

KEENE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Education Committee
Meeting Minutes

DATE: Nov. 29, 2011

LOCATION: Cheshire Career Center conference room, KHS, 143 Arch St., Keene, NH

CALLED TO ORDER: 5:30 PM

TIME ADJOURNED: 9:00 PM

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

- Mark Nugent, Chair
- Anne Szot
- Kristin Blais
- John Stewart

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

- Carl Panza
- Kathy O'Donnell
- Chris Coates

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

- William Gurney, Superintendent
- Wayne Woolridge, Superintendent
- Catherine Woods, Special Education Director
- Alan Chmiel, Keene High School Principal
- Leslie Farmer, KHS Athletic Director
- Patricia Yoerger, Jonathan Daniels Principal
- Tom Burke, Assistant Principal, KHS
- Rand Lounsbury, Special Education Administrator
- Jim Logan, Assistant Principal, KHS
- Meredith Cargill, Director of Curriculum and Assessment
- Rachel Summe-Leonard, Assistant Principal, KHS
- Alexandra Bond, Assistant Principal, KHS
- David Maleski, Special Education Administrator

OTHERS PRESENT:

- Members of the Public (about 40)
- Britta Reida, Stenographer

Chair Nugent called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

1. Public Input

Claire Koutras, of 59 Meetinghouse Road, stated that she is a KHS student and does not think the eight-period day is a good idea, because it would make for less class time. She continued that Science and Art students especially cannot accomplish much in 45 minutes. There would also be less passing time and the lunch period would be shorter. The lunch room would be more crowded because there would be fewer lunch periods. This modified block schedule is not a good fit.

Althea Denham from Spofford stated that she has a KHS student and has concerns about the modified block schedule. Lunch has chronically been a problem – it is not

enough time for students. To decrease that time further and increase the number of students participating seems ill advised for the nutritional needs of students and their ability to focus and concentrate. The passing time of six minutes is already a problem for many students, particularly in the main area in the front of the school. Reducing it to four minutes would create a stampede and safety would be compromised. Also with this modified schedule, teachers will have half the length of time they currently have to prepare for courses. She continued that she knows how much work goes into the courses and how much work is taken home by the teachers, which they do not get compensated for. Teachers having adequate planning time benefits the students - they have every opportunity to get the latest information that is available (e.g. Math and Science have constant changes), and teachers have the time to keep their material fresh, incorporating new information that may be more current event-specific. Allowing time to prepare is essential, so teachers are not working at night when they need to be with their families. When were the changes decided? She has been hearing this for a couple months. When did the changes switch from the idea stage to the planning stage? As a parent of a KHS student, she has not received any information about this from the school district, and would have appreciated more information sooner.

Jon Perry, of 314 Court St., stated that he is a teacher at KHS. He continued that the process of change is never an easy one, and is even more complex when it is education. There are many questions of logistics, impacts, and the process. Everyone wants students to be invested in their education, but they have been left out of this process. Thus, we risk alienating the students. It is not enough to just inform the kids - they must be a part of the process when making changes. Schools should be reaching out more than ever to form bonds. He continued that the Board should not base decisions just on the complaints of a few. The silent majority likes the schedule the way it is. There is a growing divide between those who spend their days in the classroom, and those who make educational decisions, and this widens the gap. It is necessary to slow down and implement these changes correctly. The proposed schedule may not meet KHS's needs. The Board should first bring all of the groups affected into the decision making process, which might take a year or longer. The Board needs to have a clear list of current concerns and show a direct link to KHS's current schedule, then examine the ways the current schedule has flexibility to meet those needs/concerns. The current schedule includes six of the eight proposed options already. Slow the process down and allow this to be a unifying process. Vote to suspend the change until this can be done collaboratively and thoughtfully.

