

June 30, 2008  
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**Board offers interim superintendency to Deputy Superintendent Karst Brandsma**

Following the announcement Friday that Superintendent Carol Whitehead will retire as of Sept. 1, 2008, board members reviewed their options for either replacing her or selecting an interim.

Following discussion of possible actions and the qualifications of current staff, the board unanimously voted to offer an interim contract to Deputy Superintendent Karst Brandsma, effective Sept 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009.

Following their decision, Board President Karen Madsen called Brandsma to relay the board's decision and to ask whether he would accept and consider a contract. Brandsma, who is out of town told her, "I am humbled that you have made the offer and honored to accept."

Before the next board meeting on July 8, board members Ed Petersen and Sue Cooper will meet with Brandsma to negotiate a contract. Depending upon those negotiations, the interim superintendent contract may be on the July 8 board agenda.

Throughout the meeting, board members repeated their regret that Dr. Whitehead has chosen to retire sooner than anticipated. Madsen stated, "The board and I feel profound frustration that you have been put into the position of leaving because someone made the bad choice to threaten you. That said, it is where we are now, and we must consider what can be done so that the district does not lose the incredible gains we've enjoyed as a result of your leadership. All those things that are important to us, the things that are going so well, we would not want to lose."

In their deliberations, the board considered the pros and cons of launching a search for either an interim or a superintendent. Cooper pointed out, "This is not a good time of year to do a search. We must be careful and thoughtful. Selecting a superintendent takes time; we must connect with the calendars of the candidates, and we must plan how we will choose a leader who can build upon the strong foundation laid by Dr. Whitehead. To ensure that the work continues, we must look inside the district for quality interim candidates."

Remembering the superintendent selection process eight years ago when Whitehead was selected, board member Kristie Dutton said, "We took our time and involved the community. That worked well because it brought Carol to us. We should use the same process and take the same amount of care."

Brandsma has been in the district for seven years. He was hired as an associate superintendent and then named deputy superintendent. Of Brandsma's skills and current responsibilities, Petersen noted, "Coordinated, articulated, and aligned is the engine that we must keep going. Karst understands the importance of that flow very well. It would be comforting to know that he will be working with the strong leadership team that Dr. Whitehead has put in place to carry on that work."

Petersen acknowledged also that misunderstanding of Brandsma's role in the district's discipline of a teacher could be concerning to some. Madsen thanked Petersen for his candor and added such misunderstanding might be possible, "We know that all administrative actions taken were to protect students. I believe the community will see our interim selection today as a sign of our confidence in Karst and our full understanding of what happened. We have no doubts about Karst's intentions then or about Karst now in this leadership position."

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