

Approved by the Rye School Board at its December 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 November 19, 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, Ron Fortier, Jeanne Brown, Ann Jule,
Phoebe Guarnaccia, Sheila Adams, Jeanne Brown, Tim Moynahan,
Maggie Hanna and Michelle Wirth

Residents/Visitors:

Lesley Cornell, RJH Students.

CALL TO ORDER:

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

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Approval of public minutes - On a motion by Mrs. Moynahan, and seconded by Mr. Schwartz, the public minutes of October 15, 2008 were accepted as amended. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Communications – Dr. Cushing passed around a packet for each School Board member containing persuasive essays from students in Ms. O'Connell's 7th grade language arts class. Dr. Cushing has also received essays from the students and will be joining them for lunch this week in order to respond to their questions and suggestions.

REPORTS:

Superintendent:

- Dr. Cushing asked if there were any questions about the special education report that was distributed. Mr. Grant noted that Mrs. Lyons gave numbers by gender on this report and asked if this could be put in as a standard in all of the reports.
- Dr. Cushing commented on events at both schools; the Veterans Day assembly, updates on Ms. Ellwood's Antarctica trip at RJH and the play, Annie at RES.
- Dr. Cushing noted that there were a good number of teachers joining the Learning Compact for Follow the Child. At this point they are in the process of conferencing with parents. Dr. Cushing reported that he will update their progress monthly. Mr. Schwartz asked about the learning style

questionnaire. Kathleen Cole responded that it gives the teachers a good idea of what kind of a learner each student is. Dr. Cushing said it helps the teachers decide what will work best for each student.

- Dr. Cushing commented that the presentation by Ed Gerety at this year's project Safeguard, as always, was very powerful. Mr. Gerety challenged the students to create a dream board with pictures of goals or things that interest them. He told them to start with what "I want" and eventually make it to "I will".
- Dr. Cushing stated at the last commissioner's meeting it was reported that there is a shortfall in the state budget. He further stated that they are down 32 positions in the State Education Department since 2003 and are being asked to come in at 10% less than their budget last year. Some items mentioned that may be cut were building aid and assessment testing.

Principals

Ms. Lane Richardson – Rye Elementary School

- Ms. Richardson reported that Election Day and their first lockdown drill this year went very well.
- Ms. Richardson said the reading garden at RES has been completed with the help of a former Rye student and funds from the PTA and that it looks beautiful.
- RES has received letters from students in China through their program Moving Mountains and that it was very touching to hear them say what hope they have for the future.
- The PTA Bake sale during Election Day was very successful.
- All staff worked on NEASC on teachers' workday November 4th. Ms. Richardson reported that they are in the final stages of their report and they are currently proofing. She also commented that Kathleen Cole and Kathy Tucker have taken leadership roles in the NEASC process and are doing a wonderful job.
- Ms. Richardson recently returned from Calais, ME for her NEASC visit and also went to the National Mentor Program in Georgia where she obtained a lot of good information.
- Mr. Katkin informed Ms. Richardson she needed to ask the Board for permission to transfer \$1,200.00 that is budgeted for their chess program and transfer to a program for mentors. Mr. Grant was okay with the transfer as long as they would still be able to find money to fund the chess program. Mr. Schwartz made a motion to transfer \$1,200.00 from the chess program to the mentor program, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan. Vote: Unanimously approved.
- Ms. Richardson reported that Mr. Southworth and Mrs. Costanzo are busy working on gender studies and the NECAP Assessments.
- Ms. Anderson noted that Mr. Eaton, Rye Town Moderator sent a correspondence to Dr. Cushing thanking the School Board and Ms. Richardson on how incredibly well everything went at RES on Election day.

