

*Approved by the Rye School Board at its May 20, 2009 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 April 15, 2009 at 4:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:**

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

Administrators: Dr. George A. Cushing, Superintendent  
Chris Pollet, Principal, Rye Junior High  
Linda Walsh, Curriculum & Instruction Coordinator

Absent: Patricia-Lane Richardson, Principal, Rye Elementary

Staff: Katie Jarvis, Kathleen Cole, Tom Southworth, Jim Gordon,  
Sheila Adams, Jeanne Brown

Residents/Visitors: Cynde Lingamfelter

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Mr. Grant called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:**

*Approval of public minutes* - On a motion by Mrs. Moynahan, and seconded by Mr. Schwartz, the public minutes of March 18, 2009 were accepted. Vote: Unanimously approved.

The non-public minutes of March 18, 2009 were circulated for Board review. The public and non-public minutes of the special Board meeting of April 9, 2009 were circulated for Board review.

*Communications*

Dr. Cushing shared the following communications:

- A thank you note to the School Board from Susan Detwiler
- A letter from Commissioner Tracy granting the Rye School District a one-day waiver as requested and approving an adjusted 179-day school year calendar for 2008-2009
- A letter from New Hampshire Association of Special Education Administrators announcing Mary Lyons is a finalist for Special Education Administrator of the Year. She was nominated by Dr. Cushing.

Mr. Grant noted that the newly tenured teachers will be recognized at the May School Board meeting and apologized for any inconvenience in moving this agenda item from April to May.

**REPORTS:**

**Superintendent:**

*Special Education Report:* Dr. Cushing handed out Mrs. Lyons' special education report and asked if there were any questions. Mr. Schwartz asked how our spending per pupil relates to other districts. How

much money do we spend per pupil in special education once you factor out catastrophic aid? Mr. Katkin said the DOE 25 form filed annually with the state provides the best information and right now Rye runs about 13%.

Mr. Grant asked for more information behind the jump of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students receiving services; in February there were 4 students and, as of March, there are now 7. He didn't understand why this would occur so late in the school year. Dr. Cushing will follow up with Mrs. Lyons and ask her to respond directly to the Board.

As lead in to presentation by Linda Walsh and Tom Southworth, Dr. Cushing shared two Powerpoint slides from last week's Dropout Recovery Council Conference. The first referenced the different ways a student drops out: physically leaving, non-participation, etc. The second addressed ways for public schools to personalize education for students. Dr. Cushing will speak further on this at the next meeting with the administrative team.

*NECAP test results and AYP* – Linda Walsh and Tom Southworth

Mr. Southworth began with a brief grant update. He stated we are doing well; have added professional development opportunities, and core substitutes and administration of the my voice survey will be covered by grants next year. He said Title IIA grant is challenging as it has many tentacles. He said there is another \$20,000 grant to apply for in May and Mrs. Walsh is already working with Ms. Richardson and Mr. Pollet in preparation for that grant.

*AYP* – Mr. Southworth said the Rye District math scores are very good but RJH did not make AYP and will not be able to appeal though we missed AYP by just .1. Mr. Southworth said some RJH students in one of the subgroups improved their scores by as much as 8 points.

Mr. Grant asked what the ultimate goal is. Mr. Southworth said the ultimate goal is for all students to be proficient by 2014. Mrs. Balboni added that subgroups are always changing as students leave a given subgroup once they have met goals so this adds to the complexity of these scores. Mr. Southworth said a growth chart is looked at for each of our students to further track and address needs. Mr. Grant asked if the NECAP categorizes students that were in a subgroup in the previous year. Mr. Southworth said students who have an IEP (even if only for a day) and attended school during the school year, are part of the subgroup. Mr. Schwartz confirmed that districts are only held accountable for students in school from 10/1 – 6/30 of a given year. As follow up to Mrs. Balboni's comment, Mr. Schwartz said he isn't personally too concerned about not making AYP but he would like to see if we can learn from other schools' subgroups that are making AYP. Mr. Southworth said there probably are some peer schools we can look at and Mary Lyons might be able to contact other special education directors as follow up.

