



Choosing Our Next Superintendent

A Report on a Community Discussion held
by A+ Schools: Pittsburgh's
Community Alliance for Public
Education



May 2005

A+ Schools Board of Directors

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Choosing our Next Superintendent

A Community Discussion

Summary

“Visionary.” “Integrity.” “Academic excellence.” “Bridge builder.” “Understanding of different cultures.” These were just some of the qualities the community is looking for in the next Superintendent of the Pittsburgh Public Schools.

On April 28th, 2005, over 150 parents, grandparents, students, residents, educators, clergy, community advocates and other stakeholders participated in A+ Schools’ town meeting to discuss issues surrounding the recruitment of the next Superintendent. For an hour, the group discussed the qualities and qualifications they thought were critical for our next leader to possess, the roles of the superintendent and School Board, the compensation package for the new Superintendent and any additional issues that they thought might add value for the Board’s search.

Background

The search for Pittsburgh’s next superintendent is the most important decision Pittsburgh’s Board of Education will make. While the final selection of a superintendent belongs to the Board, A+ Schools believes that there is a role for community members - to advocate that the Board assure a process for searching and selecting a superintendent who will be an outstanding leader. The superintendent is the one individual, more than any other, who can move our schools toward becoming high achieving centers of excellence that work for all of the city’s children.

In preparation for the town meeting, A+ Schools developed a position paper to present what we believe the Board of Education needs to include in the search process to increase the chances that the search will produce the best candidate for the job. (The position paper can be found in the Appendix.) Participants in the public meeting were given the position paper and were asked to respond to it during the course of the evening.

Community Discussion

Our public meeting was developed to give the public as much time as possible to discuss and share ideas as well as give meaningful input. Two speakers were asked to set the tone for the evening, speaking about educational leadership on national and local scales.

Michael Usdan is a Senior Fellow at the Institute for Educational Leadership and co-author of the book [Powerful Reform with Shallow Roots: Improving America’s Urban Schools](#). Mr. Usdan’s studies have concentrated on the problems relating to urban education and the relationship of government and politics to public education.

Esther Bush is the President and CEO of the Urban League of Pittsburgh and a board member of A+ Schools. Ms. Bush’s experience in starting a charter school in addition to the Urban League’s long history of working with school children gives her a special understanding of the challenges of leadership.

Mr. Usdan concentrated his brief comments on what he believes the most necessary characteristics a new superintendent must possess. He cited the growing minority demographic, No Child Left Behind legislation and the challenges of urban settings as three demanding realities that would make necessary the need for greater collaboration and partnerships, the broadening of political bases and new forms of coordination among and between government services.

Ms. Bush focused on the importance of the public being involved in the recruitment process because of the importance of the decision. The School Board's decision will set a tone for the district and indicate the direction that the School Board is moving in. Giving the charge for the evening's break out sessions, she asked that we should all "be realistic, but at the same time, we want the best for our students," to take our task seriously and to "give your best thinking. We need your input because you are representing the community."

With that, Michael Kumer, our master of ceremonies, asked the group to think back about a person who had a profound and positive impact on their lives and think of three characteristics that person possessed and how they exerted that positive influence. He pointed out that rarely do we see these characteristics in a job description and "yet the success of the next leader may depend on this type of personal attribute."

For the next hour, small groups of four to six, led by volunteer facilitators, discussed the following four questions:

1. Given your experience and what you've heard this evening, what are the 3 most important qualifications and qualities of an outstanding superintendent in your opinion?
2. Do you agree with A+ Schools that there should be a clear line between policy and operations functions with the Board of Education being responsible for policy and the Superintendent responsible for operations?
 - A. If you disagree, then what is the role of the Superintendent?
 - B. On what issues should the Board cross the line from policy to operational discussions?
3. Given the importance of attracting the best Superintendent candidates to Pittsburgh to improve student achievement and reduce the racial achievement gap, do you agree or disagree with the A+ Schools position that the next Superintendent's compensation package should be significantly higher?
4. What else should the Board of Education consider in conducting the search for our next Superintendent?
 - A. Should the Board of Education give itself more time to recruit and hire the best candidate?
 - B. Is prior experience as a Superintendent an absolute requirement?

Each group was given a packet of information that included comparisons of superintendent salaries from across the country (found in the Appendix). Our facilitators had the advertisement for the Pittsburgh superintendent position from *Education Week* to share.

At the close of the evening, Michael Usdan was asked to comment on what he heard during the break out sessions. He offered these words. For him, our meeting further reaffirmed that the superintendent is the Mt. Everest of public service. He stated that "one big advantage that Pittsburgh has, is that it is the only city in the country that would feel comfortable in recalling two former superintendents to come out of retirement to play a role in the search. In virtually every other city, every former superintendent would be tarnished in some way." This points to a great legacy in Pittsburgh and will be a great asset as we move ahead.

He again stated that the future of our country is demographic diversity. If the public schools do not play the civic role of basically engaging, involving and integrating diverse groups, they will fail our country and urban centers. "This crowd here tonight offers some hope."

Lastly, so many of the comments offered by the crowd, further confirm for Mr. Usdan that the role of school boards and of the superintendent is of paramount importance. He said that these roles have to be reassessed and that can only happen at state capitols, where school boards are created. "If states are serious about school reform and keeping good superintendents, they have to reassess the roles and responsibilities of school boards," he said.

Karris Jackson, the Director of Urban Youth Action and an A+ Schools board member, closed by announcing A+ Schools' next steps and intention of publishing and publicizing the report of the results of the meeting.

