

*Approved by the Rye School Board at its November 14, 2007 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 17, 2007 at 6:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:**

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

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

Staff Sheila Adams, Jeanne Brown, Kathleen Cole, Bridget Hughes, Katie Jarvis, Tim Moynahan, Sharry Sparks

Residents/Visitors Joe Cummins, Robin Husslage, Jeanne Moynahan, Marty Random, Brian Sullivan

**CALL TO ORDER:**

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

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:**

Ms. Anderson proposed, and Mr. Dodds seconded, a motion to approve the public School Board minutes of September 19, 2007. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Communications:

- Kent LaPage, Chairperson Portsmouth School Board, sent an invitation to attend an NHSBA presentation on negotiations. The workshop will be on November 29<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 - 9:00 p.m. Registration is \$10 and Mr. LaPage would like to know by 11/19 if you plan to attend.

**RECOGNITION OF VISITORS:**

- Mr. Pollet introduced the four officers from the RJH Student Council who gave their reasons for joining student council: to increase student awareness and for leadership, and to have a greater role in the community.

·They spoke of the t-shirt drive, gift drive at holiday time, and the 'families first' dinner as just a few of the upcoming Student Council sponsored events.

·They also talked about collecting books for troops and indicated they would like the student council, or some of the RJH student body to go to Pease Air Terminal as part of Pease greeters. Pease greeters

welcome veterans home from serving in the Near East. Please see [peasegreeters.org](http://peasegreeters.org) for more information.

- One officer mentioned the canned food drive in progress. She said the goal was to collect 500 cans for Families First but as of today they already have 503 cans. She said they are expecting a large collection at the upcoming school dance with added incentives such as 'homework passes' for those who participate.
- They reported the student council has 51 members with varying degrees of participation. The council meets every Wednesday afternoon.
- Mr. Pollet said he has met with Ms. Hughes and the student council several times and they continue to impress him with their communication skills and desire to be involved.

## **REPORTS:**

### **Principal:**

#### **Elementary School**

- Ms. Richardson's monthly report and the new RES brochure were passed out.
- Ms. Richardson thanked Tom Southworth and Bonnie Vadala for their help with the brochure.
- Mr. Magnet is coming to RES tomorrow (10/18) - he sets up the gym as a theatre of electricity
- The Winter Concerts will be January 9 (K-grade 2) and January 23 (grades 3-5)
- There will not be a play this year as the music curriculum is being focused on. We may do a talent show for grades 4 & 5 later.
- The roof is nearly done, Mr. Katkin is negotiating the cost of fixing the skylights
- Woodchips were delivered and spread around the playground and it looks beautiful
- The book sale earned \$7,041.00 which was \$3,170 in profit and \$175 worth of books
- Ms. Richardson then discussed the new report cards. Ms. Richardson said they tried to make the section for teacher comments larger, moved the Unified Arts grades to a separate sheet, moved the attendance to another section and kept World Language off the report cards of the lower level grades
- Term 1 will not have a teacher comments section as this communication will take place at the Parent/Teacher conferences

Mr. Grant asked if the Unified Arts comments were passed among teachers or if this was a privacy issue with teachers being able to see the comments. Dr. Cushing stated it was not a privacy issue, teachers can discuss students with other teachers.

Ms. Richardson indicated comments and grades may be able to be submitted via computer in the near future.

Mrs. Balboni asked if the report card could reference the school website so parents can see what is being worked on in Unified Arts classes.

Mr. Grant said previously the UA classes grades were heavily weighted to behavior. His frustration with the previous report card was that it was more geared to behavior than what the students were actually doing in class and what the academic accomplishments were. Ms. Richardson said they would reverse the order on the form to start with the more academic comments.

Mrs. Balboni said this concern was addressed with Dr. Driscoll over the summer and it was important to make sure the report cards took care of this concern but that they also weren't too cumbersome for parents.

Mr. Schwartz asked if the Parent/Teacher comment section could include specific areas that are stretching a student's capabilities.

Mrs. Balboni stated that this ties into our 'ultimate' goal and may fall into place with this new format.

