

*Approved by the Rye School Board at its September 17, 2008 meeting.*

**RYE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
RYE, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

The monthly meeting of the School Board of the Rye School District was held at the Rye Junior High School on August 5, 2008 at 4:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:**

School Board Members: Ian Grant, Betty Anderson, Peggy Balboni,  
Jeanne Moynahan, Mike Schwartz.

Administrators: Dr. George A. Cushing, Superintendent  
Chris Pollet, Principal, Rye Junior High  
Patricia-Lane Richardson, Principal, Rye Elementary  
Linda Walsh, Instruction & Curriculum Coordinator

Staff Kathleen Cole, Tim Moynahan

Residents/Visitors: Joe Cummins and his children

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Mr. Grant called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:**

On a motion by Mrs. Moynahan and seconded by Mr. Schwartz, the public minutes of July 2, 2008 were accepted as modified. Vote: unanimously approved.

Communications - Dr. Cushing stated the Rye School District had received a the Commissioner's Public School Approval Designation Report from Ed Murdough of New Hampshire State Department of Education giving the district an 'approved' status rating. This rating applies through 2013. Ms. Anderson asked if there are approvals beyond 'approved'; such as 'approved with distinction'. Dr. Cushing will look into exactly what ratings are available and more detail of the standards considered.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:**

Dr. Cushing introduced Linda Walsh as the recently hired Instruction & Curriculum Coordinator for SAU #50. Ms. Balboni, Mr. Pollet, and Ms. Richardson were all part of the committee that reviewed resumes and conducted interviews for this position. Mrs. Walsh has a very strong background, comes from a high-performing district, and has experience with gifted and talented as well as differentiated instruction. Mrs. Walsh has been busily studying CORE documents as well as our Professional Development Master Plan and Learning Compact. Mrs. Walsh stated she is very excited to be here and feels like there are many great things to be done. She is truly looking forward to meeting staff in the weeks ahead. Mrs. Walsh then took a moment to personally introduce herself and shake hands with each board member.

Dr. Cushing stated that the aforementioned Professional Development Master Plan had been accepted exactly as submitted by New Hampshire Department of Education. He said this was a credit to the hard work of the professional development committee (of which Mrs. Balboni is a member) as it is rare for the state to not request edits of any sort.

Dr. Cushing handed out a memorandum from the SAU 50 attorney's Soule, Leslie, Kidder, Sayward & Loughman highlighting recent developments in Labor and Employment Law. The informative memo included developments pertaining to teacher non-renewal, collective bargaining, and the NH retirement system.

Dr. Cushing shared an article from the July 6<sup>th</sup> issue of the Portsmouth Herald. The article spoke of professional learning communities the Stratham and Exeter school districts are implementing. As a starting point, they reference the book On Common Ground by Richard Dufour, Robert Eaker, and Rebecca DuFour. Dr. Cushing chose this book for his administrators to read prior to their August 13<sup>th</sup> retreat. The book emphasizes that everyone must take responsibility to make certain no child is left behind.

## **PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

### **Rye Elementary School - Ms. Richardson**

Ms. Richardson gave the following summary of new staff at RES:

- Ms. Rosalind Robichaud - Grade 5 teacher
- Ms. Kristine Dawson - RES school nurse
- Ms. Linda Perrot - Guidance counselor/psychologist
- Ms. Sally O'Brien - Spanish teacher
- Ms. Michelle Blaisdell-Wirth - .5 music teacher
- Ms. Brittany Canner - paraprofessional

Ms. Richardson extended her thanks to Jim Gordon, Matt Krol, Chris Pimental, and Al Rousseau for having the school in such great shape. She noted the following improvements to the building: grade 3/5 wing - paint, new flooring, Room 100 - many renovations, and Room 101 - new ceiling and lights.

Ms. Richardson said Rye Rec. has moved into their new space which will be shared with the music teacher during the school day.

Ms. Richardson also noted the new sound system in the cafeteria/gym and said it sounds amazing.

Ms. Richardson said Judy Prince is giving workshops for Microsoft 07 which is now on all classroom teachers' laptops. Ms. Prince and Mr. Moynahan are also setting up new computers at both RES and RJH.

Ms. Richardson has received a request for a 'Clean Air Zone' in front of the school. She would like to install two signs marking this a no-idling area to encourage this.

Schedules are 90% complete thanks to the efforts of Mr. Pollet, Mr. Southworth, and Mrs. Berry.

Teacher letters will be sent home to students on August 15<sup>th</sup>. Parent-input letters will be part of the first day packets sent home with students.

