

WASHINGTON WEST  
SUPERVISORY UNION

State of the Union Report

December 2009

**Prepared by the Central Office Administrative Team**

## **OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT (OOTS)**

### **Brigid S. Scheffert**

The WWSU Central Office Administrative Team will be preparing “State of the Union” reports several times each year as part of our new coordinated systems management. The purpose is to document information, process and progress as we move forward in our work to fulfill the WWSU mission and vision. These reports might also prove useful to new school board members and administrators in the future.

As a new superintendent, my work with the WWSU really began last spring with Phase I, transition. I began by visiting our schools, joining team meetings, becoming acquainted with as many constituents as possible and gathering data and information. Boards and administrators answered my early guided question, sharing what they thought worked well and not so well in the supervisory union and at each school. Similar information was gathered at board retreats. (Common concerns are summarized below). Listening, learning and reflecting were the key components used in determining where common needs evolved. From here, I developed my work plan, which helps me identify what needs to be done, why, how the work connects to practice, and how to build capacity and sustain outcomes. Our central office team is focused, intentional and comprehensive in our efforts, while incorporating input from all of you as we move forward.

After July 1, Phase II began. I moved from transition to orientation and Stage I development. The central office was reorganized physically and operationally for efficiency and accountability. We evaluated and upgraded our phone and technology systems. I think the standing joke (in a good way) is what is our process for that and where is it written?

Teams were formed and projects were identified. I created a standing calendar for myself. I meet with each building administrator twice each month, once at the school and once at central office. The entire WWSU Administrative Team meets twice monthly and so does the Central Office Administrative Team. I also meet individually each week with each central office administrator.

Another very successful effort was to further establish the WWSU Executive Board Committee, and to confirm our Rules of Organization and composition of members. We meet twice each month and have completed a work schedule that includes all work topics generated from a thorough district brainstorming exercise.

As I have said many times to all of you, the WWSU should be proud. A lot of wonderful work and accomplishments are evident. However, it is an organization of 1’ers! So much more can be accomplished with a systems approach where success is built upon, effort is coordinated and channeled, and capacity is created and sustained.

Dynamic schools and thriving organizations understand that capacity, sustainability and accountability go hand in hand. Moral purpose is central to our work. It requires us to strive to constantly improve student outcomes. My focus for the adults in the WWSU is to strive to become organized, efficient and accountable in all they do. Everything we do for our students should be tied to increasing and improving rigor, relevance, engagement, and preparedness.

**Key areas identified as needing work or of concern throughout the WWSU are:**

- Communication across the district.
- Sharing and receiving required information in a timely manner.
- More transparency and collaboration district wide.
- Administrative turn-over.
- A coordinated curriculum and instructional delivery system with a true focus on WWSU students, pre-K through 12.
- Ensuring that all WWSU students enter HUHS on a fairly level playing field.
- The continuity in student learning pre-K through 12 throughout the district and the subsequent impact at middle school and high school transitions.
- The teacher, support staff and administrative evaluation process.
- Mathematics instruction and student outcomes.
- Middle school instruction and student outcomes.
- Professional development in general, including Early Release Days and updates to boards on prior initiatives.
- Support in building accountability in administration and administrative teams in each school district.
- Clarifying the work, roles, authority and accountability of central office staff and administrators.
- Accountability in curriculum, instruction and assessment work.
- Negotiations and contracts.
- Facilities management: Buildings and grounds.
- Cost control measures for budget development and concerns with declining enrollment.
- School sites need direct access online with the accounting system, NEMRC, at central office.

## **Key areas of my work to date have included the following:**

- Participating in individual school board retreats. Information was gathered and compared with my survey questions of what's working and what's not in the WWSU and your school.
- Facilitating our first 2-day administrative retreat in August, where our new team was formed, ground rules were developed, expectations were clarified, decision making was outlined and a tool developed, and future work identified.
- Bringing together all WWSU employees at HUHS at the start of the school year to formulate a new team and reinvigorate the mission.
- Developing perspective on the supervisory union's strengths and challenges of educational programs at each school site.
- Bringing clarity to the WWSU operation by clearly identifying the roles and responsibilities of all central office staff.
- Analyzing pay scales and job categories and then correcting pay inequities with central office support staff.
- Reviewing and becoming familiar with many essential supervisory union documents and contracts.
- Working with the media to report information and support the many new administrators in our district.
- Becoming a visible and engaged participant in our schools and communities.
- Meeting with different teacher and support staff union teams and representatives.
- Working with Laura to review and correct the seniority list, which identifies the step in the contract that each employee is placed on to determine annual salary.
- Meeting with the student body and student voice group at HUHS.
- Exploring the opportunities afforded to HUHS students at the Barre Technical Center and attending meetings.
- Assisting the central office team in providing appropriate services, and program and fiscal accountability around grant funding so that we are compliant with federal and state mandates, (such as school-wide Title I programming) to maximize revenue reimbursement and successfully pass required audits.
- Working with Michelle to support facility safety audits and improvement plans through our insurance carrier, VSBIT.

- Met with Ray Staskus and Laura Titus to discuss busing in general. We clarified our procedures for closing school in inclement weather.
- Overseeing the management of H1N1 preparation in each school. Contingency plans were developed for each school in the event the building administrator needed to be absent for more than 2 days.
- Meeting with the HAPCO health services team to decide how reinvestment monies will be utilized throughout the district.
- Working to develop appropriate distribution and accountability around the ARRA stimulus funds, IDEA-B and Title I allocations.
- Supporting and advising administrators and board members concerning student matters, personnel issues, parent concerns, action plans, goal setting, and school improvement status.
- Teaming with Michelle to begin the process of putting the transportation contract out to bid and dealing with a new central office lease within a year.
- Researching legal information, providing support to HUHS administration and board as they work to bring additional accountability for student safety and fiscal reporting to foreign field trips.
- Training and protocol development for administrators around legal reporting of suspected educator misconduct based on Vermont statutes.

