

Approved by the Rye School Board at its November 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 October 15, 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
Mary Lyons, Director of Pupil Services
Chris Pollet, Principal, Rye Junior High
Patricia-Lane Richardson, Principal, Rye Elementary

Staff

Kathleen Cole, Katie Jarvis, Sheila Adams, Jeanne Brown, Tim
Moynahan, Phoebe Guarnaccia, and Michelle Wirth

Residents/Visitors:

Joe Cummins

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Grant called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Approval of public minutes - On a motion by Mrs. Moynahan, and seconded by Mr. Schwartz, the public minutes of September 17, 2008 were accepted. Vote approved: Ms. Anderson, Mr. Schwartz, Mrs. Balboni, and Mrs. Moynahan. Abstained: Mr. Grant because he was not at the September 17th meeting.

Communications – Dr. Cushing mentioned he received an invitation for the Rye School Board for Jane Ireland's retirement party scheduled for October 25th at 6:00 at the Galley Hatch. The invitation asked for a \$50 donation which includes a gift contribution. On a motion by Mr. Schwartz, and seconded by Ms. Balboni, the board approved a \$50 donation to Jane Ireland's retirement gift on behalf of the Rye School Board. Vote: Approved: Mr. Grant, Mr. Schwartz, Mrs. Balboni, and Mrs. Moynahan. Abstained: Ms. Anderson because her husband is Town Moderator and she felt voting on this might be seen as a conflict.

RESPA – an agreement was reached with RESPA with regards to the Supervisory Custodian. Job descriptions for the lead custodian and custodian were distributed for review. Mr. Katkin created the job descriptions. Mr. Grant suggested board members take the time to read the job descriptions and vote on them next month.

REPORTS:

Superintendent:

- Dr. Cushing stated that at the SAU 50 board meeting he distributed index cards to board members asking for input on the Portsmouth Superintendent search. He will share this information with Dr. Paul DeMinico at his upcoming meeting. Dr. Cushing will also find out the next steps in the search process.
- The report of Mary Lyons, Director of Pupil Services was distributed. Mr. Grant said he wanted to complement the special education team of Rye Elementary School for their presence at RES curriculum night. Mr. Grant said their time meeting with parents as part of that evening was appreciated.
- Science NECAP – Tom Southworth
Mr. Southworth said this is the first year for Science NECAP, and the results will be reviewed more closely in the fall with Ms. Ellwood and Ms. Adams. Mr. Southworth noted that at the high school level there were some 'upper-end' students who participate in advanced placement level classes but did not score proficient or above on the NECAP. Mr. Southworth said at the high school level there are many science class offerings which make it challenging to test across the curriculum. Mr. Grant asked if we budgeted for, and bought, more science materials. Ms. Richardson said yes, we had \$4,000 for this and Ms. Gianforte has spearheaded purchasing science materials for RES. Mr. Southworth said the NECAP test is a baseline test and we really need 3-5 years of data to get a true picture. Mr. Grant thanked Mr. Southworth for reporting this data to the board.

Principals

Ms. Lane Richardson – Rye Elementary School

- Ms. Richardson distributed a list of music concerts for the year from Ms. Papoutsy and Ms. Wirth.
- Several teachers are working with Dr. Cushing on the Learning Compact. The Learning Compact parent survey went home in September and has already proven to be of great value to the teachers
- Ms. Guarnaccia's monthly mentor program for new employees is working very well
- The PTA had three new parents of kindergarteners step up to the plate to lead the PTA.
- Recent book fair was a huge success thanks to the organization of Kathie Kennedy and Denise Wheeler. Total sales were over \$6,000 and the school received \$1,500 profit.
- Walk-to-school day on October 8th was a great success. We had 113 children either ride or walk to school with parent chaperones.

Mr. Chris Pollet – Rye Junior High School

- As follow up to last month's meeting Mr. Pollet reported that bulk-mailing was not cost-effective for the number of pieces we mail.
- Merrowvista – Mr. Pollet said 51 students and 7 teachers had returned from Merrowvista. There were 8 students and 1 teacher from New Castle with the group.
- Eighth grade science teacher, Ms. Ellwood has safely arrived in Antarctica as part of the research team working in the Dry Valleys. Ms. Ellwood is already posting information for the students on the website <http://www.ryejrhigh.org/ellwood>.
- Mr. Pollet invited the board to the November 6th Veteran's Day presentation at RJH and said it will be from 9:30 – 10:30.
- There has been one principal advisory meeting already and there will be a rotating list of teacher presentations at upcoming meetings.

