

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

October 30, 2018

The Boston School Committee's Superintendent Search Committee held a session on October 30, 2018, 6:00 pm, Boston Teachers Union, 180 Mt. Vernon St., Dorchester, MA 02125. 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), Carlos Brown, Katherine Grassa, Pastor Samuel Acevedo, Jessica Tang and Dr. Tanya Freeman-Wisdom.

Committee Members Absent: Michael D. O'Neill, Carolyn J. Kain, Elvis Rodriguez and Craig Martin.

### DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

1. Session Agenda
2. Search Committee Timeline (Draft)
3. Superintendent Desired Characteristics
4. Community Listening Session Flyer

### CALL TO ORDER

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

### SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Introductions around the table to include the search committee and four attendees of the listening session. Created an informal round-table discussion.

Alex Oliver-Davila: describes the documents handed out to the committee and attendees.

Dr. Keith Motley: thanked everyone for coming.

Alex Oliver-Davila discussed the main questions and topics planned for the session:

- Strengths of the District
- Challenges of the District
- Qualities for a new Superintendent

Co-Chairs gave Ms. Linda Freeman the opportunity to speak:

Linda Freeman, Parent, child is at Boston Green Academy:

- Biggest Strength = Diversity throughout all of the schools, keep mentality of diversity and open minded
- Biggest Challenge: Size of district and the number of SPED children
  - Would like to see when you visit schools it shouldn't be a showcase, see the school as is
  - See the teachers as they are
  - Wants the kids to learn and progress
  - Teach them (students) well, they remember. If you hurt them, they remember even more.

Alex Oliver-Davila re-explained the session to two new arrivals.

Guest #2 (Maria Esdale Farrell): Why are we re-inventing the process when we just did it a few years ago?

Keith Motley: explains we are in transition and continue to get information. The committee will not re-invent the wheel, but they want to be refreshing.

Sam Acevedo: Was on the previous Search Committee and explains things are a lot different than 3 years ago. A lot has been learned in the last 3 years, it is a different day.

Guest #3 (Nicol Riley): Is there representation on the Committee by parents and students?

Carlos Brown: explains he is a parent and a teacher.

Guest #3: Carlos doesn't look like the parent she usually engages with. Is there room for more?

Katherine Grassa: Explains there are other people on the committee that are not here tonight.

Guest #3: On principal hiring committee, one thing she liked was that others were represented with different backgrounds to support students with different needs (special education).

Alex: The committee tried the best they could to create a diverse group. They tried to make it as representative as possible.

Keith: You are now part of the process. Members of the committee who are here will convey their message to the other committee members.

Carlos: he has a brother with severe handicaps.

Guest #1 (Linda Freeman): SPED students don't transition well, adjustment from one school to another is not easy. Parents have a certain schedule as well.

Guest #3: Is there a collaboration with the Boston Compact?

Alex: Explains one document is the job description from the last search.

Jessica: part of the process is to determine what should be added and taken out.

Guest #3: Has seen a big decline in Parent University over 20-year with the age span of her children.  
-She would like to see a Superintendent that focuses on Parent University again.

Jessica: has teacher feedback from a survey.

Guest #3: No discussion on the agenda of the 4 essentials.  
-One thing that was a huge buy-in for her is the tactics that were to be taken  
-Wants the new superintendent to improve on the standards of academics  
-Raise standards of where things are now and 4 Essentials are good step

Katherine: All work has to fall in the 4 essentials

Keith: What are the 4 essentials?

Guest #3: One thing she really liked

Tanya: she discussed what her school is doing around this topic

Katherine: read the 4 essentials to the group

Guest #3: Wants to see the 4 essentials in this search, because they are just getting rolled out.

Katherine: the schools need to be doing all of the essentials, and discussed that they have been rolled out to all of the schools.

Jessica: discussed how the administration struggled to roll it out across the district

Katherine: discussed how her school rolled it out, and was working on it previously, possibly using different language.

Guest #3: Dr. Rose is amazing.

