

WAYLAND • PUBLIC • SCHOOLS

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To: School Committee
From: Gary A. Burton
Date: June 10, 2009
Re: Administrative Initiative Reports

Three years ago, the administrators set aside a full morning of our two-day summer retreat to engage in a structured exercise designed to look into the future and identify topics or subjects that we agreed we would like to see the district promote or encourage. From an initial list of approximately twenty ideas, we came to agreement on five educational initiatives that administratively we wanted to advance by personally investing our time and energy.

Central to our conversation was the realization that with the adoption of these initiatives we would not be afforded any relief from our normal responsibilities as Wayland administrators. In short, we collectively agreed to take on more work, even as we acknowledged our responsibilities for the daily operations of the schools, the preparation of annual budgets, and any school committee goals or projects that might be undertaken or otherwise assigned to us. The acceleration of the high school building project, the reconsolidation of the elementary schools, and the ongoing budget problems confronting the community are three examples of activities that have arisen and are now consuming a great deal of administrative time, even as we try to move the five initiatives forward. Also, acknowledged at this meeting was the fact that a number of the administrators would be leaving the district within two years and replaced by others who might not be as committed to these initiatives as those who initially agreed upon them. (This has not proven so.)

School districts don't run themselves. The course that a district follows, be it an elaborate strategic plan, short-term goals, or simply a well-stated educational philosophy, changes from time to time. Schools function differently today than they did ten years ago, and I assume more changes are forthcoming. Most often these changes are normal and natural. They result from a variety of forces within our community, state, and nation that shape and reshape the local schools. The five administrative initiatives were intended to change the Wayland Public Schools in specific ways.

The five initiatives identified in the summer of 2006 were unanimously supported by the administration with the belief that, as a district, we should invest more time, money, and energy as we work to improve the quality of our students' school experiences and, equally important, to better prepare them for their lives in a broader and ever-changing community. At the time of our initial discussion, we agreed that all five initiatives represent long-term commitments to topics that would need to be constantly explained to the community and re-examined and modified as warranted based upon public reactions, school committee directives, and appropriate funding. Administratively, we have revisited these initiatives on a regular basis and are pleased with our progress to date.

To some, our five initiatives may be considered the core of a strategic plan vital to the district's long-term success, while others view them simply as educational fads and/or administrative favorites. Personally, I believe that they fall somewhere in-between. Each administrator has had the opportunity to become actively involved with any of these initiatives, and you will learn from the attached reports that specific administrators have elected to lead our efforts in each of the five areas identified. I ask that the committee members read each report completely, as they contain recommendations that if acted upon will necessitate funding and or staffing that is not currently within the district's budget. These recommendations will be formally revisited by administrators when the FY'11 budget is constructed.

In closing, I believe these initiatives have considerable merit and should become integral parts of our district's operation. In many ways, they already have been integrated into our programs, curriculum, and ongoing planning efforts. The five reports reflect our efforts to date and none should be considered complete or final. Each initiative will continue, though the amount of administrative time devoted to them will vary based upon ongoing events within the district and our efforts to, if appropriate, secure funding. Nevertheless, all five

initiatives will continue to be reviewed and modified. Finally, I believe some of these initiatives are more visible within the district, thus, more prone to public support or criticism, and, as such, there are degrees of urgency associated with each one that serves to hinder or promote it. I look forward to discussing these reports with you beginning on Monday, June 15. Please call or write should you have questions that can be addressed beforehand. Thank you.