



COLCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Dear Colchester Community,

It is a pleasure to welcome all community members to the start of the 2010-11 school year in Colchester. For the past four years I've had the great opportunity to represent this community as superintendent of schools. I firmly believe that Colchester continues to be a thriving community and lives up to the quote of being a "great place to live and learn." It is my goal to continue to provide the leadership necessary to foster a sound educational system. With that, here are some items I'd like to share with you for the year.

Vision Plan: Prior to my term as superintendent, the district began the process of establishing a vision plan for the future. The mission and vision were, however, based on a snapshot of the educational community during that period of time. There was little consideration given to the learning needs of 21st century students. In fact, much of the vision was for the purpose of establishing consistency in educational practices throughout the district. The current vision plan and mission have served our district well for the past 5-6 years. During the past three years we have provided our teachers with an incredible amount of professional development opportunities in the areas of affective learning environments, assessment and instruction. It is, therefore, time to rethink our purpose and determine what outcomes we want for our students. With little doubt, technology will be a central focus for us. It is essential that the citizens of Colchester determine the expectations for their schools. I hope that all community stakeholders will participate in some way to help us create a new vision for our district.

New Administrator: I am pleased to welcome MBS Principal Julie Benay to our administrative team. Julie brings fourteen years of administrative experience to this position, having started the Success by Six programs in Franklin County. She later served as an assistant principal and principal for Swanton Elementary School prior to joining the CSD team. Julie started her career in education helping her mother run the Saxon Hill School out of their home in Jericho, Vermont. She graduated from the University of Vermont in 1978 with a B.S. in Early Childhood and Human Development. She taught first grade and kindergarten before earning a M.Ed. in Educational Administration in 1988. Julie lives in Fairfax with her husband Jeff, and has two grown children.

New Student Information System: This past year we learned that the software company that manages our student information system will no longer provide technical support. This action has prompted many school districts in Vermont to seek a new system. Following a comprehensive review, we selected PowerSchool as our new student information system. There are many new features that supported the selection. In addition to providing accurate and easily accessible student information, the software allows us to maintain much more information with respect to your child's learning needs. One important feature is the PowerTeacher Gradebook. Once this is setup, this component will provide parents with instant access to assignments and

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grades through our parent portal. Parents will simply log in to the system and retrieve their child's schedule and grades at any time. We expect this feature to be on-line later in the fall. The cost of the system was approved in the last school year with funds from FY'10. The total cost, including technical support, was around \$20,000.

Act 146 Challenges for Change: Many community members are aware and concerned that the Vermont Department of Education has announced that Colchester, and most schools in Vermont, should take an active role in reducing the state deficit. The law specifies that FY'12 education spending will be reduced by \$23.2 million from the FY'11 level. The state determined this amount through a complex algorithm based on enrollments, prior spending, number of staff and other factors. Colchester is responsible for about \$734,000 in reductions from its current budget.

How can this be when CSD claims to be a low per pupil spending district? The answer is as complex as the method to determine the amount for the reduction. In any case, our district will need to act in "good faith" to determine if we are able to cut another \$734K from the FY'11 budget. Colchester voters approved a budget in May that represented a 0.59% increase (\$182K) over FY'10. We reduced 12 teachers and over 10 support staff in the district as well as cutting our operations by about \$180K. This information was not used in the formula to determine our share of the \$23.2M state shortfall. Colchester continues to have a low per pupil spending amount. We typically spend anywhere from \$200 to \$2,000 per pupil less than other districts in Chittenden County. Unfortunately, our spending history in comparison to other districts was not considered in the process. As we begin budget development earlier than expected, we will keep the community informed as to the impact and ability to meet the expectation from the Department of Education.

Athletic Fields: This is the first year that we're able to allow teams to practice on the new athletic fields located off of Laker Lane. I must say that there is always a great deal of activity on the fields from early morning to well into the evening. Currently most, if not all, of our fall programs are using the practice fields on a daily basis. This preserves our main fields for game use. We are grateful to the community member who donated the funds to construct the fields. Our students benefit greatly.

Finally, as I travel from school to school I take note of the energy and enthusiasm from teachers as they begin the process to prepare for the first day of school and another school year. It is remarkable how within a few days of in-service, a school will completely transform into a bright and wonderful learning environment for students. I look forward to the new school year in Colchester and have high expectation for our students and staff.

Respectfully,

Larry Waters
Superintendent of Schools

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." **Winston Churchill**