

## OFFICIAL NOTES OF THE BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE'S SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSION

December 10, 2018

The Boston School Committee's Superintendent Search Committee held a Community Listening Session on December 10, 2018, 6:00 pm, East Boston Social Center, 68 Central Square, East Boston, MA 02128. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit [www.bostonpublicschools.org/superintendentsearch](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/superintendentsearch), email Ken Rowe at [ken.rowe@boston.gov](mailto:ken.rowe@boston.gov) or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

### ATTENDANCE

Committee Members Present: Alexandra Oliver-Davila (Co-Chair), Dr. Keith Motley (Co-Chair), Pastor Samuel Acevedo, and Carlos Brown.

Committee Members Absent: Craig Martin, Carolyn J. Kain, Elvis Rodriguez, Jessica Tang, Katherine Grassa, and Dr. Tanya Freeman-Wisdom.

### DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

1. Meeting Agenda
2. Superintendent Desired Characteristics
3. Letter from the School Committee on Behalf of Multiple Local Civil Rights Organizations
4. Draft Timeline
5. Draft Timeline (Spanish)

### CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Alex Oliver-Davila called the meeting to order.

### SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Alex: Started the meeting and thanked everyone for coming, and thanked representatives in attendance from the Greater Boston Latino Network. The meeting was conducted in a combination of Spanish and English.

Alex: Described the timeline to the audience, and encouraged them to take the survey.

Sam: What we want to communicate tonight is that we are still very early on in the process, and we want to hear the Latino voice throughout this process.

Alex: Asked the audience to go to the posters and write notes on the following four topics:

- Good things about the District
- Positive Qualities of Previous Superintendents
- Challenges facing the District
- What are the characteristics you want to see in the new Superintendent

The group broke up to put notes on the posters.

Discussion after the attendees put answers on the posters:

Alex: Started the conversation and brought everybody back together.

Carlos: Read off comments about the Positive Qualities of the District, Positive Qualities of Past Superintendents, Challenges Facing the District, and Characteristics wanted in the New Superintendent (see photos of posters).

-The reason you need staff diversity in education, "Students need to be able to look in a mirror and not just through a window."

Keith: Explained that he hoped people that signed up for Public Comment would speak now in an open dialogue. If you are going to talk about some of the challenges, offer us some solutions you have been thinking about. No matter how you think those solutions will be received. We are recording everything you say, and it will be considered going forward through the process.

Open Discussion / Public Comment:

1. Speaker #1: Last time we hired the last Superintendent we thought no one listened to us. We were not incorporated in the process last time. This time I hope the community gets a voice through the whole process, and the community means all of Boston. The dynamics of Boston have changed a lot in the last six years. New leadership will need the knowledge base and an affinity for the characteristics of the community of Boston.
  - i. Sam: After the last process, and thinking about the opportunity in front of us what would be the best way we ensure that your community would be listened to?
  - ii. It is very simple, come back to the community and give us an update of where you are. Make an effort to bring the process to the community when you have a small number of candidates.
  - iii. Keith: What is different this time is that we are hosting these meetings ourselves. We are not hiring a search firm to host these meetings as what happened in the past. We are vetting the candidates that the search firm finds for us. We are leading the community process ourselves. You need to keep giving your feedback to the School Committee and the Mayor. We are collecting data from different neighborhoods throughout the City, and wherever we go some common themes continue to come up. We are hearing it ourselves, and then we can tell the search firm what we have heard. That is the difference how we have approached this process compared to the past. We will be accountable to you. Website, public process, and continued engagement.
  - iv. My concern is knowing the leadership of Boston (strong man leadership), and how a recruiter will be able to navigate that element, and I would like to see how that is reconciled. At the end the Mayor is going to make the decision.
2. Speaker #2: We often only hear from people knocking on doors when they are running for office, and then we never hear from them again. Is there a plan to have follow ups or a three month check in? We are looking for this process to be community driven. Who has our interest in mind?
  - i. Keith: We all worry about that. Part of this is to get your input, and part of our job is to hold decision makers responsible.
3. Speaker #3: Intersectionality, we need a leader that understands housing justice is education justice. We need someone that understands that. Second, advocacy, we need a superintendent that is willing to advocate at the State, Federal and Local levels. I do believe Boston has the best urban school district in the country. We need some of that

advocacy at the State and Federal levels. All of those opportunities have funding for our District. We haven't seen a Superintendent be an advocate as loud as we need.

