

Superintendent's Report for August – September 2014

Student /Staff Learning

1. All our WCSU Principals joined me for an extended planning retreat August 16-18 in Grafton. Abby, Bud, Matt, and Tom contributed their expertise to our discussions and study. Alison, Deb M., and Claire met with us on the last morning to inform the team of changes in their areas of responsibility. FYI, I emailed the agenda for this retreat to all board members on the 15th.
2. Rosemary FitzSimons and Bill Anton delivered two very fine speeches on August 5th, when they were honored by the VPA as Vermont's Elementary School Principals of the year (2014). Emily Long represented the WCSU Board at the presentations and two former colleagues, Frank Rucker and Bruce Garrow (2001 honoree) brought congratulations as well.
3. At the VPA Conference, we learned about how principals can prepare to support the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in mathematics and language arts this year. This will require a shift in what we look for as we observe instruction and student learning in our schools. We should see much more open-ended questioning by teachers and considerably more discussion, argumentation, debate to verify answers and solutions given by students. In all, it's a much more engaged and dynamic student centered approach to teaching and learning.
4. All licensed employees in our eight schools met at L&G on Aug. 25th for the WCSU Welcome Back 2014 in-service. I highlighted the importance of good teaching as the foundation of our democracy and called attention to our continuing initiatives to support professional learning to improve instruction. No individual teacher can meet the needs of every child, but a team of teachers and support staff *can*.

Policy and Regulation

1. See last month's report for issues that still pertain.
2. We have adopted an administrative procedure across the WCSU to improve the air quality in our parking areas near school buildings. This follows up on a recent VT Statute, but seeks a safer standard for our students arriving and departing every school day. We require everyone to turn off their motor vehicles when standing still for any time on the school's campus.
3. Windham is exploring the feasibility of provided hot lunches in cooperation with Abbey Food Service at Leland and Gray. L&G's kitchen already provides meals for Wardsboro. If Windham makes this change it means that every student in the WCSU will have access to the federally subsidized food nutrition program.
4. The Townshend Selectboard is improving the Town's right-of-way across the L&G campus to access parking in the back of the Town Hall for their employees. The Townshend Road Crew is now excavating and adding gravel to this right-of-way behind the Dutton Gym. Access will necessarily be limited by the administration to ensure student safety.
5. Jamaica and Townshend school boards will meet jointly on Sept. 9th at 7 P.M. at JVS to review financial projections and estimates re: building a new elementary school to

serve both towns. Bud has consulted with the AOE and will report on the latest developments in school finance that pertain. Cost estimates will be provided based on prior board discussion.

Finance/Accounting/Operations

1. Bud DeBonis submitted the AOE's "statistical reports" as required on Aug. 17. Bud and I want to thank Laurie, Randy, Deb M., Debbie W., Carolyn, and Teri for ensuring the accuracy of these reports. Marlboro submitted their statistics independently, but I authorized all eleven separate reports by signature.
2. Reminder: The Sullivan and Powers team will be in our office for the weeks of September 22 and October 6 to audit the accounts of Windham Central SU, Jamaica, Leland and Gray UHSD #34, NewBrook (Brookline and Newfane), Townshend, Wardsboro, and Windham. This annual professional audit continues to be required by law for all Vermont school districts regardless of size.
3. Chris Pratt, WSWSU Superintendent, and I met to explore the possibility of jointly contracting for operations in our respective central offices. There appears to be considerable potential for improving operational efficiency. We have directed our staff members to meet in pairs to make recommendations to us in September. These recommendations may pertain to implementation of our FY15 budgets, but more likely inform our planning for FY16 and beyond. Pairs are meeting to discuss the possibilities for special education, technology/information systems, human resources, and finance/grants management.

Enrollment/Staffing

1. We welcome fifteen new staff to our schools this fall.
2. We are very pleased to welcome Betty Young to the WCSU Team. Betty serves on a one-year contract as the WCSU's Mathematics Coach. She will be working directly with teachers in their classrooms and after school to support professional learning to improve our teaching of mathematics K-12. This coaching is funded by the Consolidated Federal Grant and made possible by an unexpected increased allocation for the WCSU this year.
3. As of today student enrollments for each school: Dover 101, Jamaica 65, L&G 345, Marlboro 81, NewBrook 125, Townshend 82, Wardsboro 60, and Windham 15. Leland and Gray and NewBrook have declined some, while the others remain pretty stable.

Informational Items

1. The WCSU Board's Annual Planning Retreat is at the Hermitage in Dover on Wednesday, September 24 at 5:00 P.M. This dinner meeting is a good chance to learn about other school boards in the WCSU and set the stage for our budget planning this fall. Please mark your calendars and make every effort to attend.
2. VSBA Southeast Vermont Regional Meeting will be Sept. 17 at Springfield H.S., 303 South Street in Springfield VT from 5:00 – 7:00 P.M.

8/26/14 - sbj

- WCSU will**
- ...place students at the center of our decision-making.
 - ...build trust and respect by acting ethically, transparently, and with integrity.
 - ...operate as a community of learners, committed to developing the skills and capabilities of all.
 - ...collaborate, share and seek creative solutions.