

FINAL

RICHMOND SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, January 9, 2024 - 6:00 PM

PRESENT: Beth Choquette, Superintendent/Principal; Ina Wilhelm, Chair; Karen Youdelman; Nate Steele; Tom Forstner; Mary Shook, SPED Dir.; Frank Maher; Cristina Lenfest, School Nurse; Natalie Gingras, Sec. to Princ.; Michelle Smith

REVIEW AND APPROVE THE MINUTES OF DEC. 12, 2023: Ina moved to approve the minutes as amended. She was seconded by Karen and the motion passed with unanimous consent.

CORRESPONDENCE: None

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT: Beth reminded the Committee. that the school's 8th grade has been chosen for the Nation's Report Card. A team will come and administer the tests on February 2, 2024.

The Richmond Educational Enrichment Fund (REEF) and the Berkshire Taconic Fund: The school has obtained a total of nine grants, some of which the staff sought, and some through other organizations wanting to work in Richmond.

1. **\$1,000 to - The Tamarack Hollow Nature and Cultural Center.** Drama and dance program for Pre-K through 6th grade.
2. **\$400 - Mass MOCA Field Trip for grades 1 and 2.**
3. **\$1,000 - Berkshire Pulse -** A creative arts program for grades 1 through 6.
4. **\$500 to - Berkshire Horseworks -** Equine-assisted learning and team-building for grade 3.
5. **\$1,000 to - Berkshire Art Center -** After-school program for grades K-5.
6. **\$1,000 to - The Berkshire Music School -** A program entitled, "Willy was Different" - a musical enrichment program for K - 5.
7. **\$300 to Richmond for a Field Trip to the Eric Carle Museum**
8. **\$1,000 for Ronna Zigmand to update the Library.** Revitalizing Excellence: a Culturally Diverse Journey
9. **\$1,000 to Zachary Houle for Flexible Learning Options.**

Joint Chronic Absenteeism Letter from Commissioner Riley. The State has determined that it will make chronic absenteeism a top priority. There is a public discussion currently underway regarding whether or not chronic absenteeism should be weighed more for MCAS, rather than academic scores. Richmond has been identified as having chronic absenteeism, which is defined as having absences on 10% or more days out of the school year. In School Year 2019, (pre-pandemic) Richmond's percentage was 10.3%. In 2022 it rose to 16.5% and in 2023 we were only able to reduce that to 13%. The school is identified as having chronic absenteeism if the percentage of absences is greater than it was pre-pandemic and if the school was unable to reduce absenteeism

by 50% in 2023. All school superintendents are being asked to sign Commissioner Riley's letter.

A discussion ensued as to whether it has been made mandatory for all superintendents to sign the letter and disseminate it to the families. Discussion continued as to how COVID and those families who take their children out of school during the year to go on family vacations affected absences. Beth might notify people of the situation in her own way by writing an explanation of the letter from the State and sending both out together.

COMMITTEES: Beautification Cte. - Nature Trails, Playground, Fields. Beth asked Nate if he would become a member of that Committee - agreed to do that.
Vision/Mission Committee - Ina and Kimmie Leeco will undertake that committee.

POLICIES - First Reading: IA - Richmond does not have a policy concerning an overview of what the institution's goals are.

IJK - Richmond needs to adopt a policy for supplementary materials selection and adoption. Beth provided a framework that details seven forms of bias in instructional materials. This is being used currently to ensure those biases are not in our materials and can also be a resource for students to use when looking at their classroom library to determine if any of those biases are there.

The Middle School ELA teacher has devised a system for the classroom library and supplemental materials. Books with stickers on them may not be used by 6th graders; 7th graders need the teacher's approval and both 7th and 8th graders' parents are given a "heads-up." A separate collection of books is kept behind the teacher's desk. Students' use of those books require parental permission.

Karen asked that a minor change to the wording of Policy IJK be made to make the Policy stronger.

IHAM - Health Education. Beth wants to update this policy to address the new standards. Beth discussed the new standards with reference to the way Richmond conducts teaching them and how health education will be taught as a separate discipline. She wanted to keep the methodology flexible and perhaps obtain a grant to hire an expert on addiction

IJ - Instructional Materials. No need for change

IJA - Concerns regarding how to deal with what is taught. This includes religion, ideology, profanity and obscenity. Beth will work on creating criteria for these. She will also look at a Disposition of Problem procedure. Beth would like to have everyone use the chain of command to register complaints and she will work that into the criteria.

IJL - Library Material Selection and Adoption. Beth wants to add a paragraph taken from Mt. Greylock's policy concerning a "freedom to read" statement in the Library's Bill

of Rights and a reconsideration of library media materials. Beth will work with Ronna to include those links into Richmond's policy.

IJND - Access to Digital Resources. Beth read the new update which includes a sentence about budgetary support of the School Committee for timely updates to technology as necessary.

IJNDB - Change name to: "Use of Technology and Instruction." Keep the policy as written.

IJNDC - Internet: Richmond's policy needs to be updated. Accessible use of digital resources and a requirement for staff to sign off on usage and liability for damage.

New Policies from the State: Free and reduced prices for services and Universal Free School Meals has been voted in.

[Beth lost network connection]

Submitted by Phyllis LeBeau