### **Administrative Team:**

I must tell you that as a new Superintendent, I feel like I have hit the jackpot! Most of what I am able to accomplish is dependent on a strong, capable, hard working administrative team, and we have that in spades in the WWSU. In addition, passion and enthusiasm are other attributes that the group brings. We are continuing to build our relationships. Our meetings are very productive, and additional work continues outside of the meeting. We have sub-committees working on: Teacher Evaluation, PLC'S and Early Release Days, a policy and guidelines for Appropriate Technology Use by Employees, development of a WWSU Support Staff Evaluation Tool, and finally P.A.R.T.Y., which stands for Planning Administrator Rejuvenation Time Yearly! All joking aside, it is essential that we meet and spend time together outside of the fast paced meetings and crisis management we do weekly. A team that plays together...stays together.

### **Budget Development:**

Michelle has done a tremendous job getting us all into budget season with timely, accurate, information and a solid understanding of our challenges. Our site administrators continue to work hard bringing in very responsible budgets. My role has involved reviewing and analyzing financial reports, reviewing contracts, and working with Michelle on both short term and long term planning. I spent a lot of time

getting up to speed on the staffing plan in each school. Michelle, site administrators and I are examining not only what we spend, but where we can spend what we are already spending differently.

We provided Education Funding 101 training for boards, administrators and community members in October.

### **Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment:**

We are so fortunate to have Shelia Rivers on our team. Together we have been revisiting prior work and agreements, identifying areas that need work, and beginning the conversations that hopefully will lead to a coherent and aligned WWSU curriculum at all levels of our system. Backwards design with the Harwood Union Graduate in mind is really where we focus. At the district level we hope to:

- Create a system of Pre-K-12 curriculum, instruction, and assessment that is combined with measurable ends and targets.
- Obtain and manage resources to maximize the return on our investments as measured by student progress and increased opportunities.
- Increase student achievement for all students and subgroups in all our schools.
- Identify efficiency areas where WWSU schools can share resources in an era of declining resources.

### **Data Collection & Analysis:**

I have been working with Sheila Rivers to formulate a long term plan and model for collecting student data. One of my observations has been that prior data collection and work in the WWSU lacked a broad context. For example, our longitudinal data collections will compare our middle schools to each other, and to several other middle schools in Vermont. Past NECAP data reports compared individual schools with WWSU district data and state scores only. At the high school level, we will compare HUHS against U-32, BHS, SBHS, MMU, and MHS with both assessment data and program of studies analysis. I am hoping to distribute data reports to boards and site administrators in February.

The **PowerSchool** data collection and distribution system needed to be examined considering, use, purpose and cost effectiveness. PowerSchool is largely a high school application. HUHS is nearly fully operational. Both middle schools have met with success in expanding use to include grade reports, scheduling, assignment postings, and parent access. All schools use the tool for attendance and other basic reporting functions. PowerSchool is not easily adapted to grade reporting at the elementary level, nor does it utilize a format structure conducive to report card development in grades K-6.

We have revisited our overall data collection systems in the WWSU and the personnel hired to maintain them. We have moved to an approach of building more internal capacity by training existing staff and setting up a leveled protocol as to who to call and when. Only after exhausting our internal experts will we move to an outside consultant. Since we are no longer in the development/early implementation

stage of PowerSchool, we eliminated the data management specialist position at the central office, moved those resources into technology upgrades, and expanded the maintenance level work of data by assigning it to other central office staff.

Student assessment data and staff evaluation data are better supported in VCAT (Vermont Common Assessment Tool). We have moved our membership in EDW (Educational Data Warehouse), which was virtually unused and costing us thousands of dollars to VCAT. Our WWSU full administrative team will be trained in the use and application of the VCAT system on 12-14-09. The administrative team has high hopes of developing a common elementary report card to be used by all schools using the VCAT system.

### **Evaluation:**

The WWSU will soon have a fully developed evaluation system for nearly all employees. Evaluation tools need to be developed, processes and timelines established, training provided, and recording systems to measure accountability put into place.

The National School Standards for School Leaders (ISSLC Standards,) and the Pathwise Program (Charlotte Danielson's work), in which you invested heavily, have provided the foundations for the work in this area.

### **Administration:**

The tool for the Superintendent's evaluation should be out in draft to the board sub-committee this week. I have worked with board members Ann Griffin and Jean Wry on this. We have reviewed a number of tools used throughout the state and integrated the work into one for the WWSU. Boards will be asked to set some time aside to complete the evaluation at their January meeting.

Each board soon will have received a complete packet of the tool, timeline and process I have developed for the evaluation of all building administrators. The National Standards for Leaders mentioned above, along with the Educator Quality Standards for Vermont Administrators, provided the foundation for this work. The administrative evaluation process begins in late February with gathering feedback from staff and boards, and then conducting all WWSU climate surveys. Goals are set from the feedback received and ongoing review and supporting evidence is collected throughout the year.

School boards are presented with completed evaluations in March in advance of the customary contract renewal period in April.

Since I am new and needed to spend the semester developing this evaluation model, formal written evaluations will not be forthcoming until March 2011. However, all principals have set goals which we discuss during our 1 to 1 time. I will be prepared to share thoughts and suggestions orally to boards and administrators in March 2010.

