

*Approved by the Rye School Board at its March 19, 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 February 20, 2008 at 6:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:**

School Board Members: Ian Grant, Betty Anderson, Peggy Balboni,  
Michael Schwartz.  
Absent: Gary Dodds

Administrators: Dr. George A. Cushing, Superintendent  
Chris Pollet, Principal, Rye Junior High  
Patricia-Lane Richardson, Principal, Rye Elementary

Staff Robin Ellwood, Jeanne Brown, Sheila Adams, Kathleen Cole, Tom  
Southworth, Katie Jarvis.

Residents/Visitors: Jeanne Moynahan, Maggie Duffy-Durkin, Joe Cummins, several  
RJH students.

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Mr. Grant called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

**NON-PUBLIC SESSION:**

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, a motion to go into a non-public session at 6:05 p.m. to discuss personnel issues. Unanimously approved on a roll call vote.

**PUBLIC SESSION:**

The Board returned to public session at 6:40 p.m.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:**

Ms. Anderson proposed, and Mr. Schwartz seconded, a motion to approve the School Board public minutes of January 16, 2007 as amended. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Communications:

- Dr. Cushing received a letter from Mr. Pollet requesting coverage of the hotel cost for two teachers at RJH attending the NSTA National Convention.
- Dr. Cushing received correspondence regarding the PHS Graduation celebration. PHS is asking for a contribution of \$1,000 (\$250 from each Board) from SAU 50 in support of this event. Ms. Anderson proposed a motion, seconded by Ms. Balboni to approve this payment. Vote: Unanimously approved.
- Dr. Cushing received information on the New Hampshire State Scholar program. He will look into this further and report back.
- The Local Government Center is asking us to join in support of a legal fund regarding the retirement system. Dr. Cushing spoke to our attorney who would like more information.

She will discuss this at a meeting she is attending in March with other attorneys and will report back.

- Dr. Cushing passed out information on Measuring Aspirations and Participation for 2007, which discusses New Hampshire high school seniors' plans and preparation for college.
- Dr. Cushing received a letter from Vicki Scally thanking him and the Board on their agreement to allow her son to attend RES kindergarten for tuition.

## **REPORTS:**

### **Superintendent:**

#### **PHS**

- Dr. Cushing passed out the adopted 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 PHS school calendar. He stated that PHS did take into consideration the wishes of SAU 50. Dr. Cushing will re-work the Rye School District calendar before the next Board meeting.
- Dr. Cushing discussed the PHS budget process with Jeff Collins and reports that they have been trying to accommodate our needs. They have added a full-time math and business teacher. They did not add a foreign language teacher but that will be a top priority for next year. More information will be presented at the Secondary School Advisory Committee meeting on March 5, 2008. Ms. Anderson stated she is extremely disappointed that the Portsmouth Board is not asking for at least the 3.5% the City Counsel requested considering that many classes are over enrolled including the honors classes.
- The Rachel's Challenge presentation for the middle school is scheduled for April 3, 2008 at PHS. The PTA will be funding a portion of this presentation.

#### **NECAP**

- Mr. Southworth presented a summary of PHS (midyear). The scores for the 11<sup>th</sup> grade will be coming out soon and he will forward this information to the Board and study the results including the male to female ratio. Mr. Southworth made the following recommendations: He stated students need more review one or two weeks before testing, especially with math skills. Ms. Richardson stated that the Math Trailblazers program we use does not align with the NECAP test and puts us at a disadvantage with regard to test scores. She would like to do a two week math overview in the fall and maybe pilot a new math program to see what is on the market currently. Mr. Grant looked at peer schools to see where Rye was in comparison and is appreciative that the State gave the scores differentiating between regular education students and students with IEPs. He thinks as a school our goal is ultimately to score 80-90%+ in the proficient and proficient with distinction range. He further stated that he did not see a large gender gap in the scores except in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade where boys scored better in reading than math compared to the girls. He indicated in his analysis he saw a few additional things worth noting: 1- 6<sup>th</sup> grade without IEP scores 100% were Proficient or above in math and reading! And 2- that writing scores were lower than he thought was sufficient in the two grades tested, 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, although he noted that the same was true with the peer schools except North Hampton in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. He asked if we flag students with a noticeable drop in scores to understand if there might be any proactive steps that can be taken. Mr. Southworth stated they do flag them and work with the teachers and the students to improve. Mr. Schwartz stated that the high school scores will be out tomorrow.

