

Rochester School for the Deaf  
Town Meeting  
Thursday, November 1, 2007

Harold Mowl welcomed everyone and introduced Deborah Pearce as the new RSD Board President. Mrs. Pearce began serving on the Board in 2001 and is very excited to begin her time as Board President.

Dr. Mowl made a few announcements regarding several staff members as follows:

- School Counselor, Pat Sullivan received the National Heart of Social Work Award.
- Former Athletic Director, Paula Hanson was inducted into the Batavia High School Sports Hall of Fame.
- Former Principal, Ames Curchin was inducted into the U of R Athletic Hall of Fame.
- Athletic Director and Coach, Mary Cook was inducted into the Waterloo High School Hall of Fame.

**Surveys—**

Dr. Mowl shared information regarding the surveys that were taken last May. The response rate was low at only 22% compared to 35% in 2006; however, more than 50% of the responses were positive.

There was some discussion as to whether or not the School should continue the surveys and if so, how to increase participation. One suggestion was to have the questions of the survey signed. Another suggested a paper survey, but Dr. Mowl explained the reasons behind not wanting to do that. The PSA should encourage involvement also.

**Advisory Committee for Effective Communication Report—**

Committee makeup is SA, RSDAA, UFA, JRNAD, Board, PSA. Dr. Mowl explained how the meetings are setup. So far, ten issues have been resolved. There are five issues currently being worked on. They include:

1. The new telephone/network system; we are waiting state funding.
2. Board voice in a newsletter; it will be included in the next *Building Bridges* newsletter.
3. Student directory; currently being worked on.
4. Parent involvement, which is a constant struggle. Trying to brainstorm ideas to encourage parents to become more involved with the School.
5. Effective communication between school office and parents; this is an issue that will never be fully solved. There will always be a way to improve smooth communication between parents and staff/directors.

If anyone would like to bring an issue to this committee, contact your constituency representative.

### **ASL and English—**

Dr. Mowl reminded the group about the Communication Philosophy Committee and the work that they did. He also explained a new approach he and the Directors are taking this year. The goal is equal recognition of both English and ASL. A new Language Planning Committee is being established; Susan Searls will lead this committee. This committee will observe and evaluate classroom techniques. One of the new principles is that the teachers will work with the student's strengths, whether it is English or ASL. This year we do not have any speech/communication teachers; they are speech teachers. Barb Di Giovanni is our new ASL/English Bilingual Specialist.

### **Parent Involvement—**

Dr. Mowl opened the floor to suggestions on ways to get parents more involved in the school. PSA meetings are not well attended, and often need to be cancelled. The ECC has a program in place that encourages socializing.

This year, the School had a PSA meeting the same night as Open House. This year all teachers had at least one family present, which is normally not the pattern. One thought regarding low attendance is the signing ability of some of the parents. Some parents would rather avoid an uncomfortable situation than participate. Another idea was to host an event for the kids that require parental supervision. This would give parents an opportunity to interact with each other in an informal setting. Another suggestion was "adopt a parent/friend" program in which a deaf parent and a hearing parent would team together and be able to learn from each other.

### **Singing Environment—**

One issue raised by a parent was the fact that some staff members have been observed not always signing, even when they are around students. This parent believes that this is a subtle message that says ASL is not important. They do not know how to encourage a signing environment, but one suggestion was to implement signage around the RSD campus to remind people to respect each other by signing at all times.

The meeting ended at 7:45 p.m., and Dr. Mowl thanked everyone for coming.