### *Review of RES Parent/Student Handbook*

Early dismissal - Ms. Richardson indicated there is an ongoing problem of parents requesting early (2:30) dismissal of their student in an effort to avoid the line at regular pick-up time. These requests create a distraction in the classroom for all students and the teacher. Ms. Richardson is planning to address this in a cover letter to be sent home with the handbook.

Mr. Grant said it is typically the kindergartner parents, or first time RES parents, who actually read the handbook in its entirety and it may be helpful to highlight new information and important changes in a cover letter.

Page 9 - Ms. Balboni asked for clarification of notices required if a student is following an after school routine different than his/her usual one.

Page 10 - Ms. Balboni suggested curriculum questions/concerns be addressed via the parent advisory council. Ms. Balboni will propose verbiage addressing curriculum review and Ms. Richardson will add information regarding the parent advisory council.

Mr. Grant feels the web addresses and website are not very user-friendly or intuitive. Mr. Pollet said he and Ms. Richardson are working on this very topic with Mr. Moynahan.

Ms. Anderson said Mrs. Moynahan's email address should be formatted to match the others. Ms. Anderson initially questioned including the bullying information in two locations but after discussion suggested it be kept as is and simply include a cross reference to page 22. Ms. Balboni suggested an x-ref for the discipline policy on page 21 as well.

Mr. Grant suggested MP3 player be changed back to Ipod as it is a more widely recognized terminology and generally accepted to cover all MP3 players.

Page 8 - Mr. Grant asked there be additional verbiage regarding behavior on school buses: 'No spitting, no verbal abuse, no physical abuse.' Ms. Richardson suggested including a disclaimer at the beginning of the bus section with language such as "... includes but not limited to ...".

### **Rye Junior High School - Mr. Pollet**

#### RJH Handbook

This year the parent/student handbook was printed as part of the agenda book. Although the paper copy of the handbook has already been printed because of the need to get the agenda books printed, Mr. Pollet will send the handbook to the board for review/edits and he will make changes to the electronic version which will be posted on the website. Mr. Pollet will refer to the online version of the handbook in his opening letter.

#### Music

Mr. Pollet shared a proposal for the “America Sings” program. Ms. Blaisdell-Wirth has done extensive research into this program and it presents a great opportunity for those in chorus and has a wonderful community service component. America Sings is a non-competitive choral music festival culminating in a two-day celebration in Washington, D.C. in April. Ms. Blaisdell-Wirth is looking into costs and thinks a program like this would do a lot to boost choral participation. She would be more than happy to make a board presentation at the September meeting.

Mr. Schwartz asked if the program is open to all choral participants. Mr. Pollet confirmed that it is and that Chorus is now part of the school day; they built 3 blocks in the middle of the week for band/chorus instead of at the end of the day as it has been in the past.

Mrs. Balboni asked if students who performed in band would also be eligible for chorus. Mr. Pollet stated that Ms. Blaisdell-Wirth and Ms. Papoutsy are coordinating schedules to allow students to participate in both band and chorus. Mr. Pollet said the advent of the program stemmed from the community service piece.

Mr. Schwartz said this type of program is great but there will need to be further discussion/research around funding. He feels we could be doing more of these programs involving students in other areas; we just need to look into funding and determine the level of school-sponsorship.

Mr. Pollet said that they came across the program after the budget season but he wanted the program considered for the future.

Mr. Schwartz said there is a smorgasbord of wonderful opportunities for students and, even if we do not have funding for programs, it would be nice to highlight all of the enrichment opportunities available to students.

Dr. Cushing offered to get material from Portsmouth that addresses fundraising options as this material may provide some ideas for the future.

Mr. Pollet said that due to adjustments and necessary schedule modifications within the music department at RJH, a .1 percussion music position is necessary to provide instruction during the school day. We have funding available within the budget and both Ms. Blaisdell-Wirth and Ms. Papoutsy had several ideas for instructors.

Mrs. Balboni asked if the .1 position would be spread over the week. Mr. Pollet said it would be four 45-minute lessons.

Mrs. Balboni made a motion, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, to approve the .1 percussion music instruction position at RJH as presented. Vote: unanimously approved.

#### RJH Handbook *continued*

Mr. Grant noted there were policies missing from the proposed RJH handbook. Mr. Pollet explained that, in an effort to streamline things, he references policies and refers to the website as applicable. He asked that board members let him know of any omissions. Mr. Schwartz noted the difference of content between the RES and RJH handbooks due to different student ages and needs.

There was discussion of creating a single handbook that applies to both schools. Ms. Richardson thinks this is something we could consider next year.

