

Acevedo led in tough times

The Reporter Recommends

Posted - Friday, October 17, 2008 10:28 AM EDT

Monroe County School District Superintendent Randy Acevedo's first four-year term has been sometimes tumultuous. He has a history of butting heads with school board members, teachers and administrators.

He has come under fire for making unilateral decisions without the consultation of the school board. This was evident when Acevedo used his prerogative in 2006 to not renew the contract of Sandi Bisceglia, the popular Plantation Key School principal — perhaps one of his most controversial decisions.

His management style has been criticized by several members of the school board, and he has been slammed for having too many administrators compared to teachers. The district under Acevedo has also come under scrutiny for its use of supplemental pay to reward employees for doing tasks critics say are within their job duties.

But during his term, student performance has improved district-wide. When he was first elected, Monroe County was a "B" district, as graded by the state. For the last three years, the district under Acevedo maintained "A" status, and only one of its high schools, Key West High School, was rated a "B" school by the state last year.

The district under Acevedo also saw the graduation rate improve from 33rd in the state to ninth. And despite criticism of Acevedo for running a top-heavy district with a big gap in pay between administrators and teachers, Monroe County boasts the highest salary for beginning teachers in Florida.

His opponent, Fred Colvard, was principal of Marathon High School for two years beginning in 2002 before retiring after an injury he said he sustained breaking up a fight.

Before coming to the Keys, Colvard had more than 30 years of experience as an educator, athletic director, principal and superintendent. Much of this time was in West Virginia.

Colvard has criticized Acevedo for running up a budget deficit of \$6.4 million, and promised if elected to build reserves, make schools safer and increase teacher pay.

Colvard has some good ideas and is qualified to be the school district's superintendent, but so is Acevedo, and he has spent his entire career working for the district.

We have been among Acevedo's harshest critics for some of his policy decisions over the years. For example when he chose to add another test to gauge FCAT performance, we lambasted the test as a waste of time and money.

But Acevedo has guided the district through tough times with impressive results. As the economy continues to get worse, we think Acevedo is the right person to head the district. Already this year he has shown fiscal responsibility by trimming the district's operating budget by millions to \$90.4 million, which will result in taxpayers shelling out about 2 percent less than last year. It's a start.

Despite Acevedo's accomplishments, there is still room for improvement.

We have great teachers and students in the Keys and there's no reason we can't have some of the best schools in the country.

Acevedo is in a position to make this happen. The Reporter recommends Randy Acevedo for school superintendent.