



**Washington
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Supervisory
Union**

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**TO: WWSU Local Board Members & Administrators
FROM: Brigid Scheffert
DATE: September 2011
RE: Board Report: Updates & Information**

WOW! I doubt any of us will soon forget the start to this school year! Irene certainly has taken a toll. Each day presents new challengesí still. Our school year will remain influenced and impacted by the devastation. Let me just say that in spite of the devastation, I remain full of heart as I continue to observe such a strong outpouring of community!

At the present time, I can report that all of our schools, except Moretown, were able to open four days late. Moretown is only two days behind the rest of the district at this point, because we were able to put all school field trips in place for three days last week and one day this week. Unfortunately, their news was not as we had hoped last Friday when their air quality and surface testing did not come back clean. A plan for this week involving tents was put into place until we receive new testing results, expected Wednesday 9/14. We remain hopeful that MES students will be able to occupy the building by Monday, 9-19. If not, we are looking for a òPlan B.

The central office has been operating as command central since the storm arrived. We really take it one day at a time, trying to problem solve around issues that arise each day in addition to acting as a resource and support for those in need. At this point, all of our staff and most of our students have been accounted for.

School Boards and the Executive Committee will need to decide changes to the 2011-12 WWSU school calendar, or not. By law, schools are required to be in session 175 days. WWSU schools have 180 student days. We schedule five contingency days for bad weather. The question will be whether or not we schedule make-up days for the four days missed and, if so, when. The Commissioner said the State Board of Education will consider waiver requests for those districts affected by the flood, but that since the occurrence was so early in the year, the expectation will be that districts make up days. Last year with the spring flood, the maximum number of days waived by the State Board was 2. It makes sense to plan possible make-up days, but the number of bad weather days we take will impact this decision, and it is just too early to tell.

Some realities we are dealing with at central office include:

Title I allocations will need to be recalculated due to the increase in homeless status for many of our students. Homeless status allows those students to qualify for the free lunch program. The percentage of eligible free lunch students determines the proportionate share of the Title I grant each school receives. For example, a school like Moretown, who was ineligible in the past, may now be eligible.

Bus routes were revisited and adjusted where necessary. Most routes are stable at this time. This task and busing in general this year will be more challenging with the resignation of Ray Staskus, our bus coordinator, in late August. First Student has transferred Steve Landon to WWSU from Lebanon, NH at least for this school year. Steve is working hard to get to know the roads and routes, but this will take time.

Each day presents schedule changes for any number of events throughout the state. Most statewide meetings are just now getting underway. The NECAP testing administration timeline has been extended by one week. I have contacted the DOE regarding a special plan for Moretown and NECAP testing.

On the State Level:

ACT 153 is the primary focus and topic of discussion at VSA (Vermont Superintendent Association) meetings. The Dept. of Education still has not sent out any guidance or technical assistance as to how to move into the centralized model of services required by the law. I have asked repeatedly about what the waiver provisions will be to no avail. The Commissioner reports that waivers will be few and far between, and that the burden of proof will be on districts to prove that keeping these services, such as special education, at the local level will be more efficient and cost effective.

We agreed last year that WWSU will invoke a stay put rule until more guidance and definition were forthcoming. Executive Committee will re-engage around the implementation of ACT 153 as soon as more information is known. Here is a summary of the changes specified in the law for your review.

ACT 153: Duties of SU Boards: Effective July, 2013 (changes in Title 16 § 261)

- establish an SU-wide curriculum and ensure its implementation;
- provide special education, compensatory and remedial services;
- provide financial and student data management services;
- procurement and distribution of goods and operational services;
- provide construction project management;
- contract negotiations with educators, administrators, and other school personnel;
- provide transportation, or arrange for its provision, in districts that offer student transportation;
- provide human resources management support..

ACT 153: Duties of Superintendents: Effective July, 2013 (changes in Title 16 § 242)

- report all financial operations of the supervisory union and/or its member districts;
- hire non-licensed staff and dismiss all staff subject to all legal and contractual procedures;
- nominate individual candidates for licensed positions for board approval. If the board rejects the nominee, the superintendent would bring forth another single nominee;
- develop and implement class size policies in conjunction with school boards.

I think some of you may remember me mentioning last year that I was interested in learning more about the Randolph district, where they have a hybrid of centralized services. Brent Kay is the Superintendent there. He will be coming to WWSU to meet with Michelle and me on September 21.

