Getting a Great Superintendent

Last week about 120 people came out the night of the Pirates playoff game to take part in a discussion focused on search process best practices (get 'em next year Buccos!). Participants had an opportunity to learn from former school board members Alex Matthews and Patrick Dowd, from Valerie Dixon, a community activist who served as a volunteer screener for the hiring of the Chief of Police, Robert Cavalier, a professor who runs the Project for Deliberative Democracy at Carnegie Mellon University and Leigh Halverson, a former Deputy Chief of Staff to Mayor Peduto who helped organize his nationwide search for top talent to fill appointed roles in city government.

After the panel discussion, many people left, presumably to go catch the start of the Pirates game. The participants that remained broke into small discussion groups to consider questions about what they found most interesting from the panel, who they think should be involved in the search process, and how they would like to be involved in the superintendent search process. In between discussion questions, participants used their mobile phones to participate in polling on these questions and others, including: Should the board conduct a national search (100% responded yes), and how should stakeholders be engaged (the number one choice of participants was through CMU’s deliberative democracy process). For complete polling results and a summary of small group discussion notes click here.

What we learned

While the discussion was far ranging, there were three important themes that emerged from the panel and the small group discussion and polling that occurred afterward.

1. **The Board has an incredibly important, difficult and time consuming job ahead.** Governing Pennsylvania’s second largest school district and improving educational outcomes for over 24,000 students while conducting the search for its next leader will require significant time and effort. Engaging more people to help will increase community ownership about the final decision.

2. **Stakeholder input is essential – you can’t have too much.** All of our speakers stressed the importance of getting representative perspectives from across the community to provide input on the vision that the Board could set for what they want from the next Superintendent. While there are many different perspectives about what works in education, so too are there in perspectives on policing and criminal justice. The deliberative democracy process that was used to help build the list of criteria for the next chief allowed every voice to be heard, and created a roadmap for a community based screening committee to make recommendations. Participants strongly agreed that stakeholder input is essential (with strong support for meetings that solicit input of both the community in regional meetings and stakeholders like teachers, parents and students), identified a broad range of stakeholders who should be involved, and offered a variety of
ideas about what they are willing to do to help engage others. Participants in this meeting favored CMU’s deliberative democracy process because of its structured and objective format that both educated and engaged many voices. Participants created a large list of stakeholders that should be engaged and offered numerous ways in which they would like to be involved in the process and in increasing engagement.

3. **Process matters.** Panelists and meeting participants talked a lot about how a structured, transparent and fair process that is heavy on stakeholder input is important for building community support not only for the next superintendent, but for the future of the Pittsburgh Public Schools. Each speaker emphasized that the more help that the board can get, the better the outcome will be. Tapping into the expertise and connections of multiple members of the community can help increase the Board’s reach as they try to find candidates. Participants especially appreciated Valerie Dixon’s experience as a screening panel member for the Chief McClay search.

**Recruiting and selecting the next superintendent for Pittsburgh Public Schools is an amazing opportunity to build community investment in the success of our district and our students.** The superintendent’s position is more than just the leader of our schools. This person will set a vision and tone for our community and region about what it means to serve children well. Thankfully, we have good examples and insights from former school board members, the Talent City process, and other selection processes both in Pittsburgh and across the country. The Board has an opportunity and challenge to develop a strong search process that is transparent, fair and inclusive of many community voices. It won’t be easy, but as last Wednesday’s meeting showed us, they’ll have lots of people willing to help if they ask.

You can learn more about the process used to select Chief McClay and what the research tells us we should be looking for from a school leader by watching PCTV21 later this month for our interview with Leigh Halverson and Dr. Olga M. Welch, Dean of the School of Education at Duquesne University.
Deliberative Democracy Forums

Deliberative Democracy Forums seek to discover what people think about an issue after they have engaged alternative perspectives in a deeply deliberative process. Deliberative forums provide the resources citizens need to develop an opinion informed by relevant facts, expert information, and an understanding of how issues and policies affect others in their community.

Elements of a Deliberative Forum

1. Organizers recruit a diverse group of participants
2. Participants receive background materials offering basic information and a balanced overview of various perspectives on issues
3. Participants engage in small-group discussions facilitated by trained moderators
4. Participants’ questions are addressed by a resource panel of people with expertise on the issues
5. Participants return to small groups to reflect on the information provided by resource panelists
6. Participants complete an exit survey.

