

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



MEMORANDUM

TO: Boston School Committee Chairperson and Members
FROM: Alexandra Oliver-Dávila, BSC member and co-chair,
Superintendent Search Committee
Dr. Keith Motley, co-chair Superintendent Search Committee
SUBJECT: Superintendent Search Committee Process Update
DATE: November 28, 2018

The Superintendent Search Committee would like to provide the School Committee and Boston Public Schools (BPS) community with an update on the search process to-date.

At a special meeting held on November 14, the School Committee approved a final Request for Statement of Qualifications (RFQ) for search firms and consultants to assist with the search process. The RQF, which is due by November 30, was immediately released and is posted on the BPS web page. The Committee also reviewed the superintendent's job description/desired characteristics from the 2014 search and suggested edits. The job description was further refined by the Superintendent Search Committee at a separate meeting that same evening. The job description has been shaped by input received a community listening sessions and responses from the online survey.

The Search Committee held Community Listening Sessions in partnership with the Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center on November 19, the Boston Student Advisory Council and Sociedad Latina (student forum) on November 20, and the Citywide Parents Council on November 27. Additional sessions are scheduled for December 6 with the Boston Branch NAACP, December 10 with the Greater Boston Latino Network and Amplify Latinx, and on a date to be determined with BPS headmasters.

The Superintendent Search Process page on the BPS website has been updated, and it will continue to be updated as new documents become available:

<https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/superintendentsearch>. We have developed an online survey

in both English and Spanish for people to voice their opinions on what they want to see in the next Superintendent. As of mid-day, we have received 333 responses.

We sent a robocall home to families inviting them to the listening session and inviting them to take the survey. We continue to push the sessions and survey via traditional, ethic, and social media, and we are asking headmasters to ask teachers to allow students take the survey during class.

Tonight, the Search Committee will present a revised job description to the School Committee for review and feedback. It is expected that the School Committee would vote on a final job description for immediate posting at the December 5th School Committee meeting. The Search Committee looks forward to providing regular updates on this important work.

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Boston Public Schools

Superintendent of Schools

Desired Characteristics

The Boston Public Schools (BPS) is seeking a strong educational leader who is committed to addressing the issues of Equity, Coherence, and Innovation. *The next leader of BPS needs to have the skills necessary to lead the nation's oldest school district to become the first school district in the nation to eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps, while fostering a culture of excellence in every school and providing central office managers and school leaders with the support needed to do so.*

The Superintendent must be visionary, innovative, and a results oriented individual with a demonstrated ability to manage a culturally diverse large urban district. The Superintendent must be digitally literate; a digital age person who is globally aware and has a passion to engage, empower, prepare and educate all children for the 21st century and global economy as well as anticipate technological progress and its use in the classroom. The leader of the District is expected to provide innovative and forward-thinking solutions that eliminate both opportunity and achievement gaps with a specific focus on equity and also reduces the dropout rate.

The Superintendent must have the proven ability to recruit and retain exceptionally talented and culturally proficient individuals. The Superintendent must be a politically astute problem solver with outstanding communication skills and possess rigorous fiscal oversight expertise to address the District's current financial needs.

The Superintendent must possess strong interpersonal skills that enables collaboration and consensus building in securing the necessary political and financial support for the short-and long-term goals of the District. The Superintendent must be highly visible and communicatively proficient to advocate for K-12 education, at both statewide and national levels, and to advocate in collaboration with the local community. The Superintendent must have a record of successful experience in managing a large organization and the proven skills to building an effective Team. The Superintendent and all BPS staff are expected to place service to students as the primary focus, to encourage culturally and linguistically diverse parent involvement, to set and achieve goals that have a broad base of support, and to be accountable for those outcomes.

The Superintendent must possess the competence to proactively build bridges with all key stakeholders and entire school communities during times of transition, and prior to the implementation of new, planned, and proposed initiatives.

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Minimum Qualifications:

- **Education:** Master's Degree
- **Certification:** Required State certification
- **Experience:**
 - 10+ years related supervisory experience
 - Experience in public school, state or local government, nonprofit or a business of similar size and complexity,
 - Massachusetts and Boston area context/experience preferred.
 - Experience managing community, student, parent, stakeholder and/or board relationships
 - Demonstrated ability to develop policy, strategic plans and related initiatives

Skills and Qualities

1. Elimination of the Opportunity and Achievement Gap:

- A proven record of excellence, equity, and an urgency for improving educational opportunities for and proficiencies of all students, along with the competency to develop and execute systematic reforms to address these needs.
- Has demonstrated the ability necessary to address and eliminate the achievement and opportunity gaps, and to improve educational outcomes for all students from early childhood to college and career readiness.
- Displays cultural competence to address the myriad of realities associated with meeting the needs of all students in a diverse urban setting, including culture, disability, equity, gender, language acquisition, poverty, prejudice, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and success as adults in a diverse global society.

