

Approved by the Rye School Board at its June 11, 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 May 21, 2008 at 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT:

School Board Members:

Ian Grant, Betty Anderson, Peggy Balboni,
Michael Schwartz, Jeanne Moynahan.

Administrators:

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

Staff

Kathleen Cole, Katie Jarvis, Sheila Adams, Ron Fortier, Jeanne Brown.

Residents/Visitors:

Robin Husslage, Nancy Gardella, Joe Cummins, RJH student.

CALL TO ORDER:

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

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Mrs. Moynahan proposed, seconded by Ms. Anderson, a motion to approve the School Board public minutes of April 16, 2008, as revised. Unanimously approved.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION:

Mrs. Moynahan proposed, seconded by Ms. Anderson, a motion to go into non-public session at 6:05 p.m. to discuss personnel. Vote: Unanimously approved on a role call vote.

PUBLIC SESSION:

The Board returned to public session at 6:45 p.m.

REPORTS:

Superintendent:

Communications:

- Dr. Cushing reported information regarding bills currently in the legislature. CACR-34 was voted down by the house and rejects pursuing a constitutional amendment on education funding. It needed 237 "yes" votes to pass and received 140 "yes" votes. Dr. Cushing stated it will be a long time before we see another constitutional amendment regarding educational funding.

Senate Bill 539 on adequacy and funding devised a new formula with a fiscal capacity of \$940 million in state aid. This results in a two year transitional period where no community will receive less or be a donor town. House Bill 1436, the Evergreen Clause has new language that amends the terms of any pay plan in a contract after it expires.

- Dr. Cushing reported on the plan to address the “Youth At Risk” survey results. Dr. Cushing would like to have representatives from each town at the press conference that will discuss the results of the survey. He feels this issue should be kept on the front burner. Ms. Anderson commented that she thought Dr. Cushing and Dr. Lister were handling this in the right way. Dr. Cushing also reported he met with police chiefs, the Rotary and Karen Dandurant of the Portsmouth Herald to discuss the Youth at Risk Behavior survey. The press conference will be held May 29th at PHS.
- A letter was sent home from Portsmouth High School to parents of graduating students discussing drinking and driving. Dr. Cushing and Dr. Lister drafted a letter to go out to parents of middle school students. Dr. Cushing presented this letter to the Board for approval. He would like to send this letter home to parents of 7th & 8th graders of SAU 50 this Friday. The Board agreed and approved the letter to go home.
- Mr. Southworth was present to discuss the NECAP Assessment Data and CAT test results. He handed out data with his findings to the Board. He recommends that we monitor the 7th grade math group for next year’s 8th grade testing. He also recommends looking at individual students and what we can do now to support them. Ms. Anderson asked if Giselle Chagnon will be involved in this process. The response was that she would not be involved at the Junior High level. Ms. Anderson encouraged Mr. Pollet to determine if there is a need at the Junior High for someone like Giselle as her contribution at the elementary level has been remarkable. Ms. Richardson reported on information that showed a double digit increase in testing scores of students that are working with Ms. Chagnon. Mr. Pollet discussed formative and summative assessments. He stated that, with ongoing formative assessments, you can show an increase in 2 to 4 years and improvements in SAT scores of up to 100 points. He further stated that we need to look at how we can get students to perform better and to take the testing more seriously. He agrees with the value in looking for further support at RJH. Mr. Grant stated that the investment in Giselle Chagnon at RES has been invaluable. He stated that by grade, the scores looked consistent. He commented that 8th grade scores in science were 73 while others were in the 80’s. Mr. Schwartz added that all grades were lower in science. Mr. Southworth stated that RJH has a process oriented science program and the testing is more content oriented. Ms. Richardson reported that they have put money in the budget for science next year and that they are compiling what needs to be completed and will present their findings to staff and purchase what is needed for each grade level., Dr. Cushing was interested in knowing how 9th and 10th grade students were doing and how well prepared they were for science in high school. Ms. Adams commented that the curriculum is not aligned to CAT testing. Mr. Grant noted that we should be getting the science scores from the aligned NECAP tests and asked if the administration could confirm that the science scores are better under this test. Mr. Grant appreciated that the letter going home included the median grade scores for each subject for Rye students as well as the national. Mr. Schwartz asked if we looked at how many students went into honors or advanced placement classes and whether or not what we are doing is working. Mr. Schwartz asked if NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association) is more informative. Mr. Southworth stated that NWEA is used by schools in need of improvement and that it is not recommended for our profile. He further stated that he would provide the Board with the number of students taking honors or AP classes.