## **FINANCIAL**

### **Manifests:**

- Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to approve the manifest of July 12, 2008 through July 18, 2008 in the amount of \$625,109.04 Vote: Unanimously approved.
- Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to approve the manifest of July 19, 2008 through July 31, 2008 in the amount of \$80,986.60 Vote: Unanimously approved.
- Mr. Schwartz proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to approve the manifest of July 1, 2008 through July 11, 2008 in the amount of \$187,147.87 Vote: Unanimously approved.

### **Other:**

#### Year-end summary

Mr. Grant handed out a year-end summary for the Rye School District. While he applauded Mr. Katkin for being conservative, he feels that, going forward, we could work on reducing PHS tuition in the budget. There is a \$114,523.73 2007-08 Unreserved Fund Balance after tuitions are removed. The good news is there is tuition money going back to the town.

## **SECRETARY'S REPORT *continued:***

On a motion by Mr. Schwartz and seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, the non-public minutes of July 2, 2008 were accepted and sealed. Vote: unanimously approved.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

### **Goals:**

Mr. Grant led a discussion reviewing goals initially set at the July 2<sup>nd</sup> retreat. He stated that tonight's purpose is to determine the 'who/how/when' for each goal.

### **Curriculum:**

1. Who – Curriculum Coordinator, Principals, and Superintendent  
How – Survey from Learning Compact  
When – Survey (October 2009), Teachers – 2008-2009 school year
2. Who – Curriculum Coordinator, Principals, and Teachers  
How – Meetings and reports, documents online  
When – June 2009

Ms. Balboni noted that Linda Walsh is currently aligning CORE documents to NH standards and can provide an update in October. Mr. Pollet stated Mrs. Walsh has clearly identified areas for immediate attention. Mr. Schwartz recognized that implementing the documents with teachers is critical and he would like Mrs. Walsh to provide information on how we will get there as part of her update. Ms. Richardson noted that teachers are actually already working on this via the teacher to teacher program. Ms. Richardson said she and Mr. Pollet are working to identify any holes and Mrs. Walsh is doing the same at the state level.

3. Who – Superintendent, RJH Principal, Mr. Schwartz, Ms. Ellwood
4. Who – Tom Southworth with Joanne Costanzo  
How – presentation, ultimately a booklet
5. Implement fully school-sponsored Destination Imagination program  
Who – Principals, DI Manager  
How -  
When – September 2008

Goal # 5 above is a new goal created out of a discussion lead by Ms. Anderson. She noted that there had been discussion at the November budget meetings of having a formal school-sponsored DI program. Ms. Balboni had noted the difficulty in getting managers. Ms. Anderson indicated that, in November, the Board approved a stipend of \$2,400 for a DI Manager, splitting the funding between RES and RJH. The intent was for a school employee to take over that role, like that of the athletic director, to manage the DI program, as the athletic program is managed, to ensure that any child who would like to participate will be able to do so, without depending upon parent volunteers. Ms. Cole raised a concern about being able to get teacher coaches. She said she tried to facilitate getting coaches and it is often a difficulty getting the commitment from parents. Ms. Anderson said that, while it is ideal to have someone from within our school serve as the DI Manager and coaches, we should pursue other options such as hiring a retired teacher who has the time to devote to the program.

Mr. Schwartz made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan to accept the 2008-2009 goals as modified.  
Vote: Unanimously approved.

Mr. Grant thanked everyone for their input and recognized that this is the earliest the goals have been finalized.

*RJH Handbook continued*

Mrs. Balboni suggested the board approve the RJH handbook as is and deal with amendments after the board has had an opportunity to fully review the handbook and provide feedback at the September board meeting.

Mr. Schwartz made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, to accept the RJH handbook as part of the agenda book with the understanding that expansions and clarifications would be part of an online version of the handbook. Vote: Unanimously approved.

**Verizon land lease update**

Mr. Schwartz said that Verizon has re-initiated its inquiry about putting a cell tower on school land. He, Dr. Cushing, and Mrs. Moynahan met with Verizon representatives and gave them the revised blueprint of the land, including the proposal for a track. It is possible the Verizon venture could fund part or all of the track. Revenue costs are now projected to be \$20,000 not \$12,000. The next step is getting a cost estimate so Verizon can make a proposal.

Mr. Grant asked if there was a possibility of the associated building going underground. Mr. Schwartz said the Verizon rep said that is not an option. Mr. Grant said he has always been open to proposals, but does not want to spend a lot of time on this if it is also going to create issues with neighbors. He feels the

Board has as its focus education of students. Mr. Schwartz said we will proceed with plans for the track and see what Verizon proposes.

**Other**

Ms. Cole thanked the board for supporting Ms. Richardson's request to tighten early dismissal request procedures.

