

Unapproved

Peacham School Board Grades 7/8 Planning Meeting
June 12, 2008, 3 p.m.
Peacham Elementary School

Present: Jean Dedam, Neal Gombas, Wendy Olcott, Paula Guion, Jo Anne Post, Jenny MacKenzie, Angel Emerson

1. Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 3:10 p.m.
2. Approval of minutes: The minutes from June 2, 2008 were approved as written.
3. Organization of tasks: The committee discussed several avenues for gathering information on middle school programs. These include interviews with principals, site visits to schools and review of relevant literature.

Review of literature: Jean will work out a communications procedure with Shelley Green and graduate assistant Jennifer Duguay to assess and share relevant literature with committee members.

Interviews/site visits. The group developed a preliminary list of questions to ask other schools covering general structure and configuration, curriculum, extracurricular activities and social/emotional needs.

General questions:

- ▶ How is your middle school program structured?
- ▶ How many 7/8 students do you have?
- ▶ How many 7/8 grade-only and how many whole school shared staff do you employ?
- ▶ What specific programs do you offer grades 7/8?

Curriculum:

- ▶ What specific curriculum do you use?
- ▶ Do you offer traditional classes using textbooks or an integrated or project-based curriculum?
- ▶ What about differentiated instruction?
- ▶ What allied arts programs do you offer and how?
- ▶ What math curriculum do you use and why?
- ▶ Are students able to complete Algebra 1 in 7th or 8th grade?
- ▶ What do you offer for art, music, foreign language and drama?

Extracurricular activities:

- ▶ What kind of sports program do you offer? What does your program require for equipment and space?

- ▶ How many students do you feel you need to have a sports program for each of the sports you offer?
- ▶ Do you have a paid or volunteer coaching staff? Criteria for your coaches?
- ▶ What clubs do you offer after school?
- ▶ Do you offer any music outside the classroom?

Social/emotional needs:

- ▶ Is the philosophy for middle school different from that for elementary?
- ▶ What kind of guidance program do you offer? Who provides it—counselor, physical education teacher, school nurse or outside consultant?

Some general observations on curriculum and sports program:

Jenny noted that a 7/8 program could improve the 5/6 program, as students have rapid intellectual development starting around age 10. Summarizing comments from Kathy Renfrew's middle school listserve respondents, Jean said that middle school must not be treated as an extension of elementary school but as a separate program geared for older students.

Jenny volunteered to contact area high schools in order to determine their expectations for incoming students and learn how they assess and place new students.

Concerning the sports program, committee members noted that it could be more inclusive in a small school because there are fewer children; that sports do not necessarily have to be competitive but could be snow shoeing or X-C skiing; that Peacham teams might be formed with both Stevens School and Peacham Elementary students; and that coaches could be volunteers. Jenny said that the Academy will offer off-season use of its equipment and facilities to area middle school students in order to encourage skill development before students arrive at the Academy.

The committee added several schools (Glover, East Haven, Newark) to its list of possible schools to interview in order to talk to other small or very small middle schools.

Miscellaneous:

The financial impact of a possible middle school program will be studied after the components of the program are identified (curriculum, extracurricular and transportation).

Angel Emerson, parent at Peacham Elementary School, has agreed to serve on the committee.

The committee will develop a fact sheet on Peacham Elementary School so that all committee members have the same information (projected enrollment, configuration etc.) when interviewing personnel from other schools.

Martha Tucker, incoming superintendent, will be informed of upcoming meetings and invited to attend as she is able. Her background in curriculum development will be helpful to the committee's work.

4. Next meeting: The next meeting will be Tuesday, July 1 at 3:30 p.m. Agenda to include reviewing the list of questions, deciding on a list of schools to contact and deciding who is going to call which school.

5. Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jo Anne Post