

MONT VERNON SCHOOL BOARD MEETING MINUTES
June 22, 2006
MONT VERNON VILLAGE SCHOOL LIBRARY

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Leo White called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Present:

ATTENDANCE

Mont Vernon School Board: Howard Brown, Peter King, John Schwope, and Leo White.

Administrative Team: Howard Colter, Nicole Heimarck, Kathy Skoglund, Susan Ward, and Meredith Nadeau.

Teacher/Faculty: Nancy Sandahl, Beth Chestnutt, Kimberly Tighe

Public: Donna Patten, Jane King, Paula Daniels Kimberley Harmon, Leanne Aiken, Jack Aiken, Beth Girard, Trevor Girard, Carol Yetto, Vanessa Foley, Cindy Raspiller, Bob Bell, Dawn Gregory, Sabrina Gregory, Roxanne Harmon, Warren Clay, Bob Kent, Steve Elich, Susan Mead, Amanda Mead, Ryan Jones, Chris Jones, Michael Jones, Leslie Ashcraft, David Brooks, Tom Brooks, Tim Allen, Kathy Dobbs, Linda Pomeroy, Candee Norda.

Newspaper: Mary Ellen Hettinger

Minutes Recorder: Lyn Jennings

Leo said there were several members of the public, which was unusual for the school board. He welcomed members of the public to the meeting.

PUBLIC TIME

Leo explained the format would be different, he explained members of the public were welcome to discuss any topics other than the Math program.

Leo said this was an educational meeting for the school board. They did not plan on taking any action on the Math program this evening. Board members planned on listening to Meredith Nadeau's presentation as well as her recommendation on the program. After Meredith's presentation, Bob Kent would present the Alpha Math program. Next, would be questions and comments from the School Board and then public comments, and questions.

Bob Bell came to discuss the placement of his daughter, Sierra Bell. Bob explained his daughter, Sierra recently completed Kindergarten at the Nashua Christian Academy. Bob said they moved to Mont Vernon in December. Bob said if Sierra were to continue at Nashua Christian Academy, she would move on to the next grade level. He is asking permission for Sierra to be tested since her Date of Birth is November 3, 2000, and she missed the cutoff date of September 30th to be eligible to attend the Mont Vernon Village School in the Fall. It is Bob's desire to have her participate in the community here at the Village School. Mr. Bell is asking the board for a waiver of the

current policy.

Both Howard and Meredith denied Bob Bell's request for a waiver since Sierra missed the cutoff to enter First Grade per the SAU Guidelines.

Howard requested members of the board put this item on a future agenda and take no action at this meeting since it was not on the agenda for discussion.

Board members agreed to put this item on the next agenda for discussion.

**BUSINESS &
INSTRUCTION
*Curriculum and
Instruction***

1. 6th Grade Math Program Review – Nicole Heimarck told members of the board as well as the public the SAU Staff as well as the administrative team met to discuss the 6th Grade Math Program at the Mont Vernon Village School as well as the transition of the curriculum to the Amherst Middle School and Souhegan High School. Nicole highlighted the SAU 39 Mission Statement as well as its Core Values. Nicole said the Administration would make some future recommendations for the Math program at the conclusion of this evenings meeting.

Meredith presented the Mont Vernon Village School Goals:

1. To improve student learning by providing a safe and respectful environment for all students and staff members.
2. To improve student performance in reading, writing, math, and complex thinking in all content areas.

Meredith highlighted the Objectives to meet the MVVS goals.

1. Differentiated Instruction
 - a. Differentiate instruction and programs to meet the needs of all learners.
 - b. Provide teacher training in Differentiated instruction (to include assessment)
2. Technology
 - a. Provide teacher training in the use of technology as an instructional tool.
 - b. Increase the use of technology as an instructional tool.
3. Integration of Curriculum
 - a. Align curriculum in reading, math, specials, science, and writing.
 - b. Increase the integration of curriculum.

Meredith highlighted the current MVVS 6th grade math offerings as well as the current AMS offerings.

