
From: Bud Meyers <Bud.Meyers@uvm.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, September 12, 2023 11:35 AM
To: Samuelson, Jennifer <Jennifer.Samuelson@vermont.gov>
Subject: Re: The Vermont Secretary of Education

Hello Jennifer,

Thanks so much for your note about my letter. The letter will be sent widely to stakeholders during the time that the search is in process. I am very happy to have the letter posted as part of the agenda packet for the next meeting. I'm also happy to provide any other information that might be helpful.

I noticed that the article in the VT Digger this morning underlines the importance of "minding the gaps". I hope that this will become a series of public engagements that will provide support for hard choices in the months and years to come.

Thanks for all that you do for Vermont kids.

Best,
Bud

From: Samuelson, Jennifer <Jennifer.Samuelson@vermont.gov>
Sent: Monday, September 11, 2023 6:15 PM
To: Bud Meyers <Bud.Meyers@uvm.edu>
Subject: Re: The Vermont Secretary of Education

Hello, Mr. Meyers, and thank you for your email. I appreciate you taking the time to share your background and perspectives as the State Board of Education embarks on its search for candidates for the next Secretary of Education. May I post your comments to be included in the agenda packet for our next meeting? Although I do not yet have a date firmed up, I anticipate that it will be in the next week or two.

Thank you again for reaching out.

Kind regards,
Jennifer

From: Bud Meyers <Bud.Meyers@uvm.edu>
Sent: Monday, September 11, 2023 12:58 PM
To: Samuelson, Jennifer <Jennifer.Samuelson@vermont.gov>
Subject: The Vermont Secretary of Education

September 11, 2023

Dear Ms. Samuelson:

As a member of the Vermont State Board of Education you have a vital interest in the selection of the candidate to receive your recommendation to the Governor for the next Secretary of Education.

As an observer, supporter of Vermont education and former deputy commissioner of education I have logged more than fifty years of experience in the education arena. I knew personally and worked with Bob Withey, Steve Kaagan, Rick Mills, Marc Hull, Dave Wolk, Ray McNulty, (interim commissioner, Armando Villeseca), Richard Cate, Rebecca Holcombe and Dan French. It is from this vantage point that I offer the following as you consider the job description and qualifications of the next Secretary of Education. I believe that a commitment to equity, combined with a focus on the science of learning, are critical characteristics for Vermont's next education leader.

The history of Vermont Education over the past four decades has been characterized by the persistent theme of local and state balance of control. Though I did not know him personally, I do know that Harvey Scribner was attracted to Vermont because he valued local control and I believe that he did all that he could to reinforce local control of schools. It has been a costly lasting legacy.

Over time, local control has been altered by state-wide initiatives such as Vermont's mainstreaming of special needs students resulting from the 1971 Senate Bill 98 and has continued with Act 46, the recent redistricting effort. Even so, over these years local control has preserved the basis for decision-making related to curriculum and instructional practices that has allowed gaps in opportunity to learn for low income, special needs, racial and gender groups to persist and grow. Well-intentioned attempts by the State Board of Education, Vermont's Governors, and the Vermont Legislature to ameliorate gaps in opportunities to learn attempted to address these gaps by altering funding mechanisms to equalize resource allocation to all Vermont students. Still, as we now know from more than thirty years of assessment data, including every reliable measure we have taken, the gaps in performance of under-served groups have only worsened. I know this because I was responsible for these measures during the period of 2000 through 2006.

Leadership matters. From the early 1970's to the present each Vermont education leader has brought all that he or she could to the table of policy making in valiant effort to serve the best interests of every Vermont child. Equity issues are complex and often viewed from very different perspectives by community and state leaders. Some of our former state education leaders knew a great deal about local control and its effects on equity; some knew a great deal about the special needs of all of our students. Other leaders came with agendas and professional commitments that emphasized academic outcomes, safety, the need for competent local leadership, and the need for highly trained and well-paid teachers. Each decade, in my experience, seemed to demand leadership in one or more of these areas.

The coming decade will demand an even more vigorous and intelligent approach to providing equity for all students in their opportunities to learn to read and do mathematics. The Governor's priorities of growing the workforce and investing in the tools needed to reverse pandemic learning losses will be unlikely to bear fruit without specific systemic initiatives that support equity and the science of learning. The next Vermont education leader will need to have a deep knowledge and understand the meaning of the science of learning as applied to reading and math instruction. He/she will also need an unwavering commitment to the processes of systemic change needed to overcome the inertia buttressed by local control sufficient to enable equity to reach every child in every Vermont classroom in every Vermont community. Vermont's system of higher education must be a willing and supported partner in these efforts.

Lest there be no confusion or equivocation about the meaning of these qualities to enable the initiatives that will be needed in the next decade we need only look towards the work now underway in twenty-seven other states. These states now have passed legislation aimed at changing the instructional practices of the teaching of reading to enable practices described variously as structured language or the science of reading. The rationale for passing legislation and developing initiatives that support the science of learning applied to reading and mathematics instruction is clear and well documented over the past thirty years of research on gains in student performance for all underserved groups.

Perhaps it is because my vantage stems from twilight years that I sense the urgency of making a clear recommendation to the Governor that will enable leadership to emerge that will have both the knowledge and commitment to lead and effectively support those who teach every Vermont child to potential. It seems that anyone who is committed to equal opportunity for all needs to consider what Effective Schools researcher, Ronald Edmonds said in 1978:

We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us.

We already know more than we need to do that.

Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far.

I am willing and able to meet with anyone at any time to discuss these ideas further.

Yours truly,

H. Bud Meyers, Ph.D.

H. Bud Meyers, Ph.D.

Bud Meyers, Dir

www.LighthouseEvaluation.Com

967 Sunset View Rd

Colchester, VT 05446

802-363-7732

Lighthouse Evaluation

