

MINUTES
SAU 39 SCHOOL BOARD MEETING MINUTES
September 24, 2009
Souhegan High School Annex, Room A222

Chairman Dan Foley called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Present:

ATTENDANCE

Souhegan Cooperative School Board: Steve Coughlan, Pam Coughlin, Dan Foley, Jeanne Ludt, and Mary Lou Mullens
Amherst School Board: Dwight Brew, Nancy Head, Rob Graybill, Peter Maresco, and Peg Bennett (arrived late)
Mont Vernon School Board: Kim Roberge, Jason Darula, and Bruce Schmidt
Administrative Team: Dr. Mary Jennings, Betty Shankel, Renea Sparks and Porter Dodge
Minutes Recorder: Heather Loewy Nichols

A. FY10 Enrollments

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. Jennings submitted the latest enrollment numbers to the Board and noted that on October 1st the SAU will be sending in the final enrollment numbers, which the state will then base their funding calculations on. Dr. Jennings noted that enrollment at Clark/Wilkins has declined by 121 students or 15% in five years, the middle school has declined by 12 students or 1%, Mont Vernon has increased by 2%, and Souhegan's enrollment has declined by 154 students or 15%. She stated that overall, with 2,664 students, the SAU has 10% less students than it had five years ago. Dr. Jennings stated that the question has been asked as to whether the percentage of students attending private schools has been changing and she noted that at the end of 2009 the percentage of students applying to private schools is the same as last year, and a little bit less than it has been in the past eight years. She also noted that SAU 39 students who are applying to private school are getting accepted.

In response to a concern expressed by Ms. Ludt regarding the middle school encouraging students to apply to private school, Dr. Jennings explained that the concern was brought up a couple a years ago and has been addressed. Dr. Jennings stated that the

school lets students know that guidance counselors are available for assistance with private school applications but it is not the policy to encourage private schools.

Dr. Jennings explained that the SAU is in touch weekly with the authorities from New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services as they are the point people the Superintendent's Association is recommending that the SAU refer to. She explained that the chief immunologist has been very helpful and responsive through either conference calls or private consultations. Dr. Jennings stated that they have not been asked to consider participating in any immunization programs but would do so if they were provided with vaccines and staff. She further explained that the state still has to decide where the different doses of vaccines will go. She stated that she will try to keep the Board informed and noted that she is making the buildings available for an immunization clinic but she has not obligated any staff. Dr. Jennings noted that the faculty has been asked to get up to speed on ANGEL by November 1st and that this will be helpful for students that are absent. She also noted that the districts have joined a volunteer nurse reporting program where the nurses will report to the state how many children are absent and how many are absent with flu like symptoms each day. The state will then be using the school data to see where outbreaks may be occurring.

Ms. Roberge stated that she was surprised to that there was a game going in a PE class that involved children holding hands with each other and then switching hands. She stated that she knows that coaches are getting updates about not sharing water bottles but maybe more information should be dispersed. Dr. Jennings noted that she just received an advisory today that was sent to the nurse and Athletic Directors. Ms. Ludt noted that in some hospitals people are not shaking hands but rather bumping elbows.

In response to a question from Mr. Foley, Dr. Jennings explained that every year the District's nurses received flu shots although it has not happened yet this year.

In response to a question from Mr. Graybill, Dr. Jennings stated that in order to use the school as an immunization clinic people

who can give the vaccines and refrigerated places to store the vaccines would need to be provided.

Chairman Foley called for public comment and heard none.

III. PUBLIC TIME

The Board asked that the minutes of March 26, 2009 and August 20, 2009 and the budget transfers be pulled from the Consent Agenda.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

A MOTION was made by Mr. Schmidt and SECONDED by Ms. Coughlin to approve the following Consent Agenda items:

B. Treasurer's Report

1. August 2009

C. Manifest

1. August 2009

Voting: 12 ayes; motion carried unanimously.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Brew and SECONDED by Ms. Coughlin to approve the minutes of March 26, 2009 and August 20, 2009 and Budget Transfers numbers 2010001, 2010002, and 2010003.

In response to a question from Mr. Brew, Ms. Shankel explained that transfer 2010001 is necessary because the SAU was unable to hire a mail carrier with the budgeted amount and the allotted time and due to labor laws the position could not be a contract position. Ms. Shankel also explained that she is transferring funds for benefits for the carrier position and the last minute increase in pension funds.

