

# Almeida dispels rumors

## Uses numbers to show no new administrators

KENDRA LEIGH MILLER

kmiller@ricentral.com

COVENTRY — Following his budget presentation during Monday's budget workshop, Coventry School Superintendent Mike Almeida spoke out against the rumors he says he's heard as of late regarding the district adding positions to the administration team.

"The fact is we're at our lowest personnel rate in 10 years," he stated. "We've actually eliminated three positions in the central office."

He said the district is operating with three open/vacant administrator positions at its central office and is "drowning."

Coventry is the seventh largest school district in Rhode Island with a total of 4,976 students.

He explained that several districts have another layer of instructional support personnel for all instructional areas including English, math, science and world languages.

"No district Coventry's size has one special education administrator," he said. "We have the highest special educator administrator-to-

# Rumors addressed by Almeida

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special education student ratio in the state.”

The superintendent would not comment on where the rumors were coming from but said he knew exactly where and felt it was very important to answer the questions of the town council Monday night so they knew the truth.

“I do believe it was helpful because I know they believed we were overspending,” he said. “These positions are market-driven. We need the best leadership in Coventry and you truly do get what you pay for in this case.”

The district has restructured the central office several times and has saved over \$300,000. Principals and assistant principals have had no raises in five years, elementary school principals’ salaries are at the median in the state, the middle school principal is the lowest paid even though that position’s ratio in relation of administrator to student is the highest (1,117 students).

Also according to the numbers in his report, Almeida said the high school principal is paid the second lowest to the bot-

tom when comparing principals’ salaries in relation to administrator-to-student ratio (principal pay per student is \$74.17 for 1,565 students).

Almeida explained from his point of view the difference between getting a raise and getting a new position that pays a higher rate of pay.

“A raise, to me, is someone who gets paid more for performing a job well at the job while if someone leaves a position and goes to a new position with a higher pay rate, that’s a whole new job; that’s not a pay increase in terms of a raise.”

While members of the town council agreed everyone wants the best school district and to invest the most resources possible in raising its children, council members agreed that there has to be a balance between working out the right numbers and residents in town being able to feed their families and not feeling like they are being taxed out of the town because of the school budget.

“Some families are eating steak while others eat hamburger,” said Coventry Town Council President Gary Cote, “and that’s just not fair.”

School committee Chairwoman Kathy Patenaude recognized the hard work of the school district and said it can’t cut any more than it has.

“I remember before I was on the committee, that I would attend all the meetings because I had children in the school and I would see the line items and think, ‘Wow, they can’t cut anything from that?’ but now, having the experience behind me and learning, I now see that there isn’t really anywhere else to go because the majority of it is contractual.”

She said she appreciates when someone new comes on the committee with all their ideas about making changes but once they arrive and see things, they learn it’s not that simple.

Coventry resident and President of the Coventry Teachers Alliance, Kelly Erinakes was on the edge of her seat as Almeida explained where the district is compared to others and agreed with Almeida.

“The less we educate our youth, the less care we’re going to get and I believe in our schools, teachers and administrators.”