- Picturing America – The students are enjoying classical American art pieces that portray American culture and history. The 8th graders will be interpreting and sharing this art with the Rye community. This program comes to RJH from a grant received last year.
- Ongoing professional development at RJH – Mr. Pollet is meeting with teachers about goals and doing observations.
- NEASC – had one work day at Timberlane, it was suggested we create a box of artifacts related to RJH students

Mr. Schwartz asked about 'long blocks'. Mr. Pollet said it is when there is an extended block with rotating subjects. This format allows for more team teaching and collaboration across disciplines. For instance, in math you would begin with a warm up activity, homework review, class work, etc. The critical piece is that the activity should guide the schedule.

Mr. Schwartz extended thanks to Mr. Steve Carpenter for framing the mural at Rye Elementary School. Mrs. Moynahan wanted to commend both school secretaries for having student numbers readily available during the recent FEMA drill.

Financial

Manifest –

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to approve the manifest of September 11, 2008 through October 1, 2008 in the amount of \$348,675.55. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to approve the manifest of check numbers 040004 through 040010 in the amount of \$22,089.79. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mrs. Balboni, a motion to approve the manifest of October 2, 2008 through October 10, 2008 in the amount of \$241,202.37. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Mr. Grant asked about check #40110 for telephone support at RES. Ms. Richardson explained this was for tech support for the next telephone system. Tech support was called after several staff members tried unsuccessfully to solve the problem.

Budget committee meeting – the Rye budget committee meeting conflicted with tonight's school board meeting. Mrs. Moynahan is still waiting to hear from them as to when they are available for a follow up meeting with Mr. Grant and Mr. Katkin.

Mr. Grant said that at one point he had heard informally that the budget committee expressed an interest in quarterly meetings with the school board. Mr. Katkin feels quarterly meetings would be too cumbersome but semiannual meetings might work well to keep the lines of communication open.

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, a motion to have mid-year and year-end meetings with the budget committee in addition to the scheduled budget season meeting. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Summary of pending projects – Mr. Grant said he is trying to determine where things are project-wise and budget-wise in order to determine prioritization.

- Library – Mr. Schwartz said the board has approved the design and he expects the construction cost estimate by mid-November
- Track & Road – Mr. Schwartz is trying to work with the selectmen to determine town involvement; Dr. Cushing is going to attend the selectmen's meeting next Monday when they

set the tax rate. Mr. Schwartz said he feels like the road extension is one project and the track is the second project. Mr. Grant asked for numbers and a possible time line to determine if we move forward or hold off. He said we want to be cognizant of the selectmen's involvement. Ms. Anderson said, given the current economic state, we need to bring a bare bones budget forward; any non-essential items may have to wait because, in this political climate, the Budget Committee is unlikely to approve the school budget if it is too high. Mr. Grant said there is some value in understanding cost; he loves the concept of the track and road project but needs some ballpark numbers.

- 1-to-1 Laptops – Mr. Schwartz said the expectation is to have two or three different options in November. Mr. Pollet said he is meeting Friday to determine different levels of infusion. He has met with Mr. Moynahan and they will involve Mr. Katkin after Friday's meeting. There have been substantial conversations about how this initiative fits into the big picture.

Other

Ms. Balboni said RJH staff members are working on a grant proposal to the Rye Driftwood Garden Club and REF to create raised garden beds in the area in front of the school. The beds would be 24' x 32' with a fence. She that garden committee members are in conversation with the historical commission to make sure fence meets all guidelines. Ms. Balboni said these gardens would be used to enhance the curriculum in many areas as well as promote sustainability. The grounds would be tended to by student and community volunteers and there is no cost to the school.

