

**RUTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS
OCTOBER 28, 2008**

School Board Members Present:

Peter Mello
Christopher Book
Wayne Cooke
Roberta Dress
Peter Fagan
Collin Fingon
Peter Forshay
Gina Fucci
Karen Gartner
Cindy Kilic-Murray
Nicholas Ouelette

Member Absent

Richard Courcelle

Also Present:

Superintendent Mary Moran
Assistant Superintendent Rob Bliss
Wil Cunningham
Peter Amons
Ellie McGarry
Peter Folaros
Glenn Olson
Jay Slenker
Bill Olsen

Motion by Gartner/Fagan to convene to executive session at 6:15 pm for the purpose of discussing personnel matters, the premature release of information regarding those subjects which would place the Board at a substantial disadvantage. Unanimously passed by those in attendance.

**EXECUTIVE
SESSION**

**PUBLIC
SESSION**

The Board came out of executive session at 6:50 pm.

ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Mello noted the absence of Commissioner Courcelle.

**MOTION:
MINUTES
10/14/08
MEETING**

Motion by Forshay/Fagan to accept the minutes of the Oct. 14, 2008 regular school board meeting with the following correction: On page 3, under Pension Committee report: The committee has not completed an audit of the pension fund. The committee passed a motion to perform an audit. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

**WRITTEN
COMMUN-
ICATION**

Written Communication - None

**ORAL
COMMUN-
ICATION**

Oral Communication - None

**EDUCATION
REPORT**

SAT / AP Report - Mr. Sampson gave a report on SAT and AP testing. He gave an overview of the Advanced Placement (AP) program at RHS. Rutland High offers 15 out of 33 available AP courses. The AP exams are a required component of the RHS courses. Scoring is between 1-5. A "3" is a passing grade. Most colleges or universities will offer a chance to earn college credit or allow a student to skip an introductory course for scores of "3" or above. In the 2007-2008 school year, the College Board implemented an audit process in which all instructors have to submit a course outline and syllabus for review. New courses or new teachers in an AP course also have to submit to the audit process. These are the most rigorous classes at RHS.

**SAT / AP
REPORT**

Mr. Sampson provided score comparisons from 1997-2008. He reviewed results from 2007 and 2008, which shows number and percent of students scoring at different levels and showing

comparisons with all students around the world taking the particular courses. Mr. Sampson said we are holding steady or improving in the number of students who have received recognitions showing they have excelled in a number of courses. 71% of our students are achieving a "3" or better. In most schools, the tests are optional and students who are not comfortable with their expected outcome, might not take the test. At RHS, they are required so every student taking the course takes the exam. Mr. Sampson said there have been opportunities in the past for a student who has not taken the course to take the exam.

Commissioner Gartner asked if the school pays for the cost of the AP exam and what it is. Mr. Sampson said the district started paying about ten years ago when it became a requirement for all students to take the cost. Off hand, he does not know the cost. Ms. Moran said the idea was that if the district was requiring all students to take the exam, we should pay for it. Also, students are usually accepted into college before the results of the tests are back and so there was not always an incentive for students to take the exams. Mr. Sampson said there is some grant money available for students who are eligible for free and reduced lunch. Commissioner Fucci said it is an asset to have these classes at RHS and many families appreciate it.

There was discussion about some gaps in scores and why there are some differentials between years. Mr. Sampson said there are different students each year and they are small groups. A small difference in a couple of students can have a big influence on the scores. Mr. Sampson said most of the larger numbers taking a particular class would mean multiple sections. They try to honor the limit of 24 students per classroom but make adjustments as appropriate.

Commissioner Dress asked about low scores in one particular class. Mr. Sampson said there are a lot of factors. Language courses and exams are particularly difficult. He described other factors which influence scores. Commissioner Fagan said from 2003 forward, we have exceeded the global AP standards and in some instances by a wide margin. Mr. Sampson said our AP program compares with others around the state, nation and globally. Mr. Cooke asked if the courses are semester or all year. Mr. Sampson said most are full year. The semester long courses only take place in the spring. Most of the AP courses are taken by seniors but some are taken by juniors. Mr. Mello asked if the College Board set limitations for class size and Mr. Sampson said it is up to the schools.

