

Desirable Characteristics of a Good Superintendent

Attendees: The names for some are based on the name they used on ZOOM.

L J Blair
Bill Allen -- Friends of the Family
Karen Elmagrisi
Dana Crumlish
Michele Lockwood
Laurie Campbell
Catherine Herring
Kerry McGinnis
Bob Vacca
Michele Lockwood
Eunique Lawrence
Thomas Johnson
Becky Ryan - CEEC
Evelyn MacPhee
Harry
Khannie Butler -- Pres CSD Secretaries Association
CIARLOT -- Tammy Ciarvo
Fred Polaski
Claire O'Neal
Keeley Powell
Erica's iPhone (Erica Dorset)
SM-J260A -- Shirin Skovronski
Avionnaaa
CARMACKP
MACNAMARAT
Rob Polecaro
JKEY John Young
Aaron Selekman
Alethea Smith-Tucker
Amanda Cavoto
Lofinkr
Kim Givens
More!

Fred Polaski discussed the purpose of the meeting is to get input on personality characteristics desired in a Superintendent in Christina. There was also discussion about the selectin process and questions that should be asked of candidates.

The first question was whether the Superintendent should live in the Christina School District. This question was raised because the job description for the Brandywine Superintendent position has residence in the district as preferred.

Comments:

- Seems too restrictive, Delaware is a small place anyway.
- Could it be a requirement of being hired to move into the district if not currently a resident?
- It would be a big advantage. Consider giving the new superintendent a period of time in which to move.
- This would limit candidates because of family attachments to other areas.
- An excellent idea. Would show commitment.
- Too restrictive
- If they live in the district, they would be more invested in our district and community.
- Recommend making it “preferred” like Brandywine
- Not a deal breaker, but would be ideal
- The applicant should have deep relationships in the community he/she came from that were leveraged to help students

The following are characteristics of a Superintendent that were presented for discussion, and the comments about each made by the meeting participants.

1. Has a Vision for Christina
 - a. Has a vision of the future for the students of CSD that is innovative and challenging, but achievable.
 - b. Knows how to move CSD to a new vision

Comments:

In the application, interview process

- The applicant has to demonstrate a measurable and quantifiable vision for the CSD.
- The applicant should be asked to show actual experience to prove they have a record of experience with a district vision.
- The Board will have to fact check information from the applicant.
- The applicant should be a visionary with a track record of leading a school or district (specifically with high need students) and getting exceptional outcomes.
- Should have experience recruiting and retaining a high performing team.
- The applicant must demonstrate an understanding of the current Strategic Plan (SP) and how as the superintendent they would want to change the SP. The Board would then have to decide if they would agree with the changes the applicant would propose.
- Person should be a visionary... should have a track record of leading a school or district (specifically with high need students) and getting exceptional outcomes,

should have experience recruiting and retaining a high performing team^[P]_[SEP]Should have deep relationships in the community he/she came from that were leveraged to help students

- Concerned that an outsider won't understand CSD's dynamics
- The superintendent must have a vision for the district and the energy and passion to execute it.
- Must have an understanding of Delaware funding and referendums
- If everyone has a strong shared vision, decisions should be more easily agreed upon

2. Interpersonal skills

- a. Strong but respectful
- b. In charge but inclusive
- c. Decisive but nice to people
- d. Cares about people – employees, students, parents
- e. Is a team builder

Comments:

- The applicant needs good communication skills
- The interview process needs a question to show the applicant has these qualities based on their experience. Letters of recommendation should include specific information on communication skills.
- Must be able to interface with the Governor, DDOE, Redding Consortium, those involved with the Wilmington schools MOU.
- How will the applicant interact with the unions?
- How has the applicant solved problems with union contracts?
- Has the applicant demonstrated respect for the union contracts?
- Must be accessible
- Must show respect for the bargaining units.
- Must be able to deal with different communities – unions, legislature, Wilmington vs. Newark.
- Comfortable in large and small groups
- Is action oriented, connected, available, understanding, engaged, and visible

3. Communication skills

- a. Active listener
- b. Comfortable in both large and small groups, and with individuals one-on-one

- c. Good public speaker who can handle questions and engage in the hallway conversations before and after the public speech.
- d. Can handle tough questions.
- e. Knows how to communicate such that all levels of employees in the district understand the message.
- f. Can communicate with teachers – a challenge with the large number
 - i. Directly and through the administration

