

(Follow-up to the June 6, 2006, Public Forum)

REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATION
TO THE NEWINGTON SCHOOL BOARD

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December 27, 2007

Following the June 6, 2006, Public Forum concerning the future of the Newington Public School, review of written correspondence, and several hours of deliberation, the School Board voted, unanimously, "to refrain from going forward with any study focused on closing the Newington Public School."

The Board directed Administration to study:

- Tuitioning students from outside communities into Newington Public School.
- New and innovative ways to apply for grants, and corporate donations, for the Newington School District.
- Continue to scrutinize expenditures on goods and services paid by the Newington taxpayer.

During the months of August through December, 2006, the study was conducted and update reports were presented at the monthly meetings of the school board.

THE STUDY

- I -

Tuitioning Students From Outside Communities Into Newington Public School

An exploration of accepting nonresident students at the elementary school determined that school districts have the power to contract with each other for the education of their pupils.

RSA 194:14, Nonresident Pupils, reads as follows: "a district may determine upon what terms scholars from other districts may be admitted to its school . . ."

RSA 193:4, RSA 194:22 (High School), and RSA 194:2, give school districts the general power to enter into contracts.

Based on the above statutes, the local school board has the authority to allow enrollments of nonresident students and to enter into contracts with other districts, and with parents, for education of nonresident students.

If the board votes to accept nonresident students, then it should adopt a nonresident student policy.

On the question regarding how to calculate tuition, the board can, if it chooses, use the state formula for calculating tuition. However, the board is not required to use the state formula.

If the board is going to be contracting with other districts, or with parents, for the education of nonresident students, the board can establish whatever tuition rate it wants. The rate can be above or below the state rate / district per pupil cost.

Recommendations

1. The board should decide if it wants to move forward with regard to accepting

nonresident students.

2. If the board decides to move forward, the first action would be to develop a policy for accepting nonresident students that would include clear procedures and safeguards. The policy should include a number of requirements, such as: there is space to accommodate additional students; that the children be in good standing at their schools of residence; that they agree to obey all school rules and can be discharged, immediately, if they do not; that allowing them to attend is not an acknowledgement that they are residents; that the permission to attend public school, in the District, covers only the elementary school; that enrollment is conditioned upon the availability of an appropriate program in the school for that child; that the parent or sending district sign an agreement to pay the tuition and that failure to pay, in accordance with the terms of the contract, means that the child will be excluded from school immediately.
3. Once a policy is developed and accepted, a small committee, that includes community members, should be formed to determine an acceptable tuition rate.

- I I -

New and Innovative Ways to Apply for Grants and Corporate Donations

Several factors make this a particularly good time to attract grant money and sponsorships.

The Newington Public School became a Follow the Child school in the summer of 2006. Follow the Child is a New Hampshire Department of Education initiative that encourages a personalized education for each student. Newington has been on the path of personalized education for the past three years. The initiative is a good fit for Newington philosophically, and it comes with state money. All Follow the Child professional development initiatives will be supported with state aid. Currently, there are 17 SAUs, state-wide, participating in this initiative.

Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP): For the last five years, Newington has been eligible for a rural federal grant for innovative programs. In each of those years, the school sought out and qualified for the grant money. The annual benefit of this grant has ranged from \$12,000 to \$14,000. The school has received the grant in the amount of \$15,175 for this school year. As long as we continue to maintain and expand innovative programs (technology based) and the federal dollars are allocated, we will continue to stay on the cutting edge of technology programming for students.

In addition, this year:

- Principal Rist applied for a Best Buy TEACH grant in the amount of \$5,000 for the purpose of videoconferencing.
- Principal Rist, teacher Beth Brown, and part-time technology educator, Sue Girardin applied for a N. H. technology mini-grant in the amount of \$5,000 for a Reading is Cool pod casting center.
- The Newington Wal-Mart, annually supports the school with a \$1,000 donation of money and school supplies.

