

**RUTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS
MAY 11, 2010**

School Board Members Present:

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

Members Absent

Christopher Book
Wayne Cooke
Richard Courcelle
Daniel Wigmore

Also Present:

Superintendent Mary Moran
Assistant Superintendent Rob Bliss
Ellie McGarry
Bill Olsen
Kristen Hubert
Peter Amons
Wil Cunningham
Cathy Farman
Susanne Engels
Glenn Olson

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

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

Motion by Forshay / Cavacas to accept the minutes of the April 27, 2010 regular school board meeting as written. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

**MOTION:
MINUTES
04/27/10
MEETING**

Written Communication - None

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Oral Communication - None

ORAL COMMUNICATION

Mark R Skakel Proclamation - Chair Mello said the Vermont Senate and House of Representatives sent a proclamation in memory of Mark R Skakel noting his service to Rutland City Schools and many organizations. Mr. Mello read the proclamation and said it will hang at Stafford Technical Center. Ms. Moran said the students are continuing their work and "stepped up the beat" in Mark Skakel's honor. There will be a celebration of his life tomorrow.

MARK R SKAKEL PROCLAMATION

EDUCATION REPORT

RHS Assessment Report - Ms. Moran said this information is in response to the Board's desire for updates. It is not new information but is compiled into one single document. It will be an ongoing progress report. Mr. Olsen said the attempt is to look at everything they are doing and assess progress. Beyond NECAP scores, there are other assessments which will be examined. He said they will eventually add Local Common Assessments given at department and grade levels. They want to add more information about school climate and discipline; activities and athletics, NEASC, and special education. He said they also want to add information on students' post-secondary plans and awards and recognitions they have earned. The overall goal is to look at everything and see what we can do better. He said we try to compare our results with similarly sized schools. The document is still a draft.

RHS ASSESSMENT REPORT

Mr. Olson said the strength of Infinite Campus is the amount of data we can get. He is still learning what the data can tell us. One piece of information we can get, for example, could look at the current junior cohort and tell us how those students did on the NECAPs in the 8th grade? Any student who was in the 8th grade in the state of Vermont. There was further discussion on some of the data we can now get in real time as well as some of the NECAP comparisons. Ms. Moran said the standards are different state to state. The NAEP test is given nationwide but it is only given to a sample of schools and only through 8th grade. The Board discussed other pieces of data. Mr. Mello said this looks like an attempt to compile a list of data that can be used for comparative purposes. The focus has been student achievement and he said an interest to keep in mind is tracking individual students. He likes looking at a variety of sources. Ms. Moran said multiple measures also need to include citizenship, attendance, and students actively engaged in the community. Commissioner Fagan said he would like to know in the future if it takes a lot of keystrokes to repopulate the report or if it automatically repopulates.

SUCCESS Program Report - Ms. Moran congratulated Ms. Engels for completing her Masters Degree at Woodruff Institute. Ms. Engels said Success is a therapeutic program designed to provide students the structure and support they need to be successful. It is not a school but a program. It is a collaboration between Rutland City Schools and Rutland Mental Health. She reviewed the structure and staffing as well as the program components. The program went through a self-study this year looking at goals, strengths, etc. Outcome goals include increasing connections and strengthening communication with partner schools and sharing resources.

Ms. Engels said it became evident that it would be in the best interest of the students to relocate the 3-6 grade students to a classroom at RIS. They will continue to be part of the Success program. She said it will be exactly the same program it is now but in the RIS building. Ms. Engels said the self-study focused on the program K-12 and they looked at the needs of all students. They are continuing to increase communication and strengthen connections in other ways.

There were questions and discussion from Board members:

- Is there an exit planning strategy for these students? Ms. Engels said each student is individual; it is a process they look at from the time the student starts with Success. It is ongoing.
- Does moving the classroom to RIS diminish services available from Rutland Mental Health? Ms. Engels said it was an important factor in making the move to RIS that there will not be a change in the clinician. Rutland Mental health staff working with that group will also move.
- What is the graduation rate of Success students? Ms. McGarry said she does not have the information with her but she can get it. Ms. Moran said a number of the students take part of the day at Success and part at RHS.
- Mr. Mello commended the staff for taking a comprehensive look at the program.

