

FINAL

RICHMOND SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING Tuesday, September 12, 2023 - 6:00 PM - Via Zoom

PRESENT: Beth Choquette, Superintendent/Principal; Ina Wilhelm, Chair; Karen Youdelman; Kimmie Leeco; Nathan Steele; Ann Larkin; Mary Shook, SPED; Catherine Perry; Michelle Smith

Ina called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

Public Comment: None

Review of the Minutes of August 15, 2023: Ina moved to approve the minutes as amended. Nate seconded the motion, which was approved by a unanimous vote.

Correspondence: None

Ina introduced Ann Larkin who was sitting in on the meeting via Zoom and provided some background information on her credentials.

Principal's Report: Beth noted that she would report on her combined goals of Principal/Superintendent together.
Beth read the details into the minutes (please see attached).

The School Improvement Goal is the same for both her Principal's and Superintendent's goals. The goal is centered around Standard II-Management and Operations, with a focus on Indicators A: Environment and C: Scheduling and Management of Systems.

Nathan asked what resources Beth had to draw on to achieve her goals. Beth noted that she had no problem reaching out to colleagues who are Superintendents, as well as asking Peter Dillon for help when needed. She is currently meeting with Sharon Harrison, Business Manager for Richmond School, on a weekly basis and has met with Rebecca, the Hancock Superintendent, earlier today.

Student Learning: Student Learning Goal addresses standards I (Instruction), II (Management and Operations), and IV(Professional Culture). Beth read out the details of the goals, which ties into a lot of the Professional Development work done last year on the Universal Design for Learning that is continuing this year. That is expected to build a robust system of support for students and ensure that teachers look to different types of instruction for the variety of learners they have in their classrooms. (please see attached)

Beth announced that work has begun on Restorative Practices. Consultants are working with the school on Professional Development this year, looking at alternative ways for discipline, which is what Restorative Practices is all about. Previously, students were just punished but there was no requirement for them to take ownership of their actions and work together with the other party on how to recreate a trusting relationship.

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Training in that will be done this year. Electives, enrichments and interventions using WIN(What I Need) block have been included for the Elementary and Middle Schools and an extra recess before school and a little extra time for recess at lunch have been instituted. Beth said she encourages the teachers to get students up and moving so that they can come back ready to learn.

Ann asked Beth to explain how she addresses the needs of students at different grade levels from their classmates. Beth is a huge advocate for inclusive practices, regardless of where a student may be at the moment. At times, students do need targeted academic work in specific areas. Research has shown that exposure to the grade level core curriculum is very important. Universal Design for Learning is specifically about inclusive practices. Beth wants to see teachers presenting the material for students at all levels in a way that meets their needs. For example, one SPED student does better listening to a story, does that student have access to a tape of the reading? Do students have access to seeing the story printed on a screen with the words highlighted as they are spoken; do they have access to larger print or fewer images on the paper? That's what the Universal Design for Learning is all about. Last year we did a book study. This year consultants from the Katie Novak organization will come in to work with the teachers.

Classroom teachers will work in consultation with other service providers and, new this year, WIN (What I Need) block has been implemented. Beth was able to design a schedule so that classrooms have two or three or even four adults present to break into small groups based on what they need. For those students who are above grade level in their learning, they may need some extra enrichment.

Ina noted that she was aware that Mary Shook, SPED Director, had created an accommodation for every SPED student and distributed them to the specialists. Mary said everyone in the building has a copy of those, just so they can be aware of what the special needs are and who the specialists are that address those needs.

Beth explained her philosophy regarding a trusting, cooperative environment school-wide that eliminates the teachers' anxiety of having the principal or other specialists in their classrooms and the work she did towards that end.

Principal's Report: For her Professional Practice Goal as Principal, Beth selected Standard II-Management and Operations, with a particular focus on She read the details of that goal into the minutes (Please see attached). Beth is currently mentoring a staff teacher at Richmond towards becoming a Principal and a current Berkshire Hills Principal.

Student Learning: (See attached) Beth will focus on Standard I-Instructional Leadership, with a particular focus on Indicator E-Data-Informed Decision Making. This goal speaks to the importance of early education and early intervention. She will work on Reading and Math, with the intention of getting at least 80% of students up to grade level as measured by the AimswebPlus Benchmark Assessment.