Mr. Southworth said that according to the 2009 Index District Report, overall scores look very good. In the educational disability subgroup, 21 students were proficient or higher which is very good for this population. He also stated that 8 students in level 2B just missed proficient.

Mrs. Balboni asked if it was true that some students lost points because they did not write enough for their writing prompts. Mr. Southworth said some students did lose points for that reason. He feels immaturity and adolescence certainly plays into that and that on any given test day some kids will be "off" and others may not get writing prompts that interest them.

Mrs. Walsh said it is important to note that the NECAP test is one moment in time. She also said there are other common assessment tools we can use to learn how students learn. These are being discussed in professional learning community meetings.

Mrs. Walsh said we do not have a clear idea about a specific improvement plan needed yet as a result of not making AYP but she will have more information after the May 21<sup>st</sup> workshop she will attend at the DOE.

Mrs. Walsh has already spoken with Ms. Richardson, Mr. Pollet, and Mrs. Lyons and noted a number of programs already in place and she credited their forward thinking efforts for having so much in the works.

Mrs. Walsh then reviewed a few of the current happenings within the schools:

- RJH: for low math students-pre-teaching of skills for tests
  - 6<sup>th</sup> grade: Super Speed Math works on facts and concepts so students work on areas where everyone has needed improvement (automatic recall of facts, decimals and fractions, conversions, problem solving...) Chart individual and group progress using line graphs so assessments can be used for further instruction. Since AYP status was revealed, the team has been working on how to make this common across the curriculum with other teachers
  - 7<sup>th</sup> grade: Mad Minutes
  - 8<sup>th</sup> grade: already intense remediation with lowest performing math students and their learning time is concentrated on math
- RES: for low performing students:
  - Designated math teacher (Giselle) to work with students on specific math standards and the types of questions which may be asked to test that skill. This program has been implemented all year.
  - Teacher-to-Teacher grant (written by Giselle) for grade two teachers, to pilot supplemental materials aligned with the standards to boost student achievement. (there were identified gaps in Trailblazers math)
  - Inclusive work with designated grade five teacher with a cluster of low math students, enriching and supporting classroom math instruction, co-teaching and differentiating instruction
  - Students have been receiving instruction in reading in-class and in pull out small groups and assessed regularly to drive instruction. (Subgroup in reading did not make AYP at RES.)
  - Encouraging Teacher-to-Teacher grants focused on math and reading
  - Leveled book library to meet the needs of all learners

Mrs. Walsh then credited the efforts of the forward-thinking staff at the Rye schools for these efforts.

Mrs. Walsh and Mr. Southworth will refine accommodations list for those students who require them for October assessment and meet with all personnel who oversee accommodations to ensure guidelines are followed. Ms. Anderson asked if a child needs to be special education identified in order to receive an accommodation. Mr. Southworth said no and that teachers track it and discuss arrangements with parents.

Mrs. Walsh said it is important to have practice tests in the fall. Mr. Pollet said we did better preparation this year so the students are familiar with the format of the test. Mr. Southworth said NECAP is essentially the final exam on state required curriculum.

Mrs. Walsh said she will write a plan required as a district in need of improvement (DINI) after the May 21<sup>st</sup> workshop at the DOE and will involve all teachers in this process. She said the DINI plan will be woven into what is already being done and will not be a distraction for teachers.

Mrs. Walsh then highlighted a few long-term goals:

- Involve all teachers in DINI plan –look to other model programs for writing our plan (Dover, Exeter for example)
- Continue with program modifications which are working
- Examine class time devoted to math and reading and other subjects to ensure consistency
- Plan time in schedules to implement Response to Intervention (RTI) programs pulling in qualified teachers to serve low performing students with a formative assessment component (every 4 to 6) weeks to monitor progress and restructure instruction to optimize learning
- In particular develop and solidify a RTI system at the Middle School Level (designated 45 minute times three times a week?)
- Reassess how Special Education and support services are delivered at the Middle School
- Attendance plan for struggling students
- Work with teachers in fall to insure curriculum standards are being taught to all students throughout the year
  - Discuss goals/expectations with common rubrics
  - Work on integration of skills in content areas
  - Work towards consistent vocabulary, essential skills and common assessments
- Concentrate the curriculum on essential skills and focus on individual achievement using Target Growth Charts to Follow the Child and have each child realize his or her personal goal.
- Explore “Keys to Literacy” philosophy for grades 6-8 to integrate language arts more in the content areas. (workshop-June 2<sup>nd</sup>) Proven effective in other communities.