**In response to a question from Mr. Brew regarding the 403B match for the Superintendent's office, Ms. Shankel stated that she would confirm that the number was correct and asked the Board to approve the transfer and will bring a correction back to the Board if necessary.

In response to a question from Ms. Ludt, Dr. Jennings stated that there is no longer a substitute coordinator due to the new software.

The motion was AMENDED by Mr. Brew and Ms. Coughlin to

FINAL Minutes of September 24, 2009 SAU 39 Board Meeting

**approve only the minutes of March 26 as amended.
Voting: 11 ayes; motion carried unanimously with Ms. Roberge and Mr. Schmidt abstaining.**

A MOTION was made by Mr. Brew and SECONDED by Ms. Mullens to approve the minutes of August 28, 2009 as amended.

Voting: 7 ayes; motion carried with Mr. Graybill, Ms. Coughlin, Ms. Ludt, Ms. Roberge, Ms. Schmidt, and Ms. Bennett abstaining.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Brew and SECONDED by Ms. Coughlin to approve budget transfer numbers 2010001, 2010002, and 2010003.

Voting: 13 ayes; motion carried unanimously.

A. SAU 39 Preparation for NECAP Tests

Ms. Sparks explained that the Administration wanted to show the Board how the teachers and students are preparing for the NECAP exams. She noted that all the schools are preparing for the tests but tonight the Board will get the bulk of the information from the Middle School. Ms. Sparks explained that the NECAP replaced the NEAP in 2005 for the lower grades and as the test has evolved over the years so have the student, parent, and environment preparation. She reviewed the NECAP schedule which will run from October 1st through the 16th, including the make up days, for a specific time period each day.

Ms. Sparks stated that at Souhegan both the Math and English departments have been watching for students who are potentially at risk. She also explained that they have been able to pilot a free program called Catch Up Math so that the pilot coincides with the test preparation. She further explained that both the NECAP preparation and math program will be explained during parent night.

Ms. Sparks stated that in the elementary schools all the proctors have participated in trainings and changes have been made to allow more accommodations per student. She noted that the grades that are not testing are aware that testing is going on.

V. PRESENTATIONS

**In response to a question from Ms. Ludt, Ms. Sparks stated that she will confirm that the Souhegan students are also getting snacks.

In response to a question from Ms. Ludt, Ms. Sparks state that students in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Rhode Island are all taking the NECAPs at the same time.

In response to a question from Ms. Mullens, Ms. Sparks stated that the administration has spoken to the principals to confirm that the testing days will not be broken up as was done last year. Dr. Jennings noted that the students are spending two hours a day for six days in testing so the testing will be focused as tightly as possible.

In response to a question from Ms. Mullens, Ms. Sparks explained that the High School teachers will be targeting at risk students and the Catch Up Math program will be used by Math 3 teachers.

Mr. Dodge explained that he thinks that last year one of the biggest factors for the bad scores was environmental. He explained that grades 5, 6, and 7 will test in the mornings and the school will be giving the students a healthy breakfast and snacks. He stated that the staff has been communicating with the parents to let them know how important it is to send in only healthy snacks. He noted that on Thursday only grades 5 and 6 will be taking the writing test but the whole school will still be in test mode. He explained that previously they had a very organized approach to the testing, and this year will be even more so, as last year they slipped from this policy and experimented with some things that were a mistake. Mr. Dodge further explained that teachers are going to have students do movement activities before and after the test, testing will finish before lunch, and no homework or projects will be given out during the testing days so students can be well fed and rested. Mr. Dodge explained that active proctoring can help with the comfort level of the children which is important. He stated that he sent out a count down to NECAP to get everyone into the mode so everyone knows that this is an important test. He also noted that they have been having team town meetings and talking to the

children about how important it is to do their very best. Mr. Dodge stated that his is thinking about giving a school wide prize such as dunk the principal and noted that this test prep is not in lieu of regular curriculum but integrated into the curriculum. Mr. Dodge introduced Tiffany Maher and Pat Steenhoek. Mr. Steenhoek explained that they got together with other math teachers to pull the data together and ended up with a spreadsheet that allowed the teachers to see where the children are at before they even met them and for them to tailor their day to day instruction and prepare for the test preparation. Mr. Steenhoek explained that they realized that there were 10 kids who scored below proficient on the NECAP but only four who did so on the NWEA so they looked at the students' specific answers to the released items. He explained that this review allowed the teachers to see where the students are making their mistakes. He further explained that the teachers made a mirror test and had the kids take it and used it as a teaching tool.