Mr. Southworth discussed AYP and stated that the goal at both schools was to improve our

written responses. He said that some of the students tested wrote too little in the written part of the exam. He suggested we have a review/prep course in September for students going from 2nd to 3rd grade. . He also suggested that we set goals for SPED and look at how we can better prepare these students. He thinks we should set 3 to 4 broad goals and have several smaller individual goals. Ms. Anderson asked if the time we would use to prepare SPED students was agreed to by parents in developing a student's IEP. Mr. Southworth replied that test preparation is already written in their goals. Ms. Anderson stated her concern was that we would give up real learning, and that parents should be involved and informed of our goals and what prep time would be used. Ms. Richardson thanked Mr. Southworth for all of his time in preparing and studying this data. She further commented that she and Mr. Southworth go over the data in detail and look at how they can help each individual student. Mr. Grant restated that overall, our general population, -- 95% made AYP and that a small population of our students did not. School-wide our scores were excellent. Ms. Anderson asked if the parameters set by law were fairly and reasonably attainable goals for special needs students. Mr. Southworth stated that, in some cases, they are not reasonable. Mr. Schwartz stated that in 4th grade you need to be able to achieve the standards and that is why they are testing the students. Mr. Southworth stated that Safe Harbor helps schools with some of the lower subgroups. He further stated that if a group shows growth they will pass. He also asked how can you label a group of students as not proficient and then expect them to be proficient. He stated that in high school some students due to block scheduling have not had reviews or even had a math or science course for the months before they take the tests. Mr. Grant reported that you can look at any school's results on the Department of Educations website. He asked Mr. Southworth if we could outline or identify our area of need. Mr. Southworth replied that he will work with Mary Lyons and the SPED staff to work with students and their written response portion of the tests. He also stated that all students already take a pre-test with teacher review, but that we could work on doing more in this area. He stated that teachers do build these skills into the curriculum. Mr. Southworth remarked that we should be aware of what will happen if we do not make AYP next year. He stated that a school would be put on an improvement plan if they do not make AYP 2 years in a row. If a school shows growth they would not be put on the improvement plan. Mr. Southworth reported that he and Mary Lyons are already working on this area.

RECOGNITION OF GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS:

- Robin Husslage stated that she observed how different the letters regarding CAT testing scores were from RES and RJH. She stated that the letter from RES was more detailed and specific and the letter from RJH was not as detailed, and she wondered why. Mr. Pollet replied that there was no reason behind it, just that they chose to send a different letter. Mrs. Husslage also stated that she has a 7th grader who started the Math Trailblazers program in the 3rd grade and that grade has always struggled with math. Now that they are in 7th grade, this group of students is still having problems with math. Mr. Pollet replied that computation skills are weak and that the 7th grade math teacher has identified specific needs and is working on that with the 7th grade. Mr. Southworth stated that, when you change programs, it can be difficult. Mr. Grant asked if RJH uses a customized letter in the 7th grade. Mr. Pollet replied that we may have used an older form when sending out the letter this year but the intention was to send a more detailed letter and going forward they would. .
- Joe Cummins asked if the professional staff was allowed to take a sabbatical every 7 years. Dr. Cushing replied that they can apply for it, but it is up to the Board to approve it. Mr. Cummins asked if the Board retains managerial authority over the curriculum or does the Superintendent have approval. Dr. Cushing stated that the recommendations come through the Superintendent

and then he makes the recommendation to the Board. The Board has the final decision although there are legal standards they must follow. Ms. Richardson said the Board is very collaborative with the principals when making these decisions. Mr. Cummins commented that he has heard talk about weaknesses in math. Mr. Grant stated that the administration has already started, several months ago, working on this area in math and evaluating other programs and that there is a process that we need to go through. He acknowledged Mr. Cummins' apparent frustration with this process. He further stated that starting in the 3rd grade there have been for several years additional math fact exercises both in the classroom and for homework that are done by students and more recently starting in Kindergarten through second. We do realize we need to supplement what we are doing in Math Trailblazers. He commented that if you look at the NECAP scores our numbers are in the 80 to 85 range. Mr. Cummins stated that the math standards are weak and that a parallel track should be considered. Kathleen Cole agreed with what Ms. Richardson said about using Giselle Chagnon and that they will be working on a math lab with her at RES. Ms. Richardson reported that 92% of students in grades 3 through 8 are proficient in math.

REPORTS: (cont.)

Elementary School

- Ms. Richardson extended an invitation to the Board to attend a Literary Tea with Phoebe Guarnaccia's class.
- The 5th Grade classes are holding a "Mall in the Hall" event this week.
- World Language data results are in and 50% have chosen to take French and 50% have chosen to take Spanish.
- Ms. Richardson reported she has received a letter from a parent of a student in kindergarten and 1st grade to finish out the school year in Rye as they are moving to Exeter. It was agreed by the Board that this request is within the policy and is approved.
- End of the year events are underway.