School Improvement Grant Recommendation - Ms. Moran said they have been working on this since January. Mr. Bliss said there are still some unknowns but the grant would potentially improve the district overall. Mr. Bliss said they learned that it is a one year grant which can be stretched financially over three years. Our team of teachers and

leaders is strong enough to make the improvements. There will be more reporting we have to do for the state and federal government, but they will be mostly of things we are already doing. If we apply, Mr. Bliss said the letter of intent is due to the state by May 15 and the application with our plan of improvement is due June 15.

Mr. Olsen said a lot of what they have been doing over the past few years is what the grant is asking us to do. He said he does not see too much change which would have to be made in order to comply. It is potentially a significant amount of money which could have a big impact on how we educate our students at both the high school and lower grades. He said he thinks we have a team of teachers and administrators who would do things which would lead to the transformation for students.

There were questions and discussion from Board members:

- How much money might we receive? Mr. Bliss reviewed Vermont's application to the federal government and said the potential is between \$50,000 and \$2 million. He thinks it could be \$500,000, which could be spread over three years. Ms. Moran said we do not know for sure. She said we do not want to derail or undo the good work we are doing. We have had a lot of reassurances we can build upon what we have been doing.
- There was discussion on the improvement model which would require firing the principal. Ms. Moran said we are applying for the transformative model which is not punitive.
- Outside of reporting requirements, are there performance requirements? Mr. Bliss said he was told that if a school takes the funds, they will not be identified in the next round of ranking. He reviewed some of the things we would have to report which we are now measuring, but not reporting. Ms. Moran said we will have to set up goals which will not be imposed externally but rather internally. We will have to show we are making progress toward those goals and will have to respond to the state, who will respond to the federal government.
- We have a 94% graduation rate. We could make the goal to reach 96% and we are after the same money as a school in another state which might have a graduation rate of 60%.? Ms. Moran said there is no guarantee of any of this. We do not have guarantee of reauthorization of NCLB. However, the state has been working with us very cooperatively.
- We already know that we showed a marked improvement from the last set of data points which they used. What is the downside besides the extra reporting and potential changes from the federal government? Ms. Moran said the unknown. Mr. Bliss agreed.
- If we use the money for all schools in the district, will all schools be subject to the same criteria? Or will only RHS be measured? Mr. Bliss said the other schools are in the "needing improvement" system. There is some criteria for ongoing improvement.
- Is it possible that the scope for transformation is a downside? That it is far

beyond what we are comfortable with? Mr. Olsen said the transformation model includes just about everything we are doing. There might be some refinements but the model includes all the best-practice items that schools are going after. He said an example would be the possibility of improving student transitions through summer programs. That is something we are considering.

**SIG
IMPROVE-
MENT
GRANT
RECOM-
MENDA-
TION, cont.**

- What about student performance and teacher evaluation? Has that changed in terms of our expectations? Mr. Bliss said he does not see that expectation changing but we will review our evaluation system. There will be a model to take student achievement into consideration. We will develop something internally.
- Do we have an idea of how the funds would be used to implement the program? Ms. Moran said we have talked about the human capital available. We would have to be careful about any new programs we initiate.
- A concern would be that once we start a new program and it is successful, how do we maintain it?
- Has the State set aside a pool of money? Ms. Moran said the State has been allocated approximately \$8 million and there are ten schools and nine districts. Mr. Mello said not all the schools might choose to apply. Ms. Moran said she feels everyone will apply. If they all do not apply, there will be a hold back of some of the money.

**MOTION:
RECOM-
MEND
APPLYING
FOR
SCHOOL
IMPROVE-
MENT
GRANT**

Motion by Fagan / Towle to recommend that Rutland City Public Schools apply for the School Improvement Grant as presented and to send the Letter of Intent by May 15, 2010. Motion passed with one no vote (Dress)

Motion by Towle / Fagan to approve the Licensed and Non-licensed section of the Personnel Memorandum No. 424 dated May 7, 2010, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

**MOTION:
PERSONNEL
MEMO #424**

The appointments and resignations were reviewed by Superintendent Moran. They are attached.

Motion passed by all those in attendance.

**HIRING
UPDATE**

Hiring Update - Ms. Moran said we are still looking to fill several positions and she reviewed them.

