

# Tracy, WWG schools to share superintendent

## Boards meet jointly, one-year trial period envisioned, Loy Woelber & Chad Anderson express support

By Seth Schmidt

Tracy Public Schools and Westbrook-Walnut Grove Schools are close to an agreement for sharing a superintendent for the coming school year.

School boards for both districts met jointly, and then separately Monday night to discuss a plan that would have Westbrook-Walnut Grove Supt. Loy Woelber serve as the superintendent for both school districts.

Board members from both districts overwhelmingly spoke favorably about the shared superintendent proposal at the joint meeting held at the Walnut Grove school.

“I think this is a win-win proposition,” said WWG board member Maydra Maas.

“This is a way for us to maybe be more efficient with our dollars, and spend those dollars in ways that benefit kids,” said Tom Hook, a Tracy board member.

WWG board member Greg Madson agreed.

“The upside is real good. There are a lot of positives, and the risks are really pretty low.”

Tracy board chair Eric Fultz said he could see a shared superintendent opening the door for additional district-to-district collaborative efforts.

“Maybe we can move some teachers around to be able to offer more for our students.”

Kerry Knakmuhs, WWG board member, said he can foresee a future time when WWG schools will no longer be able to support three full-time administrators (elementary principal, high school principal, and superintendent) on its own. Woelber’s willingness to consider a shared Tracy-WWG position, and the looming Tracy superintendent’s opening, Knakmuhs felt, is an opportunity to consider new options that can help both districts.

Roland Dobberstein, Tracy board member and former Balaton school principal, said that a shared superintendent would be worth trying for a year. The two districts could then evaluate how it worked. If either party was dissatisfied, the arrangement could be changed, he said.

Only WWG board member Tim Helmer stopped short of endorsing the shared superintendent’s position. Helmer said that he neither opposed nor supported the idea, but had reservations about potential “conflict of interests” from having a single superintendent for two neighboring districts. Such conflicts of interest, Helmer felt, could hurt the smaller district.

WWG schools have about 480 students in grades K-12. Tracy Public Schools have about 800.

### **Moving ahead**

After the joint meeting, the Westbrook-Walnut Grove board directed that planning for the shared superintendent concept “move forward.” Tracy board members were unanimous in their support for sharing a superintendent after convening their own meeting in Tracy.

The Tracy Board of Education is scheduled to meet again on Monday. Board members talked of formally accepting Tracy Supt. Dave Marlette’s resignation at that time, and then acting on the superintendent’s vacancy.

Marlette, Tracy’s superintendent for the past eight years, has accepted a job in the Watertown-Mayer school district effective July 1.

Woelber is finishing his tenth year as Westbrook-Walnut Grove’s superintendent.

