

# RCTA Newsletter

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## John Shea's Way May Not be the Only Way YOU decide

With the current downturn in the economy and taxpayers losing their jobs and homes, is now the time for the Rochester School Department to move forward with another school? As a community we have many great opportunities for our children, the problem is those opportunities are not taken full advantage of.

As a taxpayer are you ready to fund another, smaller high school?

Are you prepared to have your taxes increase in an effort to fund an idea that may turn out to be just another fad?

Do you believe that any project is truly "budget neutral?"

Will Mr. Shea's new school be a consultant-driven intervention that imposes a pre-packaged agenda on our school?

Will Mr. Shea's new school create a testing regime in which increased dropout rates and distorted teaching practices are the collateral damage?

Will Mr. Shea's new school use selective data by administrators to justify policy decisions they would have made anyway?

Will Mr. Shea's philosophy of curriculum integration really allow students to determine to a large extent what they want to study versus what they should study?



As a taxpayer it is imperative that you become involved and familiarize yourself with Mr. Shea's ideas, philosophy regarding education, and his proposal for a smaller high school. This endeavor may be more costly to our community than just money; it may become an educational tragedy for current and future generations if this "experiment" fails.

As a parent and taxpayer you must decide:

How prepared will our children be for college?

With the elimination of the "antiquated" method of teaching, how much will students truly learn if they focus on smaller "pockets" of information and not receive information regarding the bigger picture?

The concept of small schools has failed over and over again in many communities leaving students unprepared not only for college, but in their ability to enter the workforce. Even Bill Gates has abandoned the "small school concept" and is backing charter schools. In 2005, he admitted that the test scores in math in the "small schools" he funded were far below those of the regular high school.

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For all the changes implemented over the years' school systems ultimately return to what has worked for a hundred years.

The RCTA has done extensive research regarding this topic. The website lists a number of informative links (documents/ schools/small school links). Mr. Shea is preparing to "roll out" his proposal January 28<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM at Community Center to the general public. A Public Hearing with time for Q&A is set for 7 PM, Monday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, same place. After this hearing your School Board will review all the remarks and discuss options. **COME and get YOUR questions answered. YOU must become part of the process and VOICE your opinion as a Taxpayer.**

As a taxpayer the time has come to slow down school spending and make those teaching our students more accountable.

Mr. Shea is passionate about his vision/idea which can be considered admirable, but his agenda appears to also be the agenda of Mr. Hopkins. When Mr. Shea brought forth the idea of the Big Step Forward a year ago the community was informed that this was to be a smaller school for students that were less engaged than most. The new school would not have a band, sports and students would not have access to the Richard W. Creteau Regional Technology Center. The vision is every student would have a new best friend in their teachers.

As Mr. Shea has gone from school to school talking to parents about his vision there have been subtle changes noted in his presentations. Now this smaller school will include a scaled back music program and varsity sports of some kind. One may think that Mr. Shea does not have the total support that he thought he did and will do what he has to in order to get his agenda validated.

There is still no concrete information regarding the success of so called smaller schools other than the breakup of inner city schools of 6000 to 7000 students with a high population of minorities. Making these schools smaller is logical.

Funding is a major issue and after researching Mr. Shea's list of Perspective Partnerships Targeted Foundations and grant makers start up funding is going to be a serious issue.

**The NH Department of Education** is no longer guaranteeing 60% of start up funding for new schools. **The New England Consortium of Secondary School Redesign** is funded by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation. This foundation has committed only \$1 million to support the initial 18 months of the Consortium's work, which includes a \$500,000 grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. **Carnegie Foundation** more recently focused its work on moral, civic and political education; preparation for the professions (law,

engineering, clergy, medicine and nursing); reform of the Ph.D.; and field-building work with teachers at all levels to develop new models for documenting classroom practice in ways that other educators can study, adapt and implement. The Foundation continues to work with community colleges to improve basic skills education in that sector. There may be some money here for high school, but as a school we do not fit any of their categories. **Pew Charitable Trust** partners with the school. Please be aware that their investments are highly focused, making