Findings

Over 60 sheets of oversized flip chart paper were poured over, transcribed and analyzed to produce the following results. (A complete list of everything said and transcribed can be found in the Appendix.) Findings are listed here by the question asked.

Given your experience and what you've heard this evening, what are the 3 most important qualifications and qualities of an outstanding superintendent in your opinion?

People feel strongly about recruiting a visionary leader with integrity, who understands diverse cultures and can communicate well with different types of people. The ideal candidate would be willing to collaborate, have business acumen and be fiscally responsible. The superintendent should be both compassionate and politically savvy. Those are the comments made most when asked what qualities and qualifications an outstanding superintendent would possess.

All of the comments could be grouped together in the following larger categories:

- Vision
- Education/Academic Background
- Moral Character
- Team/Consensus/Community Builder
- Leadership Skills
- Understanding/Commitment to Public Education
- Open to Change/Risks
- Communication
- Understands/Cares about the Pittsburgh School System/Urban School Issues
- Compassion and Understanding of Different Cultures/Age Groups/Needs
- Political Savvy
- Financial/Management Success
- Other

Do you agree with A+ Schools that there should be a clear line between policy and operations functions with the Board of Education being responsible for policy and the superintendent responsible for operations?

A. If you disagree, that what is the role of the superintendent?

B. On what issues should the Board cross the line from policy to operational discussions?

Generally, people did agree with A+ Schools – that there should be a clear line between policy and operation functions and that the distinctions between the role of the School Board and superintendent must be made.

However, some also thought that the superintendent should guide policy. Reasons for this ranged from some feeling that the School Board did not have a deep enough understanding of educational issues to set policy, to others believing that the Board and superintendent should collaborate and set policy together. Still others felt that the superintendent should set policy and then delegate operations. One person thought that the superintendent should be the tenth member of the Board, with no voting privileges and another that “separating functions is completely unrealistic”, recognizing that this is a challenging issue because of all of the separate stakeholders involved.

There was more agreement in what people believed the role of the School Board to be. People agreed that the School Board was too hands-on with the previous superintendent and should grant more authority to the incoming superintendent. They thought that the Board should set high standards and clear expectations and support the superintendent. They also believed that the Board is responsible for financial oversight and should approve the recommendations of the superintendent.

Some believed that the School Board should look at best practices around the country and be more open to attending professional development and on-going education for themselves.

Given the importance of attracting the best superintendent candidates to Pittsburgh to improve student achievement and reduce the racial achievement gap, do you agree or disagree with the A+ Schools position that the next superintendent’s compensation package should be significantly higher?

Again, most participants agreed with A+ Schools and thought that the next superintendent should receive a higher compensation package. There was no agreement about how much the package should be, but most supported the need for a competitive base with performance-based incentives.

Others noted that more money wouldn’t necessarily translate to a better superintendent and that a high salary can sometimes bring negative publicity. Some suggested that the School Board publicize compensation rates from around the country to make the public more comfortable with high rate and to avoid “sticker shock.” One participant reminded the group that “this is tax payer money.”

What else should the Board of Education consider in conducting the search for our next superintendent? Should the Board of Education give itself more time to recruit and hire the best candidate? Is prior experience as a superintendent an absolute requirement?

Of the comments received for this question, two statements stand out. Overwhelmingly participants believed that the community should be involved in the search process. Whether by inviting finalists to address the community or finding some other way for stakeholders to meet the candidates, people felt strongly that there should be some avenue for community input.

They also suggested that the search be “blind.” That is, take the name, gender and race off of the candidate’s resume. The next superintendent should be hired on qualifications alone, taking out the politics, and making the process transparent.

Most agreed that the next superintendent would need to have a proven track record, possibly working in a city similar to Pittsburgh where they were able to reverse the trend of those leaving the city. People were split as to whether they would expect the next superintendent to have previous experience as a superintendent. Some felt the candidate should have education experience, others felt that a good business manager or administrator could turn the system around.

Closing the achievement gap, working with parents, and identifying early education as an important priority were also very important issues to participants at the meeting.

A+ Schools' position regarding the search is presented in our position paper, included in the Appendix. The remainder of this report is a summary of the discussions of the participants at the forum. We are presenting them here not for the purpose of endorsing any or all of them, but for the purpose of transmitting them as accurately as we can for consideration of the broader public and the Board of Education.

Appendix

Recruiting a Superintendent for the Pittsburgh Public Schools: A + Schools' Position

The most important decision a board of public education makes is the selection of a superintendent of schools. The superintendent establishes the educational philosophy and objectives of the district, and puts in place the fiscal and management organization to support the philosophy and goals. The superintendent is the one individual, more than any other, who determines whether the district inspires confidence in parents, students, teachers and the larger community.

While the final selection of a superintendent belongs to the Board of Education, there is a role for community members – as parents, students, employees of the district; as taxpayers and interested citizens. That role is to advocate that the Board assure a process for searching and selecting a superintendent that will increase the chances that the person selected will be an outstanding leader.

A + Schools believes that in order to identify and retain such an outstanding individual, at least four steps must be included in the process:

1. Clearly define the qualities and qualifications of an outstanding superintendent;
2. Commit to conducting a national search to find more than one candidate who meets those qualifications;
3. Commit to creating a definition of the roles of the Board and the superintendent that will encourage outstanding candidates to apply in the understanding that they will have a constructive relationship with the Board in which the latter sets policies and empowers the superintendent to implement those policies free from interference from individual board members or from the Board as a whole;
4. Defining a salary and benefit package worthy of a world class superintendent.

