

A workshop session of the Dover School Board was called to order by Chairperson Marjorie Fisher on Monday August 28, 2006 at 7:20 p.m. in City Council Chambers.

Present were, Marjorie Fisher, Dorothea Hooper, Audra Lurvey, Carolyn Mebert, Kara Winton, Brandon Foye, and Doris Grady.

Also present were Superintendent John O'Connor; Larry DeYoung, Principal, Dover Middle School; Barbara Szabunka, Principal Horne Street School; Christopher George, Principal, Dover High School; Patrick Boodey, Principal, Woodman Park School; Dustin Gray, Principal, Garrison Elementary School; Jean Briggs, Director of Federal Projects; Lynne Wissink and Kimberly Lyndes, Deans, Dover Middle School; Peter Wotton, Athletics Director; Kimberly Stephens, Dean, Freshman Dean, Dover High School; Susan Hodgson, Teacher, Dover Middle School; Fran Meffen, Guidance, Dover Middle School; and Larry Clow, *Foster's*.

A. ADMINISTERING DISCIPLINE POLICY AT HIGH SCHOOL, MIDDLE SCHOOL, & ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: The Superintendent stated this item was on the agenda in response to a Board member's request approximately 8 weeks ago. During the 2004/2005 school year, an inordinate amount of discipline hearings were brought before the Board. This was because first time offenders were being scheduled for Board hearings. The Board revised their policies and practices prior to the 2005/2006 school year allowing administrative staff to take disciplinary action for first time offenders.

Dr. O'Connor presented a PowerPoint slide identifying existing Board discipline policies:

- **BDEA – Suspension and Expulsion of Students**
 - **Overview of School Board Discipline Committee (RSA 193:13, VII)**
- **EEA – Student Transportation Services**
 - **Student Conduct on Buses**
- **EEAC – Student Transportation Policy**
 - **Procedures for Handling School Bus Discipline**
- **JICD – Student Conduct, Discipline and Due Process (Safe School Zone)**
 - **Principals of Student Conduct & Disciplinary Procedures (RSA 193:13 and RSA 193-D)**
- **JICDD – Student Discipline Out-of-School Actions**
 - **Disciplinary Action for Conduct Occurring Off-School Property That Has an Adverse Affect Upon the School**
- **JICK - Pupil Safety and Violence Prevention Policy (Bullying)**
 - **Discipline for Conduct Constituting Bullying in Accordance With RSA 193-F**

The Superintendent then introduced building administrators who were available to answer Board member questions.

Ms. Hooper asked Mr. George to explain if the numbers of hearings before the Board had "gone up, down, or stayed the same" subsequent to the dropping the policy to bring first time offenders before the Board. Principal George stated during the 2003/2004 school year, 54 students went before the Board for discipline hearings. In 2004/2005, there were 38 student hearings before the Board, and in 2005/2006, only eighteen. He stated this decrease was due, in part, because the Board allowed administrators to deal with first time offenders. Ms. Hooper noted it was her belief the rationale for students coming before the Board was to demonstrate the seriousness of

their actions. She asked whether or not the incidents of misbehavior increased once the change was made. Mr. George passed to the Board a spreadsheet listing all infractions over a three-year period. He noted that more class cuts were seen last year than the administration felt was appropriate, so they added a new requirement in the 2006/2007 handbook that states "five cuts in a single quarter" will result in a student suspension from school and not be allowed to return without a meeting with a parent to talk about how the behavior will change.