**BUSINESS
REPORT**

Financial Reporting Update - Mr. Amons reviewed the reporting requirements for schools and said there is no mandatory interim reporting. He spoke with a number of school business managers and asked the question: What type of interim reporting information does a school board need?

**FINANCIAL
REPORT-
ING UPDATE**

He said that school boards are doing a number of different things. He suggests a one page quarterly report showing a year to date budget with the addition of the status of the contingency fund and the ARRA monies. Mr. Amons distributed a third quarter report which he said will be emailed to Board members in the future. Those wanting

more detail can request it. He said it was decided that it will not be routinely discussed at the Board meetings but Board members should contact him with questions. Mr. Amons said it is not necessarily a lot of extra work to compile the report but there are obstacles in the software. Also, some items can come up during the year such as some of the grants. The ARRA funds were not in the original budget. Board members agreed that they liked the format of the report.

Announcements

- The Music Department thanks Rutland community members as well as school personnel for the great support during the All State Music Festival. We housed more than 300 students in area homes and had more than ten times that number of musicians, teachers and parents visit for the parade and concerts. It was a wonderful event and great for the economy as well. Ms. Moran congratulated the Rutland Herald for their coverage and thanked everyone for their cooperation.
- RHS Evening of the Arts will be held May 12. Visual arts, music and theater will all be featured in this special annual event.
- Various RIS and RMS band, orchestra and chorus performances are being held during the school day almost every day this week and next.
- At Northeast, the annual National Walk to School Day will be on May 13 at the Godnick Center. Second graders will visit the Alpaca Farm this week and will be visited by the "Pond Lady" from Hildene next week. They will use the recently refurbished pond to full advantage.
- On May 21st the Northeast and Northwest second graders will have their second annual get-together at Giorgetti Park. A combination field day and picnic, it is the first occasion these students will have to meet their new classmates for the 2010-2011 school year.
- The Northwest "Spring Walk to School Day" will be on Wednesday at Giorgetti. Spring Fling with RHS students will take place on Friday. There was a successful kindergarten screening last week, along with Teacher/Staff appreciation. On Friday students planted a weeping cherry tree to honor teachers (donated by Pratico's Landscaping).
- Thank you to the RIS PTC for a wonderful Staff Appreciation Breakfast last week. Thanks to longtime PTC Chair Sherri Rooker for her four years of service to RIS. June 8th school wide Field Day at Giorgetti Park.
- The 14th annual RMS Coffeehouse is May 13 in the RIS / RMS Cafeteria. Students will be reading original works of poetry and prose in a coffeehouse atmosphere.
- RMS NECAP tests for grade 8 students next Tuesday and Wednesday, May 18, 19.
- RHS started NECAP Science testing today. The next two sessions for juniors take place on 5/13 and 5/18.
- During the month of April, STC Hospitality and Entrepreneurship students took the National Financial Capability Challenge, an awards program designed to increase the financial knowledge and capability of high school students. Results: National Statistics: Total number of students taking the challenge: 76,892 and the national average score: 70%. Vermont came in 6th in the nation with a 76.62% score. Vermont Statistics: Total number of students who took the challenge: 145. Number of students who scored in the top 20% nation wide:

45. TC Statistics: Total number of students who took the challenge: 13. Number of students who scored in the top 20% nation wide: 3. Number of students who met or exceeded the national Average: 12. Average score for STC Hospitality and Entrepreneurship students: 78%. Stephanie Colton (RHS), Courtney Mumford (MRUHS) and Brent White (MRUHS) scored in the top 20% of the nation.

**ANNOUNCE-
MENTS, cont.**

Legislative Report - Mr. Fagan said he hopes they will finish tomorrow.

**LEGISLA-
TIVE
REPORT**

Committee Reports - None

**COMM.
REPORTS**

New Business - None

**NEW
BUSINESS**

Old Business - None

**OLD
BUSINESS**

Motion by Towle / Fingon at 8:00 pm, after a recess, for the board to convene to executive session for the purpose of discussing 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.

**MOTION:
EXECUTIVE
SESSION**

The Board came out of executive session at 8:54 pm.

**PUBLIC
SESSION**

Motion by Towle / Shimp to adjourn at 8:55 pm. Passed.

ADJOURN

Respectfully submitted

Janet Mondlak
Recording Secretary