**STANDING COMMITTEES:**

A. Physical Plant

RES – Ms. Richardson reports that cabinets are not yet installed, but she is hopeful they will be in by the end of August.

RJH – There is new carpet in Janet Smith's office, the foyers, and ramp. Music rooms are done and Mr. Gordon and his staff are at least one week ahead of schedule. Mr. Fortier is doing some of the painting and the stage curtains are in.

B. Special Issues – None

C. Rye Education Foundation

REF will not be hosting a golf tournament this year and they are currently looking at alternatives.

D. Secondary School Advisory meeting is scheduled for September 16, 2008 and AREA committee meeting is scheduled for October 8, 2008.

E. Parent Teacher Association

Mrs. Moynahan will be the membership coordinator for 2008-2009

F. Rye Recreation – Nothing further

G. Communications – None

H. Technology

August 20 – volunteer staff development day for RJH staff to hear 1-1 proposal and hear from a Wells, ME teacher where the program is up and running. The afternoon will offer technical training. Mr. Pollet has received a tremendous response to the staff development day.

I. Curriculum – None

J. Peer Schools – None

K. Athletics – Remove from future agendas

L. Bus Committee

Mr. Grant expressed frustration with the bus company on dragging its feet to respond to requested changes for the PHS bus routes. He plans to continue to finalize this in the next week.

Ms. Anderson suggested we negotiate a late start on election days with the bus company.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Nominations

Dr. Cushing placed Michelle Blaisdell-Wirth into nomination for a .4 increase to her existing music teaching position. This, combined with her .6 music teaching position at RJH will bring her to a 1.0 teaching position. Mr. Schwartz made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Balboni to accept Ms. Blaisdell-Wirth for the additional .4 position with the breakdown being that Ms. Blaisdell-Wirth will be 50% at RES and 50% at RJH and Ms. Papoutsy will be 50% at RES and 50% at RJH. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Dr. Cushing placed Kristine Dawson into nomination for a 100% school nurse position at RES granting Mrs. Dawson the maximum of 3 years credit of work experience when determining her pay step. Mr. Schwartz made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan to accept Mrs. Dawson for the position. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Additionally the board unanimously approved the creation of a .1 percussion music position at RJH.

Mrs. Moynahan asked if it is still the tradition that new staff come to the September board meeting for introduction. Mr. Grant said it is and the September meeting will start at 5:30 to allow for that at the beginning of the meeting.

### **Policies**

**IJ** – Instructional Materials – the board reviewed the policy and, after discussion, made several edits. On a motion by Mr. Schwartz, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan the policy was accepted as amended as first reading. Vote: Unanimously approved.

**JICK** - Student Safety and Violence Prevention – the board reviewed the policy and discussed at length the need to include teasing and disrespectful behavior as part of this policy. Ms. Anderson said she believes there could be a two-fold approach with JICK policy at the SAU level to meet legal requirements and additionally a section of the handbook could differentiate between teasing and bullying. Mr. Grant said a parent is likely to refer to a policy and therefore it is important to define teasing as part of JICK policy. Ms. Anderson suggested referring parents to a legal reference for a more detailed definition of bullying and keep our policy simple without trying to give examples of bullying in the policy. It was agreed Mr. Schwartz would draft a paragraph related to disrespectful behavior.

**JLDBA** – Behavior Management and Intervention for Students – On a motion by Mr. Schwartz, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, policy JLDBA was adopted. Vote: Unanimously approved.

**JICD** – Student Conduct, Discipline and Due Process - On a motion by Mr. Schwartz, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, policy JICD was adopted as modified. Vote: Unanimously approved.

**JICFA** – Hazing - On a motion by Mr. Schwartz, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, policy JICFA was adopted as modified. Vote: Unanimously approved.

**IICA** – Field Trips - On a motion by Mr. Schwartz, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, policy IICA was adopted. Vote: Unanimously approved.

**GBH** – Motor Vehicle Seat Belt Use for District Employees - On a motion by Mr. Schwartz, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, policy GBH. Vote: Unanimously approved.

**KF** – Use of School Facilities – the board reviewed this policy and after discussion made several edits. It was agreed to review at September meeting as second reading/for adoption.

The policy review process was discussed and the board agreed to try reviewing policies at a special meeting every other month with the understanding that those requiring immediate attention would be on the monthly agenda as needed.

**NON-PUBLIC SESSION:**

Mr. Schwartz proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to go into non-public session at 8:10 p.m. to discuss personnel. Unanimously approved on a role call vote.

**PUBLIC SESSION:**

The board returned to public session at 9:05 p.m.

**AJOURN:**

Mr. Schwartz proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to adjourn at 9:07 p.m. Vote: Unanimously approved.

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School Board Secretary