

DUDLEY-CHARLTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Approved minutes of the Dudley-Charlton Regional School Committee Meeting, Superintendent Finalist Interviews, Monday, February 11, 2019, at Shepherd Hill Regional High School, 68 Dudley-Oxford Road, Dudley, 5 p.m.

In attendance were members of the school committee: Pauline Aucoin, Chair, Mary Antocci, Vice Chair, Cathleen Carmignani, Catherine Kabala, Elaine Rabbitt, Stephanie Reed, Jamie Terry; Celeidgh O'Brien, Student Representative.

Also in attendance were district administrators Lorinda Allen, William Chaplin, Jennifer Desto, Barbara Marderosian, Richard Mathieu, Lori Pacheco, Dean Packard, Kathleen Pastore, Diane Seibold, Christopher Starczewski; Tracy Novick, MASC, Kim Lundquist, Mary Solomita, Christine Marrier.

1. Call to Order

The chair called the meeting to order at 5 p.m.

This special meeting of the Dudley-Charlton Regional School Committee is being held to interview two of the four finalist candidates for the position of Superintendent of Schools.

5 p.m. – Steven Lamarche, Superintendent of Schools, Bourne Public School, since 2019 Mrs. Aucoin, congratulated Mr. Lamarche on being a finalist and reviewed the procedure for the interview. Each candidate will ask two questions, and the interview will conclude with a closing statement by the candidate.

Mrs. Rabbitt Question #1

The Educator Evaluation process has been in place for several years now. Can you speak to how you utilize this system to develop your educators and administrative team to improve their craft? Can you provide examples of:

1. Use of this process to help a staff member grow their skill set?
2. Use of this process to address an underperforming staff member?
3. Use the process so that the functions within the process (observation) is seen as a positive?

Finally, how have you set your own yearly goals to address both the needs of your supervisor(s) and your desire for personal and professional growth? What type of support and feedback do you find beneficial?

Mr. Lamarche said the educator evaluation system as introduced in 2012 was meant to change the culture of evaluation and teaching and learning in public schools. He called it a great instrument, noting that in his district he worked with the union to set focus. In Bourne, the focus was on community connection.

Mr. Lamarche said we want teacher evaluation to be a collaborative tool for looking at teaching and learning. By looking at the areas of focus, we try to work on those annually, collaboratively. For the struggling educator, this is a tool we use to double back, and ask how we can improve.

Mrs. Rabbitt Question #2

Looking at your district improvement plan, a couple of questions came up: The two statements under Objectives for Advancement and success for all learners. Give these two statements life.

1. Learning needs of all students drive the operating budget and the master schedule.

2. Learning needs of all students drive district objectives, professional learning and student practice growth and goal setting.

Mr. Lamarche said often times programmatically, or how we have always done it drives the schedule. We don't always do what is best in favor of the way we have always done it. Mr. Lamarche said we want the kids to drive the schedule, not the schedule to drive the students.

Our budget has to tell a story of what we are doing for students. We want students to be a part of the process. WE need to ask if we can base the budget on what kids really need.

Mrs. Carmignani Question #1

What steps would you take to reduce and close the achievement gap among student groups in the district and between the students of the two towns?

Mr. Lamarche said first you need to identify where the achievement gap originates. Is it curriculum based, assessment based or instructional based, and who falls within these categories? Then you want to be plan oriented and methodical to address it, whether assessment tool is not measuring as you want it to be.

In closing the achievement gap between the two towns, Mr. Lamarche said he is not sure where the gap is. Mr. Lamarche said he toured all schools earlier in the day, and noted there is an organizational need to bring the two sides of the district together and make sure all is equitable. What we do every day should be equitable between our two communities.

Mrs. Carmignani, Question #2

Do you use data? Please provide us with examples of how you have used data to make decisions, plan, budget, or work with others.

Mr. Lamarche said data is good and bad: it serves a purpose and sometimes not. He said DESE collects data and schools often don't know why and sometimes it comes back to the district in unexpected ways. There has to be a system to collect data with only a few strokes, and give teachers access to it but not spend all their time mining it.

Mrs. Reed Question #1:

As a leader of the district how would you obtain the buy in of staff and administration for change or new ideas to bring the district from good to great?