Inform teachers about the Content Library on Performance Tracker. Contains questions based on the standards for students to practice.

Mrs. Walsh said Mr. Southworth has studied growth charts provided by the DOE and will make sure all teachers are aware of these growth charts. Mrs. Walsh said we are lucky the state of New Hampshire has been so pro-active with the Follow the Child model.

Mr. Grant thanked Mrs. Walsh and Mr. Southworth for their presentations and asked if there were any further questions for them. Ms. Anderson commented that Rye should have a way to measure students throughout the year so we know all along whether or not we will make AYP.

Ms. Balboni said Portsmouth recently created a DINI plan and that may be a good resource for Mrs. Walsh. Mrs. Walsh said she has spoken with Steve Zdravec about their DINI plan and that there are many good resources available.

Mr. Schwartz said over half of the schools in New Hampshire use Northeast Evaluation Association – Measures of Academic Process (NWEA-MAP) as a predictor for student success on the NECAP. Mrs. Walsh said she worked with schools in Hollis that used NWEA and it is a very accurate predictor. Mr.

Southworth noted that his investigation of NWEA showed that it is not good for schools with strong performing students.

Mr. Schwartz said CAT results will be available in Performance Tracker and that should be valuable to track data.

Mr. Grant said the leveled-book library has been in place for several years at RES and one could make the argument that it is not something new that was put into place last year. He wondered about new programs/plans for students.

Mr. Southworth noted that most of the of RES students with low test scores were new to RES. Mr. Grant said he was just making an observation and wondering what was next for the elementary reading program.

Mr. Grant again thanked Mrs. Walsh and Mr. Southworth for their presentation.

## **Principals**

### **Mr. Chris Pollet – Rye Junior High School**

- Mr. Pollet reported World Language Week at RJH is April 20-24
- He circulated a list of projects Amy Raymond has worked on as part of RJH Enrichment
- Thursday, April 16<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 – 2:30 p.m. there will be an African Celebration in the cafeteria. He said this has been a student-driven assessment pulling from all disciplines. It will feature food, music, dance, and artwork.
- Saturday, April 18<sup>th</sup> – Garden Project work day at RJH
- Mr. Pollet distributed an RJH Study Skills Program handout to be discussed at the May Board meeting.
- Mr. Pollet also distributed an article on ‘sexting’ which was part of a recent Good Morning America presentation. He said within RJH Ann Rafferty and the police department is being pro-active about this issue. The topic is discussed with 7<sup>th</sup> graders. Ms. Anderson asked if we do anything to determine if students at RJH are at risk. Mr. Pollet said the policy is phones are off during school. If a student’s phone is on, the phone is turned over to Mr. Pollet and the student gets it back at the end of the day. A second offence results in confiscation of the phone and parents are contacted. He said he is trying to keep an open forum at the school; a lot of the activity happens outside of school. Mrs. Balboni asked if we could bring someone in to address the internet safety and sexting issues in a local setting. Mr. Southworth said he believes JoAnn Costanzo is working on something. Ms. Anderson wondered if there were a Youth at Risk survey available for the middle school. She feels this type of survey often helps open parents’ eyes to these issues by providing data.

## **Financial**

### **Manifest –**

Mrs. Balboni proposed, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, a motion to approve the manifest of March 13, 2009 through March 26, 2009 in the amount of \$330,265.00. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Mrs. Balboni proposed, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, a motion to approve the manifest of March 27, 2009 through April 10, 2009 in the amount of \$335,186.32. Vote: Unanimously approved.