1. Leadership Qualities and Qualifications

The search for an outstanding superintendent must begin with a definition. We believe that the field of leadership and leadership development identifies clear characteristics of outstanding leaders. We have organized them into two categories – qualities and qualifications. Qualities refer to personal and professional behaviors that characterize outstanding leaders. Qualifications refer to the credentials and specific accomplishments that would demonstrate that individuals meet the standard of an outstanding leadership.

Qualities

1. Ambition for the organization they lead, not for themselves; possess a sense of personal humility – do not attempt to play the role of the “larger than life” leader; give credit to others in times of success; take responsibility in times of failure; rely on inspired standards more than personal charisma to motivate employees; do not pursue artificial “motivation” techniques.
2. Work effectively in teams.
3. Demonstrate capacity to organize people and resources to successfully pursue goals; create an organizational culture in which people will be heard, and where the unvarnished truth will be the basis of decision making.
4. Catalyze commitment to and pursuit of a compelling vision.
5. Groom future outstanding leaders to empower the entire organization, and to sustain the organization's strengths and successes over time; identify talented people and bring them into the organization at all levels.
6. Unwavering resolve to assure that the organization performs at the highest level of achievement.
7. Demonstrate competencies in the four areas that constitute what is called emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.
8. Can utilize various management styles in appropriate situations to advance the organization's performance.
9. Demonstrate unimpeachable moral character.

Qualifications

1. Responsible for leading a large, complex organization, or major division within such an organization.
2. Responsible for the success of such an organization or division.
3. Experience with and demonstrated understanding of work in a multi-racial environment; demonstrated the ability to communicate publicly with a wide array of customers and others and build confidence in their organizations.
4. Success in leading at least one large-scale, sustained, system-wide improvement effort in the private or public sector.

5. Demonstrated success working with a board of directors, and understanding the respective roles of CEO/staff and board.

6. Demonstrated support for strengthening the performance of urban public education systems.

If the field is to be restricted to candidates from the education field:

7. Experience as a superintendent of a public education district or as the leader of a major system within such a district, and a demonstrated capacity to generate significant improvements in student achievement in such a district, displaying the following characteristics:

a) created a highly positive, collaborative working relationship with many different stakeholders in the community and the school district;

b) achieved an intense focus on improving student learning that had the support of key stakeholders and was carefully planned, implemented and evaluated;

c) developed and implemented long-range professional development plans that expanded the skills of principals, teachers, and support personnel;

d) implemented a data oriented decision making process that promotes accountability for student achievement, understanding that accountability is a two way process in that the district must provide resources for those it is holding accountable so that they have a reasonable opportunity to meet expectations;

e) secured funding to support educational improvement strategies and demonstrated the ability to shepherd resources effectively to sustain improvement.

2. A National Search

A + Schools believes Pittsburgh should strive to be a world class education system – not just among other public education systems, but among any education systems – public, private or parochial.

The only way to pursue such a goal is to cast the net for candidates as broadly as possible. Our hospitals and universities understand that. Our symphony orchestra and art museums understand that. Our large corporations understand that. And our sports teams understand that. Our public education system must understand that.

We must be honest with ourselves for the sake of our children. There is a tendency among us to say that we have the talent locally to meet our education leadership goals, and to say that we don't need to learn about what works in other communities or school systems. This is a dangerous tendency.

People thrive by interacting with each other. We don't thrive in isolation from one another. Communities, cities, and school districts are human organizations, and, as such, can only thrive in commerce, communication, and interaction with other communities, cities and school districts. Without an infusion of people and ideas from outside the city, our school system will fail.

Only a national search can assure a pool of candidates that meets the criteria identified in the qualities/qualifications section above. Asserting this says nothing negative about Pittsburgh. The assertion applies to every school district and city in the United States.

3. Defining the Roles of the Board and Superintendent

A long-standing tradition in Pittsburgh – and many other districts – is that the Board of Education plays a direct role in operations. As most board members would probably note, that is consistent with the Pennsylvania School Code, which vests substantial power to operate school districts in the boards of education. But the school code is over 50 years old, and is clearly the product of an age that understood far less than we do today about how to run a large system. And even if the code is not amended soon, there is no reason not to adopt an effective board-superintendent division of labor. Nothing in the code expressly forbids that.

We know today that any organization the size of the Pittsburgh Public Schools must have a clear division of labor between the Board and the Superintendent. The Board's role should be to hire the superintendent, set the annual tax rate, establish the fundamental strategic goals and values of the district, and monitor the superintendent's success at achieving the goals within the parameters of the values. The superintendent's role is to be in full charge of the operations of the district

The only way the superintendent can be held accountable in such a system is if the Board keeps its hands entirely off of the operations of the district, including any and all personnel matters. That doesn't mean that the superintendent has a blank check to run roughshod over the rest of the staff. The superintendent's actions would be governed by collective bargaining agreements, by the District's personnel policies, and by a variety of laws that protect the rights of employees. But, within those parameters, the authority is the superintendent's – period. Why else hire a superintendent?

If the Board adopts the suggestion to conduct a national search, and if it hopes to attract capable candidates, it is imperative that the candidates know the superintendent will have control over the operations of the District. And, no matter whom they finally appoint, Board members must understand that unless they give that individual real operating authority, they will have undercut his or her effectiveness with the staff and the community from the very start.