Benefits of a Deliberative Forum

• Participants develop an opinion informed by relevant facts, expert information, and an understanding of how issues and policies affect others in their community
• Participants enrich their understanding of their own perspective.
• Participants develop understanding of new or alternative perspectives.
• Participants develop a more comprehensive knowledge about the issues.
• Participants practice skills of civil deliberation.

Program for Deliberative Democracy

Contact: Robert Cavalier, rc2z@andrew.cmu.edu

Contact: Tim Dawson, theartofdemocracy@gmail.com
Small Group Discussions

Below you will find individual responses to our discussion questions that were transcribed by our volunteer facilitators. We have grouped comments under headings to provide for ease of reading and organization.

Question 1 - What did you find most helpful or interesting from the panel?

Comments related to what people learned about process

- The analogy with the police chief search was successful. We should use this approach.
- If they leave out certain groups or individuals, you set the next supe up for failure.
- Advice to look at other cities.
- Large emphasis on community involvement.
- Students involved in the process. Community based meetings in schools.
- The points made by all panelists on how they needed help throughout the process.
- Process must be transparent
- Process must be equitable for all/inclusive, which will produce the best candidates.
- The emphasis on commitment and time to get it done right.
- Liked the objective approach of a search firm.
- The molded relationship of the search firm and the screening group.
- The process in especially important with new board members.
- Criteria seems important but the process was illusive.
- Open and Sharing
- The process described was thorough, thoughtful, and gathering the community.
- Everyone had an opinion, but they used it to work together
- The more democratic the process, the better, public opinion is extremely important.
- Becoming familiar with the deliberative process.
- Important to get as many people involved as possible.
- Surprised that there is no standard search process.
- Surprised by how many superintendent search processes have occurred.
- Processing the criteria.
- Comparisons to police chief search.
Comments related to the Board’s role

- This is the most important thing a school board does.
- School Board should be the screening committee.
- “The board is changing too, that could be a problem.”
- No one candidate will please everyone you have to have goals and keep children in mind. (2X)
- Helpful to hear how important the superintendent is.

Comments related to the panel that spoke

- Leigh’s experience in the mayor’s office was very helpful.
- Not much politics were discussed which was refreshing. (2X)
- The interest and concern of panel and willingness to share and help.
- Hearing input from former school board members (2x)
- Diversity of the panels experience. (5x)

Comments related to concerns participants had

- Concerned about national search, wants local talent.
- Will it be best for superintendent
- “Surprised that there are no local candidates?”
- “Broad foundation?”
- The time requirement is troubling.
- Talent city was a time sink.
- This needs to happen quick.

Question 2: What stakeholders should be involved in the search process?

- Parents, but especially make attempts to connect with the parents who are not always there.
- Church Leaders
- Librarians
- Child advocates/social workers
- Business community
- Students
- Foundations
- Former superintendents
- Sports coaches
- United Way
- Department of Human Services
Recent PPS graduates
Higher Ed. Community
Charter administrators
PSCC’s
P.I.I.N.
Council of Great City Schools
PFT and other labor leaders
Teachers, both new and old
Suburban families that have left the district (what would it take for them to move back)
My Brother’s Keeper
Someone who works or advocates for/with students with disabilities
Wilkinsburg
Principals
Neighborhood groups
HDEC
Elected officials
Economic Development Corporations
Pittsburgh Promise
Financial professionals
Juvenile justice workers
School Volunteers
LGBTQ community

Question 3: What are some ways you or your organization would like to be involved in the Superintendent search?

Comments related to hosting a townhall or deliberative democracy forum

- Host candidates in the schools
- “October 22nd event”, Community Forum with student voices- GPS Pittsburgh
- Dave Brenigan (Lawrenceville United) will host a meeting in Lawrenceville
- Would like to be involved in a deliberative democracy meeting, but stay informed after the meeting

Comments related to engaging different portions of the community

- Engage parents where they are- schools, school bus stops
- Want to make sure African-American parents to be heard
- Figure out [how] to engage new stakeholders
• “Facebook discussion”
• Advocate to get parents

Comments related to participants desire to get involved

• Attend more events like this one
• Introduce the candidates to the neighborhoods of the city
• Publicize info about what candidates have to offer
• Volunteer to facilitate deliberative sessions
• Publicize the information after meeting takes place
• “The Allegheny Conference would like a voice”
• Grable foundation would like to be involved
• “Yes I’d like to be involved”
• “as a parent/ teacher, want to be involved as a concerned citizen”
• Get involved with the deliberative democracy process- CAPA parent
• Would like feedback/ insight in top candidates before decisions are made- Faison parent and former principal
• Outreach- Door Knocking recruiting churches will provide childcare- Urban League
• “Create a list of demands”

