

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

December 6, 2018

The Boston School Committee's Superintendent Search Committee held a Community Listening Session on December 6, 2018, 6:00 pm, Freedom House Inc., 5 Crawford St., Dorchester, MA 02121. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit www.bostonpublicschools.org/superintendentsearch, email Ken Rowe at 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), Craig Martin, Katherine Grassa and Dr. Tanya Freeman-Wisdom.

Committee Members Absent: Carolyn J. Kain, Elvis Rodriguez, Carlos Brown, Pastor Samuel Acevedo and Jessica Tang.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

1. Meeting Agenda
2. Superintendent Desired Characteristics
3. Letter from the School Committee on Behalf of Multiple Local Civil Rights Organizations

CALL TO ORDER

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

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Jose Lopez (Education NAACP)- welcomed the guests, introduced the Search Committee, and provided opening remarks.

Alex- introduced Michael Loconto and gave him the opportunity to speak.

-Michael thanked everyone for attending, and he mentioned the job description that was passed by the School Committee the night before.

-He also discussed that we want to continue to have conversations and get the public's feedback to help pick the new Superintendent. He would like to continue open dialogue with everyone in the community.

Alex- thanked everyone for being at the meeting, and gave an overview of everything the Search Committee has done up to this point. The job description should reflect what people are saying. The job description is just one step, and there is a lot of work still to go. We will bring the two documents together: the job description and the letter from multiple civil rights organizations.

-The Committee was charged with writing the job description and the criteria to select a search firm.

-There have been about seven search firms respond to this opportunity.

-We are hopeful that we will find an excellent candidate and a great fit for Boston

Keith- thank you all for coming out tonight.

-People have asked him why he is getting involved in this process at this stage of his life

- Our children matter
- It's about our children
- I have a passion for young people and their education

Alex- we have an online survey for people to fill it out on the BPS website

- We are going to take some time to write answers to the four questions on the wall
 1. Strengths of the District
 2. challenges facing the District
 3. Strengths of the previous Superintendent
 4. Qualities and characteristics for the new Superintendent
- Everyone spent time writing their answers

Discussion after the attendees put answers on the posters:

Keith – Started the conversation, what is on the poster for Strengths of the District, followed by Challenges facing the district, third strengths of the previous Superintendent, and finally qualities and characteristics for the new Superintendent

- Each poster was read off by a different search committee member
- Keith explained that the comments from the poster will be recorded and part of the process moving forward. He then opened the floor to the attendees, and asked that they introduce themselves, discuss what is on their mind, and offer solutions.

Open Discussion / Public Comment:

1. Tavshawn: works at Taylor Elementary School: How much consideration will be given to people that work in house, for example people from the District and have taught in Boston?
 - a. How are special education needs looked for the process?
 - b. Keith asked why it's important that someone from inside the Boston District is considered, and he asked why he feels strongly about special needs students?
 - c. He works in a special needs classroom, and he sees their issues and their trauma on a daily basis, and these students need support.
 - d. Alex discussed the process will look at internal and external candidates.
2. Cynthia: teacher and parent. She wants to see someone that is strong and bold and willing to stand up to the Mayor. She is also concerned about the budget being cut every year and special needs students.
 - a. Real inclusion not fake inclusion.
 - b. Wants the new Superintendent to be bold and courageous, all schools need to have the same resources
 - c. The School Committee needs to be bold and courageous as well
 - d. Teachers and Parents need to speak up as well
3. Retired Boston School Employee: Timing. He is more frustrated now that he is outside the system. He is struggling and frustrated with the SPED program. The new Superintendent needs to give adequate funding to special education, and they need to monitor it better. The support is not there for the SPED teachers.
 - a. SPED Issue: needs to a critical part when looking at the next Superintendent, do they have a vision for it?
 - i. There needs to be monitoring.
 - b. Keith: what bothered you when you were inside the system?

- i. Answer: He has to look two superintendents back to find collaboration with and among staff. A lot of the collegiality is gone from the administrative level. The Principals are on islands. He enjoyed the work, and thought he was impacting children, but the biggest lie he ever told is that a person that hated children would never be a teacher.

- 4. Ayanna: parent, and daughter of a retired BPS teacher. Are there any parents on the Search Committee? It would be nice to have someone that doesn't have to balance being a Principal and a parent.
 - a. Keith: there is a parent only on the committee. He discussed the upcoming meeting with the City Wide Parent Council on December 18th.
 - b. We need a Superintendent that advocates for the Principals. We need someone that can be an advocate and colleague of the Principals.
 - c. Echo concerns about inclusion. Her daughter was attacked in an inclusion classroom.
 - d. We don't see parents of color involved at the grassroots level, and she would like a Superintendent that will focus on that and not be afraid to use unorthodox methods.
 - i. Reach out to other organizations to host meetings because of the school location was difficult to get there at 6 pm.
 - ii. If you are a teacher or on a parent council you need to call out nonsense.
 - e. As a community we need to talk about African American and Latino students, but we have other people from other cultures (Somali, Russian, etc.)
 - i. Need someone with a global perspective.

