

2007-08 REPORT FROM THE WASHINGTON WEST CENTRAL OFFICE

1673 Main St., Suite A, Waitsfield, Vermont, 802-496-2272, www.wwsu.org

CENTRAL OFFICE STAFF

Robert McNamara, <i>Superintendent</i>	Angela Neill, <i>Accounting Manager</i>
Edith Beatty, <i>Dir. of Curriculum & Assessment</i>	Susan Neill, <i>Accts. Payable/Payroll/Benefits</i>
Donarae Cook, <i>Director of Special Education</i>	Marilyn Spaulding, <i>Accounts Payable</i>
John Pike, <i>Business Manager</i>	Pearl Vargas, <i>Payroll/Benefits</i>
Aria Benjamin, <i>Data Analyst</i>	Angela Young, <i>Admin. Asst./Medicaid Clerk</i>
Laura Titus, <i>Administrative Assistant</i>	Meghan Westbrook, <i>Curriculum Admin. Asst</i>

Change in Leadership at Washington West Supervisory Union (WWSU)

Superintendent of Schools Bob McNamara announced that he will retire at the end of this school year. The Washington West Board has established a committee representing board members, educators, parents, students, and community members to guide the selection process. The goal is to identify the new superintendent by late winter/early spring.

Focusing and Coordinating Improvement Efforts

Significant strides have been made across WWSU to establish goals that guide improvement efforts in our local schools. In support of this community-by-community work, school board members and administrators in Washington West have established a common vision and mission to guide the work we do across our schools and communities, and to support the 2200 students who attend WWSU schools:

Central office administrators, school administrators, and school board members work together to ensure that every school and community in WWSU provides the learning opportunities each student needs to develop his/her potential and to gain the knowledge, skills, and attributes necessary to be productive citizens.

Three multi-year goals focus the improvement efforts. As a result of their PreK-12 education, our high school graduates will:

- Develop a foundation in mathematical content and understanding that they can use throughout life.
- Be prepared to meet the writing demands of citizenship, higher education and the workplace.
- Have the skills they need to observe, think and make judgments about the many complex and demanding issues that come before the citizenry in a democracy.

Data-Driven Decision Making

To guide our schools in the proper direction, school board, school administrators, and teachers need accurate information about our current and future needs as well as about the effectiveness of our current educational programs. To support this need, Washington West continues to phase in a data management system that informs curriculum and instruction decisions and provides

administrators and school board members with the information they need to fulfill their responsibilities:

- In 2008-09, all schools will have a common web-based student information system. This system will streamline the transfer of information between schools and improve the capacity to respond accurately to the numerous data reports required by the state.
- Washington West continues to be an active participant in the Vermont Data Consortium (VDC), a statewide collaborative delivering district-wide student information warehousing, data analysis tools, and training for data-driven decision making. The purpose of VDC is to ensure that Vermont school districts have cost-effective, timely, and accurate student information available to address school improvement, and state and federal reporting requirements. Numerous data reports have been prepared using the data warehouse to support local improvement efforts.
- A WWSU Data Council, with representation from school boards, teachers, administrators, and central office staff, has been established to advise and monitor the design and implementation of the WWSU data management system.

Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, and Professional Development

Two hundred and fifty PreK-12 educators jointly participate in professional development work eight times throughout this year. Much of the work focuses on mathematics, writing, and civic engagement; some addresses instructional improvement strategies that connect all three goal areas. This work builds upon and enhances ongoing professional and student learning embedded in classroom practice. More than 92% of all participants report that the quality of these offerings meets or exceeds their expectations. This professional development program is being carefully designed and implemented with a focus on increasing student success.

Work continues to strengthen the WWSU Curriculum including the use of local, classroom, and more formative assessments to improve student learning. This year, “common” assessments in mathematics will be administered to students across WWSU schools.

In September 2007, the Vermont Mathematics Partnership completed a Mathematics Program Review that analyzed mathematics offerings in WWSU schools. The entire report and an executive summary can be found on our webpage at www.wwsu.org. A group of local teachers and administrators, along with external specialists, is finalizing a detailed plan for action to address the report’s recommendations. The plan will build on last year’s work, which focused on grades 5-12, and will include all grade levels, PreK-12.

The first “*Superintendent Seminar*” this year focused on service learning. WWSU is participating in a three-year partnership with the KIDS Consortium in Lewiston, Maine. KIDS provides funding, professional development, networking, and other resources to support service learning work with students and our community. The second *Seminar* will focus on the results of the Mathematics Program Review, the plan to address commendations and recommendations from the report, and how parents and community members can help.

An Americorps VISTA volunteer, Becky Groberg, a recent graduate of Champlain College, is giving the WWSU community a year of service to address issues of poverty and equity.

Special Education

Students with disabilities from birth through age 21 receive accommodations, remedial and related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act (IDEIA-B) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Under both the federal and state regulations, public schools are required to locate, evaluate, identify, and serve students with disabilities and provide them with a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE).

Students who are found eligible for special education under one of the ten handicapping conditions (disabilities) require specialized instruction. The instruction may be provided by classroom teachers with consultation from special educators or directly from special educators and their paraprofessional staff. Instruction may be provided within the regular education environments or in more restrictive environments, in large or small groups, or in rare instances, in a 1:1 setting. Occasionally, students with severe emotional disabilities may receive services in an alternative day-school setting.

Currently, WWSU serves 301 students in special education from age 3 through age 21. This represents 14% of our total student population pre-school through age 21, which is consistent with the statewide average. Annually, our count of students served in special education has remained between 301-320 students.

Special education is funded by IDEIA-B and State block grants and through a state reimbursement formula. All other support services, including 504, Act 117, English Language Learners, and Title I services, are provided through local budgets, Title I and III grants, and Medicaid Reimbursement revenue.

Business and Finance

FY2009 represents the fifth year of Act 68. Legislative priority is being given to looking at the education funding under Act 68. Property tax rates continue to be primarily driven by changes in CLA's, which vary dramatically within Washington West (reflecting average market value increases between a low of 4.9% in Duxbury and a high of 15.5% in Fayston). The full implementation of Act 130, which relates to Union School Districts, will take place in FY2009. This results in Harwood Union and Waterbury-Duxbury Union having their own per pupil spending figure and resulting equalized education tax rates.

The Washington West Budget for FY2009 includes budget increases associated with the partial funding of the data analyst position and with the increased costs of maintenance of a student information system. The WWSU Budget reflects an overall increase of 5.3%