Scott Hyde from Peterborough stated that he has taught for 17 years at KHS. He continued that he works more than 6.5 hours a day. The schedule changes are lacking something. The dialogue he heard on the radio, between Mr. Chmiel and Mr. Gurney, did not reflect positive leadership. Mr. Hyde continued that it is completely untrue that teachers have "too much time" to prepare for classes. He read a list of more than 30 tasks that teachers do during the planning block, such as writing curriculum and lesson plans, cleaning and organizing the classroom, compiling college and scholarship information, planning for field trips, talking with parents, attending to IEP meetings and questions, writing college and scholarship recommendations, labeling/photographing/displaying

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student art work, and much more. Mr. Hyde spoke of the importance of department chairs who are experts in curriculum and keep things moving forward to meet needs of students. Department heads do much more than regular classroom teachers. They should be given a raise, instead of having planning time taken away from them. Being prepared for class every day is complicated and requires time. He feels that this is a blind decision. The Board does not understand what goes on during prep time. If it is cut, what would teachers end up not being able to do? Can a teacher prep for three classes in 45 minutes? Teachers that teach in single period would have to create a “stand up sit down” curriculum. We are not heading in the right direction. He is not against schedule changes for the right reasons. This should have been negotiated during contracts. These changes would mean setting education back by about a decade.

Ian Furguson, KHS student, stated that he is scared to go out into the world if he is only offered a 40-min class. He continued that to get into a good, accredited college he needs an extraordinary portfolio and he cannot do that in a 40-minute class. It would be impossible to really do art with a class that short – by the time you set up the easel and paints, suddenly class is over. He would have to throw the paint in order to get a project done.

Tina McLaughlin, KHS teacher, stated that at a faculty meeting, she asked if these changes would be happening next year. She continued that Mr. Chmiel replied that it looked like it would be hard to implement next year and it would be a two-year process. Since then, all of KHS’s staff meetings have been canceled, including the holiday party, so teachers have no opportunity to ask questions. They have been having department meetings only – Mr. Chmiel has not been speaking to the staff as an entire staff. She is wondering when that will happen.

Catherine Kissell of Westmoreland stated that she has two daughters that recently graduated from KHS and a son who is a current student. She continued that when her oldest daughter was 13, she was a freshman and took Algebra I honors and got a B. It was recommended that she not do the honors track anymore, and did the “slow and steady wins the race” track. She had to double every year in Math and Science. When she graduated, she had six or seven Math credits and eight in Science. She just graduated with an engineering degree. That would not have happened if it had been a different schedule. Her second daughter, too, was able to take Math and Science and double up and take Cheshire Career Center classes also. There will not be time for that with the 8-period schedule. She hears the committee saying that AP and honors classes will be held as usual, but worries that they are taking opportunities away from average students who want to put in the time and work. For juniors, a lot of success is based on standardized testing. Juniors do best when they have had four classes, not two.

Sarah Chavira of Keene stated that she moved to Keene six years ago from California. She continued that she wanted to get away from the “cookie-cutter/fast food schools” there. The classrooms had too many kids and not enough time for actual teaching. She has four kids, and Keene’s educational system was the number one reason why she and her family chose to move here. Since then, changes have happened. She continued that

decisions like the one to switch the KHS schedule “are just being made like they pop into someone’s head and then you decide that’s a good thing to do.” She and others are asking why, and asking where the models are, and where the research is. A year or two ago, Mr. Gurney wanted to suddenly swap two elementary school teachers, which was a bad plan and did not happen. The parents were never given information about why or the research behind the decision. Taxes are high in Keene and the community deserves to have questions answered. Who decided, and why, that 42 minutes is an appropriate class time? She knows no teacher who has ever said “I have way too much time.” It’s never *enough* time. Teachers should have the time they need to be creative, and time to thoughtfully read homework assignments, and do all the other work they do during prep time. They do not have too much time on their hands, and reducing prep time is not benefiting the students. She wants to see research and models that say this schedule change is a good idea for the kids. She also wants kids to be heard, because their opinions count, such as the boy who spoke tonight about how he won’t have enough time to even set up the easel, never mind do art. The administrator that is considering this scheduling change is leaving. Why make a change before the new administrator can come in and have a say?

