

From the Superintendent's Desk—January 24, 2018

At the November meeting of the school board, I asked to meet in executive session with the board to review my contract and job performance. I shared with the board a worry about the current administrative model, with a part-time superintendent that usually brings retired or semi-retired administrators to the role, sometimes coming from many miles away. At that time, I informed the board that I'd be formally notifying them in December that this will be my last year at ICS, as I continue to move toward full-time retirement. As fate would have it, principal Heather Knight reached a similar decision about her tenure at ICS, and began her own conversations with the board and faculty regarding her plans for the future.

As you will see in board chair Laura Houle's column, the board began to consider Heather's and my decisions on our contracts as an opportunity to consider possible changes to the current administrative structure. Under Laura's leadership, the board decided to form a review committee made up of board members and faculty to investigate how other small schools and districts arrange for administration, and to survey the faculty on their perspectives as well. The key question before the committee was whether consolidating the role of superintendent and principal was a viable alternative at this time for ICS.

One clear finding emerged from other small districts and the faculty: if you wish to explore combining the roles of superintendent and principal (in order to address some of the concerns with high turnover of superintendents, and too little time on the island), be certain to provide for sufficient coverage and support. The board will continue its process of considering alternative structures at a special board meeting on Tuesday, January 30. The board will look at several model job descriptions for a combined position, and a second part-time administrator to ensure the recommendations from other districts and faculty members are taken into account.

Personally, I am very optimistic about the future for Islesboro Central School. The prospect of a new, visionary school leader coming to the island at this time is well timed. In the past three years, the board, faculty, and administration have worked in a very collaborative way to create new personalized programming for students, and a more potent culture of shared leadership among the adults. ICS is well positioned to become a shining example of how a small island school can reinvent itself to become more relevant in the 21st century.

As I downshift into full retirement, I will look back on my three years here on Islesboro as being among my most satisfying professional experiences. I have pledged to the board that I will be as involved as needed in ensuring a smooth transition, and hope to be a regular visitor in the years to come.

Sincerely,

Patrick R. Phillips, Superintendent of Schools