

Approved by the Rye School Board at its August 5, 2008 meeting.

**RYE SCHOOL DISTRICT
RYE, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

The summer planning session of the School Board of the Rye School District was held at the Portsmouth Community Campus on July 2, 2008 at 7:30 a.m.

PRESENT:

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

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

Staff Tom Southworth

Residents/Visitors: None

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Grant called the meeting to order at 7:32 a.m.

FINANCIAL

It was noted that this is not the last financial report for the 2007/2008 school year. The final report will be issued mid July.

Manifest: Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to approve the manifest of June 10, 2008 through June 30, 2008 in the amount of \$2,137,430.12 Vote: Unanimously approved.

At this point Mr. Schwartz entered the meeting.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

On a motion by Ms. Anderson and seconded by Mr. Schwartz, the public minutes of June 11, 2008 were accepted as amended. Vote: unanimously approved.

On a motion by Ms. Anderson and seconded by Mr. Schwartz, the non-public minutes of June 11, 2008 were accepted as amended and sealed. Vote: unanimously approved.

REPORTS:

Superintendent:

Communications - Dr. Cushing shared a letter of resignation from Tami Burns. Ms Anderson made a motion, seconded by Ms. Balboni to accept her resignation. Vote: Unanimously approved. Mr. Grant extended his thanks to Mrs. Burns for her years at Rye and wished her the best of luck.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Alternative Energy:

Mr. Katkin reported that he contacted and sent a scope of work to 3 companies for estimates to determine if the proposal from the Rye Energy Committee is reasonable. GDS out of Manchester was the only company to submit a proposal, for \$39,000. The original proposal from The Jordan Institute was for \$16,700. Mr. Schwartz stated that the proposal from GDS was not to exceed the quote, but Jordan's proposal would need permission to exceed the quoted amount. Mr. Katkin stated he could tell them the limitation would be \$16,000 in total. Mr. Grant asked if the board was in favor of proceeding with Jordan. Ms. Anderson proposed a motion, seconded by Mr. Schwartz to approve going forward with the quote from Jordan. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Action Items:

Dr. Cushing stated the SPED report from Mary Lyons was in the pre-board meeting packets. Ms. Anderson asked if the budget was impacted by a student being placed in an out of district placement during the 2007-08 school year. Dr. Cushing stated that Ms. Lyons reply was "no". Mr. Grant asked about the NECAP Science results. Dr. Cushing reported they would be available in late August or early September.

NEW BUSINESS:

Nominations: Sarah O'Brien was interviewed by Ms. Richardson, Jeanne Brown and Katie Jarvis for the 70% Spanish position. She is a retired Chairperson of the Foreign Language Department at the Andover School. She has also substitute taught at GCS and RJH. Her experience is primarily in high school and she has a very strong knowledge of the language. Ms. Richardson contacted the Andover school and was given an excellent reference for her. Dr. Cushing also interviewed Ms. O'Brien. He reported that her references stated she connected very well with the students and that she was involved in a lot of extra-curricular activities. She has a great background and both letters of reference were very positive. She attended the University of Madrid and did her undergraduate work at Emmanuel College and received her CAGS from Salem State. Katie Jarvis would mentor her in this position. Mr. Grant stated that he thought it would be beneficial to the teaching team to have a teacher whose primary language is Spanish as opposed to a French teacher teaching Spanish. Ms. Richardson reported that Katie Jarvis would teach K1 and K2 and that Ms. O'Brien would teach 3rd grade and up. Mr. Schwartz stated it was important to have a mix of experience levels and hoped that was what we were looking for. Ms. Richardson replied they were looking for the best candidate. She further stated that Ellen Parker, principal at the Andover school, is a well-respected principal in Massachusetts and that she feels confident with her reference. Dr. Cushing placed Sarah O'Brien into nomination for the 70% Spanish teacher position, 50% at RES and 20% at RJH. Mr. Schwartz made a motion, seconded by Ms. Balboni to accept Ms. O'Brien for the position. Vote: Unanimously approved, with the exception of Ms. Anderson, who abstained.