Comments:

- The Superintendent must be able to communicate with the different communities within Christina. Wilmington, Rt. 40 corridor, West Newark, Hispanic population, those whose native language is Arabic, etc.
- It is hard to communicate to the 3 different communities within CSD. The communications must be different.
- The applicant must have a track record of communication skills. The question is how to measure this?
- The superintendent's communications will have to be more transparent.
- The superintendent must develop a district culture of openness and transparency so that the culture is one of good communications that improves on the past. This is an attitude that will result in trust.
- The superintendent must be a good communicator for whom communication is natural. No fear of communication.
- Prefer the superintendent be dual language in Spanish. This may be skill set of other members of the administration. It was noted that in some district schools Spanish is not the predominant native language. In one school the predominant native language is Arabic.
- Build into the administration team someone with language fluency.
- The superintendent must speak with integrity and not demean the population they serve.
- Excellent public speaker
- Comfortable in large and small groups
- Can handle tough questions
- Can communicate at all levels of the district including teachers
- Need communication improvement throughout the district and a natural desire to be transparent
- Christina needs a leader who can act without fear and this with confidence, which leads to transparency.

4. Working relationship with the Board

- a. Use the Strategic Plan to drive the process
- b. Work together at an appropriate depth for changes and decisions

Comment:

- The Board has to clarify the boundary between Governance and Operation so there is clear agreement on the Boards role vs. the Superintendent's authority.
- There has to be an understanding of difference between operation and governance. Historically there has been a culture where the board gets into the minutiae, but board should clarify that its role should be more one of governance.

5. Working relationship with all stakeholders in CSD

- a. Students and parents
- b. Teachers, paraprofessionals, secretaries, custodians, transportation workers, food service
- c. Community members
- d. Elected officials
- e. Is comfortable in all settings, large and small, friendly and adversarial, supportive and challenging.
- f. Must be able to balance inward and outward focus to achieve positive change within CSD and change for outside influences to support CSD

Comments:

- This item has to be quantified to measure the applicant against.
- Where are the applicant's priorities? It should be students first.
- The superintendent should make all decisions bases on what is best for the students.
- The superintendent has to have the ability to interface with students with disabilities within CSD.
- The child's race and income are not a challenge to the child's learning.
- The superintendent must be able to address various constituencies.
- Want them to be able to get along with everyone and do what's best for the district – students are the priority
- Every decision should be made with the students in mind (safety, wellbeing, success, etc)
- It is important to choose the best superintendent who supports ALL STUDENTS

6. Develops trust up and down the organization

Comments:

- The applicant must have a proven track record of integrity.

7. Works through people and the organization

- a. Is comfortable delegating responsibilities and accountability while monitoring the activity
- b. Frequent check-ins with the implementer but not controlling
- c. Can both lead and manage the organization

Comments:

- Is comfortable delegating (to competent people), and holding people accountable
- Is comfortable being accountable
- Frequent check-ins, but not controlling -- no micromanagement

8. Decision making approach

- a. Collaborative with the Board on high level decisions
- b. Develops a relationship with the Board that includes the Board in the process for making decisions so the Board is accountable for the outcome.
- c. Collaborative with others in the organization
- d. Decisive.
- e. Can communicate the decision so everyone understands, even those who do not agree with the decision

Comments:

- Once through the first year for the new Superintendents, the Board can delegate more decisions to the superintendent to drive and lead the district.
- Empower the superintendent to make decisions, not rely on Board to make decisions
- Operations vs governance -- sometimes decisions that don't cost anything that come before the board and are disputed
- If everyone has a strong shared vision, decisions should be more easily agreed upon. unfortunately, in the past it seems individual agendas stood in the way of serving students to the best of our ability
- Decision making should be made using a sound methodology and based on the best information and data available
- Best information requires transparency and intellectual curiosity

9. Handling of events

- a. In control, but uses a team approach
- b. Understands strengths and weaknesses in others when managing the situation
- c. Analyses the situation to determine causes and implements effective actions to address the event and prevent recurrence
- d. Learns to be better prepared in the future

Comments:

- Note from Fred Polaski – the word “event” was intended to be crises and negative events, but was interpreted by some as positive events, such as school concerts and plays. The comments reflect on both.
- Negative events
 - Is there a policy or process in place to deal with crises? There should be one based on the level of the crisis.
 - Team approach
 - Understands strengths and weakness in others when managing the situation
 - Analyses the situation to determine causes and implements effective actions to address the event and prevent recurrence
 - Learns to be better prepared in the future
 - Is there a crisis response team?
- Positive events:
 - The superintendent should attend concerts, etc.
 - Curriculum at city schools (reading) is not the same as suburban schools. There should be no differences between the city and suburban schools. Decisions should be made across the district without partiality.