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, a motion to approve the raised garden bed concept as presented. Vote: Unanimously approved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Calendar of Policy Action – October

- CF – Building Administrator Evaluated by the Superintendent – At Dr. Cushing's request there was board consensus that this be moved to the March calendar of policy action.
- EI – Annual Risk Management Report – Both principals have completed and the reports are on file with the business office
- GCI – update of Staff Development Opportunities – We now have an online listing of professional development for staff: http://www.sau50.org/curriculum_professional_learning.html

Goals

DI goal – Mrs. Balboni will speak further to this goal next month when teams are formed

Selection process – ongoing

Annual survey review – draft due next month

Bus bids – bids are due October 24th so there will be more to report next month

Mr. Grant stated that at the July retreat there was discussion of a program assessment of special education within Rye. He said the point of the discussion was to assess and understand how we're doing; what are people's feelings from inside and out; special education represents 10% of our budget so it is important both financially and academically.

Ms. Anderson said she was looking for Mrs. Lyons' input in framing what assessment would look like. Do we just meet the letter of the law or do we do more? She said the board needs to be educated to have a better understanding.

Mrs. Lyons said everything within special education is IEP (individual education plan) driven. There are specific goals and we have to make sure each child is making progress towards the goal and make adjustments as necessary. There is constant evaluation and it is very data driven. There are many checks and balances that target particular indicators. Mrs. Lyons feels there is a lot of monitoring at the state level. There are state performance indicators related to parental involvement.

Mr. Grant said front-end testing of students with possible needs is one of the three primary questions he receives from parents. Some parents feel the school is not reacting. What is the expectation -- by the letter of the law or more?

Mrs. Lyons said the response is intervention. The goal is addressing the need of intervention. A child should not have to be identified as educationally disabled to have his/her needs met. This follows our movement to personalize education. The extended blocks Mr. Pollet spoke of earlier are a perfect opportunity to do intervention.

Mr. Grant asked if there are statistics available on the number of parents who raise an issue of need/problem of their student and how many of those issues are legitimate special education needs and how many are not? Do we identify boundaries? Should we expand our boundaries? He knows students at the bottom tier are dealt with but he wonders about students at the higher end.

Mrs. Lyons said as far as parents coming forward with concerns; there is a process followed with all requests. Some parents ask for testing but testing is not always necessary to identify an educational disability. She feels it is best for parents to understand that they are being heard and there is follow up. Intervention can happen over the course of several years. Sometimes intervention at the elementary level needs to be revisited and adjusted at the middle school level.

Mr. Grant asked if we have statistics of parent requests.

Mrs. Lyons said there is internal and external data available. We're moving in the direction of data-driven instruction across the board.

Mrs. Balboni suggested that there might be a disconnect between what Mrs. Lyons is saying and what parents understand. While a specific disability is necessary to qualify for special education, there might be other ways to assist and support a struggling student. We need to bridge the gap so miscommunication does not happen. Is there a way we can follow up with parents after assessment?

Mr. Grant said the other disconnect is that if the school does testing and those findings differ from those done as part of external testing. We need a real mechanism to make sure there is a consensus to frame a goal.

Mrs. Lyons said in terms of creating a goal she is looking at specific qualifications for identified child for special education. If there is a disconnect with parents, we need to make sure the parent is comfortable with results and the plan for the student. External testing is one test; school evaluation is testing with team input and goes farther than a single evaluation.

Mr. Grant said he is not sure he understands the process if the parents are not happy with the evaluation. He asked Mrs. Lyons to frame up the goal and we will revisit in November.

Mrs. Anderson said addressing the needs of students who need some type of accommodation who are not Special Ed. identified, is the responsibility of the principals as well as Mrs. Lyons.

Mr. Schwartz said he understands we can still provide services for a student if he/she does not have an IEP and asked if that cost falls under the special education budget and if we have sufficient budget for these services. Mrs. Lyons said that yes, and an example would be speech services. Provision of speech services could be an early intervention service if there is reason to think a special education need could develop if services were not provided.

Dr. Cushing mentioned that our special education program received approval as part of an evaluation done every 3-5 years. He further stated that the Learning Compact is moving us in the right direction with personalized education.

Mr. Grant said there is perception that students/parents are battling schools around special education. He questioned why there is a disconnect when it is clear we are all after the same goal: to provide an education for all students.