Ms. Richardson reported that she is re-advertising for the nurse position at RES. She stated that Michelle Wirth, the music teacher at RJH, is interested in a full-time position. At present, there is a total of 2.1 positions in music for both schools budgeted. She would like to hire Ms. Wirth for the music position at RES and has been brainstorming with Mr. Pollet about the schedule to make this work. She stated she will need more time to make this work out. She received a lot of resumes for the position but she needs to look at all possibilities; she would hate to lose Ms. Wirth if she found a full time position elsewhere. Mr. Pollet stated that the music program affects the scheduling and that he will need to sit down with Andrea Papoutsy and Michelle Wirth to see if they can work it out. Ms. Anderson asked if Ms. Papoutsy continued to want a 100% position. Ms. Richardson replied that she does. Mr. Schwartz stated that it is better to have more full-time

people on staff but that he understands the situation. Mr. Grant asked why Ms. Richardson was re-advertising for the RES nurse position. Ms. Richardson replied that she did not have a lot of applicants that were the “right fit” for the position. Mr. Schwartz asked about having one nurse to oversee both schools. Ms. Richardson replied that Janet Smith is an outstanding nurse at RJH and had helped with the interviewing process, but that a full time nurse is needed for both schools.

Mr. Pollet reported that he has filled the 6th grade paraprofessional position. Rebecca Adams was a music teacher in Deerfield for 2 years and is now exploring working in SPED. She is very excited to have this opportunity. Her references were excellent. Ms. Adams will be replacing Johnny Wu’s position.

Dr. Cushing reported they had 41 candidates apply for the position of Curriculum coordinator. One candidate, Linda Walsh stood out from the group and was unanimously voted to be brought back for a second interview. She has worked in high performing districts and has a background as a gifted and talented teacher. She has taken courses on compacting curriculum and has used this technique in Massachusetts. She has experience in the classroom and is presently employed as a curriculum coordinator. Ms. Richardson added that she is an excellent communicator, connects with the teachers, and is very organized. Ms. Balboni stated that 2 teachers were involved in the interviews for this position and that she definitely connected with them.

Legislative Liaison: Mr. Grant reported he received and shared with the board an e-mail from E. MacDonald regarding working with our seacoast schools on legislative issues. He suggested we put this issue to the Special Issues committee. Ms. Anderson and Mrs. Moynahan agreed.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION:

Mr. Schwartz proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to go into non-public session at 8:12 a.m. to discuss personnel. Unanimously approved on a role call vote.

PUBLIC SESSION:

The board returned to public session at 8:40 a.m.

OPENING OF RETREAT:

Mr. Grant opened up the meeting to the Retreat Agenda at 8:47 a.m. He stated he would like to use this time to reflect back on the past 12 months and look at the successes we have had. Mr. Pollet has started to put his vision in place at RJH and there is a new spirit and feeling at the school. Ms. Richardson continues to build the team and increase levels of academic expectations at RES, and hopes are high with the recent hiring of a new Curriculum coordinator. Mr. Grant thanked the administrators and the board for a great year and focusing on where we are going

AREA AGREEMENT:

Mr. Grant stated that in the spring the board wanted to understand what the boundaries of this PHS AREA agreement are and understand what the process and ramification of getting out of the agreement are should we ever choose to do so. Mr. Schwartz asked what the cost would be to get out of the agreement. Mr. Katkin replied that he could give the board an approximate cost and a copy of the law. He noted that on the 2nd page, section V, that the rental charge is yearly and increases annually. Mr. Grant asked if this was for the bond issue. Mr. Katkin replied that it is the timing of the bond. The costs

for withdrawing were discussed. Based on the formula, Mr. Grant estimated that it would cost approximately \$200,000 a year to pull out. Mr. Katkin stated that these are rough estimates and that residents would be the ones to make the decision to withdraw through a warrant article, but that the board could campaign for it. Mr. Schwartz pointed out that if we sent our students to a school with a tuition rate that was \$750 less per student, that it would recoup the \$200,000. Mr. Schwartz commented that he is not necessarily recommending we withdraw, but this information helps us understand our options better. Mr. Grant stated that we need transparency in the PHS budget as it continues to impact Rye and the whole SAU. Mr. Katkin passed out information about Collective Bargaining agreements and Unions. The information related to re-bargaining.