## **Budgetary Considerations**

### ***Unreserved Fund Balance***

Mr. Katkin said the unreserved fund balance is shrinking. There is just under \$300,000 remaining between now and the end of the year. \$172,000 is tied up in tuition (a discussion point with the budget committee tonight). \$100,000 is for health insurance. Available funds have gone down from last month.

To put into context, Mr. Grant said there is the potential need for RJH library renovation, potential need for RES track, and energy conservation work. He stated that the exact sources of funds for these won't be clear, or even if we can do all projects, until the May meeting when Jim will have a better sense of the district's financial situation. It may be that the Board needs to approve taking funds from the Building Trust Reserve fund for some of the energy conservation work.

Mr. Grant referred the Board to the letter that he sent to the Budget Committee that was going to be part of his presentation to the Budget Committee later that night. He said the goal was to update the Budget Committee on the School District's financial situation, outline the intended direction for RJH library renovation and potential track at RES, and gain support for the strategy. (Mr. Grant's letter outlined the results of the 3 year negotiation through a "clarification agreement" with Portsmouth High School that will result in a savings this year of \$172,000 which the Board would like to use for the RJH library renovation; the fact that the RJH library would be under construction for the energy efficiency work and potential efficiencies of both projects occurring at the same time; opportunity to apply for Building Aid monies from the State for 30% of the cost; take advantage of competitive construction pricing in this economic period; take advantage of the \$5,000-\$10,000 grant from Rye Education Foundation if the project were started before June 30; that the projects could occur without having to increase or raise new taxes; that he and Mr. Katkin met with NH Department of Revenue and it was confirmed that this was permissible.)

Mr. Schwartz said Rye Education Foundation (REF) has been instrumental in getting the RJH library renovation project off the ground and he spoke with Cynde Lingamfelter about efforts to raise funds. Cynde Lingamfelter was at tonight's meeting to show REF's continued support for this project and to state that REF had agreed to fund \$5,000-\$10,000 for the library project.

Mr. Grant asked if there were any other questions related to the unreserved fund balance. There were none.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

### ***Calendar of Policy Action – April***

Payment of School District Moderator, payment of School District Clerk, new School Board member orientation, evaluation of the superintendent, checking of signs regarding weapons-free school zone

### ***Committee Assignments***

The board discussed committee assignments and corresponding commitments and responsibilities. It was agreed to collapse Annual Report and Public Relations into Communications. It was also agreed that Technology could be addressed at the building level and wrapped into Curriculum. It was suggested rather than have a Rye Recreation committee assignment, the Principals would take over at the building

level and bring issues before the Board as needed. It was suggested a contact from Rye Recreation could attend Board meetings as needed/desired.

2009-2010 Committee Assignments follow:

- AREA - Ian Grant
- Budget Committee – Peggy Balboni with Board back up as needed
- Building Use – Ian Grant
- Communications – Betty Anderson and Peggy Balboni
- Curriculum (Portsmouth) – Peggy Balboni
- Emergency Management – Jeanne Moynahan
- Energy Committee – Ian Grant and Jeanne Moynahan
- Finances – Ian Grant
- Health Insurance – Jeanne Moynahan
- Physical Plant – Ian Grant
- Policy – Jeanne Moynahan
- PTA – Jeanne Moynahan
- RESPA and ACT – Mike Schwartz (Ian Grant)
- Rye Education Foundation – Mike Schwartz (Ian Grant)
- Secondary School Advisory – Ian Grant
- Special Issues – Betty Anderson and Jeanne Moynahan

*Verizon tower request* – Dr. Cushing had received another communication from Verizon regarding a land lease proposal for a wireless tower. He asked the Board if they are interested in receiving a revised proposal. Mrs. Balboni suggested we either tell them no or hold a public forum for input.

After noting that the Board members just stated how little time they have for all the Board's business, and that there are many other more pressing issues for a public forum, Ms. Anderson made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, to not allow a cell tower on school property. Vote: Unanimously approved.

