

Lanesville board hires Steve Morris as principal and superintendent

Written by Administrator

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Present Jeffersonville High School principal Steve Morris was named the new superintendent of the Lanesville Schools along with the position of principal of the junior-senior high school, in the Lanesville Board of School Trustees' Tuesday (June 15) meeting.

The hybrid position is expected to save the Lanesville Schools between \$35,000 and \$40,000 per year.

The superintendent's position is presently being held by interim superintendent Sam Gardner, and the Lanesville Junior-Senior High principal's job is presently held by Janet Paige.

Gardner has already retired from full time positions as a superintendent when he took the Lanesville job on an interim basis in 2007, and has had stints in the Clarksville and Greater Clark systems. Paige is leaving to become the new principal at New Albany High School.

In fact, Gardner was a mentor to Morris, 50, a graduate of Providence High School in Clarksville.

Morris was formerly employed by the Clarksville Community Schools, when Gardner was the superintendent in that system, with Morris being the principal at Clarksville High School at the same time.

Morris taught and coached for 13 years at the start of his education career, and has been in administration the last 16 years. You could say it is in his blood to be in education.

His father Jim Morris was a teacher and the head boys' basketball coach at New Albany, as well as the head men's basketball coach at Indiana University Southeast in New Albany for years.

The hat that Morris will wear on any given day, whether that of a superintendent or principal, will depend on what needs to be done on that day.

As Morris put it recently, it "depends on what's going on, on that day or week. It's just making time to do both."

Morris said that the day to day work will be more in the vein of being principal of the junior-senior high school.

At Jeffersonville, Morris has spent three of the past four years of his principalship dealing with construction issues. The School is entering the latter stages of a major renovation, and as he put it, "That poses many challenges. That made it tough, but the project's almost over. We still expected them (the students at Jeff) to get where they needed to be on time. They just had to move a little bit quicker."

He will not be taking over the position within the Greater Clark Schools that he recently had been appointed to, that of Principal of Development, in a position created by Superintendent Stephen Daeschner; the position was to have been filled as of July 1.

Morris said that there were several reasons for his interest in the hybrid position at Lanesville.

For one, Morris has had his superintendent's license for four years, and he has had a desire to use it.

Second, Morris still wanted the day to day contact with students that you get with being a building principal.

"It's an opportunity to do both," Morris explained. "I'm eagerly looking forward to it."

Due to less state funding, Lanesville Schools will be forced to cut a total of \$1.2 million before the end of the summer.

The task is one that Morris said he will be very heavily involved with.

Morris said that the best case scenario would be if the State of Indiana did not have any further

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cuts in funding, but he said it would be wise to budget cautiously for 2011.

He is concerned that as the school corporations in Indiana eliminate people and eliminate programs, it will hurt kids the most.

The Lanesville board did manage to rehire three paraprofessionals (teacher's assistants) on an hourly wage basis with no benefits, according to the decision the board made in the June 15 meeting.

Morris said that the board is working on a general tax referendum, where Franklin Township residents would have a chance to vote yes or no on raising local taxes to help fund the Lanesville Community Schools more fully. Firm details have not been made yet on the proposal.

There has been some talk at the state level of any school district with less than 1,000 students be consolidated into a larger district, but Lanesville remains an exception to the move to start consolidations once again.

Local community support remains high for the schools as they are, and the schools have consistently finished in the higher reaches of the ISTEP test every year, and Morris said "it's a very high performing school district." He reasons that in that regard, the schools are working.

In other business, the board:

Gave approval to St. Mary's Church to use two midi buses for shuttle service during the St. Mary's picnic on August 8, 2010

Dispose of technology equipment and other surplus items, like a comb binder.

Approved the following coaches: Kevin Smith (jv baseball), Rusty Cecil (jv softball), Scott Cecil (assistant softball), Evan Bridges (junior high girls' track).

Approved teacher's contracts for summer enrichment for the following instructors; Sandy Tyree, Robin Wolfe, David Henke, Bethany Miller.