### **Junior High**

- Mr. Pollet had a few "Coffee with the Principal" meetings for parents
- A 7<sup>th</sup> grader served as "Principal for the Day" on October 16<sup>th</sup>. The student was randomly selected as part of the magazine fundraiser. She helped in the office and Mr. Pollet feels this gives the students an opportunity to have a voice and be involved.
- Mr. Pollet complimented the student council members for their fine presentation to the Board. He noted that they were more relaxed this evening than when they did their first presentation to the faculty.
- Mr. Pollet has been talking with Bonnie Vadala about technology assessment: timed typing, accessing files, navigating around MS Office, etc. Mary Coombs will assess skill levels. Ms. Vadala will backfill with 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Typing skills are somewhat limited. "Home row" isn't taught with repetition as it used to be. Will have a better view of where we are by the first of the year.

Mrs. Balboni asked if the assessment would be done in class. Mr. Pollet said there will be a stand alone assessment conducted during 'focus time', homeroom, etc.

### **Superintendent**

#### Special Education

Dr. Cushing distributed the Special Education report. Mr. Grant asked for explanation of "parentally placed" under the student discharge section. Dr. Cushing stated he would bring this question to Mary Lyons and get her explanation.

#### Virtual Learning Academy

Exeter Region Cooperative School District (SAU 16) initiated the Virtual Learning Academy Charter School. This is the first public charter high school and allows enormous flexibility for students. It is open to anyone who attends public or private high school or is home-schooled.

The concept is exactly the kind of innovative and flexible change that is needed in the way we do business.

*This virtual high school will begin operations in January 2008*

- It is NH approved and meets NH standards
- It has NH curriculum and meets NH curriculum standards
- It will be taught by 100% by NH certified teachers
- 100 students signed up in the first two days of enrollment
- The school is absolutely free to any NH high school student
- If capacity allows – out of state students can enroll and will pay 125% of the tuition cost
- Annual tuition for a full-time student (5 courses) is \$3,500 or \$700/course
- The school provides flexibility in scheduling and boasts "anytime, anywhere, any place" ability to meet a student's needs

- It is a leveled program – a student and parent together choose levels which consist of 'Honors' or 'Regular' level classes. This is controlled by the number of classes needed to complete the curriculum. An honors student may complete a course in 18+ weeks; a regular course might last 32 weeks. A very advanced student could conceivably complete the course in 18 weeks.
- Each month the teacher will check in at least once with the student and parent via telephone to see how things are going.
- The courses are designed by Florida Virtual Supplies – an established curriculum provider. The courses have gone through regional accreditation and multiple revisions and are aligned to national standards.
- The maximum number of students in a class is 25. If enrollment for that class is larger they use a lottery system to fill it.
- The total enrollment for the first year of operation will not exceed 700 students (state wide).

Additionally, there is a guidance dashboard so that local high schools can chart the progress of their students. Next year plans are in place to offer a NH approved Virtual Learning Academy diploma for a 20-course program.

It provides the flexibility that is currently missing in today's high schools. Currently there are many cases where a Junior or Senior must choose between two important classes because they conflict with the student's schedule.

Currently if a student really wanted a specialized course in Science at the high school, and it met the same time as AP Calculus, they would have to decide which one to take. Virtual High School allows you to take one class beyond your normal high school load. In this case they could take AP Calculus as that is an offering at the Virtual High School and their PHS specialized Science class at the school.

Dr. Cushing has been reading grant applications submitted to the Dropout & Recovery Council. Cited among many of these applications is the need to get students through high school. Dr. Cushing would like to talk with Exeter Superintendent, Dr. Hanson, and see if there are opportunities as the junior high level for something like this. He feels it is time to think outside of the box.

Ms. Anderson felt this is an alternative for high school students who were not accepted into honors-level classes.

Dr. Cushing said the Virtual Academy is looking for teachers to get a full load of staff.

Mr. Schwartz asked how many of the 700 students enrolled were full-time and how many were taking one or two classes. Dr. Cushing did not have these specifics but will ask Dr. Hanson.

Mr. Schwartz asked how it works if a PHS student takes a class from the Virtual Academy: does the fee come from the resident town budget? Dr. Cushing will ask Dr. Hanson how this works as well.

### Preparation of SAU 50 students for 9<sup>th</sup> grade

Dr. Cushing visited PHS and observed students. The focus at PHS is very different than it is at the Middle School. Dr. Cushing spoke to Mr. Collins about our student preparedness for this transition. Mr. Collins will speak with the department heads and get feedback from teachers on our students. The 9<sup>th</sup> grade survey will be done via telephone by Rye guidance counselors.