### **Licensed Teaching Staff:**

All WWSU administrators will be trained or re-trained in using Pathwise on December 18<sup>th</sup>. I have created a data base at the central office with all licensed staff with the most updated information as to when they were last evaluated. From there, we have placed each of them on the appropriate level of evaluation as specified in the program. Each school administrator is well along in goal setting with each teacher. He/she has also submitted to me the names of the teaching staff being fully evaluated this year. I will discuss the progress of these evaluations at our 1 to 1 meetings throughout the year. Progress monitoring of teacher evaluations will now be possible through our new VCAT system. This will allow me to review teacher evaluations in process online. In June, Laura Titus will use VCAT to print out all the completed teacher evaluations in the district conducted this year and directly file them to the personnel records.

### **Support Staff:**

Chris Dodge (FES) and I developed a draft tool for support staff evaluation, which was recently presented to the WWSU Admin Team for review. We established a sub-committee to continue the work. They will create different forms for each of the different support staff positions.

### **Negotiations:**

Coordinated support staff negotiations for Moretown, Waterbury/Duxbury and Harwood Union have been underway since I arrived. We are headed to mediation. This process is very time consuming but necessary. It is essential that we build increased flexibility into our contract agreements in order to further develop our school organizations into 21<sup>st</sup> century learning environments.

Teacher negotiations have just begun. Our task is to integrate the HUHS contract with the unified WWSU contract, which includes all the other five districts.

We had a thorough work session at our last WWSU Admin Team meeting, which allowed me to gather concerns around what didn't work and/or needed clarity in the support staff contracts from the site administrators view point. Next, we will devote time to the same kind of exercise around the teacher contracts.

### **Policy Development and Revision:**

It quickly became apparent to me that policy revision and adoption is all over the map in the WWSU. Step 1 was to collect a report from each site administrator identifying all policies in place and their adoption dates for each school district in the WWSU. Step 2 was to enter all that information into a data base. Step 3 was to conduct a crosswalk with the VSBA Model Policy Manual. A WWSU Process Protocol was developed and adopted by the Executive Committee. Now we will begin our work of correcting titles and code numbers, updating all required policies over time so that every three – five years they are addressed, begin immediate work on any required policies we currently do not have in place, and

create essentially an up to date report specifying the status in the WWSU of all required, recommended, and local policies on the books.

### **Professional Development:**

One of the key areas identified by board members as needing review was the Early Release Days professional development model. Accountability, quality and scheduling are being studied. We now have procedures in place to track attendance. I would like the time to be spent more on curriculum work in grade level groups across the district focused on instructional practices and techniques, as well as content alignment. To date, the vast majority of offerings have been centered around training from expert consultants outside the district.

An Admin Team sub-committee has been examining other scheduling options. One scheduling option being considered is to have a combination of half and whole days. The whole days would strategically be on Mondays, such as Columbus Day. Families might have these days off already, and a Monday could allow for a three day weekend. Depending on the curriculum work being done, a full day could allow for total immersion and a greater depth of study with more well articulated targets.

In addition, the entire WWSU Admin Team is engaged in thorough discussions and decision making around this very important topic. Sheila has included some information in her report below for your review. Recommendations will be made to the Executive Committee in January.

Sheila and I have gathered participation data for the past five years regarding LAPDA, our regional professional organization. LAPDA provides cost effective courses and workshops to educators. However, the WWSU pays approximately \$8,000.00 annually to belong. If we did not belong, the same offering would cost us \$100.00 additional dollars for participants. We are interested in determining if our financial contribution is paying off, and if these professional development offerings are linked sufficiently to our action plans.

### **Student Support Services:**

Donarae does a fabulous job meeting the reporting requirements of more state and federal mandates than I can count. Her department is highly organized and focused on improving student outcomes and maximizing resources at every level. She has taken on the coordination of our preschool programs and partnerships throughout the district. We were out of compliance in several areas, which she has corrected. More details are included in her section of the report.

Donarae and I will be studying two important areas throughout the year. The first is the analysis of need and use of all paraeducators in our schools. Statewide we have seen a very significant increase in the number of instructional assistants. In addition to concerns around large increases in the cost of public education funding in this area, a growing concern has emerged that we are creating students who are too dependent on these support adults.

The second area of study revolves around the possibilities of increasing student supports through RTI models (Response to Intervention). These models focus on diagnostic, intensive classroom interventions for struggling students, rather than more adult support in the form of paraeducators or simply re-teaching in the same way the content and concepts presented. This work hopefully will lead to increasing academic and social success for students not yet meeting standards.

## **Systems Work & Development:**

### **Hiring Procedures:**

We have created a hiring packet with a checklist for site administrators to use so we can ensure that all reference checks and criminal checks have been completed and recorded. The materials submitted during the application process must be sent to the central office with a request for a contract. All salary and step information is verified by Michelle before a contract is produced. I am not signing any contracts for employment until the checklist is complete and signed off on by Laura. Once the hiring is complete, the employee packet is moved to the personnel file.

### **Personnel Files:**

Laura and I are hard at work correcting the personnel files, especially in the area of evaluation documents. We have many teachers working in our district never evaluated and/or the last report dates back to 1998. This is a big problem for several reasons, but contractually speaking we are seriously out of compliance.

### **Job Description Manual:**

Our employee management systems are being revisited and developed more fully. Negotiated contracts, employee evaluation and supervision, hiring procedures including security checks and licensure, consistent and thorough job descriptions, and the management of personnel files all work together to fulfill our legal requirements and to hire and retain highly qualified staff. Job descriptions usually do not exist, and those that do, in my opinion, are too scant; they need to identify the essential functions of a job and clearly outline expectations. Job descriptions should be the same for individuals working under the same job title and working under the same negotiated contract. Oftentimes, the annual employment contracts and agreements are titled differently than both the job description and the negotiated master agreement. This is a serious problem that I hope will be corrected by next fall.

