

Minutes
RPC Leadership Team and Foxcroft Academy
Wednesday, December 12, 2007
FOXCROFT ACADEMY – LIBRARY
6:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Present: Sue Mackey Andrews, Ralph Johnson, Rick Johnston, Jack Clukey, Ray Webb, Dick Swett, Julie Anderson, Vandy Hewett, Dick Gould, Beth Postlewaite, John Dirnbauer, Ann Bridge, Bill Bisbee, Kevin Stithan, Walt Emmons, and Michele Janes.

Sue Mackey Andrews briefly provided the background for the meeting. The chairs of the subcommittees met to develop the questions that are the frame for the conversation. The desired outcomes are:

Planned Outcomes:

Participants will:

- **Gain an understanding of the vision of Foxcroft Academy as it relates the Academy's role in RSU # 18**
- **Discuss the diverse needs of students and the importance of creating options and opportunities for all students K-12**
- **Identify questions, issues and/or barriers for MDOE response**
- **Identify potential content areas for the development of a Collaborative Agreement between RSU # 18 and Foxcroft Academy**

Sue asked for ground rules or working norms for the meeting. Several people offered suggestions.

- Okay to disagree, not be disagreeable
- Listen to and assume the good will of others
- For tonight to avoid the discussion of money
- To seek good outcomes for students
- To accept the law as it is for now
- The conversations are worthwhile and valuable no matter what the outcome

Sue shared the RPC vision with the group.

The vision is to provide a community-based education system with a broad base to meet the diverse needs of all students. We wish to create more opportunities for students; cost savings is second. We do not intend to sacrifice instructional quality and availability in this regionalization opportunity.

The goal is to provide opportunities for students, not track students. Ray Webb shared his reflection on the questions, their meaning, and the larger construct of the RSU.

Questions for the meeting with the RSU Planning Committee and FA

1. Is it possible that "school choice," as opposed to an "exclusive contract" will become a significant part of the RSU procedures? If so, will FA consider a more broad based curriculum? How may it differ from current approaches?
 - Ray Webb is willing to consider all sound educational ideas. He listed the breadth of coursework at FA including industrial arts, the arts, and three foreign languages.
 - The kind of school choice that is productive is choice that fits and benefits students
 - Concern was expressed about schools and educational plans by Dick Swett that we do not make the cookie cutter education.
 - School choice should be a partnership between a school, a student, and parents to develop a plan that meets the needs of the student.
 - Dr. Swett believes that school choice should be an option.
 - Vandy Hewett believes that FA provides a good education and will be the option of the majority of students in the area.
 - Dr. Webb explained a vision of school choice that might result in the desire to maintain the area high schools and students in the area could choose any school. He spoke about the idea of reserving places for out-of-area places for students, a common daily schedule, and common calendar.
 - John Dirnbauer introduced the concept of magnet-area high schools.

2. What role and involvement do you see for parents and community members to contribute to the vision and future of Foxcroft Academy?
 - Dr. Webb believes that it is essential that parents are part of their students' education.
 - He wants to re-institute parent forums, has had one, and scheduled one February.
 - Mr. Stithan believes that parents must be involved from early on in school.
 - Dr. Swett suggested that the state mandate a common schedule.
 - Dr. Webb suggested that a larger liaison committee for the RSU be created to meet to discuss student and curricular issues.
 - Ms. Bridge said that the student outcomes should be the driving force behind the reorganization.
 - Dr. Webb believes that the work should focus on success and build on it.

3. How do you foresee FA's involvement in curriculum and program development in the context of 2-4 other high schools in the RSU?
 - Dr. Webb shared one possible approach to the design is that area high schools provide programs of specialty. Each school would develop a program core and then offer a special program that would allow the development of excellence in specialties.
 - Rick Johnston suggested that we think in terms of moving faculty around.
 - The lower 25% of at-risk students are of concern.
 - Technology may provide some support for developing programs that reach many more students.
 - Dick Gould believes that FA could be the 'hub' and example of a quality educational institution.

- Ralph Johnson expressed some concern that a private high school is not as accountable to the RSU as the public high schools.
4. Whether or not there are changes in school choice, would FA work in conjunction with the RSU to support the development of program options for middle and secondary education to provide exposure to multiple avenues of learning including vocational, technical, business, college track, etc.?
 5. If FA were one of several choices for secondary education, what requirements or standards would you institute or consider instituting for enrollment at Foxcroft Academy? Will such be developed in concert with the other high schools in the RSU? What enrollment standards exist currently for students enrolling at FA, specifically in terms of entrance exams, performance standards, disciplinary standards, or other standards?
 - Ms. Andrews asked how FA might look at standards and flexibility for students.
 - Currently, FA currently has an open enrollment policy. The commitment would be to continue in a similar way. Private students apply and their past record is reviewed for predicting success. The desired outcome is that the students may graduate within the timeframe expected. Disciplinary and attendance procedures are designed to ensure success.
 - Dr. Swett suggested that this reorganization would offer opportunities to form a consortium for purchasing the services of sophisticated service providers.
 - Dr. Webb believes that the current educational role of providing a broad-based, comprehensive education will remain such in the near future.

ζ *The ideas interjected at this point are not a direct response to this question and are included below.*

6. Why is there such low participation in the Tri-County Regional Voc Ed program? MSAD #68 pays for 32 slots per school year. How many slots are being used now for our students?
 - It is a complicated issue that includes distance to TCTC, student must choose to participate, the ability to participate in activities at FA.
 - FA did not choose the number of slots at TCTC and has filled about 13 slots a year. (The numbers in the student junior/senior populace dictates the number of slots.)
 - FA has offered to facilitate the 'selling' of TCTC and encourages TCTC to sell the program.
 - One of the problems has been that the students do not want to take on anything extra and meet the demands of two different school programs.
 - Dr. Webb thought that offering eighth graders an opportunity to take an FA industrial arts course might increase participation at TCTC.
 - The opportunity to offer to provide more and broader educational opportunities exist at this juncture.
7. What role would FA play in meaningful education to students with special education needs, Section 504 students, students who require a structured

alternative education program perhaps housed outside of the school environment, etc.?

8. The new RSU undoubtedly will have a collaborative relationship with many entities including FA. What process do you envision that will be in place to evaluate our collaborative effort in the future, i.e., identification of future issues affecting the quality of education in RSU 18, challenges, barriers?
9. What do you envision as the process for outlining steps to address these issues, and tracking the progress of resolving these issues as they may arise from time to time?
10. How do you see FA fitting in to the complicated context of an RSU as an equal and participating component, or as something else? How will FA interact with their new partners in the ongoing development of curriculum and program?
11. What is the discussion amongst the other headmasters of private schools related to the RSU initiative? Are we unique or are others dealing with similar questions?
 - There is a division between town academies and private schools.
 - The town academies believe that they have served towns quite well.
 - Most of the other town academies are not as involved in the process as FA.

ζ

The one person, one vote stipulation creates a problem for surrounding towns because Dover Foxcroft is the largest political entity with the largest block of votes (Rick Johnston). The current alignment does not create greater opportunities for students. With the current fracture of the area districts, the problems of the area will not be addressed (Ms. Bridge). Ralph Johnson sees this reorganization as an opportunity for drawing the county together.

Jack Clukey believes that even if the area is not in one RSU we still have opportunities to institute collaborative agreements.