



STOUGHTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

September 10, 2010

Stoughton School Committee
Stoughton Public Schools
232 Pearl Street
Stoughton, MA 02072

Dear Honorable School Committee:

Re: Superintendent's End of Year Report - 2010

I have prepared, as you requested, a report on Year 1 of my tenure as Superintendent of the Stoughton Public Schools. I have aligned the components of the report with the evaluation instrument that was voted last summer as appropriate.

Leadership and District Culture

As superintendent, I have led the discussion on the need to teach 21st century skills, and the need to provide our students with the best post secondary skills possible. The preparation of our Stoughton students for the most competitive opportunities is now starting consciously in kindergarten. One of the elementary principals has been given the responsibility of weaving the skills of creativity, working in teams, a high level of social skill and oral communication into the curriculum. I convened an Extended and Alternative Curriculum Task Force that met a half a dozen times last year, and will reconvene this year. Members of the school staff and the greater community participated. Using some suggestions from the Achievement Gap Task Force of the previous year, and developing some new ideas, the group listed some priorities for which our grant writer, Prudence Goodale can solicit funds. This grant writing position, funded by stimulus money, is meant to produce funding for innovative district initiatives, particularly related to extended curriculum, longer school day, and technological literacy. I believe that there is a very good start here that is moving the district in the right direction, ahead of the curve.

We have started a foundation at my behest with several interested stakeholders to expand the base of funding sources for innovative projects. The foundation is up and

running, most of the board has been identified, and a volunteer chair, Mr. Anthony L. Sarno Jr., with deep ties to the town and the school system is in place.

Policy and Governance

We were able to start the 2009-2010 school year with a complete, 5 Year Strategic Plan. This plan, developed by a committee of 35 community members and numerous sub-committees gives good strong focus to the work of the district, and the policy decisions of the School Committee. A strategic plan ensures that an organization moves forward in a predetermined direction, and gives a context to decisions. All principals are instructed to align their school improvement plans with the strategic plan, and they have all done so, presenting strong, vibrant and cogent plans in conjunction with their school councils.

In a budget year with unprecedented financial difficulties and negotiations underway with all of our unions, we have together achieved a budget with no layoffs, and no impact to the class size in the district, a significant accomplishment.

Communications and Community Relations

I have established relationships with all of the representatives of the press who cover the Stoughton Schools on a regular basis. The coverage that the system has received has been positive, and has emphasized the new programs that were started, and the good work being done by the students.

My relationships with the members of the Finance Committee are very positive, and demonstrate a level of trust that has been built over almost 3 years. My relationships with the members of Town Meeting are positive and personal, based on credibility. There were no hostile questions that are often the result of mistrust. The relationship between the school department and the other departments in town is also strong and very cordial. We work with the library on a tutoring program, the DPW on many levels, as well as the other town departments. I attend the Department Heads meeting every 2 weeks and actively seek out ways that we can work together. We are now extending the conversations about group bidding to keep purchasing costs at their absolute minimum for both sides of town.

I participated for 2 years in the Facilities Master Planning Committee, and have now, at the School Committee request reconvened this group to recommend implementation of the plan. Members of the community have approached me about participating in the process of replacing our aging facilities, and now the development of that committee is under way.

I produce a regular TV show, *Rizzi Chats* with the Stoughton High School students to highlight positive aspects and innovations in the school system. I appear regularly on other local cable shows for the same reason, this month appearing on both *Snyder's Stoughton* and *Community Forum*. This kind of outreach is ongoing.

Organizational Management

We were able to develop a strong budget in a very bad year, maintaining the core values of the school district, meeting all of the mandated expenditures in Special Education, Title 1, ELL compliance, and Civil Rights trainings. Crisis Planning and Management continues through the Crisis Team, and temporary teams are convened as needed to address new laws and regulations such as the new bullying law.

A technology plan is in place through the Strategic Plan, implemented as aggressively as funds will permit by the Director of Educational Technology. This year, after Fin Com and Town Meeting chose to share the vision, every classroom will be outfitted with an interactive white board.

A Feasibility Study Committee is being formed to prioritize and start the process of replacing our outmoded facilities, a process for which many community members have shown a great deal of enthusiasm.

Curriculum Planning and Development

We are fortunate to have a strong curriculum at all grade levels in all subject areas. The elementary reading program, chosen by the staff and administrators after a careful process of evaluation, is now in year three of implementation. Everyday math has been updated for Stoughton, emphasizing the most important standards in the state frameworks. The Assistant Superintendent, Jonathan Ford, is building a website that will eventually hold all of the curriculum documents, lesson plans, resources, Powerpoints, pacing charts, assignments and assessments in the district for all of the teachers to share and access. As the implications of the Common Core and new federal legislation become more clear, we will develop a plan to respond to that also.

The Multiple Intelligence Camp and SMARTS program, along with the more modest Dream Team at the Gibbons are our first forays into the possibilities of lengthening the school day. As money becomes available through different sources, these ideas will be expanded and spread to other schools.

Curriculum steering committees with K-12 representation are an ongoing part of our constant curricular review and revision. There is a committee for each major subject area. The Access Team, representing the educational leadership of the district meets every 6 weeks to share and coordinate their work, and develop K-12 programs and ideas. This process gives all of the leaders of the district an opportunity to work together, when their day to day activities often leaves them little time to see each other.