Mr. Chris Pollet – Rye Junior High School

- Mr. Pollet reported he and Ms. Richardson have scheduled a Special Issues meeting for January 8, 2009 at 7:00 pm at RJH, and hosted by the Principals' Advisory Councils.
- Mr. Pollet reported that 2 former RJH students, now in high school came to RJH to speak to current French students on emerging programs. The students at RJH were very receptive and asked a lot of questions.
- Project Safeguard went very well again this year. Mr. Pollet agreed with Dr. Cushing about Ed Gerety's presentation. He stated RJH will tie this presentation into an assembly on

Rachel's challenge after Thanksgiving break. RJH is currently running a "chain reaction" program recognizing students for being kind, caring and generous without any incentive.

- Mrs. Brown discussed an on-line parenting resource purchased through the C.A.R.I.T. program. This resource will allow parents to access valuable tools and videos on line, teaching responsibility, respect and healthy relationships.
- Mr. Pollet passed out information about Ms. Ellwood's trip to Antarctica. Mr. Fortier gave a presentation showing video clips, journal entries and other links available on the RJH website. Included was a video clip of a robot built by last year's 8th grade class as it was being tested and admired by the scientists of PolarTREC. Mr. Grant noted that, at the February Board meeting, it was agreed that Mr. Pollet would get parent feedback half way through this trip and wanted to make sure we were doing what we said we would do. Mr. Pollet replied he has met informally with 8th grade parents but will set a more formal venue. Ms. Balboni noted that honors reference letters are not due until February and Ms. Ellwood will be back in early December.

Financial

Manifest –

Dr. Cushing passed around a revised financial report. Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to approve the manifest of October 11, 2008 through October 28, 2008 in the amount of \$372,232.30. Mrs. Balboni asked if the check to American Youth Foundation is Merrowvista. Mr. Pollet replied that it is. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to approve the manifest of October 29, 2008 through November 14, 2008 in the amount of \$1,124,316.99. Ms. Balboni asked if the check to Wentworth by the Sea is for professional growth for NEASC. Ms. Richardson replied that it is. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Budget committee meeting –

Mrs. Moynahan reported that they had an all day session regarding the town budget and that there were no cuts made at that meeting. Mr. Grant asked if an increase in the budget for the track was discussed. Mrs. Moynahan replied it was not. Mrs. Moynahan further reported that she abstained from two votes at this meeting. One was related to the Fire Department budget as she has a relative on the force, and the other related to the after school program at RES as she still has questions regarding this program. Mrs. Moynahan reported the date for the budget committee meeting has not yet been set. Ms. Anderson asked what the overall increase was for some of the larger town departments. Mrs. Moynahan said she will follow up. Mr. Grant said the meeting for Rye School District budget review is scheduled for Monday, November 24, 2008 from 8:00 to 3:30 at the SAU.

Summary of pending projects –

- Library – Mr. Schwartz reported that Mr. Katkin has sent out the library design for estimates and hopes to have some information back this Monday.
- Track & Road – Mr. Schwartz stated that we are still waiting on estimates for the track and safety road.
- 1-to-1 Laptops – Mr. Schwartz said Tim Moynahan will have a spreadsheet available for review on Monday.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Calendar of Policy Action – November – none

Goals Update -

Leadership and Organization: Annual survey/review of RES and RJH parents – Ms. Richardson reported she is working on the draft to make it more user friendly. She will bring the draft to the next meeting.

Participate in the selection process of PHS Superintendent – Dr. Cushing informed the board he was recently appointed as the representative for SAU 50. The first meeting will be held on November 29, 2008. They will meet every Saturday until January 1, 2009 when names for the position will be submitted.

Budget: Negotiate new school bus contract – Mr. Grant will discuss this in the committees portion of this meeting.

Increase identification for potential bidders for school projects – Dr. Cushing is still working on this and will discuss on Monday.

Coordination of funding priorities of PTA, REF and School Board and Explore early retirement incentives – Dr. Cushing reported both these goals are ongoing.

Assessment and Accountability: To improve communication process with parents around identification of students for special education review – Parent survey to evaluate process strengths/weaknesses – to include questions regarding the referral process. Mr. Schwartz made a motion to accept this change, seconded by Mrs. Balboni. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Verizon – Mr. Schwartz was sent an e-mail from Verizon stating they would like to test how tall of a tower would be needed if allowed to build on school property. He suggested as we are still waiting on estimates for the track and safety road that we might want to wait for this information before allowing Verizon to test. Mrs. Richardson stated it would be better to wait until the ground is frozen to avoid any lawn damage. Mr. Grant asked if we want to go ahead with this inquiry at this time before we have made a decision on whether or not we would allow Verizon to build a tower. He is afraid people may be concerned we have agreed to something with Verizon by allowing them to test tower height. Mr. Schwartz said we need to clarify that there is no consensus at this time to allow Verizon to build a tower. He asked the Board if they agreed that we should wait until we have estimates before going forward with Verizon's request. Mr. Grant noted that we need to be careful of how we proceed. Mrs. Balboni agreed that we do not want people to assume we are moving forward with this idea. Ms. Anderson made a motion to deny having Verizon do a tower height test at this time, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan. Mr. Grant added that we should ask them to come back with a financial package first. Vote: Unanimously approved.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS:

No one in attendance had any questions at this time. It was noted that two RJH students were in attendance at tonight's meeting to obtain points for their social studies class.

STANDING COMMITTEES:

- Physical Plant – Mr. Grant reported they will be looking at both buildings again this spring.
- Special Issues – Ms. Anderson reported the next meeting is scheduled for January 8, 2009.
- REF – Mr. Schwartz stated there was nothing new to report.

- PHS – Mrs. Balboni reported the next meeting is scheduled for December 14, 2008. Dr. Cushing added the will be discussing the budget at that meeting.
- PTA – Mrs. Moynahan said she was unable to attend the last meeting. Ms. Richardson reported that they have elected new officers who are very enthusiastic of their positions. The fundraiser held at RES on Election Day went very well. The PTA has recently funded several requests for both schools.
- Rye Rec – Mr. Schwartz stated they have not had a meeting yet, but he will be talking with Janet Stevens and Ms. Richardson next week. Ms. Richardson added that she has spoken with the after school director Paul Penman, and reported he has some very good ideas for stepping up the program. She also stated that they are still working on the room situation. Mr. Grant asked if there was anything we have to do regarding the room issue as it relates to the budget. Mrs. Moynahan said the biggest impact would be on Rye Rec’s budget if their program was not held at RES because they would have to find a new location. Ms. Anderson said that the aftercare program is run out of a revolving account which means it runs on fees for services and is not an impact to the Town budget. But there would likely be an increase in their fees. Mr. Grant asked how discussions regarding their concerns and room issues were proceeding. Mr. Schwartz replied that they need more procedures in place. He needs to meet with Janet Stevens to discuss these concerns and come up with a plan. Ms. Richardson added that Rye Rec has oversubscribed their student numbers by 13. Mr. Grant again stated that in his personal opinion the main responsibility of the school and school board is to make sure we are maximizing the educational aspects for students during the school day first, and while he strongly remains in support of the Rye Rec aftercare program as an important program to help parents after the school day is finished, he wants to make sure that Rye Rec’s needs do not dictate how the school facility needs and programs are determined. Mr. Schwartz said that we have a lot of after school programs but no after care and that we need to think about the fact that we don’t offer it. Mr. Schwartz stated that we should consider the needs of our students regardless of whether we are funding and coordinating the specific after-school activity.
- Communications – Mr. Schwartz and Mrs. Balboni met with the employees of RES at a recent staff meeting to keep an open dialogue between the staff and the School Board. The following was discussed:
 - It was asked by the RES staff if the Board was aware that after the budget is set there are sometimes additional items to be purchased to support the curriculum. It was discussed that the board should consider ensuring the Principals have enough budget available for curriculum needs throughout the year. Additionally, it would help if the staff had a better understanding of the budget process, as historically the Principals have had available funds, midyear.
 - Staff also brought up the issue that when buying items for the next school year they were locked into purchasing catalogue items when they could actually purchase the items for less money locally. Mr. Schwartz and Mrs. Balboni mentioned the new ‘credit card’ system that Mr. Katkin was putting forward and described how that might resolve this problem.
 - The Board was thanked for allowing a staff member to have their child attend kindergarten at RES.
 - Positive feedback was given for the monetary support of field trips.
 - It was suggested the Board think about early releases and late starts as that time could be used for professional development. PHS has six early release dates this year that staff use for professional development time.