WWSU has increased centralized purchasing in the areas of maintenance supplies and food service in the last year. Michelle and I will continue to build these types of centralized services where savings can be demonstrated.

VSA and VSBA conducted a survey late last year regarding the implementation of ACT 153. I am sending it to you as an attachment (#1) to this report.

Adoption of the National Common Core Standards

The 2011-12 school year will be spent informing teaching staff of the required changes as we know them to be, as well as the implementation timeline. Sheila Rivers, our Director of Curriculum, is leading our work in this area. I am attaching a few curriculum documents to keep you informed about our work (#2-5). Please remember that the WWSU website is regularly updated with new documents, especially in curriculum and assessment. Basically, we will all need to realign curriculum to fit with these national

standards, and transition from the NECAP assessment to the Smarter Balanced Assessment by 2014-2015.

There has been some serious activity at the DOE regarding the waiver process for receiving academic credit. This came to light around those schools who allow physical education credit equivalents for student athletes. According to the Commissioner when he spoke at the all members VSA meeting, none of these high schools applied for a waiver to the School Quality Standards. I have learned that HUHS did receive a waiver some years ago. Commissioner Vilaseca said that this will be the last year he will allow this to occur without approved waivers. The waiver request will need to provide evidence that the state PE standards are being met, and be signed off on by a licensed PE educator.

The Winooski VSA, of which I am a member, is formally opposing this based on the interpretation of the waiver process regulations. Superintendents have the authority to approve many other alternative pathways to high school credit such as Multi-Year plans, Act 176, and technology center education. We are very concerned that his interpretation of the waiver requirements will significantly interfere with transformation, online learning, and many other progressive initiatives. (See attached letter #6).

On the Local Level:

Here are some of the main areas of work this year:

The WWSU Central Office **lease with Small Dog** ends this June. The board will need to determine whether or not they are interested in a multi-year lease going forward. You will probably remember that Don agreed to a one-year agreement last time because we were exploring consolidation options.

The **transportation contract** will expire 6/30/2011, and we will go out to bid. Michelle and I are working with five other supervisory unions near to us to determine if it will be more advantageous to all of us to centralize these services. Bidding five supervisory unions together might entice other bidders.

The **Support Staff negotiations** did not conclude 6/30/2011. Therefore, MES, HUHS, TBPS and CBMS, have support staff working under an expired labor agreement. Our next meeting is scheduled for Sept. 26, as these negotiations continue. We have implemented our new process of Michelle, Dale Smeltzer and I negotiating directly with our local organization representatives without VT-NEA and legal counsel. I believe we are moving forward positively.

Teacher negotiations will begin this fall, and their contract expires 6/30/2012. We plan to use the same "local" process for these negotiations as mentioned above.

We are conducting **searches for Principals** at Harwood and Warren.

In the area of **labor relations**, I presently have six cases. I just completed an arbitration on August 31, two are expected to move into long-term disability, one will move to arbitration, one is brand new, and one will be litigated in court.

Each year as part of the evaluation process, the principals develop Goals. They are usually due by 10/15/2011. Given our difficult start, we will extend the due date until November 30, 2011.

The **Job Description Manual** project has taken a back seat as a result of other projects, labor cases that were unforeseen, and the Administrative Guidebook. However, I have begun to develop this new administrative tool. As you know, we are expected to have a job description for all of our employees. It is especially important that they be the same for those employees covered by common master agreements. The plan is that I will create a batch of 10-15 job descriptions, and I will send them to the principals

electronically for suggested edits. Next, I will consider and incorporate the suggested edits into a second "draft". Draft #2 will be sent to the associations for input. We will consider their input, and create draft #3 that will go to the Executive Committee for edits and ultimately approval. We will maintain a WWSU Job Description Manual online. Principals can then go into it at the time of hire, insert the school district's name and print the job description for the new hire.

Tisa and I are putting the final touches on the **Administrative Guidebook** project. Principals will receive hard copies at the Admin. Team meeting on 9/19. The document will also live on our website. Laura and I will keep track of any new decisions we make or tools we develop throughout the year. The Guidebook will be updated annually in August. This sizable project has taken a while to complete, but I believe that it will remain very useful for some time to come.

Policy Packet #2:

Last year a new structural model for policy work was completed. We successfully completed 14 policies as a supervisory union. This policy system design will allow all 7 boards to get to compliance and to remain in compliance. In reflection, I feel that the timeline was a bit too short, so I am extending it considerably for Policy Packet #2. Please remember that where policy revision and development are concerned, the process and progress are what matters; the timeline remains flexible and can always be extended. After the completion of Policy Packet #2, which contains 21 policies, the supervisory union will have 35 union policies going into 2012-13.

