

**GILFORD SCHOOL BOARD MEETING  
MONDAY APRIL 7, 2008  
GILFORD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
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**The Gilford School Board held a regular meeting on April 7, 2008 at the Gilford Elementary School Tocci Library. Present were board members Sue Allen, Paul Blandford, Derek Tomlinson, Kurt Webber, and Margo Weeks. Representing Gilmanton were Mike Hatch and Zannah Richards. Administrators present were Paul DeMinico, Brian Ernest, Scott Isabelle, Jim Kemmerer and Ken Wiswell.**

**OPENING**

School Board Chairperson Sue Allen called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m., led the Pledge of Allegiance, and confirmed posting of the meeting.

Sue introduced Gilford Elementary School Vice-Principal Brian Ernest, and the new Gilmanton representative, Michael Hatch.

Margo Weeks made the motion that the board approve the minutes of the March 24, 2008 meeting. Kurt Webber suggested a change at the top of Page 3 from "good size beyond" to "well beyond average." Derek Tomlinson seconded the motion and it was voted in the affirmative.

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Gilford Elementary School

Brian Ernest invited questions to the written report.

Derek Tomlinson inquired about feedback from teaching staff about NECAP results. Brian replied that the teachers met in teams, discussed the released item analyses, and will be using that data when reviewing curriculum instruction and planning. He noted that there was a concern for immediacy and adequacy in planning.

Kurt Webber inquired about when teachers might have time to engage in such analysis, and particularly asked if the March 31 teaching workshop was focused towards this effort. Brian replied that much of the analysis and discussion occurs during team time, and time has been dedicated to that effort, although perhaps not on the March 31 workshop.

Paul DeMinico commented that 55 days per building are devoted to curriculum work, of which analysis and alignment are major priorities.

Derek inquired about the after school enrichment program, particularly whether those pursuits were more non-academic in nature. Brian replied that there are activity-based programs which have both academic and non-academic components.

Brian then described the summer program in some detail, highlighting that a price increase has occurred, to \$110 per week for Gilmanton and Gilford residents, and to \$130 per week for out-of-district students. The increases come from raised minimum wage rates and fuel prices. He welcomed Katie and Michael Bryant, the new coordinators. Along with the summer program, there will be Title 1 interventions as well as speech and reading recovery classes. Construction will result in some creative scheduling.

Margo Weeks moved that the board adopt the proposed summer program with the new prices for 2008. Kurt Webber seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Kurt commended Wendy Oellers for a recent newspaper article; Sue suggested that the board send her a letter of appreciation.

Gilford Middle School

Jim Kemmerer added to his written report an update on the National History Day competition at Plymouth State University, announcing that GMS took First and Second Places overall.

Kurt Webber commented that a review of the participants from the Spelling Bee,

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Math League, and National History Day revealed many of the same names, and that "it would be nice to see more names."

**Gilford High School**

Ken Wiswell first asked the board to set graduation night at June 14, 2008 so that parents can plan and book accommodations for that busy weekend. Margo Weeks moved that the board set June 14, 2008 for graduation day. Kurt Webber seconded the motion.

Derek Tomlinson inquired whether a further waiver would be necessary in view of the snow days. Paul DeMinico replied in the negative, adding that the approval from the Commissioner of Education was based not solely on the instructional time (for which GHS is well over the state standard) but more on the argument about the tradition of holding graduation at Meadowbrook. He indicated less optimism about a similar waiver to reduce the number of school days for grades k-11. The waiver has been submitted and he will advise of any developments.

Margo Weeks inquired whether the standard was hours of instructional time or days of school. Paul replied that the State rules state instructional hours, but the legislature has set number of days.

Margo's motion passed unanimously.

Ken informed the board that the National Gold Key Award was won by Senior Greg Lines. His work was on display in the lobby for some time. The award confers "elite honors of artistic accomplishment."

Ken closed his report by reminding the board of a Drug and Alcohol Forum scheduled for April 8, 2008 from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in the cafeteria; also that the National Honors Society Induction dinner will occur on April 9, 2008 at GHS cafeteria, then into the auditorium.

Zannah Richards inquired whether block scheduling has affected class enrollment, or are there enough students to take all offered classes. Ken replied affirmatively, except for a calculus class which will be offered via Virtual High School. A discussion about the number of AP classes and class size ensued.