### **Financials**

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Dodds, a motion to approve the manifest of September 14, 2007 through October 12, 2007 in the amount of \$746,983. Vote: Unanimously approved. Mr. Grant noted the big expense was the \$225,000 for the roof repair.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

#### Calendar of Policy Action:

- Dr. Cushing stated he would like to relax the calendar of policy actions somewhat with regards to administrator evaluations. He will have something on Mr. Pollet by March and would like to propose a 'light' evaluation of Ms. Richardson given the very thorough evaluation done just last year. There was a motion by Ms. Anderson, seconded by Mr. Dodds, to do a light evaluation for Mr. Pollet in March and forgo an evaluation for Ms. Richardson. After further discussion the motion was amended by Ms. Anderson, seconded by Mr. Dodds, for Dr. Cushing to do a light evaluation (defined by Dr. Cushing) on both Mr. Pollet and Ms. Richardson in March. Vote: Unanimously approved.

#### Student Academic Form:

- Mr. Grant indicated the student academic form was the last remaining goal to be finalized. Mr. Pollet, and Ms. Richardson, handed out a 1-page profile to be delivered from one teacher to the next. It is not a complicated table. Mr. Pollet said it allows the teacher to note the student's learning styles and that a lot of information will get transferred from teacher-to-teacher. He envisions this form following students and thinks it is a great pilot. An important piece is going from grade 5 to grade 6 as the student changes school. This will help the teachers prepare better for their students.

Mr. Grant asked if Mr. Pollet envisioned the teachers preparing and reviewing forms over the summer enabling them to hit the ground running. Mr. Pollet said the teachers will be able to review the forms and know who the students are so they can prepare accordingly.

Mr. Schwartz asked if this information would be something the parents would see and, if so, should it not be part of the report card?

Ms. Richardson stated that the student academic form is more related to the student's performance on NECAP, Dibels, CAT, etc.

Mr. Grant said this draft will be part of Curriculum Goal #3 and it is something that will be able to be modified.

Mr. Pollet said that as a teacher you really want a quick glimpse at a student as opposed to the detail of report-card level information. The report card is more parent-oriented. Learning style alone is valuable information for teachers to share from year-to-year. This form will be more of a fact sheet than a narrative.

Mr. Schwartz stated it may make more sense when he sees the draft. He is not sure if it makes sense to have two separate vehicles of communication.

Mr. Grant said as a goal we define it and that will allow us to modify it later.

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Dodds, a motion to accept the proposed student academic form for Curriculum Goal #3. Vote: Unanimously approved.

### Verizon Wireless Land Lease

Dr. Cushing had received a land lease agreement from Attorney Thomas Hildreth on behalf of Verizon Wireless. They were interested in leasing land for the purpose of installing a cell tower.

Ms. Anderson said Verizon wants to site the cell tower behind Lang Field. This land is valuable to us in the event we want to create additional sport fields or some other sort of expansion. The proposed easement also poses a problem. Personally Ms. Anderson would vote 'no' on allowing this. The town zoning allowed Verizon to make this request; Ms. Anderson feels it is up to Verizon to go back to the town to pursue this further to expand the zoning allowance.

Mr. Schwartz confirmed with others that the School Board was not required to agree to this land lease.

Mr. Grant admitted that the cell reception is poor in some areas of Rye and at one level we had a community responsibility to at least consider aiding this town problem. He also said there may be some benefit to signing the agreement if Verizon would cover full expenses of access road, field irrigation, etc. Mr. Grant stated he was neither for or against the proposal at this time but was willing to take the agreement to the next level for review and suggested we at least explore if there was any location that would not conflict with future expansion potential.

Ms. Anderson stated Verizon is only looking to pay \$12,000/year; it would be hard to believe they would be willing to pay an extra \$60,000 to do additional work. The biggest issue with the proposed agreement is tying up our land. This is the only area where we have land and signing this agreement would limit future expansion possibilities. Ms. Anderson feels there is very little to be gained.

Mr. Schwartz agreed with Ms. Anderson and Ms. Balboni said she is not in favor of this agreement at all.

Mr. Schwartz proposed, and Ms. Balboni seconded, a motion to not move forward with the Verizon Land Lease Agreement. Agreed: Ms. Anderson; Opposed: Mr. Grant and Mr. Dodds. Motion passed.

