

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

**December 18, 2018**

The Boston School Committee's Superintendent Search Committee held a Community Listening Session on December 18, 2018, 6:00 pm, Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building, 2300 Washington St., Roxbury, 02119. This listening session was in partnership with the Boston Citywide Parent Council. 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), Carolyn J. Kain, Michael O'Neil, and Pastor Samuel Acevedo.

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

**DOCUMENTS PRESENTED**

None

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION**

From 6:00 pm – 6:32 pm the Citywide Parent Council held an abbreviated meeting to provide updates before giving the Search Committee the opportunity to speak.

Alex: started the conversation by introducing herself and asked the other committee members in attendance to introduce themselves as well.

Alex: we are here to listen, and she asked everyone in attendance to introduce themselves.

-Discussed what the search committee has done to date.

-Re-wrote the RFP to hire a Search Firm. 7 applied, interviews have been conducted, and the Search Committee will announce to the School Committee tomorrow (12/19/18) that they chose Isaacson Miller (IM).

Keith: IM didn't have a pre-conceived list. We told them we have already done a lot of listening sessions throughout the different neighborhoods.

Alex: we were also in charge of re-vamping the job description. We wanted to make sure we went into the neighborhoods to talk with the community. We have been eliciting feedback from the community to give the information to the search firm and then use that data/information to find a new Superintendent. We will put out the new job description by the end of the week. During the Christmas break is when most people will apply for the position. That is why we had a fast approach.

Keith: we are trying to be consistent. We want to collect the data. Please take 10 minutes to make comments to the four questions. This is an ongoing conversation.

Alex: Everything we have done is on the BPS website, including a survey. On the survey you can write in questions you want us to ask candidates. We will be looking for community members to help us interview the candidates.

- Discussed the four question:
  - Positive qualities of the district
  - Positive qualities of past superintendents
  - Challenges facing the district
  - Desired qualities and characteristics of the next superintendent
- Provided the audience 10 minutes to write notes to the four questions

Keith: began the conversation again, and discussed how there are fewer comments on the two positive posters, and more comments on the Challenges Facing the District and Desired Qualities and Characteristics of the Next Superintendent.

- Not enough staying power was written on the Positive Qualities of Past Superintendents and Bold Leadership, knew the system, efforts to close the achievement gap, culture of "WE"
- Challenges facing the District:
  - Integrity, not enough funding, high need student population, big and diverse, financial landscape, retention of our children, different qualities of schools
- Desired qualities and characteristics of the next superintendent
  - Transparent (many times)
  - Parent
  - Tested management skills
  - Will not close more schools
  - Engage the parents
  - Intimate knowledge of Boston and BPS

Keith: Began to take comments and questions. If you have a solution please tell us and introduce yourself.

1. Do you have a sense of what the process and timeline will look like with the search firm?
  - a. Alex: No. We are negotiating. We will engage with IM, and share our information and develop the criteria of the candidate that we want.
    - i. They will help us engage with the community and during the quiet part of some of the interviewing.
    - ii. Our hope is that if everything goes well we will have someone hired by June 30<sup>th</sup>.
  - b. Michael: Application phase will be in January, and the search firm will begin bringing a pool of candidates, and numbers of applicants will be given to the School Committee and those numbers will be made public.
    - i. There will be a quiet period as we interview and get the pool narrowed down.
    - ii. There will be public panels for the community to interview the final candidates.
    - iii. This time we will do a better job of getting the feedback from the panel members.
2. Nicole Riley: based on my knowledge and experience when we hired a principal. Who has the ownership in the end of deciding?
  - a. Keith: We are the Search Committee. Our responsibility is to be as inclusive as possible during the process, and we recommend to the School Committee. The School Committee will decide. The Mayor is a stakeholder as well.
    - i. Timeline: we want this to occur during this academic year.
  - b. Is it the Mayor or not? Does he determine?
    - i. Carolyn: No, the School Committee decides