2. Instructional Leadership:

- Accomplished in urban education challenges, and understands Boston's history of desegregation, as well as, its current minority/majority student population with a high proportion of Blacks and Latino students, English Language Learners, and Special Education students.
- Evidences a strong commitment to the academic, emotional, physical and social development of the whole child.
- Values and relies on hard data when making decisions and in the development and implementation of comprehensive monitoring and accountability systems for the academic, personnel, operations, and fiscal management of the District.
- Tolerance for risk-taking, when appropriate, to better meet the needs of students and/or the District.
- Educated in best practices in K1-12 instruction, school-based transformation, garnering public support for expansion of early childhood and updating facilities.
- Possesses a track record of positive results in improving the performance of Black and Latino students, especially males, as well as Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners.
- Has professional success in dealing with the specific types of challenges facing the

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Boston Public Schools and the needs of students for critical thinking, the use of technology, and the ability to participate fully in society.

- ❖ Literacy and differentiated learning for high achievement and to close gaps
- ❖ A high proportion of English Language Learners with multiple languages
- ❖ A high number of Students with Disabilities (especially male students of color)
- ❖ Schools requiring targeted focused support and schools requiring broad comprehensive support with state monitoring. (At risk of or in turnaround status.)
- ❖ Professional Development, including overall strategy, funding, and evaluation.

3. Management and Operations:

- Capable of effectively and efficiently leading a system of schools operating under a variety of structures with varying degrees of autonomy and flexibility in decision-making.
- Experienced with capital and operational needs to ensure students are attending schools in facilities that are state-of-the-art by garnering the requisite community and political support to reach this goal.
- Ability to develop, with proven success, strategic plans for recruiting, hiring, and retaining strong people of color at all levels (teachers, principals, headmasters, and senior administrative staff).
- Experienced and effective in union relations and negotiations, including teacher hiring, evaluation, and accountability.
- Has the executive skills to recruit, develop, evaluate, collaborate with, and retain outstanding administrators, teachers, and staff members at all levels that are representative of the diversity of Boston.
- Success in dealing with managerial/operational issues to address:
 - ❖ Teacher and staff diversity in recruitment, hiring, development, and retention
 - ❖ Issues in student assignment and school choice, given racial and ethnic equity concerns and the disproportionate assignment of high-needs students
 - ❖ Major capital facilities plans for school buildings to be designed and implemented in the context of grade reconfiguration, excess seats, and equity issues
 - ❖ Weighted Student Funding in budgeting
 - ❖ The central office role in the support and accountability of School Leaders in a system of schools with differentiated autonomy
- Experienced with creating positive and collaborative relationships with unions/professional associations and effectively managing contract or labor agreements.

4. Family and Community Engagement:

- Possesses the excellent communication and management skills necessary to work collaboratively with the School Committee and appropriate stakeholders in the development, refinement and/or periodic review of the District's mission, vision, and comprehensive strategic plan to ensure that they provide the District focus and guidance in short and long-term planning and decision-making.

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- Track record of being visible and actively engaged in the schools and community.
- Ability to develop effective and efficient partnerships with the many community organizations, parent and family groups, not-for-profit agencies, businesses, foundations, institutions of higher learning, faith-based communities, public officials and other groups that have a strong track record in ensuring every school is led by a capable, qualified school leader.
- Demonstrated success in engaging parents as full partners in the education of their children.
- Successful in developing respectful working relationships to genuinely engage with key stakeholders to effectively engage with students, parents, families, teachers, school leaders, staff, bargaining units, community, advocates, foundations, partner organizations, media, elected officials, the School Committee, and the Mayor.

