

**2008-09 REPORT FROM THE WASHINGTON WEST CENTRAL
OFFICE**

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A Year of Administrative Searches

Dr. Richard Moser was hired in June 2008 to serve as Interim Superintendent of the Washington West Supervisory Union for the 2008-09 school year. Dr. Moser's responsibilities have included general oversight and supervision of all schools within the supervisory union, as well as facilitating four administrative search activities.

The pending retirement of Roberta Barone, Principal of the Moretown Elementary School, and Richard Schattman, Principal of the Waitsfield Elementary School, have resulted in the development of a search process to replace each administrator by July 1, 2009. At the time of this writing, both positions have been filled with experienced administrators who happen to be Fayston residents. Kaiya Korb has accepted a contract offer for the Waitsfield principalship, and Debbie Lesure for the Moretown principalship. Search committee members, including the chairs of each search committee, Wrenn Compere and John Schmeltzer, are very pleased with the outcome of each search process. We welcome Kaiya and Debbie to the Washington West Supervisory Union. At the same time we congratulate the two departing principals on their retirement and thank them for their years of outstanding service to the Moretown and Waitsfield Elementary Schools.

A third principal, Ken Page, is also retiring from his work as Principal of Crossett Brook Middle School. The search process includes the organization of a search committee comprised of administrators, teachers, board members, and parent/community representatives. The search process is expected to conclude in late February with the hiring of a new principal/district coordinator. The position will include middle school principal responsibilities, as well as PK-8 oversight of the Waterbury/Duxbury School District. The Washington West School Community also congratulates Ken on his retirement and offers a sincere

thank you for his commitment and professional service to the Crossett Brook Middle School.

A final search process has been designed to identify a new superintendent for our supervisory union. Similar to the other search processes, a search committee of approximately fifteen members has been formed to conduct the search. The committee is chaired by Missy Siner-Shea, Chair of the Waitsfield School Board, and facilitated by our interim superintendent, Dick Moser. The Washington West Board anticipates a final selection for a new superintendent by March 1, 2009.

Therefore, the 2009-10 school year will bring significant change in our supervisory union. A new superintendent and three new principals, along with our existing staff, will help set a new direction for our schools, one that captures all the positive elements of our existing program and promotes continuous improvement and success for the years ahead.

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 2116 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 now 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, was established to advise and monitor the design and implementation of the WWSU data management system.

Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, and Professional Development

Nearly three hundred PreK-12 administrators, teachers, and para-educators participate collaboratively in professional development opportunities eight times throughout the year for the second year of implementation. Much of the work focuses on mathematics, writing, and civic engagement; some groups address instructional improvement strategies that connect all three goal areas. Additional opportunities have been added this year to continue to support science, fine arts, and other areas of critical content. This work enhances additional professional and student learning opportunities, embedded in classroom practice, and is carefully designed, implemented, and evaluated with a focus on increasing student success.

Work continues to strengthen curriculum, instruction, and assessment, including the use of local, classroom, and more formative assessments to improve student learning. This year, “common” assessments will again be administered to

students across WWSU schools in mathematics. Similar opportunities will be added to inform writing, science, and service learning.

WWSU is in its third year of 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 number of student-initiated projects is increasing with the help of mini-grants from the WWSU grant. One such project is *Speak Out for Understanding*, in which Harwood Union High School students with and without disabilities explore challenges and celebrations of unique student experiences within inclusive school communities. Resulting in student-led presentations and DVD documentation, this project continues to receive multiple local, statewide, and national recognition and awards. Students and faculty will make a presentation and receive the National Youth Leadership Award at the National Service Learning Conference in Nashville, Tennessee in March of 2009.

Once again this year, WWSU schools received a BEST grant from the Department of Education to support efforts in “Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports.” This will enable faculty and staff from three schools to address more effectively the increasing behavioral needs of students, to track and use data more thoroughly, and to network and learn from peers from other schools.

Programs continue to embrace and develop our common definition of effective instruction, using the PATHWISE model. Qualified mentors are supporting twelve new teachers in induction this year. Every administrator in WWSU has been trained in Framework Observation and is implementing the program. All teachers have had the opportunity to participate in the Introduction to the Framework.

Our new WWSU science NECAP scores were among the best in the state! We all have a long way to go, but we are continuing to provide opportunities for teachers to develop units and assessments, aligned with both curriculum and grade expectations, that foster deep understandings of science concepts for all students.

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.

This year a server was installed at the Central Office which houses all of our data as well as special education paperwork, making remote access possible and making data more secure. We have also been working with Michael Giangreco from UVM (funded through a Federal Grant) in our middle and high schools to increase the time our special education students spend with highly qualified teachers and special educators.

Currently, WWSU serves 294 students in special education from ages 3 through 21. This represents 13.89% of our total student population pre-school through age 21, which is lower than the statewide average. Annually, our count of students served in special education (age 3-21) has remained between 301-320 students. Students between birth and 3 years old are evaluated by the local school districts and served collaboratively between the Family Infant Toddler Program and local school districts.

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

FY 2009 has been an uncertain environment for school finance and budgets. Managing financial resources has been challenging due to the wide swing in energy costs, unpredictable special education costs, maintenance needs, and decreasing revenue sources.

Given the current economic climate, the future is even less certain. Further declines in revenues, and in some schools pupil enrollment, point to further reductions in future budgets.

FY 2010 represents the sixth year of Act 68, and the introduction of Act 82. Although FY 2010 proposed expenditure increases in the district ranged from 2.2% to 4%, property tax rates continue to be driven substantially upward by changes in the CLA and range from 0% to 12.4%.

The Washington West Budget for FY 2010 reflects a 2.9% increase over FY 2009. Goals for next year include a commitment to effectively managing all financial resources and reductions and identifying opportunities for economic efficiencies including district wide initiatives and use of technology.

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

The Washington West Supervisory Union and Waitsfield School District audited Financial Statements for the year ended June 30, 2008 are available at the WWSU offices in Waitsfield, Vermont or by calling 802-496-2272, ext. 117.

They are also available on-line at
www.waitsfielelementary.org.