Mr. Schwartz and Mrs. Balboni will be meeting with staff at RJH this Thursday.

- Technology – Mr. Schwartz reported the technology team has met to discuss their plan and will be wrapping it up in the next few weeks.
- Curriculum – Mrs. Balboni is working on the curriculum revision table and power standards and how to introduce them. With input from the committee they are working on a format so that we will all come in at the same place.
- NEASC – discussed in principals reports.
- Peer Schools – nothing new to report.
- Bus Committee – Mr. Grant reported that four companies were given an opportunity to offer a proposal for bussing Rye students next school year. Only First Student responded. One of the companies from Vermont was interested in expanding service but due to recent financial downturns will not be going forward with expansion at this time. Another company in Newburyport was not within a reasonable distance to consider. One of the requests for the bus companies was that any bus being used for transportation of students not be older than 6 years of age for safety reasons. Mr. Grant reported that this would increase the cost by 5.49% where as using the existing fleet, (with some busses being older than six years) would be an increase of 3.5%. Mr. Grant also stated that Rye’s cost per route is 50% higher in comparison to the other SAU 50 schools, particularly Greenland that has the same number of routes and in a quick review seemingly same distance of routes. He asked Jim Katkin to request more information from First Student and is waiting for them to respond to why Rye is paying more. The cost difference may be justified but he wants to understand how they arrived at the pricing differences. Ms. Anderson suggested it may be mileage. Mr. Grant will follow up.
- Track and Safety – Mrs. Moynahan stated that Gregg Mikolaities gave her a list of materials needed to build, and that several different options were discussed. Also discussed were ideas addressing the concern of the proximity of the playground to the new road. Mr. Grant wanted to make it clear that Mr. Jordan is providing estimates for what he can do as an independent contractor and estimates for the town and what they can do.
- Policies:
 - JG – Assignment of Students to Classes and Grade levels, 1st reading: Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, a motion to approve this policy as a 1st reading. Vote: Unanimously approved.
 - ILBA – Assessment program, 1st reading: Mr. Schwartz suggested adding the following (in italics) to the first paragraph: “ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the curriculum on improving student’s *academic, social and emotional* performance”. The following (in italics) was added to the second paragraph: “including off-site learning projects; competency-based assessments, *standardized testing*, and teacher designed quizzes and tests”. The following change was made to the fifth paragraph, third sentence: “Individual scores shall be made available only to the appropriate personnel within the district in which the student is enrolled and to parent (s) or legal guardian (s) of each student as provided by law”. It was discussed striking the following (in italics) to the sixth paragraph: “The Board will provide funding for the student assessment program *including professional development for teachers* in the use of tools to understand assessment results, to adjust instruction to meet personalized needs of students, and to monitor progress”. Ms. Anderson stated this sentence makes it sound contractual and that is what the union contract is for not a document like this. Mr. Schwartz feels the budget will support this policy. Mr. Schwartz made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan to approve this policy as a 1st reading. Vote: Unanimously approved.
 - IKE – Promotion and Retention of Students, 2nd reading: Text changes – The words ‘As soon as a’ were added to the beginning of the second paragraph and “If a” was stricken. In the second sentence, second paragraph “along with parent input” was added after Building Administrator.

Mr. Schwartz proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan to adopt this policy as a 2nd reading as modified. Vote: Unanimously approved.

