

**RUTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS  
FEBRUARY 23, 2010**

**School Board Members Present:**

Peter Mello  
Christopher Book  
Wayne Cooke  
Richard Courcelle  
Roberta Dress  
Peter Fagan (7:10 pm)  
Peter Forshay  
Cindy Kilic-Murray  
Rob Towle

**Members Absent**

Hurley Cavacas, Jr.  
Collin Fingon  
Daniel Wigmore

**Also Present:**

Superintendent Mary Moran  
Assistant Superintendent Rob Bliss  
Wil Cunningham  
Lyle Jepson  
Ellie McGarry  
Bill Olsen  
Bob Johnson  
Jay Slenker  
Peter Amons  
Cathy Farman  
Jessica Henderson  
Kristen Hubert

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The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Mello noted the absence of Commissioners Cavacas, Fingon, Fagan and Student Representative Wigmore

Motion by Towle/Forshay to accept the minutes of the Feb. 9, 2010 regular school board meeting as written. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

Written Communication - None

Oral Communication - None

Education Report

Co-Teaching Report - Ms. McGarry said co-teaching is an approach used to work with students who have special needs and disabilities to help them remain in general education classrooms. She reviewed the rationale for the approach based upon federal requirements. Ms. McGarry discussed the research done on co-teaching which shows the positive impacts and reviewed the advantages of co-teaching and critical components of collaboration. This is our second year of co-teaching and we are one of two pilot districts in the state. She said the benefits are already being seen and we are improving the quality of instruction for all students. It has been cost-effective in leveling off special education costs. Ms. McGarry said we are noticing the referrals for special education are decreasing as we are doing a lot of prevention rather than referring. Ms. McGarry said 20% of our population up to grade 6 is identified as special education. The state average is 15%.

Mr. Johnson gave an overview of the restructuring of the special education delivery which led to co-teaching. He said the same strategies are being used and this is still evolving. Mr. Johnson said a number of the faculty members are passionate about this. Ms. Hubert explained the four approaches to co-teaching: Supportive teaching;

**CALL TO ORDER**

**ROLL CALL**

**MOTION:  
MINUTES  
02/09/10  
MEETING**

**WRITTEN &  
ORAL  
COMMUN-  
ICATION**

**EDUCATION  
REPORT**

**CO-  
TEACHING  
REPORT**

Parallel teaching; Complementary teaching; and Team teaching. Mr. Slenker explained the Education Support Team (EST), which is made up of building professionals who provide assistance to children who are experiencing learning or behavior difficulties. They will help assess situations and provide strategies for the teachers.

Ms. McGarry said we will continue professional development for teachers to better enhance what they are doing. We continue to look at data on students and see where we need to improve instruction, assess our needs and continue to look at improvement. We have identified some gaps and are looking at more professional training this summer. The state will be assisting with training as they expand co-teaching statewide

There were questions and discussion from Board members:

- How is co-teaching different than mainstreaming special education students? Ms. McGarry said with mainstreaming, the special educator is not spending as much time in the classroom. With co-teaching the special educator is in the classroom for most of the day. It helps keep the students in the classroom for a large part if not all of the day.
- How many students are there? Mr. Johnson said co-teaching is a special education initiative but it is pre-emptive. It helps keep children from being identified as a special education student. There is a skilled professional in the classroom who can more readily implement strategies to avoid IEP referrals. In a classroom of 20, approximately four students are special education. One might be for speech. Another for a different reason. The classes are grouped heterogeneously.
- What is the average class size? About 20 students.
- With co-teaching, are each of the four approaches being used at the same time? Is the approach determined depending on the population of students? Ms. Hubert said it is a continuum. There are different times when one approach works better than another. A big part of co-teaching is finding meaningful roles for both teachers and that is something they work on.
- If there is a student who requires a one-on-one, are there paraeducators in the classroom? Mr. Slenker said at all three schools, there are students with one-to-one support. The teachers look at the student's goals outlined on the service page. It is truly an individualized education program. Ms. Hubert said co-teaching is improving the professional development of the paraprofessionals because of the presence of both the general and special educators in the classroom.
- Does co-teaching increase or decrease the need for paraeducators? Ms. McGarry said a student with a paraeducator is very restrictive. There are students who will always need a one-on-one for personal care and other reasons but for other students, this model will make them more independent and decrease the need for paraeducators.
- Mr. Johnson said in the beginning, co-teaching was happening 35 minutes a day. Then it increased to 60 minutes. Now it is from 90 minutes to 2-1/2 hours. The ultimate goal is a half-day.
- Mr. Johnson said co-teaching has been cost-neutral to the district. The greater the availability of co-teaching, the greater the likelihood for a decrease of the number of students needing IEPs and the greater the likelihood of students becoming more independent.
- What is the distinction of the expectation and responsibilities based upon the

educators different skills and background? Mr. Slenker said common planning time is important. The teachers look at what is needed for each student and how the education will be delivered. It all depends on the students' goals.