Margo noted her concern that, despite the wide array of career choices that stem from it, AP Biology has not been offered. She inquired whether that is due to lack of qualified instructor or lack of interest. Ken replied that the school offers a Biology II honors program in its stead. He added that the school lost its only AP-qualified biology instructor and has not yet found a replacement.

Kurt inquired whether the March 31 workshop was devoted to NECAP results. Ken replied that the faculty meeting of April 2 was so devoted.

**Meadows Advisory Committee**

Sue Allen reported that the MAC met on March 26. She referred to two letters from MAC: one to Andy Howe asking him to hay the fields; the other to Dr. Kallmerten, who will be running the lacrosse program. Paul Fluet had given a presentation about a preliminary meeting that he and Tim Bartlett had on March 20 with members from the Department of Environmental Services, National Marine Fisheries Services, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who will all have input when the district files a permit for the Meadows project. Those individuals conducted an overview, provided suggestions and voiced concerns, but overall reacted extremely favorably to the presentation. They were particularly pleased that the project will create three to four additional acres of wetlands. Mr. Fluet anticipates that the application will take six weeks to prepare. Prior to the actual submission, he will come before the board and make a final presentation. The MAC will meet again on April 16. As it moves forward with the fields plan, it will begin to focus on the buildings at the Meadows. To

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respond to its request for input from the district as to its needs for the buildings, Dr. DeMinico will attend that next meeting.

Sue noted that the committee will make a presentation to the board as well as to the community. Esther Kennedy's programs that currently run at the Meadows will be part of the community presentation.

**Youth Risk Behavior Survey**

Gilford High School Nurse Meg Jenkins reviewed results of the 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. She noted that the first survey, conducted in 2005, yielded results against which GHS had no yardstick to compare. The latest results can be compared against the 2005 results, and they are "disheartening." These results indicate a troubling use of alcohol and drugs by the students, and mirror results statewide. She termed the results "a community issue: we have a captive audience to take the survey, but it's a family issue." Among the examples Meg gave were:

- Students who rode in a car in the past 30 days with someone who had been drinking increased from 26 percent in 2005 to 31 percent in 2007. State average is 24.5 percent.
- Students who had had a drink in the past 30 days increased from 51.5 percent in 2005 to 57 percent in 2007. State average is 44 percent.
- Students who have used marijuana in the past 30 days decreased from 38.8 percent in 2005 to 32.5 percent in 2007. State average is 25.1 percent.
- Students who engaged in binge drinking (defined as consuming five or more drinks in a row) increased from 35.3 percent in 2005 to 41.9 percent in 2007. State average is 29.3 percent. Meg added that five percent of GHS responders reported binge drinking more than 20 times in the past 30 days.
- Students who used cocaine in the past 30 days increased from 7.8 percent in 2005 to 11.4 percent in 2007. State average is 9.9 percent.
- Students who have ever used heroin increased from 4.9 percent in 2005 to 9.4 percent in 2007. State average is 3.9 percent.
- Students who used methamphetamine increased from 8.8 percent in 2005 to 9.4 percent in 2007. State average is 3.9 percent.

Meg stated that she lacked answers for the results. The public forum to be held on Tuesday April 9, 2008 will include a number of presenters. She noted that such forums had previously reported poor public attendance. She suggested that parents use social networking sites such as My Space to find out what their children are saying about themselves. She reported as "shocking" the kinds of things children are saying about themselves, as well as the number of references to drug and alcohol use.

Kurt Webber opined that many of the responses are students' exaggerations. "I'm particularly curious how serious they take this." Meg replied that the results would indicate that the exaggerating behavior is statewide. The survey is not a GHS product, but rather was developed by the Center for Disease Control, and was designed to produce statistically relevant responses.

Margo Weeks commented that ten percent of the student population is 50 students. "I can't help but wonder: five drinks, somebody's got to notice that or something's amiss somewhere. This can't happen this often without somebody picking up on it. I'm not saying it's the school, it's more the home than anything, or anywhere in and about town."

Meg posited that either the students are not home, the parents are not home, or neither is engaged when they are home. She closed her presentation with the announcement that the test results will be available at the town library, town hall,

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“and anywhere else you think it ought to be.”

Sue Allen commented that parents need to know where their children are and what they will be doing. She hoped students would attend the public forum.

**NECAP Report GHS**

Ken Wiswell described in detail his handout report issued to board members. He referred to the March 19 edition of Education Week which described the latest NECAP tests for Grade 11 as a “much more rigorous test” than the old NHIEAPs were. He described areas that would indicate the test is close to being considered a college readiness test as opposed to a minimum standards test. The test carries the endorsement of Achieve, Inc., a group developed by the Governors’ Association to study these tests. The article goes on to describe why in three states the scores were so low.

