

LYME SCHOOL DISTRICT



NARRATIVE REPORTS 2008



The Lyme School

Kindergarten to Eighth Grade Serving the community of Lyme, New Hampshire for over 100 years
(603) 795 - 2125 • MAIN STREET, LYME, NEW HAMPSHIRE 03768

Lyme School Principal's Report 2008

This year we have seen a lot go on in the Lyme School, too much to thoroughly list in this report, but here are some highlights:

- Our multiage program, designed to build a “whole school” sense of community, has grown from a single event to a monthly themed event that included students creating holiday cards that were sent to members of the community who do not have students in the school.
- The Lyme School continues to be ranked as one of the top three schools in the state of New Hampshire based upon standardized test scores.
- Teachers are in year two of a multi-year effort to redesign their instruction to align to state and national standards, to incorporate strategies that reflect the newest research about how different people learn and express their understanding, and to ensure the continuity of instruction, K-8.
- The school strategic plan continues to prioritize areas of improvement and focus resources in the most cost effective manner to benefit the greatest number of students in an effort to simultaneously control costs, provide for our students’ education, and ensure that no students “fall through the cracks.”
- Morning Meeting and Student Council continue to provide students with authentic opportunities to lead the school, take on responsibility, and become confident public speakers.
- We continue to retain and attract some of the top educators in the state, and serve as a teaching mentor site for the Upper Valley Teaching Institute.
- The school continues to work closely with the town’s emergency organizations to serve residents in need and establish specific plans to respond if a crisis were to arise.
- Lyme School’s graduates continue to perform at the top of their classes in high school, earning them High Honors and Honors distinctions for their academic performance. Our students also continue to serve their high schools in leadership roles within their various student councils, clubs, organizations, and athletic teams.
- The most recent highlight was the opportunity to view the Inauguration as a school, along with many community members, thanks to a generous donation by Rich Lowre and Pastor Donna Colletti-Lowre of the First Baptist Church in Lyme Center. We look forward to the ability to view future inaugurations and historic events in the years to come.

Depending on where one lived, the point in history when they went to school, and one’s own predispositions and interests, the image of what a school may currently look like could be very different. Many would recall their own educational experience and recall images of textbooks, papers, math problems, and science labs—the reading, writing, and arithmetic, or the “three Rs,” of education. The Lyme School is fortunate to be among New Hampshire’s top schools based upon academic testing that targets these areas. Some may recall a favorite teacher who inspired them, and some may recall the difficult lessons they learned from the one that didn’t. Anyone familiar with the Lyme School would understand that “school” also involves learning to appreciate hard work, the enjoyment of discovery, and learning about yourself and others—who they are, where they come from, and what they value. For years the Lyme School has also meant something else—service to others. It is now only half way through the year and, to date, students have worked to contribute to 15 different organizations: causes and organizations such as the Children’s Hospital at Dartmouth, the Humane Society of the Upper Valley, the Upper Valley Food Cupboard, The Converse Free Library, Save the Manatees, Connecticut River Cleanup Project, the Nepalese Fleece Drive, and Books for Zimbabwe.

We work to instill the idea that service to others is intrinsic to being a citizen of the United States. Service to others can take the form of contributing time or money, but it also involves modeling of the values that motivate the efforts: the demonstration of concern and respect for others. In this sense, service to others can be expressed through everyday acts of understanding and patience, appreciation and humility. Often these everyday acts are more challenging than the work required to raise awareness of or money for a cause.

Good citizenship and the pursuit of intellectual and personal growth require many of the same skills—the willingness to work hard, the ability to learn from one’s experiences, and the ability to learn from those around you. And to these I would add one more: the understanding of how one’s values influence perspectives and actions.

This past year we worked with students to develop the Lyme School’s shared values:

Respect for oneself and others • Companionship and belonging • Creativity and individuality • Honesty •
Kindness • Work ethic • Fairness • Responsibility

As part of the process we discussed the difference between ethics, morals, and values. We discussed how these can often conflict with one another, resulting in dilemmas. One of the most difficult types of dilemma is *right versus right*.

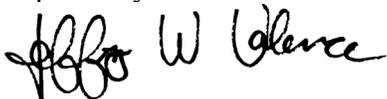
A right versus right dilemma is a situation in which one must choose between two or more options, each having its own ethical merits. Right versus right decisions often involve truth versus loyalty, individual versus community, short term versus long term, and justice versus mercy.