### **WWSU Administrator's Guidebook:**

This is a work in progress. The goal is to create a guide for frequently asked questions and general procedures to assist site administrators in their leadership. It can be a time saver for all of us, as I often provide support and guidance on the same or similar questions via multiple phone or email conversations. A guidebook can also serve as a handy reference for team decisions that we make at our

administrative team meetings over the years. It probably goes without saying that tools such as this can be extremely helpful to new administrators when leadership changes occur.

### **State of Vermont Involvement:**

I have been appointed to the legislative committee representing the Vermont Superintendent's Association in Montpelier during this session.

I was both a presenter and a panelist in October at a statewide conference in Montpelier. My topic was "Using Systems Approaches to Develop Sustainable Capacity in Vermont Schools to Better Serve Students and Taxpayers".

I have been appointed by the Vermont Judiciary along with Commissioner Vilaseca to The Vermont Supreme Court's Justice for Children Task Force. Leaders from the legal system, human services, legislature, the courts and now education work to forge solutions to problems facing Vermont children.

I made direct contact with all the legislators and senators who represent Washington County. We held our first joint get together at the central office on November 16<sup>th</sup>. Some of the topics discussed were our roles and getting to know one another, state revenues on the decline, budgets, and the cost drivers (student-staff ratios and special education costs). We tentatively planned getting together again, and they indicated to me they always wanted to know when I was at the statehouse so we could connect then, or they would try to sit in on my testimony.

### **Technology:**

As it turns out, our technology problems at the central office are quite significant. At first glance, I thought the overall use and hardware and software capacity simply had not been evaluated in quite some time. Work stations were off line far too often, and tech support was almost never available. Failures increased to a point that Michelle and I decided a full, comprehensive audit was essential to moving forward with thoughtful and specific remedies.

We chose Symquest, aware that there would be mixed feelings about choosing them for several reasons. Symquest was never intended to be a long term solution for tech support, only necessary at these initial stages. The choice was made because of the scope of knowledge their team of 12 engineers and experts could bring to our problems, and because I had strong first hand reference information from other supervisory unions about what they were able to do for them. Their expertise specifically with a school district as large as ours using NEMRC has proved invaluable. We also had an immediate need to secure emergency back-up off site. They have been monitoring our systems remotely and fully provide safety support at the present time.

Once we fully evaluate all the recommendations, we will go out to bid for the replacement of the hardware, software, connectivity issues, etc. Michelle and I have presented an initial report to the Executive Committee. Some of the key problems identified are failed back-up systems since 2006,

incorrect, conflicting IP addresses, no security, servers not replaced since the mid 90's malfunctioning, firewall deficiencies, seriously mismatched, outdated software and licensing issues.

We are finally live with our new WWSU website. As most of you are aware, we hired a HUHS student to do the work, and we haven't been sorry! Now we need to get updated information posted. Sheila Rivers is overseeing this ongoing effort in central office.

Our first WWSU Coordinated Calendar has been created and is regularly updated from site based newsletters by Laura Titus. Hopefully, we all can remember to check it regularly to avoid scheduling conflicts where possible, especially regarding student events.

### **Closing:**

Recently, the Vermont Department of Education published a report titled "Roots of Success: Effective Practices in Vermont Schools". The findings conclude that the one element which allows school organizations to be highly effective rather than just good is systems development. I encourage you all to read this study. It can be found at [www.rootsofsuccess.wordpress.com](http://www.rootsofsuccess.wordpress.com)

As we continue our work together, leadership in our district will focus on systems approaches regarding new initiatives and problem solving around old ones. Together we can strive to provide high expectations, continuous improvement, strong leadership, effective use of data, a professional teaching culture, comprehensive student supports, safe and engaging school climates, and high levels of family engagement.

In closing, I feel confident that we are off to a good start and that the Washington West Supervisory Union is a district that will remain on the move. I am impressed with the dedication, commitment, and spirit of board members, administrators, teachers, support staff, and other employees. The entire central office team is capable, energetic, and ready to move our organization to the next level. The WWSU has considerable untapped capacity in this one administrator's opinion. In case anyone is wondering...I like this job!

## **CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT (CIA)**

### **Sheila Rivers**

It has been an exceptionally busy, yet productive start to the school year. I am thrilled to once again be part of the WWSU school system, and I am excited about the challenges ahead. With an effective and supportive team behind me, I feel I have been able to delve into the important work at hand. I feel confident that there will be many positive changes with curriculum and assessment development during this school year and beyond. Please feel free to contact me at any time with questions or concerns.

My overarching goal for the school year is to provide leadership and support, with follow-through, to the teachers and administrators in WWSU. This goal will be accomplished through facilitation of curriculum and assessment development groups, and data-driven decision making; support for on-going professional development throughout the district, and clear communication with the many constituents within the organization. The specific goals I have outlined for the school year are as follows:

- **GOAL ONE:** Work to develop a Local Comprehensive Assessment Plan for the SU that consists of school and Supervisory Union wide common assessments in the core content areas.
- **GOAL TWO:** Collaborate with Administrative Council to develop a stronger link between data-based decision-making and professional development in the Supervisory Union.
- **GOAL THREE:** To support the WWSU Board and Superintendent in the analysis of school programming and develop long-range plans to improve deficits in areas identified.
- **GOAL FOUR:** Move toward full implementation of the VCAT (Vermont Comprehensive Assessment Tool) as a tool for articulation of curricular and assessment expectations, and as a tool for data analysis.
- **GOAL FIVE:** Collaborate with Administrative Council to solidify the Teacher Evaluation process
- **GOAL SIX:** Collaborate with Business Office and Administrators to improve coordination, monitoring, and reporting of Consolidated Federal Grant Funding in WWSU

### **Professional Development:**

The following 24 Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) have been developed and will meet during the eight early release days this year. Additionally, the administrative team, with input from teachers and community members will evaluate this model and make recommendations for how Professional Learning and Inservice will be developed and implemented in the years to come in WWSU.

