

## **S.A.V.E. Legislation Issue**

**Overview:** The first issue that the West Team addressed was to inform Dr. Audrey Farnsworth and the Mohonasen Board of Education about the scope and implications of the SAVE legislation. This legislation includes school policy and curricular mandates. During the course of studying this issue, our team met regularly with Dr. Farnsworth. The team made a presentation to her administrators, the Mohonasen Board of Education, and the Capital District Superintendents.

What the team learned about the role of the Superintendent:

### **STRATEGIC**

The importance of developing structures to address regulations, program

Know research resources: The web, attorneys, and educational resources

Make it a practice to consult with local districts

Divide tasks into both short- and long-term "next steps"

Update the Board - Early and Often

Always provide teachers with accurate information

Plan for communicating

### **POLITICAL**

Develop policies/procedures that reflect SED regulations and community needs

Align with community agencies

Develop school and district level teams

Keep the Board informed

Communicate final products consistent community culture

### **ORGANIZATIONAL**

Take time to research the regulations

Review existing district policies and codes in relation to issues at hand

Prioritize tasks

Consider financial implications

Present to leadership team and get feedback on issues

Develop timelines to define tasks

Get people involved

### **INSTRUCTIONAL**

Establish relationships

Schedule faculty meetings to share information and invite comment

Plan required staff development

Assure appropriate structures to address curriculum with needs/regulations

## Piseco Common School District Issue

Overview: Dr. Geoff Davis, District Superintendent of the Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery BOCES, asks the team to assist him with looking at short- and long-term administrative options for the Piseco Common School District. From the start it was clear that this was a very sensitive subject that must be handled confidentially and with caution.

The small, rural school district is one of ten common schools still in existence in New York State. By definition, a common school cannot operate a high school but is still responsible for ensuring the education of the high school population. Piseco Common School houses students from grades K-6. Students grades 7 and up are tuitioned to other school districts (Lake Pleasant, Wells, Wheelerville, and Johnstown). There are 16 students attending the K-6 Common School and an additional 36 students tuitioned out for their secondary programming. With the retirement of its long-time superintendent In the fall, Dr. Davis hired an interim superintendent to work three days per week while looking at administrative possibilities. The team visited Piseco Common School while collecting Information and then debriefed with Dr. Davis.

What we learned about the Superintendency:

### STRATEGIC

View the superintendency position as a unique opportunity

Attempt to research and brainstorm organizational options

Look at issues by viewing short- and long-term options

Try to take the perspective of those in the district, not imposing our own values

### ORGANIZATIONAL

Explore existing structures

Understand the unique role of the superintendent In various settings

See possibilities for unique structures due to unique nature of school/district

Explore enrollment and staffing patterns

### INSTRUCTIONAL

Take the time to observe current instructional programs and get feedback from teachers about positives and perceived weaknesses

Ensure that data drives programmatic decisions

Have a big picture perspective of staffing, service provision, scheduling, Instructional strategies that facilitate Individualized Instruction

Have'a vision that creates a picture of the best program

### POLITICAL

Understand the history of the community and school

Gain knowledge of audiences and what to ask whom

Acquire a sense of what the community wants

Learn about neighboring districts and the connections and coalitions

Suggest services that can be shared or used differently

Learn what needs to be communicated and how to best do that

# TEAM NORTH - AUTHENTIC LEARNING EXPERIENCE

## BALLSTON SPA CENTRAL SCHOOL ISSUE

### ISSUE DESCRIPTION

The first issue addressed by Team North was with the Ballston Spa Central School District. The issue centered around whether or not the District should reopen negotiations with the CSEA in the face of real and/or anticipated loss of staff to better paying jobs. An ancillary issue within our charge was the perception on the part of District CSEA employees that an inequity of remuneration is occurring between District employees and neighboring districts. The Superintendent, Dr. Roger Gorham, also a SDP faculty member, was involved intimately in the process from start to finish. A report was generated and a meeting occurred between the Team and the Finance Committee of the Board of Education. The Team received feedback from Dr. Gorham and the Board President to complete the process.

### INSTRUCTIONAL

**Financial** - Reallocation of monetary resources could detract from the instructional program.

**Morale** - The support staff's job satisfaction results in the creation of a conducive environment for instruction. A properly maintained facility will instill staff and student pride in their school. In turn, a positive self concept will develop thus allowing students to feel confident meeting the daily challenges of school.

**Staff Training** - Increased staff turn over may result in a decrease in productivity on the part of administrative staff responsible for training incoming employees.

### STRATEGIC

**Plan of Action** - A Superintendent needs to work toward a resolution of the problem by outlining a plan of action. Contained within the plan should be the following components:

- Awareness of financial goals of the District
- Constant involvement in process but at the same time look ahead
- Knowledge of where you want the District to be at the end of the plan
- What are the long term ramifications of implementing the action plan
- Use both hard and soft data to formulate the plan
- Attempt to create a "win - win" situation
- Front end Board awareness and participation
- Courage to live with the plan's solution(s)

### RELEVANCE TO SUPERINTENDENCY

This authentic learning experience allowed us to understand the need to handle difficult situations with sensitivity and factually. The Superintendency is effected directly when worker perception is involved. The Superintendent must listen to the issues before reacting. He/She must identify the issue then gather data in order to make an informed decision. The CSO must involve people - particularly key individuals in the process. He/She must evaluate the data, both hard and soft, to sufficiently arrive at a palatable decision. The CSO may incorporate the use of a consultant to present the data to the Board of Education, formulating a decision that the Superintendent can support. Be objective. Most decisions of this nature that involve employee earnings need to be considered carefully, with a view toward maintaining a cadre of quality senior employees.

