

The Beaver Island Association

*Supporting Environmental and
Economic Sustainability*

P.O. Box 390
Beaver Island, Michigan 49782

Monday, July 16, 2012

Mrs. Jessica Anderson
President, the Beaver Island School Board
25680 Lake
Beaver Island, MI 49782

Dear Mrs. Anderson:

I understand that the School Board has undertaken a process for identifying qualified candidates to replace Kitty McNamara as Superintendent and Principal of the Beaver Island Community School, who will be retiring at the end of the next school year; and that the Board has retained Mark Eckhart, the former head of the Charlevoix Intermediate School District, to assist in this process.

The Beaver Island Association is a non-profit organization of approximately 200 members who are property owners on Beaver Island. We have a strong interest in maintaining the Beaver Island Community School as an educational institution fully engaged in preparing Beaver Island students for college and ultimately for rewarding careers in the world economy. The viability of the island community depends upon preparing future leaders with strong academic experience.

With this letter I am presenting the views of the Beaver Island Association regarding the qualifications and experience which a new leader of the school system should have, in order for the school to best prepare its students for the demands of the twenty-first century. Here is our position in summary form:

1. **Vision**. The new superintend/principal must set an educational mission for the school based upon high academic achievement.
2. **Leadership**. He or she should have strong leadership skills to work with the staff to implement a coordinated curriculum based upon the mission.
3. **Educational theory**. He or she should have the academic background and experience to apply state-of-the-art teaching methods to the school curriculum, with particular emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).
4. **Teacher Effectiveness**. The new superintend/principal should have experience in processes for measuring the performance of the teaching staff; a willingness to undertake comprehensive evaluations; and the ability to design and implement programs to improve effectiveness where indicated.
5. **Distance Learning**. With the small size of the school and its relative isolation, it is important that the new leader have familiarity with the technology of distance learning to bring courses and programs of high academic quality and high student interest to the school and to the homes of students. BICS has invested heavily in classroom technology. Using this capability to cost effectively expand the academic curriculum and to better engage the students and parents in learning should be a high priority.

6. **Community Involvement.** The island community is small and closely knit. It is imperative that the new superintendent effectively engage the parents of the students and other community leaders in working to support the high academic mission of the school.
7. **Knowledge of State and Federal standards and requirements.**
8. **Emphasis on preparation and guidance for four-year colleges and universities.** In years past, the majority of BICS students graduated and then enrolled in four-year colleges and universities. For some time this has not been the case, with a great majority of students electing to attend two-year community colleges within Michigan. The future of the island, in the hands of BICS graduates, depends upon greater focus on preparing BICS students for four-year colleges. This will require connecting with parents for them to better understand the career and economic benefits that a four year degree offers; and it will require an effort on the part of the school's guidance staff to become more familiar with appropriate colleges and universities, and to become more expert in the process of obtaining available financial aid. Greater educational opportunities for graduates should be a high priority for the new superintendent.

I hope you and the other Board members will carefully consider this letter and incorporate these concepts in your search. A number of our board members have careers in academic fields. We would be glad to spend more time, at your convenience, discussing this and in addition, the Beaver Island Association would appreciate periodic updates on your progress, or thoughts regarding any assistance you think might be helpful to the School Board in finding the best possible candidate for the position.

Sincerely,

Peter Igoe
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c: Beaver Island Association Board