

Secaucus Public Schools
Superintendent's Report

February 4, 2010 Published for Employees of the Secaucus School District Office of the Superintendent

This is the first issue of the *Superintendent's Report* that will be issued periodically. The Report contains information of importance to the teaching and support staff. The Report will normally be distributed through the e-mail System and posted on the district web site in keeping with the Board of Education's goal of minimizing the use of paper. This first Edition will also be distributed in hard copy.

The following are my comments regarding a number of timely issues:

Race to the Top

A meeting was held in January to review documentation provided by the Department of Education that pertained to the Federal Grant Initiative entitled Race to the Top. In attendance at the meeting were Jack McStowe, Board of Education President, Robert Anderson, SEA President, Edward Walkiewicz, Board Secretary and myself. We reviewed information contained in the Memorandum of Agreement that the Commissioner requested that we approve and sign. A part of the agreement was related to compensation and what has been referred to as "Merit Pay." Bob Anderson made it very clear that he was not in favor of the concept along with other provisions related to the use of test scores. I made it very clear at the meeting that I was not in favor Merit Pay; however, other provisions of the grant program were already in place and would support District goals. Understandably, the SEA would not sign the Memorandum as requested by the NJEA. The Board and I signed and submitted the Memorandum. However, we were very clear that we would only consider a compensation program that was developed with and approved by the NJEA. This language was contained in the comments section of our submission.

On-Line Lesson Plans

I am pleased to announce that over 95% of teachers are submitting their weekly lesson plans utilizing the On Track Program. Thank you all for a job well done. For those staff members submitting their plans manually, assistance in utilizing the On Track system is continuously available through varied support staff members in each building.

Accountability Regulations

The Accountability Regulations were renewed in December with additional provisions included in the revised regulations. As you are aware, the Accountability Regulations have a significant impact on the manner in which we conduct the business of the district. The following are examples of what we are required to do:

- Mandatory sign in and sign out of all employees on a daily basis.
- Formula-based staffing models for the custodial staff.
- Caps imposed on the amount of overtime we can pay staff and restrictions on the use of classroom aides.
- The development of Standard Operating Procedures and Internal Control Procedures that we must strictly adhere to
- Preparation and submission of a Position Control Roster that contains comprehensive information about every position in the district including details related to the employee filling each position.
- All new and vacant positions must be filled at the first steps of the applicable guide

The Executive County Superintendent is charged with monitoring our compliance through annual Efficiency Reviews and NJQSAC. He has the authority to direct us do whatever he deems necessary in order to comply with the regulations.

2009 - 2010 School Year Budget

Uncertainty about the State's ability to totally fund State Aid this year has caused us to limit spending to purchases related to program, health and safety issues. All vacant positions remain unfilled with the exception of direct instruction, pending a determination of the status of our State Aid payments and the implications for future budgets.

2010 - 2011 School Year Budget

The budget process started in October of 2009. All staff members with budgetary responsibility were required to submit a budget. The cap for non payroll, benefits, insurance and utility spending was +2% over the current year's budget. Budgets have been submitted and reviewed for compliance with District Goals. At this time, the impact of a new governor has not been defined. His goals are widely known and they may impact the revenue side of the budget. Until that information is known in mid-March, the process is essentially at a stand still.

Communications

The administration requested that a schedule of meetings with the SEA be established. The first set of bimonthly meetings were to include the SEA Negotiations Committee, the Board of Education Negotiations Committee and the administration. This is in accordance with provisions of the collective bargaining agreement. The first meeting was held in December. The second meeting is scheduled for this month. The purpose of meetings is to resolve any issues that are related to the contract. The second set of meetings were to include the Executive Committee of the SEA and members of the administration, with the purpose of creating a forum where other non-contractual issues may be resolved. Meetings are scheduled for the alternate months. The first meeting was held in January. Both meetings have proven to be an effective forum to create dialogue and promote problem resolution. We look forward to another SEA Negotiation Meeting scheduled on February 23rd.

District Newsletter

The first edition of the new district newsletter, "School District News," is now available to read on our website. Simply go to our Web Site and click on Newsletter Logo and you will be linked to the page. The newsletter will be published on a monthly basis utilizing e-mail and the web site as the primary method of getting it out to the staff and public. We realize that not everyone has access to the Internet. Therefore, a limited number of print copies will be made available at key locations throughout the town. This departure from previous practice of mailing copies of the quarterly newsletter represents both a cost savings to the district and furthers the district's goal of going green. It also brings the news to readers in a more timely manner. A print copy of the first issue will be provided to all staff as a way of introducing the new format. The newsletter contains information about the wonderful and exciting things that our students and staff are doing.

Technology

We are in the process of designing our own fiber optic network for installation over the summer. This enhancement to our infrastructure will provide very high speed access and greatly increased bandwidth to our staff, greatly enhancing efficiency. Installing a fiber optic-based network is one of the most cost effective methods to increase much needed bandwidth. I am also pleased that the implementation of our interactive white board initiative and the use of Safari Montage is essentially complete. It is gratifying that the feedback from students and staff has been positive. Any staff member encountering a problem in using the system should resolve it by generating a work order using the School Dude software and notifying a building administrator about the work order. Our IT staff is working systematically to close open work orders and should be commended for their commitment to providing staff with the best possible service.

*In closing, I invite you to contact me directly with any issues you may have.
You may contact me by e-mail : crandina@sboe.us or by calling my office at 974-2004 for an appointment.*