

South Burlington School District
November 10, 2010

To: School Board Members
From: John Everitt

Re: Superintendent Report – November 17, 2010
Policy 2.9 – Communication and Support to the Board

1. Support Staff Retirement Plan – After much study, discussions with support staff, external consultation, and several discussions with the board, I am ready to make a recommendation to the board about changes in the SBSB Support Staff Retirement Program. Attached to this report is a copy of the external review done by People's United Bank Retirement Services. Key components have been highlighted.
 - a. Defined benefit vs. defined contribution – This is not an either/or situation. The district has existing commitments to current and former employees in the defined benefit program that need to be addressed. As we do so, there will be opportunities that we will continue to explore with VMERS and with our support staff to provide a defined contribution benefit for the future. We still have unanswered questions about how both benefits can exist at the same time.
 - b. I believe that the optimum next step is to transfer our current support staff into the VMERS Group A program and retain our retired staff in our own existing program. At the start of this program, the district would continue to pay both the employer share (4%) and the employee share (2.5%) of covered payroll. The coverage of the employee share would become the subject of future negotiations.
 - c. I recommend that we structure the finances of this move by transferring approximately \$3.6M of our existing assets into VMERS and retaining the remaining funds, of about \$1M, in our existing plan. The district would fund the remaining amount due to VMERS with either a loan direct from VMERS or a pension obligation bond, depending on the favorability of the terms.
 - d. The action I request from the board is a decision for the district to move forward on this recommendation by seeking a detailed funding proposal for the board and by including the change in support staff negotiations.
2. State Math Assessment – Attached to this report is a chart comparing most states' 2007 fourth grade mathematics assessment with a set of international benchmarks. Each line shows the percentage of students meeting the proficiency standard for the state and for the international common standards. For example, 64% of Vermont students met the state standard while 48% of those same students met the international standards.

Vermont students scored quite well on the international standards. Only five other states scored higher. My second interpretation of the data is that the Vermont assessment, compared to many other states, is an accurate approximation of international standards. This is shown by the states where a much larger percentage of students met state standards than met the international standards. The difference in Vermont was not very large.
3. Second Language Learning – Another attachment to this report is a recent article on the benefits of children learning a second language at an early age. The benefits from “live interactions with native speakers” seem to have far reaching effects.

4. Superintendent Search Process – Raymond Proulx and Mary Jane Shelley have agreed to work with the district in a superintendent search process. The three of us met to adapt the principal search process to one for the next superintendent. Mary Jane will be at the next board meeting to explain the suggested process. The board would have responsibilities at the beginning of the process and at the end.

At the beginning, the board would work with Ray to fashion the criteria to be used by a search committee to select up to four candidates for interviews. This work would be done at the November 30 board meeting and would include input on criteria from both Ray and district administrators.

At the end of the process, the board would use the input from the search committee and Ray to interview finalists and make a decision.

A search committee representing parents, teachers, support staff, administrators, the municipality, the SBEA, and both the general and business communities would be responsible for evaluating the candidates against the board's criteria to select candidates for interviews. Following an inclusive interview process, the committee would review the interview feedback, make site visits, if needed, and recommend zero to four candidates to the board for consideration.

Separate groups of administrators, staff, parents, and community members would meet to develop lists of desirable traits, experiences, and skills for the next superintendent. These questions would be used in interview sessions with the candidates. Following each interview, those participating would complete written feedback sheets involving numeric ratings as well as general comments. This feedback would be compiled for use by the search committee and the board.

There are two critical elements that are required for this to be a process that is transparent, inclusive, and respectful to candidates. First, the work of the search committee must be kept confidential. Second, the board needs to agree that it will not hire a candidate as a permanent superintendent unless that candidate has been recommended by the search committee. If there is no candidate recommended that meets the board's approval, a new search process is started or an interim is hired.

Ray's role would be to advise the board, make reference calls, communicate with the candidates, and ensure the board receives all important information about candidates and the process.

Mary Jane's role is to spearhead and drive the process. She will facilitate the development of the interview questions, facilitate the interviews and search committee meetings, and compile all the data generated by the search committee and the feedback forms into usable reports.

My part in the process will be to support Ray and Mary Jane and be available to provide candidates with information. I will not be part of the search committee, interviews, or recommendations to the board.

Action needed at the November 17 board meeting is a decision to move forward with the process.

Please bring your policy manual to the board meeting.