5. Professional Culture:

- Has proven outstanding leadership skills that demonstrate effective and deliberate communication skills; an ability to passionately motivate others; and maintains openness to innovative ideas to advance the vision and mission of an organization with an annual budget in excess of one million dollars.
- A collaborative leadership style that is open-minded, inclusive, and decisive.
- Creates a collaborative culture among administrators and teachers that focuses on supporting the work of teaching and learning in the classroom and throughout the school.
- Ability to collaborate broadly to address issues with other Boston schools for the benefit of all children within the city, including engagement with charter and parochial schools.
- Demonstrated strong leadership skills to guide systemic improvement in large institutions and champion public education in Boston to acquire adequate resources and attract students to the school system.
- Displays knowledge and an understanding of the historically political environment of Boston and its structure of a School Committee appointed by the Mayor, with strong parent and community organization involvement.
- Committed to engage in regular, direct conversation and dialogue with students and to consider students first when every decision is made.
- Effective interpersonal and communication skills (verbal, written, and listening), including the demonstrated ability to communicate with key stakeholders in a variety of public and private forums.
- Displays courage in decision making that will always put the needs of students first regardless of conflict and criticism.
- Shows self-awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses and has a documented professional record in building teams of education and management leaders to effectively meet the full range of challenges needed for successful, systemic, institutional changes in a diverse urban school district like Boston.
- Exhibits a proven track record in managing large systems, including the application of and use of current technology to improve efficiency and responsiveness.

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Current Challenges

The next Superintendent will partner with the BPS community to address a number of ongoing system-wide challenges, including:

- Closing persistent opportunity and achievement gaps by fostering opportunities for marginalized students (Black, Latino, English Language Learners, students with 6 disabilities, economically disadvantaged) to flourish across all areas of their education.
- Implementing BuildBPS, the district's 10-year educational and facilities master plan, to increase equity, expand access to quality, and reduce transitions for families.
- Addressing the complex needs of the district's high population of special education students and English Language Learners.
- Increasing staff diversity, to ensure that our teachers and administrators reflect the students they serve.
- Providing targeted, ongoing support for turnaround schools, the district's lowest performing schools.
- Redesigning the high school experience to prepare every young person for postsecondary, career, and life-long success.
- Addressing the varying admissions processes in high school admittance.

Background and Context on Boston Public Schools for Candidates

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After seeking input from the Boston Public Schools (BPS) School Committee members, faculty, parents, staff, students and community via community listening sessions and an on-line survey, the Superintendent Search Committee for the BPS seeks a strong educational and instructional leader who will lead the BPS toward excellence for all its students.

Over the past 20 years, the Boston Public Schools (BPS) has been transformed from a failing school district to one of the most renowned urban public school systems in the country. We educate more than 54,300 students in 125 schools — 71 percent of the school-age children who live in Boston.

We are proud to be one of the most diverse school districts in the nation. Nearly one in every two students speaks a language other than English at home, and our students come from 139 different countries. One in five BPS students has a disability, and half are economically disadvantaged.

Approximately 42 percent of the system's students are Latino/Latina; 34 percent are African American; 14 percent are White; 9 percent are Asian; and 1 percent are of a different background or multiracial. The Boston Public School system employs more than 10,000 persons, including 4,500 classroom teachers. The system's general fund budget for FY19 is \$1.1 billion.

On the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) – also known as the “Nation’s Report Card” – Boston students’ performance is on par with the national average for all public schools, including suburban schools, in grade 4 Reading and in grade 8 Mathematics. This is the first time since measurements began that any urban school district has met this mark in two subjects and grades. Since 2007, the BPS four-year graduation rate has steadily increased, reaching its highest rate ever in 2017 despite more demanding standards required by the state for graduation; and the percentage of ninth-graders who dropped out before graduation decreased to its lowest point ever for the 2017 Cohort.

BPS is the home of many firsts in the nation: first public school (Boston Latin School, 1635), first public elementary school (Mather Elementary School, 1639), first public school system (1647), first public high school (English High School, 1821).

- Our 2017 4-year graduation rate of 72.7 percent was the highest it has ever been—up 14.8 points since 2007.
- 4-year graduation rates for Latino students have risen from 50.6 percent in 2006 to 69 percent in 2017.
- BPS offers pathways to graduation to students who may have dropped out through our Re-Engagement Center, one of the first of these centers in the

nation, and our summer graduation programs. The Re-Engagement Center, a joint initiative between the Boston Public Schools and the Boston Private Industry Council, re-enrolls more than 400 dropouts annually, and has helped to cut the number of dropouts in half since 2005.