Ms. Anderson thanked Mrs. Lyons for her presentation of the special education program.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS:

Ms. Kathleen Cole also thanked the special education teachers for being part of the RES curriculum night.

Parent, Mr. Joe Cummins said he had heard that 1 of 4 boys in Rye are in special education and asked if this disproportionate statistic was true. Mrs. Lyons said that is not accurate but she can provide an accurate gender breakdown.

Mr. Cummins asked Mr. Grant why more Rye students are not going to Phillips Exeter Academy (PEA). Ms. Anderson said 5 Rye students went to PEA this year and the low number Mr. Cummins is referring to was actually from two years ago when only 1 Rye student was accepted into PEA.

Mr. Cummins said he heard there were no social studies books in RJH for students for a few weeks at the beginning of the year. Mr. Pollet clarified that this years 8th grade class has 83 students and several students had to use 'teacher copies' of the book until the additional books were received.

Mr. Cummins asked if there was any plan to change from the Trailblazers Math program as part of our curriculum. Ms. Richardson responded that there is no plan to change and the teachers have much supplemental material to go along with this program and there remains additional money in the budget for further materials. Ms. Balboni added that the current 6th grade class is the first to have Trailblazers throughout their elementary years.

STANDING COMMITTEES:

- Policies:
 - IHCA – Summer Activities, 2nd reading/Adoption: Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mrs. Balboni, a motion to adopt this policy. Vote: Unanimously approved.

JICK – Student Safety and Violence Prevention, 2nd reading: Mrs. Moynahan noted a few key pieces that need to be incorporated in our policy: cyber bullying, related forms, and discretionary reporting. Mr. Schwartz will rework the policy with this new information. Mr. Grant said he questions the reference to a group of students not including another student in an activity or ignoring can be unilaterally classified as bullying. Mr. Pollet said this is a very dicey area and when he was an assistant principal his school took a committee approach to investigate incidents. The committee included a counselor, teacher, principal, etc. Mr. Grant said he liked the idea of this sort of team approach. Ms. Anderson said she feels it is up to the principal to decide the approach to take but agrees that a committee approach is a good one.

ACE – Procedural Safeguards Non-discrimination on the Basis of Handicap/Disability, 2nd reading for adoption: Mr. Schwartz made a motion to adopt, seconded by Ms. Balboni. Vote: Unanimously approved.

AC – Non-discrimination/Equal Opportunity, 2nd reading for adoption: Text change to the first paragraph – in the third line of this paragraph a period will be added after the word disability. The remaining text ‘in employment, educational programs or activities in the School District’ will be inserted in the first sentence of the first paragraph after the word ‘discrimination’. Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mrs. Balboni, a motion to adopt this policy as amended and asked that the Board be provided with a clean copy of the policy at next month’s meeting. Vote: Unanimously approved.

DA– Code of Conduct Involving Financial Transactions, 2nd reading for adoption: Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to adopt this policy. Vote: Unanimously approved.

IKE – Promotion and Retention of Students, 1st reading: Text changes – The word ‘parents,’ was added after the word ‘with’ in the second sentence of the second paragraph. In the fourth sentence of the third paragraph the following text was removed: ‘at the end of the second quarter or trimester,’. In the second sentence of the last paragraph the word ‘any’ was replaced with ‘the number of’. Mrs. Balboni proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to accept this as a 1st reading, as amended. Vote: Unanimously approved.

IGAC – Recognition of Religious and Cultural Diversity – Mr. Grant began by asking for a consensus from the board if we want to be inclusive or exclusive in the schools with regards to religions at holiday time. Mrs. Balboni said it is difficult to look at complete removal (exclusion) and she would rather see us embrace and celebrate openness and diversity. Mr. Grant agreed it is a great educational opportunity. Mrs. Moynahan agreed with the idea of being inclusive and feels the diversity provides many learning opportunities. Ms. Anderson stated that there are thousands of religions so it is difficult to define what “inclusive” means. Mr. Schwartz said he shares the belief we should be inclusive of religions and not just those that are prevalent in our schools.