4. Speaker #4: What we have been hearing from parents is that there are problems with the administration, and we need some outside the box thinking. Maybe create two roles.
  - i. Carlos: As a parent I have thought that maybe this District is too big to be for one person. Maybe it is an antiquated system the way we have it now.
  - ii. Keith: One person can't have or know everything. It is about the people that work for you, and as a leader it is often important to get out of the way and let your people run with things.
  - iii. Alex: We have had those discussions at the School Committee level.
    1. There is no one person that can do everything.
    2. We are trying to do a different process as we get out to the community.
5. Speaker #5: The job description is so broad, and maybe it is a lot to ask for in one person. There needs to be incredible strong supports. There are a lot of politics to operate here in Boston. Who will serve in the support roles? On the advocacy, what are the advocacy resources for the new Superintendent? We don't do a great job at community engagement. I'm disappointed by tonight's turnout. What will drive people?
  - i. Alex: I think it is hard when there isn't candidate in front of you.
  - ii. We need to develop the community engagement piece. Diversity. The ideal thing would be to have a diverse Superintendent to flex the changes happening in the City. Can this person manage radical change, facilities, and schools? Some issues will be painful for different communities. They need to manage that with high emotional intelligence.
6. Speaker #2: What are the plans going forward? Build BPS, will things change or continue, what will happen with student learning?
  - i. Sam: We never disbanded the task force for eliminating achievement gaps even after we announced the plan. We didn't disband it because we wanted it to be a governing body. This is one of the most promising Districts in the country to close the achievement gap. We don't want to give that up.
  - ii. Alex: we have a strategic plan at the School Committee level, and we are still executing that. Superintendents are often only here for 2 years, I wish it was longer because I think that their early departure can be detrimental to the students.
  - iii. Keith: A city like Boston should be an aspirational place for a new Superintendent. They should want to come here and stay for a long time, and we should support them to be successful and help them stay. There are politics to be considered in Boston. One of the things that has happened is that the Principals have said they have restarted a number of times, and they have their listening sessions. We are looking forward to getting all of this information to sustain things that work and look at what needs to change, and give that information to the Superintendent.
7. Speaker #6: Parent and alumni, and works BPS: As a parent we need someone with cultural awareness and sensitivity. Students need to know their language and cultural experience is an asset in their education.
  - i. We need leadership committed to seeing this through.
  - ii. Sam: how will we know? What are the indications that we have the right person in front of us?

- iii. It is easier to be it when you see it. They need to see leadership that looks like them. You know it's happening when you see it in the classroom. Bring candidates to the classroom. You will know if you see it, culturally sustaining practices.
  - iv. Keith: They are not a competent candidate if they haven't been in the schools. Maybe there is a way we can be helpful in that process.
8. Student: How would people be notified when the Search is over?
- i. Keith: It will be well known in the news, media, and social media. There are ways to get the word out.
  - ii. Alex: there will be robo calls and opportunities in the future to further be a part of the process. Some things will be live streamed and there will be updates on the BPS website. We will post dates online.
  - iii. Keith: There is a student on the committee and he is dedicated to getting the word out to students. Once you hear, spread the word. We need your help.
  - iv. Carlos: BPS survey. You have an opportunity to write in a question for the Superintendent in the interviews. Please post those ideas if you have great questions. Start filling out the Survey. These listening sessions still play a key role in the interview process.
9. Speaker #2: Survey: does it ask about demographics?
- i. Alex: No. We are trying to get more input.
10. Speaker #5: Outreach, is there a way could we ask how to reach the parents better?
- i. Keith: The principals are working on that.
  - ii. Alex: we will keep working on it. We have been working on it throughout.
  - iii. Keith: Anything you can help with on Social Media we would appreciate it.

Keith and Alex thank everyone for coming out.


#### PUBLIC COMMENT

See Summary of Discussion.

#### ADJOURN

At approximately 7:54 p.m. the Committee voted by unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Kenneth Rowe  
BPS Superintendent Search Committee Staff