The right versus right dilemma is one that is quite common this time of year, as it is the time when we construct, debate, and vote for or against the school’s budget. On one side of the dilemma are the lives and futures of the youngest members of our society. On the other are financial pressures faced by property owners in a challenging economy, pressures which are exacerbated further by local taxes. Both of these groups are at the heart of our community, and neither would wish to compromise or complicate the lives of the other. So we seek compromise, hoping that we will find a comfortable place where both can be satisfied and controversy can be averted. If this place could be plotted on a map, the paper marking its location would be worn through, for it is a place we all seek and would like to believe we could always end up.

However, it is called a dilemma because a solution is not easy. There are days when one longs for that time in our lives when we could see things in black and white, things that now appear as shades of gray. Were I able to see only deep blacks and brilliant whites, I could say that our sole responsibility is to provide for the education of the children in our town. Life has enough obstacles in its path without our compromising a young person’s primary tool for success—an education suited for the challenges they will encounter, a benefit we were all provided when we were young. However, as a teacher and as a citizen I also recognize the pangs of anxiety when the costs of living exceed one’s income. Both situations are real, both have consequence, and each will be viewed by some as “right.” What remains is the dilemma: the responsibility of a free society to choose where and how to invest its resources.

As one of the people charged with leading our school my priorities are clear: to use the resources made available to the school as efficiently as possible to ensure that our children will receive the fullest educational potential of those resources and to annually advocate for the needs of the youngest and least-represented members of our town, those who will carry the fullest measure of our decisions, the children of our community.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Lyme School,



Jeffrey W. Valence
Principal, The Lyme School

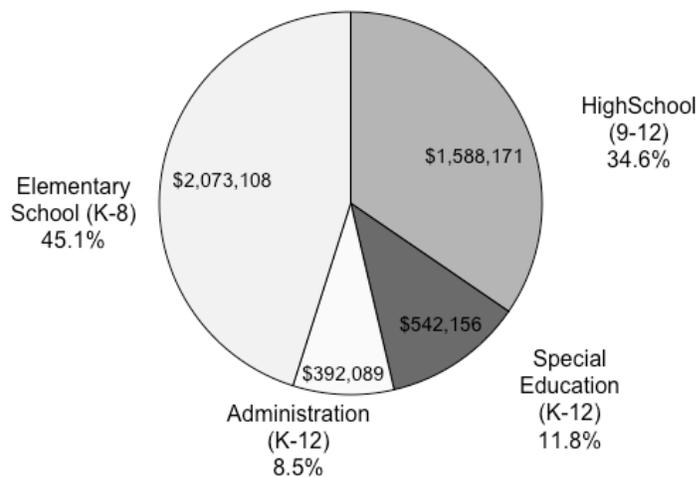
LYME SCHOOL DISTRICT Town Report 2009–2010

Summary

In recognition of the recessionary economy, the proposed FY10 budget for SAU 76 is level-funded (*i.e.*, no increase) compared to last year's budget.

The proposed 2009–2010 Lyme School District budget is \$4,595,524. This is the smallest budget increase in seven years and reflects our focus on keeping discretionary costs under control while also providing the necessary resources for an education in the 21st century.

Lyme School Expense Budget 09-10



Proposed 2009–2010 Expense Budget

High School

Tuition

Total high school tuition costs will increase by about \$215,000 due to more pupils next school year (93 vs. 84 in regular placements). The tuition increase was estimated to be five percent for all schools except Hanover High School, which historically has seen larger increases than other high schools. Hanover's tuition was estimated to increase by six percent.

Reserve Fund

No funds were allocated to the high school reserve fund. The reserve fund was \$339,841 as of June 30, 2008, and with the \$200,000 allocated from last year's budget, we believe

the fund is sufficient to smooth the impact of unusually large classes entering high school in the next few years.

Special Education

High School

High School special education costs will decrease about \$125,000 because fewer students require placement in expensive out-of-district special education schools compared to last year. Costs in the 2009-10 proposed budget include tuition for one student attending a special education school that is out of district. It's important to remember that special education services, and their associated costs, at both the high school level and for students in grades K-8 are federally mandated, and must be paid for by the school district.

Reserve Fund

For the second year in a row, no additional monies were allocated to the special education reserve. We believe the current reserve balance, which is more than \$150,000, is adequate to cover unanticipated special education expenses in the upcoming school year.

Elementary

Elementary special education costs will decrease slightly by approximately \$23,000 in 2009-2010 due to a reduction in aide position (0.6 FTE), because of a reduced caseload for services, and efficient use of existing staff. Cost are expected to increase by nearly \$6,000 for externally provided psychological and speech services combined, while other special education costs remain approximately the same.

