

DUDLEY-CHARLTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT'

Approved minutes of the meeting of Dudley-Charlton Regional School Committee, Superintendent Candidate Finalists' interviews, Tuesday, February 26, 2019, held at Shepherd Hill Regional High School, 68 Dudley-Oxford Road, Dudley, 5 p.m.

In attendance were members of the school committee: Pauline J. Aucoin, Chair, Mary N. Antocci, Cathleen Carmignani, Catherine M. Kabala, Elaine M. Rabbitt, Stephanie A. Reed, Jamie L. Terry, Lori A. Pacheco, Lorinda Allen, Christopher Starczewski, Diane Seibold at 6:36, Kathleen Pastore, Jennifer Desto, Kristine E. Nash, Rich Mathieu, William F. Chaplin, Mary Solomita, Liz LaFond, MASC; media representatives Rich Earle, audio-visual coordinator, Sandra Sullivan, recording secretary.

1. Call to Order

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. – Jennifer Haggerty, Superintendent of Schools, Erving School Union #28.
Mrs. Aucoin, congratulated her on being a finalist and reviewed the procedure for the interview. Each committee member 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?

Ms. Haggerty said the evaluation system is a wonderful tool, and noted she trained administrators in the system when it was implemented. Ms. Haggerty said as a superintendent it is important that there is open communication line from staff to leadership and central office. This line should not be disparate but cohesive.

Ms. Haggerty said she has used the rubric to help teachers and staff with their directed growth plans. Ms. Haggerty said it is important to note that an evaluation is not something that an administrator is doing to a staff, but together we are mapping a plan for the betterment of their learning and students' learning.

Mrs. Rabbitt, Question #2: uniqueness of Union 28, speak to how you entered your superintendency in the union and found a pathway of respecting culture, yet you worked to create a vision of those four parties to create the overall arching vision.

Mrs. Haggerty said the first plan was listening. Her entry plan sought to capture multiple perspectives of administrators, teachers, and students to create a reality. Ms. Haggerty said she spent time in the schools, and found more commonalities, which led to a goal in the strategic plan.

Mrs. Carmignani Question #1

How do you use data when planning budgets and curriculum?

Ms. Haggerty said schools and life are driven by data, but it is not the only factor in decision making as data can be interpreted differently. Ms. Haggerty said of more importance is how we gather data, as this can assist in making decisions that are based on providing the best education for our students.

Mrs. Carmignani Question #2:

Noting the candidate has done research on our district, Mrs. Carmignani asked if there is any area that she would like to investigate.

Ms. Haggerty said she has read about the district and its towns. Her entry plan is to dig deeper relative to curriculum and instruction, and test data. She would begin the conversation about where we need to grow.

Mrs. Reed Question #1:

As a leader, how would you obtain the buy in from staff, and bring the district from good to great?

Ms. Haggerty said it is important to think of the why of change, and not to change for change's sake. Is the change to improve performance of staff students, and will it implement a strategic plan goal? She said it is good to have urgency as to why the need for change, but if it is coming from only one place it is not going to be lasting.

Mrs. Reed Question #2

Past superintendents have made themselves known in the district. How does Ms. Haggerty intend to connect to our students and district?

Ms. Haggerty said she would attend in school and after school activities, such as concerts, football games, eating lunch in the cafeteria and having casual conversations with students. She cited the Superintendent's Advisory Council as an example of getting to know students and their needs.

Mrs. Aucoin Question #1

How important to you are community ideas, and parent input? How would you facilitate this?

Ms. Haggerty said parents and our students are our consumers, and just as in the business world, it is as important to gather feedback from consumers as it is in education. She said scheduling coffee hours, forums, drop-ins are some ways that this can be accomplished. Ms. Haggerty said her entry plan provides for time to gather data, job descriptions, and job audits which will allow her to inform the school community.

Mrs. Aucoin Question #2:

We think we have excellent candidates convince us you are the best candidate.

Ms. Haggerty cited her unique skillset of managing five budgets and towns, as well as her background as a principal. She has gained perspective that has been valuable in the superintendent's office. Ms. Haggerty said she spent 20 years in the classroom, which gives her a strong perspective when she asks someone to do an initiative. She described herself as a good listener, and a person who strives to build relationships and make connections.

Mrs. Antocci Question #1:

Should the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District be run as a multi-million dollar operation?

Ms. Haggerty said there are two equally important responses to that question: the best educational balanced with fiscal responsibility to the towns. Ms. Haggerty said yes, we need to be fiscally responsible, and there are business aspects of running a school district but relationships must be developed so it is not as if the schools are going to the towns once a year. A school district can be a business with a heart.

