

THETFORD TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT
Tuesday, December 19, 2017
Thetford Elementary School Art Room

APPROVED MINUTES

Shannon Darrah convened the meeting at 5:03 p.m. The following were present: Julie Acker, Shannon Darrah, Kristen Downey, Scott MacPhee (arrived 6:28 p.m.), School Board; Kevin Petrone, TES Principal; Keith Thompson, OESU Assistant Superintendent; Melanie Elliott, OESU business office/human resources

PUBLIC PRESENT: Laura Sharpless, Abby Harrington, Mary Wunderlich, Bette Nunez, Robert Bartlett, Leif LaWhite, Donna Steinberg

TA Administration and Resource Committee: Bill Bugg, Cameron Cudhea, Linda Lantiegne-Magoon, Therese Linehan, Suzanne Liepmann

AGENDA REVIEW: Agenda approved.

SBAC RESULTS AND DISCUSSION – Laura Sharpless and Abby Harrington: Sharpless and Harrington have been taking a semester course at Vermont Mathematics Initiative. For their semester project, they analyzed standardized testing data. They looked at Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium (SBAC) data in grades 3 – 6. 25% of students in grades 3 – 6 who took the SBAC receive free or reduced priced lunch (FRL). The student to teacher ratio is 9.14:1, according to recently published data from the VT AOE. This includes all professional staff, not just classroom teachers. The average class size is 17. The SBAC is used by TES as an end of year summary. The students are tested in English, language arts, and math. It is a computer adaptive test: The system adjusts the level of difficulty for the next question based on the previous answer. This means students get different questions. Students take the test on laptops or iPads. There is a large variety of question types and answer responses. Students type in responses like essays or short sentences. The data was approached from many angles: How have TES students performed on the test over the past three years (this is how long test has been offered); From the most recent year, how does TES performance compare to performance in other schools (schools with comparable FRL, OESU schools, neighboring schools)?; What are the strengths and weaknesses that the SBAC results reveal (across math and English/language arts (ELA); girls vs. boys; comparing students who qualify for FRL and those who don't? Are there correlations between proficiency and other variables (teacher: student ratio, % of students on FRL).

Schoolwide proficiency in ELA and math has not changed in a statistically significant way over the last three years. In ELA TES was compared with nine other Vermont schools with a similar percent of students receiving FRL in the 2017 testing year. It was advised that the FRL factor is the most telling way to find comparable schools. One of the 9 schools, Ferrisburg, scored significantly higher in ELA. TES was also compared against all schools in the state.

Conclusion: For 2017, there is not a statistically significant difference between the performance of TES and Vermont students statewide, but TES may want to look at what Ferrisburg is doing in ELA. For Math, conclusion: There was no outlier among the 9 schools. TES' performance is in line with other schools with a similar FRL rate and statewide. TES was compared against OESU schools that have elementary schools (Newbury, Bradford, Waits River). TES's percent proficiency in both ELA and Math are higher than these three schools, but the only ones that TES scored statistically significantly higher than were Waits River in ELA and Newbury in ELA and math. Newbury has a higher FRL rate than TES. It is interesting to note that Bradford has a statistically significantly higher FRL, but they are not scoring statistically significantly lower than TES. Next, TES was compared against eight neighboring schools, which have a variety of FRL rates and are not in our SU. For ELA percent proficiency, White River School, Newton School, and Marion Cross scored statistically significantly higher than TES. For Math there was less of a statistical difference with the exception of Marion Cross. Note that MCS has a 5% FRL rate and is the highest scoring school in the state. Downey noted there are many schools across the country that have overcome the FRL issue. FRL is not an excuse. Sharpless stated she is interested in looking at what the White River school is doing in ELA. Donna Steinberg asked if it is possible to look at the data without the scores of FRL students. Sharpless responded they do not have that data for other schools, but they did look at that within TES and will discuss later.

Next, TES was compared with itself over the last three years, examining strengths and weaknesses within both subjects. There are four sections within ELA: reading, writing, listening, and research/inquiry. Sample questions in these areas were reviewed. Schoolwide trends in ELA: In the reading category there was an increase in the percent of TES students who were 'below the standard' (increasing from 10% three years ago to 25% in 2017). Not sure if statistically significant, but may be educationally significant to think about in house. There was a corresponding decrease in the 'above the standard' group. A similar pattern was seen in writing, with an increase in the below the standard group (from 13% to 24%), but less of a decrease in the above the standard category. For listening, there was also an increase in the below the standard group (an increase from 8% to 14%). In research, there was an increase from 11% to 23% in the below the standard group. Listening seems to be a relative strength, but reading, writing and research needs consideration. There are three sections in Math: concepts and procedures, problem solving and modeling and data analysis, communication and reasoning. Results: Concepts and procedures seems to be a relative weakness. The other two categories are relative strengths. Looked at the different populations within TES and how they compare to one another in grades 3 – 6 over all three years of test taking. Comparing girls and boys, there was not a statistically significant difference in the first two years, but in the third year of testing, the boys scored a bit below the girls. More detailed analysis is needed, but this may be an educationally significant difference. Looked at FRL and not FRL. The FRL population is performing statistically significantly below the non-FRL population across all three years of testing in ELA (especially) and math. This is a concerning trend in both subject areas. Some discussion followed. Next, it was asked, is there a connection between SBAC scores and student: teacher ratios? Looked at the schools that TES was compared to, including neighboring, OESU, and those with similar demographics. Conclusion: No correlation observed. Discussion followed.