Mr. Lamarche said the most difficult part of education is change. To motivate, to bring the district from good to great it has to be articulated as to the purpose of the change, and be reflective. We need everyone to participate in the process that is articulated and thought of all the way through.

From my perspective Dudley-Charlton is great already. How to get it to the next step is the question. We need to be true reflective practitioners to get a sense of what they are doing really well.

Mrs. Reed Question #2

Our superintendents have always made sure to be known to our students by being present in the schools and being present at activities. Do you have a plan for being connected to our students?

Mr. Lamarche said his goal is to live in the community in which he works and be connected. Accessibility is a key piece. The other piece is to be connected to his own children who are involved in athletics, sports, and to be present as a father. He regularly attends events to see what the students are all about. People should know the superintendent.

Mrs. Aucoin Question #1

How important to you are community ideas and parent/community input into district decision-making? How will you facilitate the flow of information from the district parents and community? How will you facilitate the flow of ideas and critical feedback from parents and other citizens back to the district?

Mr. Lamarche said we are community based schools and this is critical. He said Bourne is opening a new school but did not know what it looked like until half way through the process, and this is due in large part to the community. He cited the Charlton Elementary School reading program, Adopt a Reader program that gets people involved.

Mrs. Aucoin, Question #2

We think we have excellent candidates. How can you convince us that you are the person for this position?

Mr. Lamarche cited his years of experience. He has worked hard to be in this position. He said he loves being superintendent. He said his experiences are unique. He has a background in special education. He is passionate about accelerated learners, early college learners programs. It is about creating opportunities. He worked in Webster as interim special education director when the department had 47 areas out of compliance. He said he approaches job with a sense of humor.

Mrs. Antocci Question #1

Give us some experiences that you have had as an administrator and outcomes that came from them and explain how they would help us see your potential as a successful superintendent.

Mr. Lamarche said he has had a great deal of experience. His roles have been from St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands to high school to building based administration to opening a new school. Mr. Lamarche worked with the town to create an old wood lab in the high school into an innovation studio with capital outlay funding into a project based learning space. That came from innovation and not without some resistance. It was opened to the entire district.

Mrs. Antocci Question #2

Our district is a multi-million dollar operation; some would say it should be run like a business. How would you respond?

Mr. Lamarche said he agrees there is a business flavor to education. You are talking about multi million dollars. The towns expect fiscal responsibility and accountability.

However, the one thing that is difficult to explain is human capital. Educators make thousands of decisions a day, most companies do not. There are ways that it is not a business.

Mrs. Kabala Question #1

“Control” is an important element in managing a school district. How do you manage to be in “control” without being overly “controlling?”

Mr. Lamarche said he would change the word to accountability as this is really important to him. He said he expects the school committee to hold him accountable as he holds others accountability. Control is common at some point in time in education. The goal is to provide the best for our students. Mr. Lamarche said it involves open dialogue, being honest. He is not a micromanager. He said he decentralized the central office and brought ourselves together. Everyone knows that the principal is in charge of his/her school. This administrative leadership team develops the budget together.

Mrs. Kabala Question #2

How do you keep the school committee informed? In particular, what is your strategy around issues that are your responsibility but that the school committee would have an interest?

Mr. Lamarche said he works closely with chair, taking the lead through the chair, to either send out information on demand or on the spot. He sends out an email in Bourne called TidBits to the committee. He never uses texts, usually a phone call. He has an open door policy and answers his own phone.

Mrs. Terry Question #1

Let me start by saying I think our District has many great attributes, but we are always striving to be better. After sifting through a full day of learning about our District and getting to know many on the interview committee members throughout this process, what are the first steps you would take in bettering our district if appointed? And what attracts you to this district?

Mr. Lamarche said he does not own a bulldozer. He said he only received a slice of the district during his tour. He said he had a fantastic visit, which ended with the Charlton Elementary School faculty. He called the people in the district passionate and proud, and said he would not tell us what he would do after today. It would not be fair. Dudley-Charlton is clearly home to me.

The Dudley-Charlton Regional School District's 2018-2021 Strategic Plan Portrait of a Graduate details an initiative that embodies the message that Everybody Matters. How do you plan to support every teacher and administrator throughout the year through this initiative?