### POLITICAL

**Internal Perspectives** - The Superintendent needs to be sensitive to and not minimize the importance of the support staff to the overall mission of the District.

**BOE Relations** - The need for the CSO to create a climate of open communication with the BOE in order to stay together and "on the same page." Constant communication will ensure political acceptance and success.

**Perceptions** - Staff perception of inequality, whether valid or invalid, need to be of concern and potentially addressed by the CSO.

**Community** - Nurturing partnerships within the community for open lines of communication is vital to the success of the CSO.

### ORGANIZATIONAL

**Recruitment** - The Superintendent needs to be able to brine the best and the brightest into the Distinct, while at the same time being aware of the Board's financial priorities and goals.

**Team Relationships** - The CSO needs to nurture an environment of collaboration within a positive working environment in order to develop team unity.

**Market Supply & Demand** - Any change in surrounding area base salaries will impact the efficient and effective running, if the current organization structure (political). Prepare and be aware of market changes!

# TEAM NORTH - AUTHENTIC LEARNING EXPERIENCE CORINTH CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Spring 2001

## ISSUE DESCRIPTION

The Team, after consultation with Mr. Matt Breitenbach, the Superintendent at Corinth Central, was asked to determine firstly if the food service program can be run as a profitable entity. Secondly, the Team was charged with the responsibility to develop recommendations to support this determination. The food service program has diminished the cafeteria fund balance and will now require district financial assistance. This, coupled with a staggering tax certiorari case, has placed the District in a very precarious financial position. The likelihood of a double-digit school tax increase is highly probable during the upcoming budget season. The Team interviewed in-house staff, highly regarded managers of area food service programs, researched both in-house and area food service programs, and scrutinized food service data produced by CASDA and similar sized school districts. A final report was shared with Mr. Breitenbach followed by a Team presentation to the Corinth Board of Education.

## INSTRUCTIONAL

- Any attention taken away from the mission of the school district is counterproductive.
- A Superintendent should always be cognizant of the fact that it is often the small issues unexpectedly turning into big issues that take the most time, are the most troublesome to resolve, and all too often sidetrack the instructional program.
- A Superintendent needs to be aware of the nutritional requirements of the student body and to work closely with the food service department to meet these needs. Knowledge of the school community socio-economic status is critical to achieve this end.
- The issue of student treatment by non instructional employees is of importance to the Superintendent as it may affect student self esteem, student pride, and potentially academic achievement.

## STRATEGIC

- An awareness, on the part of the Superintendent, is needed to step in to formulate a plan of action to bring closure to the problem. Coupling this is the need on the part of the CSO to frame the issue and share a vision of how it will be resolved with key staff members.
- Prior to the formulation of a plan of action, the Superintendent may be well served to solicit advice, input and data from area CEO's.
- Consideration may be given to the utilization of an outside task force to look at the problem with unclouded eyes and make recommendations in line with the school mission and in the best interest of the students and the parent community.
- There is a need for the Superintendent to create an atmosphere of accountability on the part of the administrative team to resolve the issue.
- Determination should be made as to whether or not this is an issue worth getting into at the present time.

## RELEVANCE TO SUPERINTENDENCY

Any issue that the Superintendent deals with will be influenced or impacted by all four leadership dimensions either directly or indirectly. This issue was exacerbated by a tax certiorari decision in favor of a major corporate entity. What would, on the surface, appear as just a financial issue had ramifications regarding community perceptions, personnel, instructional implications as well as organizational and strategic consequences. Isolated issues don't exist. Superintendents need to be aware of the implications of the issues and decisions and as such, need to evaluate the quality of the information they receive from the people that should be in a position to advise. While the Superintendent may not be directly responsible for an issue, s/he is ultimately responsible for all aspects of the institution and therefore should provide the necessary resources so personnel can and are held responsible.

## POLITICAL

- It is important to the Superintendent that the community has the impression that the district is hiring competent employees and nurturing their growth.
- The Superintendent needs to be aware that acting too boldly or too meekly could be problematic. Making decisions from a position of knowledge and confidence is key.
- The Superintendent should work diligently to establish relationships with key community members in order to gauge the community's perception and reaction to the reality of a staff member being dismissed.
- The importance of constant and open communication with the Board is vital to the longevity of the Superintendent.
- A dismissal proceeding against a long time staff and community member is always political and very often perceived as personal.
- A sense of timing to resolve issues is vital to the longevity of the Superintendent

## ORGANIZATIONAL

- There is a need on the part of the Superintendent to evaluate the organizational structure of the administrative team. The creation of an organizational chart with line responsibilities/supervision will eliminate the lack of accountability on the part of key staff members.
- Nurturing the development of an administrative team built on trust, open communication, and confidence is vital to the resolution of this problem.
- The CSO should have an awareness that the organization is a "people entity" and therefore flexible and fluid in its role. The CSO needs to be aware, not only of the organizational chart, but also the people who inhabit the boxes. The CSO should provide a true sense of direction, motivation and purpose that will allow staff to work toward a level of growth that nurtures collegiality and group camaraderie.
- A return to the true mission of the District could frame the problem in the minds of key players.