Ken’s report included a detailed grade level summary report, which showed all scores on one page; specific test results; a summary of all tests leading up to Grade 11, including their composition; and a synopsis of what the test examines. The report comprised reading results, desegregated results, a math overview, a writing overview, item analysis reports, and a sample student report.

Ken made some observations based on the test results:

- If the school does not meet Adequate Yearly Progress for the second time in the subgroup Special Ed Reading, the school will be once again labeled “School in Need of Improvement”
- Geometry comprises roughly 30 percent of the math test portion of the test. 29 of the students who took the test had not yet studied geometry due to a (since corrected) curriculum shift, putting those students at a severe disadvantage.
- A “40” score is considered proficient in math; the school missed that rating by one point
- A “7” score is considered proficient in writing; 41 of 67 students scoring partially proficient missed a proficient score by one point
- Girls write better than boys by one full point

Ken commented that the results are accompanied by individual student identifiers and answers, enabling the staff to analyze trends and identify target areas and students.

Ken reported that the faculty has found the test results to be extremely sobering. Their meeting on April 2 was devoted entirely to discerning the meaning of the test scores, on analyzing the scores, and discussing the data. This data, coupled with the data from the Youth Risk Survey data and the Aspirations data “send us a message of things we need to address within the culture of our school.” He was encouraged by the level of commitment pledged to addressing the issue, and feels that the scores “may have unified us toward a common purpose.”

Ken related that after the results were received, 45 students were interviewed, and were asked five questions:

- How do you feel we as a school performed on the NECAP tests? (The students were shown the chart of GHS results in comparison to state-wide results)
- Did you put forth a great deal of effort?
- Given an opportunity, would you take it more seriously?
- Which part of the test did you find most challenging?
- What could the school have done to improve the testing environment?

Students reported that the test presented questions they had never seen before, especially in math. As a result, the math department has incorporated more extended-response questions in quizzes, tests, and assignments, asking the student to explain how he arrived at his answer. The school is also teaching students to

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answer all questions to multi-question problems. It is obvious that the school needs to increase writing across the curriculum: the English department has already increased the number of writing assignments across all trimesters. All departments will establish a school-wide rubric in writing.

Each department will have meetings to discuss the data and make suggestions as to what that department can do to help raise test scores. Reading and writing are the most common elements that all departments share.

The English department is compiling grading comments to identify particular student deficiencies.

The math department has already been rearranged to include geometry earlier in the curriculum. It is re-writing competencies to align with test content. The first NECAP science test will be administered in May. The science department will now include Earth Science, which is 30 percent of the test. Results of including earth science will not be seen for two years.

In all subjects, there is a need to teach to deeper understandings of core concepts. Students reported "I'm supposed to apply things I learned in Grade 8 or 9 to a test you give me in Grade 11. I can't remember that stuff that long." Block scheduling is in part designed to allow that kind of instruction, but it will take time to affect all students.

The 45 students who were interviewed all indicated that they could have done better, but ceased trying as the problem difficulty rose. Ken indicated that proper test administration includes giving students an optimal chance to do well, "and that includes buy-in. Before we rip up our curriculum and make wholesale changes we need to see what our results look like if our students give their best effort." Students will be more exposed to the kinds of questions that will appear on the test.

The school is considering the following steps:

- A return to an off-site testing area, using a set team of proctors in an isolated environment, with an expectation of encouraging a better effort
- NECAP scores will appear on student transcripts
- Open campus privileges will be tied to NECAP scores
- A series of "perks" will be developed to reward students who show improvements in targeted areas
- A "pep" rally will be held with the testing group, emphasizing the importance of performing well on the tests
- The school will improve its efforts to reach out to parents and find more ways of sending more messages home
- Students will hear and re-hear the importance of doing their best

Ken related that all of the interviewed students were shocked at the school's results, and indicated they would have put forth more effort. "When we get a class that gives us their maximum effort, then we'll be able to uncover the gaps in our curriculum that we need to address. When we get the culture shift, we won't need carrots and sticks." He viewed the situation as an opportunity to build a school culture that places a premium on learning, and not on GPA. "The purpose behind all these tests is to inspire school improvement."

Margo inquired about the benefits of off-site testing. Ken replied that the benefits include the ability to spread the students out; to reduce distractions; and removal of students who had finished the test without disrupting those still taking the test; and better and more uniform proctor oversight.