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School Improvement Goal - the same as explained earlier as part of her Superintendent's goals.

The consensus of the Committee was that Beth's goals were exceptionally well done. Kimmie asked the School Committee if they could add to the agenda updates from Beth on the achievement status of her goals at their monthly meeting so that the Committee can have a clear sense of how things are moving forward. Ina agreed that would be helpful, especially with filling out the Assessment for the Principal/Superintendent.

Handbook: Beth highlighted changes made to the handbook. Beth made note that Pre-K will be free to Richmond residents. A new recess program that increases play time was added. A discussion ensued concerning the new uses of the Library. Changes under Core Curriculum is only a listing of the programs. CAP: Anna O'Donnell is in charge of the CAP (now called STEAM) program for some of the grades in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math.

Dress Code: Last year a committee of teachers, parents and students cooperated in creating a dress code. In addition, Beth reviewed model policies across the country- including an in-depth discussion of the controversies around change in dress code and how difficult it can be to accept changes in dress codes. Beth considered social justice and marginalized populations and the laws around freedom of expression in creating the wording of the code. Beth read the details of the Goal. (Please see attached)

On the subject of hats, specifically, Beth noted the change to the policy last year. For example: if a hood would impede safety by interfering with peripheral vision, the student would be given that explanation as to why he was asked to remove it. Beth noted the role of parents' responsibility in adhering to a dress code.

Cell Phones: Beth received a grant and is looking into various types of holding systems for cell phones.

Apps & Websites: The D.A.'s office met with the School to provide some guidelines and rules around student privacy. At Parents Night child privacy issues in educational websites and apps will be explored. In regards to websites and apps, teachers will have to check with Ronna if the app or website is approved for use in the school.

Artificial Intelligence: In response to a question concerning the future of Artificial Intelligence, Beth noted that Ronna and the Berk 12 are working on a way to introduce it and how to track students' use of it. She outlined how it works and how it can be useful for students' getting started writing.

Custodial Update: There is still no Night Custodian and Berkshire Family Cleaning charges \$34-\$35 per hour. Unlike other companies she talked to, they will work with the school's schedule. Hiring that company means we have no insurance payments, but it is expensive. Beth said she will continue to try to hire a custodian.

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Ina reported that the Richmond Record avoided having to close down by having volunteers submit stories about the school. This will provide an excellent opportunity for the Richmond Record to tell the community all the different things being done with the money in its budget. Beth has asked teachers for monthly notices of special accomplishments of their classrooms for publication.

Superintendent's Report: Beth reported that the school will be returning \$92,000 to the Town mostly from students who did not attend the High School they had intended to and anticipated Special Ed expenses that were not incurred.

Ways to Decrease the Budget - Beth said some payments will be moved for Professional Development and Text Books to Title 1, 2, and 4 grants.

Restorative Practices will all be charged under the 1, 2, and 4 grants. Title 1 = \$44,000., (Curriculum, Family Engagement)
Title 2 = \$2,200 (Develop Teachers; Mentoring; Access for low income families and stipends for teachers working on committees)
and Title 4 = \$10,000 (Well rounded educational opportunities; instruction materials for after-school programs)

All of which allows the school to reduce the budget by those amounts.

Special Education Director's Report: Mary noted that both grants have been submitted and thanked Julia Foodman from the State and Sharon Harrison for their help with that.

Mary will be meeting with Rebecca the SPED Director/Superintendent for Hancock. In October, they will be putting together a meeting with parents to talk about IEPs and try to answer parents' questions. Mary anticipates bringing in a speaker.

Mary reported that she currently has 25 SPED students. She spoke to the help she has received from Beth and the improvement she sees in students.

Financial Report: Software support - over by a couple of hundred dollars. Summer Custodians - over because Natalie and Ryleigh were hired and did a lot of work to get the building ready to open.

Maintenance of Grounds: All of the fencing has been fixed and the Town cannot redo the parking lot until the drainage problems are corrected.

Maintenance of Building - \$25,000. Unexpected expense paid to replace the fire panel.

Beth will ask Sharon if her entire salary could be moved into one specific line rather than pieced together from several lines.

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There being no further business before the Committee, Ina moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:18 PM. She was seconded by Kimmie, and the motion was carried by unanimous vote.

Submitted by: [Phyllis Lebeau](#)