Ms. Fisher asked Principal George to compare the 2004/2005 to 2005/2006 drug and alcohol infractions. Mr. George stated it was (18 drug, 8 alcohol) 26 and 22 respectively, so it had gone down slightly. Carolyn Mebert asked why incidents of threatening, bullying, harassing, and bringing dangerous objects were on an increase. Some of the rationales given were a difficult incoming freshman class in 2004/2005; weapons included paint ball guns, BB guns, and other items that may not have been reported previously because of a greater awareness, increased reporting, and less tolerance. Ms. Hooper noted the district spends a great deal of time working on programs with students to increase awareness and lower incidence of bullying and harassment yet it seems to be increasing progressively. She wondered what could be done to stop this trend. "...It doesn't seem to be working." Ms. Lurvey responded by asking, "How much of this increased reporting comes from increased awareness? How many years ago would nobody have thought twice about a kid having a pocket knife?" Her opinion was that the data should not be taken as "being the whole thing" and being worried about it because we "are talking about different administrative teams, and different levels of awareness in different years." Ms. Hooper noted that was correct, but that we still need to take a look at this to reverse the trend. She stated, "My concern is that we are using district resources, workshops, all kinds of assemblies, and small groups, especially on the issue of bullying; and I am wondering whether or not we have to look at that and see whether or not there is something we can do to change that." Mr. George noted that Donna Frank-Berchulski attended PBIS training this summer. She brought back ideas that they will use to reinvigorate that program.

Ms. Grady stated she thought Mr. George was "pretty courageous" for providing Board members with the discipline data presented. She noted class cuts doubled from 2001/2002 to 2005/2006. Mr. George agreed it was a big jump and that was why the procedures had been changed for the 2006/2007 school year. He thanked Ms. Grady for her comment on sharing the data. "I believe in being transparent. The fact is we need to look at what is going on." Ms. Grady noted that surveillance in hallways might reduce the number of student cuts. She then questioned whether there were actually only 20 dress code violation in 2005/2006. Mr. George stated that did not reflect the number of students addressed about the dress code; rather only those students who are non-compliant when asked to meet the dress code criteria. Ms. Grady added, "Another number that has just about doubled is the number of referrals – from 2262 to 4018 total. Mr. George stated, "That's huge isn't it?" Enrollments went from 1455 in 2001/2002 and increased by 9%, to 1595, in 2005/2006. The current figure for this 2006/2007 school year is 1,775. Ms. Hooper noted, "The more kids you get in a confined space, the more discipline problems you're going to have." Dr. O'Connor made three points to the Board: Bullying is a nationally recognized concern, the impact of the internet, and staff understanding of the law more fully have all contributed to a rise in the numbers of reported cases. Ms. Grady stated it is also important for the parent at home to cooperate with the school department and take notice of the child who is doing the bullying. "It is a cooperative effort to try to improve that."

Larry DeYoung stated the Middle School set up a "hearing room" for first time offenders to instill the seriousness of the student actions. Only one student was expelled for intent to distribute

drugs. He provided discipline statistics over the past three school years. 2003/2004 – 168 referrals; 2004/2005 – 165 referrals; 2005/2006 – 117 referrals. Major referrals during those same school years: 2003/2004 – 94; 2004/2005 – 89; 2005/2006 – 48 – a decrease in each year. Mr. DeYoung stated his belief that this was due to administrators taking a proactive approach with staff and students and due to the use of PBIS and SWISS data, there is an increased visibility of discipline concerns. Brandon Foye asked Principal DeYoung the length of time a middle school student is expelled from school. Mr. DeYoung stated it could be 45 to 90 days or for the entire school year, depending upon the infraction. Ms. Hooper asked what the youngest age of student to come before the middle school administration for drug issues. Principal DeYoung stated the youngest had been 7th and 8th grade students.

Ms. Grady asked for clarification of a statement contained in the middle school handbook that stated certain actions were cumulative and would be kept on file throughout the student's four years of middle school. Her concern was that students be given a fresh start each school year. Dean Wissink stated that the actions did not count across the years; rather the information was retained for historical purposes only and might be used to establish chronic misbehavior across the years. Students have a "fresh start" every school year. Ms. Grady then asked whether the discipline file was forwarded with the student to the high school. Ms. Wissink stated it was not. Ms. Grady stated she was concerned that students might be labeled improperly if the information was held against them.