*Last day of school* – Commissioner Tracy granted a 1-day waiver as requested as the Rye schools exceeded the required hours of instructional time. June 19<sup>th</sup> is now the last day of school and the Board can decide if it should be a half or full-day.

Ms. Anderson made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, for the last day of school to be June 19<sup>th</sup> and for it to be a half-day.

Discussion – Mrs. Balboni said she is a strong proponent of instructional time and while she agrees with the 1-day waiver she feels the last day of school should be a full day. Mr. Grant said he has always supported full days during the middle of the school year but is not sure how much 'instructional time' actually occurs on the last day of school. Dr. Cushing had recommended a full day which is what the New Castle and Newington districts are doing; Greenland did not use the 1-day waiver as their last day of school already falls on June 19<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Schwartz asked Mr. Pollet for his thoughts. Mr. Pollet said he and Ms Richardson strongly supported a half day. Mr. Grant said he would support the principals and vote for a half-day.

The motion on the table remained:

Vote in favor: Mrs. Moynahan, Mr. Grant, Ms. Anderson; Opposed: Mrs. Balboni and Mr. Schwartz.

### *Teachers' last day*

Mr. Grant said he and the Board should recognize the work the teachers put in to the NEASC process and that many of them were in the school on a Sunday as part of that process. He proposed the Board reduce the teachers' contracted work days by one day.

Ms. Anderson made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, to grant teachers a one-day waiver for all contracted teachers. Vote: unanimously approved.

Mr. Katkin said it is a different issue for para-professionals and special education employees. He explained these employees receive a daily rate of pay for the hours worked.

Mr. Schwartz made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, to grant a one-day waiver with pay for para-educators and special education employees not covered by the teacher contract. Vote: Unanimously approved.

### *Metrics*

Mr. Southworth said this started as a Board goal and the document is now in draft form. Mr. Schwartz said Mr. Southworth will provide the numbers and noted the grayed out areas on the packets the Board was looking at would not have data. Mr. Southworth noted 8<sup>th</sup> grade is a good year to get a snapshot of a student's extracurricular activities. Mrs. Balboni said she likes the direction the metrics packet is heading in. Extra curricular should be broken down with sports, clubs, etc. With regards to sports, Ms. Anderson suggested there could be metrics to get at the quality of the program, rather than just basic numbers of how many students participate. She gave some suggestions. The rest of the Board did not agree that further metrics were needed.

Mr. Schwartz asked the Board to email further feedback directly to him. Dr. Cushing asked that the Learning Compact not be part of the metrics as it is its own stand-alone piece that is currently in the works.

Mr. Grant thanked Mr. Schwartz, Mrs. Walsh, and Mr. Southworth for their work on the metrics document.

### **STANDING COMMITTEES:**

- Physical Plant – Mr. Katkin reported the lower leach field at RJH has failed; two pumps failed due to non-biodegradable items being flushed. The leach field needs to be replaced (\$12,000 - \$15,000) and we need an engineer to submit a plan to the DOE. Mr. Katkin is working with Mr. Pollet on this issue.
- Special Issues – Mr. Grant is trying to get parts of the proposal (phase one) as they are ready for review because of the tight time schedule. Mr. Grant is trying to get parts of the proposal as they are ready for review.
- Mr. Katkin acknowledged a three-ring binder of reference material Jim Gordon created for both schools. The book is a complete and thorough guide to all systems, programs, and aspects of the buildings. Mr. Katkin shared the reference with the Board members and thanked Mr. Gordon for all of his work creating it.
- Mowing Bids – Mr. Katkin spoke to the lawn mowing bids for the Rye School District. He received sealed bids and checked all references. Each Board member had a sheet summarizing the bids received. Mr. Katkin's intent was to recommend that Lilac City Lawncare be awarded the moving of fields at RES and Rye Community Field and award RJH field to Todd's Property Maintenance. Todd's Property Maintenance withdrew their offer when told they had the low bid

on only one of the fields. As a need to be fully transparent, Mr. Katkin said his son is one of the principal owners of Lilac City Lawncare. Mr. Grant pointed out to the Board that McNally's Property Maintenance currently has the contract. Mr. Grant applauded Mr. Katkin's transparency and asked the board for discussion. He asked if we could take Mr. Katkin out of the equation if something went awry with Lilac City. Ms. Anderson said she has the utmost confidence that Mr. Katkin will hold Lilac City to task though she is generally opposed to hiring relatives.

