

**RUTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS
DECEMBER 14, 2010**

School Board Members Present:

Peter Mello
Christopher Book
Hurley Cavacas, Jr.
Wayne Cooke
Roberta Dress
Peter Fagan
Collin Fingon
Peter Forshay
Erin Shimp
Rob Towle

Also Present:

Assistant Superintendent Rob Bliss
Bill Olsen
Peter Amons
Wil Cunningham
Ellie McGarry
Jay Slenker
Jessica Henderson
Cathy Farman
Lyle Jepson

Member Absent

Richard Courcelle
Blake Bohlig

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Mello noted the absence of Commissioner Courcelle and Student Representative Bohlig.

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

Motion by Towle / Dress to accept the minutes of the Dec. 7, 2010 regular school board meeting as written. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

**MOTION:
MINUTES
12/7/10
MEETING**

Written Communication - Mr. Mello said occasionally, Board members receive random email letters from the public. He said it is not the Board's practice to respond to those letters in a public session. When someone write to the Board, they respond responsibly but arbitrary email letters are not usual and customary in terms of incorporating them into the minutes of a Board meeting.

**WRITTEN &
ORAL
COMMUN-
ICATION**

**RESPONSE
TO EMAIL
LETTERS**

Oral Communication - None

**EDUCATION
REPORT**

Co-Teaching Report - Mr. Bliss introduced Todd Stratton, RIS third grade teacher and Jenna Chamberlain, a special educator. They are co-teaching teammates. Mr. Bliss explained co-teaching, delivery option for special services. He said co-teaching allows all students to have access to all services. In a pull-out model, students are taken out of the classroom and essentially, have less instructional time. All students in the classroom benefit from the presence of both teachers. The regular educator is the content expert. The special educator is a specialist. The City is a co-teaching pilot for the entire state. A video showing a classroom with co-teaching was shown.

**CO-
TEACHING
REPORT**

Mr. Bliss said there were a number of models shown in the video. He reviewed a hand-out showing co-teaching data and figures. He said the district is working with a co-teaching consultant about supporting teachers on an on-going basis.

Mr. Stratton and Ms. Chamberlain talked about the different types of co-teaching and gave examples of what they do in the classroom. This is their third year co-teaching together. They switch off being lead teacher and observer. Ms. Chamberlain said this

is important for the general education teacher to be able to observe students aside from delivering. The students recognize that there are two equal teachers. Mr. Stratton said all students are receiving the benefit of a second licensed professional in the classroom. The teachers have some common planning time. He said students have no idea who in the class is on an IEP or why Ms. Chamberlain is there. That is a huge philosophy shift; in the past, there was a separation between one teacher's students and someone else's case load. Ms. Chamberlain never has her case load pulled aside doing separate work. Ms. McGarry discussed evaluating co-teaching. She reviewed the different assessments, outcomes and feedback gained at classroom, school and district levels.

There were questions and discussion from Board members:

- Has the state asked for specific data since we are a pilot? Ms. McGarry said they have not asked specifically but she is sharing with them what we are doing.
- How is this model different than having two general education teachers in the classroom? Mr. Stratton said special educator training is very different. They are specialists and while general education teachers have that training, it is not in depth. He said it could look the same. Mr. Bliss said the special educator has background and expertise in how students learn in different ways. A general ed teacher is a content expert. The two roles are the combination that works. Ms. Chamberlain explained how she might be helping students differently during an assignment. Only the teachers know what is happening. Expectations for students are different. Mr. Stratton said his primary role is curriculum. Ms. Chamberlain provides extra instruction. She does some re-teaching or pre-teaching during e-block.
- Commissioner Fagan said he loves this concept. It does not label a child and there is no pull-out. He asked the teachers what market changes in students, year over year, they have seen. He also asked them what they like about the model that was not expected. Mr. Stratton said he was not in favor of the model in the beginning because "this is my classroom." He said he is most proud in the shift and mentality for himself. He sees students rising to the occasion because they have peers who are modeling appropriate skills, behaviors, etc. Ms. Chamberlain said with the pull-out model, students did not want to leave with her. They did not want to get up and go. She feels like she can help them more and for longer amounts of time. It is less identifiable which is good for the students.
- How do you collaborate with assessment? There are IEP goals and those for the regular classroom. Mr. Stratton said there are common local assessments in which the students cannot have accommodations. He gives them on a day when Ms. Chamberlain is not there. Ms. Chamberlain's assessment is done during e-block and Friday station time. He will create an assessment and she accommodates it for IEP students. Common assessments are not being modified or accommodated. They do not build common assessments together. Mr. Bliss said they are the same across grade level.
- Are there some teachers who are not comfortable with co-teaching? Mr. Bliss said there are people uncomfortable with new things. There are some teachers who have a philosophical difference with the approach. Mr. Stratton said he had that difference but he attended a conference and saw results. He said that seeing the model work really helped him.