JICK – Bullying, for adoption: Mrs. Balboni made a motion to adopt this policy, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan. Vote: Unanimously approved. The Board thanked Mr. Schwartz for all of the hard work he put into this policy.

IGAC – Recognition of Religious and Cultural Diversity, 2nd reading: Mr. Grant met with Ms Moynahan and researched existing policies to combine with our policy under the Board supported direction of being inclusive and not exclusive to religion. The new draft's first paragraph was stricken. In the second paragraph, third sentence the words "The Board" were replaced with "The Schools". In the second paragraph, fourth sentence the words "his/her own" were replaced with "their own" In the third paragraph, second sentence the words "soliciting or encouraging" were replaced with "promoting". In the fourth paragraph, first sentence, the words "that at a macro level" were stricken and the words "religions/cultures" replaced "all cultures and beliefs". The fifth paragraph was changed to read: "The Board recognizes that activities related to the celebration of religious holidays present an excellent opportunity to teach students about religious and cultural traditions and beliefs and foster respect and understanding among students. Therefore, instruction and activities related to the awareness of religious holidays, or having religious themes are permitted as long as they are conducted in a manner to educate students and not promote any religion, are presented in an unbiased and objective manner, and focus on the origins, cultural, and historical significance of the holiday". In the sixth paragraph, first sentence the words "or no faith" were added after "of all faiths" The seventh paragraph was stricken. The eighth paragraph, second sentence was changed to read: "If holiday religious symbols are used, they must be used for educational purposes". The ninth paragraph, second sentence was changed to read: "Holiday cultural symbols may be used for decorative purposes in the schools if they are used as part of the educational curriculum, and/or have an educational component, (so long as they are not used to promote any religion)". The tenth paragraph was changed to read: "Use of holiday cultural symbols within the school buildings is permitted at the discretion of the Building Principal, as long as such display is balanced and inclusive to students of all faiths or no faiths, is illustrative of the world's religious traditions and cultural heritages, temporary in nature, coinciding with the holiday season and does not impose a risk to the health and safety of students and staff". Mr. Grant stated the key point is that the policy is inclusive. He feels it is best to spell it out and not leave it open to interpretation as long as there is balance. Mrs. Balboni prefers to leave the policy less specific by not including specific holidays, customs, or areas of curriculum in the policy. Mr. Grant stated that what we care about is that at the end of the day students are being educated and not necessarily that it is in the curriculum. There was further discussion to define that inclusiveness is over the school year and not at any one time of year. There was consensus from the Board that this was the right approach. Mr. Grant offered to provide a clean draft incorporating the changes and to add a draft definition of the Board's intent on inclusiveness. Mr. Schwartz made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Balboni to approve as a 1st reading as modified with the expectations that the principals will move forward in defining inclusiveness and how we teach diversity. Vote: Unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS:

Dr. Cushing presented new job descriptions for the position of lead custodian that needs the Board's approval. Mr. Schwartz asked if we give a description for lead custodians, are we limiting ourselves to what the job entails. Mr. Grant replied that descriptions can be revised every year. Dr. Cushing agreed that we can update job descriptions annually. Mr. Grant was in agreement with the job description as

long as we are able to modify. Ms. Anderson made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan to approve the job description of lead custodian. Vote: Unanimously approved.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION:

Mr. Schwartz proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to go into non-public session at 9:03 p.m. to discuss personnel. Unanimously approved on a role call vote.

PUBLIC SESSION:

The Board returned to public session at 9:30 p.m.

SECRETARY'S REPORT *continued:*

Approval of non-public minutes - On a motion by Mrs. Moynahan, and seconded by Mrs. Balboni, the non-public minutes of October 15, 2008 were accepted and sealed. Vote: Unanimously approved.

ADJOURN: Mrs. Moynahan proposed, seconded Mrs. Balboni motion to adjourn at 9:30 p.m. Vote: Unanimously approved.

School Board Secretary