

Teachers miffed at master

Wanted input on Adamowski pact

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WINDHAM — Local teachers are calling out for more inclusion in state-appointed Special Master Steven Adamowski's evaluation following his one-year contract extension by state school board members Wednesday.

Teacher's union members say there should have been more local input in the evaluation of Adamowski's effectiveness over the past two years and they are calling for Windham to conduct its own review of his time in town.

"Efforts are now underway to get the community behind a true investigation," said American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Connecticut Spokesman Matt O'Connor Friday afternoon.

He explained this investigation ought to include input from all local stakeholders — teachers, parents, local and state officials, among others.

"All should be very concerned about the direction of the schools and the educational opportunities for the students," O'Connor said. "Our teachers know first-hand, because they hear it first-hand, from in particular the parents: it's important to reverse the course and get on track for the sake of the kids if what's changed isn't working."

Randall Prose, president of the Windham Federation of Teachers and a social studies teacher at Windham High School, submitted written testimony to the state board of education before its unanimous vote to extend Adamowski's contract for the 2013-14 school year.

"I am a very trusting and optimistic person and hoped that the state intervention in Windham would be a positive boost for our schools," Prose wrote.

"But we face more challenges than ever in our charge to best educate the students of Windham. Since the appointment of the Special Master two years ago, test scores have plummeted," he stated.

Indeed, the Connecticut Mastery Test and Connecticut Academic Performance Test scores released last month showed significant **(Windham teachers, Page 4)**

Windham teachers unhappy with Adamowski

(Continued from Page 1)

decreases among most grade levels and subject areas, especially for the 10th-grade students taking the CAPT assessment.

"Surely, these results demand a closer look at the effectiveness of recent changes that were imposed by the Special Master," Prose wrote.

The state board of education advanced Adamowski's contract for a third year, lowering his pay from \$ 225,000 to \$ 162,000 to reflect a shift from contracting for to being an employee of the state Department of Education.

O'Connor called the board's renewal a "very quick move by the state board of education to renew the special master without doing their due diligence."

Adamowski arrived in Windham in August 2011, charged with turning around a school system struggling with a wide achievement gap, low student performance, high dropout rate and more.

Under state legislation, Windham will have a special master until a year after Windham's district makes adequate yearly progress in reading and mathematics.

"Every day that doesn't happen is taking away from the future educational opportunities for the kids in the schools," O'Connor said.

In a release from AFT Connecticut, Melanie Godbout, an English teacher at Windham High School and WFT member, also expressed concern about Adamowski's contract extension.

"The state isn't listening, so it's up to us to take charge and take control of our future," she said. "We needed an honest and unbiased assessment of the policy changes under the Special Master legislation.

"Now is the time to do that work, not next June or some future date. The kids in our classrooms can't afford to wait."

Windham Board of Education Chairman Murphy Sewall praised the work Windham's teachers have done.

"I would like to emphasize that the teachers have been helpful, cooperative, supportive and are really putting the effort into making our schools better," he said. "I think this is a problem that's bigger than they are, and it's going to take all of us to turn this thing around."

Regarding Adamowski's effectiveness, Sewall said many of Adamowski's reform initiatives could not have been expected to bear fruit immediately, but might begin to do so this year.

"It's not like you come in and you say, 'Do this,' and the next year there's going to be this big change," he said. "We're talking about several years here before you're really going to have an evaluation of how well this is working.

"I think it's unreasonable to expect instant results, and I would hope that you'd begin to see some of the impact in another year, but we've put in place programs that should have a noticeable impact on reading scores next year," Sewall said.

Windham Mayor Ernest Eldridge said, although he found it unlikely the state would consider local assessments of Adamowski's effectiveness, it would have been appreciated.

"It's like anything — we're all judged by what we do and don't do," he said, adding if locals' opinions had been considered, "at least if they get to say something and it doesn't go their way, well, we move on."

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