Content Area	#	Title of PLC Offering	Grade Levels	Facilitator	Goals
General	1	Pre-K Creative Curriculum	Pre-K	DOE Staff	Prepare for implementation of the <i>Creative Curriculum</i> for all Pre-K classrooms.
	2	Supporting the Implementation of Responsive Classroom	K-6	Chris Dodge	Support the implementation of Responsive Classroom's <i>Guiding Principles</i> in a variety of school settings
Literacy	3	Formative Writing Instruction in the Elementary Grades	K-6	Mary Jane Wright, Carla Kotas-Lewis	Collaborative, in-depth look at student writing with emphasis on effective writing assessment used formatively to plan instructional next steps based on results.
	4	Securing the Literacy Block	3-6	Gayle Moskowitz	Review the different components that make up the "Reader's Workshop", create curriculum maps, implement assessment, analyze results. Video case studies will be used for analysis of instruction.
	5	Writing Across the Curriculum	7-12	Jon Potts	Cross-curricular study group to reflect on the practices and pedagogy behind high-quality writing instruction.
Mathematics	6	K-2 Mathematics	K-2	Loree Silvis Brenda Hartshorn	<b>NEW CONTENT**</b> Review <b>changes</b> to the DOE Version of the Primary Number and Operations Assessment (PNOA) to prepare <b>for full implementation</b> , analyze results of spring implementation, create instructional goals, reflect on instruction

Content Area	#	Title of PLC Offering	Grade Levels	Facilitator	Goals
	7	CMP2 Implementation	6-8 <i>Plus 5th grade multi or looping</i>	Doug Bergstein Diana Puffer	Continued support for implementation of the CMP2 Math program. Designing follow-up plan for year two implementation and professional development.
	8	9-12 MATH	9-12	Elaine Watson	Develop course offerings and sequencing to better address mathematics GEs across all classes
Science	9	Curriculum Mapping	7-12	Amy Cole Charlotte Sherman	Create and identify learning opportunities through curriculum mapping to focus on student outcomes in Science
Social Studies	10	Curriculum Mapping	7-12	Helen Beattie Kathy Cadwell	Create and identify learning opportunities through curriculum mapping to focus on student outcomes in Social Studies
SpEd/Support Services	11	Orton-Gillingham	K-12	Laura Baker	Create scope and sequence of OG instruction along with specific lessons to share
	12	American Sign Language	K-12	Renee Pellerin	Introduction to American Sign Language (ASL)
	13	Para-Educator Seminar	K-12	Cathy Knight, Barbara Tomasi-Gay, Brenda Veveris	Current topics and themes supportive of the role of Para-educators in WWSU schools. <b>(This session runs from 1 p.m. - 3 p.m. only)</b>
Service Learning	14	Interdisciplinary-Project-Based Learning	K-12	Ellen Berrings	Develop, implement and assess project-based units of instruction and analyze process through use of <i>critical friends</i> protocols.

Content Area	#	Title of PLC Offering	Grade Levels	Facilitator	Goals
Tech	15	iLife Suite '09	K-12	Doug Lombard	Learn the new '09 versions of the iSuite for Mac: iMovie, iWeb, iPhoto, and Garage Band. Prerequisite - for Mac users with the Apple iLife '09 upgrade. (Limit 8, first come, first serve)
	16	Integrating Interactive technologies	K-8	Eric Hall	Integrating LCD Projectors, Document Cameras and Interactive technologies into the Classroom
	17	SmartBoard Application and Use	K-12	Katie Sullivan	Support for meaningful integration of SmartBoard technology in the classroom
Arts	18	Art, Music	K-12	Gail Kilkelly Carol Gargon Diane Phillips	Create and identify learning opportunities and develop authentic assessments to focus on student outcomes in the arts
Job Alike	19	PE	K-12	Carol Baitz Lindsay Simpson (DOE)	Continued implementation support of PCAT and unit development using <i>Riverdeep</i>
	20	Foreign Language	K-12	Nancy Skilton	Curriculum Revision of WWSU World Language curriculum in alignment with National Standards for World Languages.
	21	Library	K-12	Susan Hennessey	Action research with a focus on the relationship between Library/Media specialists and 21st Century skills and planning for ways in which the work will impact student learning.
	22	Health/Nurses (HAPCO)	K-12	Linda King/ Sue Dillion	Focus on the principles, practices and processes of school health

Content Area	#	Title of PLC Offering	Grade Levels	Facilitator	Goals
					management. Also, an overview of the VT Health Ed Standards.
	23	SLP	K-12	Sharon Cote	Continued professional support exploring topics to better enable the SLP to provide services to students in schools. Topics may include integration strategies, use of appropriate technologies, and sharing expertise of the group.
	24	School counselors	K-12	Lisa Lemieux	Development of a comprehensive K-12 counseling model

## Committees

The following is a list of some of the committees I will facilitate and support in my work throughout the year.

### Science Curriculum Development Team:

This team is made up of teachers of grades K-12 with expertise or special interest in science. This group has met over the last two years to update our WWSU curriculum in the area of science. Currently the group is creating assessments for use across the Supervisory Union.