Ms. Grady then noted she did not agree with the language under Loss of Privileges that states, "Any student who abuses normal school privileges or repeatedly uses poor judgment may also lose privileges." She added, "Sometimes the use of the word 'may' leaves an opening to how severe it is...I always hate seeing 'may' because it leaves the door open for judgment on who the student is." Ms. Wissink stated that was true. "May" gives the administration the latitude to make decisions based on a case-by-case basis. That's why I would rather see 'shall' and if it's Johnny Jones or Mary Whoever, they get the same punishment." Ms. Fisher added she and Ms. Grady were asking the question because, over the last few years, Board members get many calls at the end of the school year – "Johnny cannot go on the school trip because he did this but Dick did the same thing and he's going on the school trip." The perception from parents is this may be because the child "knows somebody" and calls and emails come in every year on the same thing. Mr. DeYoung noted the administration was aware of these concerns and stated they were working on refining the requirements for the 8th grade consequences for events. Ms. Grady thanked Mr. DeYoung for taking a look at this and asked that information be provided to the Board when it is done. She said the Board gets calls every years from parents who are upset because, "Johnny's been bad all year long, but he doesn't get in trouble that last 30 days. Mary's been a devil all year long but the last 30 days doesn't get in trouble so she goes to the dances and he doesn't."

The Superintendent stated all three elementary schools shared similar expectations:

1. Be safe
2. Be caring
3. Be respectful
4. Be here, be ready

Fostering and promoting an atmosphere of mutual respect that celebrates children - their similarities as well as their differences - can make an incredible impact on children and their community.

- Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

The last item discussed regarding discipline was the Athletic Agreements. The Superintendent noted there had been no community concerns voiced regarding the athletic agreement that was revised 3 to 4 years ago and was seen as being administered fairly. Ms. Grady stated she had recently reviewed an article that suggested coaches be aware of bullying between athletes on the fields and work to stop those behaviors. Dr. O'Connor stated that Mr. Wotton meets with coaches each year to discuss hazing and bullying and the coaches do an effective job of communicating that to the athletes. Ms. Hooper asked whether athletic agreements were signed just for the season or for the whole school year. Mr. Wotton stated they were signed for the season only and noted that Portsmouth is looking into a yearlong contract. He indicated it will be interesting to see how well it works. Mr. Wotton added that the Dover Coalition for Youth had met over the summer and asked him to address the possibility of enforcing a yearlong contract. He noted his concern that a yearlong or school-yearlong contract would be difficult to enforce, but he would monitor other communities to see how successful they are.

B. 10-STEP SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN: Superintendent O'Connor gave an overview of the Dover School District 10-Step Process for School Improvement. He described it as a structured process that will lead to school improvement. He noted he had searched the web and found the plan on the State of Maryland Department of Education's website and obtained permission from them to use their model in the Dover School District. Dr. O'Connor then reviewed each step of the plan and how it will be achieved:

Step 1: Understanding the Process

Facilitator to introduce the process – Administrators met with Nick Hardy, a facilitator who works with the Department of Education to introduce this process to the administrative team. Then administrators met an additional 4 hours in the high school to look at the various components and aspects of the process. All together, there have been approximately 8 hours of training at the administrative level. "This is a trial year. We are not looking for perfection. What we're looking for is to be able to initiate the process; work through it; let's look at what the results are saying; let's see what kinds of plans we can put together; and basically, give us an idea of where we need to go in a year from now."

Step 2: Analyzing the Data

Use a series of data analysis work sheets to look at data to ask a series of questions to identify patterns, trends, and specific problems to share with the staff. Most of the problems will revolve around curriculum and instruction issues. This is a time sensitive issue. There will be structure to the timeframes. This will not be an open-ended process. People will need to adhere to established deadlines.

Step 3: Setting Priorities

Identify priority instructional needs. Are we able to identify what are the priorities. This will be determined by looking at the data. Priorities that come out of the data may be different for each school.