- The number of students taking an AP exam has nearly doubled in the past 10 years, increasing from 1,666 students in 2008 to 3,100 students in 2018. Along with greater access to AP courses and exams, 51.3% of students received a qualifying score of 3 or higher.
- Nearly 17,000 additional students now have access to arts learning opportunities during the school year, compared to nine years ago. 96 percent of students in grades pre-kindergarten through eighth receive at least weekly, year-long arts instruction—up from 67 percent in 2009. The number of high school students receiving any arts instruction has more than doubled from 2009 to 2018—from 26 to 63 percent, respectively. The district has seen even greater gains in the percentage of pre-kindergarten through eighth grade students receiving arts instruction two or more times per week, from less than 10% in 2009 to 65% in 2018. High School students meeting the MassCore graduation requirement in the Arts has increased to 61%.
- The percent of students who pass all grade 10 MCAS tests on the first attempt has risen from 39 percent in 2007 to 58 percent in 2018. Passing all grade 10 MCAS tests are part of the state graduation requirements, known as the Competency Determination.
- In the 2018-2019 school year, we will offer full-day pre-kindergarten education for over 2,500 four-year-olds, up from 700 seats in 2005.
- Expanded Learning Time (ELT) is one of the key ways in which the district hopes to provide a high-quality education for all. Schools in BPS can expand the day through the Schedule A initiative, having turnaround status, or becoming an autonomous school. As of the 2017-2018 school year, BPS will have implemented ELT in a total of 57 schools serving over 23,000 students in only three years.
- One in five students attends one of our award-winning summer learning initiatives -- nationally recognized for excellence in summer learning in 2013.

The next superintendent will partner with the BPS community to address a number of ongoing system-wide challenges, including:

- Closing persistent opportunity and achievement gaps by fostering opportunities for marginalized students (Black, Latino, English Language Learners, students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged) to flourish across all areas of their education.

- Implementing BuildBPS, the district's 10-year educational and facilities master plan, to increase equity, expand access to quality, and reduce transitions for families.
- Addressing the complex needs of the district's high population of special education students and English Language Learners.
- Increasing staff diversity, to ensure that our teachers and administrators reflect the students they serve.
- Providing targeted, ongoing support for turnaround schools, the district's lowest performing schools.
- Redesigning the high school experience to prepare every young person for post-secondary, career, and life-long success.
- Addressing the varying admissions processes in high school admittance.

OPTIONS FOR STRATEGIC PLAN LANGUAGE

OPTION 1 – From Tommy Chang's administration, 2015

BPS Strategic Plan

In 2015, the Boston School Committee, following an extensive community engagement process, approved a five-year strategic plan for the district which set the following aspirational goals for the district:

Improved student outcomes

- All students will graduate ready for college and/or career as life-long learners and engaged global citizens.

Improved school quality

- BPS will be a district of high-performing schools, eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps.

Strong district leadership/high-quality, action-oriented teachers and staff

- BPS will recruit, develop and retain highly effective, culturally-competent school and district leaders, teachers and staff who are held accountable for meeting objectives.

Effective resource allocation

- BPS will make effective and equitable use of resources.

Greater community engagement

- All schools will strengthen student, family, and community investment to guarantee opportunities for student success.

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OPTION 2: From Laura Perille's administration, 2018

Strategic priorities:

1. **Improve opportunities for students:** Establish the systemic conditions necessary to improve opportunities for students in order to narrow achievement gaps at all BPS schools.
2. **Differentiate school supports:** Position Central Office to enable rapid and sustainable improvement to teaching and learning in all schools while prioritizing supports to lower performing schools.
3. **Plan for the future:** Align long-term investment decisions of BuildBPS around new or improved facilities with decisions about grade configurations, program placements, and minimizing transitions for students.

Conditions for success:

- Maintain focus on **equitable and culturally and linguistically sustaining practices**
- Prioritize **teaching and learning as the core business** of BPS and recognize the central role of **social and emotional wellness** in that endeavor
- Instill a **sense of urgency** in the improvement of opportunities and narrowing of achievement gaps
- Promote learning environments that are **safe, welcoming, supportive, and affirming** for students and families
- Require **student-centered decision-making** recognizing the Central Office exists to support school communities with focused objectives.
- Cultivate a **collaborative culture** in which staff feel valued and take pride in work done on behalf of students.
- Operate in a **transparent, forthright, and responsive manner** to establish trusting relationships and ongoing dialogue among students, families, staff, and external partners.
- Confront **systemic and long-standing obstacles**.