

From: Ann Wright
Subject: The interim situation

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To: Ann Lane <ann.lane@comcast.net>, Henry Brackett <hfb4444@comcast.net>, Jim Kach, Krista Butts, Jocelyn O'Quinn, Megan Turnbull

Dear Fellow Board Members,

I hope you enjoyed Graduation on Friday. I thought it was a lovely celebration of our school, our students and our teachers. It is clear that our students have great love for their school and their teachers, and this is truly what makes OR special.

At agenda setting on Tuesday, 6/7, Henry said that he was going to hold preliminary interviews with three interim superintendent candidates on Friday (6/10). After I called him and left him several emails asking if I could join him for those interviews, he called me back and told me that I could not, that Megan Turnbull and Jim Kach were already accompanying him to these interviews taking place at the Durham Police Department. It strikes me as odd that Henry would not ask his more experienced board members to take part in these interviews. Another thing that sent up a red flag was that he said they would be interviewing [REDACTED] who, as I have heard from Henry, did some work on the statements Megan wrote for Howard's buyout. Megan knows this gentleman, as does Jim Kach, from his job. While I don't know the details (I have only heard small details from Henry by telephone), the fact that one of the candidates is known by the three interviewers causes me concern. I also would hope that we would have Sue Caswell and Danielle Bolduc, at the very least, interview these individuals. After all, they will be working most closely with the superintendent, not the board. I hope we can discuss all this on Monday evening. Important decisions like the hiring of a superintendent should be left to the board as a whole, not segments of the board determined by the Chair.

Henry also told me that the Board would meet for a non-meeting on Monday, June 13th to decide on which interim superintendent to hire. I strenuously objected to this process. Feeling powerless, I spoke with Krista on the telephone and explained to her what I knew (she did not know about this process Henry had set up), and, as I understand it, Krista spoke with Henry yesterday. Apparently there will be a different plan now. If so, I don't know what it is. Perhaps some board members know about this already and others will find out by phone call or at the non-meeting on Monday. I could be telling you all something you already know about.

However, my point is that this is not how a board is run. Board Chairs do not make decisions unilaterally. Nor do Board Chairs involve some individuals in their decision making and leave others out. Decisions are made by the board as a whole. Information should not travel by telephone, but be imparted during meetings. Some of you do not know this because you have only sat on a board a short while and have only learned from this Chair. It is vital that we all start to act like a board and not several individuals acting independently.

It is one thing to have the Chair say that he will write a statement regarding [REDACTED] appointment and then involve one other person (hopefully at the instruction of the board - I still do not know who wrote that statement delivered last Wednesday that this Board signed off on). It is something else entirely to have the Board Chair, on his own, decide who to contact as this district's interim superintendent, and then attempt to keep that hiring process to three of his hand-picked people. Is this transparent? Is this due diligence? Remember, the board rejected a principal candidate after this person had been vetted by a dozen teachers, three community members, three board members and a superintendent with over thirty years of hiring experience - a process that took months. If our Chair's judgment says that this board could hire an interim superintendent - someone who will take us through budget season, decide whether [REDACTED] will become our permanent Principal, and hire our new Director of Curriculum - after one interview with only three board members, I seriously question this Chair's judgment.

It is not my goal to sit here at my computer and point my finger at Henry or at anyone on the Board. My letter is sent out of frustration. I want this board to act in the interests of our students and our community. If we cannot act as a cohesive unit, we cannot make informed decisions in order to improve student achievement and act in anyone's best interests - even our own. If you haven't noticed, we are not a community in crisis, but a board in crisis. We can continue along our merry way and leave a legacy of negative press, reduced teacher and student morale and a community that is no longer desirable to move to, or we can begin working together and act like a proper board. If we chose to act like a proper board, we will have to re-think our actions, and demand accountability among each other.

Take Care,
Ann