### **RECOGNITION OF VISITORS:**

Jeanne Moynahan, Rye PTA

- currently there are 180 members
- recently voted to make a \$250 donation to Safe Routes
- Safe Routes kick off is scheduled for 10/24, 6:30 - 7:30 p.m., at Rye Public Library, John Corrigan of the Department of Transportation will make the presentation

## **STANDING COMMITTEES:**

- Physical Plant: Mr. Dodds reported that Mr. Katkin is negotiating a cost for skylight repair at RES
- Special Issues: Committee recommendation on stipend positions: Ms. Richardson indicated all were in agreement that jobs would be offered to staff first. If it isn't possible to get a staff member to fill a position, then a stipend would be offered to parents for jobs with job descriptions for school-related programs that can't happen if this position is not filled. Mr. Pollet said he views these positions as coaching-type positions. Mrs. Balboni said there is a liability issue if they aren't considered employees. Mr. Pollet said these people would still need fingerprinting and all other safety checks. Mrs. Balboni said all stipend-related positions are leadership positions that require training of some sort.

Mr. Grant asked if a parent is willing to volunteer can they do that? He feels that philosophically the town is built on, and known for, volunteerism and he is concerned that offering stipends creates a slippery slope. One person can say they volunteer 100 hours and get no payment? Or it pushed people to the stipend programs at the sacrifice of other programs.

Mrs. Balboni stated that PTA volunteers fall under the PTA auspices.

Mr. Grant stated that people in Rye volunteer for a lot of things and this is part of the fabric of who we are; he struggles with the stipends for parents philosophically.

Dr. Cushing commented that some parents receive a stipend and then return them for use elsewhere.

Ms. Anderson said the budget committee is focusing on stipends. She echoed Mr. Grant's concerns about parents receiving stipends. Ms. Anderson questioned the recommendation that a staff member should be chosen first without an analysis and comparison of qualifications.

Mr. Pollet agreed with Ms. Anderson and said he was looking more from the viewpoint of Middle School skill building. With a basketball team you would want to make sure you get someone who can work well with a group of students. He is not sure if, de facto, that teachers get an intramural coaching position but it is typical because of their relationship with the students.

Ms. Anderson stated she is just worried that we are not looking for the 'total package' of someone applying for a given position to make sure we get the best person for the job, including qualifications, ability to relate to students, cost, etc.

Mrs. Balboni said the basic issue is if parents should be eligible for stipends. It should be 'all or nothing' across the board. Ms. Balboni philosophically agrees with Mr. Grant that it is a complicated issue but she is not clear how you would draw the line. She also raised the question of a teacher who is also a parent who holds a stipend position.

Ms. Anderson suggested that, if a parent is a teacher, the teacher role would take precedence and the person would receive a stipend as a teacher.

Mr. Grant asked if parents would do these jobs whether or not a stipend was offered. He believes parents volunteer to contribute to the community and that the stipend did not influence their decision to become involved.

Mrs. Balboni said stipend positions have a job description which requires some level of accountability. She noted that there have been instances in the schools where people volunteer but then do not follow through.

Mr. Schwartz said he volunteered as a coach through the Rye Recreation Soccer program and he felt okay leaving the team in the hands of another parent when a schedule conflict arose. Maybe that would be viewed differently if there was a stipend involved. He asked if it was possible that the stipend be issued as “Rye school money” where the person could allocate the money to an item or program within the school as opposed to benefiting directly.

At Mr. Grant's request, Mr. Dodds and Mrs. Balboni agreed to present the Board with a written document before the next meeting that clearly states the recommendations of the Special Issues Committee regarding stipend positions which may be filled by parents.

- REF - Mr. Schwartz reported the annual REF golf outing was a great success, grants are due at the end of this month, and REF contributed \$250 to Safe Routes.
- PHS - Ms. Balboni reported the following:
  - Juniors were participating in NECAP testing this year
  - A new student management system has been purchased which will allow progress reports to be available online, communication has improved via online communication, and there have been improvements within the guidance department with essay writing instruction and changes to the summer program. The summer program is currently geared at remedial skill levels and the change is to offer enrichment. There has also been progress made with leadership training including a program called “Rachel's Challenge” a program in the name of the first girl killed at Columbine; her challenge had been to make everyone feel welcome.
  - Dr. Cushing spoke to putting SAU 50 input into the PHS budget. Kent LaPage is supportive and Dr. Cushing will sit down with Mr. Collins when budgets are presented as a voice for SAU 50. Dr. Lister is also looking at the whole district and Dr. Cushing wants to hear more on that.
- PTA: No report as Ms. Anderson was unable to attend
- Rye Rec: No report as Ms. Anderson was unable to attend due to attending a Budget Committee meeting
- Communications: Mr. Schwartz and Ms. Richardson met to discuss building communications with 'super seniors' which would allow senior citizens to take a bus to the school to volunteer. Mr. Schwartz also met with Mr. Pollet and staff and Mr. Pollet will try to identify the items that need to be replaced vs. repaired and figure out how to allow for that in the budget.

