

The Beaver Island Association

*Supporting Environmental and
Economic Sustainability*

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Monday, August 13, 2012

To the BICS Selection Committee and Mr. Eckhardt, thank you for the opportunity to outline the thinking of the Beaver Island Association with regard to the selection of a new Superintendent and Principal.

The Beaver Island Association is an organization of about 200 residents and taxpayers on Beaver Island whose mission is to protect our environment and to help develop the economy so that our island can remain pristine and prosper, both today and for the benefit of future generations.

The Beaver Island Community School is essential to achievement of the goals of our mission and we applaud the dedication and all of the work that has resulted in this beautiful facility and its modern capabilities.

We are also pleased that BICS has achieved a high ranking in the summary of all Michigan Public Schools, with a rating of 94%, which according to the news release, means that our school achieved results better than 94% of all schools in the state.

We wished to learn more about the strengths of BICS, especially given the upcoming changes in school leadership. We began with the Michigan Education website that had been the source of the rankings. The following factors appear to be significant in BICS receiving its high ranking:

- 100% graduation rate
- 0% drop out rate
- Operating within budget
- Low student/teacher ratio (6.2)
- Percentage of students eligible for subsidized lunches (56%)

I looked at other websites since the features above do not describe the students' academic achievement. I was able to find three sources that describe student academic performance.

- The website mischooldata.org includes data on all Michigan public schools. The only data available for BICS was the 2011-12 MME Snapshot for the 11th grade. I believe this is a small class so the statistics may not be very representative. Nevertheless, what the report shows is that in Math and Science, no students were rated "proficient". In reading, social studies, and writing, less than 50% of the class was rated proficient.
- Another report on the website greatschools.org for the 11th grade showed the following:

<u>% Proficient</u>	<u>BICS</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>H/(L)</u>
Reading	64%	63%	1%
Social Studies	91%	78%	13%
Science	55%	61%	(6%)
Writing	27%	47%	(20%)
Math	27%	52%	(25%)

- The website mischooldata.org also included a report on mathematics for grades 3-8 (2011-12 MEAPP). It shows that proficiency for these grades varies widely, but seems to average about 50%

Copies of all three of these reports are attached.

I don't have any data on the scores of 11th graders ACT or other board scores, but it my understanding that in recent years only a small percentage of graduates have gone on – directly from BICS or after graduating from community college – to four-year colleges or universities, and we suspect that this is at least partially a function of the lower levels of academic performance.

Our interest in coming here tonight is to urge this selection committee to focus its efforts on retaining an energetic and experienced person to lead the school to high academic achievement. We have a beautiful facility, state of the art classrooms and computer systems, a low student-teacher ratio, and a budget that translates into about \$35 thousand per student per year, or over \$400 thousand investment in a student who matriculates through the K-12 grades. Our students perform very well in social studies and are at least typical of other Michigan students in reading, according to one of the websites. We need the leadership to leverage these resources into stellar academic performance across all the school subjects so they are able to have a range of choices for higher education. While there are many paths to higher education degrees, our students deserve to know that BICS will prepare them so they will be accepted to any school they might choose. Graduating from BICS with strong academic programs will set all our students on a strong path for career and personal fulfillment, which in turn, will benefit the island and its future.

Our students deserve to be challenged. The world is challenging and our students need to be prepared, particularly in math, science, and critical thinking. High educational achievement is a requirement for success in the world today. It opens up all of the opportunities for interesting and meaningful careers and experiences. And Beaver Island needs successful students to lead the island in the future. We owe this opportunity to them and to their families who have invested so much in them.

Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,

Peter Igoe for

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