NEASC:

Ms. Richardson reported that the committee work is all underway and that they are meeting 2 to 3 times a month. She stated that, in October, the committee will go with an NEASC team to visit a school in Southern New Hampshire. This fall they will move forward with their own visit in March. The self-study is not quite complete, but their target areas are to continue working on curriculum alignment and school culture.

NEW TOPICS OF DISCUSSION:

BUDGET PROCESS

Ms. Balboni asked about more information on the budget process. She stated that teachers find it difficult to budget ahead not knowing what their future classroom student needs will be. She would like to look at this process and see how we can make it better. Mr. Grant said that maybe we could look at creating a discretionary fund. Ms. Balboni replied that flexibility would be a good idea. Ms. Richardson stated that it is up to the teachers to check and see what has been cut after the initial approval of the budget and then again at the end of the year to see if they still need those items. Ms. Anderson noted that the board has always been supportive of budget requests. It was agreed that the board is supportive of teachers' budget needs and encouraged the principals to continue to communicate that support.

LEADERSHIP

Mr. Pollet reported that RJH is formulating reports on leadership and stated that they have made some changes to the discipline model. Mr. Pollet commented on exploring a late bus for students to take home after school hours. Mr. Grant stated that Rye was probably too spread out too geographically for this to work with 1 or 2 busses. He further commented that this issue did not come up at RJH when they did the bus study a year ago. Ms. Balboni said we should explore carpooling more formally, but that perhaps we could do something informally with lists of students being carpooled presently.

CURRICULUM

Ms. Balboni also commented on the core curriculum process and that we should continue to improve the consistency at all grade. Mr. Pollet stated he feels we have a lack of mental health support for students who may have emotional conflicts. He asked if there is an outside source we could access in a timely manner. He stated we should look at this issue and, in addition, get an outside source to give their point of view. He further stated that this assessment would be a good thing to discuss with the visiting team from NEASC. Dr. Cushing asked if teaming was an issue. Mr. Pollet replied that he does not have that component yet. Ms. Anderson commented that she appreciates the honest feedback from the administration during the NEASC process and that she thinks the administration is doing a great job during the NEASC process. Dr. Cushing reported that the next step for NEASC would be the visiting teams to the schools in March. He thought we should have a press release, focus groups and meetings with the parents and the School Board with a public report at the end. Mr. Schwartz asked if PHS was

part of the NEASC process. Dr. Cushing replied that the transition piece is but that the high school has its own accreditation process. Ms. Anderson asked if the board was involved in the accreditation process at the High School as it is for Rye schools. Dr. Cushing replied that it was.

OIL BID PROCESS

Mr. Grant said Mr. Katkin discussed with him about locking in our oil price for the upcoming school year sooner than the Town's schedule. The process is usually completed in August, but maybe we could lock in earlier as some companies are not even offering lock in options. He asked the board what their thoughts were and if we should ask the Town to start the process now. The board agreed to go with Mr. Katkin's recommendation. Mr. Grant said he would contact the town to see what their thinking was.

COMMUNICATIONS:

School Board Member information request process: Mr. Grant re-reviewed with the board members that, as individuals, we may have at times sought information from administrators without consulting other board members. He stated that we need to work on always getting a consensus from all of the board members before pursuing ideas on our own. Ms. Anderson suggested that as in the past we channel these ideas through Mr. Grant or Dr. Cushing, and that no board member should ask for information from the administration without first discussing with the board to determine if this is an issue as a group we want to pursue. Mr. Grant also suggested that the administrators should feel comfortable and empowered to request that a board member get board agreement if individual requests come up. Ms. Anderson reinforced that she hopes the administrators will honestly relay any concerns to her or other board members individually.