Ms. Maher explained that they tried to make the mirror test look similar to the NECAP and in class they broke up into small groups and read the questions, analyzed them, and went through test taking strategies to help them learn how to use the format. They then gave the students their answers for the real test so the students were able to reflect on why they chose the incorrect answer. Mr. Steenhoek noted that even though the 5th graders were given the 4th grade NECAP, they still got the questions wrong again.

Mr. Dodge noted that Ms. Maher and Mr. Steenhoek both did a presentation regarding Performance Tracker for the other teachers.

In response to concern expressed by Mr. Maresco that all the emphasis is making students more nervous, Ms. Maher stated that she thinks that it is important to talk about the test in order to make them more comfortable.

In response to a question from Ms. Ludt, Mr. Dodge stated that other schools are absolutely doing the same sort of prep work and noted that when he goes to the workshops, they give lists of these prep items that are commonly done in higher scoring schools and the NELMS report advised more prep time. He stated that some

schools have test preparation before school, during lunch, after school and on Saturdays.

Ms. Mullens expressed a concern that the district's goal is appropriate and noted that she wants to make sure that they are using the data to make sure that every child is improving. She does not want teachers to be teaching to the test and does not want to dilute their teaching ability.

Ms. Roberge stated that she thinks it is good that they are teaching general test taking skills across the board and she thought it is spectacular that the data shows where the kids are missing skills so they are able to fill in the blanks.

Dr. Jennings explained that Performance Tracker is not just for the NECAP but it is also used for the differentiated instruction throughout the SAU. She noted that it is an instructional tool; not a test prep tool. She also noted that they are trying to concentrate on the test window for a couple of weeks, not all nine months, and they are no longer administrating a fall NWEA.

B. 2009 Science NECAP Results

Dr. Jennings reviewed the 2008-2009 NECAP results for the Board. She explained that in 2008 64% of 4th graders scored proficient and above and 2009 68% did. In 2008 44% of 8th graders scored above proficient and in 2009 49% scored above proficient. Dr. Jennings explained that their greatest weakness on the test was the inquiry questions or the open ended responses and their greatest strength was the life and physical science questions.

Dr. Jennings stated that in 2008 50% of Mont Vernon 4th graders scored proficient or higher and in 2009 75% scored proficient or higher. She noted that from one year to the next is a different cohort of students taking the test and the 2009 cohort has nearly twice as many students as the 2008 cohort. She stated that their greatest weakness was the inquiry strand.

Dr. Jennings noted that this is only the 2nd year the school has taken the Science NECAP.

Dr. Jennings stated that in 2008 31% of 11th graders scored proficient or above and in 2009 34% scored proficient or above. She stated that these scores are basically at the state level and that inquiry based questions was their greatest weakness.

Dr. Jennings explained that this summer two teachers worked on two common inquiry tasks for grades Kindergarten through 10. She explained that each grade level will be required to complete the two tasks so the teachers learn how to teach in an inquiry way and the students learn how to think as scientists.

In response to a question from Mr. Maresco, Dr. Jennings explained that inquiry based learning is taking data and explaining it.

Dr. Jennings presented an area district comparison for the 2009 grade 4 Science NECAP and explained that in 2008 the district was not among the top five districts which they compare themselves to but this year Mont Vernon is second on the list and Amherst is third on the list. She also noted that the Science test is still being tested as a test. She also presented the same comparison for grade 8 and noted that last year they were 3rd on the list and this year they are first on the list. Dr. Jennings then presented the same comparison for the 11th grade and noted that they ranked sixth in the grouping and they did not have any students who scored proficient with distinction although they did raise the proficient scores.

In response to a question from Mr. Darula, Dr. Jennings stated that the Science test is not considered as part of No Child Left Behind.

Dr. Jennings explained that the district is going to keep having curriculum meetings and reviewing the data using Performance Tracker and then they will develop actions and a response to the student data.

In response to a question from Mr. Brew, Dr. Jennings explained that the other states taking this test are getting the same results.

In response to a question from Ms. Ludt as to whether the

coordinators will be determining whether the integrated Science and Math are contributing to the gaps, Dr. Jennings explained that the teachers have to sit down and see if the courses are delivering the academic expectations.

In response to a question from Mr. Foley, Dr. Jennings stated that the school has only had the new Science curriculum for a year.

Mr. Coughlan noted, as Ms. Heimarck would point out, that they do not know anything positively until they have three years of data.

