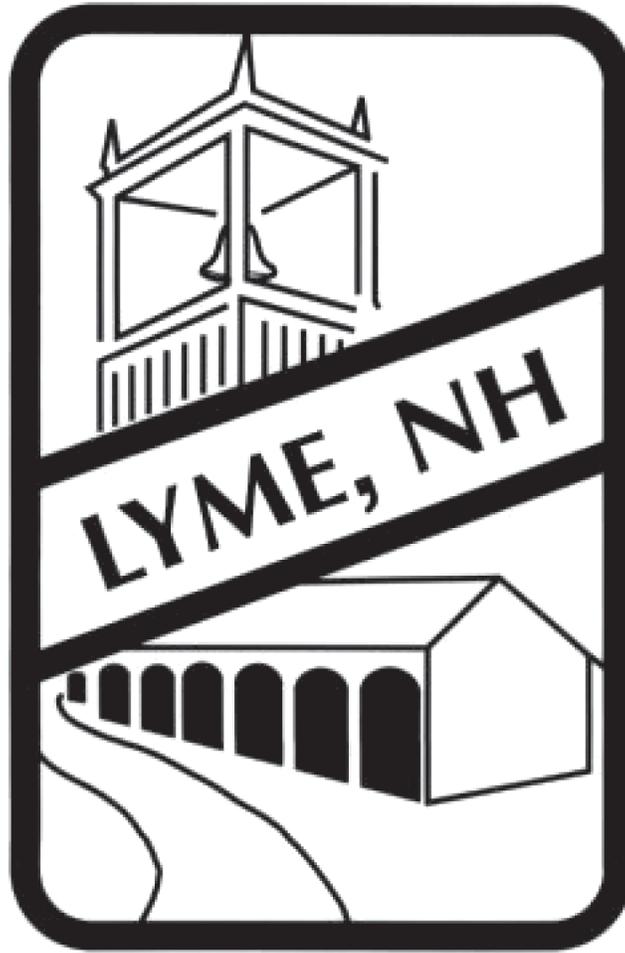


# LYME SCHOOL DISTRICT



## NARRATIVE REPORTS 2012

## Annual Report of the Lyme School District

This past fall the addition of two temporary classrooms in the form of trailers in back of the school provided some level of punctuation to the ever-evolving story of overcrowding in the Lyme School. However this is far from the end of the tale, as class sizes in the elementary school continue to push beyond state recommended thresholds. Many of you also know, it is not the total population, but rather the distribution of that population grade-to-grade that provides the largest challenges, as student populations frequently change throughout the year. The currently preferred solution for classes just above the traditional tipping points is to create a “soft split” that allows larger grades to benefit from both the differentiated instruction that smaller classes can support and the social benefit of having a larger class. We have been pleased with the results of this type of arrangement in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades this year. It allows the school to better support students without needing to add another full-time teacher or a full-size classroom, but it can’t solve all the problems.

The reality is even with the temporary addition of trailers “outback,” the Lyme School still had to divide what had been the kindergarten classroom into two smaller spaces, bringing the total of new temporary walls in the school to 17. While the trailers have created some breathing room for classes in the upper school, they do not create suitable spaces for small group instruction, or for individual instruction/support as necessary, nor do they prevent the cafeteria from needing to serve as one of a half-dozen locations for music instruction and as another temporary math classroom. We are very glad to have the trailers, as this year would have been almost impossible without them, but our stated goal for doing this in last year’s town report was to “provide a bridge to a more suitable solution for the town of Lyme’s most significant public building and its student population.” After many years of evaluating potential options, the School Board is proposing a 20-year bond to support a significant renovation to the Lyme School to respond to the dual challenges of larger populations and the ability to succeed in executing an educational model that focuses on individual outcomes and results, while at the same time making the building more energy efficient.

The School Board has also invested significant effort in creating a new multi-year strategic plan. This process, led by Kate Semple Barta, Barbara Lynch, Jeff Valence, and Mike Harris began with surveying and interviewing community members, parents, and teachers to first define the direction our community wants to the school to move in, then outline areas where we can improve, and finally, clearly set goals, with defined paths and timelines to get there. As the previous two strategic plans have been invaluable in guiding the school, we are very pleased that this plan will build on that work and take the school even further.

