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Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 WSESD board has drifted from transparency and
2 accountability

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

3 Board member 'no longer has confidence that the board,
4 as currently structured and operating, is willing to consistently
5 meet the standards' we need for our students and our community

####END SUBHED####

6 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

7 TO THE Windham Southeast Community,
8 First, I want to express my sincere gratitude to the voters
9 who entrusted me with the opportunity to serve on the Windham
10 Southeast School District (WSESD) Board of Directors.

11 Representing our district has been an honor, and I have taken that
12 responsibility seriously from my first day in office in March 2020.

13 After careful reflection, I have decided to resign from the
14 WSESD board.

15 This was not an easy decision. I entered this role with a
16 clear purpose: to advocate for transparent governance,
17 responsible oversight of taxpayer dollars, academic
18 accountability, and a constant focus on improving student
19 outcomes and school climate for all students.

20 I entered this role believing that, working collaboratively
21 and in good faith with administrators, students, teachers, support
22 staff, families, and members of the public, we could move our
23 district to high levels of achievement — levels that just a decade
24 ago placed Vermont education among the elite in the nation.

25 Encouraged by dedicated and principled colleagues on
26 the board, I believed we could make meaningful progress in
27 reducing bullying, promoting anti-racism, and closing the
28 persistent learning gaps affecting students with special needs,
29 those from families living in poverty, and other marginalized
30 groups.

31 At a time when issues such as global warming and civic
32 responsibility demand informed and engaged citizens, I believed
33 our district could also serve as a model for climate education and
34 student civic engagement.

35 However, shortly after I was sworn in, Covid struck. In-
36 person learning was shut down, and the eventual reopening of
37 schools brought its own set of challenges. But Covid was not the
38 only challenge. The board also faced several serious legal
39 investigations that tested our ethical resolve and consumed
40 enormous time and energy.

41 These were difficult times, followed by more difficult
42 times. Most recently, our district — which has still not fully
43 adapted to a merger consolidating five boards into one, with little
44 clear evidence of cost savings or improved academic outcomes

45 — is now facing a double-pronged challenge to public education
46 from both federal and state levels.

47 To meet these challenges and those ahead, we need
48 effective governance grounded in the integrity of the board's own
49 processes. The chair's role is to facilitate meetings with neutrality.
50 Effective governance also requires that each board member have
51 equal access to timely, complete information and the ability to
52 communication directly with administrators and staff in order to
53 fulfill their oversight responsibilities.

54 * * *

55 I HAVE GROWN increasingly concerned about a gradual
56 but significant shift away from this model toward a more
57 hierarchical approach in which a small subset of members
58 assumes greater influence over agenda-setting, information
59 access, and decision-making. That shift, however unintentional,
60 undermines transparency, weakens accountability, and limits the
61 board's ability to fully serve its students and the public.

62 Equally concerning is the board's need to further deepen
63 its understanding of district finances and to more rigorously
64 examine the equity of expenditures across all schools.

65 The responsibility of a school board is not simply to
66 approve a proposed budget, but to provide meaningful oversight
67 — asking hard questions, considering alternative scenarios, and
68 ensuring that resources are aligned with student needs and
69 district priorities.

70 Respecting the expertise of principals and administrators
71 is essential, but it cannot replace the board's independent
72 obligation to fully understand and evaluate how public funds are
73 being used.

74 * * *

75 ALL THIS IS TO SAY that now, more than ever, we need a
76 school board that has an unwavering commitment to transparent,
77 data-driven decision-making.

78 We need a board that actively promotes direct dialogue
79 with those remarkable teachers who know our students best, and
80 that continues to elevate meaningful student voice in its work.

81 We need a board that invites and facilitates comments
82 and questions from members of the public — and one that
83 measures success not by broad claims of progress and excellence
84 (“We’re knocking it out of the park” or “We’re the best district in
85 southern Vermont”) or by presentations that avoid unflattering
86 comparisons to national percentiles, but by clear evidence of
87 student learning, safety, and well-being.

88 At a time when student achievement data shows a
89 decade-long decline in reading and math performance across
90 Vermont, this focus on outcomes is absolutely essential.

91 * * *

92 UNFORTUNATELY, I no longer have confidence that the
93 board, as currently structured and operating, is willing to
94 consistently meet those standards. For that reason, I believe the
95 most honest and responsible step I can take is to step aside.

96 I remain deeply committed to this community and to the
97 success of every student in our schools.

98 My hope is that this moment will prompt renewed focus
99 on what matters most: academic achievement, safe and inclusive
100 school environments, and a governance model rooted in
101 transparency, shared responsibility, and respect for the role of
102 every board member.

103 Our students and our community deserve nothing less.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

104 **TIMOTHY MACIEL, ED.D.** is a former WSESD board
105 director.

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

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LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

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####END LOGLINE####