C. Policies

Ms. Coughlin stated that the Policies Committee had a meeting on Tuesday and they are all going to bring forward one policy. She noted that the Board has policy DJ – Purchasing Procedures in their packets, noting that there are three other related policies coming to the Board soon.

Mr. Brew suggested that the Board review the four policies as a group as they are interrelated.

D. Superintendents 2009-11 Goals

Dr. Jennings reviewed her proposed goals including improved communication between schools, the school community and the community at large, aligning student services and curriculum K-12, supporting transitional leaders and existing formal and informal school leaders.

She noted that her and her secretaries check the website and keep it up to date on a weekly basis and her goal is to increase the readership by 25%. She stated that she is providing news stories from each school through the Brick School News, website, or news media and she has a blog that she will be initiating tomorrow.

In response to a question from Ms. Ludt as to why improved communication with the school board was not specifically mentioned, Dr. Jennings explained that the School Board is implied as part of the school community.

In response to a question from Ms. Head as to how one insures that the content is timely and pertinent, Dr. Jennings stated that she thinks that everyone needs to get in front of issues and that knowing the temperature of a community and keeping everyone aware of it is important.

Mr. Maresco stated that he thinks that for any major changes the administration should get opinions from the Board and they can put out feelers in the community.

Dr. Jennings stated that the teachers, administrators, and Board members need to be telling each other about changes but noted that peoples' opinion differ on what is a major change.

Mr. Foley stated that the question is what constitutes a substantial change.

Ms. Roberge questioned how the Board can give a directive as to when issues should come to the Board.

Mr. Graybill noted that if one does not formalize the structure then they will not get what they want and questioned how the Board wants to formally address communication. He further noted that they have to decide if it is important enough an issue to spend the administration's time on.

Ms. Ludt stated that they should err on the side of communicating and that all the Board needs to know is what is going on in the advance.

Dr. Jennings stated that she will send something to the Board every week and if it is more important she will communicate more frequently but she does not want to send something every day because she has to balance doing the work and reporting about the work.

Dr. Jennings stated that one of her goals is to improve NECAP scores to get off School In Need of Improvement by 2011 and to decrease the number of students in Special Education or on a 504

by 5%.

A. SAU Agenda Goals

Mr. Foley explained that at the last meeting the Board went through a goal setting exercise and the end result is in the Board's packet.

Ms. Mullens stated that she would like to hear more about the transitions and curriculum changes that have been happening especially between the Eighth grade and the High School specifically regarding philosophy and expectations.

Mr. Foley questioned whether the Board wanted to add another bullet item with regard to transitions and suggested that the Board get a presentation from Souhegan as to how they ease the transition.

Mr. Coughlan suggested that both the sender and receiver should be involved in the discussion.

Ms. Sparks suggested that the Board have a discussion first so that the presenters know what the questions are before their presentations.

**Mr. Foley stated that based on everything he has heard this evening he will try to come up with a clear concise statement of what the Board wants to know.

Ms. Mullens stated that she is concerned with not just the student transition but with communication between the High School and the Middle School to share best practices. She stated that it would help if they had some shared philosophy and school culture.

B. Preparation for Public Forums

Dr. Jennings explained that the public forums are scheduled for October 1st and October 20th and noted that she would like to leave the meeting with a completed sign up sheet to see who is going to be at which meeting representing the SAU Board. She explained that the Board does not have any responsibilities at the meetings other than listening. She further explained that presentations will

**VI. DISCUSSION
ITEMS**

be given and then there will be a question and answer session.

Ms. Ludt stated that it would be best if as many people as possible attend both forums because she wants to make sure that the Board hears the questions from both meetings.

** In response to a question from Mr. Maresco, Dr. Jennings stated that she will check on whether the forums can be televised.

Ms. Mullens reminded the Board that the administration gave a presentation at the last meeting and got a vote of confidence from the Board to go ahead with the forum.

In response to a question from Mr. Schmidt, Ms. Ludt stated that they considered holding a forum in Mont Vernon but she asked Leo White if he felt strongly that it would make a big difference to have it at Souhegan and he did not.

Dr. Jennings noted that the literature also stated that the issue could be addressed at regular Board meetings during public time, but noted that the point of the forums is so people hear what other people have to say.

**A MOTION was made by Mr. Coughlan and SECONDED by Ms. Coughlin to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m.
Voting: 13 ayes; motion carried unanimously.**

**IX. REVIEW OF
MEETING/ADJOURN**