



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
SUPERINTENDENT FINALIST INTERVIEW: DR. TOMMY WELCH**

June 24, 2022

The Boston School Committee held an in-person meeting that was live streamed on Zoom and on Boston City TV on June 24, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. in the School Committee Chamber of the Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building, 2300 Washington Street, Roxbury, MA 02119. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit www.bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee, email feedback@bostonpublicschools.org or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

ATTENDANCE

School Committee Members Present: Chairperson Jeri Robinson; Vice Chairperson Michael D. O'Neill; Stephen Alkins; Lorena Lopera; Rafaela Polanco Garcia; and Quoc Tran.

School Committee Members Absent: Brandon Cardet-Hernandez; and Student Representative Xyra Mercer.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

None.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Jeri Robinson called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance. She announced that live, simultaneous interpretation services were available in the nine major BPS languages via Zoom.

Ms. Robinson explained that the Superintendent Search Committee was tasked by the School Committee to conduct a thorough search for the next leader of Boston Public Schools. Beginning in March, they began by hosting a series of public listening sessions and community stakeholder meetings. The feedback voiced by students, families, educators, and other community partners was incorporated into the Superintendent's job description and informed the Search Committee members' interview questions. Beginning with 34 candidates, the Search Committee narrowed the pool to 8 candidates throughout May and June, and conducted several rounds of interviews with the candidates. On June 17, the Search Committee conducted its final

deliberations and voted to select a group of finalists for the School Committee's consideration. Two candidates have since withdrawn from the process prior to the start of public interviews. The two final candidates are: Mary Skipper, Superintendent of Somerville Public Schools, and Dr. Tommy Welch, Region 1 School Superintendent at Boston Public Schools.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW

Dr. Welch provided an opening statement sharing his experience as a bilingual educator, Region 1 Superintendent, and current BPS parent. He spoke about his experience closing opportunity and achievement gaps and his deep connection and commitment to Boston. He emphasized the importance of building trust and described himself as both a doer and implementer.

Dr. Alkins asked Dr. Welch what specific strategies he has utilized to improve outcomes for Black students, what outcomes and measures he used, and how he has addressed systemic racism. Dr. Welch spoke about partnering with the community to create welcoming schools that serve all students.

Noting that the language that is most spoken in our BPS other than English is Spanish, Ms. Lopera asked her question in both Spanish and English. She asked Dr. Welch how he has created positive partnerships with students, families, and community members who speak a language other than English. Mr. Welch responded first in Spanish, then in English. He recounted his experience working with parents in South Central Los Angeles to establish a school for English Learners (ELLs).

Ms. Lopera asked Dr. Welch if he is committed to ensuring native language access for multilingual learners and multilingual learners with disabilities. Dr. Welch said he would tap into the teacher diversity pipeline program and teacher cadet program in BPS to recruit and hire racial and linguistically diverse teachers.

Ms. Polanco Garcia asked Dr. Welch about his philosophy and commitment to provide access to the native language and literacy in the native language. Mr. Welch responded first in Spanish, then in English. He emphasized the importance of maintaining native language proficiency and affirmed his commitment to training and supporting bilingual teachers.

Mr. Tran asked Dr. Welch for his personal definition of equity. Dr. Welch said equity means giving every student what they need to succeed. The topic of his doctoral research was succession planning in urban districts through a lens of equity. He spoke about equity in terms of outcomes, opportunity, commitment, and systems.

Ms. Robinson read a question on behalf of Mr. Cardet-Hernandez asking Dr. Welch to provide evidence about his work in special education reform and disability justice. Dr. Welch spoke about his successful experience in L.A. supporting students with disabilities.

Ms. Robinson read a question on behalf of Ms. Mercer asking Dr. Welch his thoughts about students playing a key role in their education and asked how often he would like to meet with student leaders. Dr. Welch spoke about the importance of student agency. He committed to making himself available to students as superintendent.

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Mr. O'Neill recalled touring innovative schools in Los Angeles with Dr. Welch a few years ago as part of BPS' high school redesign work. Mr. O'Neill asked Dr. Welch about his approach to fiscal management, investing Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds, and generating private funding. Dr. Welch spoke about his incremental approach to speeding ESSER funds over five years. He spoke about the importance of investing private funding in a targeted, impactful way.

