

**Berlin Elementary School
Directors' Report**

January 2008

Staffing

The 2006-2007 school year had us saying so long to many people. Pat Nelson decided to retire after serving as an outstanding librarian for 29 years. Pat not only brought many books into children's lives, but also helped immensely with technology. She will be missed by the students as well as the staff. We appreciate all she has done for Berlin Elementary School. It was evident by her time, effort, and energy how much she cared for our school. We would like to thank her for her many years working with our children. We wish her the best in future endeavors.

Ellen Baker resigned her position to take a job with the University of Vermont. This was a very difficult decision for Ellen after working with children in our community for the past 26 years. She was not only an important part of the 3/4 grade team, but was instrumental in a variety of initiatives throughout the school. She will be missed by students and staff alike. We wish her well in her new position. We appreciate her dedication, hard work, and her gift of time to the Berlin community. We wish her the best in her new position.

Donna Manley, reading teacher, also decide to retire after working with Berlin students for 24 years. She worked with many children in the primary grades to help them build those essential skills for reading. She will be missed by all. We appreciate all she has done for our students. Our best to her and her family.

We had to say good-bye to Cally Schober. She worked in the Washington Central district for the past 18 years. She served as Berlin's secretary for the past 12 years. We will miss her big smile, friendly personality, and organization in the front office. She will also be remembered for her amazing culinary skills! A huge thank you for all she has done for the Berlin School community. We wish her and her family the best.

Our nurse, Trudy McArdle, decided to retire after serving the Berlin School for the past 15 years. She helped many children with cuts and bruises, but also helped many heal on the inside. Her patience and kind heart helped students through challenging times, no matter what the circumstances. She will be missed not only by the children, but the staff as well. We wish Trudy the best in her retirement.

We would also like to thank Stephanie Allen and Josh Keels for their years of service at Berlin. Stephanie worked as our cook and food service agent for 4 years. Josh taught math part time in the 5/6 unit. We would like to thank them for their years of service in the Berlin School community. We wish them well in their future endeavors.

Cyndi Johnson has also resigned her position on the School Board. Cyndi and her family decided to move back to Michigan to be with her family. She was on the School Board for many years and was part of the Washington Central Executive Committee as well as the negotiating committee. She was also instrumental in starting the committee for 'Students Exceeding the Standards.' We wish her well in her future endeavors.

We had the pleasure of welcoming Lisa Stoudt as our new administrative assistant. Lisa

worked at the Washington Central office for a short period of time before coming to Berlin. We are very fortunate to have her as part of our office staff.

We also welcomed Lynne Jakubauskas as our new nurse. She has worked as a school nurse for 17 years, the last several in Orange and Washington. Prior to that she worked at Doty. Lynn is not only a registered nurse, but is also certified as an elementary school teacher. We are pleased to have her on board.

Michael Flies is our new food service agent. Michael is a recent graduate of New England Culinary Institute. He brings amazing culinary skills to this position. He has already done an amazing job offering a variety of foods and using local products. We are extremely fortunate to have him with us.

Amy Young is our new library/media specialist. She came to us from Doty Memorial in Worcester, and before that Randolph High School where she was a librarian for 6 years. She has been influential in reorganizing the space in our learning center. We are excited to have her as part of our staff.

Lynn Wagner is our new 4th grade teacher. Lynn comes to us from Roxbury where she taught multiage first /second grade and third/fourth grade from 1993-2006. She has been teaching for 14 years. She is a wonderful addition to our school community.

Jen Nye is our new part time Literacy teacher and Differentiated Instruction expert. She comes to us from The Renaissance School in Shelburne, Vermont. She was instrumental in implementing the concept of Differentiated Instruction to all teachers. We are very fortunate to have her with us.

Abigail Colihan is our new part-time reading teacher. She was a special educator in Calais from 1999-2007. She also worked in Warren. She has a masters degree in Special Education. We are pleased to have her working with Berlin students.

Rebecca Deres is a half-time assistant working in the primary unit. She came to us from the Washington Central preschool program. Rebecca is also a behavioral interventionist. We are happy she has joined our staff.

We would like to welcome Jonathan Goddard as our new school board member. He is finishing a 1 year of a 3 year term that Cyndi Johnson vacated. Jonathan sat on the School Board in Colorado. Jonathan and his wife have 3 children, one son is at U32 and the twins are in 4th grade here at Berlin. He has been active as a soccer coach at Berlin, and is the assistant coach for the U32 girl's hockey team. We are very fortunate to have Jonathan as part of our Board.

Population

Our elementary school population has stayed steady as of December 3, 2007 with an enrollment of 230 students. The School Board watches these numbers quite carefully. Our ADM, or average daily membership, is very important because it determines how much money we receive from the state. The ADM is a 2 year average determined by the number of students enrolled, or counted, on the first 40 days of school. From all correspondence that we have received from the state thus far, it looks like the base education amount per equalized pupil for the Fiscal Year 2008-2009 will be approximately \$8,210 per student, which is an increase from

last year of \$474 per equalized student or 6.13% increase

Use of Building

Our school has been used widely not only by the school community, but by the public as well. Berlin Elementary School is truly the center of our community. The Board takes pride in keeping our facility open during the week and on weekends for a variety of events that take place from sporting events in the gym, to various meetings that take place in the library and in classrooms. There are many after school and evening programs offered to children, adults, and families through Community Connections as well as the Kid Watch program. We want people to continue to feel welcomed.