Junior High

- Mr. Pollet reported that we have a student in the 8th grade that finished 1st in the State and 4th nationally, in the National French competition.
- World Language week and the spring concert were celebrated. The 6th Grade World Music Festival will be held at 7:00 p.m. on May 29th.
- Mr. Pollet stated, if there was enough interest in an after school program at New Heights, he would talk with the bus company about facilitating a bus run to accommodate the need.
- Mr. Pollet reported that in 2006/2007 24 students applied for the honors English program with 16 accepted, and 26 applied for honors science with 15 accepted. In 2007/2008 21 applied for honors English and 9 were accepted and 24 applied for honors science with 16 accepted.
- Mr. Pollet stated he would like to make a minor change to the RJH Mission Statement. He would like to remove one line and use the sentence under the beliefs section. Ms. Anderson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, to accept this change to the RJH Mission Statement. Vote: Unanimously accepted.
- Mrs. Moynahan wanted to thank the RJH staff for all of the help and support during the production of Grease. The Board agreed with the sentiments.
- Ms. Anderson asked for an update on numbers of students going to private schools next year in 9th grade. Mr. Pollet replied that 20 students were accepted as of this date and have committed to private schools.

Financial

Manifest –

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to approve the manifest of April 10, 2008 through May 2, 2008 in the amount of \$567,819.61. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, a motion to approve the manifest of May 3, 2008 through May 19, 2008 in the amount of \$411,305.41. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Mr. Grant stated that there was a payment to PHS for the PASS program that we have been holding back during re- negotiations. The negotiations are not complete, but based on legal opinion; Rye would still be responsible for the payment until the new terms are agreed to. Dr. Cushing stated there will be a report given at the SAU meeting”

Budgetary Consideration: Mr. Grant spoke with Mr. Katkin about the original \$60,000 in the unreserved fund balance, and reported that a number of items came in under the original estimated cost. In addition the District received an unanticipated \$20,000 in catastrophic building aid. Mr. Katkin is comfortable with the additional spending to replace the stage curtains and other building projects at RES and RJH. Mrs. Moynahan made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Balboni, to approve these purchases. This would leave \$10,000 and does not touch the High School tuition surplus. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Mr. Schwartz said the next step for the safety road and track would be to do a full survey of the land and put together plans to include a wetlands survey at a cost of approximately of \$15,000. This includes \$6,200 for the road and track survey, \$1,000 for wetland survey and \$6,500 to \$8,500 to put the plans together. Mr. Grant suggested we should start with the track and wetland survey, which would need to be completed by June 30, 2008 which would then give us the ability to understand future costs to building them. Mrs. Moynahan made a motion, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, to go ahead with the track and wetland surveys. Vote: Unanimously approved. Mr. Schwartz also stated he met with an architect, Peter Kasnet, about what to do with the RJH library space. He stated that it is estimated to cost approximately \$2,500 for the conceptual design and that they plan to go to REF to pay for some of this cost. Mr. Schwartz expressed his gratitude to Peter Kasnet for his efforts with the library design.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Calendar of Policy Action – May: Acceptance by SAU Board of Superintendents Evaluation – This is scheduled for next Wednesday. School Board review of District Investment Plan – Mr. Katkin will report on this.

Review of School Board Goals –

- Curriculum: #1 & #2 - completed.
- #3 Ms. Richardson and Mr. Pollet are both using the learning styles for the 5th to 6th grade transition. Completion date changed to May 2009.
- #4a. – a lot of work has been completed but more planning is needed to put the technology plan into place. This goal is ongoing and completion date is changed to January 2009.
- #4b. – completed. Communication: #1 – ongoing.
- #2 – RES is completed. RJH has made adjustments and work is ongoing. Leadership and Organization: #1 – ongoing.
- #2 – completed.
- #3 – completed.

- Budget: #1 – ongoing. Mr. Grant stated we cannot reduce costs, but we can enhance the service by making changes, including centralized locations and bus start times.
- #2 – ongoing.
- # 3 – completed.
- Assessment and Accountability: #1 – Dr. Cushing reported that the Follow the Child Model is in its final draft and ready to pilot.
- #2 – RES is completed and 9th Grade is ongoing. Change K-8 Parent feedback to a completion date of August 2008. Ms. Richardson stated we should put this to the Principal’s Advisory Council. Mr. Grant stated there is a benefit to doing a survey for this information and that it is important to get parent feedback as people are not always available to attend Board and PAC meetings. Mr. Grant feels very strongly that we should make a survey available. Dr. Cushing stated that questions are built into the Learning Compact, in the parent input questionnaire of the NEASC accreditation process. Mr. Grant questioned whether these questions would give us the response and feedback we are looking for. He feels not as many people would respond to the parent input questionnaire because the questions don’t ask about curriculum and other programs. Ms. Balboni agreed with Dr. Cushing that this model would be a good first step to the process. Mrs. Moynahan replied she would respond to the Learning Compact model questionnaire. Dr. Cushing stated that he would like to see parents sit down with their student’s teachers and discuss strategies individually as each student has different needs. Mr. Grant stated he would like to bring this up for further discussion at the retreat.
- Gender discrimination: Mr. Pollet stated that he has made connections at the Moultonboro School to discuss this topic and has also purchased several professional books on this issue.