While the percentage of Lyme students in special education (10.8%) is less than the national average (12%), and while the director of special education at the Lyme School works hard to ensure that special education funds are carefully spent, the fact remains that some children require significant support. Our experience suggests that early intervention and support, while expensive, is the best way to ensure that these students can thrive, and in fact this approach costs taxpayers far less in later years. The difference we can make in the earliest years of school can pay off handsomely as a student enters middle school and high school, where the tuition for a mandated special education placement can be as much as \$90,000 per year for just one student.

Elementary School

Teachers' Salaries

Per the negotiated agreement, the teachers receive an annual increase of the Northeast Urban Consumer Price Index monthly average from October 2007 through September 2008, plus ¼% with a floor of 3% and a cap of 4.5%. This year the CPI for that period was 4.35% so the increase reverts to the cap of 4.5%.

This budget involves several personnel changes. First, we have eliminated two teaching positions (1.1 FTE) because of declining enrollment at the middle school. This has been expected, and we hope to achieve this reduction through attrition.

In addition, we hope to hire a half-time differentiation coordinator to focus exclusively on math. This change will allow our current differentiation coordinator (also 0.5 FTE) to focus on language arts and on the administration and interpretation the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) tests. (The NWEA tests use computer adaptive technology, aligned with state education standards, to measure student achievement and growth. These tests allow the staff and school to regularly assess how well individual students are learning over the course of the school year, so that they can adapt instruction accordingly).

Both differentiation coordinators will allow the school to better educate a broad range of students. The differentiation coordinator is one way we can keep special education costs down through early intervention. We can also serve students on the advanced end of the curriculum with these positions.

This budget also calls for our school nurse to become a full-time employee (instead 0.8 FTE). This year, we have six medically fragile children at the school and a full-time nurse will ensure that their needs are appropriately met.

We are also hiring a half-time regular aide to direct our pre-school reading program. Having a dedicated employee for this task will greatly reduce the risk of these students requiring special education.

Health Insurance

Health insurance costs will increase by six percent next year for teachers and staff. While this increase is higher than last year, having fewer staff and faculty taking the health care benefit mitigates the impact of the increase.

Retirement

Retirement costs have increased by 20% this year, a significant amount mitigated by one fewer person being on retirement this year. The net impact is an additional cost of approximately \$11,000.

Computer Equipment

Computer expenses will increase by \$7,000 to \$29,000 to replace equipment that is beyond its practical lifespan and to make some needed investments in new technology. We are in year two of a technology replacement plan that has brought needed improvements to our infrastructure, and these funds will ensure that plan is adequately funded.

Improvement of Instruction

An important part of the strategic plan that we adopted two years ago focused on a clear articulation of academic principles, instructional principles, subject and grade objectives,

and instructional units for each grade in the Lyme School. To support these efforts, a very modest \$4,800 is budgeted to pay for teachers' summer work, \$1,000 for substitutes while the teachers are doing professional development (a reduction of \$1,500), \$16,000 for graduate tuition reimbursement (an increase of \$2,000), and \$3,000 for additional training. The budget also continues a strategic investment of \$10,000 for special instruction of teachers and students in order to maintain the high level of language arts instruction that has been achieved in recent years.

Fuel

Fuel costs have been very volatile this year, and this budget estimates fuel, which is currently at \$2.75 per gallon, to be \$3.50 per gallon.

Food Service

After years of deficits ranging from \$12,000 to \$18,000, food service operations enjoyed their second year of strong growth at the Lyme School. We sold an average of more than 110 meals every day this year (a 10% increase from last year). We anticipate a \$7,500 deficit for next year for food service. Lyme has less than 5% of its student population eligible for state-subsidized free or reduced lunch. We operate our food service at a deficit in order to keep prices low while providing good nutrition for the children. We believe the projected deficit is a reasonable subsidy for our food service. This year also marked the third consecutive year we raised prices for lunch (by \$0.25 for a total cost of \$2.75).

Building

The budget calls for \$10,000 to be spent on improvements to the school, including new doors for the cafeteria and bathrooms, and replacement of carpet in a few rooms.

Teacher Contract

A new three-year contract with the teachers' union (the Lyme Educational Association) has been reached. What follows below are highlights of the tentative agreement.

- The salary increase structure remains unchanged. Teachers will continue to receive an annual increase based on the Northeast CPI monthly average from October through September, plus 0.25%, with a floor of 3% and a cap of 4.5%
- Modest increases in educational support, as well as support for teacher involvement in extracurricular activities like the school play.
- Reimbursement for graduate educational courses, instead of being a flat amount (\$1,500 per teacher per year) is now tied to the cost of a graduate course at Plymouth State University, where most of our teachers study. This will produce savings in year one of the contract of \$157 per course,
- Teachers who use a more expensive health care plan must pay for that option.

