

**GILFORD SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
MONDAY MARCH 24, 2008
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The Gilford School Board held a meeting on March 24, 2008 at the Gilford Elementary School Tocci Library. Present were board members Sue Allen, Paul Blandford, Derek Tomlinson, Kurt Webber, and Margo Weeks. Administrators present were Paul DeMinico, Scott Isabelle, Jim Kemmerer, Sandy McGonagle, and Ken Wiswell.

OPENING

Election of Officers

Paul DeMinico called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and opened the floor to the election of board officers.

Margo Weeks nominated Sue Allen for the position of board chair. Paul Blandford seconded the nomination. Sue was elected board chair unanimously.

Paul Blandford nominated Margo Weeks for the position of vice-chair. Derek Tomlinson seconded the nomination. Margo was elected vice-chair unanimously.

Margo Weeks nominated Kurt Webber for the position of secretary. Derek Tomlinson seconded the nomination. Kurt was elected secretary unanimously.

School Board Chairperson Sue Allen led the Pledge of Allegiance, and confirmed posting of the meeting.

Derek Tomlinson made the motion that the board approve the minutes of the March 3, 2008 meeting. Margo Weeks seconded the motion and it was voted in the affirmative.

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Report on NECAP Tests Part 1

Paul DeMinico prefaced Sandy McGonagle and Jim Kemmerer's presentations by noting that the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) test results would be presented in two parts: the elementary and middle school tonight, and the high school on April 7.

Sandy distributed a report that she and Jim Kemmerer had developed reflecting test results from Grades 3 through 8. The report delineates school performance as against state-wide results; it gives results broken down by Teaching Year (the year that the subject matter was taught, or the year immediately previous to test administration) and Test Year. The Teaching Year results are distributed to the previous grade teachers to help guide their strategies, while the Test Year results are used by the students' current-year teachers to help determine which students or subject matters would benefit from remediation. The students are tested in reading, math, and writing.

Student test results are assembled into four levels: Level 4, Proficient with Distinction; Level 3, Proficient; Level 2, Partially Proficient; and Level 1, substantially below proficient. Sandy related that the goal is to move those students from Level 1 to Level 2, and upward from each level to the next, such that by 2014 all students would achieve Level 3 or greater. Test results at each level are displayed by a percentage of the total achieving that level, and the number of students achieving that level.

Sandy discussed several examples at different grade levels and in different fields of study, comparing the district to the state levels.

Kurt Webber observed that Gilford's number of students at Level 1 is significantly lower than the state average, except for Grade 4 reading scores. He inquired about Grade 4 scores. Sandy acknowledged that the school's goal is to move as many students as possible from Level 1 upwards. She described that Grade 4 is a small class, with a significant population of special ed students. She went on to relate that a considerable amount of time and effort is being expended on analyzing specific test results with a view to how the school can assist students.

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Jim Kemmerer pointed out that, using the graphic representations of the report, one can determine that no significant differences exist between state and local performance.

Kurt reiterated that he finds that the scores for this year are significantly lower than for the previous two years quite disturbing. Jim cautioned against inadvertently comparing different groups of students to each other.

Sandy indicated that the results are being used as another tool the teachers can use to provide specific, or grade-wide, instruction in areas determined to need further attention, as well as to students or groups of students determined to need additional instruction.

Jim related that this year marks the first time that results have been provided in such depth and specificity, with regard both to individual questions and answers, and to identifiable, particular student scores. The results can be analyzed from the perspective of an entire class down to an individual student, making them a powerful tool. For example the results can indicate whether a large group of students gave the same incorrect answer to a question, which could assist in either specific curriculum direction or in helping students to learn how to avoid “distractor” questions. He related that in an upcoming workshop, the teachers will be interpreting item analysis for the first half of the day, and interpreting student analysis for the second half of the day.

Sandy concurred, describing for the board the Item Analysis Report and the Release Items, or specific questions and responses. She described how that data is interpreted.

Margo inquired whether there is a “cutoff” where the efforts begin to focus. Jim replied that Level 1 scores prevent the school achieving Adequate Yearly Progress status. Further, the test is conducive to a growth model, such that the school can “look across the board at how we can help kids improve, where we can remediate particular skill or concept areas.” Sandy added that schools are penalized if students do not move from Level 1 to Level 2, or if students at higher levels of proficiency do not remain at those levels. Paul DeMinico concurred that, like the Danielsen model, the results are used as a growth model. “We wouldn’t want you to leave thinking that we only focus on getting kids out of lower levels.”

Sandy indicated that the school does conduct comparisons between NECAP and NWEA testing.

Kurt inquired, given current teaching loads, how much time teachers have to engage in such analysis and develop teaching strategies based on the results of such analyses. He also inquired how the level of student effort expended on the tests is evaluated.

Sandy replied that such analysis is important at any time the teachers are conducting curriculum design. As much as possible, in-service time is used in this regard; she sees teams using teacher planning time to respond to the scores. Paul DeMinico added that part of the 50 to 55 days of curriculum development days is devoted to such analysis.