- Is this different than having two general educators or two special educators in the room? Ms. McGarry said the two teachers bring different things to the table. The special educator brings the special way to deliver education to students with different needs as well as doing all the paperwork. The general educator has the content area.
- Mr. Johnson said when teachers are working together for a long period of time, there is a seamless delivery. An observer would be able to walk into a classroom and not be able to identify which teacher is general or special.
- What type of student achievement data is being used? Ms. McGarry reviewed the different assessment tools and initiatives and Mr. Johnson said it takes time to build up the information to be able to reflect on it. He said co-teaching has not yet been fully implemented. Mr. Slenker said co-teaching helps every student, regardless of their ability and teachers have responded favorably.
- There are not enough teachers to go around. Are you focusing in on reading and math first? Scheduling is essential. Mr. Johnson reviewed planning time and how critical it is to the success of co-teaching.
- Are service plans written differently for co-teaching than with the traditional model of special education delivery? Ms. McGarry said the service plan is written differently to take into account co-teaching. It enhances the IEP to the extent that the special educator is in the classroom.
- Are there still students who need to be addressed outside the classroom. Mr. Johnson said it varies but there are certain levels of service such as physical and occupational therapy which cannot be delivered in the classroom. He has seen speech services delivered in a co-teaching situation and the student benefits greatly from not being in isolation.
- This is a pilot program and a fascinating approach. Can a professional video be made? It would be a great tool for the public and parents to see a classroom in action. It is important to let people who do not have an educational background know about this.
- What resources are coming from the state and is the state observing classrooms? Ms. McGarry said because we are part of a pilot, we are sending in data to the state Last year the state observed in all buildings and gave us positive feedback. There are no resources from the state. Ms. McGarry said the state is going to be changing the regulations regarding reimbursement to reflect that co-teaching is now a reimbursable expense. Professional development is also reimbursable.

Mr. Mello said this presentation fulfills a couple of things board members had discussed at the retreat: hearing more from principals and learning about an aspect of special education.

Book Discussion - *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell. Mr. Mello posed the question "What about this book captured your attention?" Board members discussed *Outliers* and how they related it to education. Mr. Mello said there will be a subsequent conversation about the book at an upcoming meeting.

Motion by Towle / Dress to approve the Licensed and Non-licensed section of the Personnel Memorandum No. 419 dated Feb. 19, 2010, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

**MOTION:  
PERSONNEL  
MEMO #419**

The appointments, transfer, and retirement were reviewed by Superintendent Moran. They are attached.

Motion passed by all those in attendance.

**BUSINESS  
REPORT**

Business Report - None

#### Announcements

**SUPERIN-  
TENDENT'S  
REPORT**

- Thank you note was received from Susan Bassett, Community Cupboard director, thanking the school district for the almost 12,000 items donated to the Cupboard.
- New artwork is displayed at Longfellow by RHS by painting and drawing students of Fred Lower.
- At Northeast, the Compassionate Canine Readers will be visiting on Friday to have students read to their canine friends. School concerts will be held next week. March 5th is "Northendorfer Day" in celebration of Dr. Seuss' Birthday. In the evening, there will be a family movie night airing the "Cat in the Hat."
- At Northwest, this is Multicultural Week, with various events and cultures. The culminating event will take place on Friday with each grade level performing music from different regions / cultures. Next week is Dr. Seuss week.
- At RIS, the Slapstick Scientist put on a great show a few weeks ago on force and motion. There will be a PTC sponsored movie night on March 5.
- The RMS Math Team (Taylor Ampatiellos, Matt Abatiell, Molly Wight, Peter Gibb) placed second at the SouthWest Vermont Chapter of MathCounts. Individually Taylor Ampatiellos finished second and Matt Abatiell finished third. This result qualified the team for the State Competition, March 13. Congratulations to Christina Lovett who has competed as an alternate every year and not missed any practices since 6th grade.
- Congratulations to the RHS Varsity Cheerleading team who earned the State Division 1 Championship. In Feb., the RHS Malestroms delivered Singing Valentines to staff and students and The Unpredictables delivered Singing Valentines throughout the High School and sang for the residents of the Meadows. They also performed at the Chittenden Public Library. Encore Theatre's One Act festival piece, Tracks by Peter Tarsi will be performed at RHS on March 4 and 5 and at the regional One Act Festival on March 6. Encore Theatre will host a breakfast for RHS faculty on March 2 to celebrate Theatre in Our Schools Month and thank the faculty for their support of the program. The Key Club raised \$100 in support of an injured MSJ student. On Wed. the Key Club is sponsoring Bingo at the Bardwell House. Several Key Club members participated in the Winterfest, sponsored by the recreation department, assisting the Kiwanis club.
- Stafford Technical Center will be holding an Open House for students who are interested in applying to Stafford for the Fall of 2010 on March 4.