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Ms. Szot made a motion to approve the minutes from October 18, 2011. Ms. Blais seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3. Modified Block Update – KHS Administrators

Mr. Chmiel gave an overview of the planning and progress. He stated that the goal of any school is to offer a schedule that best fits the needs of all students. He continued that some students need long classes, some need short classes, and all of those needs need to be met. In the 2012 to 2013 school year, he estimates that only 20% of students will be impacted by the schedule changes. He distributed a handout showing the timeline, which will also soon be posted on the website. A video will be filmed on Friday, and shown. There is a meeting with parents, and a meeting with students, scheduled for December 6. A consultant will look at the impact of the changes on students’ schedules

Ms. Bond gave a PowerPoint presentation about the potential changes, such as an increase of length of the school day by 13 minutes, increased program and scheduling flexibility with classes offered in eight formats, the opportunity for improved prep time and coordination with the introduction of some common prep time within subject areas and teams, a change to teacher prep time which could result in increased student contact and additional and meaningful duty assignments, and an advisory period that will be one day per week for ten minutes. Information will soon be on KHS’s website.

Mr. Burke showed the schedule of an eight-period day. There are 44 minutes per class, except period five, which is 43 minutes long. A 92-minute double period can be created by combining 2 44-periods together plus the four-minute passing time. The passing times will also be slightly different depending on how many students are expected to be in the hallways between each period. Tentatively three lunches are scheduled instead of four.

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There are still many operational considerations to that to filter out, such as the fire code, logistics, and time. The administration will work on it.

Ms. Summe-Leonard spoke about the ability to have lots of formats for students. She stated that adding a 44-minute class gives students the option to learn that way and some parents say that will be beneficial for their kids. There are many variations, such as a single period meeting every day for a full year for a full credit, or every other day for a half credit. A double period may meet every other day for a semester, or for the full year; or every other day. AP classes could meet every other day for one semester and every day for the next semester. This does not mean that each class would be offered in each of the eight formats.

Mr. Logan stated that teachers would teach six doubles per year or three doubles per semester or some combination of that, and have a duty-free lunch of 29 minutes. Duties such as hallway monitoring would be assigned and done collaboratively. There would be a 44-minute planning period every day. They would have assignments such as RTI initiatives, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), Extended Learning, and data team. As this process moves forward, they will target more professional development as it relates to these initiatives. For 2012-2013, data will be very important. Teachers have been working on reading and implementing data for intervention.

Mr. Maleski stated that the schedule changes will offer flexibility for Special Education students. He continued that some students have difficulty with paying attention for a whole block and this will alleviate that. Year-long classes can help many students. Special Education already offers single periods. With the changes, there might be more classes over a semester, so there is more information and transitions for the students to deal with, but by and large the changes seem to be more of a plus.

Ms. Farmer stated that one impact to the athletics program is the increased length of the school day – she will request to her colleagues that they adjust the start time of games that are impacted, between 15 and 30 minutes. She continued that many other schools have lights on their fields so they can continue playing after dark, and that is a possibility. The scholar athletes this fall are up 5% from last fall. Student athletes are getting the job done even though they are out of class the last block of the day. She does not think 13 minutes will have a big effect if the game times are adjusted.

Ms. Blais asked what additional schedule changes are anticipated in coming years. Mr. Chmiel replied that first they have to see how this goes in the first year, when approximately 20% of students will be affected. He continued that a consultant will examine it and he may say only 5-10% of students will initially be impacted. Ms. Baker does very well presenting the best possible schedules for students. Mr. Gurney stated that over time, the schedule will be driven by what classes the kids sign up for. It will be possible to tailor it to the students' learning styles.

Ms. Szot asked if Art and Cheshire Career Center classes will stay in block format. Mr. Logan replied that all CCC and Tech classes will be double periods, as will Art. Ms. Szot

asked if this means that during the four-minute passing time the students would just continue doing art. It is actually an increase in art class time. She asked if it would be possible for a student who might not be in honors classes but wants to take Algebra in a double block period to do so. Mr. Chmiel replied yes. Ms. Szot asked which 20% of students will be affected by the changes. Mr. Chmiel replied that it would be presumptuous to answer that right now.

Ms. Blais asked about the 2007 survey which recognized problems with KHS's schedule. In response, changes were enacted. As a result of that survey, KHS is already offering five or six of the eight proposed schedules. Do we know that the problems that were recognized in 2007 still exist? Mr. Chmiel replied that that is what he said in October when he said he thought it would be best to wait a year to implement modified block, but now we are on a new path.