In the interest of providing a new avenue to college for our students, and by extension, the families, I have aggressively promoted the development of our Quincy College Dual Enrollment Program, which I brought to Stoughton as Assistant Superintendent. It is now possible for students to take courses in English, History, Math and Science that yield college credit to students still in their high school years. This is something that districts will be attempting to provide in the coming years and we are already doing it. This program drastically reduces the expense of college, demonstrates a student's ability to do college work, which makes them stronger candidates for better colleges, and it shows students who may not have had college in their plans that they are capable.

We have expanded the Quincy College program to Stoughton Academy to extend this option to our nontraditional students. In addition, Stoughton Academy can now offer online courses, and we will continue to expand this valuable resource as more and more extended curriculum options are implemented.

Instructional Leadership

The teachers in the district continue to be evaluated using the Research for Better Teaching process. Staff meetings have been changed to professional development time in all of the schools and housekeeping has been relegated to email in most cases. Teachers are encouraged to work in teams to revise report cards, create curricula, the new writing curriculum is the latest of these, and plan professional development activities. All of the elementary professional development has been organized this year in grade level teams, and the teachers have responded with great enthusiasm. They are becoming acquainted with their counterparts in other schools, with more sharing as a result. A pilot project designed to improve the teaching of writing has begun in third grade as a result of this model of PD sharing. I personally lead the third grade team to model the process, and this gives me an invaluable opportunity to work with teachers on what they do every day.

Starting this week, we are offering a Masters degree through Bridgewater State University in three areas, elementary ed, special ed, and the teaching of English. Teachers will be able to get their Masters for a deeply discounted price and the convenience of staying in Stoughton, and we have worked with Bridgewater to get exactly the content work that we think the district will find useful. This is a powerful

resource for our teaching staff. This program has been designed with a great deal of input from teachers themselves.

Leadership team is constantly engaged in professional development as a group. We are reading two books this year, *Mindset*, by Carol Dweck and *Difficult Conversations*, by Douglas Stone. Both of these address areas of interest that arose during our administrative retreat. This kind of work is vital to the growth of strong and functional leadership team, but even more important when many of the administrators are new to their positions.

Human Resources Management

It is very important to me to be identifying people in our district who have leadership potential, and develop them with the training, encouragement, and opportunity to take on tasks that will prepare them for the next level, and allow them to demonstrate their capacity. It is because of this that we were ready, with very limited notice to replace two principals who chose to leave Stoughton this year.

The district has hired two new principals who have been brought up through the Stoughton system, trained in our leadership team, and through a series of workshops offered by the Mass Principals organizations as well as a series of legal workshops on regular and special education law. A hiring procedure has been developed and put in place to ensure the best possible hiring at all levels. Over the last two years, although the district has lost positions, layoffs have been avoided, and some retirees have been replaced by new staff. All new hiring is done with a view towards getting the most intelligent, motivated, passionate, talented teachers that are available for any job open in the system.

Values and Ethics of Leadership

The first thing I did when I started was to address the achievement gap in a number of different ways: starting a team through an achievement gap course in conjunction with the STA; helping the high school principal put forward an initiative in cultural competency for staff, students and families; and supporting the Fruition Scholars program and the Library tutoring program. Respectful, courteous interaction is explicitly expected in all leadership team interactions, and the administrators have responded with enthusiasm. I attempt to model this behavior with everyone in the district and the greater community. Open communication and the opportunity for everyone to propose ideas is healthy and leads to innovative approaches to problems. When I started in Stoughton it

was my perception that not all of the teachers felt comfortable expressing their ideas, and I continually suggest that they do so. While not every idea is acted upon, the more there are in the mix, the more likely we are to find some really good ones, and our teachers often know their own needs best.

Labor Relations

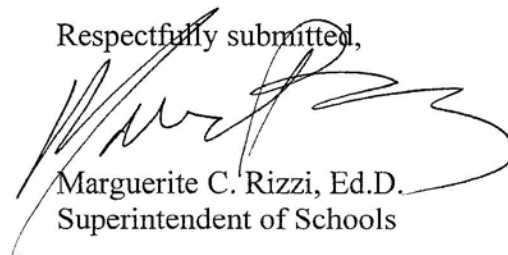
In a very difficult budget year three of our unions have agreed to take a zero until the budget picture becomes more clear. The STA agreed to the Race to the Top application. Multiple attempts have been made to reach out to the teachers' union, and additional attempts will be made regularly in spite of an apparent lack of interest in collaboration at this time. It should be noted that all of the charges brought against me and the School Committee to the Division of Labor Relations were summarily dismissed. My relationships with the teachers in all other contexts remains very strong. The School Committee position of standing firm on financial issues in an era of shrinking budgets is being maintained. This is a difficult time for unions with the landscape of education changing, particularly in the area of accountability, and the revenue numbers shrinking, perhaps for a significant period of time.

Closing Statement

I will continue to a strong advocate for the students, teachers, and administrators in this district. I will continue to articulate a vision for the future of our system, and do every thing possible to advocate for the funding necessary, even in hard times, to implement that vision, and keep us ahead of the current trends. I will continue to work with our teachers in a professional capacity, asking for their input and participation in decisions that are made to move the district forward.

A first year in any new position is always hard, and this job has more facets than many. I wish to heartily thank the members of the School Committee, past and present who have given me the tools and support needed to get off to a good start. Many of you have gone above and beyond to be as helpful as possible.

Respectfully submitted,



Marguerite C. Rizzi, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools