

## Selecting a Superintendent; an inexact science.

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I, and fellow Board of Education members, will make the most important decision of this board since my being elected in 2005; the hiring of a new Superintendent of Monroe Local Schools.

The process began in earnest just about three weeks ago when we received the packet of candidates on October 12<sup>th</sup>. We are already nearing the end of that process with final interview taking place this Wednesday, November 7<sup>th</sup>. We will be replacing Superintendent Arnold Elam who has been the only leader we have known during the seven years of our existence as a school District. He has led the way, guiding, directing, and implementing the community's vision for our school.

This decision is almost as important and the one made to break away from Middletown schools; creating our own District. That decision required the dedicated work of many residents, friendly allies from outside the community, and thousands of hours of research, presentations, and negotiations.

Since its inception, under Mr. Elam's guardianship, the community has forged ahead with its vision. With exceptional public support, we funded and built a new single site K-to-12 school facility. By direction of the Board and Superintendent we witnessed the building of a world class sports facility and outstanding sports program. The diligent work of the Superintendent and staff has enhanced the educational opportunities of our children. We have witnessed our children's academic performance significantly improve. During the past seven years our State Report Card has grown from a low end of "Continuous Improvement" to the high end of "Effective". This rating is just, as the old football phrase goes, "mere inches from the goal line" – attaining the highest ranking of "EXCELLENT."

Now we are at a crossroads. The selection of our next Superintendent is critical; whoever takes the helms of our schools will set the tone, spirit and direction of Monroe schools far into the future; beyond this Board's tenure and even the new Superintendent's career here.

It seems obvious that our school's future depends continuing the direction we have already started, while enhancing and adding onto the dreams of our community. We are already *living* a vision of academic excellence and are continuing to move upward and forward. We need someone with the vision to continue **our** growth toward excellence.

In closing, the position of Superintendent of Schools for Monroe is one of the most important positions we have. It is the one that will set the tone and direction of our school district far into the future.

This process, the five of us are undertaking, is an inexact science – based on a mixture of intuition and fact. Because of the sheer nature of this process, and its importance, we need to be very careful when making a ‘best choice’ for our community.

We need to use due diligence when selecting our next Superintendent. We need to make sure of a compatible fit with the community, Board of Education, Administration, Teaching Staff, parents and students. We need to make sure they will maintain a positive and forward looking vision moving us forward and upward – not simply maintain the status quo. We need to be sure they will work well with the public and press.

Shouldn't we consider their performance from past positions and the academic performance of their most recent contributions to the field of education? Shouldn't we consider bringing the final three to the community and get feedback? Or, at a minimum to the Administrative staff for feedback?

Why must we make a decision that affects the future of our schools in a single night? This is a thoughtful and serious issue that should not be influenced by personal friendships, acquaintances, lack of in-depth investigative processes, or of making a final decision after working through a grueling and exhaustive four hours of interviews.

Perhaps these questions and issues are not as serious as I make them out to be. Perhaps I'm just a bit paranoid about the methodology and the process. Perhaps I am way off field due to my own naiveté in the field of education and the hiring of a Superintendent. ... Or, perhaps I've just "hit the nail on the head!"

Thank you for letting me express my opinion and concern.

Michael R. Irwin