4. Salary and Benefit Package

If Pittsburgh is to have a world class system with a top flight superintendent, then it must adopt a salary and benefit package consistent with such ambitions. The current salary range for PPS superintendent places it barely above those of surrounding, small, suburban districts.

Ft. Worth, Texas recently advertised for a superintendent at a salary of \$300,000. There is no reason that an entity with an annual budget over half a billion dollars that strives to be the best in the world at what it does should not offer such a salary. Compare that salary to what we pay our university presidents, hospital administrators, and corporate CEOs. It is often said that the most important job in the city is the superintendent of schools. We should pay that person consistent with the importance of the job.

Appendix - Table Consensus

Groups were asked to report out on their “discoveries”, compelling points of agreement, and compelling points of disagreement. Tables are assigned random numbers for the purposes of this report.

Table 1

Table Discoveries

A Focus on Truth!

- There should be a publicly transparent and explicit process
- There should be a reciprocity of accountability
- Allowance of competence and leadership
- Consistent district-wide focus on children
- Focus on the Achievement Gap

Compelling Points of Agreement

- To have a demonstrated track record as a Superintendent in a similar school district, with prior experience and evidence in addressing the racial achievement gap.
- The new Superintendent should have an ability to identify leadership potential in others, support them and nurture them.
- The new Superintendent should be willing to embrace the challenges of addressing the achievement gap, working with the community including parents, motivating teachers, and dealing with the Board
- There should be a national search but a willingness to be open to local people who understand the environment.
- This should be an open and honest process, not a political choice.
- The Board should do active recruitment and not just restrict the search to those who apply. Headhunters and successful superintendents should be approached.
- The Board should be commended for choosing to work with Drs Faison and Wallace. They should be allowed to negotiate the contract between the Board and new Superintendent.
- The School Board should be educated so that they better understand their role.
- We must recognize the dynamics in play – this is a political environment, issues of governance are a major stumbling block to recruiting a new Superintendent.
- We must acknowledge that the public knows about Pittsburgh’s history and politics.
- The salary must be comparable to national salaries. Incentives should be considered.
- Allow the new Superintendent to function as an expert.
- The new Superintendent should function as an academic, educational and financial leader. Again, he or she should be allowed to lead.

- Evaluation measures should be in place upon hiring the new Superintendent. The measures should be clearly articulated to the public, should be realistic and justified by research.
- Three most important qualities are: team builder, communicator, competent and confident.

There were no compelling points of disagreement.

Table 2

Table Discoveries

- There should be a seamless partnership and collaboration between the Superintendent, Board, schools and community with a focus on kids and student achievement.
- We agree that the Board sets policy and the Superintendent directs operations. However, the Superintendent and Board should set goals together; policy is developed from goals. The Superintendent should make a master plan after the policy is set and oversee the operation.

Compelling Points of Agreement

- The new Superintendent must have an interest in and support parent involvement.
- The new Superintendent must be committed to closing the achievement gap.
- The superintendent search should be non-sexist and non-racist.

Compelling Points of Disagreement

- National search
 - o If the new Superintendent is not in place by September 1st, let Dr. King go for a year, if he closes the achievement gap, give him the job.
- Pay for the Superintendent
 - o Regardless of what we pay, the person should be here for the children
 - o Offer the best, most competitive package in order to demand the best results
 - o The pay should be \$200,000 to \$250,000 with incentives for benchmark achievements

Table 3

Table Discoveries

- The need to create a culture of learning within the entire school district. Students would see from all of those around them that they have choices and there are consequences for actions. In this culture, failures would be recognized as learning opportunities – not opportunities for pointing fingers and making accusations. The adults in the system would model behaviors that would help the children to learn more than just academic subjects. This culture would be

supportive of all...understanding learning styles, offering equity of all subjects.

Compelling Points of Agreement

- The group strongly believed that the role of the Superintendent is to be a visionary, an educational leader/expert, and to be the leader who gets everyone to move in the same direction.
- The group agreed that there needs to be a clear chain of command in the school district. If the public has a problem with something in the school – they should call the school principal and the school district – NOT the Board members. The Superintendent should be the communication source for the Board.
- Everyone must give the Superintendent the opportunity and time to lead.
- The compensation package should be competitive.
- Prior experience as a superintendent is necessary.
- The Board should improve its communication efforts regarding the entire search process and the final selection of the candidate so that there are no questions or misperceptions in the public.

Compelling Points of Disagreement

- Concern over leaving the Acting Superintendent in the position for too long.
- There are candidates within the district who do not have superintendent experience.

Table 4

Table Discoveries

- The new Superintendent must have the following qualities:
 - o Passion
 - o Academic excellence
 - o Integrity

Compelling points of Agreement

- Keep the search timeframe open if the right candidate isn't found
- Collaboration between the Board and Superintendent is important. It's a two way street. The Board needs to live up to high standards also.
- Agree with both A+ Schools statements:
 - o Operation and policy distinctions
 - o The compensation package should be competitive
- Experience as a Superintendent is good, but not absolute.

No compelling points of disagreement.

Table 5

Table Discoveries

There was a real focus on competence and fairness in the hiring process. There was also strong feeling that the Board is the problem.

Compelling points of agreement

- Educational leadership
- Get the best candidate
- Pay what it takes
- Must be a person who can communicate across all cultures.

There were no compelling points of disagreement.