Mr. Grant asked for and received Board consensus that the schools will be inclusive with regards to religion and diversity. Mr. Grant said he would like to have a revamped policy for the November meeting. Mr. Grant wants to get an idea of what the school holiday programs are going to look like; he asked principals to provide history of holiday programs and has determined the programs are balanced and inclusive. With regards to school decorations – the town provides wreaths which some regard as a Christian symbol. It was the consensus of the Board to incorporate other decorating elements (perhaps on the wreaths) representing other religions. Mrs. Moynahan offered to work on the policy with Mr. Grant.

- Physical Plant: Mr. Grant has done a walk-through at RJH and will soon do the same at RES
- Special Issues: there will be a joint (RES/RJH) meeting set for January
- REF: Grants are due 11/1

- PHS: Mrs. Balboni reported that at the recent AREA meeting it was noted that the Greenland Central School is hosting an Internet Safety Panel & Discussion on Tuesday, November 18, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. The event is open to all parents and staff of SAU #50 and SAU #52. Mrs. Balboni also reported on the recent secondary advisory meeting and said they are exploring academic summer programs. Last summer two pilot programs were offered for a fee: *Writing a College Essay* and *How to Succeed in High School*. Guidance counselors are exploring a mentoring program in which upper classmen volunteer through the guidance department, receive training, and then mentor a freshman or sophomore. Within professional development the high school is working on assessment and they are also working on the Infinite Campus (software which tracks student data). She also mentioned that beginning this year all students must take a mandatory economics class which will include personal finance as part of the curriculum.
- PTA: Mrs. Moynahan said there is a meeting scheduled for next Tuesday and they currently have 160 members and she hopes to hit 200.
- Rye Rec: Ms. Anderson reported that the architectural firm hired by the Rec. Department gave its presentation on the Rye Rec. Master Plan at the last Rec. Commission meeting. After that, Ms. Anderson tried to discuss the issue of over-enrollment in the after school program and the burden this creates for RES and the after care program. The Rec. dept. was not open to considering the use of modulars at RES for their program. Ms. Anderson noted that the recreation department has already presented their budget for next year so the Board needs to give them information soon about space for next year. Ms. Richardson said accepting 53 students instead of 40 has caused some difficulties. Mr. Schwartz said at the last meeting we talked about forming a committee for recommendations. Mr. Schwartz offered to take this on; Mrs. Moynahan offered to help Mr. Schwartz. Mr. Grant said we need to set priorities of the school first and the committee can help focus this and work with Rye Recreation.
- Communications: nothing to report.
- Technology: Mr. Moynahan said there is a district committee meeting Wednesday and the committee plan is due November 12th. Mr. Moynahan met with Ms. Susan Birrell the district technology director at PHS to open communication. Mr. Grant asked if Mr. Moynahan if he could work with her to determine why we can send emails to Rye parents (only) at PHS.
- Curriculum: nothing to report.
- NEASC: done earlier in meeting
- Peer Schools: defer to after NEASC
- Bus Committee: We are expecting bids from 3 or 4 companies. The bids are due October 24th. We need to communicate with PHS students from Rye that there is a change to bus stop at Foyes Corner. Dr. Cushing will follow up with Mr. Collins about including this information in the next PHS newsletter.

NOMINATION:

Dr. Cushing put Eugene Guth into nomination for a .1 percussion teacher position at RJH. His teacher salary will be retroactive to his hire date of September 3, 2008. Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to accept the nomination of Eugene Guth for a .1 percussion teacher position at RJH. Vote: Unanimously approved.

SECRETARY'S REPORT *continued:*

Approval of non-public minutes - On a motion by Mr. Schwartz, and seconded by Mrs. Balboni, the non-public minutes of September 17, 2008 were accepted and sealed. Vote approved: Ms. Anderson, Mr. Schwartz, Mrs. Balboni, and Mrs. Moynahan. Abstained: Mr. Grant because he did not attend that meeting.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION:

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, a motion to go into non-public session at 8:40 p.m. to discuss a student issue. Unanimously approved on a role call vote.

PUBLIC SESSION:

The Board returned to public session at 9:35 p.m.

ADJOURN: Mrs. Moynahan proposed, seconded Mr. Schwartz a motion to adjourn at 9:35 p.m. Vote: Unanimously approved.

School Board Secretary