Additional Comments

• Get a superintendent with experience in decentralizing the school system, empower principals
• Council of Great City Schools has credibility and they should be included
• Very well organized
• Resources for students who experience trauma/ challenges
• Find a way to publicize the candidate’s qualifications and experiences while maintaining anonymity
• Include student and parent voice in future meetings.
• Concerned about who School Board members view as their community if only 5% are voting.
• Everything was well explained
• People expected to share info about the type of superintendent not hear about the process, but it went really well and was a great surprise
• Host open meetings in new locations, churches, libraries
• Spend time on process, what we need will lead to good outcome
• Opportunity to be inspired by educators with great ideas
• Looking for someone who has a track record of staying put for at least 5 years in leadership positions that they are hired for
• A superintendent that maintains great programs already in place i.e. not changing everything
Getting a Great Superintendent Overview

Current run (last updated Oct 13, 2015 11:42am)

Polls: 10  
Participants: 74  
Average responses: 61  
Average engagement: 63%

Where do you live?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answers</th>
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<td>North</td>
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<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central/Hill District/Downtown</td>
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<td>Outside of Pittsburgh</td>
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How do you identify? (please choose one)

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<tr>
<th>Answers</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Student</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent/Caregiver</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educator</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concerned Citizen</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>61%</td>
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<tr>
<td>District Staff/School Board Member</td>
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<td>3%</td>
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What's your race/ethnicity?

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<tr>
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<td>African-American</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>37</td>
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<td>Latino</td>
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<td>Multiracial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
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<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Prefer not to say</td>
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<td>3%</td>
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Do you have children who attend PPS Schools?

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<tr>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes I have children but they have graduated or don't attend PPS Schools</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>52%</td>
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https://www.polleverywhere.com/reports/32972
Should the school board conduct a national search for the next superintendent?

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What did you find most helpful or interesting from what you heard from our panel?

Unique participants: 42

Pick the top three ways the school board should seek community input (choice 1).

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<tr>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>deliberative democracy process</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<td>public hearings</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>town hall/open forums</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>online surveys</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>telephone hotline</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>town hall meetings/or deliberative democracy sessions by geographic regions(north, south, east, west, central)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24%</td>
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<tr>
<td>town hall meetings/deliberative democracy sessions by stakeholder group (teachers, students, parents, administrators, employers, higher education, etc)</td>
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<td>23%</td>
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<tr>
<td>appoint stakeholders to serve on search committee/advisory panel</td>
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<td>9%</td>
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Pick the top three ways the school board should seek community input (choice 2).

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<th>Answers</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<td>deliberative democracy process</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>public hearings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>town hall/open forums</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>online surveys</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>telephone hotline</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>town hall meetings/or deliberative democracy sessions by geographic regions(north, south, east, west, central)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>town hall meetings/deliberative democracy sessions by stakeholder group (teachers, students, parents, administrators, employers, higher education, etc)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23%</td>
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<tr>
<td>appoint stakeholders to serve on search committee/advisory panel</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15%</td>
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Pick the top three ways the school board should seek community input (choice 3).

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<tr>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>deliberative democracy process</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>public hearings</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>town hall/open forums</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>online surveys</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>telephone hotline</td>
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<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>town hall meetings/or deliberative democracy sessions by geographic regions (north, south, east, west, central)</td>
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<td>29%</td>
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<td>appoint stakeholders to serve on search committee/advisory panel</td>
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<td>7%</td>
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What are some ways you or your organization would like to be involved in the Superintendent search?

Unique participants: 22

Engagement: 30%

Responses: 45
What did you find most helpful or interesting from what you heard from our panel?

Current run (last updated Oct 13, 2015 12:37pm)

42 Participants 1 Polls 64 Average responses 100% Average engagement

Survey

1. What did you find most helpful or interesting from what you heard from our panel?

Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>228675</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>203163</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Use Model that was used to find new chief</td>
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<tr>
<td>203163</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>935383</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Community involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>669018</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Smart, deliberative process for Pgh City candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>998872</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Apprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>998872</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dedication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>181842</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Understanding of the deliberative process and insight from panelists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>977049</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hearing the details of process design and implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>492929</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Public discussion of priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>513610</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Process discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>689393</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>school Board should first articulate a clear vision and create criteria, and share with public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>402964</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Deliberative and structured process with transparency and input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>929758</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>The search will be a long but critical process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>929758</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Good panel diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>929758</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Importance of criterion and arriving at these criterion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

https://www.polleverywhere.com/reports/34311
What did you find most helpful or interesting from what you heard from our panel?