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support very unlikely for activities that do not closely match their program goals. **The Wallace Foundation** is currently active in three focus areas. The Foundation solicits proposals from organizations it identifies for programs it initiates, and unsolicited proposals are rarely funded. **The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation** serves Kansas City. **The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation** is a possibility. **Joyce Foundation** supports the Great Lakes Region and although I was taught with the antiquated method I know New Hampshire is not part of the Great Lakes Region. **Spencer Foundation** invests in education research. **Charles Stewart Mott Foundation** primarily supports projects in the Flint, Michigan area. The list goes on and on, but as one can see there is not much monetary support for such endeavors and if this is allowed to go forward the taxpayer will definitely be on the hook to pay for a dream.



Poor House

We need to question why our students are not succeeding with the current model. Is it the model or the method of how it is taught that needs to be reviewed. Mr. Shea mentioned at a number of meetings that schools such as St. Thomas and Portsmouth Christian Academy have the same problem using an outdated system. I beg to differ with him. These students seem to do exceptionally well, as do students at Portsmouth High School. Maybe we should be looking to these schools for guidance and answers rather than trying to implement a system that has never been tried before. Block scheduling with its 90 minute classes has been tried and is considered yet another failure. It has been under review for more than a year and according to Mr. Shea changes are ready to be implemented but this will not happen for another school year. Why are we waiting? If a change needs to be implemented and the course of action has been decided upon, is waiting not a disservice to all students attending Spaulding High?

Is the problem Spaulding High suffers from really boredom and the lack of engaged teaching methods? Some members of the RCTA have reviewed the books utilized by the English Department at the High School and were somewhat surprised that works such as

Romeo and Juliet, Julius Caesar, Midsummer Night's Dream, To Kill a Mockingbird, Great Expectations just to name a few were being utilized for their Honors and A/P classes. Those of us who were educated in the 100 year old antiquated system were taught these in 7th, 8th and 9th grade "English."

So consider all the changes made over the past 40 years, how much have we truly prepared our graduates with the ability to compete in today's workforce? Rather than building new schools, redesigning curriculums and schedules, worrying about everyone's feelings and egos, shouldn't we be allowing teachers to teach (improve instruction), and not to be social workers and best friends of each and every student (this is the parent's job) and lets remove disruptive students from the classroom.

Some believe our schools are being used to affect social justice and political change on the taxpayer's dime, without much of a record of academic success. How do you see it?

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As we wonder why we are falling behind the rest of the world, we should understand what the rest of the world

has come to expect from their students and follow their lead.

If we do not, we will never regain our status as the best educated in the world.



**YOU decide** - Do we really need another school?



**1. William. Allen**



**2. School Street**



**3. Maple Street**



**4. Gonic**



**5. East Rochester**



**6. Nancy Loud**



**7. Chamberlain**



**8. McClelland**



**9. Rochester Middle School**



**10. Spaulding High  
with the Richard W. Createau  
Technology Center**



**11. Bud Carlson Academy**

**YOU decide** - Are we not capable of providing a superior education with what the taxpayer already pays for?

**YOU decide** - Is this truly the path we want to take, an unproven idea that could set those "400" students back years?

**YOU decide** - We have tried many fads in the past that have not worked. Why is it the School Department focuses on fads and not proven educational methods, like the antiquated one we all learned from?

**YOU, a Taxpayer, will pay for this!**

**YOU must get involved!**

**YOU must attend the presentation and get educated on the details!**

**YOU must come to the Public Hearing so your voice can be heard!**

**YOU must ask questions!**

Visit our website for more info:

[www.rochestertaxpayers.org](http://www.rochestertaxpayers.org)

or e-mail:

[info@rochestertaxpayers.org](mailto:info@rochestertaxpayers.org)