Table 6

Table Discoveries

The qualities the new Superintendent should possess are:

- Team builder and bridge builder
- Powerful communicator
- Encourages communication at various levels
- Culturally competent and aware

Improvements in Board and Superintendent roles and relationships:

- Clearly communicated expectations
- Board professional development
- Agree with A+ Schools' statement that Board should handle policy and the Superintendent, operating

Compelling points of agreement

See above in addition to the following points:

- Salary comparable to other successful districts
- Incentive pay for achieving performance goals
- Superintendent should be offered an executive coach or consultant

No compelling points of disagreement.

Table 7

Table Discoveries

The qualities the new Superintendent should possess are:

- Politically savvy
- Have realistic expectations
 - o Understand the need for a ready workforce
- Fiscal magician
- Charismatic
 - o Engage the community
 - o Visionary
 - o Ignite the imagination
- No "suck ups"

Compelling points of agreement

- Need mutual respect between the Board and Superintendent
- Corporate model – Superintendent is the 10th member of the Board, with no vote
- Good compensation package
 - o Have incentives and performance criteria
 - o Performance criteria should not be just student test scores

Compelling points of disagreement

Of the distinction between policy and operations. "Young people needed less of a clear line than adults" in this group.

Table 8

Table Discoveries

Important qualities of the new Superintendent should include:

- Ability to speak frankly
- Understanding of other factors, like neighborhood and home life, that impact education

Compelling points of agreement

- Superintendent should focus on policy
- Board must allow the Superintendent to do his/her job

Compelling points of disagreement

On the compensation package some believed that we need to pay what it takes to get the best candidate and others believed that with taxpayer dollars, couldn't afford to go overboard.

Table 9

Table Discoveries

The Superintendent should be:

- A forward thinker
- Visionary
- Understand the Pittsburgh system
- Project out diplomacy effectively
- Values community partnerships

Compelling points of agreement

- The general qualifications of the Superintendent were agreed on.
- The new Superintendent needs a good track record.
- There needs to be a public process in the search for Superintendent.
- The compensation package should be competitive.
- Challenging to figure out the role of the Board and Superintendent.

Compelling points of disagreement

- The role of the Board and Superintendent.

Table 10

Table Discoveries

- Humility is an important trait.
- School system is failing both black and white students.

Compelling points of agreement

Qualifications of the new Superintendent are:

- Past successes – not only based on school tests
- Background in education system

Compelling points of disagreement

- Some believed the new Superintendent could be paid at or over \$300,000 and other believed that \$300,000 was far too much

Table 11

Table Discoveries

Superintendent qualities should include:

- Business acumen – run the school like a business
- Respect for students, teachers, all aspects of the community
- Open, flexible – open to new ideas and creative solutions
- Need legislative and advocacy skills

Compelling points of agreement

- Board should set clear expectations for the Superintendent and determine ways of measuring and evaluating
- Collaborative skills of Superintendent very important
- Salary should be high – the schools will save this city (make or break it)
- Doesn't have to be a prior superintendent or educator
- Too much bickering on the board
 - o Represents their own districts and can't create a city-wide vision, so the Superintendent must

No compelling points of disagreement

- Only differing views of emphasis. One person wanted to stress how test scores should not be the only measure of success.

Table 12

Table Discoveries

Qualities of the Superintendent

- Vision based on the needs of schools and students
- risk taker
- unifier
- salesperson
- enthusiasm and curiosity of learning

Board/Superintendent Roles

- Need well thought out policy
- The current structure is politically difficult

Compensation

- More money but cut the perks

Thoughts for the Board on their search

- Critical to find someone as soon as possible
- But should have a national search

No compelling points of agreement or disagreement

Table 13

Table Discoveries

Budgetary issues were addressed

Thought Superintendent had more input on policy issues
Board is not a paid position

Compelling points of agreement

- Revisit how the school board is chosen
 - o Term limits
 - o Qualifications
 - o Mandatory continuing education for school board members
 - o Equal representation of all ages and demographics on the Board

No compelling points of disagreement.

Table 14

Table Discoveries

Superintendent should have/be:

- Visionary
- Advocate for children and passionate about their success
- Collaborative both internally and externally
- A good communicator with all stakeholders
- Team builder

Compelling points of agreement

- Board should focus on policy, Superintendent should focus on operations and communicate well with the Board.
- Pay should be commensurate with experience.
 - o We should match the average with our size district.
 - o Have the opportunity for a performance bonus.
- Public opinion should be given more voice.

Compelling points of disagreement

- Where to draw the line between policy and operation.

Table 15

Table Discoveries

None

Compelling points of agreement

Superintendent must:

- Understand diverse populations
- Be a leader and consensus builder
- Have business and management experience

The Superintendent should assist Board in developing policy. Board should only cross the line on budget and human rights issues.

Need a performance based contract.

Compelling points of disagreement

Need for a former teacher to be the new Superintendent.

Table 16

Table Discoveries

None

Compelling points of agreement

Superintendent should:

- Fit into the culture
- Be resilient
- Politically savvy

- A consensus builder
- Should combine needs of the district with a vision for change
- Have experience in a diverse district
- Supportive of professional development
- Life-long learner
- Strategic planner

The Board develops policy and the Superintendent is responsible for operations. They should work together to develop new strategic plan.

Compensation should reflect the market. The public should be made aware of the market so there's not "sticker shock" when announced.

No compelling points of disagreement.

Appendix – Categorized Statements

Everything listed here was taken directly from the notepads used by A+ Schools' facilitators. Every word or phrase written here was said once. Each + sign indicates how many additional times the word or phrase was used. This list was categorized for ease of use and analysis by A+ Schools.