Ken Wiswell replied on behalf of the high school that student effort on these tests is a concern statewide. He discussed self-reporting that was conducted at the conclusion of the tests, wherein some students replied that as the difficulty of questions increased, the level of effort decreased. His presentation at next meeting will include further results and strategies.

Derek Tomlinson voiced his disappointment that the test scores did not reveal much achievement beyond the statewide average. “I expect we are going to have above the state average with the amount of money and effort we spend on the educational process: I think we should consistently be getting better than the state average.” He indicated that throughout his tenure on the board he has heard of

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strategies and plans to rise above the average, but has yet to see encouraging data. He related that the board hears discussion about using test results while planning instruction, but conversations with teachers do not yield the impression that the test results have been used to address the needs of individual students.

Paul DeMinico concurred, noting that the school has expended significant resources, it offers experienced teachers, and represents a solid socioeconomic background. "We simply shouldn't be average. We should be a well beyond."

Paul Blandford related his continuing disappointment that an above-average expected result has not been achieved. "It goes beyond even the students: from top to bottom we've got to be taking these tests seriously, if we're going to be using these tests and be judged by them. We do not want to be average."

Margo Weeks concurred with the concerns of Paul, Derek, and Kurt.

Sandy related that her staff is working diligently to promote better test results, including serving bagels and fruit on test days, and sending letters to parents encouraging early bedtimes on nights before tests. "We talk to teachers endlessly about the importance of this particular assessment."

Paul Blandford suggested that, if all other efforts are being expended unsuccessfully, then "maybe they're just not learning what they need to learn: maybe they just don't know what they should know."

Jim observed that this year the NECAP tests are providing genuinely usable data. In previous years, the scores were used primarily to gauge one district against another, or against a statewide average. This marks the first year that individual student scores, presented in a comprehensive and comprehensible manner, have been provided. Such information makes it possible to consider each student and establish goals and work on target areas.

Derek inquired, in the spirit of Follow the Child, whether methods exist to make the results visible to each student and his/her parents. Paul DeMinico replied that Ken Wiswell's presentation next week addresses that very issue. Margo suggested including the test results in a student's transcript.

Further conversation ensued concerning student motivation.

Sandy closed the presentation by inviting board members to call with suggestions or comments.

Meadows Advisory Committee

Sue reported that the Army Corps of Engineers moved their meeting to Thursday. The Meadows Advisory Committee will meet on Wednesday to hear about the meeting with Department of Environmental Services.

CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence was received.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was offered.

OLD BUSINESS

Confirmation of Board Poll

Paul DeMinico reminded that he had previously polled the board about submitting a letter to the Commissioner of Education to waive one day of school for seniors so that the scheduled graduation date of June 14 at Meadowbrook could proceed, and that he was seeking confirmation of the consensus. Margo Weeks moved that said letter be submitted; Paul Blandford seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Paul noted that Ken Wiswell had demonstrated conclusively that in part due to block scheduling, the number of hours of instruction received by Gilford seniors was well in excess of the 990 required by the state.

Paul inquired whether the board would direct him to submit a similar letter on

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behalf of grades k-11, to avoid the last day of school falling on Monday. Kurt Webber moved that such a letter be submitted, and Margo Weeks seconded the motion. After brief discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Designate Superintendent to Suspend for More than 10 days

Paul DeMinico reminded the board that such authority had been provided to him in 2006. He sought renewal of that authority so as to have it on file. Kurt Webber so moved, Margo Weeks seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Staff Resignation/Nomination

This agenda item was moved to non public session.

Policy Review (First Reading)

Paul DeMinico referred to three policies that have already been vetted through the GEA, the Guidance Director, a subcommittee of the board, and the school nurse. The Department of Education requires that the policies be in place and titled appropriately in order to gain approval status.

Sue asked that any suggestions or concerns be directed to Paul DeMinico.

Sponsorships for Report Card 2008

Paul DeMinico reported that the cost of last year's Annual Report Card was in excess of \$5,000, with a distribution fee (Gilford Steamer insert) of \$400. This method was the determined to be the least costly for the widest distribution. Paul observed that this year's cost is yet undetermined, but is expected to be higher. He indicated that there are four or five businesses he could identify who could be approached to put their logo (and no additional verbiage) on the inside of the back cover, at a cost of \$1250-1500 each, which would offset the cost significantly. The sponsor page would include an acknowledgment along the lines of "The following companies have given their support for the publication of this document."

Derek Tomlinson made the motion that the board allow Dr. DeMinico to seek sponsors for the annual report card. Paul Blandford seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Calendar

Paul DeMinico advised of one potential calendar change: a Middle School trade of the October 10 parent conference with the November 10 workshop. It was felt that better attendance, and more meaningful conferences, would result if the date were changed to later in the year. After brief discussion, the board's consensus was to approve the change.

**NON-PUBLIC SESSION
RSA 91-A:3 II (a) (b)**

At 7:16 p.m., Margo Weeks made the motion to enter non-public session pursuant to the provisions of RSA 91-A:3 II (c). Kurt Webber seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous roll call vote.

ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully Submitted,

**Kurt Webber
School Board Secretary**