## **Elementary School**

- RES held their Science Fair this week.
- Ms. Richardson passed out the latest numbers for kindergarten registration for next year.
- As a direct result of recycling efforts, RES has reduced the cost of waste management by obtaining a larger container and reducing the number of pick ups. Ms. Anderson thought we should earmark some of the savings for a student council charity or for the recycling program. Ms. Richardson also stated they could use new recycling containers.
- Ms. Richardson reported they have confirmed the substitutes they will have in place for maternity leaves.
- Bonnie Vadala has posted tech news on the RES website.
- Mr. Grant commented that the science fair at RES was truly amazing. He asked if the 5<sup>th</sup> grade tech assessments had been completed. Ms. Richardson replied they had. He stated that it would be nice to quantify where the students are and where they need help for both RES and RJH. He asked what level they are at now, and asked if they are proficient in Excel, Word etc. Ms. Balboni stated that we should be preparing them for where they need to be for the next grade. Ms. Anderson asked if Bonnie Vadala could come to the next meeting to give a report. The administrators agreed that would be a good idea.

## **Junior High**

- Mr. Pollet stated the technical proficiency level for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade was very good. He said that one of the things they were looking at was how well they navigate. If an area is noticed as lacking, the teachers are then factoring that area into what they are teaching for those students. Mr. Grant asked what the numbers were. Mr. Pollet replied that he would have those figures for the Board in March.
- Mr. Pollet handed out the following items:
  - Information on the PHS timeline for course selection.
  - A draft form for student academic information to be used for teacher knowledge of each student from one grade level to the next.
  - Documents regarding gender issues including a list of professional development books RJH will purchase this year on the topic.
  - A list of RJH staff trained in CPR, First Aid and AED.
- At the last staff meeting, the My Voice survey was discussed. Teachers were given information regarding gender differences and male mentors. Mr. Schwartz asked about the gender study done by the Moultonborough Central School. Mr. Pollet replied that their study did not really give us any new information and that they were also looking for any information we might have.
- RJH has studied NECAP results and is now looking at what we can do in the next few months to improve student skills. Mr. Grant asked about information on actual programs we have received from peer schools on gender differences. Mr. Pollet stated we will be looking into this at the NELMS conference. Mr. Grant asked what research he was doing on a national level. Mr. Pollet replied that we are always looking at the published research.

## **Financial**

### **Manifest –**

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, a motion to approve the manifest of January 12, 2008 through February 1, 2008 in the amount of \$328,877.68. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, a motion to approve the manifest of February 2, 2008 through February 14, 2008 in the amount of \$305,502.35. Vote: Unanimously

approved. Mr. Grant stated he needed to send a letter to Jane Ireland authorizing the release of funds (\$263,184) from the trust account to pay for the roof repair and asked for the Board to re-approve this. Mr. Schwartz proposed, seconded by Ms. Balboni a motion to approve. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Dr. Cushing stated bids to repair the leaks outside the library will open at 2:00 p.m. tomorrow. He asked if the Board would be able to attend or vote for approval to move forward. Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, a motion to approve them moving forward with the bids and have Ian Grant review the bids with Mr. Katkin. Vote: Unanimously approved.

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

- Calendar of Policy Action: Payment of School Board Members – completed.
- Track Update: Mr. Schwartz met with the conservation committee and showed the Board members new blueprints that have been drawn up. The track is located in the best place possible to avoid any conflict with other activities. The 1/8 mile track would be built in stages with the town helping to clear the area for the safety road, helping to reduce the cost. The PTA has also expressed interest in helping to fund the project. Mr. Schwartz thanked Gregg Mikolaities, Jim Raines, Joe Mills and Bud Jordan for their help. Mr. Schwartz asked the Board if we want to move forward. Mr. Grant stated that the access/safety road would also be able to be used for deliveries at RES, and asked what the ballpark estimate on the cost for the road was. Dr. Cushing replied that it would cost approximately \$70,000 to 80,000 for clearing, the fence and the road. The Board agreed they should move forward and discussed also widening the road by the RES field to allow for more parking for events.

#### **RECOGNITION OF GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS:**

- Ms. Moynahan gave an update on Emergency Management. They will have 3 drills this year with the first being at the end of summer. Rye has received good reviews on their drills in the past. Ms. Moynahan further reported that the funding for Safe Routes to school was turned down. They will be submitting a request for funding again in the second round.
- Ms. Cole commented on how great the RES science fair was again this year and that the students were very knowledgeable in their presentations.
- Mr. Cummins asked about the science fair. Mr. Cummins also stated he had noticed a broken window by the gym at RJH and wondered when it would be repaired. Mr. Pollet replied that we needed a lift to replace the window, and that this was in process.

