

Approved

Peacham School Board Grades 7/8 Planning Meeting
July 1, 2008, 3:30 p.m.
Peacham Elementary School

Present: Jean Dedam, Martha Tucker, Paula Guion, Wendy Olcott, Judy Chypre,
Jo Anne Post

1. Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 3:45 p.m.
2. Approval of minutes: The minutes of June 12, 2008 were approved as written.
3. General discussion: Jean opened the discussion of how to gather and evaluate information about other middle school programs. Superintendent Martha Tucker made the following points:

- ▶ There are different philosophies for educating the middle grades, notably the *junior high model*, which views middle school as a preparation for high school; the *middle school model*, which views students in that group as their own special age with their own needs and requirements; and various *independent school models*.
- ▶ Some parents are looking for a rigorous and personalized style, while others prefer a thematic, integrated approach. What is the right fit for the Peacham community?
- ▶ Possibilities include a classical education, global citizens, service learning, high school preparation and environmental studies, among others.
- ▶ Standards and content are required in every scenario; what differs is the “packaging,” or style of delivery.
- ▶ Every teacher needs to know how to address a broad range of students, including high achievers. More professional development is needed in the area of differentiated instruction.

4. Conclusions: There was consensus on the following points:

- ▶ The first questions we need to ask other schools are the what and why of their middle school programs: “What do you believe? What is your (middle) school about? Why do you prefer this approach/ philosophy?” The questions developed at the June 12 meeting are follow-up (or “how”) questions, describing structural pieces that can be tailored to Peacham.
- ▶ Questions should be added concerning how other schools address the needs of gifted and talented students; what methods they use to evaluate the effectiveness of their middle school programs; and whether their philosophy or approach for middle school differs from their elementary program.

- ▶ We should try to identify schools that have done or are doing research on grades 7/8 and piggy-back on their work if possible, as a savings of time and energy.
- ▶ Parent involvement in this process is essential.
- ▶ The Board and community as a whole will need to define its vision and goals for education (strategic plan) in order to adopt a middle school plan consistent with Peacham's values.

5. Next steps:

- ▶ Jean and Martha Tucker will arrange a meeting with Dave Cobb, principal of Lyndon Town School, which has been working for some time to revamp its middle school program.
- ▶ Wendy Olcott will draft a school profile for Peacham Elementary School, containing basic information on enrollment, class configuration, staffing etc.
- ▶ Martha will query other superintendents to identify schools that may have recently done research on or made changes in their middle school programs.
- ▶ The committee as a whole will define the process and timeline for completing its study. Is it feasible to complete by this fall? If not, what information can we provide the community at that time?
- ▶ Jo Anne will reconfigure the list of questions developed at the June 12 meeting.

6. Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jo Anne Post

Next meeting: July 28 at 3:30 p.m.