

Superintendent's Report for October – November 2014

Student /Staff Learning

1. Congratulations to all the young scholars who competed in the WCSU Spelling Bee hosted by the Dover School on Oct 6. Tom Daughton our WCSU School Psychologist was pronouncer and Marty Testo from L&G and Kerry Cady from the State's Attorney Office served as judges. Dover took first place and will represent the WCSU in the regional competition. The Vermont Principals' Association sponsors this competition each fall.
2. L&G families are hosting students and teachers from the Affiliated Middle School of the Performing Arts College at the University of Inner Mongolia, China. Principal Hou Shouzhi led this, the 14th, performing delegation from Hohot to join with Leland and Gray students for Journey East. Mr. Hou Shouzhi first came to our school ten years ago. I have attached a photo of the teachers and entire performing group with their host families. The two performances were held on Oct. 24, one for our elementary schools and later that night for the general public. The Rebels all enjoyed a fabulous finale for an all school assembly on Monday morning. Our guests' musical collaboration with our students gave the audience an unforgettable evening with our long time friends.
3. To support teachers and administrators working with behaviorally challenging students, WCSU School Psychologist Tom Daughton has taught several Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) workshops this fall. In addition, Tom helped coordinate a workshop in Life-Space Crisis Intervention taught by Ken Kramberg, a behavioral consultant for schools in Vermont.
4. The WCSU Math Committee continues to meet monthly to extend and apply the work of Dr. Mahesh Sharma to improve instruction and student mastery of the Common Core State Standards in mathematics PK-12. A special thanks goes to the teachers representing our schools. WCSU's math coach, Betty Young, advises and supports the work of this committee led by Laura Hazard and Chris Barton.
5. The literacy coaches from each school are also meeting regularly (most recently on October 22) to implement the Fountas and Pinnell instructional techniques to improve reading, writing and speaking PK- 6. Rosemary Fitzsimons and Deborah Leggott are providing administrative support for this committee's work. Bruce Rosow (our newest special educator teaching at L&G) is teaching a graduate course in Teaching Language I and II for all WCSU teachers to further support improved literacy.
6. A WCSU Elementary Report Card that is based on the K-6 state standards for mathematics and language arts will soon be released in final form for each school. This January, parents and students will receive this report card for the first time. Our goal is to ensure equivalent assessment and reporting of student achievement in math and language arts for all WCSU elementary schools.

Policy and Regulation

1. Policy review and adoption continues for each school board as may be required. Beginning next year (2015) we will not work on policy from April 1 to Sept 1. This

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- will enable Alison Hescoek to assist Claire Johns to meet the seasonal increase in workload for human resources. We will no longer accept applications for substitute teachers from April 1 to July 1. Please keep this reallocation of administrative support services in mind for the future.
2. The WCSU was selected by the state for an administrative food service review by Vermont Department of Child Nutrition. “The objectives of the Administrative Review are to (1) determine whether your School Food Authority (the WCSU) is in compliance with program requirements, (2) provide technical assistance, (3) obtain any needed corrective action should there be any findings, and (4) assess fiscal action, if applicable when meals or reimbursement has been incorrectly claimed.” Our federal and state meal reimbursements totaled \$266,512.97 in FY14. These funds enabled our food service programs to provide a little over 163,000 meals last year. Deb Mears provides oversight and support for our seven meals programs and one milk program (Windham) from our office. This fall we expanded our after school meal programs for students at Jamaica, Townshend, and L&G.
 3. The Jamaica and Townshend School Boards met together on Sept. 9th at JVS to review financial projections and estimates re: building a new elementary school to serve both towns. Although education expenses for both towns could be reduced, the two boards are unlikely to proceed further without a clear signal that the state will provide financial support for such proposed new school construction.
 4. A number of board members attended the VSBA Southeast Vermont Regional Meeting met Sept. 17 at Springfield High School. Secretary Holcomb presented some compelling data informing the tough decisions boards and voters face in approving budgets for FY16. This data will soon be available online at the VSBA website.

Finance/Accounting/Operations

1. Energy initiatives to reduce future school expenses for electricity, heating, and cooling:
 - a. NewBrook – at a special meeting Oct. 23, voters approved a photovoltaic solar panel installation on campus by paper ballot 195 to 96. The voters also approved borrowing up to \$330,000 to install HVAC heat pumps. These two projects are complimentary to make the school “green” except for a three-stage propane boiler system for back-up heat and summer hot water.
 - b. On October 28, the Dover School Board anticipates signing lease and net metering agreements to install solar cells on school property in back of the school.
 - c. I have signed a proposal with other Windham County Superintendents that will bring \$1.6 million in grants available to municipalities and school districts for biomass heating systems (wood chips or pellets). Boards may want to consider applying in January when the grant qualifications and conditions are to be released.
 - d. A possibility for other school districts in the WCSU is to become “off takers” of electricity from either solar cell installation at Dover or NewBrook. We’ll need more details before considering this option.
2. Budget FY16 proposals timeline:

November 11 – L&G first reading and review

November 13 – NewBrook first reading and review (may be rescheduled)

November 18 – Jamaica first reading and review

November 19 – WCSU first reading and review

December 3 – WCSU Superintendent's Budget consideration /possible approval

December 9 – L&G Budget consideration /possible approval

December 10 – WCSU Board additional budget meeting if necessary

December 11 - NewBrook budget review /possible approval

Proposed budget presentations for other schools will follow at December meetings.

3. The WCSU Board Executive Committee directed me to propose a Superintendent's Budget for FY16 that is flat (no change in expenses). They also directed me to include some money in salary reserve. This amount is not public as it might compromise the WCSU Bargaining Council's (and Dover's separately) pending teacher negotiations with the WCEA/VEA. The Brookline, Jamaica, L&G, Newfane, Townshend and Wardsboro Boards have appointed representatives to the negotiations. The paraprofessional and support staff negotiations for NewBrook, L&G, and the WCSU will follow that of the teachers.
4. The Sullivan and Powers team will be returning to our office November 4 to continue their audit of the WCSU, Jamaica, Leland and Gray, NewBrook (Brookline and Newfane), Townshend, Wardsboro, and Windham accounts.
5. WSWSU Superintendent Chris Pratt and I met to explore the possibility of jointly contracting for operations to better serve our respective central offices. Staff from both SUs met in corresponding pairs to make recommendations to us. While there appears to be considerable potential for improving operational efficiency in the long term, we agreed to plan our FY16 budget proposals independently at this time.

Enrollment/Staffing

1. The WCSU business office is dealing with an unfortunate coincidence of personal illnesses this fall. We anticipate being up to full strength in November.
2. As of October 27 student enrollments (including PK) for each school are: Dover 112, Jamaica 64, L&G 353, Marlboro 78, NewBrook 122, Townshend 79, Wardsboro 58, and Windham 20. Note: these are not equalized pupil counts.

Informational Items

1. The full WCSU Board will review and discuss the proposed FY16 Budget (including the Superintendent's, Agency Fund and Grants) Wednesday, November 19 at 7:00 P.M. in the L&G Library. Bud and I will email a copy of my proposal to all board members prior to that meeting.
2. A vote on the Superintendent's section of the FY16 WCSU Budget is anticipated for Wednesday, Dec. 3 at 7 P.M. at L&G. Please make every effort to attend this meeting. If necessary, an additional meeting is tentatively scheduled for Dec. 10.
3. The Joint Annual Conference for VSA and VSBA is October 30 -31 at Lake Morey. Friday's sessions will focus on professional negotiations and health benefits costs.

10/26/14 - sbj



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