Mr. Schwartz made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, to award Lilac City Lawncare the Rye grass mowing contract as presented by Mr. Katkin. Vote: Unanimously approved.

- Rye Rec – Mr. Schwartz said there was a meeting last week to determine enrollment numbers for each room to provide a quality program for the children. Mrs. Balboni asked if we provide furniture for the program. Mr. Schwartz said Rye Rec provides the furniture.
- Technology – Mr. Pollet emailed the technology plan to Board members for discussion at the May meeting.
- NEASC – Mr. Pollet said he will receive preliminary information by the end of the week and should have reports by the end of the school year.
- Energy Committee – Mr. Grant reported Lucy Neimann has left Jordan Institute. He said there will be tight deadlines with the RJH library project and Mr. Katkin has already identified some contractors.
- Policies: Due to time constraints policies will be put off until the May Board meeting

#### **NOMINATION:**

Dr. Cushing placed Sheri Whitworth into nomination as a 20% Speech Specialist at Rye Elementary School for the 2009-2010 school year.

Mr. Schwartz made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, to accept the nomination of Sheri Whitworth for 20% Speech Specialist at RES. Vote: Unanimously approved.

#### **RECOGNITION:**

Ms. Anderson wanted to acknowledge and thank Jim Gordon for all of his work on the binder Mr. Katkin had referenced and circulated earlier and all of his hard work at the schools. Mrs. Cole said she additionally wanted to recognize and thank Jim for all of his time and preparation for the NEASC visits. Mr. Grant noted in addition to the binder the great work that is going on in the schools as a result of Jim Gordon's hard work.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

##### *Surveys*

Mr. Pollet had emailed his survey to the Board for input. The survey allows for demographics, input on school climate, unified arts, and unlimited opportunity for communication. The Board can email Mr. Pollet directly with further input. His goal is to send the survey out May 8<sup>th</sup> with a May 22<sup>nd</sup> due date.

Ms. Richardson had emailed her survey to the Board as well.

Mr. Schwartz said he had suggested to Ms. Richardson a question regarding preparedness and asked if we should seek input from 9<sup>th</sup> grade parents. Mr. Schwartz also felt it is important to have names on the surveys with the assurance that names won't be shared beyond the staff of the principal's office. Ms.

Anderson suggested disclosing those who would have access to the names right on the survey. Mr. Pollet said only the principals would see the names.

Mr. Grant said he thinks the surveys are both fair and balanced.

**OTHER:**

Mrs. Moynahan reminded everyone the second annual bike Rodeo is slated for May 9, 2009.

**NON-PUBLIC SESSION:**

Mrs. Moynahan proposed, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, a motion to go into non-public session at 6:22 p.m. to discuss personnel. Unanimously approved on a roll call vote.

Dr. Cushing recused himself from the non-public session at 6:31 p.m. Dr. Cushing rejoined the non-public session at 6:41 p.m.

**PUBLIC SESSION:**

The Board returned to public session at 6:50 p.m.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT** *continued:*

*Approval of non-public minutes* - On a motion by Mrs. Moynahan, and seconded by Mr. Schwartz, the non-public minutes of March 18, 2009 were accepted. Vote: Unanimously approved.

On a motion by Mrs. Moynahan, and seconded by Mrs. Balboni the non-public minutes of April 9, 2009 were accepted. Vote: Approved: Ian Grant, Betty Anderson, Jeanne Moynahan and Peggy Balboni. Abstained: Mike Schwartz.

**ADJOURN:**

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to adjourn at 6:55 p.m. Vote: Unanimously approved.

---

School Board Secretary