I am targeting April/May for the final adoption of these 21 policies. Here is the timeline:

9/16/2011 Final comments and suggested edits are due from principals.

9/23/2011 Local Boards receive Policy Packet #2 for consideration.

October through January ó Local Boards complete comments and suggested edits.

February through March ó Executive Committee finalizes all 21 policies.

April ó Each Local Board warns finalized policies for 1st Reading.

May ó Each Local Board warns the 21 policies for adoption.

All board members will receive these policies electronically along with more specific directions and a detailed timeline.

WWSU Goals to Action:

Last year we worked as a supervisory union team to develop four broad overarching goals. We agreed that the next step was to have the administrative team develop a draft plan to present to local boards and the Executive Committee. The team began this work at our 2-day retreat at Sugarbush in August. The first part of the work involved taking each goal and conducting a "think tank brainstorm" of all the topics or areas that the group felt could be addressed under the goal. After some considerable discussion, the admin team decided that each school principal should present his/her school's action plan(s) to the team, because we really needed a deeper understanding of what is going on in each building. These presentations have been scheduled through October 5th. This week Warren and HUHS presented. It was wonderful to be engaged in serious conversations about student learning!

Once the administrators truly understand more about what is happening in each WWSU school, we feel we will be better equipped to develop objectives of "agreed upon" and "non-negotiable" (as we call them) for our Pre-K -12 system. I have had to adjust the timeline as a result. I hope to be able to present a draft document to the Executive Committee sometime in the

spring. I hope eventually we end up with a 3-5 year plan that brings together the many wonderful initiatives already underway, identifies gaps for growth, and ultimately allows us all to articulate where we are trying to go and why, while informing the budget process.

The Administrative Teamwork:

Our WWSU Administrative Team meets twice a month as a full team at central office from 9:30-11:45 to learn from and support each other, as well as conduct our business. We also work in standing subcommittees called workgroups. The full team decides what tasks/topics get moved to the smaller committees.

Here are the Workgroups:

Workgroup A:

Duane Pierson (chair)
Cathryn Hayes
Donarae Pike
Don Schneider

Workgroup B:

Lisa Atwood (chair)
Sheila Rivers
Cathy Knight
Barbara Tomasi-Gay

Workgroup C:

Tom Drake (chair)
Jean Berthiaume
Andreas Lehner
Michelle Baker
Kaiya Korb

Here are the projects currently in process in each group as I know them to be. At the 9/12 meeting, chairs reported out on the work; an update so to speak. We will review and reestablish the work for 2011-12.

Workgroup A: (1) Service Learning, (2) Goal #2.

Workgroup B: (1) Climate Surveys, (2) District Inservice Planning, (3) Goal #3.

Workgroup C: (1) Instructional Minutes Project, (2) Common Core Implementation, (3) Goal #1.

Goal #4 will be worked on by the central office team.

The Administrative Team at a Glance:

- We have put a new tool/protocol in place where all parent conference scheduling will be done online. CBMS was the pilot site, and after experiencing great success and positive feedback from school staff and parents, we will be implementing this program throughout the supervisory union.
- Evaluation tools are in place for evaluating the superintendent, principals, teachers and support staff common throughout the district. Most everyone is at a goal-setting stage. The central office maintains a database to manage the evaluation system. For the past two years, nearly all expected evaluations were completed and sent to the central office for review by the Superintendent and filing to the personnel record.
- I will be developing another set of 3 legal workshops for our administrators. The administrators felt that the 3 training sessions conducted last year were excellent. Pietro Lynn, an attorney known for his expertise in employment law, will again provide the training at the central office. VSBIT has agreed to pay for it. At our summer retreat, the administrative team participated in a 2-hour training by attorney Heather Lynn focused on Peer Harassment in public schools. Heather also provided an excellent "take away" resource of suggested forms for us.

- All WWSU Elementary Schools will be implementing a common report card, which was developed, piloted, and revised last year. We hope this will be helpful to our middle schools.

Dear Board Members-

I have decided I just need to call it quits and get something out to you, since I have sat down four times since Sunday to attempt finishing this. Believe it or not, I do have more to report, but I am simply out of time. I do apologize for not completing this report and I am certain it is not of the quality I would like to put forward. Irene has truly created a number of other more important needs at this time.

Regards,
Brigid