

KEENE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Special Meeting – Board Retreat Minutes

DATE: August 25, 2009

LOCATION: Stonewall Farm, Program Room, Arch Street, Keene, NH

CALLED TO ORDER: 4:07 p.m.

TIME ADJOURNED: 7:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

- Ms. Kathleen O'Donnell, chair
- Mrs. Carol Brown
- Mrs. Amy Speas
- Mr. Donald Parker
- Mr. Carl Panza
- Mrs. Kristin Blais
- Mr. Carter Chamberlin
- Mr. Neil Donegan (arrived at 4:15 p.m.)
- Mr. Chris Coates (arrived @ 5:34 p.m.)

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

- Mr. William Gurney, Co-Superintendent of Schools
- Mr. Wayne Woolridge, Co-Superintendent of Schools
- Mr. Paul Cooper, Director of Human Services
- Ms. Catherine Reeves, Director of Special Education
- Mr. Alan Chmiel, Keene High School Principal
- Mr. William Harris, Benjamin Franklin School Principal
- Mr. James Logan, Director of Cheshire Career Center
- Mrs. Meredith Cargill, Director of Curriculum
- Mr. Richard Cate, Symonds School Principal
- Mr. Paul Huggins, Fuller School Principal (arrived at 4:15 p.m.)
- Mrs. Dorothy Frazier, Middle School Principal (arrived at 4:20 p.m.)

OTHERS PRESENT:

- Mrs. Dru Fox, Stenographer

Ms. Kathleen O'Donnell, Chair, called the meeting to Order at 4:07 p.m.

1. Public Input - none

2. Review of Initiative Planning for 2009-2010

Ms. Kathleen O'Donnell introduced the purpose of this retreat, spoke about its focus and described this as a continuation of the meeting held back in May.

Mr. Carter Chamberlin made a motion to accept the May, 2009 retreat minutes. Mrs. Amy Speas seconded. Vote taken, motion passes by a unanimous vote of 7-0.

Mr. William Gurney brought our attention to the items listed in the meeting minutes of May, 2009 as "brainstorming of action items for strategic planning" and updates were provided on the following:

Recruitment - Mr. Paul Cooper reported that our recruiting process is moving along very well. Applications were received from all over the country and currently there are 53 new employees throughout the SAU.

Ms. Meredith Cargill spoke about the partnership between SAU #29 and Keene State College, the anticipated benefit to new development and new staff, and the desire to expand our mentor program to include Keene State College staff.

Leadership development for principals - Mr. William Harris reported on leadership development for principals and told about his visit to Plymouth Elementary School and their special education services. Mr. Richard Cate reported on his visit to Birch Hill in Nashua and their programs for emotionally handicapped children. Mr. Gurney asked those principals to write him a report about that exchange. Mr. Alan Chmiel spoke about his visit from the Triton High School principal and Mr. Wayne Woolridge spoke in detail about his experiences in China.

Mr. William Gurney then provided an update on the preparation of the budget up to this point, the search for quality teachers, improvement plans, meeting student goals in MAPS and identifying needs. Mr. Chmiel told about the development of a new mid-term exam and the process that went into its creation.

Mr. Gurney spoke at great length about the up and running Chinese language program. He provided an update on its progress, a biography of the teacher that was hired, spoke about her video presentation and her interaction with the world language department. He reported she currently has 8 or 9 students in each class and talked about her duties and responsibilities including cultural and community activities, Dublin School and the opportunity for student and teacher exchanges between the US and China.

Ms. Meredith Cargill presented information about a recently held Institute at KSC. She said that all schools were represented and commended Wheelock School for their representation. She spoke in detail about how they took the curriculum and focused on grade level cohorts. She talked about the continuity of the program, curriculum work, world language, extending into other curriculum areas, art, and the finalization of social studies curriculum with minor changes at middle and high level, and more changes at the elementary level.

Reporting on initiatives continued with a presentation of Beth Corwin's application for a grant to continue her wellness work through the spring made possible by an anonymous donor and an upcoming conference she will be attending.

