructure. Once the network infrastructure is improved, we could deploy cloud computing best suited to L-S, and then student devices. Learning could then move forward in ways that we may not imagine today.

Planning to upgrade L-S educational technology has been going on for over two years. It started with a presentation to the school committee in October 2012. L-S has been meeting and discussing its needs with both Lincoln and Sudbury officials since that time. We are grateful for the presence and feedback of various officials at our School Committee meeting on Oct. 15, 2013. We took what we heard at that meeting to heart; we hired an independent outside consultant to review and oversee the project. An important point that we heard at that meeting is that LS should not only meet today's needs, but also should prepare a solid foundation that can meet tomorrow's advances. The project milestones are: study the current network and identify the bottlenecks, perform a wireless coverage survey, develop requirements and specifications, receive proposals from vendors, choose a state-approved vendor and start the work over the summer of 2014. We are proceeding

along this plan. We have had pre-sales presentations from three vendors, and we asked them to refine their proposals.

We ask for the support of the community. Please vote for Article 17 at the 2014 Sudbury Annual Town Meeting.

Members of the Lincoln Sudbury Regional District School Committee: Radha R. Gargeya, Elena Kleifges, Nancy Marshall, Kevin J. Matthews, Patty Mostue, and Gerald Quirk.