4. SERESC High School and Elementary Updates – Catherine Woods

Ms. Woods stated that a three-year action plan for Keene High School had been created. Part of it was developing longer lasting relationships with students and a higher advocacy rate, making changes to the transition process that have helped to create a smoother transition from the middle school to the high school, and the creation of resource rooms. The resource rooms were so successful with grades 9 and 10 that this year they were implemented in grades 11 and 12 as well. The Special Education changes have been successful, as evidenced in part by the fact that people are not knocking on Mr. Chmiel's door as often as they with previously were with problems and issues related to the Special Education Department. There is also a higher rate of attendance by regular staff at the IEP meetings.

Mr. Maleski stated that the resource room model allows more intensive support for students. It is also a "drop-in center" - students can go there if they are struggling in class and their classroom teacher gives permission to go to the resource room. It is also being used in the RTI model. One problem is the high school has too many Special Education referrals. Allowing students to use the resource room and some other programs before they begin the referral process is helpful, in the sense that Special Education staff can first find out what the concerns are about the students. Maybe some of those students just need help in one class, and do not need to be in Special Education full time.

Chair Nugent asked if this means that regular education students go to the resource room for help, whether or not they are on a Special Education path. Mr. Maleski replied yes. He continued that if concerns are expressed by parents or teachers, the Special Education Department may suggest the student be allowed to use the resource room. They can be given a separate place to go to study. It is, at the very least, a place to observe those students and provide a minimal level of support. Ms. Woods added that it is a balancing act – how does one effectively provide for the needs of that student, while protecting the capacity of the space and the staff so there is true support for all the students?

Ms. Szot asked if one of the changes to the modification of block scheduling, adding more study halls in structured subject areas, would help this. Mr. Maleski replied yes.

Ms. O'Donnell asked Mr. Maleski to elaborate on his statement about KHS having a higher percentage of Special Education referrals. Mr. Maleski replied that the KSD as a whole has a high number of Special Education students and the Special Education Department at KHS tends to get more referrals than would be expected, mostly from parents, but also from teachers. There is a formal referral process that teachers know how to go through. If a parent wants a student referred, they provide a written statement. Mr. Lounsbury stated that it is somewhat atypical for there to be many new referrals in high school. It is unusual for a student who has been in regular education all through elementary school and middle school to be identified only in high school as needing Special Education services. Mr. Maleski stated that KHS has more learning disability referrals than is typical. In his opinion, the Math program at KHS is very rigorous. There is also a higher incidence of anxiety disorders that affect high school students. Related to that, Keene is somewhat isolated. There are not a lot of services outside of the general area.

Ms. Woods stated that after SERESC studied KHS and KMS, they came back the following year and conducted a study of Keene's elementary and preschools. Ms. Cargill is in charge of the curriculum action plan and the RTI plan district-wide. Mr. Lounsbury had previously chaired the RTI subcommittee and is now chairing the work of implementing the Special Education action plan. Mr. Gurney is chairing the work of the leadership action plan. The leaders meet once a month to discuss progress on the action plans. The SERESC consultants will be back in December to do progress monitoring. They will also be facilitating at least two meetings of the KPEPC, to review the progress they note and modify the action plans as necessary. Maybe the action plans should just be part of DINI work or other committee work. Job descriptions are in progress. Once those are developed, people's roles can be reviewed and there can be an assessment of how they are being utilized in the schools.

Mr. Lounsbury stated that he asked the SERESC consultants to recommend schools to visit, in regards to RTI and Special Education. He and a team of others are doing site visits – they have been to Rochester and are soon going to Claremont, and will try to visit Hanover in January. For each site visit, they will bring the same set of questions, have a discussion with the school's chosen team, then observe classrooms and have a tour of the school and talk with people individually. Mr. Lounsbury continued that he will report on the feedback from all three site visits.

Ms. Woods reported that over the summer, and continuing this fall, Ms. Cargill, Mr. Lounsbury, and principals created an RTI manual to ensure consistency of RTI in the five elementary schools. One issue in the SERESC report was the inconsistencies among the five schools. The manual continues to be fine tuned.

Ms. Woods reported that in terms of IEP goals, it is highly ineffective for case managers to have to repeatedly develop the same goals that their colleagues might be using or they might be using with students. Many goals will look the same and will be individualized based on students' needs. It makes sense to have a goals bank, and Ms. Cargill is

chairing work with the resource room teachers to develop one that is connected to the Common Core.

