

Superintendent Interview: Or lack thereof

Our school has been in a constant state of upheaval since just prior to this ED613 class starting. Our Superintendent of several years was put on administrative leave for an undisclosed school board investigation. Shortly after he returned our Principal accepted an education administrator job with the state department of corrections and left mid-semester. I moved from my classroom to the office as K-12 Dean of Students and have been working with a local retired Principal that the district hired part-time until year's end. Our Superintendent subsequently resigned and was replaced by a local retired Superintendent through next year.

All of that is to say that I have not had much of an opportunity to sit down with any of my administrators to discuss their thoughts on the current MN Legislative session and its impact on our district. I can say that our new Superintendent seems focus on the regulations surrounding our Food Service practices. That's likely because we were just audited and inspected by the state in that area. He has been asking questions about when our vending machines are turned on, what kind of food our school store sells before school, what fundraising efforts have included selling popcorn or smoothies during lunch hours, etc.

It is clear that we need to tighten our grip on food service as a whole because he has also spoken to me about how we are not currently showing expenses such as water, waste, and electricity for our kitchen in our budget. That money is coming from somewhere, likely our general fund. Which means, in his words, we are taking money out of the classroom and sinking it in food service. Not a sound financial practice.

The challenges I see him facing moving forward as our interim Superintendent are building enough social equity with the school board and the staff to make the changes necessary to get and keep the district on the right path. It helps that he has a good prior record as an area Superintendent. It helps that he was chosen from a fairly open hiring process that involved many stakeholders.

So far the politics have been set aside in favor of stabilizing a somewhat chaotic situation surrounding our administrative team. I'm guessing that will be short-lived as he begins having to make decisions that require the support of both the board and the staff. Local politics have historically affected policy decisions because we are a small district in a small town that is run by a handful of legacy families in the area. Many of our staff members and students

are part of our community's "ruling class". And, although not openly admitted, that close knit relationship has played into the inner workings of our school from time to time.

Perhaps having this new, intermediate, Superintendent will help remove some of that local social stigma. He is not connected to the area per se. He will not have to lobby for a continuing contract. He can look at our school district with an objective eye and enforce policies that he considers are good for the district as a whole. He can look at our budget, our class sizes, our teacher placements, our calendar, our technology, and our policies through a lense not clouded by local politics. It could be refreshing.