

HAMPSTEAD SCHOOL DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

SCHOOL BOARD HIRES DR. METZLER AS EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANT

The Hampstead School Board is pleased to announce Dr. Earl Metzler will serve as Educational Consultant to the Hampstead School District during the SAU 55 withdrawal transition year.

In March 2020, Timberlane voters approved a plan to withdraw from SAU 55 effective July 1, 2021. Timberlane and Hampstead share the same SAU, (business services, educational leadership, human resources) and the two school boards have engaged in discussion regarding the long-term financial liabilities shared by the two districts and the best pathway for each district as they transition to independent district status. Additionally, both parties, along with Superintendent Metzler, agreed that it is in the best interest of both districts (more importantly Hampstead's best interest), that Dr. Metzler resign from his position as SAU 55 Superintendent effective immediately and serve as Educational Consultant to the Hampstead School District. The Hampstead School Board has trusted the expertise of Dr. Metzler since 2012 and is pleased to ensure his complete focus on the Hampstead School District during this withdrawal transition year. This will also permit Timberlane to begin planning for its future leadership as it too transitions into an independent school district.

As the Executive Consultant, Dr. Metzler will be have the following responsibilities:

- Leadership and direction for the Hampstead School District as it plans for the 2021-22 School Year and prepares for the withdrawal of the Timberlane School District from SAU 55. This includes, subject to Board approval, identifying and locating appropriate administrative offices, negotiating lease terms, developing an organizational and leadership plan for the Hampstead School District and coordinating the transition of all SAU functions to the Hampstead School District.
- Responsible for the planning and implementation of all educational programs for the Hampstead School District for the 2020-21 school year, including developing a plan for reopening of schools and the potential for a return to remote learning.
- Direct the work of the Executive Director and other administrative staff of the Hampstead School District.

- Serve as the Liaison to SAU 55 with respect to the financial affairs of the SAU and of the Hampstead School District.
- Perform such other services as are reasonably requested by the Hampstead School Board.

What is important to note is that the past month has been one of unprecedented change and uncertainty for the Hampstead School District. As the Board faces difficult decisions as to what form education will take in the fall, they have also been engaged in discussion with the Timberlane School Board regarding its withdrawal from SAU 55. In late June, the Hampstead School Board considered an agreement which it believed to be fair to both parties and would allow for high quality superintendent services for both districts. On June 23, 2020, the Hampstead School Board voted to approve such agreement. Unfortunately, within twenty-four hours of the board vote, the Hampstead School Board was informed that the Timberlane Board had rejected the agreement.

Soon after this action, the Hampstead School Board received additional information that the Timberlane Board was planning to take action, through the SAU Board, that would leave the Hampstead School District without quality, stable, educational leadership. The impact of such a decision in the middle of the COVID-19 global pandemic, during a transitional year to a single district SAU, and within six weeks of the start of the school year, would be devastating to Hampstead's educational community. Furthermore, the Hampstead School Board very recently learned that the Timberlane Board has been in discussions and negotiations with an individual to serve as their interim superintendent. This process was conducted without the knowledge or participation of the Hampstead School Board. To date, no comprehensive plan for superintendent services has been presented to the Hampstead Board.

After months of the Hampstead School Board being subjected to actions and decisions made by Timberlane Board members by way of SAU Board votes, it became clear to the Hampstead School Board that Hampstead's interests would not be considered by the majority of the SAU 55 Board (Timberlane Board). This conclusion is based on the Timberlane Board's abuse and overuse of the weighted voting process and on decisions made without the Hampstead Board's input. The Hampstead School Board felt compelled to take action to protect its students and staff and, by unanimous vote, made the decision to secure strong, consistent leadership to guide the district through these unprecedented challenges. Contracting Dr. Earl Metzler as Executive Consultant for a period of one year will provide the stability necessary during these times where continuity and maintaining a stable environment is paramount. The Hampstead Board agrees this was a prudent action necessary to move the district forward.

Caitlin Parnell, Hampstead School Board Chair
Karen Yasenka, Hampstead School Board Vice Chair

July 17, 2020