#### **STANDING COMMITTEES:**

- Physical Plant: Nothing to report.
- Special Issues: Nothing to report. The next Principal Advisory Committee meeting will be held in April. Mr. Grant asked about the “open night” for parents. PAC will decide date for Spring opening.
- REF: Mr. Schwartz thanked Chris Reaney for his previous work as president and Cynde Lingamfelter as new president for their work at REF. The principals have notified their staff about applying for REF grants for the second half of the year.
- PHS: Dr. Cushing reported that the Secondary School Advisory Committee is scheduled to meet March 4, 2008 at PHS. Mr. Schwartz passed out information on a program the state is implementing called Virtual Course. Online courses are available at no cost to

- public and private schooled students. There is also an SAT prep course available. Mr. Schwartz asked if we should make taking a course part of our policy. Mr. Grant stated that we should definitely advertise the option of taking the courses offered.
- PTA: Ms. Anderson announced the Spaghetti Dinner at RES is scheduled for 2/21. The PTA will help fund the cost of the Rachel's Challenge presentation. Membership is at an all time high of 198, up 42 from last year. The PTA has recently funded 3 requests for the RJH music teacher and requests from the physical education teachers at RES and RJH. Mr. Grant again wanted to thank the PTA for changing the date a few years ago to a non-school board meeting night so board members and administrators could attend.
  - Rye Rec: Ms. Anderson reported Dr. Cushing said that Jeff Collins is looking to see if their Tech Ed department might be able to make a new sign for Rye Rec.
  - Communications: Mr. Schwartz stated the Rye Annual Report will be available next week. The teacher appreciation breakfast for RES will be held on March 6<sup>th</sup> and at RJH on March 13<sup>th</sup>.
  - Technology: Mr. Schwartz said the committee met on 2/20. The plan is due to the State in March and will be completed by the next Board meeting.
  - Curriculum: Ms. Balboni reported the professional development meeting will be held on 3/11. They will be discussing what would be the best way to invite Rye parents into discussions on curriculum. The CORE curriculum is on the SAU website and shows where students will be throughout the year. Ms. Anderson suggested we link that information from the Rye websites to the SAU 50 website.
  - NEASC: Ms. Richardson stated they are collecting data and that it is a work in progress. Mr. Pollet stated that they have formed committees according to the NEASC guidelines and that there are spots for two Board members on some of these committees. They will begin meeting on March 21<sup>st</sup> and will potentially complete the process by June 8, 2008.
  - Peer Schools: Mr. Grant stated that RES is focused on the schools that they will visit this year, specifically looking at math and language arts programs. Mr. Pollet reported that he and five teachers will be attending the national NELMS conference and they will be focusing on certain areas related to NEASC at that conference.
  - Athletics: Ms. Balboni stated a spring sports information meeting was held and the athletic committee will have another meeting after vacation. Ms. Anderson asked if the new softball and baseball uniforms at RJH had been purchased. Mr. Pollet replied they will be purchasing them next week. They have 18 students signed up for softball, 19 for baseball and 20 for track and field.
  - Bus Committee: Mr. Grant reported they mailed out 147 letters to parents asking them to participate in this survey. At this date 37 have responded to the on-line survey. Two teams on this committee rode/ followed the PHS busses in the am and pm. They will have a draft of their findings at the next Board meeting. He stated that 60% to 70% of students do not ride the bus in the morning, primarily due to the time of am pick up and early arrival at school. Some busses arrive at 6:55 am and PHS does not start until 7:25. Mr. Grant thanked everyone who is working on this committee.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

- Antarctica Project: Dr. Cushing reported that Robin Ellwood the 8<sup>th</sup> grade science teacher has been asked to be part of a very prestigious scientific team working in Antarctica again next year. He believes this is a wonderful opportunity for the Rye schools. He is aware of the concerns of having a substitute fill in but believes the value outweighs any obstacles. He further stated that now that RJH has a technology coordinator it can be of even further benefit to the students. Mr. Pollet thinks this is an unbelievable opportunity

to impact our students both while she is in Antarctica and on her return. As principal he will make sure that this experience will be shared at all grade levels. Ms. Ellwood informed the Board that Polar Track will cover the cost of a substitute in her absence. She stated that, because she has gone on this expedition before, she has a very good understanding of how to connect this with the curriculum and the students. The students in her class will be completing weekly labs that will mimic what she and the team are doing in Antarctica. Ms. Ellwood showed several examples to the Board of what some of these labs will be using equipment we have at RJH. This expedition will also involve teachers and students at RES. She stated that this expedition meshes perfectly with the State standards. She is aware that private school applications are due at the time she will be away but assured the Board that she will still be able to write and send her recommendations through e-mail while in Antarctica.

