



Some principals fear loss of momentum

By Diane Knich
The Post and Courier
Thursday, April 12, 2007

Some Charleston County principals and teachers worry the district could lose momentum on recent progress if Superintendent Maria Goodloe-Johnson leaves the district for a job in Seattle.

Goodloe-Johnson could know as early as Friday whether she'll have an offer for the top schools job in Seattle. Members of that district's school board visited Charleston this week to learn more about one of their top two candidates.

Leanne Sheppard, principal of Charles Pinckney Elementary School, said she's begun to see progress with Goodloe-Johnson's long-term plan for district improvement. That plan, the Charleston Plan for Excellence, is a six-strategy, six-year program to make Charleston County the highest-performing school district in the state.

"We finally have a coherent curriculum," Sheppard said.

Her concern about the possibility of Goodloe-Johnson leaving, she said, is "having to start again with someone who has a new plan of action."

"That's scary," she said, and added that other principals have expressed similar fears.

Blondelle Tolliver, a teacher coach at Angel Oak Elementary School, feels the same way.

If Goodloe-Johnson left, she said, "It would be a sad day for Charleston County."

Tolliver said she's been working in the district since 1979 and has seen a lot of leaders come and go. Most come with their own plan, she said, and efforts underway by the previous leader are tossed aside.

"If you continue to start over," she said, "you never reach the finish."

William Price, principal of McClellanville Middle School, has worked for the district for the past 11 years. He called Goodloe-Johnson "by far the best superintendent Charleston has had."

But, he added, the fallout for the district if Goodloe-Johnson does leave will depend on who takes over. Some people hope that if Goodloe-Johnson leaves, Nancy McGinley, the district's chief academic officer, will take over, at least on an interim basis, he said. She's familiar with the plan and could continue work on it.

If McGinley doesn't take over, "you could see changes in administration at some schools," he said.

"Many people are behind the Plan for Excellence," he said.

But Andrew HaLevi, founder of the Charleston County Teacher Alliance, said a recent survey of members indicates that many teachers aren't impressed with Goodloe-Johnson's leadership.

One of the questions on the survey, the results of which will be released next week, asked teachers if the superintendent is an effective leader.

Only about half of the 867 teachers who completed the survey responded positively to that statement, HaLevi said. There are roughly 3,500 teachers in the school district

That's been the trend on similar surveys the group has completed over the past three years, he said.

"What you glean from that is there's a mixed feeling from teachers on her leadership," he said.

Reach **Diane Knich** at 937-5491 or dknich@postandcourier.com.

Copyright © 1997 - 2007 the Evening Post Publishing Co.