Mr. Lamarche said Bourne has a Kindness Matters initiative, which is similar to Charlton Elementary School's Kindness Matters. We look at students with multiple disabilities. Their relationship in school is excellent among their peers, but drops off when they go home. We try to work on social skills.

As far as staff and administrators, Mr. Lamarche said everyone has a voice. We have one to one conversations. When a new administrator comes on board, one of Bourne's practices is to honor those things that go well and see where the new person's skills match.

As for teachers, Mr. Lamarche said we look at their ideas and honor what they bring to the position.

Steven Lamarche-

Closing remarks: Mr. Lamarche said he is the person he is today and what I bring to the table is through collaboration. He is an emotional person, who believes in emotional intelligence. He said he is fortunate to be a finalist in this impressive district. He is a collaborator who will strive to understand everything about the district. .

Mrs. Aucoin said the committee is still on schedule to select a superintendent on Feb. 27.

The interview concluded at 5:47 p.m.

The committee recessed at 5:47 p.m.

6:30 p.m. – Dr. Michael Whaley

The meeting resumed at 6:18 p.m.

Elaine Rabbitt: Question 1: The Educator Evaluation process has been in place for several years now. Can you speak to how you utilize this system to develop your educators and administrative team to improve their craft? Can you provide examples of:

1. Use of this process to help a staff member grow their skill set?
2. Use of this process to address an underperforming staff member?
3. Use the process so that the functions within the process (observation) is seen as a positive

Finally, how have you set your own yearly goals to address both the needs of your supervisor(s) and your desire for personal and professional growth? What type of support and feedback do you find beneficial?

Dr. Whaley said he makes it a yearly goal to visit as many classrooms as possible, as he believes this provides a diagnostic. Dr. Whaley said a purpose of the evaluation system is working with the teacher to set yearly goals, and uses the feedback to assist in determining a final rating.

Dr. Whaley said he is the primary evaluator in the building with 62 teachers, although not all need to be evaluated every year. He said he makes the process as supportive as possible, focusing on the goals, and supporting student achievement. He said he sets challenging goals as he wants to have the best school.

Dr. Whaley said he appreciates consistent feedback, as that encourages his growth. He said a constant flow of constructive and positive feedback is best, as critical feedback does not support growth.

When he assumed his present position in 2009, Dr. Whaley was the sixth principal in four years. He had to build trust among the staff, as well as address the graduation system or the state was going to take over.

Leadership changes in Burrillville

Mrs. Carmignani Question #1

What steps would you take to reduce and close the achievement gap among student groups in the district and between the students of the two towns?

Dr. Whaley replied that he enjoys studying data and responding to the culture of the school. He said he noticed in looking at Dudley-Charlton Regional School District data, that improvement is needed among students with special needs. make improvements.

Excellence and equity.

Between the two towns?

Mrs. Carmignani, Question #2

Do you use data? Please provide us with examples of how you have used data to make decisions, plan, budget, or work with others.

Dr. Whaley said he implemented a good problem solving team who regularly looks at data. The goal is to be effective and efficient in our use of resources.

Mrs. Reed Question #1

As a leader of the district how would you obtain the buy in of staff and administration for change or new ideas to bring the district from good to great?

Dr. Whaley said he is impressed by those he has met during the site visit. He said relationship building, identifying the critical needs, working with building leaders creates the necessary energy and momentum to move things forward. He said staff know there is hope for the new leader to come in and set that course. Dr. Whaley said he is not being afraid to do the work.

Mrs. Reed Question #2

Our superintendents have always made sure to be known to our students by being present in the schools and being present at activities. I was wondering if you had a plan for being connected to our students?

Dr. Whaley said he wants to be superintendent for the challenge, but still likes interacting with kids. As superintendent, he would plan to be in the schools and in the classrooms. Without that you are not connected to what is important and why you do the job.

Mrs. Aucoin Question #1

How important to you are community ideas and parent/community input into district decision-making? How will you facilitate the flow of information from the district parents and community? How will you facilitate the flow of ideas and critical feedback from parents and other citizens back to the district?