Ms. Anderson noted that RJH progress reports were due to be sent out and asked how he makes sure the progress reports actually make it home. Mr. Pollet indicated that

signatures are required on the progress reports and he makes notice of the progress reports in his Principal's Note. He also sends a broadcast email so parents can keep an eye out for the reports.

Mr. Grant asked how bus procedures are communicated to a new family and asked if this should be part of a communication piece from the communications committee. Ms. Richardson said this is addressed at orientation with each student.

- Curriculum: Mrs. Balboni had a draft of the master professional development plan and said they were incorporating feedback from members of the committee. From here the plan will go to the curriculum advisory board for input.
- Technology: Mr. Schwartz met with Dr. Driscoll, Mr. Moynahan, Mr. Pollet, and Ms. Richardson and feels we're in a good place. Mrs. Balboni encouraged reminders to let parents know how to access the websites. Mr. Schwartz circulated his draft of the One to One Laptop Proposal. The thought is we'll move forward with the proposal and he will then make a full presentation to the Board with a variety of funding options.
- NEASC: Ms. Richardson met with David Flynn and he had a great message for the teachers, "It is not the Principals writing this evaluation, it is you, the teachers, writing the evaluation." Mr. Pollet said Dr. Flynn put this in real simple terms and he is not worried about the process as it is reflective of the staff and he feels the nature of his staff will lend towards this. Ms. Anderson offered to be on the steering committee as it was her understanding Greenland School Board members served on their committee.
- Peer schools: Mr. Grant reported they had a great meeting since the last school board meeting and it was unanimous to continue with this process. The model of how to select schools to visit will change to factor in the culture of the school, differentiated instruction, and literacy/writing programs. The new model has teachers/staff visiting peer schools as opposed to just the committee members. We will continue to look for best practices and provide feedback to principals and the school board.
- Athletics: Ms. Balboni thanked Mr. Moynahan, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Berry who helped get out an e-mail notice to 5<sup>th</sup> graders about the basketball program. Currently the athletic committee is brainstorming ideas for awards for RJH athletes; they are looking at a basketball night with parents at the end of the season; and winter sports information night is October 31<sup>st</sup>.
- Bus committee: Mr. Grant reports that the bus committee met with almost all committee members returning and reviewed activities. The major effort this year is reviewing the Portsmouth High bus service and providing suggested solutions. There are still a couple of agenda items to resolve. (1) There is a possibility of adding a bus to the afternoon route; currently there is 1 less bus on the afternoon route than there is for the morning route. There are budget issues to consider with regard to providing transportation for extended day activities. (2) Bus lateness tends to be due to replacement bus drivers; Robin Husslage made the suggestion that the bus company program the routes into the GPS systems for replacement drivers to help with this. (3) The bus company contract was just renewed under the same contract and conditions. First Student Bus Company and Laidlaw Bus Company just merged. NH is the only state that did not negotiate conditions. It is the committee's recommendation that we explore the option of operating our own fleet of busses. This is for comparison purposes. Mr. Katkin has agreed to explore this option (4) Re-evaluate bus entry/exit by Lang Field with creation of extended access road for improved safety and reduced drop off congestion. Mr. Katkin has also expressed interest in this access road for deliveries. To be reviewed for budget.

- Policies: Ms. Anderson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Dodds, to accept on first/second reading, Policy JLC (Student Health Services and Administering Medication to Students). Vote: Unanimously approved.  
Ms. Anderson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Schwartz to accept Policy EEA (Student Transportation Services) with proposed changes on first reading. Vote: Unanimous.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- Ms, Anderson reported that the next meeting for RESPA negotiations will be held next Wednesday.
- The tentative date for a budget meeting is November 16th.

**NON-PUBLIC SESSION:**

Mr. Schwartz proposed, seconded by Mr. Dodd's, a motion to go into non-public session at 9:12 p.m to discuss negotiations. Vote: Unanimously approved on a roll call vote.

**PUBLIC SESSION:**

The Board re-entered public session at 9:45 p.m.

**ADJOURN:**

Mr. Dodds made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mrs. Balboni at 9:45. Vote: Unanimously approved.

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School Board Secretary