

SAGINAW PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Superintendent Search Input Report October 13, 2009

A series of meetings was held in late September and early October, 2009 with groups of parents, staff, and community constituents of the Saginaw Public Schools.

At each meeting, participants were told of the Board's overall responsibility for making the decision to employ a new superintendent, the role of the consultants in facilitating a process which will bring forward a group of quality candidates for consideration and a detailed description of the selection process itself. All participants were helped to understand the Board's commitment to an open, inclusive, collaborative effort to find and employ a well-qualified individual to fill this important position.

Discussion was then opened to receive input in the general areas of:

- challenges facing the district in the immediate future,
- desirable professional background and experience,
- desirable personal traits and attributes of the new superintendent.

Comments at each meeting were recorded by the consultant.

In addition, an Input Form was posted on the district website and everyone was invited to download it and return it directly to the MASB office.

It needs to be kept in mind that participation in the input process was self-selected and voluntary, so the input does not have the same high level of validity that a well-designed research study using random-selection techniques might have. Nevertheless, we believe this input is representative and informative and should be strongly considered as the Board develops selection criteria for the candidates.

The items bolded at the top of each category are those mentioned repeatedly and are, therefore, the most important for the respondents but they are not ranked in any order. The items that follow the bolded items were also cited numerous times, but not to the extent of the bolded items. Items that were unique are not reported.

It should also be noted that items have been summarized and grouped, with minor re-wording, to avoid repetition.

CHALLENGES FACING THE DISTRICT

- **Enrollment loss due to relocation, dropouts, charters, private schools and public school choice**
- **Finance and budget**
- **Public perception of the district, including school safety**
- **Achieving equity of resources across the district**

Student achievement

Keeping technology current

Partnering with other units of government/agencies to make the community safer and more attractive

DESIRABLE PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND, EXPERIENCE AND SKILLS

- **Experience in a diverse, urban environment**
- **Knowledge of school finance and a record of successful budget management**
- **Demonstrated record of community involvement/leadership/collaboration-building**
- **Doctorate not necessary**
- **Strong communication skills; able to develop, articulate and implement a vision**
- **Record of progressively increased responsibilities, preferably in an educational environment**
- **Teaching experience**

Private sector/business experience

Experience as a principal

Negotiations experience

Marketing skills

Knows and uses technology

Management experience could be in private sector or non-profit

DESIRABLE PERSONAL TRAITS AND CHARACTERISTICS

- **Highly visible, in schools and in the community and enjoys personal interactions**

- **Wants to be here; wants to be a part of our community**
- **Believes in collaboration**
- **Listens, makes informed decisions, then displays courage and integrity**
- **Committed to all students**

Motivator; inspirational; exhibits a positive attitude

Committed to equity

Has a sense of humor

Dynamic and energetic

Role-model and mentor

Willing to make mistakes/fail

Relates well to a wide variety of people

Committed to diversity

COMMENTS

Constituents and staff of the Saginaw Public Schools are proud of the district, especially its diversity, dedicated staff, range of programs and its sense of community. While there is virtually unanimous agreement that the district is facing major and serious challenges, there is also a pervasive and underlying feeling that the district is better than it is perceived from the outside.

All groups cited enrollment loss and its consequent negative impact on the budget as a major challenge. Nearly as strong was the feeling that the district suffers from a negative image, much of which originates from socio-economic factors in the community at large.

Participants articulated a strong feeling that the new superintendent have a background and experience in education specifically in a diverse, urban setting. There was much support for requiring a record of successful teaching experience as well as previous successful school administrative experience.

There was no consistent feeling on exactly what kind of administrative experience should be required (e.g. principal, central office, superintendent). Some participants felt that leadership experience in a private sector or non-profit setting could be acceptable. There was strong

support for finding someone who has some knowledge of finance and who has had successful budget management experience

There was no consistent opinion on the level of training that should be required. During discussion there was a general opinion that graduate-level coursework would be required, but there was virtually no support for requiring a doctorate.

A major focus in all meetings was on desirable personal traits and characteristics. It is very evident that finding an individual with outstanding human relations skills is critical. Participants hope to work with a leader who is open to information and genuinely listens before making decisions.

A major point of emphasis concerned commitment to the community. Participants were almost unanimous in their desire to have the new superintendent move into the district and become actively involved in community leadership, particularly in building coalitions outside of education to solve community-wide problems.

There is a hope that the new superintendent will enjoy direct communication and be highly visible both in the schools and in the community.

It was a pleasure to facilitate these discussions and the time and the thoughtfulness of the participants is much appreciated.

Michigan Association of School Boards
Superintendent Search Services

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