10. Maintain a current, dynamic S/P that is used to guide and lead the district, and as the uniting device for the Superintendent, the Board, the Administration, teachers, parents, and the community. The S/P must be fluid, relevant and timely.
- a. The Board should meet regularly with the Superintendent and Administration to review implementation of the S/P
 - b. The S/P should be updated annually.
 - c. The Superintendent’s yearly evaluation is tied to and aligned with the S/P.

Comments:

- The Board should identify new things for the Strategic Plan that would be in the expectations for the new Superintendent as part of the selection process.
- BE careful that DASL doesn’t tell CSD how to do things. CSD should make the decisions.
- Don’t bring Broad back again.

11. Organizational Dynamics: Supports actions to improve the administrators and the district as a whole in the areas of organizational dynamics. This is professional development beyond teaching and learning.
- a. Decision making
 - i. Collaborative

- ii. Decisive
- iii. Decisions clearly articulated so they are understood
- b. Accountability
- c. Effective communication
- d. Dealing with difficult people
- e. Leading analysis of events
- f. Problem solving
- g. Understanding different personality styles
- h. Effective listening (active listening)
- i. Project management

Comments:

- Need to teach customer service to everyone in the district. Everyone in the district should treat parents as out customers.

12. Develops those who report to him/her to their fullest.

Comments:

- Each area leader in the CSD administration has different skill sets. The superintendent can work with administrators to identify and develop skills sets that would benefit the administrator.
- The superintendent should set the tone for the organization to develop everyone – a culture of education.
- Should candidate demonstrate experience in seeking prof development, and experience in encouraging others to seek prof development?

13. Financially responsible

- a. Annual budget
- b. Monitoring the budget and spending throughout the year
- c. Accurate reporting to the Board

Comments:

- If the applicant is currently a superintendent in another district, the applicant should be asked to provide a financial audit. An applicant who is not a superintendent cannot be asked because it would not have been with their area of responsibility.
- It may be difficult to attract candidates because of the current financial situation.
- Ask the applicants how they would handle specific financial issues.
- Will you tell the truth to the residents of this district and the elected board you serve, unwaveringly?

- Are you willing to consider a radical reimagination of our facilities and their uses?
- Will you reach out and work with our educators by putting them first?
- We need a forensic audit.

Other comments:

- The applicant must demonstrate a competency in diversity. The application should include a statement on diversity that is supported by demonstrated experience.
- Need a superintendent who is competent in diversity and sensitivity
- What are we going to do to attract candidates because of the failed referendum?
- How do we attract someone to the position?
- CSD has to show how we would treat and support a new superintendent.
- The sub-committee should create a rubric aligned with requisite criteria; knowledge, skills, abilities and proven educational leadership (human resource/culture of instruction, data driven operations, fiscal, community engagement and turnaround)
- The candidates should submit a proposed entry plan (30-60-90 days) as well as a year. The plan would be fluid and would be comprised of his/her priorities demonstrating ownership, accountability, and visioning needed for our Christina School District stakeholders - our students, families, educators and the community.
- Superintendent should be face of the District, students and staff should know who he or she is and possibly had a conversation with the Superintendent

After the review of the characteristics to be considered, Fred Polaski asked everyone to submit to him by email questions that could be used in interviews with applicants.

The next meeting is Monday March 30, 2020, 6:30 PM on ZOOM. Information on joining the meeting will be available on the CSD website. The topics will be review of the questions and process for interviews with candidates. Examples of questions are on the next page.

Fred Polaski

March 24, 2020

Examples of questions for a Candidate for Superintendent:

1. How do you see yourself as the Superintendent fitting into the CSD, both from an internal and an external perspective?
2. How would you use district organization and resources to improve student performance?
 - a. What do you see as areas that impede student educational achievement?
3. How would you improve the quality of the personnel within CSD and how the CSD functions organizationally?
4. Would you use the CSD Strategic Plan to operate the CSD? How would you do that?