Mr. Grant complimented Ms. Ellwood on being an outstanding teacher. He stated that the students get such a good understanding of science from her as a teacher but that he struggles with the disconnect should she go. He said he reviewed the Polar Tech website and saw several other programs in non-school months and where teachers shared information to a number of schools and asked if it was possible for her to work with the team from here or if there were other programs she could be a part of in the summer. Ms. Ellwood replied that there were, however having the direct connection is best as it is an ongoing research process and models commitment to a project and taking risks. She agrees that there is a disconnect but that it is truly a unique relationship she has with this team. She also stated that the program they will be working on is a global issue that will affect us locally and historically. Mr. Grant asked if this program would be an every other year event. Ms. Ellwood replied that it is always different and she could not say if it would be every other year but that it might be. Ms. Balboni agreed that the substitute is an important factor and that is important we obtain the same substitute we have used in the past as she knows the students and Ms. Ellwood's style. Ms. Ellwood said that Annie Cole was interested in the substitute position and would be available if she goes. She further stated that Mrs. Cole brings a lot of her own knowledge and teaching skills to the class as geology major. She said that the work done while she is gone ties into those strengths. Ms. Balboni asked if she would have enough time with the students to assess and write their letters of recommendation. Ms. Ellwood replied that, by the end of October, she feels confident with where the students are and that she would also be receiving feedback from Mrs. Cole. Ms. Anderson stated she was concerned with transitional issues such as students responding better to one teacher over another. Mr. Schwartz asked what the dates of her absence would be. Ms. Ellwood said from November 1, 2008 to December 31, 2008. He suggested using Ms. Ellwood as an enrichment teacher for the first semester and utilizing her in other enrichment areas upon her return to finish out the semester. Mr. Pollet stated it would be difficult to hire a teacher for one semester. Mr. Grant said that idea would be more time away from direct classroom teaching which is what he personally was hoping to avoid. Ms. Balboni would like to see more of this program shared throughout the district and that we be proactive about the adjustment with two different teachers. She feels that sometimes this experience gets lost and would like to make sure that that does not happen. Dr. Cushing asked when Ms. Ellwood needed a decision by. Ms. Ellwood replied that she would need to reply to the team before the first week in March. Mr. Grant asked if this year—a year when she was not going—were her Rye students receiving a less beneficial education with her being in the classroom vs. when she is in Antarctica. Ms. Ellwood replied yes.

Mr. Grant stated that it is hard to let her go and he agrees that in the past the integration of this experience has broken down. He feels he needs more time to think about it before making a decision. Mr. Pollet stated that one way they could work on transitional issues is to have an overlap with the substitute and Ms. Ellwood before she left. Ms. Balboni asked if the curriculum would be different. Ms. Ellwood stated that it is the same curriculum just in a different order. Mr. Grant stated he would want accurate feedback and what the true impact would be. He stated we would table this discussion until later in the meeting.

- NSTA request for funding. Mr. Pollet requested hotel cost be covered for two teachers attending the NSTA conference. Mr. Schwartz proposed, and Ms. Anderson seconded, a motion to approve. Vote: Unanimously approved.
- Mr. Grant stated that he and Mike Schwartz met with Ms. Richardson, Alan Gould and Chief Walsh regarding concerns on Election Day at RES. It was a productive meeting to review issues from the primary election in January and identify some potential solutions. They agreed that they would use yellow tape to block off areas inside and outside of the school and add an additional police officer to be inside. Mr. Gould stated that the starting time for voting cannot be changed without a warrant article. If we build the access/safety road for the track it could help with traffic issues.
- Candidate Night will be held at the Rye Public Library from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 4<sup>th</sup>.

#### **NON-PUBLIC SESSION:**

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, a motion to go into a non-public session at 9:30 p.m. to discuss personnel issues. Unanimously approved on a roll call vote.

#### **PUBLIC SESSION:**

The Board returned to public session at 10:20 p.m. At this point in the meeting Ms. Anderson left for personal reasons.

Ms. Balboni made a motion to support Ms. Ellwood's expedition to Antarctica with the understanding that the issues identified from prior years will be addressed by both Mr. Pollet and Ms. Ellwood. This motion was seconded by Mr. Schwartz. Ms. Balboni further stated that she supports a one month overlap of the substitute prior to Ms. Ellwood's trip. It was asked if it would be possible to get Polar Tech to fund the cost of having a substitute to work the one month overlap. Mr. Grant stated that his preference was that Ms. Ellwood be in the classroom with her students. He recognizes the support from the principal to make the integration of this program happen and that he is supporting this request due to Mr. Pollet's commitment to insure successful transitions and communications. It was discussed to communicate with parents in the beginning and get feedback half way through the time period allowing to make any necessary adjustments, and a survey at the end from parents and students. Mr. Schwartz also supported this statement. Mr. Grant stated that what is at stake are any future endeavors based upon its success. This motion was seconded by Mr. Schwartz. Vote: Unanimously approved.

**ADJOURN:** Ms. Balboni proposed, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, a motion to adjourn at 10:30 p.m. Vote: Unanimously approved.

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School Board Secretary