The Lyme School offers two healthcare plans -- an HMO plan and Point-of-Service (POS) plan to faculty. Teachers who choose the POS plan must pay 100% of the difference between its cost and the cost of the HMO plan by year three of the new contract (33% of the difference in year one, 66% in year two, and 100% in year three).

The net impact of these changes in the tentative agreement with the LEA represents an estimated savings of more than \$11,000 compared to the previous contract.



YUYU CUTTING EXAMINES HIS CATCH

(Photo: Staff)

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF SCHOOL THETFORD ACADEMY 2009

This year at the Academy we're celebrating 190 years of continuous service as an independent school that educates students in partnership with their families and communities. Our long connection with Lyme is an important part of that history, and I'm pleased to provide this report to the Town.

Academics: We are implementing major changes in the way we educate our students. TA eighth-graders have begun working with our new program this year on a pilot basis. We know students from the Lyme School will arrive well prepared to take up the challenge in their first year of high school.

- We have developed new, more challenging Graduation Standards. Our premise is that whether they are work-bound or college-bound, all students must master vital skills to engage productively in the demanding 21st century world. TA graduates will demonstrate proficiency in skills essential to lifelong learning: writing, reading, investigation, expression, reasoning and problem solving. Our standards will also challenge students to show an active commitment to community service and citizenship, and develop responsibility and reflection in their work habits.
- Students will increasingly take charge of their own education through the creation of Personal Learning Plans. These plans, which will be refined each year in consultation with faculty, advisors, and parents, will help students formulate goals, document progress, and prepare to leave high school with a clear vision for their future. A system of Personal Learning Plans, recommended as one of Vermont's "High Schools on the Move" reform strategies, is currently being developed at a handful of schools in New England including Thetford Academy.
- High performance teachers are crucial to high performance learning. In the last year, we have placed increased emphasis on evaluating teaching and learning school-wide. I have been visiting each teacher's classroom at least four times per semester, using TA's six learning principles as a framework to see how they are applied in action. My "Classroom Walks" provide teachers with frequent, informal feedback on teaching strategies and our shared goals for high quality learning.
- We have a new set of Professional Standards, also grounded in TA's six learning principles, with indicators for teaching proficiency developed in collaboration with the faculty. The purpose of these Professional Standards is to provide a consistent and efficient method for the evaluation of individual teaching. The document also serves as a clear, comprehensive description of best practices at TA.

Building Project and Budget: The Academy trustees have worked hard to respond to the challenging economic climate while sustaining a strong learning community at TA. They remain committed to the building project approved last year, with a first phase that will include complete renovation of the science building, construction of a new gymnasium, and refurbishing Anderson Hall to create space for a small theater and a functional cafeteria. The process of obtaining state permits has been slow; we now expect to break ground this spring. When this project phase is complete in 2010, physical education, performing arts, and food service will all have improved and expanded space.

- The renovation of the science building will include modernized labs and an additional science classroom, changes that will eliminate safety issues and overcrowded space. Our award-winning science teachers and their students deserve a better place for their good work.
- The construction of a new gymnasium will provide desperately needed additional physical education space allowing for the simultaneous use of the gym by two classes or practicing teams. After more than a half-century of use, the historic Anderson gym has outlived its useful life. It will be transformed for new purposes: expanded performing arts space, with a 200-seat theater and scene shop, as well as a larger, more efficient area for food service.
- The financial plan behind the building project is sound. The project cost is estimated at \$8.5 million with 30% of this amount to be raised from non-tuition- based resources. TA is budgeting to raise \$1.2 million through fundraising, \$350,000 from asset sales, and \$1.0 million from annual endowment contributions over the life of the 25-year bond used to support the project. \$560,000 has been raised from generous donors to date, even before the full public phase of the fundraising campaign. While current economic conditions are weak, construction costs and financing rates are very favorable for building.
- Including building project expenditures, TA's FY 2010 budget increases 4.8% over the FY 2009 level. Not including those costs, the operating budget is increasing just 0.7% over last year.

Partnership: We continue to value the Academy's partnership agreement with the Town School District of Lyme, guaranteeing admission to all Lyme students who choose our school as ninth-graders. We continue to find them well prepared and ready to learn; New Hampshire students in grade 11 at TA scored exceptionally high on NECAP tests of reading, writing, and mathematics this past fall. I'm also pleased to report that thanks to the efforts of Dr. Gordon Schnare, parents, and local legislators who advocated with the Department of Motor Vehicles in Concord, Lyme students can once again obtain driver's licenses after completing the Academy's course in Driver Education. We look forward to offering future students this service along with the rest of our comprehensive curriculum.

Martha Jane Rich
Head of School