



The Pomfret School

CHALLENGING THE MIND ★ ENCOURAGING THE HEART

Board of Directors Monthly meeting - DRAFT
Monday, February 23, 2015 @ 6 PM, The Pomfret School

Present: Tom McKone, Greg Greene, Bob Coates, Jody Eaton, Jenny Hewitt, Alice Worth – Superintendent of Schools

I. Call to Order 6:15 PM

II. Approval of Minutes: January 9, 2015 and January 19, 2015

Moved: Greg Greene

Seconded: Bob Coates

III. Correspondence

Thank you to Nancy Farwell, our Library and Media Specialist. Nancy will not be returning this Fall 2015. Good luck and many thanks.

IV. Reports

Principal – Tom McKone

Students, Programs & Academics

- **Artist-in-Residency Program.** Trish Denton, who directed *Peter Pan* for us two years ago, will have her first meeting with students this Friday, Feb. 27. She will meet with them again next Friday, March 6. The residency will run for two weeks, from March 16 through March 27. The performance will be Thursday, March 26, at 6:00.
- **Chess Club.** This starts March 9 and runs Mondays after school for five weeks—right up to the week before April vacation.
- **Heartfelt Help for the Hungry.** Led by the second graders, we collected 414 items for the Woodstock Community Food Shelf.
- **Raising Respect Awareness.** The Student Leadership Team just before vacation led some school-wide activities to raise awareness about respecting others. Jill Stevens is doing parallel activities in Guidance classes.
- **Studying Science with Chippers.** Our partnership with Chippers is turning into quite an authentic science project for our fifth graders. With Brent Lehouiller and Gabe guiding them, our

students are doing an experiment to see whether 3/16-inch tubing with gravity feed can draw as much sap as 5/16-inch tubing that is vacuum pumped. Brent and Gabe are explaining the science to students, and students are measuring the sap collected and putting it into a database that Chippers is providing. The data will be sent to a maple syrup research project. A photographer from the *Valley News* is coming to school Wednesday to take pictures for a Sunday photo feature. Not one to miss an educational opportunity, Sarah Woodhead asked the photographer if she can come early to talk with students about how she does her job; this is a follow-up to the photojournalism workshops that were part of last year's artist-in-residency program.

Professional Development

- **Math Coaching.** Classroom teachers are participating in two more rounds of spring math lesson studies led by Luke Fisher. Lesson studies focus on one grade at a time. Luke and the teachers meet at one of the elementary schools; they plan a lesson together, the home teacher teaches it while the others observe, and they then debrief. This generally takes from 8:00 to 12:30. Each teacher will participate in two lesson studies. Luke will be at TPS part of each day from March 4-13 to work with teachers individually. He will also attend the March 11 staff meeting.
- **Literacy Initiative.** We continue to use the instructional and assessment strategies that teachers were introduced to at the beginning of this year. Aimee Toth from UVEI, who has led this initiative, will be at our school on March 25 for follow-up meetings with teachers.
- **March 2 In-service Day.** The emphasis of this WCSU in-service day will be to introduce teachers to preparing for the Next Generation Science Standards (next year).
- **SBAC Preparation and Scheduling.** Raph Amadek, who is the WCSU SBAC coordinator, has kept us up-to-date on material, timelines and expectations from the Vermont Agency of Education related to preparing for an administering the new standardized tests. The Woodstock principals, having gone through the pilot test last year, have also shared their experiences and tips. We are taking steps to ensure both teachers and students are ready.
- **Teacher Evaluations.** I am doing formal evaluations of two teachers who are new to our school. One is also new to WES, so Karen White and I coordinated doing the observations and evaluations. Each formal evaluation includes three full-class observations, and pre- and post-observation meetings. New teachers need to be evaluated twice in their first year; with the observations, meetings and writing the evaluation, each evaluation takes about ten hours. For this teacher, I did the first evaluation and Karen did the second. The other new teacher works only at TPS; I completed the first evaluation in December and am close to completing the second one.
- **Walk-through Observations.** Teachers who are not going through formal evaluation write goals and get feedback from the principal. For this process, because of limited time, I have needed to focus on full-time Pomfret teachers. Teachers wrote goals at the beginning of the year; I met with each full-time teacher to discuss their goals and in some cases to help them to refine them. During walk-throughs, I focus on those teachers. I met with each full-time teacher during January or February to share observations from my walkthroughs and to discuss progress on their goals. The walk-throughs will continue into the spring; teachers will write a reflection on their goals and I will have a summative meeting with each of them.

Buildings & Grounds

- **Repairing Damage Caused by Electrical Outage and Ensuing Frozen Pipes.** The repairs are complete and the insurance claim is in progress.

- **Front Door Repairs.** In the ongoing saga of the breaking front door handles, we have switched to a different locksmith. At his recommendation, most of the time we now lock the push bars and thus reduce unnecessary wear & tear on them.
- **Protection from Freezing.** We are still looking at options for reducing the chance of having a freezing/thawing/flooding problem again.