- 5. Barbra Fields: former BPS employee and parent.
 - a. Follow up on the black parent on the committee. We need to be authentic honest and our words need to have meaning.
 - i. We have to look at ourselves and parents on the screening committee.
 - ii. There is not a black parent on the screening committee, that is just a parent.
 - iii. This is something that needs to be raised.
 - iv. Keith: the parents group raised this issue. That is why we are having another meeting with them on the 18th. They were shocked and didn't know what they were supposed to ask for. They felt they were missing on the Search Committee.
 - 1. This should be a part of the next Search, and we should record this note and do it next time. There will be other Search Committees. This is not the first time someone is not pleased with the search process.
 - 2. We are a Search Committee, there will be some conversations in private, but most will be open to the public, and your voice will be heard.

- 6. A. Smith: BPS alum. Concerned with the process. Checklist items. All of these things will happen, and ultimately the Mayor will choose. What can you on the Committee tell the community to verify that the Mayor will not be ultimately the only decision maker.
 - a. Keith: it's about integrity. One illusion to me, is that there have been very few people showing up. This room tonight is one of the first times it is not a waste of my time. We have nothing to lose in this process except for our integrity.
 - b. The question is for the process.
 - c. Keith: I'm pushing people because I'm learning from all of you. This way we can have an engaged conversation based on what I hear.
 - d. What is the process? Steps?
 - e. Alex: we are having these meetings to see what people want. We are open and trying to listen
 - i. Hire the Search Firm, ensure the new Superintendent understands Boston.

1. Look at their background, who have they placed, have people stayed, was the process successful?
 2. They also have to be open to the networks we are establishing.
 3. They will help us get candidates from Boston and other parts of the country.
 - ii. Interview the candidates from the Search Firm so the public doesn't interview 20 candidates. We are focused on candidates with urban experience.
 - iii. Narrow down the number of candidates and interview them again.
 - iv. Then the Search Committee makes a recommendation to the Mayor.

7. Parent: the search firm or the search committee makes recommendation to the Mayor?
 - a. Alex: Search Committee
 - b. Keith: we don't want a firm that already has a list of people, we will bring people we know as well. We don't want a Search Firm leading this.

8. Louis Lisa: are you narrowing the search to Massachusetts? Is an active Massachusetts Superintendent license a requirement?
 - a. Keith: No.
 - b. The language says they already need it.
 - c. Keith: This is a Draft we will change this.
 - d. Link up Students with business training and learning from industries that we supply with people.

9. Liz Steinhauser: Parent and out of school provider.
 - a. Is the Search Committee open to changes?
 - i. Any openness to change the committee?
 - ii. Alex: No.
 - iii. Second Question. What about other stakeholders representation?
 1. Alex – I represent out of school time.
 2. Alex – this job description is not set in stone, and there is new language that we will include.

10. Edith Bazile: alum, has a daughter that was a student in BPS, and has a granddaughter currently at BPS. SPED, why are there so many black and brown students in special education? Children get misclassified? Why?
 - a. We need to look at national trends. 9-11% nationally, and Boston is one of the highest represented districts in special education for black students, much higher than the national averages with a low 17%. Why are there so many black students in SPED?
 - b. The new Sup needs to be a problem solver, with a focus on the amount of black and brown students in special education.
 - c. We need to provide and fund resources for language classes and ensure children are classified properly if they do or don't need something special.
 - d. This is costly when children get misclassified.
 - i. Superintendent needs to probe this problem, and it hasn't been solved for years, and these trends continue to go up and up.
 - ii. We always look for more services, but more is not always better, we need the right services.
 - iii. Teachers need the right tools in their toolbox.
 1. Focus on black boys, engage them.
 2. Instruction and reading support.

3. Alternative solutions to students who don't learn a certain way if they learn differently, children don't always learn one way.
 4. We need professional development for the teachers, video tape teachers and problem solve based on reviewing their actions.
 5. Math at the kitchen table with different linguistic backgrounds.
 - a. Take those skills and translate them from the way they are currently using these skills at home.
 6. Help teachers with transferable skills and ongoing professional development
11. Steve Sullivan, parent, former headmaster, involved with the NAACP, concerned citizen: Integrity, in my opinion there is a lot of integrity of the Committee here tonight. You have an awesome responsibility. This has to work, we cannot have you fail, because the children will ultimately fail. As someone that was born and raised in Boston, and went straight to Boston College.
- a. I have an experience working 42 years in BPS, its bee 4 years since I retired. This is an awesome responsibility on your part.
 - b. The ideas in this room are great.
 - c. You have the experience, but the ideas that are sitting here can get you a new Superintendent. The Search Committee is an important process, it has to be the right Search Committee. They need a diverse outlook in their own agency. We need to research the Search Committee.
 - d. Superintendent needs to focus on School Assignments. This is a big deal. The Superintendent needs to have their hands and interests on everything.
 - e. The three exam schools should be more equitable. All the schools should be exam schools and thought of on the same level, not 1, 2, and 3.
 - i. Superintendent needs to have oversight on this.

