

## Superintendent's Report for February 2013

### Happy Ground Hog Day!

#### Student/Staff Learning

1. I have completed the appointments to the WCSU Math Committee. The members are: Chris Barton, Dorinne Dorfman, Tim Hayes, Laura Hazard, Beth Hiner, Gary Keiser, Sue Neuman, Mickey Parker-Jennings, Pat Pelton, Ted Redfield, Megan Richardson, and Donna Sebastian. The purpose of this committee is to provide support, advice, and insights to improve math instruction next year as we transition to the Common Core Standards (2015). Representatives from every school who serve on the Mathematics Committee will be consulting with Dr. Sharma. The committee will organize at its first meeting on February 28th with Dr. Sharma.
2. Last month at a public information meeting in Jamaica regarding the proposed formation of a Regional Education District (RED), former Vermont Representative Oliver Olsen shared information from the AOE website re: the percentage of students who enrolled in post-secondary schools and were still enrolled 16 months later (as Sophomores). He compared Burr & Burton Academy with Leland and Gray for the Class of 2009. BBA enjoyed a 73% continuing college rate while L&G had 39%. For the Class of 2010 L&G rose 10 points to 49% which quite comparable with Brattleboro at 53% and Bellows Falls at 51% for the same class. One of the smallest high schools in the state, Cabot improved from 42% to 80% from one class to the next. The data does not indicate how many students enrolled in college from each school.
3. More recently for the Class of 2012, the College Boards released a comparison of average SAT scores for Vermont high schools. Leland and Gray students averaged higher in Critical Reading, Mathematics, and Writing than Bellows Falls, Green Mountain, Black River, Twin Valley, Springfield, and Mount Anthony. They matched Brattleboro in Mathematics.
4. A comparison of Advanced Placement exams taken and passed (with a score of 3,4, or 5) found that Leland and Gray students earned high marks on 29 out of 38 exams taken, a passing rate of 76%. This exceeded all other schools including BBA and Brattleboro at 61%, Bellows Falls at 59%, Green Mountain at 48%, Black River at 28%, and Twin Valley at 0%. Dr. Dorfman became L&G's instructional leader with the 2009-2010 school year and it is encouraging to see that the efforts of her faculty are beginning to yield tangible results for our students.
5. Regarding student behavior and self-discipline, Wardsboro is in its 4<sup>th</sup> year of implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The school is now working to address Tier 3 students, the most challenging cases. The state's financial support of the PBIS initiative required us to create a WCSU Tier 3 Team that meets monthly. The Wardsboro Principal, L&G Director of Student Support Services, Superintendent, Director of Sp. Ed. a Sp. Ed. case manager, and an HCRS Rep. are members of this Team. Tom Daughton, WCSU School Psychologist, provides leadership and coordinates this team's response to student needs. To

**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.

- provide continuing support this PBIS initiative I signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with HCRS on Feb. 1, 2013. Jamaica is now in year three of PBIS implementation, with Windham and NewBrook at the first year stage of their school-wide behavior programs.
6. Dr. Dorfman won a federal SERV Grant for about \$49,000 to pay for additional counseling and staff training to better support our students in times of crisis. This grant was approved in response to the tragic suicide of a Leland and Gray student late last fall.
  7. Secretary Vilaseca supports the Governor's call for a Personal Learning Plan (PLP) for every student in grades 7-12 with "embedded real life opportunities". To make this possible the "business community must open up and ask students in". I emailed a copy of the Governor's address on Jan. 12<sup>th</sup>.

