

Education Committee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, November 17, 2009
6:30 p.m.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE
Of the Keene Board of Education

Cheshire Career Center Conference Room
Keene High School
43 Arch Street
Keene, NH

Committee Members Present:

Carol Brown, Chair
Donald Parker
Amy Speas

Others Present:

Patty Yoerger, JD Principal
Madeline Ullrich, Westmoreland Board
Judy Idelkope, Chesterfield Board
Becky Auger, Chesterfield
Member of the public (1)

Committee Members Absent:

Kristin Blais (*illness*)

Board Members Present:

Carter Chamberlin
Kathleen O'Donnell
Carl Panza

Administrators Present:

William Gurney, Co-Superintendent
Wayne Woolridge, Co-Superintendent
Meredith Cargill, Director of Curriculum & Assessment

Chair Carol Brown called the meeting to order at 6:39 p.m.

1. **Public Input**

There was no public input.

2. **Approval of Minutes of October 27, 2009**

MOTION: Mr. Don Parker moved that the minutes of the October 27, 2009 Education Committee Meeting be approved as presented. Ms. Amy Speas seconded the motion.

By a vote of 3-0 the minutes were approved.

3. **2010-2011 Calendar Proposal** – *Mr. Gurney*

Mr. Gurney distributed a proposed school district calendar for 2010-2011 (March Vacation Draft Revision 4). Mr. Gurney noted that January 18 should be represented with a “W” for workshop day. The calendar, which Mr. Gurney recommends to the Committee for approval, represents 10 workshop days for teachers as required by the Collective Bargaining Agreements. “WI” represents individual workshop days pending approval by the principal for independent staff development or as a part of small groups also as per the bargaining agreements.

The last day of school (pending use of snow days) would be June 9. Early release days count as a teaching day not as a professional day.

Mr. Gurney stated that the calendar, which is a departure from the calendars of the past, represents long weekends in January and February and a full week of vacation in March. Traditionally school vacation weeks took place in February and April. Mr. Gurney further shared that the overwhelming majority of parents and teachers favored this new model in a recent calendar survey conducted via Survey Monkey.

Ms. Meredith Cargill, Director of Curriculum and Assessment, elaborated on the survey indicating that 48% of teachers preferred one week in March and two long weekends. Parents favored the March vacation (48%) and the traditional two week model (35%). Ms. Cargill further shared that in the 2008-2009 school year as a result of snow days and holidays, students went from the beginning of November to the second week of February without a full week of instruction.

Discussion ensued regarding the proposed calendar and the impact on the town districts' calendar planning.

Ms. Brown stated that she is not supportive of early release days, citing the effect on the instructional day.

Mr. Gurney shared that early release days will count as instructional days and that they provide the opportunity for teachers to meet with colleagues in the other SAU 29 districts.

Ms. Cargill further shared that the Joint Principals group wrote a letter of support for early release days. With the exception of two districts, all SAU districts currently have early release days in their calendars. Seventy-percent of parents responding to the survey supported early release days.

The committee opted to forward the proposed calendar draft to the full board in December for further discussion. Mr. Gurney and Ms. Cargill were also asked to email the Education Committee distribution list the raw numbers from the survey.

4. **Educational Initiatives** – *Mr. Gurney and Ms. Cargill*

FLES (Foreign Language in Elementary Schools):

The curriculum is written and a staffing proposal for 4.4 teachers is in the initial elementary general budget. Full implementation of the program is roughly estimated at \$330,000 plus supplies and texts. Given the current economic crisis and the reductions to the operating budget, it is unlikely that the first round of the budget will include funds for the program. Mr. Gurney acknowledged the work done by Mr. Bill Harris, Franklin School Principal and the FLES committee to prepare the proposal and develop the curriculum.

MARCHING BAND:

Keene School District students begin band instrument training in elementary school and continue through middle school. While the high school offers a variety of band and music programs, it has been a number of years since the high school has had a marching band. Principal Alan Chmiel is interested in bringing back the marching band. Mr. Chmiel feels that one of the keystones of the Renaissance program is a marching band to celebrate athletic events as well as academics. Currently \$3,500 is budgeted as seed money for a marching band program.

Discussion ensued around scheduling, practice time, uniforms, and the value band brings to the high school program.

Ms. Brown expressed interest in a full proposal to include a marching band program for the 2010-2011 school year. Mr. Gurney will discuss further with Principal Chmiel and ask him to prepare to report out to the full board.