Given your experience and what you've heard this evening, what are the 3 most important qualifications and qualities of an outstanding superintendent in your opinion?

Vision

Visionary +++++++
Broad vision
Clear vision and message
Direction
Break with the past
New ideas
Understands the big picture +
Think outside of the box
Innovative +
See whole picture
Creative ++

Education/Academic Background

Focus on education
Understands factors that impact education
Emphasize learning and working with teachers
Doctorate degree +
Published
Knowledge of data-based instruction
Excellent educator +
Experienced educator
Educational leader
Understand learning styles of students
Know pedagogy and instructional standards
Knowledge of child development
Academic excellence +++
Life-long learner +

Moral Character

Integrity +++++
Moral character +
Honest +++
Humility +
Trustworthy

Team/Consensus/Community Builder

Bridge builder +++
Get others involved
Understand community cultures/diversity, working with public +++++++
Relationships with everyone, across all strata
Community organizer

Engage people of poverty in the city
Team builder ++
Consensus builder
Diplomat/Consensus builder +
Values community partners
Willing to work with nonprofits
Accessible to the community
Collaborator +++++
Understands need for partnerships
Ability to capture community resources and assets
Collaboration between school and community
Coalition building
Community engagement ++
Encourage community involvement
Unifier/Uniter ++
Fairness between neighborhoods, diverse groups

Leadership Skills

Leadership background with experience in education
Raise the bar
No nonsense
Challenging
Must inspire and lead
Inspiring
Motivational skills
Utilizes power
Take charge under pressure situations
Leader
Ability to effectively plan and make decisions
Surround with good people +
Situational leadership skills
Motivator +
Ability to lead and work with faculty
Take responsibility – the buck stops here
Strong leadership skills ++
Role model
Inspire sharing of expertise
Encourage
Salesperson
Ability to prioritize
Patience
Listener
Engaged
Persistent
Problem solver
Optimism
Competence
Experience
Organized
Knowledgeable +
Courageous +
Figure out what we need to do to move forward
Focused on values and important issues
Volunteer
Mediator +
Excellent judge of people

Resilient +
Analytical
Charismatic +
Tough skin
Self evaluation
Willingness and energy to go beyond what's expected
Intelligence +
Negotiable
Fair-mindedness
High expectations +

Understanding/Commitment to Public Education Issues

Commitment to public education
Concern over disparity of achievement
Understands relationship between teachers and students
Realistic expectations for students – not everyone has to go to college
Understand need for a ready workforce
Understands different ways of learning
Expectation of/supportive of professional development for staff ++
Collaboration with teachers
Create a culture of learning/emphasis on learning +
Committed/Commitment +
Commitment to children
Expect that all can learn
Teacher or administrator
Understanding of curriculum +
Understand education learning differences between children
Understand what teachers go thru'
Interest in arts, sports as well as academics

Open to Change/Risks

Willing to endure/implement a culture change
Combine needs of district with vision for change
Willing to take risks +
Open-minded +
Open to change
Confident but open to criticism
If something isn't working then change it
Flexible +
Change from the past

Communication

Articulate needs sincerely
Communicator +++++++
Communicates well with all stakeholders +
Speak frankly
Articulate +
Engaging
Open door policy/Open communication +

Understands/Cares about the Pittsburgh School System/Urban School Issues

Understand the plight of poverty +
Understanding of safety issues
Quickly adapt and work in the system
Urban experience/understanding of +++
Become part of Pittsburgh community
Knows city and neighborhoods
"With it" – needs to know what's going on across the district +
Believe in the district
Commitment to making the system better
Commitment to closing the achievement gap +
Caring/Passion for education system +++
Respect for students and teachers
Ability to encourage teachers and students
Focus on wellness and nutrition
Super should pay attention to early education and should have proven track record in early ed/Understands the value of early childhood education ++
Know the needs of all of the schools
Understanding of Pittsburgh school system
Be firm on the issues of violence

Compassion and Understanding of Different Cultures/ Age Groups/Needs

Compassion +++++
Sensitivity to students
In touch with youth culture, open to youth voice in decision making process +
Empathetic
Promotes/Understands parental engagement ++
Values the board
Empathy
Caring +
Passion +++
Interact with students
Knowledge of social services
Importance of supporting children in many ways – "It takes a village"
Social mobility – personal knowledge of social strata, has moved up thru' the system
Down to Earth

Political Savvy

Legislative advocacy/Ability to work with state and Federal lawmakers/Political savvy +++++
Ties with community and local government
Should have strong political skills
Ability to work with PFT

Financial/Management Success

Business savvy to handle taxes, budgets, investments, fundraising +++++++
"Financial wizard"
"Fiscal magician"
Fiscal responsibility ++++
Deal with site-based budgeting

Creative financing
Strategic planner
Equitable sharing of resources and funding
Not just keeping the ship afloat
Management experience +
Success elsewhere
Strategic/strategist ++
Willingness to delegate/share responsibility
Resourceful
Administrative skills+
Ability to have a master plan
Technologically savvy

Other

Local person – must live in the city
Not “just” an educator
No litmus test
Goal to graduate top numbers
Long term

Do you agree with A+ Schools that there should be a clear line between policy and operations functions with the Board of Education being responsible for policy and the superintendent responsible for operations?