## Policy/Regulation

1. Dover, Jamaica, and NewBrook have adopted the model Bullying Policy as required by state law. All other boards have warned the policy (F30) for adoption at their next meetings. This policy defines bullying as "*repeated over time, directed at a particular student, and intended to ridicule, humiliate or intimidate.*"
2. The WCSU Board appointed an ad hoc committee to review the WCSU By-Laws and explore ways to make our notable number of board meetings at the SU and SD levels more efficient and effective. (I had 205 board meetings to attend last year (Jan. 1, 2012 to Jan.1, 2013.) The committee will meet on February 7 @ 6 P.M. at my WCSU Office and intends to bring recommendations to the WCSU Organizational Board Meeting on March 27<sup>th</sup>. Send your suggestions for the committee to Emily or me.
8. The four school boards continuing with the RED study considered the draft Articles of Agreement at their December meetings. The Townshend Board voted to support these Articles for the RED Committee's Meeting on Wed., January 16, 7 P.M. at L&G. The Jamaica Board invited the public to a special meeting, Tues., Jan. 8 to field questions and suggestions re: these proposed Articles. At that meeting about half of the residents raised hands to support moving forward with the RED formation. When asked how many wanted to continue as now and do nothing, no one raised a hand. The Jamaica Board took this to indicate they must make some changes and proceed with the study. The Brookline-Newfane Board shared copies of the Articles with citizens attending their information meeting on Jan. 31 and will do so again at the Joint Contract Board's Annual Meeting on Sat., Feb. 9, 10 A.M. at the NewBrook Firehouse. Pending approval of this draft of the Articles or recommended revisions by the boards, the RED Study Committee may submit the Articles to the State Board of Education at their next meeting on February 27<sup>th</sup>. State Board approval is required before each town can proceed to vote on forming a K-12 RED by Australian ballot.
3. WCSU and WSWSU Joint Study update: Emily Long, Laura Sibilgia (for Rich Werner), and Ken McFadden represented the WCSU Board at the Joint SU Study Committee's second meeting in my office on Feb. 1<sup>st</sup>. The Committee met directly with their VSBA Consultant, Ray Proulx who knows our region quite well. You may recall that Ray completed a very thorough study of L&G's administrative structure in 2004. A contract for his services has been signed and the \$5000 state grant to support

- this study has been approved. WWSU Superintendent Nancy Talbott and I are gathering a large number of documents requested by the consultant to give him a more complete picture of administrative organization and operations in each SU.
4. Frank and I plan to meet with the entire Windham County legislative delegation in Montpelier on Feb. 13. We expect WSESU Superintendent Ron Stahley to join us. Among other issues, providing the means to fund our regional career center (WRCC), dual enrollment classes for college and high school credit, and the Vermont Virtual Learning Network will be discussed.

## **Finance/Accounting/Operations**

1. Late last month, Frank emailed a detailed comparison of the budgets and projected tax impacts for all eleven WCSU school districts. Comparing proposed total budget expenditures increases range from 0% for NewBrook K-6 (Brookline +9.4% and Newfane -3.9%) to 10.2% in Dover PK-12. The projected K-12 tax rate changes range from -0.5% for Brookline to 13.7% for Dover. Dover also reports the highest student performance in the WCSU (and 2<sup>nd</sup> in the state for elementary schools) on the NECAP tests in mathematics and language arts.
2. With last week's payroll for L&G, all teachers covered by the recently ratified Master Agreement 2012-2015 will have received their retroactive pay and increased compensation.
3. Both Education Committees in the legislature support the proposal to provide free lunch for all students who now qualify for reduced price lunches. This change would make administering this program a little simpler.
4. Having heard the priorities of the Senate and House Education Committees it appears unlikely that any money will follow high school students exercising public school choice to attend another public school. L&G has ten school choice students in grades 9-12 from Grafton/Athens. The L&G Board approved the administration's recommendation to cap incoming choice students to 20 per year. This decision was primarily based on the school's capacity to provide Biology, a laboratory class required for graduation without hiring an additional teacher.
5. The State Commissioner of Taxes, Mary Peterson, has announced publicly and in newspapers that a Homestead Declaration for resident homeowners is now required annually by April 15. Three forms are required and are available on line or at your town office:
  - 1) Homestead Declaration
  - 2) Property Tax Adjustment Claim
  - 3) Household Income Form

These three are due with your VT Income Tax filing. She warns that if you are late you risk losing the income sensitivity adjustment you may be due.

## **Enrollment/Staffing**

1. Nothing new to report.

## **Calendar Dates**

1. On Wednesday, February 7, the voters of all five towns in the L&G Union School District will vote on L&G's proposed FY14 Budget. Polling takes place in Town Offices.

2. The ad hoc By-Laws Review Committee will meet at the WCSU Office in Harmonyville this Thursday, February 8 at 6:00 P.M.
3. The Voluntary RED Study Committee (now renamed the Windham Central Education District (WCED) will meet Wed., February 27 at 7:00 P.M. in the L&G Library. The Committee welcomes your questions, comments and suggestions regarding their work.
4. WCSU Board Organizational Meeting will be Wed., March 27 at 7:00 P.M. Location TBA.

2/4/13 - sbj