

OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH COMMITTEE MEETING

April 16, 2014

The Superintendent Search Committee held a meeting on April 16, 2014 at 4:00 P.M. in the Winter Chambers, 26 Court Street, Boston.

For more information about any of the items listed below, contact Landon Dickey:
landon.dickey@boston.gov or 617-635-3895.

ATTENDANCE

Search Committee Members Present: Co-Chair Hardin Coleman, Co-Chair Robert Gallery, Laura Perille, Bill Henderson, Michael O'Neill, Michael Contompassis, Dania Vasquez, Jeri Robinson, Andrew Vega, Pam Eddinger, Richard Stutman

Search Committee Members Absent: Regina Robinson

Mayor's Office Staff: George Perry, Landon Dickey, Danny Green

BPS Staff: Laura Dziorny

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Leadership Profile Report

Desired Superintendent Characteristics

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chairs Hardin Coleman and Robert Gallery called the meeting to order.

REVIEW LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT

Bill Attea, from the search firm Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates, led a review of the leadership profile report HYA developed through input from public hearings and daylong interviews with BPS stakeholders. Bill called out several strengths of the BPS system, challenges, and desired characteristics for the next superintendent.

As strengths, Bill Attea noted extensive curriculum options and academic opportunities, the teaching force, and stakeholder engagement efforts carried out by the district. Bill also shared that community members recognized the benefit of having an appointed school committee and collaboration between the school committee, Mayor, and Superintendent. In addition, stakeholders value the exemplary K1 program BPS offers as well as the skill of school principals.

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In terms of challenges the BPS system faces, Bill shared feedback gathered on the challenge of effectively managing BPS' 800 partner organizations. Community members also highlighted headmaster attrition, the status of vocational education programs, an insufficient number of guidance counselors, a lack of inclusion settings, and BPS staff that does not mirror the ethnicity of students as challenges.

Finally, with regard to desired superintendent characteristics, community members cited highly effective interpersonal skills, the ability to hire outstanding administrators, collaboration with a multitude of organizations in Boston, and visionary leadership as highly valued traits. Stakeholders sought a resourceful individual that values diversity, supports teachers and gains trust, and implements best practices.

Bill Attea then opened to questions from the search committee.

Michael O'Neill commented that much of the feedback seemed to focus on personality traits rather than experience levels in specific areas (e.g. inclusion, dual language programs). Bill noted this may have been a result of HYA asking for "characteristics" but that the challenges outlined provide a roadmap of where experience is desired.

DEVELOP DRAFT JOB DESCRIPTION FOR SUPERINTENDENT

Bill Attea then directed the search committee to the draft job description in the report. Hardin then passed out an updated draft with edits he prepared for presentation to the search committee.

Hardin described how he reordered the list to frame closing the achievement gap as one of the highest priorities. He also highlighted the importance of the candidate having demonstrated the ability to work in a culturally and economically diverse community.

Laura Perille inquired why Hardin had removed a line from the job description on the superintendent guiding the strategic planning process, and Hardin responded that the strategic plan would already be articulated so that skill would not be required in the superintendent. After additional discussion between committee members, Michael O'Neill suggested that the school committee sets the vision for the district and the superintendent determines how to get there, collaboratively with the school committee and BPS stakeholders.

In response, Michael Contompasis suggested the superintendent should play an important role in the development of the strategic plan, and that it may not be prudent to give the ultimate candidate a plan to implement without gathering his or her feedback. In addition, he expressed interest in specifically adding language around the candidate having experience with district reform, experience as an educator, and the ability to utilize a multi-sector (i.e. district and charter) strategy to increase the number of quality seats in BPS.

Returning to the issue of the superintendent's role in developing the strategic plan, Laura Perille suggested that the school committee sets a vision for the district and the superintendent works collaboratively to develop a strategic plan, which is a living document. Separately, Laura also requested that "families", "school leaders", and "teachers" be added to the list of stakeholders with whom the superintendent must work.

Dania then raised three points she felt were missing from the document. First, she requested that the job description explicitly mention that BPS is composed of schools with varying level of autonomies and that

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the successful candidate should know how to manage these types of schools. Second, she said the document should emphasize that BPS needs a “leader of leaders” as opposed to a technocrat. Finally, Dania asked that the job description explicitly ask for the superintendent candidate to have experience dealing with issues of “diversity, race, and culture” rather than possessing “cultural sensitivity” which she felt was an ambiguous phrase.

Andrew Vega agreed with Dania and suggested the candidate needs to be comfortable with the word “race” and issues surrounding race. He further stated candidates should understand the lived experience of students in Roxbury who receive free and reduced lunch and some of whom have been through the foster care system.

After a comment from Bill suggesting the sense of urgency the incoming superintendent needs to possess, the conversation returned to the issue of the superintendent’s role in strategic planning. Michael O’Neill and Michael Contompassis exchanged comments with Michael O’Neill again stating the school committee was responsible for setting a vision and Michael Contompassis expressing concerns that formalizing a vision before bringing on a superintendent could deter candidates from applying. Over the next several minutes, Dania, Laura, and Bob suggested the ideal candidate would ultimately build on the work currently in production, including the school committee’s strategic plan. Bill Attea and John Connolly synthesized the committee’s comments, stating that a successful candidate would develop a sense of urgency in driving reform if he or she felt like an active participant in developing the plan to drive reform.

To conclude, Richard Stutman encouraged Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates to revise the document with reference to the teacher’s union or collective bargaining units in the list of stakeholders.

NEXT STEPS

Bill Attea led a discussion of next steps which would include reconvening the group to review the edits/suggested changes and grant final approval to the document. The committee agreed to bring together as many people as could be available the following week, and allow individuals who could not be present to submit comments digitally. Committee members were conscious of the need for the school committee to vote on the document by April 30th, in order to allow Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates to develop a pool of candidates over the month of May.

Danny Green confirmed he would send out potential times for a meeting the following week as well as a transition report outlining the Mayor’s priorities on education, in response to a request from Laura Perille.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Carol Ridge Martinez, Executive Director of Allston Brighton Community Development Corporation, testified regarding the outreach process for the superintendent search hearings and a desire for the superintendent search committee to spend more time recruiting candidates.

Ellen Wong, member of the Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center, testified regarding the need to have a superintendent who understands the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Boston Public Schools.


Justin, member of the Boston Truth Coalition, testified regarding his desire to see the full list of criteria generated by the Boston Truth Coalition to be part of the superintendent job description.

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ADJOURN

At 6:15PM the meeting was adjourned by Hardin Coleman.

Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. Dickey", written in a cursive style.

Landon Dickey