Step 4: Clarifying the Problem

Why does the data look like it does? What are some of the root causes of the effects that have had an impact on student performance in an area? Different problems for different schools will mean different solutions.

Step 4: Clarifying the Problem

When student performance scores are flat over the past several years, you may need to remind staff that, "if you continue doing in about the same way you have been doing it, you can expect to get the same results you have been getting."

Step 5: Identifying the Goals

One of the district's strategic goals approved in August of 2005 states that "Each child will benefit from a system-wide accountability plan based upon data focusing on student learning." That is the nexus of this plan. A structure in place is necessary to look at where our kids are and where we need them to go. We will identify objectives that will bring about these changes.

Step 6: Choosing Strategies

Identify the strategies that lead to objective attainment.

Step 7: Implementing the Plan

We must develop a timetable to implement the plan. We have to monitor the plan and hold people accountable to be sure the plan is being followed and objectives are realistic.

Step 8: Assessing the Results

Look at the data. What worked? What didn't work? What gets monitored gets done!

Step 9: Revising the Plan

Be flexible! Some things will work well, others won't. Alter what needs to be changed.

Step 10: Managing the Change

Don't let the change process manage us...Change is difficult for administrators and teachers in the district. Change requires close supervision and a laser-like focus.

The next step will be to develop a reporting process. How we want our school improvement plans to look. Within the next several months, we will have a reporting format incorporated into the 10-Step Process.

Ms. Grady stated, "Isn't this the goal anyway, that any professional staff member does? This has been from the beginning of time... and then you see us going to NECAP and because NECAP says, 'you have to test to the test'...I think the student is forgotten in the issue because they are either basic, or proficient. If they're 'basic' the child feels like they are a failure...they haven't made it. And the teacher can work, and they have to let the kid know that, 'you were here,' and regardless of what the answer is, look how much you've grown. They need that positive input and I think the state's forgotten the student. I don't see anything new here..."

Dr. O'Connor agreed, this was not new. What the plan does is elevate the level of accountability. There is a structure in terms of reporting. It adds structure to the process and insures that all of our schools are looking at the data the same way. Ms. Hooper added that this is a result of NO Child Left Behind being a reality..."We are a District In Need of Improvement and this is a plan. This is a way of adding structure and complying with what we have to comply with." Administrators will be getting School Improvement Teams members identified by the target date of September 15th.

Dr. O'Connor added that the State Commissioner of Education, Lyonel Tracy, has taken No Child Left Behind and redeveloped the philosophy that says we will follow every child and make sure they reach their potential. There is an emphasis at the state level to make sure that we are looking at every child and doing the best we possibly can for them. Ms. Winton added that some districts in this state are using the plan developed by the State Department of Education of "Follow the Child. That looks not only at the test data, but includes the social, physical, and emotional growth of children. It Dr. O'Connor stated Dover is not one of the districts that have signed on to Dr. Tracy's "Follow the Child" initiative. Rather, because of so many new initiatives ongoing in the district, we will hold off for a year and see what other districts are doing before we make that type of commitment.

Dr. O'Connor reminded Board members that New Hampshire reran Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Reports using eleven as the cell size for performance calculations. and changing the starting points (or baseline) for each content area to 82 in reading and 76 in mathematics.

The new results released last Friday indicate Dover went from being a District In Need of Improvement in reading to having made AYP in reading and mathematic as a district. Two schools did not make AYP in reading, but all did in math. Dover is still considered a District In Need of Improvement in mathematics because it requires we go two consecutive years in a row to remove DINI from the district.

C. ADJOURNMENT: At 8:30 p.m., Kara Winton moved, Audra Lurvey seconded, to adjourn the Workshop Session. An oral **VOTE PASSED 7/0.**

Respectfully submitted,

KARA WINTON, SECRETARY
Dover School Board
KW/kgb
August 29, 2006