Superintendent – Alice Worth

Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction:

The WCSU Literacy Initiative continues to have a positive influence on our teachers and students. Teachers report having better materials for instruction; more knowledge of their students through the Benchmark Assessment System; and continued growth through coaching and professional development. This month Aimee Toth, Associate Director of Elementary Education at the Upper Valley Educators Institute, will attend the WCSU Board meeting and share experiences and findings resulting from the program. The data presented will come from both teachers and students as a response to the professional work conducted this school year.

Proposed Joint District School:

This month the board members of Pomfret and Bridgewater will host two more “Fire Side Chats” designed to engage community members from both towns in conversation about the proposed Joint District School. These opportunities provide a chance to address questions directly and seek input regarding needs for inclusion in program design. Common threads have been a request for afterschool programming for children; concern regarding transportation from Bridgewater to Pomfret; questions around other options considered by the Study Committee; and financial savings and tax impact for each community. I have included a “Frequently Asked Questions” sheet that is being distributed at these events for your information.

On Thursday February 5th as part of the VSBA/VSA “joint training”, Greg Jenne, Greg Green and I will join a panel discussion entitled *Achieving Flexibility and Efficiency through Scale: Improving Educational Opportunity While Addressing Costs*. We will join Superintendents and Board members from Orange Southwest; Waterbury/Duxbury and Chittenden East.

Legislative Updates: (information compiled from VSBA Legislative Updates and AOE policy briefs)

There appears to be significant legislative support for reform in education from a finance and efficiency standpoint. In the House, Speaker Shap Smith is working on addressing the problem of education finance. He is using the proposal from the “working group” assembled in December as a starting place. Board Members who have not seen this work should take a look as there are implications for WCSU should the recommendations gain traction. In his opening remarks January 7th he spoke of quality and cost noting: “One of our fundamental obligations as a government is to provide a world class education to our children but with property taxes increasing and outpacing Vermonters ability to pay, we must look with a clear eye at the results that we are getting for the money we are spending”. On February 9th, Secretary Holcombe addressed the House and shared data which she has been presenting around the state regarding declining enrollment and its impact on cost. In his budget address, Governor Shumlin also expressed concern and called on the General Assembly to address the significant challenges facing Vermont’s public education system. He attributed some of the causes of rising costs and inequity to be with “micro” class sizes, the lowest student to staff ratio in the country, and a “complex and archaic governance structure that has superintendents and principals voting with their feet”. He referenced voters growing frustration with inaction. To help them better understand the issues, House and

Senate Education Committees are getting schooled on the myriad of governance structures that exist around the state (13).

New policy is likely to emerge this session that addresses concerns about equity, efficiency and quality. We are likely to see support for PreK-12 integrated systems with an acknowledgement that communities need flexibility and that a “one size fits all” approach is not practical, nor desirable. There has been considerable talk about “inducements for structural change” that is a combination of incentives and penalties. Small schools grants and the ADM hold harmless provision have received the most scrutiny to date. It has been noted by AOE officials that these are not achieving the original purpose and are not a responsible use of funds. I understand legislators are also examining the statutes governing tuition payment to public and independent schools at the elementary and high school levels.

Teacher – Jenny Hewitt

Jenny Hewitt’s presentation *Focus on Reading: An Update on the WCSU Literacy Initiative* was phenomenal. She explained the Benchmark Assessment System being used throughout the WCSU to evaluate vocabulary, decoding, structure and syntax, etc. Each student will be individually tested two or three times per year. The information gathered from the test is highly useful to teachers in order to help students choose independent reading books, form guided reading groups, and identifying error patterns and instructional needs. Groups are always moving depending on what the needs are.

Fifth and Sixth grade’s literacy has been a focus on reading closely in order to clearly and specifically understand the details of the text and to pair read it with another text to answer an essential question that requires analysis of the text as well as synthesizing and citing both texts.

Board Members

WPTZ will be coming to our school to interview Greg Greene, Jenny Hewitt, and Sarah Woodhead concerning the JDS proposal. The Valley News will be at TPS to take pictures of the Maple Syrup Research Project and to talk to the fifth grade about photojournalism. A lengthy discussion took place to discuss the JDS, bussing children from Bridgewater, and the Open House. We will be having an Open House at TPS on Thursday, February 26th for all parents, children, teachers, principals, and staff of BVS and TPS.

V. Action/Discussion

Motion to accept Nancy Farwell’s resignation

Moved: Greg Greene

Seconded: Bob Coates

Motion to approve Sarah Woodhead’s request for a personal day on April 10, 2015

Moved: Greg Greene

Seconded: Bob Coates

VI. Executive Session to discuss personnel

8:23-8:44 PM

VII. Adjournment at 8:45 PM

VIII. Upcoming Meetings:

Pomfret School Board Meeting: Monday, March 16, 2015 @ 6 PM @ The Pomfret School

WCSU Meeting: Monday, March 9, 2015 @ 6:00 PM @ WCSU Conference Room