- Is there 3/4 combination teaching? Mr. Stratton said his homeroom is 3rd grade. He teaches a section of 3rd grade and 4th grade language arts and his 4th grade teaching partner is doing the same in math. But they are being taught separately.
- How much time are co-teachers together? Ms. McGarry said it varies depending on the content and needs of the IEP students.
- What differences do you see in the children who came from co-teaching classrooms last year? What are the lasting results of co-teaching one year to the next? Ms. Chamberlain said the students are more familiar with the different delivery service models. The students respond to the special educator as if she is a regular classroom teacher. All the 3rd grade students were in co-teaching classrooms last year.
- How does this benefit the fast learners, the average learners and the up-and-coming learners? Mr. Stratton said if there are students who have met the standard, one of the teachers can take a group of students and move on. The other teacher can make sure the other students get it before they move on.
- There is a success rate of 24%. What will we do when we get classes with no IEP students? Mr. Bliss said that is the nature of special education. He said it is important to persuade policy makers not to take away this funding source, or the pendulum will swing the other way again. Ms. McGarry said there needs to be at least one student in the classroom on an IEP to make it an allowable expense.
- Mr. Mello said in recent years, the Board has traditionally been concerned about results and performance and reporting data, but it is not always about tests and scores. To be convinced of continuing to support co-teaching, the outcomes and measurement of effectiveness will be important.

Motion by Fagan / Fingon to approve the Licensed and Non-licensed section of the Personnel Memorandum No. 436 dated Dec. 10, 2010, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

MOTION: PERSONNEL MEMO #436

The appointments and retirement / resignations were reviewed by Assistant Superintendent Bliss. They are attached.

Commissioner Dress asked why we need an assistant indoor track coach. Mr. Bliss said in track and field, there are students in a number of events. Each coach specializes in different areas. It is a model of larger schools. Ms. Dress asked how many track coaches we have and Mr. Bliss said he does not know but he can get the information. Ms. Dress said she will vote no on this memorandum; the person starts tomorrow and she cannot support this. Mr. Bliss said the starting date was set for tomorrow so there could be board approval first.

Commissioner Cooke asked if the paraeducators are retirements or resignations. Mr. Bliss said they are a combination. Ms. McGarry said they will all need to be replaced although none have been replaced yet.

Commissioner Cavacas said looking at previous personnel memos, this approval would make the second assistant track coach and there is one track coach. Mr. Bliss said he does not know the number of students in track. Commissioner Shimp said track coaches are needed in different places at the same time during meets. Mr. Bliss said there are two teams; men and women. They work together most of the time and meets are in the same places. He said this is an unfilled position but not a new position.

Motion passed with two no votes (Dress, Cavacas)

VOTE ON
PERSONNEL
MEMO

Challenges for Change Letter - A copy of a letter written by Mary Moran to the Commissioner of Education was distributed. The Board discussed the letter and the budget building process. Commissioner Towle asked if the letter was from the Board or the Superintendent. Mr. Mello said it is from the Superintendent; the Commissioner was to be notified by the Superintendent of the district's intent.

BUSINESS
REPORT

CHALLENGES FOR
CHANGE
LETTER

Mr. Cooke said he was confused with the budget and the Board's starting point when looking at tiers and cuts. He said he thought the beginning of the budget process was to be the FY11 budget and that cuts were to come off that. He said he was confused that we had generated a brand new budget, an "inflationary" budget, and that the cuts were taken off that. That means the cuts were taken off a budget that was never approved by the Board or the taxpayers. Mr. Mello said this year's budget is adopted. The proposed budget was one we were starting from and then cut to reduce it. After cuts are made to the proposed budget, that will be the proposed next budget. Mr. Cooke said that would mean that the Board had agreed upon a new budget. But, the Board has been working from a proposed budget. He said that means that the Board was in agreement with a starting point and then agreed to cut from that. He said he was confused by that and that it means less impact in terms of the decrease. It is a 1.2% decrease.