SAT - Mr. Sampson said the SAT program also falls under the auspices of the College Board. The objective of the SAT is to assist college admission professionals to determine likelihood of success. It is one criteria used by admission professionals. In the 2005-2006 school year, the SAT program changed from verbal / math sections to include a writing component and verbal became known as critical reading. The test was lengthened and the price raised. The highest composite score is 2400. Generally speaking, colleges are looking for scores in the 500 range. Most schools will regard the highest score per section achieved. RHS Guidance recommends students take either the SAT or ACT at least twice and typically no more than three times or combination.

Mr. Sampson said the best way for students to prepare is to do the best they can throughout their entire academic career. He encourage students to involve themselves with academic enrichment activities during their free time – read the newspaper, follow elections, etc. Mr. Sampson said generally speaking, students who take tutorial programs or work with a tutor or program do not

improve their scores measurably or at all. He shared scores starting from the 1997/1998 year up to 2007-2008. The results compare USA and VT with RHS. Commissioner Fingon said for the eleven years reported, the verbal results show our students scores higher than VT and USA averages and math results show lower scores than VT and USA averages. Mr. Sampson said the math department is aware of this and they offer a refresher class and a math section during YES. Mr. Sampson said generally speaking, the math portion of the SAT involves Arithmetic, Geometry, Algebra I and II, and some new higher order math. Guidance recommends students take the tests starting in January of junior year. Mr. Mello said the math scores are below the national averages on AP and SAT, although not significantly. He asked if we are testing at the right time and if the course sequence is correct. Mr. Sampson said the math department has made changes to address some of these things and continues to work on improvements. He said the PSAT is taken by 10th and 11th grade students and is a practice test. There were 200 students who took this test several weeks ago. High achieving sophomores are encouraged to take PSATs and all college-bound juniors are encouraged to take SATs. Mr. Cooke said with all student assessments, there is a positive difference if students are knowledgeable as to what to expect on the test. Mr. Sampson said he does not dismiss the preparatory programs. He has seen mixed results. Being familiar with the test is a good thing. For families interested, he recommends programs and opportunities first that are available at no charge. Ms. Moran said individual teachers help students prepare during regular coursework also.

RHS Program of Studies - Mr. Olson and department chairs have worked on the 2009-2010 Program of Studies. There are not a lot of substantive changes. He highlighted some of the changes. A proposed new course is called American Voices. It will be an integrated course in American Studies, team taught, in English and US History, junior year, all year. Mr. Folaros said the course needs to have full enrollment and cannot have a negative impact on anything else. There is no additional staffing, it is just a different approach to the coursework. Mr. Olson said this is a beginning step in team teaching and hopefully more teams will be added in the future. Mr. Olson highlighted a few other changes and explained the Fine Art changes. The Fine Art requirement will still be one credit but the choice would be two out of three – a half credit of art, music or drama. Mr. Cooke said he has a concern with the semester scheduling and the gap students have especially in between language and math classes. Mr. Folaros said some students do some of the coursework without the gaps, especially if they are pro-active and work with the counselors. Nicholas said most teachers will offer a comprehensive review process for the first few weeks of the class which is very helpful. Mr. Mello said none of the changes have budget or staffing implications. Ms. Moran said the Board does not vote on the Program of Studies but it can be discussed again at the next Board meeting if desired. The counselors will begin working with students for fall 2009 scheduling just after the first of the year.

School Action Plans (Part II) - Mr. Cunningham presented the Rutland Middle School Action Plan. He said some of the major goals and strategies are repetitive. There are strategies in all areas for Professional Learning Communities. There are consistent meetings with teachers in grades 5-6 and 9-12 to ensure curriculum continuity. There is a continuation of consultant work. Most of the items are ongoing because they are projects and strategies we want to continue and improve upon. Mr. Cunningham reviewed some of the strategies in Math, Literacy, and School Culture and Community. There have not been changes to the Teacher Quality section. Ms. Fucci said she does not see the Action Plan addressing the needs of advanced students and we need to do more to reach out and engage those type of students. Mr. Cunningham and Mr. Bliss

described some of the things the school is doing to reach out to students with diverse learning styles, including the students who excel and need to be challenged more. Mr. Bliss said the goal is “every child, every day.” Mr. Mello said the Action Plans tend to address deficiencies and often times we do not identify the things we do for the advanced students. Ms. Moran said Action Plans are historically written for identifying what the school can do to improve but should include what we are doing to meet the needs of all students.