### Mathematics Leadership Team:

This newly formed group will be comprised of teachers across the SU who have previously worked on mathematics curriculum and assessment, or new teachers with particular interest. The goal for this group will be to review the various reports and other development work that has occurred over the past several years and develop an implementation plan that will address the larger issues in the SU (curricula, local assessments). Priority will be given to the administration and full implementation of local assessments at the K-8 grades, and course development work at the High School.

### Mentoring

Teachers new to WWSU are assigned a veteran teacher to act in the role of mentor. Research has shown that teachers mentored in their first few years of teaching are retained at a higher rate and improve their instructional practices at a pace higher than that of teachers who have not had formal mentors assigned. The WWSU mentor program has been developed to align with

the Components of Professional Practice - the same program our teacher evaluation system is based on; therefore, there is a strong alignment between the support they receive from their colleagues and the evaluation tool upon which their job performance review is based. Each summer there is training for teachers who serve as mentors. This group also meets regularly for support and additional training. WWSU has a Mentor Coordinator (paid from Federal Grants) to provide this on-going PD. Teachers who serve as mentors receive an annual stipend from local funds for their work.

## **Other On-going Projects**

### **Federal Grants Management**

Approximately 20% of my position is funded through the Consolidated Federal Grant. This time is allocated toward the management of the Consolidated Federal Grants and related ARRA funding. Through this position, I work closely with building administrators to develop plans to maximize the impact of these funds in schools, and work to evaluate and report on the programs in fulfillment of the requirements for expenditure of the funds. These funds support Professional Development initiatives in the SU, fund personnel in the schools, and provide materials and technology tools for use in the schools.

### **VCAT**

The Vermont Comprehensive Assessment Tool (VCAT) is a web-based curriculum delivery and data collection system specifically designed to meet the Vermont School Quality Standards requirement for a Local Comprehensive Assessment System. It will prove to be a tremendous asset to us as we move forward in the articulation of a coherent K-12 learning experience for WWSU students. An incredibly user-friendly system, this tool will allow teachers to view curricular and assessment expectations within the district and draw upon its many useful features for data reporting. I'm excited about the structure this will provide for us and feel it will be a very important change in our system.

### **High School Program of Studies Analysis**

I am currently conducting a High School Program of Studies Analysis that will provide a greater context for the program offerings at HUHS in relation to area high schools and some of the larger and highly successful schools in Vermont. At-a-glance data analysis and a matrix of course comparisons will provide us with information to consider during our strategic planning and budget development processes.

## **STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES (SSS)**

### **Donarae Cook**

The Student Support Services department of WWSU includes all of the support services for students which are mandated by federal or state law. This includes support to students who may be entitled to Individual Educational Plans (IEP) under special education regulations; 504 Plans of accommodation and/or services under Section 504 law; Educational Support Team Plans (EST) who are provided support in regular education under Act 117; Homeless services under the McKinney Vento Homeless Education Act; and support for English Language Learners (ELL) as well as our newest law for preschool students (Act 62). There are teams and personnel in each of our schools who work to provide the support services required in order for all of our students to be able to access and receive educational benefit from the general education program.

Along with the provision of services for students who fall under these mandated programs, there comes on-going oversight and detailed state and federal reporting. To that end, we remain very busy

#### **Key areas of focus throughout the WWSU include:**

**Continuation of our examination of the utilization of paraeducators.** Our mission across the supervisory union in collaboration with the University of Vermont Center on Disability and Community Inclusion and Michael Giangrecco's "Project Evolve" is to improve the lives of students with disabilities by educating them in the least restrictive environment. Our goal is to explore alternatives to the over-reliance on paraeducators in order that students with the most difficulty learning will be taught by highly qualified teachers, rather than the converse which is having our students with the most learning challenges being taught by our least qualified staff. This work was initiated and has been supported through our federal IDEA-B grant. Waterbury-Duxbury and Harwood have teams engaging in Project Evolve. Along with this work, I am "behind the scenes" working collaboratively with the Department of Education in identifying barriers around the special education funding system to encourage inclusion rather than the current state which, in part, penalizes school districts for the provision of inclusive opportunities for students. For more information about Project Evolve, you can visit [www.edu/-cdci/evolveplus](http://www.edu/-cdci/evolveplus)

**Coordination of pre-kindergarten requirements according to Act 62.** It has been a long-standing practice for school districts including three- and four-year-old children in our average daily membership (ADM) in order to provide publicly funded Pre-kindergarten education. In the spring of 2008, Act 62 was amended in the area of program quality standards. I have been working hard with preschool providers in WWSU this fall to implement Act 62. I am pleased to report that all of our programs have now obtained proper accreditation. Along with the quality standards, Act 62 requires an assessment of all students we count. The assessment must be administered and reported to the DOE each fall and spring. This fall we trained all of our preschool teachers in the Creative Curriculum online assessment that we

will use to measure and report student progress. Preschool teachers are meeting as a group during our PLC afternoons and are working on group professional development needs and development of written procedures for carrying out all of the Act 62 requirements.

**Developing a system-wide approach to the provision of student support services.** During this time of increasing economic hardship, I am working with building administrators and special education teams to look at staffing patterns and service delivery in all schools. Special education is one of the budget increases each year, largely due to staff salaries and benefits. I am collaborating with administrators to identify the system of supports available within the regular education environment in hopes that we will be able to broaden the continuum within regular education and provide training to classroom teachers in areas they feel they need more training, which could ultimately result in fewer students needing to be referred for specialized instruction. We are looking systemically at the related and contracted services that are provided through special education to assess where we may be able to cut some costs while maintaining our commitment and obligation under the various federal and state educational mandates.