PTA/REF budget: Ms. Balboni suggested that the school board, PTA, and REF should get together to discuss who will fund what types of grant requests. It needs to be decided which group will be the right vehicle for each type of request. It also needs to be addressed whether the School Board should fund PTA enrichment opportunities. Mr. Grant said that sometimes with REF it comes down to the timing of the grant request which group will fund. Mr. Schwartz stated that this goes back to the discussion of discretionary funding available to the Principals and the flexibility it would provide. He agreed we need to be more specific as to whom to go to for funding rather than going to all groups for the same funding. Ms. Anderson said this is a good time to get the REF and the PTA together again as we will have a new PTA president coming in this school year. She noted that it is faster to get grant request money from the PTA and that REF often gives fewer but larger grants. Mr. Schwartz stated that he began these discussions with the REF Grants chair and he recommended coordinating a meeting with the new PTA president and the REF liaison with the board representatives. Ms. Balboni thought we should put more professional development money out to the teachers to encourage them to get on board, and work, with the curriculum coordinator.

Mr. Grant stated that we should be more comfortable with not waiting until April to spend money from the budget if it will benefit the students. He further stated that he would like to suggest, considering the state of the economy, that the board and administration look at a 1 – 1.5% increase in next year's budget and tighten up what we are returning back to the town, particularly PHS tuition. Dr. Cushing stated that New Castle is the only donor town in our SAU, however due to money not spent in the unreserved fund balance, Rye is not far behind being classified a donor town.

E-mails: Mr. Grant discussed the school e-mail messaging system. He thinks we need to look at the amount of non-school sponsored e-mails we are sending. He suggested grouping these e-mails and sending them all on a specified day. Dr. Cushing suggested posting athletic items on our websites. Mr. Schwartz agreed with sending home an e-mail once a week with links to the groups' websites. Mrs.

Moynahan thinks that anything that is specific to Rye students should be given priority over something from other towns and should go out first, even if it is not school sponsored, but it should still say “Not School Sponsored” on the notice. Mr. Grant stated that we are beginning to send out so many e-mails that people will start to ignore them. Ms. Anderson would like the principals to have authority to determine what to send out. Mrs. Moynahan agreed that the principals should be able to have the authority, but consider Rye activities and groups first. Mr. Grant stated that the board should give support to help draw the line on what we will send and won't send home via e-mail. Ms. Anderson stated that, if the principals want that kind of clarity and enforcement, she is willing to give it but the principals stated they needed some latitude.

Survey Discussion:

Mr. Grant remarked that as he sat down to fill out the 5th grade exit survey he was frustrated to have to recall 6 years worth of answers in one document and suggested we make an overall change to the surveys. He noted that Ms. Richardson said she only got a few back and while year-end timing might be part of the reason, the thought required to detail 6 years could also be part of it. He thinks asking for this information so far back is irrelevant in that a lot of the teachers' they would be commenting on are no longer at the school, programs have been changed or modified, and to hear of something 4 years later does not help the school improve things. He thinks if it was only asking for their experience in 5th grade it would be easier for them to summarize this experience. He further asked that we hand out these surveys every year for each grade, and that we should do it in advance of the end of the year. Mr. Pollet asked what our goal was for these surveys. He thinks if it is for the teachers benefit the teachers should be asking the questions. He stated that the administrators are getting feedback on a regular basis. Mr. Schwartz feels we should work with the Learning Compact Parent Input Form and that we could modify some of the questions. Mr. Grant felt strongly that we should send out the survey to every grade every year and that feedback to administrators is coming from people who are comfortable speaking up. Many parents are not. He agrees that teachers should be apart of the process. He stated for the past 3 years it has been discussed that the administration would put forth a plan and that nothing has happened so he now is strongly advocating that we move forward with this without more “process delays”. He said this is as much about seeing what needs improvement as hearing – which we do – about the good things that are happening and the great teachers we have. After Mr. Pollet stated that, if three parents come to him separately with an issue, he speaks to the teacher who then explains the valid reason for the parents' concerns; Ms. Anderson then asked how he validates the teacher's reasoning. She wondered if Mr. Pollet's response would be different if a survey reinforced that 75% of parents agreed with the 3 who had come to him and disagreed with the teacher's reasoning. She asked if the administrators felt that other indicators give them enough information to make an informed decision. Mrs. Moynahan thought these surveys would make it easier to be able to follow the child. Dr. Cushing thought the goal was for a total experience not year to year. Mr. Grant asked what the downside would be. Ms. Richardson said that maybe people would get tired of filling out surveys and that perhaps we should send them out in April. Mr. Grant suggested putting the survey on line would make it easier for people to do – and certainly be easier to tabulate. Dr Cushing asked if the information was for the administrators or the School Board. Mr. Grant replied that it is for all parties and that the School Board would use the information as indicators for what was good, average, and in need of improvement. He further stated that there is accountability on the board's part and that they should have this information to use as a strategy at meetings on issues that need to be looked at. Ms. Balboni agreed that annual surveys would be beneficial at determining program strengths and needs. She suggested that the board be given a summary of the survey results rather than the individual surveys to review. Mr. Grant agreed that what they are looking for are trends. Mr. Schwartz feels the parent/teacher meetings are the most useful feedback for the teacher. He feels the parent input form could be summarized. He thinks that, if there is an issue, the parent input form will reveal any trends. Mr. Grant replied that we want to know what