- c. Michael: most of our money comes from the City. We think of the Superintendent as a part of the Mayor's Cabinet. The Mayor gets input, we are taking input from other constituencies.
    - i. The School Committee has this responsibility.
  - d. Sam: Mr. O'Neil and I were on the last search committee. I heard transparency many times. We have a sense of what the community wants. When you say we want more transparency, what do you mean by that?
  - e. Carolyn: The transparency issue was for the next Superintendent for clarification. I was a member of the community on the last search panel, and our input was completely independent.
  - f. Sam: one of the hardest things in Boston is to get consensus. The rankings last time, there were a lot of consensus in how the last candidates were ranked, and there was no input from the Mayor. The Mayor's people were in the room though.
  - g. Michael: there is no inside candidate, we don't know who the next super will be.
    - i. The Mayor doesn't have anyone in mind. There is no inside track in this, and this is a wide-open search.
  - h. Carolyn: if this was a pre-determined outcome search I wouldn't be involved.
    - i. This has been difficult in regard to time. If we already knew the outcome I wouldn't be doing this.
    - ii. We don't get paid.
  - i. Keith: we do this for the City and the children. I was interested because I could shape the search. When I met my colleagues, we determined we take a different approach and really listen.
3. For me transparency is understanding how and why decisions are made, and what opportunities do I have to be heard? It worries me when you are trying to get the opinion of thousands of people, the survey I have no idea where it goes. It feels like I haven't been heard. I would encourage you to take advantage of this group and the other groups that wrote the letter. We can build consensus.
- a. Keith: what are the steps you recommend?
    - i. Answer: the 14 organizations wrote the letter. That was a better way to figure out what a whole room of people agree on. We can draw from enough schools to present back to you a true or close consensus opinion on a topic.
  - b. Another speaker: why don't we just do it? That is what they are asking us to do.
    - i. It will be easier to do this if we get authorization from the Search Committee
    - ii. Keith: We gave you that authorization last time we were here.
      - 1. This is the beginning; the conversation will continue. We need you to organize now parents.
      - 2. We came back because we thought you would do more from the last time we were here. That is what we were asking last time.
      - 3. Answer: It will be easier to get bodies in the room if the Search Committee puts it out.
      - 4. Others: that is what they are doing.
    - iii. Michael: don't disregard the power of this room. You are most powerful when you represent 128 schools. From a school committee perspective, we want you representing all of the schools including high schools.
      - 1. School times roll out was a mistake on our part by not talking with the Citywide Parent Council and Site Council.
      - 2. We should ask everyone their preference at the time.
      - 3. We want to work with you, you are our biggest ally. We are all volunteers in this room right now.

4. Give us feedback during the process.
  5. The panel at the end should be different than last time. The elected officials of CPC should be in the room at the end interviews of candidates.
4. Not every school is represented here. Having the listening out in the community is important. What we want to see in the next Superintendent? What they should do or be to find success in this job. Every time someone comes in to do something hard they fail. What do we need in the next candidate? How do we make sure they have the skills to do the hard stuff as well? That is what I want all of you to figure out.
- a. Carolyn: We are developing a job description. A lot of that comes out in the interview process. I've seen that in my professional experience. I do think developing interview questions is important.
    - i. It's not going to be easy. We want this to be successful. We know Boston is a strong community. No matter how many opportunities we give parents, we don't get a lot of support from parents to show up.
    - ii. People may not participate but giving them the opportunity is important.
    - iii. Help us develop the questions. It brings credibility not just opportunity.
    - iv. I would rather go back out than have another disappointment.
  - b. Michael: hard choices, do you mean academically or operationally?
    - i. Answer: both.
    - ii. Carolyn: smart people surround themselves with smarter people than them. One person can't do it all.
5. Some of the hard work is the cultural competency work. I've seen in Cambridge that community knows how to engage people in a respectful and authentic way. I don't think we do it as well in Boston.
- a. Michael: with the students they asked us; why does the super matter?
    - i. Because they set the tone for the entire organization from the top down.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

See Summary of Discussion.

## ADJOURN

At approximately 7:39 p.m. the Citywide Parent Council ended the session.

Attest:



Kenneth Rowe  
BPS Superintendent Search Committee Staff