**ANNOUNCE-  
MENTS**

Legislative Report - Ms. Moran said a comprehensive report was sent by email. Mr. Cooke asked the status of the school calendar and Mr. Fagan said he does not believe the bill will move forward. He said cross-over day is coming up. Ms. Moran said it is important to let legislators know what is important.

LEGISLA-  
TIVE  
REPORT

Budget Buddies Update - Ms. Kilic-Murray said the budget and bond votes are March 2. Signs have been distributed. Letters to the editor have been written as well as an op-ed piece by Mary Moran. The phone bank is doing great and there are enough callers. There was review about the ballot.

COMM.  
REPORTS

BUDGET  
BUDDIES  
UPDATE

Pension Committee - Mr. Mello said the Board's action will be advisory to the pension committee, which is comprised of five school commissioners and five board of aldermen members. The pension committee will make the decision. At the last meeting, Mr. Amons presented the four options:

PENSON  
COMM.

Option #1 - do nothing.

Option #2 - follow the actuary's recommendation and cut the benefit to 1%. The cut would effect only those employees who are eligible to participate in either VMERS or VSTRS.

Option #3 - soft freeze the pension for subject employees

Option #4 - hard freeze the pension for subject employees

Mr. Amons presented the financial impacts of each of the options and board members discussed them. Mr. Amons also presented the cost impact on a teacher who has worked for 20 years and has ten more years of service left.

Motion by Fagan / Forshay to accept the actuary's recommendation and make the recommendation to the full Pension Board that as of July 1, 2010, the maximum pension benefit will be 1%, instead of 2%, for employees who have been or are eligible to participate in either VSTRS or VMERS.

MOTION:  
RECOMM-  
ENDATION  
TO PENSION  
BOARD

There was further discussion about the cost impact for teachers working certain number of years as well as the IRS rules and state statutes regarding pensions. Mr. Forshay said Collin Fingon had expressed to him that he was concerned that we would be achieving a 1% payout level for future years of work for the 14% contributed out of salary now. He believes that is a relatively expensive level of support for a 1% payout. Mr. Amons explained the benefit. Mr. Mello said the problems which have caused this include decisions made in the past with regard to grandfathering and the poor market over the past 18 months. Mr. Amons reviewed how there will be positive changes when the benefit is cut. Mr. Fagan said this is not an easy decision. He has seen the cooperation and collaboration between all the groups at the state level and he feels we will realize the same thing: That neighbors and friends cannot afford 21% into the pension fund but 14% is something we can do. He thanked everyone for their cooperation and said this has not been an easy decision. Mr. Mello reminded that the Board's action is advisory to the Pension Board.

NEW  
BUSINESS

Motion passed unanimously.

New Business - None

Old Business - Public budget meeting March 1, 2010. Next board meeting is March 9, 2010.

**OLD  
BUSINESS**

Motion by Towle / Kilic-Murray at 8:15 pm, after a recess, for the board to convene to executive session for the purpose of discussing legal contractual matters, the premature release of information regarding those subjects which would place the Board at a substantial disadvantage. Unanimously passed by those in attendance.

**UPCOMING  
MEETINGS**

**MOTION:  
EXECUTIVE  
SESSION**

The Board came out of executive session at 8:30 pm.

**PUBLIC  
SESSION**

Motion by Cooke/Forshay to adjourn at 8:30 pm. Passed.

**ADJOURN**

Respectfully submitted

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Janet Mondlak  
Recording Secretary