issues are each year not just at the end of elementary school or junior high school. For example we heard a lot of comments when we sent out the language survey. To wait until a child's 5th grade exit survey to get those comments does a disservice to students' education. Mr. Pollet stated he thinks the teachers should have input on what we ask in the surveys. Mr. Grant agreed with Mr. Pollet and restated that it is important to do this survey every year for each grade and learn from it. Mr. Schwartz and Ms. Anderson feel the Learning Compact Parent Input Survey will get to the heart of the issues. Mr. Grant stated he did not care what the vehicle was for the survey but would like to make the questions in the parent input form more specific. Mr. Pollet stated that the parent input form gives the teachers a snapshot of the students in their classes and that they can use the information to adjust the curriculum to fill their needs accordingly. Ms. Balboni thought the parent input form would be a good starting point and that the exit survey would be in addition to that form. Ms. Richardson thinks we should fine tune the survey with teacher input to improve our program. Ms. Anderson said that it is important that the principals want to do this and that they, and the teachers, not the board, take ownership of it or it will not be an effective tool. Ms. Richardson said the administrators, curriculum coordinator and the teachers should work together to create the survey.

PHS: Mr. Schwartz reported that, in regards to keeping the communication open with PHS he has asked the chairperson of the Portsmouth School Board, Mitch Schuldman, if he would be interested in attending a Rye School Board meeting. Mr. Schwartz stated that Mr. Schuldman did express an interest in meeting with our board and also an appreciation and interest in the level of depth of our budget process. Mr. Grant stated he believes our relationship with PHS is significantly better in the last 2 years largely due to Dr. Cushing's relationships. He was not sure what the purpose of Mr. Schuldman attending a Rye School Board meeting would be. Mr. Schwartz suggested we put this on the agenda and discuss. Ms. Balboni agreed that it would be a good idea to extend the invitation to improve our communications with the Portsmouth board. Mr. Grant suggested we invite them to an SAU 50 meeting or meet separately with a list of objectives. The board agreed that meeting with the Portsmouth Chair either at a Rye meeting or at a SAU50 meeting would be worthwhile.

Data Collection: Mr. Southworth reported that there are a lot of variables in data collection, but that the data is much clearer and has improved. Mr. Grant asked if he could send this data to the board. Mr. Southworth replied he will e-mail the data to all board members. Ms. Anderson asked Mr. Southworth to give an educated guess, just looking at Rye, how many students go to 4 year colleges and what percent of parents in Rye have that goal for their kids. Mr. Southworth replied approximately 70 to 80% go to 4 year colleges and that the percentage attending 2 year colleges or trade schools has increased. He stated that he believes that is in keeping with parents' goals.