**SCHOOL
ACTION
PLANS, cont.**

Rutland High School Action Plan - Mr. Olson said a lot of the Plan comes from the Commissioner’s Required Actions. The process taken this year was different than in the past. Most of the Department of Education’s actions address the students who qualify for free and reduced lunch. They focused on students with the lowest grades. Are there gaps in the curriculum? Mr. Bliss said the Commissioner’s Required Actions called for us to hire Literacy and Math consultants. It is challenging to find Math consultants. They are not funded through our Title funds but the State is supporting us through another funding source. Mr. Folaros said the consultants come and go but the faculty knows the direction we need to go in.

**RHS
ACTION
PLAN**

Mr. Olson said there are similar strategies at RMS to RHS, especially with Literacy Resource Teachers. The Action Plan calls for addressing students not already receiving formal support who may need assistance to go to the Student Assistance Room. Teachers are finding this very positive so far. Mr. Bliss said the funding for the Student Assistance Room comes from the Gear Up Fund, a small grant source and from district level Title funds. The high school is not a Title I school but as a district that has not met AYP, we are able to use those funds for something like this in the high school. Ms. Moran said a goal is to use recently retired teachers who know our students and this Room is now staffed with two retired teachers. Mr. Olson also reviewed strategies for Science, Resiliency, and Teacher Effectiveness categories. Mr. Cooke suggested adding a goal showing the ongoing work being done to add enriching activities and programs and the variety of courses offered. There was discussion about some of the wording in the Plan. Ms. Moran said so much of what is in the Action Plans is mandated. Board comments are appreciated and they will try to add positively worded comments and goals to address other types of students.

**BUDGET /
ENROLL-
MENT,
postponed**

Budget - Enrollment Analysis and Staffing Plan - Postponed until next meeting.

Motion by Fagan/Forshay to approve the Licensed and Non-licensed section of the Personnel Memorandum No. 392 dated Oct. 24, 2008, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

**MOTION:
PERSONNEL
MEMO #392**

The appointments, resignations, family/medical leave, and resignations were reviewed by Superintendent Moran. They are attached.

Motion passed by all those in attendance.

**BUSINESS
REPORT**

Business Report - None

**SUPERIN-
TENDENT’S
REPORT**

Announcements

- Ms. Moran thanked all parents and families who took part in conferences.
- The first RMS Parent Teacher meeting will take place Nov. 6 to discuss and establish PTC priorities for the school year.

**ANNOUNCE-
MENTS**

- At RIS, the PTC Family Movie Night will be held on Nov. 7.
- Congratulations to Brent Barnett, named Outstanding New Music Educator of the Year. The drum line is a great addition to our program.
- Congratulations to Lori McClallan for her 100th career win as a Girls Varsity Soccer Coach. She is a great role model for our children.

ANNOUNCEMENTS, cont.

COMM. REPORTS

Pension Committee - Mr. Amons gave an update on last night's meeting. Once a year, Prudential, our investment manager, talks to the committee about our investments. They do an asset allocation and performance review. Mr. Amons reviewed the fund's performance and some proposed fund changes. They discussed that Prudential is a solid insurance company with a high rating. They also explained their administration fees.

PENSION COMM.

Information Task Force - Ms. Fucci said she, Commissioners Dress and Kilic-Murray met. They presented a timeline and schedule of events. They are calling themselves Budget Buddies. She reviewed the schedule of events which begin in November and go through the election in March. She said this is the initial vision. Mr. Mello said reaching out to employees, students, and parents is very important.

INFORMATION TASK FORCE

New Business - Mr. Fagan said on October 20, he attended a Pops concert featuring high school musicians. There were a number of groups who performed and the students were fabulous.

NEW BUSINESS

CONCERTS

December 16 will be the winter concert at the Paramount Theater at 7 pm.

ROOFS

Mr. Book asked about building roofs. Ms. Moran will get him details.

ADJOURN

Motion by Fagan/Gartner to adjourn at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted

Janet Mondlak
Recording Secretary