Ms. Cathy Reeves outlined the work that went into the special education study action plan, the results of that study and then passed out two draft reports, the first pages of which are entitled "Tutors 2008-2009" and "KHS Special Education 2010-2011". Discussion ensued pertaining to the number of tutors in the system and the implementation of tutor hiring guidelines. Ms. Reeves affirmed that all students who require tutor support currently have tutor support. Discussion continued around the \$400,000 placed back in the budget last year by the voters, shared versus one-on-one tutors, number of new families coming into the district, whether or not concerns expressed last year have been met, numbers of actual tutors, and numbers of tutor positions that were eliminated. Mr. Donegan asked Ms. Reeves to provide to the Finance Committee a justification for adding any additional tutors throughout the school year. Ms. Reeves then addressed Mr. Rand Lounsbury's duties and responsibilities.

Discussion pertaining to "movement and rotation of principals within schools" began and Mr. Neil Donegan reinforced his expectation for this program, expressed concern over it not having been implemented by now and his frustration that it was still in the planning stages.

Mrs. Dorothy Frazier presented information about the Keene Middle School not attaining AYP. Some issues discussed were low socio-economical situations, not having the math program implemented and not enough time during the school day. She talked about creating a plan the state has approved, identifying causes and implementing an action plan. She continued with information about other math programs for the 20 severely handicapped children, explained the additional time allotted to them, the plan in place for focus study groups and spoke about our obligation to provide regular education. Mrs. Frazier explained the procedures that went into their analysis of AYP and spoke about meeting with a group of parents for the purpose of getting the message out that students need to be present while testing is going on, that they should not be

taking vacations and it is imperative that students take this more seriously. She said most kids who did not pass could have easily passed if they had simply taken the testing more seriously. Further discussion ensued.

Mr. Richard Cate talked about analyzing the data and making a plan and submitting it to the State Department of Education. He brought up scheduling issues, no study halls and questioned what a child who needs more help will miss by being pulled out for extra help. Mr. Cate said they did not make AYP in math primarily due to his special education program that houses 24 students. He had a sense 3 or 4 years ago this would happen and has been working on the issue since that time.

Discussion continued around the short period of time to make improvements, various areas at each school to focus on, AYP being an extension of other tests, the issue of how we assist all students. Discussion continued regarding the unfair assessment procedure, obtaining data and fear that the entire curriculum will get squeezed, as the standards get tougher and tougher. Ms. O'Donnell assured the group that she is a great proponent of strings, foreign language and all those programs, but the truth of the matter is that attaining AYP is very important and our budget will be eliminated if we do not pay attention.

Mr. Gurney addressed the gifted and talented program at KMS and a proposal for 2 additional teachers. Mr. Donegan expressed concern over the gifted and talented issue and said his idea about this program did not match up with the list of the items that Mrs. Frazier was presenting. Discussion continued around differentiated programs, opinions on what a gifted and talented program is and is not, and opening up more communication around the issue. Several Board members offered their thoughts on what they wanted to see for a gifted and talented program and their expectation was to have had presentation of more of an in-depth plan.

Mr. Donald Parker provided his recollection of the chronological events leading up to this point and asked what the charge of the committee was that was developed. Mr. Parker then asked Mrs. Frazier to verify that the charge of the committee is to come up with solutions and recommendations to serve the population that were identified in our motion last May for gifted and talented children and she assured him that that was the charge of the committee.

Ms. Kathleen O'Donnell suggested tabling the remaining issues and asked for a motion to move the meeting into Non-Public Session for the remaining hour.

Mr. Chris Coates made a motion to recess the meeting into Non-Public Session according to RSA 91:A3. Mr. Neil Donegan seconded. Roll call vote taken, Mr. Carter Chamberlin-yes, Mr. Chris Coates-yes, Mr. Donald Parker-yes, Mrs. Kristin Blais-yes, Mrs. Carol Brown-yes, Mr. Neil Donegan-yes, Ms. Kathleen O'Donnell-yes, and Mr. Carl Panza-yes. Motion passes by a unanimous roll call vote at 6:18 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dru Fox
Stenographer

William B. Gurney
Co-Superintendent of Schools

Approved: By the Keene Board of Education

Date: February 9, 2010