

Peacham School Board Grades 7/8 Planning Meeting
May 5, 2008
Peacham Elementary School

Present: School Board members Jo Anne Post and Jean Dedam, Principal Wendy Olcott, Community members Neal Gombas, Chris Hunt, Sherry Ward, Joe Oddo, Barbara Gray, Dean Schoolcraft, Diana Senturia, Cathy Browne, Karen Joyce, Judy Chypre, Becky Jensen, Dave Magnus, Don Davis, Alice Ruffner, Jenny MacKenzie, Jean Clark

1. Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m.
2. Review of Expansion Report: Jean Dedam, member of the Expansion Committee, reviewed the report prepared during the committee work in 2007.
3. Brainstorm ideas/wishes: Participants made suggestions for a possible 7th/8th grade program, including strong academics in literacy, math, science, technology and foreign language(s); increased use of personal learning plans; strong connection with the community through gardens and other activities; understanding and implementation of Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences approach to education; vertical teaming with receiving high schools to insure alignment of curriculum with high school requirements; an advisory program possibly including community mentors; on-site sports programs and/or transportation to neighboring schools for sports; leadership opportunities; opportunities in music and performing/visual arts; co-curricular programs and clubs; use of local resources for outdoor and environmental education; and the importance of having class sizes greater than five or six students per grade.

Participants emphasized the importance (and challenge) of finding a teacher with strong qualifications in all subject areas, assuming that fiscal constraints and small class size would make it impossible to hire two teachers.

The program should be based on a vision, and play to the strengths inherent in small size and Peacham's environmental, historical and architectural assets.

4. Concerns: Concerns expressed included the loss of choice for 7th/8th grades; the use of a single teacher rather than having several teachers for different subject areas; the possibility that students would be "guinea pigs" during the start-up of the program until problems could be ironed out; low enrollment numbers that might make the program unsustainable; unpredictable impact on the demographics of the community; the inability of a small program to provide a wide and varied social network.

5. Committee formation and charge: A committee will be formed with members representing a range of interests, experience and expertise. Five potential

committee members have been contacted: Joe Oddo, parent of a Peacham Elementary School student; Jenny MacKenzie, teacher at St. Johnsbury Academy; Jean Dedam, School Board member; Wendy Olcott, Principal; and Paula Guion, educator and School Board member from Monroe, NH. An additional one-two members could be added, and the committee finalized at the regular Board meeting on May 12. An effort is being made to identify members who are not committed to a particular outcome, and all five mentioned above so indicated. The committee's charge is to study the vision, curriculum, finances, staffing, logistics and social/emotional needs of middle school students in order to formulate a program to be considered by the community at a special or regular Town Meeting. A meeting date will be set as soon as possible.

Respectfully submitted, Jo Anne Post