Other – Ms. Anderson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, to allow the 2 students referred to in Ms. Richardson’s report to finish out the school year at RES. Vote: Unanimously approved.

STANDING COMMITTEES:

- Physical Plant: Mr. Grant reported that ramp work at both buildings and waterproofing at RJH was done over April vacation. Mr. Pollet reported that carpeting will be installed at the main and gym entrance at RJH.
- Special Issues: nothing to report.
- REF: Mr. Schwartz reported that REF awarded over \$40,000 in grants for both schools, including \$15,000 for the music department at RJH, and \$3,000 for the Artist in Residence program. He further stated that REF would like clarification on where books and technology items fall into the budget.
- PHS: Mrs. Moynahan reported that PHS graduation will be held on June 13th at 5:30 p.m.
- PTA: Mrs. Moynahan attended this meeting and stated that the PTA discussed funding of projects at RES and RJH.
- Rye Rec: Ms. Anderson reported that they have put the finishing touches on the moving of the aftercare program upstairs at RES and that all went smoothly. She appreciated Ms. Richardson’s attendance with her at the last Recreation Commissioners’ meeting.
- Communications: nothing to report.
- Technology: nothing further to report.
- Curriculum: Ms. Balboni stated the next meeting will be held on May 22nd. They will be discussing CORE curriculum.
- NEASC: Ms. Richardson and Mr. Pollet reported that this is ongoing. Ms. Richardson reported they will use grant money to pay for substitutes so teachers can take a day to work on NEASC.

Mr. Pollet stated that they have completed their rough draft and will be discussing the next step at the next staff meeting.

- Peer Schools: nothing new to report.
- Bus Committee: nothing further to report.
- Policies: Mr. Grant stated that at the last Board meeting it was brought up by Ms. Anderson to discuss holding policy meetings at a different time. Ms. Balboni asked if they might be able to hold these meetings electronically by e-mail. Mrs. Moynahan informed the Board that Debbie McKenna makes changes after each policy meeting and e-mails the corrections to those on the committee. She stated they will be meeting next Tuesday and she will e-mail the Board the policies discussed after revisions. Ms. Anderson agreed that, with regard to the policies coming out of the SAU 50 Policy Committee, it would be good to address changes to those via e-mail in a process similar to how the Board reviews the minutes prior to meetings, to streamline the discussion process at Board meetings. Mr. Grant suggested that they hold special quarterly meetings on policy alone as we move forward. The Board agreed.

JICD – Student Conduct, Discipline and Due process, 2nd reading: Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Ms. Balboni, a motion to accept this as a 2nd reading, as amended. Vote: Unanimously approved.

JLDBA – Behavior Management and Intervention for Students, 2nd reading: Ms. Balboni proposed, seconded by Ms. Anderson, a motion to accept this policy as a 2nd reading, as amended. Vote: Unanimously approved.

JII – Student Rights and Responsibilities, 2nd reading for adoption: Mr. Schwartz made a motion to adopt, seconded by Ms. Balboni. Vote: Unanimously approved.

JICFA – Hazing, 2nd reading: it was agreed to table this policy at this time.

IHAH – World Language Program, 2nd reading: it was agreed to table this policy at this time and complete a version for Rye only.

IICA – Field Trips and Excursions, 2nd reading: Mr. Schwartz proposed, seconded by Ms. Balboni, a motion to accept this as a 2nd reading, as amended. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Motor vehicle Seat Belt use Policy, 2nd reading: Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Ms. Balboni, a motion to accept this as a 2nd reading, as amended. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Slips, Trips and Falls Prevention, 2nd reading: it was agreed to table this policy at this time.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Ms. Balboni stated the Rye Travel Soccer team would like to have use of the athletic shed owned by the District at RES. They would paint and fix up the shed to use in the fall for storage. Dr. Cushing suggested it should be an annual request to use the shed, and the Board agreed that they could have use of the shed next fall, to be requested on an annual basis.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION:

Mr. Grant proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to go into non-public session at 9:38 p.m. to discuss personnel. Unanimously approved on a roll call vote.

PUBLIC SESSION:

The Board returned to public session at 10:20 p.m.

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

School Board Secretary