Beth Chestnutt, a Math Curriculum Coordinator at the Amherst Middle School highlighted student's math options for next year. Beth said students would be able to choose the 6th grade math program, a one-year advanced program, or a two year advanced program. This is

a change from previous years where they were only given the option of a two year advanced math program. Beth said she believes the program Amherst is offering students, will benefit them even more than originally thought, she said if you give students a challenge, often times they opt for a challenge.

Meredith highlighted the selection criteria for the Alpha and Advanced Courses.

Meredith provided several AMS concerns about Alpha students entering the 7th grade advanced program. A few of the AMS concerns included:

- Rubric to evaluate student conceptual and abstract understanding, motivation, and work habits (part of placement criteria) is not always completed for Alpha students.
- Scores of former Alpha students on in-class exams in 7th grade are usually lower than those of other advanced students as students are not as used to time constraints of in-class exams.
- Alpha students are weaker in process and conceptual understanding than their AMS peers.

Several parents present at the meeting disagreed with these concerns.

Meredith provided MVVS concerns about the Alpha Program.

Highlights of the concerns included:

- Consistency of programming and curriculum alignment with AMS allowing for a smooth transition from MVVS.
- Philosophical conflicts with homework policy, take-home exams, and competitive environment.
- Parent concerns about stress caused by class ranking and Alpha program.

Meredith provided a comparison of AMS / MVVS Data points.

- Alpha students' scores are comparable to those of AMS students in the 6th grade advanced program and remain comparable at the end of grade 7.
- Some students in both groups fall behind.
- About ¼ of last year's advanced students in grade 8 (some AMS, some MVVS) dropped back to regular math or elected to repeat Math 2 at SHS rather than enter Math 3.
- MVVS Alpha students and non-Alpha students qualify for one- and two-year advanced programs.

Meredith highlighted some MVVS Data points.

- From 1998 – 2004, MVVS students scored in the Advanced category on NHEIAP mathematics assessments;
 - 5 were Alpha students
 - 19 were 6th grade math students
- On May 20, 2006, MVVS Stanford Math assessments, 8 students scored in the 9th stanine;
 - 2 were Alpha students

- 6 were 6th grade math students

- MVVS end of Grade 5 assessment results indicate only 2 students meet all the qualifications for the 2006-2007 Alpha program.

Meredith provided copies of the current AMS 6th grade advanced curriculum. She also provided the link to review it online. <http://www.sprise.com/ams/Curriculum.htm>

Meredith told members of the school board as well as the public, the MVVS Staff believes they can meet the needs of all of the students in the sixth grade math classroom. She said their routine participation in professional development and training opportunities focused on best practices in education has prepared them to do so.

Meredith said the staff is focused on the SAU and MVVS mission and goals.

Meredith presented the MVVS Staff recommendation. She said the staff recommends replacing the Alpha math program with the 6th grade advanced curriculum.

The staff wants to provide the 6th grade advanced instruction to qualified students in the regular classroom.

She recommended that members of the teaching staff provide primary instruction in core subjects. Meredith said they want to utilize existing resources, including the math curriculum coordinators and the SAU Director of Curriculum and Professional Development, to monitor the program and provide support to the math teacher.

Meredith said they also want to offer math enrichment programming after school.

Leo White asked Mr. Kent to present his program “Alpha Math.” A handout of the Alpha Kids Advanced Mathematics Program 2005-06 was provided.

Mr. Kent disagreed with a lot of Meredith’s presentation. He said he would have liked to have heard about the Alpha program concerns prior to the meeting so he could have addressed them.

Bob Kent provided his thoughts on differentiated instruction and why it would not work as it related to advanced math students. He said you should not take kids from the Alpha Math program and integrate them into the classroom, which would increase the class size and change the dynamics and success of the Alpha program.

The Alpha Math program is a special expanded 7th grade-level program offered to select 6th grade students at the Mont Vernon Village School.

Mr. Kent provided the history of the Alpha Kids program. He said it began in the school year of 1997-1998. He said forty-seven students have graduated from the program. All the graduates continue to excel in math at the Amherst Middle School, Souhegan High School, and in private schools.

Bob highlighted why the program works:

- Only students with a high level of maturity who have

demonstrated exceptional academic success in all core subject areas are nominated.