2008/2009 GOALS:

Mr. Grant stated he would like the board to discuss the goals process, and asked if everyone would like to keep the same format, and should we keep the list smaller. Mr. Schwartz, Mrs. Moynahan and Dr. Cushing replied that they like the current format. Ms. Anderson stated she would like to narrow the focus on the goals which she feels is a testament to the work the schools have accomplished. Mr. Grant reported that some goals will be rolled over to the next year and others will be revisited to see if the board agrees to continue with them. It was agreed to use the same format but be conscious of the significant amount of time the NEASC process takes in determining additional goals for the year.

Curriculum: Completed. Dr. Cushing stated they will continue with the differentiated instruction goal and work with Linda Walsh on the curriculum compact. He reported that he has a meeting set up with Mr. Pollet and Robin Ellwood to discuss charter schools and adventure based learning. Mr. Grant asked if they will implement the learning compact in the 2008/2009 school year. Dr. Cushing replied they

would. Mr. Grant suggested they integrate with the curriculum coordinator and have her review Rye's curriculum and differentiated instruction. Mr. Pollet stated that Ms. Walsh's main goal would be completing the core curriculum documents and consulting with the principals regarding best practices. Ms. Richardson stated they will continue with the program evaluations to see if they are the best. Mr. Grant asked if structuring foreign language was part of it. Ms. Richardson replied they will add foreign language for this year and continue with technology integration. Mr. Pollet continued that they will promote research and analyze the best method to integrate technology in all areas. Mr. Grant discussed raising the bar and understanding where the students' knowledge is at present, with regard to technology, so that we can raise the bar from there. Based upon the report the board was given students in the earlier grades at RES were at high levels on the standardized analysis that was given to all grades in RES and RJH. As had been discussed at previous board meetings he thought it important to know that the curriculum and skills should be increased. Mr. Pollet stated they will continue to analyze and evaluate proper technology structure in the school. Ms. Anderson asked if our curriculum prepares our students for a college track in high school, and if our curriculum and instruction meet the expectations of the parents and students who want to go to college. She continued that it is important today to prepare kids for high school and in turn set them up to be prepared for college in a way that is different from a generation ago. It is increasingly difficult to get into a college and it is our responsibility to make sure we are meeting their expectations. The principals and Dr. Cushing agreed. Mr. Pollet said that it is the measurement of a good middle school to have the following components: academic, social, physical and community growth. The board agreed to add this issue raised by Ms. Anderson to the list and discuss what we can do further. Ms. Balboni added that it is important to make parents and students aware of what they need to do as soon as possible to be prepared for college.

Communication: PHS communication is ongoing. A new goal will be to improve the standards-based report card to increase communication.

Leadership & Organization: NEASC stays on; Professional Master Plan is done; RESPA contract is done; and the survey stays on. New goals will be to develop a survey for annual implementation and review and to have representation in the Portsmouth Superintendent search process.

Budget: School bus – negotiate school bus contract; facility management analysis is ongoing; evaluation of parent stipends is done.

New goals within 'Budget' will include: review bid process, coordination with PTA and REF on budget issues, and approve the offer of an early retirement incentive.

Assessment & Accountability: Goals 1-4 are completed. New goals will include: update of job descriptions as required by the new RESPA contract, the K-12 data metrics, and a review of new student information system, in hopes of providing more information to parents. Mr. Grant discussed special education identification and the process. Ms. Richardson discussed the process at RES. Ms. Anderson discussed legal requirements versus Rye expectations. It was decided to invite Mary Lyons to a future meeting to further discuss the topic.

Mr. Grant said he would draft the agreed upon goals for review and assignment of responsibility and completion dates at the August meeting.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION:

Mr. Schwartz proposed, seconded by Ms. Anderson, a motion to go into non-public session at 1:00 p.m. to discuss personnel. Unanimously approved on a roll call vote.

PUBLIC SESSION:

The board returned to public session at 1:20 p.m.

The board unanimously agreed to grant a waiver for those RESPA employees who missed the health insurance notification deadline.

ADJOURN:

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, a motion to adjourn at 1:25 p.m. Vote: Unanimously approved.

School Board Secretary