**Literacy Training Project.** My goal is to have at least one Orton-Gillingham (OG) trained teacher in every school in order to effectively serve students with specific learning disabilities (dyslexia). This effort would also save districts from having to contract this service out to private OG providers which could be a cost savings. The initial OG course was provided last summer for teachers/special educators across the supervisory union. We now have at least one teacher per school who has this training with the exception of Moretown, for whom we are training in the Wilson Reading program which is an “off-shoot” of OG. This fall, through

IDEA-B ARRA monies, Katherine Bennett, OG specialist, is providing on-going practicum support in OG to Sharon Cote (Fayston), and Susan Koeplinger and Beth McGeorge (Waitsfield). This is very exciting for our students with specific learning disabilities in reading.

**Collaborating with HUHS /CBMS to problem solve transportation of students to outside educational environments.** We continue to use outside placements as a “last resort” in our supervisory union. Many of our state-placed students come to us already enrolled in outside placements, and we continue those for educational stability. Transportation can be very costly due to schedules and bus availability. We are studying this problem and will be working on consolidating some routes as well as bringing some students back to the district over this school year.

**Medicaid Program Management.** This year we hired Amy Caffry as our new Medicaid Clerk. She is responsible to the Student Services Director and Business Manager. Her job is to bill Medicaid for services that special education is providing to students on IEP’s. Typically, this results in approximately \$200,000 of revenue to schools for “preventative activities” such as summer programs and home-school coordinator positions.

**Annual state and federal grants management and reporting requirements that have been completed this fall include:**

- Annual Service Plan budget was submitted to the DOE on October 15, 2009.
- IDEA-B and IDEA-B (ARRA) second grant application and amendment was submitted to the DOE on Sept. 22, 2009, and was approved on November 12, 2009. With ARRA funds, schools have been able to purchase computers and printers for special education staff as well as updated evaluation tools. They will also be purchasing assistive technology devices to increase communication and access to general education curriculum.
- Time Studies are currently being conducted in all schools in the supervisory union. This is how we document time spent on special education for the auditors each year. All special education and paraeducators have to complete a 10-day snapshot of their time spent. Subsequently, we will be calculating, analyzing and reporting this to building principals and the Department of Education through auditing processes.
- Child Count is currently underway where all schools are reporting their count of students with disabilities to Central Office, and on December 1<sup>st</sup> we will be completing our reports and submitting to the DOE.
- BEST Grant which supports students “at risk” through the Educational Support Team (EST) was submitted to the DOE, and we are awaiting formal approval. Monies have been targeted to provide Positive Behavioral Support Training (PBS) and sending teams of teachers to the BEST summer institute.
- ELL Grant was submitted to the DOE. We collaborate with Montpelier School District each fall to be able to apply for money as a consortium.

## **BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS (BFO)**

### **Michelle Baker**

#### **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act - ARRA**

The Supervisory Union (SU) and member districts have received a variety of ARRA funding this fiscal year. This information is intended to provide information on the types of ARRA grants received to date and the distribution to member districts.

**ARRA -State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF)** – The state received approximately \$77M for funding Vermont education. Half of that money will be distributed to school districts in FY 2010 with the other half being available in FY 2011. Information regarding the grants to school districts is on the web at [www.recovery.gov](http://www.recovery.gov). I have received several calls regarding these grants from residents questioning how the funding is being used in their town school district and how many jobs it has created. All need to be aware that these types of ARRA funds are not additional money for school districts. It is not additional money over and above education spending contained in voter approved budgets. The SFSF money is being used to restore the amount appropriated for FY 2010 education spending back to the level required by the school districts. The final state budget as approved by the Legislature appropriated an amount less than that required by school district budgets. The SFSF money closes that gap.

Despite the fact that the SFSF monies are not additional funds state and federal accounting regulations require that we allocate and account for expenditures paid by SFSF federal monies separately. We are required to track these ARRA dollars and report these expenditures to the DOE so they can report to the feds. Based on guidance provided by the Vermont DOE, we were required to spend all the SFSF by September 30. We have established accounts and applied expenses accordingly. As expected, this has created some confusion as spending by line item is not in alignment with the voter approved budget, and we have modified our summary reports to the Boards to report monies where budgeted in order to more accurately reflect spending variations from budget.

The ARRA SFSF Grants awarded this fiscal year to WWSU member districts are as follows:

Fayston	\$ 48,468
Moretown	\$ 58,046
Waitsfield	\$ 60,487
Warren	\$ 51,709
HUHS	\$350,345
Waterbury-Duxbury Union	\$263,641

As some of these dollars were used to fund salaries, we are required to report the number of FTE's supported by this grant. Again, these are not additional positions but positions that were included in voter approved budgets. We have been required to perform these accounting maneuvers because of the way education spending is funded this year, partially by these ARRA federal dollars from the education fund.

**ARRA Consolidated Federal Grant – Title I and Title IID**

The Supervisory Union was allocated Title I ARRA funds in the amount of \$255,397 and Title IID ARRA funds in the amount of \$15,934 for a total CFG ARRA allocation of \$271,331. These are additional monies intended to help the economy and improve student achievement through school improvement and reform. The amount requested by the SU for this fiscal year to date is \$203,695. ARRA funds are available for a two-year period, July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2011.

Title I funds are required to be distributed based on “Targeting & Ranking” and only those schools whose free and reduced lunch percentage is equal to, or higher than, the SU average are eligible for funding. Given that these are one-time monies to invest in education, our priority at the SU is to use this money for expenses such as equipment and classroom materials/textbooks.