Ms. Woods reported that they are in the process of developing forms that would increase the efficiency of case managers, which will be up and running by January. The forms will help to ensure standards and common discussion points in regards to determining students' eligibility for Special Education. One area noted in the SERESC report is that Keene has many Special Education students. Two things that will help put or keep more students in regular education are RTI, and having a standard process for making those decisions. Mr. Lounsbury is working with the elementary teachers to ensure a standard process of determining whether a student is eligible for Special Education services.

Ms. Woods reported that the roadblocks for Professional Development (on all subjects) are funding and available time. Ms. Cargill is leading a subcommittee to develop a strategic PD plan, and she is now on the PD subcommittee and hopes to help ensure that some of the pieces that are needed are carefully and purposefully planned for in the strategic plan.

Ms. O'Donnell asked if Ms. Woods will be at the Community Forum tomorrow night and can answer the public's questions and dispel the rumors that the proposed plan includes the elimination of Learning Disabilities Collaboratives and programs. Ms. Woods and Mr. Lounsbury replied yes. Ms. Woods stated that as a result of her meetings with principals and Marinace Architects, she believes there will be space for everything that will be necessary. Draft plans might look different from what it ends up being like. Mr. Lounsbury stated that the students with learning disabilities will always have services.

Ms. Blais stated that many things were inadvertently left off in the draft plans but were able to be penciled in. It is unfortunate that people do not realize it is a very rough draft. She continued that there are two parallel conversations going on. The new plan will have space for all that is needed and will serve children as well as or better than they are being served now.

5. KMS Outdoor Learning Area Update and Request – Miranda Nelkin

Miranda Nelkin, Art teacher at KMS, distributed a draft map of the area in question. She introduced the proposed outdoor classroom and provided background on the project. She wants to have a natural area for students that invites collaboration and interconnections. It would provide an opportunity for KMS students to participate in taking care of the Keene environment, aligns with Vision 2020, and would be the first wetland boardwalk in the area. Ms. Nelkin spoke about all of the people she has been in contact with during the process, such as the Department of Environmental Services (DES), land use consultants, archeologists, etc. Many people have been helping with this project, including many volunteers, who have walked through the wetlands with her to evaluate the area. She estimates that she has spent upwards of 400 hours on this project. She is about to submit the permit application to the DES. She wants advice on how to proceed with the project, which is costly and time prohibitive. She would need a paid sabbatical so she can continue. Ms. Nelkin continued that she is completely dedicated to the

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project. She has been successful at getting services donated, saving thousands of dollars. There is a strong possibility that fundraising will be successful. This would be an invaluable asset to the KMS and the community, and would be built to last. Students would be involved in the process and there would be community outreach.

Ms. Blais asked for more information about the project's estimated timeline. Ms. Nelkin replied that she hopes the permit process goes smoothly. She thinks that by the end of her sabbatical the project would be shovel ready or already under construction. The construction will probably go through the summer and into the fall.

Ms. Szot asked what the project's total cost is. Ms. Nelkin replied it is unknown, because the length of the trail is unknown. She continued that when the wetlands freeze it will be easier to snowshoe it and tag it and then have construction companies bid.

Ms. Szot asked if the sabbatical would be a waste of time and effort if the assumed benefactors for the site do not materialize. How much money would come from the taxpayers? Mr. Gurney replied that they would not be asking the Board for money for construction, nor would they ask tax payers to fund the construction.

Ms. O'Donnell thanked Ms. Nelkin for her inspiring work, and for the huge amount of personal time and effort she has put into this.

Mr. Stewart asked who owns the land where the trail will be. Ms. Nelkin replied that the trail will stay on SAU land. She is keeping it within the school boundaries for now, but it may expand in the future.

Mr. Coates stated that he is excited about this. He asked if Mr. Remillard, Buildings and Grounds Director, is on board. Mr. Gurney replied yes, he came on board once there was a sense from the City that they could move ahead with the permit. Mr. Coates asked for more information about the project's location, and Ms. Nelkin showed it on the map. Mr. Coates asked if Mr. Remillard is comfortable with it all. Mr. Gurney replied yes. Mr. Coates replied that he is concerned about upkeep, but is glad to hear Mr. Remillard is on board. Ms. Nelkin replied that people have been so willing to help with this project and she expects people will be helpful in repairing things.