Commissioner Fingon said we need to wait for direction from the state. The Board has not agreed to anything until they ratify a budget. He said it was confusing that we had to give the Commissioner a number, but not a budget. Mr. Mello said he has always assumed that we needed to come up with information for the Commissioner whether or not we were going to meet the cuts. We have not adopted a budget. We had to start with something. We could not tell the Commissioner we were going to meet the target or not without starting from somewhere. This letter tells the Commissioner that we will tap the education fund for \$200,000 less than we did last year, but we do not know what that means.

Mr. Bliss said the process used is the same as in the past. The administration took the FY11 budget and made changes that would be fiscally responsible and would reflect the changes needed. It was then put forth to the Board with suggested tiers. He said the letter states that the "the approved budget reduction from the draft FY12 budget to date is \$989,436." Mr. Bliss said that Mr. Fingon is right, the Board does not have an approved budget. Ms. Moran told the Commissioner that it is our intent to tap the education fund for \$200,000 less than last year's tap.

Mr. Cavacas said the confusion is in hearing two different numbers. The inflationary number and the target. He said there was last year's budget with the additions due to contracts. There are increases with inflationary measures. Mr. Forshay said the budget book showed the starting point of the FY11 budget with the impact of inflation to show a potential budget for FY12. Then it had proposed reductions. The discussion about the inflationary factor over the current fiscal year budget shows a growth in our starting point. He said there was a new starting point for FY12. He does not think the administration was misleading. Mr. Cooke said he did not say it was misleading but he said he needed clarification and it was confusing. Mr. Bliss said the Commissioner's request was to reduce the tap on the education fund. It is confusing.

Commissioner Book said it was asked of the administration if we could still change the budget. They said we could. Mr. Bliss said the Board has not ratified a budget. Mr. Fagan said the Commissioner will present a response from all the schools on January 15 to the Legislature. They could make a quick recommendation but it is highly unlikely. Ms. Shimp said during the budget process, she understood the budget was level funded. Mr. Towle said he thinks the \$200,000 figure is a snapshot. Revenues and expenditures could go up and down. It will impact our tap on the education fund. Mr. Cooke said this has been confusing for him. Every Board and administration has been tackling it differently. There was no direction from the state. Mr. Towle said the Legislature created Challenges for Change and the Commissioner has had to implement it. Mr. Cavacas asked when the tax rate is set. Mr. Amons said it is up to the Legislature; they try to do it before voting day. Mr. Mello said the Board will have to ratify a budget by January 11.

CHALLENGES FOR CHANGE LETTER, cont.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Announcements - Mr. Bliss announced the following:

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Happy holidays to everyone.
- The Northwest School Craft Day is this Friday. Their holiday sing along with John Lyons is Monday, Dec. 20
- The RIS student faculty basketball game will be December 21.
- Holiday baskets by RMS students are being collected to give to needy families by the Student Council.
- The RHS open house for members of the class of 2014 will be Jan. 19. Congratulations to Social Studies teacher Jen Kravitz who was honored on Dec. 10 by the VT Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development as the Vermont Promising Educator for 2010.

Committee Reports - None

COMM. REPORTS

New Business - None

NEW BUSINESS

Legislative Memo - Mr. Mello asked for feedback on the legislative memo. Mr. Towle said initially, he likes it. There are a lot of positives which would help to set a level playing field for all school boards. Mr. Fagan said he likes the letter. He said almost 100 Vermont schools have 100 or fewer students and they are pulling a lot of money and are spending a lot more than what a large district spends and we offer more opportunities. He does not think we could afford that anymore. Ms. Dress asked if Mr. Fagan will promote that in the Legislature and Mr. Fagan said he will try. Mr. Mello read a letter Mr. Courcelle has forwarded as a suggestion to add to Mr. Amons' letter. The letter suggests adding statewide teacher contracts and benefits. There were no objections to adding this on to the other memo and sending to legislators.

OLD BUSINESS

LEGISLATIVE MEMO

Motion by Book / Towle to adjourn at 7:53 pm. Passed.

ADJOURN

Respectfully submitted

Janet Mondlak
Recording Secretary