GIFTED AND TALENTED/DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION:

The Keene Board of Education allocated \$10,000 for the study of gifted and talented/differentiation programs for the 2009-2010 school year. Recently teachers and administrators attended the fall conference of the New England Gifted and Talented organization in Nashua, NH. Keene Middle School staff is working closely with the New England League of Middle Schools (NELMS) to move forward on this initiative. Mr. Gurney will report back to the committee regarding exemplary schools where visitations are being considered to observe best practices in action.

NWEA TRAINING:

The Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments are the most timely and potentially influential tool routinely used in the district. A critical mass of teachers have been trained on accessing and interpreting reports, however ongoing training is needed to help with flexible group generation, Lexile (reading) resources, and differentiated instruction.

Discussion ensued regarding MAP testing, number of teachers using the assessment and to what degree. Ms. Cargill reported that currently administrators at the building level set the conditions for how teachers utilize the data. As this is a component of the role of the Director of Curriculum and Assessment, Ms. Cargill will continue to report out to the committee on this topic.

MANDARIN/CHINESE PROGRAM:

Mr. Gurney will be visiting China in December as a guest of The Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban) and the College Board. The goal of the visit is to explore options for expansion of Mandarin instruction to middle and elementary students. Mr. Gurney also hopes to secure arrangements for student/faculty exchanges for the summer of 2010. The Mandarin program at Keene High School is reportedly doing very well with instruction provided by Mrs. Zhou Ling to approximately 20 students through an introductory course. The goal is for Mrs. Zhou Ling to visit schools within SAU 29 throughout the year to encourage future participation in the Mandarin program once attending Keene High School.

MENTORING:

The New Hampshire Department of Education recently updated requirements for professional development and recertification. Under the new requirements, mentoring programs are now required by districts. SAU 29 has a professional development committee with representatives from every school in the SAU. Every new teacher receives a trained mentor. Training for action research and professional learning communities are goals of the 2009-2010 Professional Development Committee.

EXISTING CURRICULUM INITIATIVES:

Everyday Math/Math Scapes: In the second half of full adoption. Grades 1, 3, and 5 joined program implementation this year, with grades K, 2, 4, and the middle school in their second year. Additional training will include new staff, ongoing support, para/tutor/special education training, etc.

- Collins Writing: Key training on utilizing the program with NECAP constructed-response questions is ongoing.
- Literacy and Core Reading: Training ongoing for new staff members in the Houghton Mifflin Core Reading program.
- Science: In the second year of full adoption (Keene Middle School on a three-year phase in), follow-up

professional development is needed to support teachers in grade-level teams.

- Social Studies: Draft year, major shift in curriculum at the fifth and sixth grade levels. Training and instructional tools/resources needed for full adoption.
- Guidance: Curriculum adopted in 2008-2009, additional support is needed.
- Art: Completion of Fine Arts curriculum scheduled for summer 2010.
- Cross-walking Curriculum: As curricula are revised, there comes an opportunity to explore integration as specific grade spans. This ensures content delivery that is relevant and rigorous while maximizing instructional time.

Discussion ensued regarding curricula and the need for the information to be readily available to teachers, parents and the public. Discussion also included state and national standards and how New Hampshire compares to other states.

KEENE COMES ALIVE:

A joint initiative between Keene Board of Education member Mr. Christopher Coates and Franklin School Principal Mr. Bill Harris resulted in elementary students mastering chapters of Keene history culminating in a performance at Robin Hood Park. In its second year, Keene Comes Alive is a collaborative project among third graders in all five elementary schools engaging students in the history of our community. Resources and supply monies devoted to this project are vital to its success. The program is an excellent example of cross-walking the curriculum and dovetails with the new social studies curriculum.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES:

Within content area and/or grade-level teams, teachers explore four key questions:

- What is it we expect students to learn?
- How will we know when they have learned it?
- How will we respond when they don't learn?
- How will we respond when they already know it?

As a component of the District in Need of Improvement (DINI) plan, professional learning communities are being looked at by the professional development committee. PLCs are the best, least expensive way to improve schools.

POWERSCHOOL:

Student management software with capabilities to assist teachers with getting data to help drive instruction. Parent Portals are open for grades 6-12 allowing parents to monitor their children's academic progress. Mr. Bill Harris has attended training for several years and worked to develop an elementary report card that will be standards-based.

NETWORKING/ICT/ REPLACEMENT CYCLE:

Chris Carreira provided a full presentation on these topics at the October 2009 Education Committee meeting. Follow up questions should be directed to Chris at ccarreira@sau29.org.