929758 1 Can't please everyone
929758 1 Very little politics which was refreshing
929758 1 Transparency and inclusion is critical
666610 1 Democracy
666610 1 Input
496840 1 Selection Process
1033345 1 Consensus
340411 1 Criteria
340411 1 Process
340411 1 Analogy
613411 1 Deliberative democracy process
1048315 1 Utility of a search firm after criteria are set by community through broad community meetings.
108456 1 "Our kids are growing up in a different education system than we had growing up"
189845 1 A lot of time
216847 1 The process for choosing police chief,
844663 1 Transparent
844663 1 Public engagement
844663 1 Deliberative
370018 1 The deliberative process J. Nash
507743 1 Biased
138504 1 The collaborative process, commitment, thoroughness, and and pay attention to what didn't work,
772200 1 Informative
247689 1 All the time involved in the process,
247689 1 It's a big job
972403 1 How time intensive screening process is
What did you find most helpful or interesting from what you heard from our panel?

430085  1  Yes
430085  1  Information
430085  1  Process
430085  1  Community involvement
430085  1  Community not professionals
430085  1  Parents
533599  1  Pros and cons of hiring search entity
748597  1  Transparent
1034857  1  Collaboration
1034857  1  Community
687730  1  Valerie Dixons experience
489918  1  Deliberate process
448236  1  Everything was helping
757367  1  Emphasis on community involvement
175977  1  Informative
175977  1  Positive
188800  1  No
368632  1  Have experienced members of the team.
368632  1  Experience
589152  1  School Board involvement
780028  1  Unity
365672  1  The 9 member school board is a screening committee. #Greatsupe
365672  1  The 9 member school board is a screening committee. #Greatsupe
What are some ways you or your organization would like to be involved in the Superintendent search?

Current run (last updated Oct 13, 2015 12:43pm)

22 Participants
1 Polls
45 Average responses
100% Average engagement

Survey

1. What are some ways you or your organization would like to be involved in the Superintendent search?

Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unregistered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Engage Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unregistered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Host community conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unregistered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Live stream meetings for those who can't attend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unregistered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Informing selection criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unregistered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Students articulating demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unregistered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Spread the word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unregistered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Attend events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unregistered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tell others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unregistered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>We want African American parents to be active in the convo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unregistered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Get the churches involved</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unregistered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Try neighborhood meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unregistered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Invite parents with babies and small children who may not often be able to participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unregistered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Media and social media outreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unregistered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Elevator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unregistered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Resumafir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unregistered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Resumator</td>
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</table>
What are some ways you or your organization would like to be involved in the Superintendent search?

- A+ Schools
  - Host community conversations
- Unregistered
  - Meeting with my school board member and supporting her work
  - #ourschoolsoursuperintendent
  - Deliberate with community members about values, criteria and concerns
  - Support the board
  - Facebook #ourschoolsoursuperintendent
  - Attend regional meeting
  - Creating meetings with students parents and teachers to discuss our needs with out representatives
  - Voice
  - Commit resources to active recruitment of diverse citizens
  - Make the process FEEL more inclusive J. Nash
  - Twitter or reshare information. #GreatSupe
  - Work with comm. orgs. as a parent to keep parents informed on and connected to the search process
  - Want to host a regional deliberative democratic process!
  - Work with comm. orgs. as a parent to keep parents informed on and connected to the search process
  - Inform criteria
  - Open meeting with school board
  - Town halls
  - Host meetings in new locations
  - Engage and activate new parents
  - Engage More African American MALES
  - Neighborhood meetings
  - Find active community members who will bring ideas and return information to their population.
  - Deliberate process
  - Community involvement
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Username</th>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<td>Community group involvement</td>
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<td>will you co-host regional community meetings with @GPS_PGH? #Greatsupe</td>
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<td>@Teen_Bloc When in school behavior has big out-of-school consequences #restorativepractices</td>
<td><a href="http://t.co/289gVbxW8T">http://t.co/289gVbxW8T</a></td>
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