

Superintendent of Schools

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January 3, 2024

Dear Superintendent Search Committee:

I was excited to see your posting for the position of Superintendent for the Rivendell Interstate School District. Given my extensive experience in education, my leadership qualities, and my desire to serve the communities in the area that I call home, I think that this position would be a wonderful fit both for myself and for the district. Please accept this letter, resume, and my application for the position.

I am an educational and organizational leader dedicated to fostering a positive, productive learning environment for students, staff, and faculty. Having worked in a variety of educational settings: rural, urban, suburban, ethnically and religiously diverse, public, and private, I fully understand that what works in one school may not be as effective in others. That said, through my varied (and various) experiences, I have come to believe deeply in the transformative possibilities of educational programs when those involved in their planning, implementation, and nurturing keep the best interests of the students at the center of what they do. In fact, of the educational programs I have had the opportunity to be a part of, I feel that this has been a hallmark of my leadership.

I have had the chance to lead significant, lasting, and progressive changes in the communities I have served. These changes range from the more mundane aspects of everyday school life (student management, scheduling, instructional initiatives, evaluation procedures, etc.) to more significant school-wide initiatives (improving school culture and climate, school and district budgeting, large programmatic shifts, resource management, facilities, etc.). In every case, I have listened to and learned from the school community to understand the importance of these initiatives to them. As a result, our collaborative efforts involving students, staff, faculty, and administration were well received, impactful, and sustainable.

Having led schools and districts with anywhere from 125 to 2100 students (and comprising anywhere from one to seven schools), I know that there are a variety of ways in which we must connect with one another to ensure that collaboration is a foundational part of any good organization. The places and people I have worked with and learned from have taught me a great deal about leadership. That said, given the challenges of leading schools, there have certainly been moments that felt more like trials than triumphs. But that's okay, as these challenges have been valuable learning experiences, helping me grow and gain a deeper understanding of myself and my role as an educational leader.

I hope this letter gives you insight into who I am and how I approach the job I love—just enough to spark your interest in how I might be a good fit for the Rivendell Interstate School District. I look forward to the opportunity to meet and learn more about one another.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my application.

Sincerely,

Randall P. Gawel

Randall P Gawel

Education

Wayne State University

Detroit, Michigan

Postgraduate Coursework

Major: Educational Leadership

GPA: 3.940

Credit Hours: 36

Attended September 1999 to May 2001

Degree conferred May 2001

Boston College

Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

Master of Education

Major: Secondary Education/Curriculum and Instruction, **Minor:** Literature

GPA: 3.910

Credit Hours: 33

Attended September 1994 to June 1997

Degree conferred June 1997

Lyndon State College

Lyndonville, Vermont

Bachelor of Arts

Major: English, **Minor:** History

GPA: 3.950

Credit Hours: 110

Attended September 1989 to December 1993

Degree conferred December 1993

Experience

Orange East Supervisory Union

Assistant Superintendent

Bradford, VT

Jun 2021 -

Feb 2022

In collaboration with the Superintendent, I have worked to ensure the effective operation of programs across all school buildings, sought to maintain a shared vision for the SU, promoted a positive climate and culture through the ongoing work we have done, responsibly managed and allocated resources to support SU priorities, communicated effectively with all stakeholders, provided direct supervision, evaluation, organization, and operation of programs throughout the SU, overseen the overall health and safety of the buildings, staff, and students of the SU in conjunction with building administrators, facilities directors, food service directors, human resources, nurses, and the superintendent (both with regard to regular operations and the pandemic), provided oversight to food service operations and transportation for the SU, ensured the smooth operation of the maintenance of buildings and grounds at all SU buildings, assisted with the implementation of technology and related programs, been involved with the development and support of instructional programs and services, represented the SU at school board meetings, worked with the business office, superintendent, and boards in the the budget process, promoted community and local business support for schools, and acted as the superintendent in her absence.

Reason for leaving: I am seeking to move up within the organization, not seeking to leave.

Supervisor: Emilie Knisley (802-222-5216)

Experience Type: Public School, Full-time

It is **OK** to contact this employer

Orange East Supervisory Union

Jul 2023 - Present

Superintendent

82 Rivervale Road

Superintendent of 1700 student/seven school supervisory union serving the towns of Thetford, Topsham, Corinth, Bradford, Newbury, Wells River, Ryegate, and Groton. Supervisory union in comprised of three elementary schools, one K-8 school, one 7-12 middle/high school, a Pre-K-12 school, and a technical center. In this role, I am responsible for all of the many things that a superintendent in Vermont is responsible for assisting and supporting: school boards, budgeting, curriculum, student services, school leadership, union issues, visioning, community engagement, and many other things.

Reason for leaving: Seeking new opportunities.

Supervisor: OESU Board of Education (802-222-5216)

Experience Type: Professional/Work, Full-time

Please **do not** contact this employer

Frankel Jewish Academy

Jul 2018 - Present

Principal

West Bloomfield, MI

Lead all aspects of daily school functioning.