Ms. Blais thanked Ms. Nelkin and stated that the project is inspiring. She continued that the community connections Ms. Nelkin is pursuing are so important for the district, and she would support the continuation of this project.

Mr. Panza commended Ms. Nelkin for her work and thanked her for including the article on the benefits of the outdoor classroom. He stated that this nature trail will encourage kids to respect the land. He asked if most of the money will come from donations. Mr. Gurney replied yes. Mr. Panza asked which students will be using this trail. Ms. Nelkin replied that the trail will be useful and relevant for Science, Art, PE, English, Social Studies, and more.

Mr. Stewart stated that he is all for this. He continued that there are many grants that could fund maintenance and construction. The JD school has a program that is entirely done outside, and Ms. Nelkin could ask them where they get their funding. Chair Nugent asked if Ms. Nelkin is currently getting paid for her work on this. Ms. Nelkin replied that she is on an unpaid art sabbatical. Chair Nugent replied that he thought the intent was to have the sabbatical grant-funded. Ms. Nelkin replied that she looked into that, and found that the grant requirements did not match the project.

Chair Nugent asked for the administration's recommendation on the sabbatical funding. Mr. Gurney replied that the Buildings and Grounds Committee would look at the boardwalk and have Mr. Remillard speak to the long-term maintenance, and then the proposal would go to the Finance Committee. He continued that Ms. Nelkin has likely put in thousands of hours, not hundreds. They have tried to keep the project small and in-house. They had a preliminary grant meeting with a local business and asked if they would consider funding this, giving them a quote for the building cost. The business said it was more than they usually give but they think it would be received favorably at their national office. That first grant would help get others, and would cover a large portion of the project. Local groups would be asked for the remainder. There is a meeting tomorrow with representatives from Antioch and the Harris Center in regards to how they can participate and lend support, including financially. Pathways for Keene is interested in participating once the trail is up and running. This is a school project first and foremost, but other groups later tapping in would be great. Mr. Gurney continued that he thinks Ms. Nelkin's sabbatical is a great idea. He cannot ask her to do any more work for free. His only concern is the timing – whether the grant proposal will be successful as she starts her sabbatical is unknown, but everyone is hopeful.

Ms. Szot asked for more information about the permit. Ms. Nelkin replied that she thinks the permit will come through, after conversations with the DES. The only big surprise would be if she and others snow-shoed through the wetlands and found something really unusual. She cannot predict whether the permit will come through before her sabbatical starts. If the permit is denied, it does not mean it will not be granted at all, it just means that adjustments would need to be made to the project and they could reapply.

Mr. Stewart asked if the trail would be open all the time. Mr. Gurney replied that the intent is for the school to control it. Preschool could take a group down there but otherwise it would be reserved for the KMS students, and others interested in using it would inform KMS. It may be hard to keep people out of there, but there is a similar boardwalk in Peterborough that people are very respectful of. Ms. Nelkin replied that she wants to create a Friends of the Boardwalk group that would include people from neighboring communities.

MOTION: Ms. Blais made a motion for the Education Committee to move this to the Buildings and Facilities Committee and Finance Committee. Mr. Stewart seconded the motion. After brief discussion, the motion passed by unanimous vote.

6. Gifted and Talented Update – Bill Gurney

Mr. Gurney reported that KSC and the NH Department of Education sponsored a career ready summit, at which Ms. Cargill presented. He continued that her presentation was on the role experiential education can play for all students, including gifted and talented, and was well received. There will be more meetings about experiential education.

Mr. Gurney reported that someone who appears to be qualified has responded to the district's ad for a G&T Coordinator. He will keep the committee posted.

7. 2012-2013 Proposed Calendar – Bill Gurney

Mr. Gurney distributed copies of the most recently updated copy of the proposed schedule for the 2012-2013 school year. He noted that it says the January workshop day is the 28th but teachers have requested the 22nd instead. Elementary teachers wanted the conference date pushed to December, so it will be Dec. 7. The City has requested that schools be closed on Election Day. Mr. Gurney asked the committee if they were in support of this. Then the end of the school year would be June 19. Brief discussion ensued.