Yes, there should be a clear line between policy and operations

Should be clearly divided/defined +++++++
Undefined lines cause of previous Board problems and gridlock
Need clearly communicated expectations
Help reduce reactionary decisions
Board should establish criteria, decision-making framework
School board's role = oversight
School board should monitor the superintendent +
Should be like a CEO/Board of Directors +
Define parameters for both board and superintendent
Change the state law on the role of the board
By-laws are antiquated
Board and Superintendent should work together, but have separate functions
Board should allow the Superintendent to lead the school district
New leader should lay the groundwork for new parameters
New leader should guide the school board
Superintendent and Board should establish a clear vision – Board sets policy, Superintendent does operations
Let us get closer to the defined roles and better understanding and adhering to those roles

No, both should set policy

Superintendent should do both policy and operations

Should be collaboration between the Board and Superintendent to set policy and then Superintendent should implement
Superintendent should influence and shape board policies
Superintendent should be involved in goal setting/has role in developing policy +
Superintendent might be involved in policy decisions as well
The Board might use policy to micromanage the Superintendent
Superintendent and board should set policy together
Superintendent should be the 10th member of the Board, with no vote

No, the superintendent should set policy

Superintendent should focus on policy and delegate operations

No, a division of roles is unrealistic

Clearly defining their function is a fantasy and is unrealistic

The Role of the Superintendent

Superintendent has the power to hire and fire
Superintendent can focus on equity
Board needs to be informed by Superintendent, good communication is critical

The Role of the Board

Board should be less hands-on – they tied John Thompson's hands
Board should grant authority to superintendent +
Board should set high standards
Board is responsible for financial oversight, hiring Superintendent, approve employees – should approve recommendations of Superintendent
Board should support the superintendent
Board should set clear expectations and measure results +

The Role of the Community

Public needs to hold Board accountable
Community should have role in review and evaluation of superintendent

Micromanagement

Board should not micromanage
There is a difference between overseeing and following every detail

Board Should Consider...

Board should have professional development to find out what best practices work elsewhere and an orientation
Board needs conflict resolution
Board must know how to set policy +

Board focuses too much on certain neighborhoods
School board should have training

More Questions

What guidelines is the board using to define its role?
What should the input process be for board members?

Other

We need a competent Board +
Policy is driven by need
Clarifying issues is a challenging issue because of all of the stakeholders varying interests and neighborhoods +
Superintendent and Board should work together on strategic plan
Challenging issue due to all of the stakeholders and varying interests

Given the importance of attracting the best superintendent candidates to Pittsburgh to improve student achievement and reduce the racial achievement gap, do you agree or disagree with the A+ Schools position that the next superintendent's compensation package should be significantly higher?

Yes, agree that pay should be higher

Should be \$200,000 or more
Pay should be above average +
If they don't come for \$300,000, board shouldn't hire
\$300,000 seems reasonable
\$200,000 to \$250,000 should be offered
\$200,000 seems to be reasonable
Good pay brings good people
Should be comparable to a CEO at a corporation
Compensation should be competitive + — Our children are that important
Has to be higher considering the challenges of the district
Competitive base + performance based incentives
+++++++
Pay for a proven track record +
Money should not be the deal breaker
Pay whatever it takes +
We have to pay more
Competitive nationally because of small pool of candidates to consider from
Good health and retirement package
Research compensation of Top 10 best corporations

No, a high salary may not matter

A high salary may not bring the right person
High salary = negative publicity
More money does not necessarily mean a more qualified candidate

Compare cost of living and other districts

Salary should have reasonable relationship with other salaries in the Pittsburgh education system
Cost of living should be considered
Look at comparable school systems ++
Salaries comparable to other high performing districts
Salary should be at the top of the scale for a district our size - \$165,000 to \$175,000
What is the current market and what is the budget?
Board should let public know.

Perks

Buy the superintendent a home but no other perks
More money but cut the car and perks

Other Comments

If we offer a lot, we should demand a lot
Begin with base salary and increase based on meeting goals
Pay should be commensurate with achievement
Feedback from stakeholders
Expected to work all day
Keep options open, how much will it take to hire the best?
Allowance for professional development
Possible private funds for compensation?
Not just a resume but performance record and plan of action
Pittsburgh is a great location for superintendent that can capitalize on our strengths
Compensation should not be advertised but negotiated
Severance should be dependent on finishing the term of employment
Pay should be commensurate with experience
Educate the public about the salary range
Media, politicians and public will complain

What else should the Board of Education consider in conducting the search for our next superintendent?

Should the Board of Education give itself more time to recruit and hire the best candidate?

Yes, take more time

Don't hire just because of the quick timeline
Take enough time to do the search process well
Timeline is unrealistic
Question the quality of someone who could come on such short notice
Timeline is not long enough +
Process of whole search will take time
May not be ready by September 1st
Extend the timeline if necessary to find the right candidate

No, Timeline is long enough

Timeline is long enough
Critical to find as soon as possible

Is prior experience as a superintendent an absolute requirement?