For TES, FRL students are doing less well when compared to other schools. For math, not as strong a correlation as with ELA but the same trend with TES scoring below other schools. Conclusions and summary of key findings: TES performance is in line with comparable schools, but students who receive FRL perform worse, especially in ELA, as compared with their non-FRL peers. There is a significant gap between girls' and boys' performance, especially in ELA. The overall school performance has not changed significantly over the past three years of testing. What to do? Examine TES's math and ELA instruction especially in socioeconomically disadvantaged students and instruction of boys, especially in ELA. It is also worth examining interim assessments to see if those methods of assessment give similar information as the SBAC to better prepare students to meet the high standards of the SBAC. Discussion followed.

FY19 BUDGET DISCUSSION WITH THETFORD ACADEMY RESOURCE

COMMITTEE: Elliott distributed an updated tax worksheet without CLA information included. Special education funding is coming through OESU, which results in the worksheet looking different. The equalized pupil number is frozen, meaning it is a safe number to use in the budget. Equalized pupil includes Pre-K enrollment. Excess spending threshold and the property yield numbers are in. Petrone made some small budget changes and summarized this budget includes a reduction in one classroom teacher, and three staff members' positions being reduced: The librarian position is reduced from full time to 80%, and the Spanish teacher's position is reduced from 80% to 60%. One other staff member's position is reduced from full time to 80%. This totals 1.6 FTE in reductions. This budget does not include the LEA (local education agent) position. Petrone stated that while having an LEA would benefit his administrative time, there are other needs at TES that benefit the students more. He is also looking ahead to the incoming Kindergarten class, and made some changes to the budget to service those kids directly next year. \$50,000 in capital improvement was removed. Darrah asked if anything is needed in building and maintenance. No, Petrone is still hoping to have the phone system done this year. This is already in the budget. The number of TA students was updated. The CLA is the only missing number; the Board is hoping the CLA goes up. Petrone would like some time to work on the budget further regarding student services. He is considering adding another special educator to the staff given the anticipated needs next year. Petrone is looking to the Board for a tax rate goal to work toward. Discussion followed.

The budget is actually decreased, but the tax rate formula, which is out of the Board's control, is what is driving up the tax rate. As the budget stands now, the tax rate is 3.8%. Since Darrah has been on the Board the tax rate has not been increased by more than 4%. Cudhea stated that 4% will be a hard sell, given the conversations he has had with other residents. Petrone has some hard decisions to make, and he asked if there are any changes that can be made on TA's part to help. Bugg replied they are already counting on some hefty reductions that he cannot specify now. Cudhea added that the TA numbers included in this tax worksheet have already been cut by \$450,000. Darrah asked Thompson and Petrone to aim for a tax increase of no more than 3%, and the Board wants to understand the full impact of the changes that will result in such a rate. Thompson asked for a motion.

MOTION: (Downey/MacPhee) moved/seconded to charge Petrone and Thompson to present a tax worksheet with a tax increase of no more than 3% (unanimous approval). Thompson suggested to the TA representatives that they make their cuts known to the public. Darrah added that both boards should explain to the public that the tax rate is increasing despite cuts in both budgets. This is an important message.

EXECUTIVE SESSION (Personnel): MOTION: (Acker/Downey) moved/seconded to go into Executive Session at 6:30 p.m. to discuss personnel. Out of executive session at 6:45 p.m. No action taken.

MINUTES REVIEW: MOTION: (Acker/Downey) moved/seconded to approve the minutes of the December 5, 2017 Board meeting (unanimous approval).

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF ORDERS: MOTION: (Acker/Downey) moved/seconded to approve accounts payable orders 6273, 6270, 6285, and 6264, and payroll warrants 6281 and 6267 (unanimous approval).

PUBLIC COMMENT/CORRESPONDENCE: After the snowstorm, the Board received an email from a parent who was unhappy about school not being canceled. The decision to have school was made by OESU. Moving forward, since TES is south of the other OESU schools, and because busing is so connected with TA, Petrone will work with TA to make the call about having school. Petrone will consider input from the Thetford highway crew and OESU as well.

BUS SURVEY: A draft parent survey was discussed. Survey questions were edited.

ACT 46 – DISCUSS WRITING PLAN FOR FUTURE: Darrah stated that based on advice given at the OESU meeting, TTSD needs to summarize for the AOE what the ideal would be, regardless of what is legal. Darrah asked for input from the Board. Acker stated she is considering the pros and cons of the White River SU vs. OESU. If OESU could be bigger, would White River SU offer better savings because of economies of scale? What would the other benefits be from being part of the White River SU? Discussion followed. Acker stated it would be great to have Fairlee and West Fairlee included, noting the geographical gap between Thetford and Bradford. There are several good things happening at Rivendell. Collaboration with Dresden was also mentioned as a wish.

EXECUTIVE SESSION (Negotiations): MOTION: (Acker/Downey) moved/seconded to go into Executive Session at 6:53 p.m. to discuss para-professional negotiations, the premature dissemination of which may place the Board at a substantial disadvantage. Out of executive session at 7:15 p.m. No action taken.

ADJOURNMENT: MOTION: (Acker/MacPhee) moved/seconded to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 p.m. (unanimous approval).

FUTURE MEETINGS:

January 2, 2018	Thetford Town School District Meeting (Oxbow High School)	6:00 p.m.
January 2, 2018	OESU Meeting	7:15 p.m.
January 16, 2018	Thetford Town School District Meeting	6:30 p.m.

Minutes Prepared By:
Amy Bosco, Minutes Clerk

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Julie Acker, Board Clerk