

## **Sharing A Superintendent Is Not In Ringwood's Best Interest - Financially or Educationally**

Times are tough. We have all heard it, and even more significantly, we have all felt it. In a time when every penny spent must be reflective of what we can afford vs. what we truly need, it is crucial that we scrutinize every aspect of our school budget. After careful consideration, the Ringwood Board of Education determined that having our own superintendent is not only something we can afford, it is something we truly need.

Since both Ringwood and Lakeland are looking for superintendents next year, the possibility of sharing a chief school administrator had to be investigated. The Board concluded that sharing a superintendent is not in the best interest of Ringwood's citizens and students because the cost savings would not be significantly realized, whereas the loss of an educational leader would be keenly felt by all members of our school district.

First and foremost, if we agree to share a superintendent now, we automatically begin the regionalization process because according to state law 18A: 17-24.2:

Upon the expiration of a contract between school boards sharing a superintendent or business administrator, the boards shall submit a report to the county superintendent or superintendents, which shall include an evaluation of the sharing relationship and the feasibility of voluntarily forming a regional district.

Over the years the people of Ringwood have determined that regionalization is not in their best financial interest for the following reasons:

- Through responsible fiscal planning, Ringwood has less debt than Lakeland Regional or Wanaque District, and a merger would cause the Ringwood taxpayers to absorb a portion of Lakeland and Wanaque debt.
- Regionalization would cause Ringwood to bear a disproportional percentage of the cost of education and administration. The appropriation of funds for shared services and regionalization is based on the average valuation of homes in the given towns. Since the homes in Ringwood are assessed at a higher value than those of Wanaque and Haskell, the citizens of Ringwood would pay a higher percentage of any shared service (as is currently the case at Lakeland Regional). Ringwood must pay for the education of her own K-8 students, and our taxpayers cannot afford the additional burden of having to subsidize the education of students in neighboring towns.
- Ringwood taxpayers would lose money through the legally required adoption of the collective bargaining agreements of the largest association (i.e., Ringwood teachers would now be paid Lakeland's higher salaries with less teaching time required in their schedules). This would result in higher pay and require hiring more teachers.

- The cost of bussing could increase significantly due to the potential need to transport students to neighboring towns.

Regionalization would not be cost effective for Ringwood, and it does not offer educational benefits for our students. Therefore, sharing a superintendent now is not prudent or responsible.

Sharing a superintendent is also not in the best educational interest of the residents of Ringwood for the following reasons:

- Maintaining a hands-on educational leader who has the ability to form close relationships with school principals and teachers as well as meaningful interactive encounters with the student body is critical to the success of our district.
- We need a Chief School Administrator who is acutely aware of the pulse moving within our district in correlation with the unique dynamic presence in elementary education.
- We need a leader who can be fully immersed in the demands of our community by developing relationships within each of our four schools, which will not only result in increased productivity but will also foster a lifelong love of learning.

The Ringwood Board of Education recognizes the need to scrutinize every dollar in the budget, but cost savings must come from an area that is less likely to hurt the students and citizens of Ringwood. Taxes in Ringwood are high, and for that price tag, we deserve, and we will continue to demand the best possible education for our students. Please support us in our endeavors to find the educational leader who will continue in Ringwood's demand for excellence.