No, prior experience isn't necessary

Don't limit search to educational background
Doesn't necessarily need prior experience +
Prior experience as a Superintendent is not necessary ++
Prior experience is not necessary as Superintendent but have management experience, turnaround specialist

Yes, prior experience is necessary

Needs to have superintendent experience

Prior experience as an educator is necessary

Needs to have experience as an educator +++

Blind Search

Look only at qualifications
No favoritism
Eliminate gender and racial bias
Search should be non-sexist, non-racist

Community Involvement

Finalists address the community
Bring candidates to public meetings with community
More community process
Stakeholders should be permitted to engage the candidates
Board should be careful to have sensitive communication to the community
Build time into the process for community input
Consider involving the community in the search process

Proven Track Record

Have past successes +
Super should have past experience working with boards
Track record of working in city similar to Pittsburgh
Reverse the trend of leaving city schools for the suburbs

National Search

Should consider both local and national candidates
Focus on national candidates
Must be a national search
Do a genuine national search

Local Search

Why search outside of Pittsburgh?
Should have presence in community as a leader
Candidate should come from the PPS

Other Comments

Board should do strong outreach to encourage African American candidates

Confidential until the end

Not dictated by NCLB

Super should have high expectations for students and teachers

Address the achievement gap between African Americans and whites, less advantaged and neighborhoods

Consider integrity of the candidate

Site visits of candidates

Have candidates respond to "real life scenarios" and "homework assignments"

Could the Board hire a Superintendent and his or her team as a package deal?

Candidate should be in good health

Superintendent shouldn't "suck up" to the Board

This should not be the person's last job before retirement

Board has a strategic plan as a vision – clarification of strategic plan for district – has this plan been presented to the candidate?

Superintendent should have a professional/executive coach

Accept who we have

A+ Schools must know:

The success of the city depends on the success of our schools

Parking Lot/Other Issues that came up

One person has concern about having an appointed board but should be criteria for becoming a school board member. Those criteria should be developed and discussed in a town meeting and involve community comment.

Violence issues should be addressed

Can't put old wine in new skins – new superintendent, old board

Transience not being addressed

30 year old model with 21st Century problems

Test scores shouldn't be the only criteria Superintendent is evaluated against

Include students on the Board, expand the student advisory board

Few School Board members are educators

Does the School Board have a vision?

Teachers and Superintendent should have merit pay

Appendix - Superintendent Job Description

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS - Pittsburgh Public Schools, Pittsburgh, PA
(From *Education Week*)

The City of Pittsburgh's Board of Public Education is seeking a passionate, academic leader with a proven track record of accomplishments as a Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent in an urban school setting. The Pittsburgh School District is the second largest in PA, with 86 public schools serving approximately 33,000 students and employing 5,200 people. With a 2005 operating budget of \$530 million, the District's racial balance is 56.6% African American and 43.4% Caucasian/Other. Pittsburgh is the nation's 21st largest metropolitan area.

THE LEADER

- A successful history of creating highly positive, collaborative working relationships with all key stakeholders from teachers, administrators, parents and students to the Board of Education, the media, government officials and the community-at-large.
- Ability to secure funding from multiple sources and provide prudent financial leadership in challenging financial times.
- Demonstrated success at improving student learning and using data-driven decision-making processes.
- Record of achievement in developing and implementing professional development plans and public engagement programs in support of the district's educational agenda.
- Experience in implementing effective personnel evaluation and accountability.

THE CHALLENGE

- Improve student achievement, with a particular focus on closing the performance gap between African American and other students.
- Provide continuing professional development for teachers and principals and identify and develop a talent pool for school leadership.
- Demonstrate political acumen that will improve communication between and among Board members and the Superintendent and Senior Staff as well as with local, state and national government officials.
- Align resources to ensure educational quality while minimizing taxpayer burden, including the development and implementation of a comprehensive plan that addresses over-capacity and facility utilization issues.

THE QUALIFICATIONS

- Ability to obtain a PA Superintendent's Letter of

Eligibility.

- Domicile within the City of Pittsburgh.
- Earned Doctorate in Educational Administration or related field.
- Experience as a Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent in a small, medium or large urban district.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS AND DEADLINE

- Application deadline: May 23, 2005. Start date: September 1, 2005.
- Include a resume with three references, a one-page recap of significant accomplishments in current position, and a two-page statement providing a personal perspective on the challenges of urban education and how the applicant would address those challenges.
- Contact and screenings will be managed by former Superintendents of the Pittsburgh Public Schools, Dr. Richard C. Wallace, Jr. and Dr. Helen S. Faison.
- Mail information confidentially to: Pittsburgh Superintendent Search, Board of Public Education, P.O. Box 7405, Pittsburgh, PA 15213.

Do not contact Board members or the District directly.
An Equal Opportunity Employer

Appendix - Superintendent Compensation

The Council of Great City Schools (GCS) is an association of 61 school districts, including cities such as Atlanta, New York, Toledo, Baltimore and Pittsburgh. Starting in 1997, the Council began to publish a biannual survey of Superintendents, including their salaries, for its member districts. The most recent survey was in the summer of 2003. The survey generated responses from 59 of the 61 member districts for a response rate of 96.7

- the average superintendent salary in 2003 was \$188,988;
- the salary range was \$120,000 to \$325,000;
- the average salary for a superintendent with five or more years experience was \$187,245;
- the average salary for a superintendent in a district with under 50,000 students was \$164,681;
- the average salary for superintendents in districts with 25,000 or more students was \$170,024.
- The range of annual bonuses or pay-for-performance provisions ranged from \$50,000 to \$100,000.
- Superintendent pay-for-performance bonuses ranged from 3 to 40 percent of their base salary.
- Some 81.4 percent of superintendents had benefits that included a car or mileage allowance; 30.5 percent had financial bonuses; 37.3 had such other benefits as travel allowances, membership dues, moving expenses, and communication allowances; and 5.1 percent had a house or apartment allowance.
- The average benefit package for GCS superintendents was valued at \$39,648.

A Special **Thank You** to our Facilitators and Sponsors!

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