

Grand Isle Supervisory Union

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Superintendent's Report

December 1, 2015

Celebrations:

- Saturday, November 21, 2015, marked Linda Norris' 50th anniversary serving the Grand Isle Supervisory Union. To mark this unprecedented milestone, a small group of old & new colleagues gathered at the Wind Jammer in South Burlington to share stories and have dinner together. Linda received dozens of cards and notes from current and former GISU colleagues and these were presented to her after dinner along with a beautiful cake and a few meaningful small gifts. Congratulations, Linda!
- GISU has been awarded an Innovation Grant for the 2015-2016 school year to research and implement innovative systemic changes leading to improved student outcomes. Grant requests had to be directly related to the Education Quality Standards. Awards were competitive and we are proud to share that our application for Kindergarten – 8th grades Personal Learning Planning and the implementation of Google Tools for Schools, along with a Chromebook for every teacher, was awarded in full for a total of \$20,000.
- Alburgh Community Education Center wins Technology Grant from the Vermont Lottery: <http://education.vermont.gov/documents/edu-press-release-technology-lottery-grant-fall-2015.pdf>

Board Chairs:

On November 13th, I received a document from the Vermont Agency of Education asking for "*Confirmation of Compliance with Transportation Consolidation*". Up until this point, I was not aware that the GISU filed a waiver request and was out of compliance with the 2010 law.

This notification led me on a hunt for documents in Mr. Nelson's files. Here is what I discovered:

- As of July 1, 2014, under Act 153 of 2010, it is the responsibility of Supervisory Union boards to provide or arrange for the provision of transportation in any districts within the SU in which it is offered. This means the responsibility for paying for transportation services resides with the Supervisory Union, whether by operating the service or arranging for the service through one or more contracts.
- The purpose of this Act was to achieve efficiencies through scale in the delivery of transportation services.
- The efficiency of transportation services must be evaluated from the perspective of the SU as a whole, and not from the perspective of individual districts.
- The Agency will enforce Act 153 in part, through close monitoring of the state level reimbursement for local transportation expenditures.

Based on a Memorandum from the AoE received by Mr. Phillips dated January 8, 2015, no transportation funds would be made available to the SU unless they secured a waiver on behalf of the SU Board. On January 14, 2015, Mr. Phillips wrote to Secretary Holcombe requesting a waiver (see attached). On January 22, 2015, Secretary Holcombe approved the waiver request for the GISU and stated:

This waiver shall expire on June 30, 2016.

This waiver is being granted based on your representation that the SU will be in compliance for FY 2017 and for good cause shown, as set forth in your letter dated January 14, 2015.

What does this mean? If we wish to continue to receive revenue for transporting our students, we must incorporate transportation into the FY 2017 GISU budget as well as the Transportation Aid Revenue. Lynne and I are working on this and it will be reflected in both the SU budget as well as local districts. The only exception provided in the law is local funds for athletics and field trips can stay at the local level as they are not reimbursable.

It is worth noting that this marks the third of three waivers the GISU requested and was granted, since the passing of new legislation, all in the past five years, all of which are coming to an end at the conclusion of this fiscal year. Each one carries significant penalties if not complied with and in addition, are intersecting with Act 46 and its cost containment measures, creating new budgeting challenges and opportunities.

Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction: A Three Year Plan for the GISU

The following reflects work done in collaboration with Dr. Tina Boogren and the GISU Leadership and Data Teams. This has been presented in faculty meetings at each of the five schools in the SU by Elaine Pentalari, GISU Curriculum and Assessment Coordinator:

Our approach to curriculum, assessment, and instruction is the guided by the Common Core Standards and a commitment to standards-based grading practices and assessments based on proficiency scales. It is important to realize the extent to which this commitment affects our practice and the evolution of our thinking about how we teach.

The Common Core is not a simple laundry list of facts that students need to know. Rather, it is a body of concepts and enduring understandings that students come to own, understandings that that deepen critical thinking and demonstrate efficacy and capability. Standards-based grading does not measure the memorization of facts, and is not always a percent score or a quantitative measure. Rather, standards-based grading determines **to what extent** students demonstrate enduring understandings and how able they are to apply what they know in real world problem-solving situations.

More and more, our top universities are asking for admissions portfolios that demonstrate proficiency by **what students can do** rather than what grades they might have scored on quantitative tests. This is not a subtle shift.

All of what we do in Grand Isle Supervisory Union moves us toward improving student outcomes with standards-based practices. It is important that our direction is clear, universal, and strategic across the Supervisory Union.