Ms. Robinson asked Dr. Welch his approach to positioning the Opportunity Gaps Office for maximum impact in deepening anti-racist consciousness and closing opportunity and achievement gaps for the most marginalized student populations – including students of color, English language learners, students with disabilities, and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds as well as examples of demonstrated success. Mr. Welch spoke about the district's expansion of the Office of Opportunity Gaps in recent years. He cited the racial equity planning tool and equity roundtables as examples of the district's racial equity and anti-racist work. He said that he has successfully managed grant money to support participation by ELL and special education students in acceleration academies.

Dr. Alkins asked Dr. Welch how he would rebuild trust with the BPS community. Dr. Welch said he would include all voices, engage in challenging conversations, and help families understand the reasons why proposals are being made by district leaders. He emphasized the importance of communication and implementation.

Ms. Lopera asked Dr. Welch what strategies he would deploy in thinking about distributing resources, keeping in mind the trend around declining enrollment, the fear of disruption, and the use of soft landings. Dr. Welch spoke about the importance of being proactive. Ms. Lopera asked Dr. Welch about his experience serving off-track students. Dr. Welch spoke about his experience supporting alternative education in BPS, stating he examined data to provide students with targeted support.

Ms. Polanco Garcia asked Dr. Welch about his approach to the recruitment, licensing and retention of faculty and staff who are competent to teach in at least two languages, as well as successes and challenges. Mr. Welch responded first in Spanish, then in English. He spoke about his experience recruiting diverse, bilingual staff in East Boston.

Mr. Tran asked Dr. Welch what would be his top three priorities for his first three months as superintendent. Dr. Welch said he would prioritize preparing for a smooth opening to the new school year, making ESSER investments, and building a strong leadership team.

Ms. Robinson read a question on behalf of Mr. Cardet-Hernandez asking Dr. Welch his strategy for strengthening school culture, building and rebuilding trust with families, and acting faster to address bullying. Dr. Welch said that BPS needs to more widely communicate the resources that are available to families. He emphasized the importance of early reporting and implementing policies.

Ms. Robinson read a question on behalf of Ms. Mercer asking Dr. Welch how he would support student leadership, specifically, the Boston Student Advisory Council (BSAC), and what steps he would take after students have protested or are protesting. Dr. Welch spoke about the importance of ensuring the student safety of students who are protesting and affirmed his commitment to elevating student voices.

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Mr. O’Neill asked Dr. Welch if he agrees that the district is responsible for ensuring student success beyond high school graduation and what he would change. Dr. Welch said that Madison Park Technical Vocational High School is currently underutilized and holds tremendous potential. He said that he would explore opening an adult education program there in the evenings. Mr. O’Neill asked Dr. Welch his thoughts on hub community schools. Dr. Welch said he would like to expand hub community schools, which provide wrap-around services for students and families. He shared his experiences overing the transformation of the Umana Academy in East Boston into a hub community school.

Ms. Robinson asked Dr. Welch how he would design a cohesive central office that delivers quality support and service to schools for equitable student outcomes. Dr. Welch said he would create a data dashboard to track major areas of work and share best practices.

Ms. Robinson invited Dr. Welch to ask the Committee a question. Dr. Welch asked the Committee members how they envision holding the next superintendent accountable. Mr. O’Neill explained that the Committee’s annual performance evaluation of the superintendent differs for year one vs. other years. He said that the Committee will likely look closely at the next superintendent’s 100-day plan, as well as progress made with team building, building trust and transparency, opening schools, and collaborating with the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Ms. Robinson spoke about the importance of regular communication between the superintendent and the Committee. Dr. Welch said that as superintendent, he would regularly provide transparent, student-related metrics. He said that he wants to be held publicly accountable for student outcomes. Ms. Robinson said that DESE will likely require regular reporting and the Committee will regularly examine its goals and values.

Dr. Welch provided a closing statement, citing his experience as a board-certified teacher, Spanish language learner, systems manager, and current BPS parent. If selected as superintendent, he said that he is ready to “hit the ground running.”

ADJOURN

Ms. Robinson invited viewers to learn more about the candidates and view recordings of all the panel discussions at bostonpublicschools.org/supt-search. People are encouraged to email feedback to the Committee via superintendentsearch@bostonpublicschools.org. The Committee will vote on the selection of a final candidate at a remote meeting on June 29th at 5 p.m.

Approved - At approximately 7:40 p.m. the Committee unanimously approved a motion to adjourn the meeting by unanimous consent.

Attest:



Elizabeth Sullivan
Executive Secretary