We are also currently piloting a new teacher evaluation system designed to ensure our teachers receive comprehensive feedback from administrators, parents, students, and outside evaluators, and have the opportunity to use that feedback to continue their professional development. Our goal is to make sure the Lyme School remains one of the top schools in the state with an educational experience that is second-to-none. Everyone rightly has very high expectations for the Lyme School, as we are extremely fortunate to have a school of talented educators and a truly supportive community. A modern and progressive evaluation system is essential to meeting these expectations, and while this system will take some time to refine, we have already benefitted from aspects of the new program and expect it to pay more dividends in the near future.

At the same time, tragic events in other parts of New England and the country have put an increased focus on school security and safety. We are fortunate that the Lyme School has already invested in systems that made the school one of the most progressive in New Hampshire in terms of security that is effective and adaptable, but not intrusive. From magnetic, programmable locks, to cameras that allow the school office to monitor points of access and egress, the Lyme School model is one that our neighbors are already planning to follow. This is no small task for a school that serves a dual purpose as the largest meeting space in town and home to most of the town’s recreation programs. That said it has been a challenge to integrate the temporary trailers into our system. If they are not replaced, the school would likely need to incur additional expenses to maintain the level of safety and security the town of Lyme has come to expect.

**As this year’s School District Meeting will commence with discussion and a vote on a proposed school renovation bond, we have scheduled it to start one hour earlier than usual at 6 p.m. on Thursday, March 7, 2013.** Please remember that you need to be present at the meeting in order to cast your vote, and it is important to have your voice heard in this process, whether you speak aloud, or use your ballot to express your opinion. Thank you for your continued support.

## **Report of the Head of School Thetford Academy, 2012-13 School Year**

Thetford Academy, an independent school with a public purpose, serves 300 students from Thetford, Strafford, Lyme, Hartland, Sharon, Corinth, Topsham, Washington, Orange, and China. For the 2012-13 school year, 19 students from Lyme are in attendance at the Academy.

Vermont's oldest secondary school, Thetford Academy is proud of our 194-year heritage of preparing a diverse community of learners for the challenges of college and career. Featuring a rigorous college preparatory curriculum and an impressive college acceptance record, we strive to meet the needs of every individual, nurture each student's emerging intellectual curiosity, and provide time and space for real-world learning experiences.

The Academy's vibrant visual and dramatic arts programs (featuring *Twelfth Night* and *Les Misérables* this school year), nationally-ranked robotics program (heading to the World Championships in Anaheim, CA, this spring), growing international student program (hosting eight students from China this year), and myriad athletic opportunities and clubs complement the Academy's 80-plus course offerings. A number of unique traditions round out the TA experience, including Mountain Day, the Wood's Trail Run, the Mr. TA Pageant, and Founder's Day.

This year, Thetford Academy has utilized a theme, "A small group of Thoughtful, Committed Citizens can change the world" (Margaret Mead), to provide a common purpose for our community gatherings and conversations. As examples of the power of individuals to inspire others to action, we have highlighted towering figures of our recent past (e.g., Martin Luther King, Eleanor Roosevelt, Neil Armstrong, Paul Robeson), and we have delved into topics of serious import (e.g., bullying, human trafficking, global warming, genocide). Along the way, our students are learning to identify and stand up for the values in which they believe, to strive themselves to become Thoughtful, Committed Citizens.

This year, my first as head of school, has been one of exciting developments at Thetford Academy. Early in the school year we established four faculty leadership positions in STEM, Humanities, the Arts, and Experiential Learning. This winter, new programs and courses are being developed in science and technology, environmental studies, the humanities, global studies, the arts, and media studies. These along, with a new Honors Curriculum, will be going into effect for the 2014-15 school year. Find out more about what is happening at Thetford Academy by visiting [ThetfordAcademy.org](http://ThetfordAcademy.org) or by emailing me at [william.bugg@thet.net](mailto:william.bugg@thet.net).

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Head of School