Dr. Whaley said a multiple tiered approach is needed, and social media plays a role. He said he currently has a student advisory board, a school improvement team, and has created a board to focus on athletics. Dr. Whaley said he is open to having community input and feedback as schools need to reflect the community.

Mrs. Aucoin Question #2

We think we have excellent candidates. How can you convince us that you are the person for this position?

Dr. Whaley said he has looked at the district from afar through the website and YouTube and looks forward to connecting more and more. He said he felt a connection at the first interview, and experienced a sense of comfort. That continued when interacting with Mrs. Terry and Mrs. Rabbitt during their visit to Burrillville. He said he is excited about the district's plans for the future, particularly, the facilities study. Dr. Whaley cited his value system, his ability to build relationships, will lend the energy that the district will need to continue to grow.

Mrs. Antocci Question 1

Give us some experiences that you have had as an administrator and outcomes that came from them and explain how they would help us see your potential as a successful superintendent.

Dr. Whaley said he has had a number of experiences that he is proud of. He worked as a science teacher, coach, and class advisor prior to moving into disciplinary role, where he wrote curriculum, common assessments, and created digital portfolios. He said being fiscally creative with limited resources has made him resourceful.

Mrs. Antocci Question #2

Our district is a multi-million dollar operation; some would say it should be run like a business. How would you respond?

Dr. Whaley said school is never going to be a business. There are business-like aspects, such as management and personnel, but with children there needs to be that human element of paying

attention to the whole child. He said it is possible to incorporate the best of both worlds: being efficient and effective, but with a human touch.

Mrs. Kabala Question #1

“Control” is an important element in managing a school district. How do you manage to be in “control” without being overly “controlling?”

Dr. Whaley said this is done by trusting people to do their job, and working to build rapport and a relationship. Dr. Whaley said he meets with groups regularly, and hires the right people for the jobs, attracting quality talent and working with them to ensure the job gets done. Not a micromanager, not afraid of difficult conversations.

Mrs. Kabala Question #2

How do you keep the school committee informed? In particular, what is your strategy around issues that are your responsibility but that the school committee would have an interest?

Dr. Whaley said relationships are key, establishing a positive working relationship with everybody. He said it is important that the school committee is well informed. There are decisions a superintendent needs to make and the school committee empowers that person to make that decision. The rationale around those decisions is important.

Mrs. Terry Question #1

When on the site visit in Rhode Island we learned a lot about how you have worked to find creative ways to work on many different challenges that your staff and/or students face. Examples of such being, raising graduation rates from the in 70th percentile to in the 90th percentile, creating working groups to address many different topics, and out of the box solutions to concerns with vaping. Without having the time to be physically present in every school every day how would you foresee being able to introduce concepts to areas of concern on a larger level districtwide across 7 schools and two Towns?

Dr. Whaley said it is really about the relationships, to be invested in your district administrators as they are the point people.

Mrs. Terry Question #2

What makes you sure you are ready to take this next step?

Dr. Whaley said his current school district is fine tuning, and this is what he enjoys most about school administration. The high school is in the end phase of pathways of studies. Dr. Whaley said he thrives on a challenge. He has a vision for a K-12 system that is inclusive and which supports student needs.

As a final statement, Dr. Whaley said he would look forward to the opportunity and challenge of leading this district. He foresees a tremendous number of opportunities among a wonderful staff, with great things going on. He wants to be a part of that.

Mrs. Aucoin thanked Dr. Whaley for his interest, and informed him that the committee is still on schedule to select a superintendent at its meeting of Wednesday, February 27. Mrs. Aucoin said the candidate may call the office if he has any questions.

Mr. Whaley left the meeting at 7:10 p.m.

Minutes of the Superintendent Finalist Interviews
Monday, February 11, 2019

Next meeting date: Tuesday, February 26, 2019, Shepherd Hill Regional High School, 68 Dudley-Oxford Road, Dudley, 5 p.m.

Tuesday, February 26, 2019
5 p.m. Jennifer Haggerty
6:30 p.m. Dr. Julia Carlson

Adjourn

A motion by S. Reed, seconded by M. Antocci to adjourn the meeting was approved by unanimous vote at 7:10 p.m.