

Youngstown City School District

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Office of the Superintendent

November 3, 2008

To: Members of the Board of Education
Shelley Murray, President
Lock P. Beachum, Sr., Vice President
Richard Atkinson
Anthony Catale
Dominic Modarelli
Michael Murphy
Jacqueline Taylor

From: Wendy E. Webb, Ed.D., Superintendent *W.E.W.*

My response to this evaluation is not to take a defensive position but rather to assure the Board that I will make an effort in every area of the Board's evaluation recommendations to strengthen my leadership role in this district. In order to better prepare for identified opportunities of growth I am requesting a copy of the full evaluation document whereby I can utilize the individual areas identified by the rubric on the evaluation form. *(I ask that this response be attached to my evaluation.)*

A. Relationship with the Board

Please accept this response to my evaluation as an opportunity to improve areas of concern with regard to my job performance.

When the full Board was seated in January 2008, including four new members, Board goals with specificity had not been developed. I believe that I was responsive to changes in timelines and information requests that had previously been established for the school year. The ability to be flexible was not an easy task as we carefully had to analyze and identify job responsibilities that could have slipped through the cracks as a result of district layoffs. The district is still required to develop and complete reports as mandated by the Ohio Department of Education.

I have and will continue to make every attempt to keep the Board fully informed of media coverage relating to our school district. I am aware of two occasions that I was not able to advise the Board in advance of media coverage. Sometimes with technology and media saturation, events make the news prior to my becoming aware of them, especially when the administration has handled these instances appropriately and according to Board policy and procedures. However, parents do not always agree with said policy and procedures and instead sometimes choose to air their concerns directly to the news media. In some instances I was out of town during the media coverage of our district. Henceforth, I will increase my calls to Board Members and also utilize staff for Board notification when I am

out of town. I too do not like surprises and will make every attempt to keep the Board from being caught off guard by district publicity via the various facets of the news media and other information outlets.

Please know that I am fully aware that the Board remains the governance body for the district even with the presence of the Financial Planning Commission, as I have often noted during Board meetings. I have attempted in every situation to inform the Board as to the plans and workings of the Financial Planning Commission. The added responsibility of answering to the Commission puts me in a very precarious position. As the Ohio Revised Code clearly dictates, I as Superintendent will work with the commission and must not be viewed as committing any acts that hinder the balancing of the district's budget. Too, I have made every effort to help build a strong working relationship between the governing body of the district, i.e., the Board of Education, and the Financial Planning Commission.

I believe that I have demonstrated openness with the Board by advising and making recommendations which serve as a springboard for the Board to arrive at its own decision-making. At the same time, even when they have not been my recommendations, I have effectively carried out all directives given to me by the Board.

I have consistently tried to be responsive by providing to all Board members the same information to enable an equal knowledge base upon which to make their decisions. We have revised a large number of dated Board policies to comply with current legal specifications.

B. Community Relations

I fully recognize that Community Relations is very significant and extremely important to the standing of our school district. One of my first responsibilities when I assumed the position of superintendent was to campaign vigorously for the passage of the second Bond Issue for our Building Construction project, which gained fifty-eight percent (58%) voter approval.

I strongly believe in building community within and without of the school community. I have forged ahead with community initiatives such as the Urban Congress, Parent Transition Meetings, Parent Empowerment Luncheons, Parent Instructional Tool Kits, and the Parent Patrol. I also initiated, among several additional programs, the Teacher of the Year Dinner and Teacher Appreciation Day. I have spoken to many community organizations and churches. If anyone expresses concerns to you, I would be happy to meet with them or appear before their organizations to speak.

As we all well know, levies are difficult to pass due to Ohio's obsolete and punitive method of school funding. I have worked diligently for the passage of our current levy issue and will continue to do so. I will continue to commit myself forcefully to improving the attitudes and perceptions of our community's stakeholders regarding the Youngstown City Schools.

To strengthen our efforts to provide our community with information concerning our students' performance and academic progress, I will have a monthly Curriculum Newsletter sent to our students' homes and distributed to other community stakeholders, organizations, etc. I intend to increase speaking engagements involving myself and administrative staff regarding our district's academic progress and other related educational issues.

I believe that I have demonstrated my commitment to community relations by meeting all of my speaking obligations, with the physical assistance of administrative staff, during my convalescence period after extensive surgery as a result of sustaining a broken ankle.

C. Staff and Personnel Relationships

While it is difficult to maintain high morale as the district is under its current financial stress, I believe the staff members have demonstrated a cooperative spirit by their willingness to take a 4-year pay freeze and accept health insurance co-pay. The movement of staff due to the Building Construction Project has hindered morale and academic programs. However, the teachers are pleased as they become situated in their new buildings. I also make every attempt to be fair and objective to the entire school community. I do commend and thank those staff members who work diligently beyond the call of duty to complete their assignments effectively and on time. I do have a policy process in place for administration and staff to read and sign off on new and/or revised policies. I strongly expect them to adhere to the process in order to make certain that the administration and staff reviews all current Board policies.

D. Educational Leadership

As the building construction projects come to a close, the district will sharpen its focus solely on a strategic plan to improve academic achievement. The staff is being trained in the Ohio Improvement Process, based on Best Practices for classroom instruction. All staff members participate in a comprehensive staff development program that is focused on the state standards and differentiated instruction in the classroom. However, if we do not make substantial systemic changes such as restructuring the school day, building strong family components, and support strong administrative leadership, we will not make the large academic gains we aspire to attain.

I continue to interact with local superintendents and the Big 8 Coalition. I attend the Mahoning County Educational Services administrative staff development programs and participate in at least two national leadership conferences every year.

E. Personal Qualities

I will continue to be professional in all situations and continue to represent the district in a manner that will reflect positively on the Board, staff, and our students.

I am not sure how data was collected to define weak administrators. I assure you that all administrators have met administrative state requirements and work diligently to maintain safe schools. I am sorry that we live in a time of turmoil where all people do not come together with similar experiences, backgrounds, and cultural beliefs. While no leader is perfect, our administration continues to build teams with a collaborative focus on educational and social development. We continue to develop teamwork based on educational best practices for all staff, administrators, teachers and parents, as we work for the collaborative good of the students of this community. This involves second order change for all members of our professional learning community. As you know, second order change is the most difficult.

F. Business and Finances

As the incumbent Board members can attest, the district expenditures did not exceed the revenue until 2005 when the foundation monies dropped drastically. Also, my cabinet had begun a reduction plan the year before the actual established deficit. However, as you are aware, the numbers continued to change, making it difficult to plan a balanced budget.

I continually attend workshops on school finance. I will continue to work with our new treasurer whose projections and statistics have given me a more accurate financial overview that allows me to more effectively plot the course of our district. Also, I have been better able to allocate resources to continue to provide best educational resources to our students; as I believe this is evidenced by our graduation rate while implementing reductions made in the district.

It has indeed been difficult to promote second order change while making necessary budgetary cuts. Until second order change takes strong root into our district and the construction project has stopped moving students, it will be difficult to regain students who have opted out of our district. Youngstown is not unique to the decline in enrollment. All urban districts face greater student losses than suburban districts. However, our research from KnowledgeWorks indicates that all public school districts are declining in enrollment due to technological changes in our ever shrinking global economy. In five years all school curriculum will be addressed on-line. Again, this is why I strongly emphasize the need to make systemic and dramatic changes. I will make every effort in my leadership style and professional planning to re-engage and encourage our students to remain in our district and to regain students back to the district.

Again, I am committed to continued professional growth and the best academic achievement for our district.

As always, thank you for your cooperation and support as we work diligently and collaboratively for the children of our community.