- For the past two years, the Smokey Bones restaurant in Newington has sponsored a fundraiser for the school's enrichment program. Last year the school received \$1,000. This year's amount, as of this writing, has not been announced.
- Curriculum Coordinator, Heather Driscoll, consults with Principal Rist on new state and federal grant opportunities for which the Newington Public School would qualify.
- Newington School Supporters, a parent group, annually sponsors family oriented events and fundraisers to enhance programs at the school. This year, money was earmarked for a two week Artist-in-Residence program. In addition, the School Supporters provided the resources financially and physically to create a new library space within the school.

Recommendations

To continue to explore any and all appropriate grant and corporation donation opportunities.

- III -

To Continue to Thoroughly Scrutinize Expenditures on Goods and Services Paid by The Newington Taxpayer.

Zero based budgeting has been a long standing practice in Newington. Many cost reductions have been proposed for the 2007 – 2008 budget. The following represent the most significant areas of reduction:

1. Maintenance – There will be no warrant articles in this year's budget for maintenance projects. This is possible because, over the last few years, a comprehensive facility maintenance study was done and areas in need of improvement were identified. In the last five years we have:
 - Replaced the septic system
 - Replaced the flooring in the hallways
 - Renovated the kitchen to bring it up to code
 - Painted the gymnasium, and replaced the basketball backboards
 - Improved drainage around the school
 - Renovated and upgraded the bathrooms
 - Reallocated storage spaces to increase the square footage of the library
 - Installed signage within the building as required by the Americans With Disabilities Act
 - Replaced worn-out classroom carpets with tile

The building is now up-to-code in all areas and all large maintenance projects have been completed.
2. Staffing – A thorough analysis of personnel was conducted and recommendations for the 2007 – 2008 budget, that will reduce costs in this area, have been made. The school board will review the recommendations at its January budget meeting.
3. Health Care – The board has negotiated a teacher contract that will enable it to competitively bid health insurance, which has the potential for reducing costs in this area.
4. Special Education – Our Director of Pupil Services, Mary Lyons, has reworked the special education services agreement with Portsmouth High School which will reduce the cost of related

special education services. In addition, classroom configurations and the restructuring of special education services at the Newington Public School have helped to eliminate the need for costly out-of-district placements.

Recommendations

To continue the practice of zero-based budgeting and scrutinizing school budget expenditures.

- IV -

Community Outreach

Another important outcome of the June 6, 2006, public forum was the understanding of the importance for the community to be informed about the current programs and services at Newington Public School. Principal Rist, along with the Superintendent of Schools took several steps to increase the involvement of the community with the Newington Public School.

- With the support of the Newington School Supporters, and a generous donation by Brian Haberstroh, a new school sign was installed that has been used to promote school events to the general public.
- Principal Rist has developed a brochure to be distributed to the entire community and given to all real estate companies, which highlights the programs, services, and accomplishments of the Newington Public School.
- Letters were sent to parents of students who attend private schools inviting them to talk with the Superintendent and Principal about their choice. Valuable input was received.
- Members of the community were invited to take part in the Annual Holiday Luncheon at the school. This year's event also offered a dessert auction, with the proceeds to benefit the Friends of the Langdon Library. Over 150 people attended and \$350 was raised.
- Plans for an Alumni Luncheon are under way for late winter.
- The following initiatives are being studied to maintain enrollment and address family and community needs:
 - Establishment of an After School Enrichment Program (user fee)
 - Optional Extended Day Kindergarten (user fee)
 - Technology Education Program for community members (user fee)
 - Yearly reconfiguring of classes based on enrollment, student needs, and staffing

Recommendations

The Administration will continue to promote community involvement in the elementary school and will communicate on a regular basis, about the programs and accomplishments of the students.

Conclusion

The future of Newington Public School will include a continued monitoring of funding options, school programs that meet the needs of the individual learners, and a commitment to community outreach.