There are several important steps in the process of moving toward standards-based practices in our curriculum, assessment, and instruction. With the technical support of experts from the Marzano Research group we have clearly defined these steps and we are shaping our three-year plan:

Year One: (2015-2016)

~First, we will prioritize our standards, determining which standards require intensive focus.

~Second, we will develop proficiency scales for each prioritized standard. These scales will clearly indicate for teachers, parents, and students what successfully meeting the standard looks like and what can be done to advance students along this scale.

Years Two and Three: (2016-2018)

Common assessments will be modified and developed that are standards based, aligned to proficiency scales, and universal across the supervisory union.

Curriculum will be articulated through instructional frameworks that will be universal across the supervisory union.

Common standards-based report cards across all grade levels will be designed and implemented.

Our administrative team and curriculum leadership teams are committed to this important work. Using the results of a recent teacher survey, teams of professionals will begin the work of prioritizing our standards in literacy and math at our December 7th in service.

Education Quality Review: Integrated Field Review Pilot:

The GISU is one of the 19 SU/SD's participating in the Vermont Agency of Education Field Pilot Project. Our group of SU/SD's has been announced and they include: GISU, Burlington SD, Washington West SU, Washington Central SU, Franklin NW SU and Lamoille North SU. We had anticipated being part of the Winter Session however; our cohort will begin in March and be completed in early May. For more information go to <http://education.vermont.gov/education-quality-review#resources>

Preschool:

The following is a complete list of applications under review to establish a pre-k region for the 16/17 school year. You can find a LOT more info (full applications and when the hearings and comment periods are scheduled) on the Act 166 website.

Please keep in mind if you have children from families who reside in the district of the applicant, they will only be able to access the Pre-k funding if your program is within the boundaries of their proposed region. Hearing about support or opposition from you as well as directly from families (at the hearing or via written comment) is an important part of the vetting process.

16/17 Applications to Establish a Pre-K Region Under Review:

- Orleans Central Supervisory Union (hearing held 10/27/15; comment period closed)
- Bennington-Rutland Supervisory Union (hearing 12/17/15; 6pm, Manchester Elem/Midd School)
- Orange Southwest Supervisory Union
- Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union
- Franklin West Supervisory Union
- Arlington School District
- Wells School District
- Middletown Springs School District
- Bridport Central School District

Cornwall Elementary School District
Salisbury Elementary School District
Weybridge Elementary School District
Mary Hogan Elementary School District
Shoreham Elementary School District
Ripton Elementary School District

Please note that the FY17 Pre-K tuition rate to approved providers has been set by the AoE at \$3092.

Special Education:

- On November 16, 2015 a memo was received from the United States Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services ensuring that all children, including children with disabilities, are held to rigorous academic standards and high expectations and it is a shared responsibility for all of us. It is important to remember that students who are eligible for individualized education program (IEP) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) must be aligned with the State's academic content standards for the grade in which the child is enrolled. The IEP team must also include the specially designed instruction necessary to address the unique needs of the child that result from the child's disability and ensure access of the child to the general education curriculum. If you are interested in reading the complete document please email Beth Hemingway at bethemi@gisu.org.
- There was a Supervisory Union Special Education meeting on November 30th to discuss the alignment of IEPs to the Common Core within the GISU.

Business Office:

- Special education assessments have been prepared using FY 17 service plan ratios. For example, if your service plan cost is \$200,000 and the total of all service plan costs are \$1,000,000; your ratio for assessments is 20%. I have polled other business managers and this seems to be the most popular method and most closely reflects actual special education usage. However, there seems to be a little controversy at the state as to whether we will be allowed to use this method. Stay tuned!
- Transportation assessments have been calculated using last year's actuals plus an increase of 5%. We have not gone out to bid for transportation for some years. We are required to for FY 17, and 5% was recommended to us by our Contracts Manager, David Crawford.
- Audit Assessments are in the works. We also need to go to bid for audit services this year, and it is a requirement that they be taken out of your budgets and brought into the GISU budget. I am projecting a 10% increase in audit costs.
- The GISU *DRAFT* budget is nearly ready for Barbara's review. Barbara and I will be taking a final looking at it on Wednesday morning. It is our hope to have guidance on assessment calculations for special education costs and reimbursements at that time.
- North Hero's *DRAFT* budget went to the Board Chair on Sunday. The entire board will be reviewing it at their first board meeting on December 1.
- South Hero's *DRAFT* budget will go to their board on Wednesday morning.
- The first of three Special Education Expenditure Reports were submitted to the Agency of Education.
- All school districts will have their *DRAFT* budgets for their first December board meeting.