MOTION: Ms. Szot made a motion for the Education Committee to accept the calendar as modified, with the closure on Election Day and the June 19 closing day. Ms. Blais seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

8. Enrollment Updates (tabled from October meeting) – Bill Gurney

Mr. Gurney indicated the longitudinal study from 2006. The number of elementary students declined steadily from 2001 through 2006. There was an increase in 2007, and there has been a steady increase over the last couple years. The numbers dropped a bit this year. KHS and KMS have seen a decline since 2006. A slight decline is anticipated next year. The numbers will increase as the elementary students move up.

Ms. Blais asked for further clarification on the numbers. Mr. Gurney replied that the low enrollment bubble is working its way through. Also, students from the sending schools are affecting the numbers. Mr. Woolridge stated that Stoddard and Surry are the variables he is unsure of. Mr. Gurney will get the information out to the Board. Mr. Woolridge stated that over the years the towns have lost 18% of their students and Keene has lost 16%.

Mr. Coates asked what the maximum number of elementary school students will be in the new configuration. Mr. Gurney replied that he will look that up and give the information to the Buildings Committee. Ms. Blais stated that the elementary schools' max capacity is so complicated, because if a town were sending their students to Keene, they would want all of those kids in the same building. Thus, it's hard to say there is a little capacity here and a little bit there.

The committee discussed enrollment projections based on the number of births in Keene in recent years. Ms. O'Donnell stated that she does not think that is a dependable source of data, because there is so much flux with the birth rates, and families might not still be

in Keene five years after a baby is born. Or, families might choose private schools or homeschooling.

Ms. O'Donnell asked how many teachers or staff members are not coming back because of changes in the federal budget or State money. Mr. Gurney replied none right now. There are some that did not come back this year because of enrollment, but no one was cut due to cuts from the State. Of the 41 people that were pink slipped, 38 returned.

9. Reading Update (tabled from October meeting) – Meredith Cargill

Ms. Cargill reported on the progress of the elementary literacy recommendations from last June. One was to develop a reading specialist job description. The one she has tonight is a revision of the one that was 20 years old. She talked with specialists about best practices and what they do. There was no continuity and consistency in the five buildings so the group looked to national standards. In reviewing the national suggestions, the group edited the four domains and came up with three – professional leadership, instruction and intervention, and curriculum and assessment. It still needs to be calibrated with Human Resources' job descriptions criteria. An upcoming meeting will determine a common vision and philosophy of reading instruction.

Ms. Cargill distributed another handout, which addresses the questions she received from some board members after an article in the Sentinel stated that the KSD was inferior to the Monadnock district. The chart shows that Keene outperforms with NECAP scores in reading, writing, and math. The grade level comparisons show that Keene outperforms Monadnock in all areas with the exception of high school reading and writing and 6th grade math. Ms. O'Donnell asked if there is any merit to the claim that Keene is inferior. Ms. Cargill replied that it is rather unreliable to consider only one data point. She continued that SAU29 is leading the state in regards to having the tools, momentum, and support for the new Common Core.

MOTION: Ms. Blais made a motion for the committee to allow a second round of public input. Ms. Szot seconded the motion, which passed by a vote of 3-1. Chair Nugent was opposed.

Public Input, Round Two

Kim Simpson, of North Winchester St., stated that she is a KHS teacher. She read about the forums about the elementary schools. It is interesting that there were never forums about the block scheduling changes. Both will impact education and the same attention should have been given, prior to making the decision. Ms. Szot replied that there is a forum on December 6.

Jon Perry stated that he has questions for Mr. Chmiel about the 20% of students who will be affected by the schedule changes. He continued that it is presumptuous to throw out the 20% figure with no data to back it up. When someone asked if the modifications that have already been made were enough, Mr. Chmiel replied that that was why he said that these changes should be put off another year. So who is driving the bus? The

School Board? What is the sense of urgency that would necessitate making these changes without the decision-making input from parents, and overriding the teachers and Instructional Council? This can't be a top down decision.