Guest #2: Discussion on AWC.

Jessica: The District needs to do a better job of explaining excellence for all.

-Everyone had access to the curriculum

Katherine: shouldn't over generalize, teachers are talented at differentiating.

-Students of color have made great advancements in her school, and people wouldn't want to go back to the way it was

-Discussion on Advance Core

Jessica: there is a challenge in the district in expectation across the district

-Excellence for all was an attempt

Guest #2: Teachers have a challenge with disruptions in AWC classes vs. non-AWC classes.

Jessica: Get to the root of why students aren't ready to learn. There are support staff in every school

Sam: If we were to build the ideal Superintendent, what are you looking for with respect to this issue?

-What do you want to see in this person?

Guest #3: It doesn't have to be skin color of someone for diversity.

-Trust is a big thing, and she wants to trust the people in the decision-making seats.

-Transparency, sharing personal experiences will help.

Alex: Someone who can build deep and meaningful relationships

Guest #2: Someone who understands Urban Districts and understands Boston

Guest #3: There are big differences across the district within a short distance.

Guest #1: Boston is not like its suburban neighbors.

- SPED students were encouraged to move to Boston many years ago
- Remind everyone about inclusion
  - What are the expectations of their inclusion?
- There are some students that can't be a part of the normal system because of the severity of their disability.

Tanya: Discusses allocation of resources and "subgroups" of students

- Disproportion amount of "subgroups" in certain schools
- How are students assigned?
- Identify a Superintendent that can see this and push back on it, and do the right thing
  - Takes someone with courage

Guest #1: SPED students struggle when they move or a school is shut down, they really struggle

Jessica: Superintendent should be someone that has experience with SPED students and sensitive to interruptions

Guest #3: Access is not there for everyone. Certain schools were unable to take her daughter. Some schools have specific services when others don't.

- It's not a realistic opportunity for everyone, because not all services are evenly distributed
- Brought up teacher support and preservation
- Doesn't like unified enrollment
  - Is this a Mayor directive? Does the Superintendent fall in line?
- Also says there is not enough opportunity

Guest #1: Be prepared for the challenges, they need to be from a big District. We have a diverse population, and they need to be open-minded.

Guest #4: Arrived to the session, works for the BTU, and was a music teacher

Carlos: looks at schools like a collaboration of neighborhoods

- Need someone that can identify resources and who he will give those resources to
- Person can build teams around them and there is trust between them to manage resource allocation
  - Human heart that can apply that to a macro need
- All schools struggle with resource allocation
  - Carlos has experience in Charter and Public Schools
- Superintendent Summer Reading List to get them up to speed before they step in
- They need to have a wealth of reports and is familiar with Boston before they arrive

Sam: Mike O'Neil did a good job of getting candidates reports and information in the past search during the last search process

Tanya: important to not bring in your own team from day one, because there is strength in having people on your team with historical context, build team from within.

Alex: asks for last thoughts.

Carlos: if we did roll out a Survey, what are the questions that should be asked?

Alex: Committee should look at the BTU survey.

Guest #3: Worried about the use of the surveys.

Keith: Need to ask people to give them an opportunity to speak their voice.  
-Use every resource we have available to us.

Jessica: Discussed the process of the BTU survey and the questions they asked.

Guest #3: What she wants to see in a candidate, or what she would ask the new Superintendent  
-“How do you think you will accomplish this?”  
-Concerned about their preparation

Discussion how people heard about the session:  
-Guest #3: email from BPS Parent Council  
-Guest #2: Twitter

Ken: Discuss avenues that information is getting out to the public

Guest #2: Would like to see a survey for parents.

Alex: Last question:  
-Want feedback anything we could have done better tonight?

Guest #2: Like the small and engaging setting.

Guest #3: Wants to know who is on the Committee.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

*Incorporated into summary of discussion*

#### **ADJOURN**

At approximately 7:40 p.m. the Committee ended the session.

Attest:



Kenneth Rowe  
BPS Superintendent Search Committee Staff