- Outstanding support from parents/guardians.
- Class size is so small that a virtual tutorial environment exists. Each student receives a great deal of individual attention.

Mr. Kent provided the eligibility requirements of the program.

He said the program runs approximately thirty-two weeks.

Mr. Kent provided a course content list.

Mr. Kent said students are encouraged to complete all homework assignments, but doing so is not mandatory. Mr. Kent said the homework assignments for each chapter of the text are given to the students and they can also be found on the internet.

Mr. Kent highlighted several assessments given to the students.

Mr. Kent provided the grading system used. Mr. Kent provides end-of-term grades on the standard report card.

Mr. Kent offered two challenges to the Village School Staff.

1. Take 10 of the best students – 5 from Amherst, 5 from Mont Vernon, give them Mr. Kent's test and see how they compare.
2. Take 8 of the best students next year – place 4 in the differentiated math class and give the other 4 students to Mr. Kent and see how they compare, his will be better.

Leo White thanked Bob Kent for the depth of his presentation and his passion for the program.

Leo asked if any school board member had a question or comment for either Bob or Meredith.

Tim Allen said he had to leave the meeting but wanted to comment in support of the Alpha program. He said it is a great program, we should retain it, and he supports it.

Howard Brown asked Mr. Kent if only two students qualify for the Alpha program next year, would he teach just two. Mr. Kent said yes.

John said he wanted to clarify Meredith's recommendation. He asked Meredith if she was recommending replacing the Alpha Math program with the same AMS 6th grade advanced program. She said yes, this was the administration's recommendation.

Carol Yetto asked who would be teaching it and where would it be taught. Meredith said it would be taught during regular class time in a separate group within the same classroom.

John Schwope asked Beth Chestnutt, how the administration administers the advanced math program in Amherst now. Beth said they have a separate class because they have large amounts of students in the program.

Peter King said a lot would have to happen in order to launch AMS 6th grade advanced math program in September. Meredith said key players have met, they've spoken with the teachers this would affect,

and they believe the resources are in place to launch this successfully in September.

Leo asked Meredith if the 6th grade teachers are in favor of this recommendation. Meredith said yes, they were not able to be at the meeting this evening because one had a confirmed case of pneumonia and the other was thought to have it as well.

Leo White said he received 28 e-mails unanimously supporting the Alpha Program. Six e-mails were from former school board members, fourteen from program alum, seven from parent alum, five from non-residents, and one other.

Leo offered comments and questions from members of the public.

David Brooks said his son graduated from the Village School a couple of years ago and said the Alpha program is a great program, and recommends keeping it at the Village School.

Michael Jones said he moved to Mont Vernon because he felt they had the best school system in the region. He said he has had a uniformly good experience with the school system and cannot say enough about the school. He said he is not sure if everyone is aware of how wonderful Mr. Kent's program is, and the excellence his students are able to achieve in the classroom. Mr. Jones said his kids would not have gotten into the school they are in today had it not been for Mr. Kent.

Chris Jone's said Mr. Kent's classroom was his best experience in the classroom. Chris said he is going to be a Junior at Philips Exeter Academy and he still has fond memories of his classroom experience with Mr. Kent.

Jane King said she has had two children go through Mr. Kent's program. Jane said both enjoyed discussing Math, and learning Math in a not so typical classroom setting.

Donna Patten said her daughter just graduated from High School with highest honors and plans on going to Veterinary school in the fall. She said she would be heartbroken to see Mr. Kent's Alpha Math program go away. Donna said she wants other children to have the same opportunity her daughter had in Mr. Kent's class.

Paula Daniels said she feels strongly about Bob Kent's Alpha program. She wants others to experience the program as well, and does not want to see the program discontinued.

Carol Yetto's last child graduated this year. She said it was the highlight of their 6th grade school year. She said her children did not get the challenge from their other teachers they got from Bob Kent.

Vanessa Foley asked since their had been concerns with Mr. Kent's program in the past, not just this year, had the concerns been addressed previously.

Kim Tighe spoke as a parent, not as a teacher. She said one of her children tested into the program however opted not to take the Alpha Math program. She said advanced Math can also be done in the

Middle School as well.