Alex announces Councilwoman Michelle Wu is in attendance.

12. Member of BPS since childhood.
- a. The Superintendent needs to be politically astute to work in this City.
 - i. There are things being asked of teachers and students. The testing system is far outdated. The systems are not working. Part of this is the politics in Boston.
 - ii. If we are going to be a 1st class school system we need to challenge this.
 - iii. Principals and teachers need to have a voice of how to do things differently. We can set the stage for testing. This has to be part of the skill set of the next Superintendent.
13. Monica, Parent: I'm thinking about the how the data is being recorded by the scribe.
- a. Are the comments able to be used?
 - b. Keith: this is what we are doing.
 - i. This data helps us catch common themes.
 - ii. One of the most important things we've heard is, what happens when the new Superintendent is hired? The community needs to be supportive.
 - c. Is there a way to share the ranked list available to the public.
 - d. Alex: please fill out the survey and pass it on.
14. On one hand the composition of the committee is set. On the other hand you say to push us.
- a. We need a black parent. I will beat a dead horse.

- b. Keith: I got a call from downtown. There is a person that runs the City and a head of the School Committee.
 - c. Crag Martin: I don't want to devalue Tanya's place. I recognize a need for a women of color that is only a parent. We all have multiple identities. We should not devalue her ability to separate her two roles, and I'm not saying anyone here is saying that.
 - d. I'm not disregarding that. But she has a duality. There should be a separation from BPS employee and parent.
 - e. Craig: As a community we all are evolving in this process and we want to serve the community and the City in this giving work we are doing. We need to be aware.
 - f. Tanya: Thank you Craig. I do wear two hats. It is difficult. I can represent parents of color well.
15. Parent: I feel that the outreach to parents and letting them know their power, particularly parents of color is inadequate.
- a. These parents need to know the power of their voice. There is a deep level of education that was not built for black and brown people, historically.
 - b. How do we change things for children? Suburban schools are much different, and the parents can see that.
 - c. We need someone to look historically at education. I feel that we need someone to be creative reaching out to people. I'm working with a young homeless lady with a son in BPS. We have to look at the building up and not the tearing down of the children in the District.
 - d. What's in the books? What's in the curriculum?
 - i. Racism
16. Brenda, retired Boston Teacher: Next Superintendent needs to be familiar with Boston, and we need to expand what that means, so someone coming in from the outside understands Boston. For example court decisions, busing, and special education has never been handled appropriately. These are all things that need to be brought to the attention of someone coming to be the Superintendent.
- a. Achievement Gaps, it seems no one is able to do anything about it.
 - b. Address how minority teachers are evaluated.
 - c. They need to be familiar with the policies and the collective bargaining agreement.
 - d. This is a time of change, but there haven't been many positive results.
17. Albert, parent and retired educator: I'm concerned because Boston needs an experienced educator with a track record of success in an urban district.
- a. We have too many haves and have nots. We need a Superintendent that focuses on teaching and learning and focuses on how we bring communities together.
 - b. The business and philanthropic communities need to come together.
 - c. Some of our schools are in shambles. Every parent needs to send their child to a school that can provide education. This needs to be important to the new Superintendent, and they need to listen to parents.
 - d. They need to be inclusive, I'm tired of decisions being made secret. They need to lead with a vision and inspire. We have resources, but we haven't taken advantage of them.
 - e. We need to do a better job, we aren't servicing our students the way we should. Resources are critical, look at the budget formula, every child needs to have a chance to go to Madison Park or exam schools.
 - f. I think a Superintendent needs to have integrity and a willing to fight for our children. A lot of that has gone away. We have strangers running our schools. Leadership can't all

come from the outside. Bring some from the inside so there is appreciation for the history of Boston. I hope you can bring Boston back.

- g. I'm tired of experimenting. We need to go back to the basics and someone who can lead with a vision.

18. Linguistic outreach. Connected calls.

- a. Alex: Multiple languages.
- b. Representation. Students?
- c. Keith: There is a student on the Committee that was unable to make it tonight.
- d. We are looking for a disruptor. As you are interviewing, consider someone who can shake things up. What are their teams going to look like? Be curious in the interviews of what their team will look like.
 - i. Willingness to be unpopular.
- e. Keith: we will use that.
- f. Don't let that person be screened out early.

PUBLIC COMMENT

See Summary of Discussion.

ADJOURN

At approximately 8:19 p.m. the Committee voted by unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Kenneth Rowe
BPS Superintendent Search Committee Staff