The Supervisory Union is required to set-aside 20% of the overall CFG grants received if one or more schools in the Supervisory Union is in the second year of school improvement or greater. A specific procedure is followed to notify students/parents of the availability of Supplemental Education Services (SES).

Distribution of the CFG ARRA funds allocated at this date is as follows:

<b>SU/District</b>	<b>Title I</b>	<b>Title IID</b>	<b>Free/Reduced %</b>	<b>Description of Expenditures Funded</b>
Fayston Elementary	Not Eligible		15.38%	
Moretown Elementary	Not Eligible		11.35%	
The Warren School	\$ 8,685	\$ 355	33.33%	Classroom Resources – Math & Writing Materials

<b>SU/District</b>	<b>Title I</b>	<b>Title IID</b>	<b>Free/Reduced %</b>	<b>Description of Expenditures Funded</b>
Waitsfield Elementary	\$ 4,472	\$ 355	34.00%	<i>Foundations</i> Academic Support, Projectors for Math Instruction
Harwood Union	\$ 90,977	\$ 2,397	16.16%	PowerSchool Training, Consultants Claudine Bedell & Elaine Watson, Math Lab Staffing, Math Materials, Math Lab Computers
Waterbury-Duxbury Union	\$ 51,984	\$ 3,983	28.47%	Equipment and training for using Internet for Instruction
Required "Set Aside" for identified schools	\$ 25,539	\$ 0		For SES – see narrative
WWSU Strategies		\$ 8,049		Technology audit, develop Tech Resources to support teaching throughout the SU
WWSU Administration	\$ 6,104	\$ 795		Included in SU Budget – Part of approximately \$18K administration for the CFG grants
<b>Total</b>	\$187,761.00	\$15,934.00		

**ARRA – IDEA-B**

Washington West received an allocation of \$502,860 IDEA-B ARRA monies and \$17,998 IDEA-B Preschool ARRA monies. These are one-time funds which must be used only to pay cost of providing special education and related services to children with disabilities. These IDEA-B ARRA monies are a component of the Vermont Special Education Funding Formula. The amount requested for this fiscal year to date is \$188,859. These IDEA-B ARRA funds are available for a two-year period, July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2011. The Director of Student Support Services, Donarae Cook, will continue to amend this grant to include additional items.

Although there are significant monies available under IDEA-B ARRA, these monies must be used to supplement State, local and other Federal funds and not to supplant these funds. Although some SU's are using these additional monies to support special education staff, we have not taken this approach and have targeted the funding towards one-time expenditures such as equipment, training and materials/supplies.

Distribution of the IDEA-B ARRA funds allocated at this date is as follows:

Su/District	IDEA B	Description of Expenditures Funded
Fayston Elementary	\$ 3,000	Computer Equipment for Special Ed
Moretown Elementary	\$ 8,500	Computer Equipment for Special Ed, Wilson Reading Training
The Warren School	\$ 6,820	Computer Equipment for Special Ed
Waitsfield Elementary	\$ 7,500	Computer Equipment for Special Ed
Harwood Union	\$ 50,000	Highland's Kitchen Project
WWSU	\$113,039	Resources for all districts including Professional Development, PLC's, Project Evolve Training, Evaluation/Testing Materials, 2009 Summer Program, OG Textbooks, Sign Language Supplies, Equipment to provide IEP Services, Firewall
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$188,859</b>	

### **VSBIT Insurance - Multi-Line Inter-municipal School Program**

Washington West and member districts purchase property and liability insurance through Vermont School Board's Multi-Line Inter-municipal School Program. Now in its sixth year of existence, membership has grown to cover 37 of Vermont's 65 Supervisory Unions. VSBIT is not an insurance company but a non-profit trust funded by member school districts who have joined together to prevent,

control and pay for their collective risk. VSBIT's main function with this program is to serve the needs of Vermont Schools. More information regarding this program can be obtained at [www.vsbite.org](http://www.vsbite.org) under the multi-line program tab.

As members of this non-profit trust, we have a strong interest in loss ratio data and risk management for WWSU as well as the other participants. From 7/1/2004 to 6/30/2009 our loss experience compared to all districts in the program is as follows:

Type of Coverage	General Liability	Auto Liability	Auto Property Damage	School Board Liability	Property	Liability & Property Combined	Worker's Compensation	All Lines
WWSU	0%	0%	2,203%	0%	116.1%	55.7%	16.7%	33.0%
All Districts	22.1%	29.1%	64.3%	37.4%	25.9%	28.0%	53.5%	40.7%

Overall, our losses are lower than the average; our loss experience has been with damage to vehicles as well as property claims including a water damage claim at Thatcher Brook and a theft/property damage claim at Harwood. WWSU's Workers' Comp experience of 16.7% is quite good.

I have asked VSBIT to conduct building and playground safety audits at all our school buildings, and their written recommendations will be shared with school board members as these audits are completed. There is an opportunity to earn points to purchase custodial supplies and equipment by improving the culture of safety and making achievements in loss control.

### **Act 68 Education Funding Formula**

Currently, we are in the throes of developing the FY2011 budgets for the SU and all districts. Given the difficult economy and the halt of growth in the value of real estate, there is daily news media attention and discussion about the education fund and Act 68. On December 8, I will attend a presentation by Vermont Tax Commissioner, Richard Westman entitled, "Act 60/68: The Consequences of a Failed System."

I recently compiled five years of data, cost per pupil, enrollment, tax rates, etc. for the WWSU District which was distributed at the education funding presentation on October 19. If you are interested in obtaining these materials in either paper or electronic format, feel free to request copies by calling me at 802-496-2272, extension 117 or e-mail me at [mbakerwwsu@gmail.com](mailto:mbakerwwsu@gmail.com).