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Four BHUSD Principals Replaced

Come fall semester 2010, Beverly Hills Unified School District will have replaced four of the five school site principals and put in place a new superintendent.

Beverly Hills High School Principal J Guidetti and Beverly Vista School Principal Eric Warren were released from their contracts March 11. El Rodeo Principal Pat Escalante was promoted to Director of Pupil Services and Preschool Development.

Horace Mann Principal Dawnalyn Murakawa-Leopard received a promotion to Director of Human Resources in February. A search is currently underway to find her replacement.

"We have a good mixture of internal and external candidates to fill these positions," said BHUSD Board of Education member Brian Goldberg.

"I think that we have some stars within our district that should be promoted," said Board President Steven Fenton. "However, I am really curious and interested to see what some of these outside candidates look like."

The employment status changes immediately follow annual administration evaluations conducted by the Board. Guidetti and Warren have been offered reassignment within the district but it is not clear if either will accept.

"Not everyone can play shortstop, but there is a role for everyone on the field," said Fenton. "I believe that these administrators can make a huge contribution to the district by playing a different position."

The drastic change in staffing of top-level administrators, however, may cause complications with the impending superintendent search.

"In my opinion, our board needs to be mindful of the message that sweeping changes send to both our community and potential superintendents," said Board member Myra Lurie. "We are not well served if our actions make us look as if we may micromanage, needlessly cause upheaval during a critical time of transition or tie a new superintendent's hands."

Typically, it is the role of the superintendent to evaluate and recommend administrative reassignment. The superintendent traditionally would also conduct the principal search. Current Superintendent Jerry Gross however is only with the district on an interim basis. The Board will assume these duties.

Lurie further fears the administrative changes come at an unstable time for the district.

"It's a disruption at a time when we least need it and can least afford it. To bring all of these transitional issues and cause all of this chaos at this time is not a positive thing."

"I think this is a good thing," said Fenton. "We really have the opportunity to rebuild the school district."

When asked for comment regarding why Guidetti and Warren were released from their contracts, the district could not comment.

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