PRINCIPAL TRAINING:

Professional development that is sustainable and cost-effective remains primarily within the SAU and is structured as:

- Administrative mentoring
- Principal professional learning communities
- Collaborative trainings and reflective dialogue

- Creating and/or implementing uniform structures to use of data, policy implementation, budgeting, teacher evaluation, and professional development recertification requirements (including action research) for teachers
- Other needs-based initiatives

SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDIES:

During the 2008-2009 school year, a study of the delivery of special education services at Keene High School took place. Dr. Richard Ayers and Jane Bergeron undertook the study under the auspices of SERESC. Recommendations from the study included restructuring the organization and the introduction of a new administrative position to coordinate services. The recommendations have been partly implemented with an interim Director of Special Services and a full search for a permanent administrator underway. Dr. Ayers and Ms. Bergeron are currently working with elementary staff and families to develop recommendations for elementary collaborative programs. Funds for these studies have been provided through IDEA grants.

RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION (RTI):

To align with the District in Need of Improvement (DINI) plan, support is needed for a district-wide adoption of a Response to Intervention (RTI) protocol. This provides students, based on (formative) assessment results, opportunities to gain more instruction or practice with a particular objective or skill. After the intervention, students are asked to demonstrate mastery of the objective before continuing on in the curriculum. RTI is considered a “regular education” best practice that in many cases can reduce the number of students referred for special education services. Training is needed for staff and administrators.

NEW KEENE MIDDLE SCHOOL:

Progress is on track. The Keene Middle School Building and Marketing Committees have been active this fall working toward plans for the new building as well as for the sale of the current building. Selection of a company to complete the design and engineering plans for the woodchip plant has been finalized. A new lease with the towns of SAU 29 is on the December SAU Board agenda. The new lease is based upon the current lease for 34 West Street that was negotiated and approved in 2007.

Discussion ensued regarding soil study and historical building study requested by a member of the public.

NORTH CAMPUS:

New North Campus buildings have been completed and are occupied by staff and students. Mr. Gurney recognized the efforts of Tom Remillard, Director of Buildings and Grounds, and his staff to complete the projects. The former Roosevelt School on Washington Street has been sold to River Valley Community College for \$1,100,000 with classes planned to begin January 2010. Anticipation is that KHS students will have the opportunity to attend courses at RVCC through the *Running Start* program.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS:

All SAU 29 schools have Wellness Committees and the SAU 29 Wellness Committee has Keene based Co-Chairs, Beth Corwin and Leslie Farmer. Keene Food Services has made progress in supplying healthier menus to our schools. The district is working closely with local health providers to monitor public health issues and to support the goals of Vision 20/20, an initiative to make Keene the healthiest community in the country by 2020. The elementary schools are concentrating efforts to promote exercise after school. Mr. Gurney recognized Jonathan Daniels School Principal, Patty Yoerger, for her efforts as the chair of the Safe Routes to School Committee, working to ensure improved sidewalk safety leading to and from schools and neighborhoods, encouraging walking or bike riding to school.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS:

Partnerships are continuing to grow with the Southwest Center and Keene State College; Monadnock Family Services, Monadnock Developmental Services and the aforementioned River Valley Community College. The goal being the more the district partners with local organizations, the better we become at serving the needs of our students.

DISTANCE LEARNING:

50 slots per year available for a fee of \$6,500. KHS is able to offer courses not otherwise able at KHS through Virtual High School. The plan is to extend Virtual learning to the middle school. Preliminary discussions have taken place with the new virtual charter school located within Exeter High School. Any NH resident student is entitled to take free online courses which are accepted for credit in NH high schools. The school offers both middle and high school courses with elementary courses in development.

Chair Brown complimented Mr. Gurney and Ms. Cargill on their presentation. Ms. Brown would like to see updates on educational initiatives as a standing agenda item for the committee. Mr. Gurney suggested the packet be included in the budget justification.

Ms. Speas asked whether a central professional library existed within the district. Mr. Gurney stated that teachers have access to the Keene State College library and noted that perhaps there will be space for a professional development library at the new Central Office building. Currently there is not one central location for a professional development library accessible by all.

Ms. Speas would like to invite a staff member who attended the gifted and talented conference in Nashua this fall to the education committee for a presentation on information gleaned from the conference.

5. Budget Discussion

Mr. Gurney stated that this was incorporated into the education initiatives presentation. Mr. Gurney expressed that staff understand the current economic climate. Thus far in the budget planning process, administrators are presenting budgets below level funding. In January the board will hear more about the items being sacrificed in order to meet budget constraints.

6. Other Business

None.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Cathy Dieter, Stenographer