Reason for leaving: Still employed, but seeking to move back to New England because my children now both attend Dartmouth College and I am originally from New Hampshire.

Supervisor: Azaryah Cohen (248-671-3233)

Experience Type: Independent School, Full-time

Please **do not** contact this employer

Berkley School District

Nov 2009 -

Principal

Jun 2018

Berkley, MI

Principal for one of the top high schools in the state of Michigan. Lead all aspects of comprehensive high school with 1400 students, and served on district leadership team, negotiation team, and administrative hiring team at district level.

Reason for leaving: Offered new position at the school my children attended, a school that was in great need of new leadership. There were a great many challenges/opportunities for change, and we have reformed the school over the last year and a half.

Supervisor: Dennis McDavid (248-837-8101)

Experience Type: Public School, Full-time

It is **OK** to contact this employer

Novi Community Schools

Assistant Principal/Director of Learning
Novi, MI

Jul 2001 -
Nov 2009

Oversaw academic services and operations for the top ranked high school in the state of Michigan. Over 2000 students and 150 staff members in the building. Coordinated curriculum, student services, and athletics.

Reason for leaving: Offered position of principal at neighboring district.

Supervisor: Emmett Lippe (2484491500)

Experience Type: Public School, Full-time

It is **OK** to contact this employer

South Lake Schools

Coordinator, Teacher, Coach
St. Clair Shores, MI

Jul 1997 - Jun 2001

Coordinated school-wide academic assistance program and acted as a support for administration with regard to student services. Taught 9th through 12th grade (English, video production), and coached cross country and softball at the varsity level.

Supervisor: Brian Campbell (586-435-1600)

Experience Type: Public School, Full-time

It is **OK** to contact this employer

Cambridge Ringe and Latin School

Student Teacher
Cambridge, MA

Sep 1996 -
Jun 1997

Student taught full course load in English and media studies in a large urban high school.

Reason for leaving: Completed degree program.

Supervisor: Joanne Walter (617-349-6630)

Experience Type: Student Teaching, Full-time

It is **OK** to contact this employer

Educational Philosophy

I am an educational and organizational leader who is committed to creating a positive, productive culture of learning for students, staff, and faculty. Having worked in a variety of educational settings: urban, suburban, ethnically and religiously diverse, public, private, I fully understand that what works in one school may not be as effective in others; however, I have come to believe deeply in the transformative possibilities of educational programs when those involved in their planning, implementation, and nurturing keep the best interests of the students at the center of what they do. In fact, of the educational programs I have had the opportunity to be a part of, I feel that this has been a hallmark of my leadership.

I have had the opportunity to lead significant, lasting, and progressive change in the communities I have served. These changes range from the more mundane aspects of school life -- attendance, discipline, evaluation -- to more significant school-wide initiatives: start time, schedules, graduation requirements, curriculum revision. Yet, in all cases, they were important to the institution at the time and the result of significant collaboration on the part of students, staff, faculty, and administration. This collaboration is key. A leader must

listen, learn, and sometimes experience setbacks to eventually bring together the majority.

The places and people I have worked with and learned from have taught me a great deal about leadership; overall, these lessons have been significant and positive, though at times, given how challenging leading schools can be, they have certainly seemed much more a trial before they could be seen as a triumph. Given this, I have come to know the importance of trust and of shared vision when it comes to the education of our young people. Moreover, I have learned very well the need to leave ego at the door to better understand the part a leader must play in the larger process.

One of the most important functions I can serve as an educational leader is in encouraging those around me to become most fully who they are in the service of the school community we share. Understanding the values and the guiding principles of the institution is, of course, critical. But understanding how the values and guiding principles of the individual, as they become most fully who they are in the service of that institution, are greater still. Many years ago I made the mistake of trying to be what I thought a school administrator should be rather than being who I was within the role that I had. I learned very quickly that this disingenuousness made an already challenging role far too difficult to maintain. Leadership must be at the core of who you are, something central rather than secondary to the person. (And we have all witnessed the impact of a person being misaligned with the institution.) Understanding, then, who we are in light of who we serve allows for all involved to grow at a rate that is exponentially more meaningful, fulfilling, and productive than if the person or process were impinged by poorly fitting or unrealistic expectations. One of my primary functions as a school leader, then, is in building these relationships and raising the individual and collective in service of the community. When it works, as it most often has, the results are spectacular.

Finally, as I reflect upon many years of learning leadership in process, I have come to welcome how much this experiential growth has the potential to continue to change and improve my practice. The very best school leaders I have worked with are certainly knowledgeable and confident; however, at the same time they are deeply introspective, willing to listen, and excited to learn. Understanding this has made my approach to new situations and the complexities of my job something I look forward to rather than dread, finding opportunity in challenge and possibility in change.

Evolving as a leader in a job that I truly love has been wonderfully fulfilling these past twenty years. I look forward to sharing with you how my experience, knowledge, and practice might continue this growth in your community.