Steve Elich said it is not life or death if you get the Alpha Math program however, if you think you can mimic the program inside the classroom it is not going to happen. He said the Alpha Program is a great program but if you think the SAU can replicate it, it's not going to happen.

Dawn Gregory said the Alpha Math program is a great program, Mr. Kent is a wonderful man, and he has provided a great contribution to the Town of Mont Vernon.

Warren Clay said his son participated in the Alpha Math program. He said his son completed the program and did very well in it. He said he hopes they keep the program.

Jack Aiken said Mr. Kent's class was very challenging for his daughter, it was a tough start, and he and his wife expressed their thoughts and concerns throughout the start of the school year but in the middle of the year, the logic turned on for his daughter and it turned out successful.

Trevor Girard said he is very concerned the program may be eliminated.

Leo White concluded by saying, we all want our children to be challenged. He said the board has a lot of work to do on this. The board will make a decision on the program at the next board meeting scheduled for July 27, 2006.

Mr. Kent said he expected to have a decision at this meeting so he would have to contact another school since he received an offer to teach the program to other school children. He will try to wait to make a decision, but if a decision is needed prior to the July 27, 2006, board meeting he will let Leo White know.

Meredith informed board members she received a quote of \$6,240 for improving the ventilation in the conference room.

**MAINTENANCE
AND CAPITAL
IMPROVEMENT
FINANCE**

1. FY06 Year End Projections - Susan provided members of the board with the FY06 Monthly Budget Report dated 5/31/06, which included the year-end projection. Susan projected a surplus in the Fund 10 account at year-end of \$132,521. Susan also projected more in anticipated revenue than originally forecasted therefore; she projects a total of \$227,000 being available in the unreserved fund balance. Susan said the Food Service program is not at where it was forecasted to be, not as many students are using it as were projected. Susan said the FY07 budgets are set and locked in place and the board should see fewer transfers next year. Susan provided board members with copies of Budget Transfer Request #'s 21, 22, 23, and 24.

A motion was made by Peter King and seconded by John Schwope to approve the transfer requests as presented by Susan Ward. All members of the board voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed.

Susan said they continue to monitor the electricity and oil accounts.

John Schwope asked Susan what the surplus was attributed to and Susan said it was due to expenditures being under in Special Education and the benefits line being under.

Howard Brown asked if the new phone system would be put in this summer. Meredith said it would be installed sometime over the summer break.

COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

- 1. Resignation – Meredith informed members of the board she received a resignation from Amy Steckel. Meredith read her resignation aloud.

PERSONNEL

A motion was made by Peter King and seconded by John Schwope to accept the resignation of Amy Steckel. All members of the board voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed.

Board members discussed the process for filling the vacancy. Meredith told members of the board, an e-mail would go out internally notifying personnel of the 3rd grade vacancy. Meredith said an advertisement would be posted in the newspapers the following week for an available teaching position K-6.

A volunteer was needed from the school board to sit on the interview committee to hire a new teacher. Leo White volunteered to be on the interview committee.

- A. June 8, 2006 – Board members did not receive a copy of the June 8, 2006, minutes in their board packets. Members requested this item be put on the next agenda for their approval.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Board members discussed options for reviewing the Alpha Math Program as well as the future math curriculum at the Village School. It was decided the board would need a subcommittee to discuss and explore options. Howard suggested three administrators and two board members comprise the subcommittee. Peter King and Leo White volunteered to be the board members that meet with the administrators.

OTHER

Peter King said he was amazed at the transition the Village School and district made in such a short time with Superintendent Howard Colter and Susan Ward as Business Administrator. He said the work

they did would have a long lasting impact on the district. Peter said he wished both of them the best in the future.

A. Mont Vernon School Board Meeting July 27, 2006 at 6 p.m.

B. Mont Vernon School Board Meeting August 24, 2006 at 6 p.m.

A. Sierra Bell Discussion

B. Decision on Alpha Math Program

Peter King moved to adjourn. Howard Brown seconded the motion. All board members voted in favor of the motion. The meeting adjourned at 8:52 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

**FUTURE AGENDA
ITEMS**

ADJOURNMENT