Policies

The Board continues to work with Washington Central Supervisory Union on various policies and updating old policies as well. A district committee was formed 6 years ago to begin work collectively on updating our school policies. We have been working very hard to make sure that all schools in the district have all of the required policies in place. The committee is made up of one Board representative from each school, as well as principals and central office administrators. The committee has been meeting the 1st Monday of every month. Linda Beaupré continues to be the policy representative from Berlin on that committee. In 2006-2007, the committee continued to work on a district health and nutrition policy as well as a policy involving the use of video cameras on busses. Search and Seizure, Student Records, Drug and Alcohol, English Language Learners, Student Attendance, Nutrition and Fitness, Local Action Plan, and Family Involvement policies were passed.

Each school has their own policy manual made up of required and recommended policies. This year, Linda Beaupré did an audit on required policies. She chose 6 policies randomly and compared them to see what similarities and differences there were. She found that most policies that went through the full policy committee, went back to the Boards with few changes. With that in mind, we are looking at having one policy manual for required policies for the elementary schools in our supervisory union.

Goals

The Berlin School Board sets goals annually. We set 4 goals for the 2007-2008 school year:

Introduction: The Berlin School Board has adopted the following goals in accordance with Berlin Elementary School's Action Plan.

1. The Board will support professional development needed by all staff so the new math program, Investigations, will be implemented successfully.
2. Facilities – The Board will support measures to make the building more safe and secure and to support any updating in order to meet current code requirements.
3. Differentiated Instruction – The Board will support professional development, including workshops or course work, for all staff so that differentiated instruction can be implemented.
4. School Climate – The Board will support an outside consultant to work with the administration and staff on school climate issues.

Facilities

The committee was recently called upon to look at the safety issues that needed to be addressed. They met with EHDanson Associates to revisit code requirements and costs. The Board approved an amount up to \$100,000.00 from our fund balance to meet these code and safety requirements. This summer, Phase I of this project took place. Ruggco came in and restructured classroom walls off the learning center, made doors handicapped-accessible, and put new security doors in both hallways as you walk into the building. Staff now have special security cards they must use to get down those hallways. The entire building has been rekeyed, and staff wear ID tags during the school day.

We are presently looking at a Phase II project. Things that are being discussed include but are not limited to a wheel chair accessible bathroom, changes to sink and water fountain heights, storage area for records, janitorial supplies, etc, and doors that open out and meet code requirements. The committee will look at the plans from 2005 and work from that on a smaller scale. The committee is hoping to have a proposal by the next budget cycle.

Budget

School budgets will continue to be funded from a combination of sources. As mentioned before, because of the passing of Act 68 three years ago, the base education payment will be \$8210 per equalized student. Equalized number of students refers to the weighting formula that recognizes that some students cost more than others to educate. The state funding formula tax rate is now set on the cost per pupil. Therefore, every school in the state will receive the same amount per equalized pupil.

One other aspect of Act 68 is that the grand list is now split between residents and non-residents. For resident/homestead tax rates, the base amount is \$.85 and goes up depending on what percent above the \$8,210 a school spends and depending on the common level of appraisal in that town. Berlin's CLA is down by 7.24%. It is currently 66.21%. It is projected to be at 58.971% for next year's budget. However, due to a reappraisal in process, the town is appealing the Common Level of Appraisal. We are anticipating Berlin to be around \$2.18 if the CLA is at 58.97%.

What does this mean for Berlin? The Board is proposing a \$2,727,456 budget which is approximately a 6.99%, or \$178,154 increase in expenditures from last year. Approval of this budget and the U32 proposed budget will result in no change in the tax rate. The current tax rate is projected at \$2.15 and is currently at \$1.96. The rest of the tax rate increase is due to the Common Level of Appraisal and state tax rate changes. This is about an additional \$192 on a house valued at \$100,000.00. In this budget, Berlin Elementary will spend \$12,400 per equalized pupil.

For non-residential, the amount is equalized according to the common level of appraisal in that town. We are anticipating a tax rate of about \$1.34, which is a reduction from last year of \$.02. The current tax rate is \$2.06. With the CLA change, it will amount to a local tax rate of \$2.27 for an increase of \$.21.

We will have a fund balance at the end of the fiscal year. At this point, we are not sure what

that exact figure will be, but expect it to remain at approximately 5% of the budget. We would like to maintain local control over the fund balance through Article 5 so that this money can be used for the purpose of funding operations and making capital improvements.

The Board would like to extend our thanks to all of those people who have volunteered their time in the school community during the school year. We would like to also thank the PTNA for their continued and incredible support that they give to Berlin Elementary School all year. You are an invaluable asset and we couldn't do any of the projects or have any of the events you bring to our school community without all your dedication and hard work. We really appreciate all you do for this school.

The Board has worked extremely hard to keep the Berlin portion of the school budget at a level that is affordable and, at the same time, to continue to provide for all programs and maintain proper maintenance of the building. We would appreciate your support for the Berlin School budget on Town Meeting Day.

Respectfully submitted,

LINDA C.K. BEAUPRE
AMY BREWER
LINDA COUTURE
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