

May 18, 2009

Students and Community United, a CGCSC PAC
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Please consider these points, while not an exhaustive list, when you consider our vote of "No Confidence" in Dr. Steven Stephanoff in his role as the superintendent of CGCSC. We strongly encourage you to NOT renew Dr. Stephanoff's contract and to immediately begin an overt search for a new superintendent to replace him beginning on July 1, 2010. We also encourage you to contact the Indiana School Board Association's attorneys to seek counsel in all matters regarding the non-renewal of Dr. Stephanoff's contract.

Our comments are intended as the dissenting position of this political action committee. We have discussed these issues with citizens as well as current and former educators in our community and feel confident that we have captured the essence of public opinion regarding this matter.

1. The issues surrounding the building project have been overtly deceptive. The original plans presented in the spring of 2008 only talked about phases. We feel that the superintendent's leadership role is to evaluate and make the hard decisions based upon educational needs and monetary limitations. Dr. Stephanoff could not or would not prioritize our building project needs versus wants when asked to do so. He has consistently been evasive about releasing public information when requested by the tax payers. Communication and trust are at an all time low in our community and that can be attributed to the authoritarian leadership style of Dr. Stephanoff. We need a strong superintendent who can listen to the will of the community and take the time to educate us when we are wrong. The open door law needs to apply to every facet of this schools business matters.

2. There has been some false information concerning West Grove and North Grove and whether the conditions of these school buildings are able to provide a positive learning environment for young students. No formal evaluation has been made as to the building condition or feasibility to add on to North Grove and Pleasant Grove. It is high time we interview architects and construction management companies to see what fresh ideas we can come up with for utilizing our existing facilities. Why haven't we approached the owners of the property west of North Grove to see if it can be bought? Why hasn't any consideration of the future value of West Grove been considered? A functioning school building will be valuable to us in that the state government or a hotel chain will likely pay us to vacate the property.

3. A mega elementary school is not cost effective as presented and goes against the research that shows small elementary schools are better for kids. Bussing our youngest children out of their neighborhoods and forcing the parents to shuttle students back and forth for extracurricular and co-curricular programs is not in keeping with the social norms of White River Township.

Finally, it is the will of this community that we maintain our neighborhood schools as a beneficial learning environment for the students and a sense of community in our neighborhoods.

4. There are issues at the high school involving physical plant that need to be addressed. These issues do not warrant the cost of the presented re-modeling plan. A study of the plan will show most of the costs goes to the "extras" not classrooms focusing on the instructional model associated with academies. The academy program has been kept vague and no valid reasons have been given to change the present curriculum plans. When educational research has been presented showing that "academies" are not cost effective or effective in instructional delivery, the administration has not listened. The discussions of the original "visioneer" study groups never included most of the facilities in the construction plan.

5. Dr. Stephanoff was the champion of spending an additional \$600,000 on architectural work for the three construction projects earlier this year. His stewardship of this school's finances must be questioned, when soon after that he recommended to halt the referendum process. Since that vote was taken and the motion passed, we have learned that the three referendum votes may still be required to be on the May 2010 ballot. He said he knew that but didn't feel it was a material fact for the board to be aware of prior to voting to halt the process. We disagree, in fact, we suggest that our CG school board's attorney should have been at the meeting to advise the board. At times it appears that Dr. Stephanoff believes the board's attorney is his personal ally.

6. He has left staff members out to dry. A good example is the Matt Shockley presentation to the Board, scheduled while Dr. Stephanoff was out of town, regarding the new and much expanded building project. Also, the Carla Johnson "famous letter" signed by the school board members in the spring of 2008 and distributed at the Sugar Grove informational meeting. Those letters were never read by the board or approved by them before their names were signed and the letters were distributed. On another occasion, Carla Johnson came to a White River Township Citizens United meeting where SCU was invited to present our positions regarding the building project referendum questions. Carla Johnson created quite an argument that had to be stopped by the leader of White River Citizens United. Does Carla Johnson represent the school board or the superintendent? It appears that she does not hold an objective point of view with regard to any ideas that oppose those of the superintendent.

7. Staff has been hired from the outside without much input from the community or our current teachers. The 5th grade teacher at NG is a good example. There seems to be a cart blanche for people Dr. Stephanoff knows to be hired by CG.

8. We do not see a report on his progress toward the goals he presented to CG when being interviewed/hired. Raising SAT scores, National Merit Scholars, etc. were the center point of his goal presentation. What progress has been made in those areas?

9. Morale of teachers and staff is at an all time low for many reasons. The most important is Dr. Stephanoff's lack of communication skills and his unwillingness to be candid and transparent in all matters. An atmosphere of fear of retaliation seems to be present and is evidenced by the termination of the Girls Varsity Basketball Coach.

10. He has little, if any, contact with community groups and individuals except for a small clique. He does not understand White River Township and/or Johnson Co. and at times discounts input from the citizens of this community. In fact, we would assert that he resists being led by the school board. This is not a training opportunity for Dr. Stephanoff. We are paying far too much for this position to accept anything short of a top achiever.

11. Dr. Stephanoff has been in charge of operating this school corporation for three years and no recommendation to redistrict has been made or voted on. Does Dr. Stephanoff have the ability to offer objective leadership when it is counter to his personal and professional agendas? The self serving agenda of the superintendent has left us with empty classrooms at a time when he is calling for major construction of a new elementary school. Redistricting is past due and we suggest that it is time for that tough issue to be addressed by implementing a redistricting plan to be in place by the start of the 2009 – 2010 school year. We own the software to accomplish this, the question is, do we have the will?

12. Dr. Stephanoff made no effort to cut general expenses before he recommended cutting more teachers. His answer to John Steed regarding had he considered any other expenses. Dr. Stephanoff said, "No". His track record speaks for it's self. Dr. Stephanoff has added almost \$1,000,000 in expenses for administrators while implementing a major reduction in force of our teachers. Dr. Stephanoff has no regard for student teacher ratio and that is opposite of the will of this community. His justification for not replacing the art, music, and PE teachers at North Grove last year was based on the assumption that he would be building a new mega elementary school and therefore he would only need five sets of specials teachers. That assumptive mentality has hurt our students and there is no end in sight. He stated that no other option would be considered by the school board because he would not make any other recommendation regarding the reduction in force of the specials teachers at North Grove.

13. Dr. Stephanoff's position on maintaining \$1.00 health benefits for the select few flies in the face of what is happening to the cost of health care in this country. He should be a leader in this matter instead of protecting his own special interest.

14. The latest recommendation by Dr. Stephanoff is to hire a consultant to win over community support for a huge building project, is again a signal of his inability to lead this organization. The community and our teachers are crying out for a new superintendent. Please take the time to meet with your friends and neighbors regarding their perceptions of Dr. Stephanoff. We also urge you to have private meetings with key teachers to learn about their concerns in a setting where they feel safe to speak freely and without free of reprisal.

Sincerely,

Ron Rose
Chairman,
Students and Community United

Walter Aldoriso
Board Member

Rich Mickel
Board Member

Tom Heermann
Board Member

David DeGeyter
Board Member