Ian Furguson stated that when he listened to the administrators reporting on the block schedule changes tonight, they sounded like they were unsure about what they were saying and that makes him nervous. He continued that he wanted to ask Ms. Farmer what she meant about the changes to the athletic program - will all of the games start 15 minutes later than they had in the past? Or will the student athletes be allowed to leave class 15 minutes early? Chair Nugent replied that he will answer after the meeting.

Andrea Levin, KHS teacher, stated that she is concerned with the speed of these changes, which she does not believe are data-driven. They need to consider the most effective instructional units for at-risk kids. There is something to be said for year-long skinnies. Research shows that rapid transitions cause problems for foundation level students. Teachers who are skilled at teaching blocks do it in 15-20 minute activities and have transitions within the block classes. It is a misconception that shorter classes are better for the at-risk kids. These proposed changes are not taking into account the damaging effects of the transitions across the building. Teachers who use block well know that it can work for all students. Do more research before moving too quickly.

Ms. O'Donnell stated that she hears people saying they want more community forums. She continued that Ms. Blais's committee hosted eight forums because the issue was closing a school and exploring community values; very emotional issues, and the changes would affect all elementary students. The Board cannot have community forums on every issue. They try to be accessible to people. Their committee and Board meetings are open to the public. They talk with people in person, via email, and via phone, and try to be transparent. Board members all have full time jobs and kids, and they are at meetings for hours, all of which have time for public input. Modifying block scheduling is not something that just came up, it was a Board goal from last October. It used to be a standing agenda item every meeting. Ms. O'Donnell continued that the issues she has consistently heard is that kids go a year without Math, or there are big gaps in semesters, and foreign languages. It is necessary to have a schedule that works for all students. The Board has researched this a lot, and there is lots of data to back any position. Some students with special needs require shorter classes and some don't. Everyone knows that kids have different learning styles. The Board has had many meetings about this over the years in the Education Committee, talking about how to best meet the varied needs of all students. The goal is not to make everything the same for all the kids. This is a work in progress and everyone is doing the best they can.

Tina McLaughlin stated that her husband was a member of the Elementary Ad Hoc Advisory Committee. She continued that she is still not completely on board with the recommendation, but everyone who went to the meetings is. The new updated timeline does not include parents and students. Some things that the administrators said were hard for teachers to hear. Administrators voted for a different schedule and feel trapped and thrown under the bus. The plan is flawed, in the sense that there is not enough room for

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common prep time, RTI, etc. to happen. The whole staff has not met together so she has been going around and talking to people from other departments and it is upsetting. She urges the Board to please ask the individual administrators if they support the modified block schedule plan. They are worried about the fire code, and discipline with four-minute passing issues. Tardies will have to be excused.

Judy Idelkope stated that she has been hearing about block scheduling changes for at least three years. She feels that as a parent she has had a lot of opportunities to provide input. There has been information at meetings and through mailings. She is disappointed that children have been indoctrinated with propaganda that is not balanced. Her kids came home and told her things the teachers are telling them, and she is sad that teachers are politicizing this with the kids. Ms. Idelkope thanked the Board for their work. She continued that the Board has researched the ways in which this could be successful. She is chagrined that the teachers are so opposed. She hopes that people work together to solve problems instead of creating them.

Suzanne Sharon, KHS teacher, stated that something that keeps coming up in Board meetings, which concerns her, is the frequent hiring of consultants. She continued that consultants come in for a few days over the course of the year then go back to their office and type up a report based on just their very brief visit and who they spoke to while they were at the school. She heard tonight that there are plans to bring in another consultant. Teachers are the ones who are at the school all the time, and they have not been given enough opportunities to give their input. The middle students will be falling through the cracks, the ones who are not calling or emailing the Board. Ms. Sharon talked about how difficult it is for her to get around the halls, to various classes, and her mail box, all in different places. It is hard to stay organized, with multiple notebooks and lists. The proposed schedule changes will increase the amount of stuff kids will have to carry in their backpacks, and they will have seven or six textbooks at once. There are many things that have not been taken into consideration with this new plan.

10. Adjourn

MOTION: At 7:59 PM, Ms. Blais made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Szot seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted by
Britta Reida, Stenographer

Approved by the KBE Education Committee – 12/20/11