Kurt Webber agreed with the change of focus from GPA to learning, adding that such an attitude can be self-perpetuating. "Lots of times people will do well because they feel they are a part of something bigger than them." He suggested including NECAP test scores as part of a student's GPA, and tying extracurricular activities to NECAP test scores. Kurt also observed that SAT scores could

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improve as a result of their efforts on the NECAPs.

Ken reminded that the tests are voluntary: students can opt out if they (or their parents) wish.

Sue Allen observed that including NECAP scores with GPAs would cause concern, as other schools do not similarly use NECAP scores in computing GPA. Ken related that the suggestions had not occurred to his staff, but they will be brought up and discussed. He noted that the NECAP is but one test, and having it appended to the transcript would be preferable to factoring the scores into the body of work that the GPA is supposed to represent.

Paul Blandford complimented Ken and his staff on their proactive approach, and observed that as scores improve, less and less adjusting should be necessary. "I hope everybody understands how serious it is: it goes to the level of the school and how it ranks, even though it's not so much focused on the individual but on the school."

Ken cautioned that finding the time to do the work required is difficult when there are already demands on existing planning time. He suggested that the delayed entry concept might be ripe for re-introduction. "Squeezing time out of the day for our faculty to give due diligence to the data is vital."

A brief discussion ensued about SAT scores; Ken acknowledged that the school should be performing much better, at the higher end of the state-wide averages.

Paul DeMinico reminded the board that the district lies in the middle-high end of the socioeconomic spectrum; it offers good teachers; its students are being accepted into two-and four-year universities, some of them Ivy League; the dropout rate is only one percent. Given that, the scores should be "soaring, they should be among the highest in the region. We need to change the culture, something Ken has been trying to do for four years now." Paul indicated that the issue is not strictly a high school issue, rather it is a system-wide issue.

Paul added that the culture that Ken has been trying to develop is one of understanding core concepts. "We teach differently if a student is tested two years down the road rather than six months down the road."

A short discussion ensued about the merits of the International Baccalaureate program.

Kurt Webber observed that "The bar is not set high enough at Gilford High School. In order to get the bar set higher you must get buy-in from students and parents. There has to be connection when you look at above state average risk behaviors and test scores. How much control do we have over that? We're not doing our jobs if we're not trying to set the bar higher: it's the culture."

**CORRESPONDENCE**

Sue Allen acknowledged receipt of correspondence from the State of New Hampshire Department of Transportation regarding interim inspection of municipally-owned bridges in the Town of Gilford and a handout entitled "Program of Studies 2008-2009."

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Susan Curtis read from "An Open Letter to the Gilford School Board, which thanked the board for its work, and made four suggestions aimed at improving the quality of administrators, educators, course curricula, and semester restructuring. Sue Allen thanked Mrs. Curtis for her letter and comments. She indicated that the board would take her concerns under advisement.

Mr. Curtis suggested that Gilford needs to have a qualified AP Biology instructor.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Policy Review—Second Reading ILBA, JLD,, EBBC,

Sue Allen inquired whether GEA had provided their input. Paul DeMinico replied that responses had been received from the GEA, the school nurses, guidance staff, and Sue's subcommittee. Only one change had been suggested

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**OLD BUSINESS**

and that has been implemented.

Margo Weeks moved that all three policies be adopted as revised. Kurt Webber seconded the motion.

Derek Tomlinson suggested review of the assessment portion at a later date, given the changing nature of assessments and their administration. Sue and Paul DeMinico both indicated that the policies can return to future agendas for discussion and revision.

Derek also asked for a report on guidance services. Paul agreed and indicated that a full report on the schools' guidance services would be appropriate.

Margo's motion passed unanimously.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Staff Resignation/Nomination

This agenda item was moved to non-public session.

Kindergarten/ Request for Closure (Brian Ernest)

Brian Ernest proposed that parent orientation occur June 9; preschool screenings be scheduled for June 13, and that visitations occur June 16 through June 19.

Derek Tomlinson moved that the board approve the proposed schedule. Kurt Webber seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Sue reminded board members of their committee assignments and invited those who wished to change their assignments to contact her.

Paul DeMinico brought up the issue of signators for warrants. Kurt Webber moved that he, Margo Weeks, and Derek Tomlinson be designated authorized signers, with any other board member to serve as backup as needed. Derek Tomlinson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

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

At 8:15 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**