Mrs. Antocci Question #2:

Ms. Haggerty as asked to share her experiences as an administrator and any outcomes that made her the perfect fit for the district.

Ms. Haggerty said there is cohesion in Union 28, and during her tenure she and her staff built a strong union identity. The team completed a three-year initiative on universal design in learning. She said this is evidence that she is willing to work to find an initiative that works for the district, and get the staff's buy-in.

Mrs. Kabala Question #1:

How does Ms. Haggerty exercise control of the operations without being controlling in the managing of a school district.

Ms. Haggerty said the key is relationships and connecting with people and distributing leadership where it needs to be. The superintendent is a district decision maker at the end of the day, and one who must make hard choices. She said it is important that you are not a leader by yourself, but have developed relationships with those who work with and for.

Mrs. Kabala Question #2

How does Ms. Haggerty keep the school committee informed of strategies of issues that are the superintendent's?

Ms. Haggerty works hard among the five communities to ensure that they are informed as soon as possible. Without sharing confidential or sensitive details, Ms. Haggerty ensures the school committee is the conduit to the communities. Communicating via conversations, superintendent reports, emails helps foster a partnership.

Mrs. Terry Question #1:

Given the diversity, discuss how you ensure equity across the union and how students are offered the same education?

Ms. Haggerty said her current job is in a superintendent union in which each town develops its own budget and contributes to one union budget. We listen to the administrators. We understand the needs across all our towns. It starts with being visible in the schools and see where the budget figures actually are spent, as each budget number has a child's face.

Mrs. Terry Question #2

How confident are you in taking the next step career wise, in view of the larger student and staff population. During the site visit to Erving, so many people spoke highly of Ms. Haggerty's interest and ability to be on site each day and week. Mrs. Terry said this is wonderful, but we are a larger district and have more classrooms.

Ms. Haggerty stated she is capable of rising to the challenge. She is cognizant of what she does in Dudley-Charlton won't be the same as in Union 28. When she left the principalship she was told that she would miss the students. She does miss that, but likes what she does as superintendent.

In closing, Ms. Haggerty stated she was more than delighted to hear in different ways how the district is spoken about by staff, students, and parents. She said it is a district with a small school feel, and the people feel they are connected and well known. Students say they see the superintendent in the hallways. She said it is easy to see why there is a sense of pride. Ms. Haggerty said she always looks for a challenge, not for change sake. It feels right, and she would welcome the chance to work for this school district.

Mrs. Aucoin thanked Ms. Haggerty for her interest, and Ms. Haggerty left the room at 5:28 p.m.

The committee recessed from 5:28 to 6:12 p.m.

6:12 p.m. - Dr. Julia Carlson, Assistant Superintendent of Fall River Public Schools

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?

Dr. Carlson said she gained a different viewpoint of the process as a beginning educator who was hungry for feedback but received none. Dr. Carlson said when she became an administrator, she made it a point to learn as much as possible. She said the evaluation process is similar in Rhode Island. She appreciates the collaborative nature of the process.

In Fall River, there are 16 schools. Dr. Carlson evaluates 12-10 principals, and seven people on the instruction team. The observations are informal, and a time to talk about goals, and develop goals from there. Dr. Carlson said she coaches new administrators, and works with new principals. She describes it as a system that should be honored, and is only as good as we use it. It's not an opportunity to catch people unaware, but a collaboration.

Dr. Carlson said, personally, she looks at those areas that she knows she wants to grow in and those she wants to know more about.

Mrs. Rabbitt Question #2

On her visit to Fall River, there were a couple of things that stood out. During the tour of the buildings, she noted the direction in which Dr. Carlton has taken teachers in professional development. Specifically in the visit to the Tansey School, and because the district has Project Based Learning as a Strategic Plan Goal, Mrs. Rabbitt noted that PBL is a culture rather than a location.

Dr. Carlson said her start date as assistant superintendent was July 1. Following the seniors' graduation from the high school where she served as principal, her position ended, and she was able to go to classrooms and speak with teachers and students. Dr. Carlson said she got a sense of what needed to be done. She saw that each school had its own vision and way of doing things. Dr. Carlson determined what the district was collectively doing for transient kids, how they were being moved to the next level. Dr. Carlson used professional development opportunities to align the curriculum, and looked at blended curriculum and instructional strategies.

Mrs. Reed Question #1:

As a leader, how would you obtain the buy-in from staff, and bring the district from good to great?

Dr. Carlson said buy-in is all about relationships, not just from top down, but perception is reality. Highlighted example of moving to providence, aren't you scared? I was there for a week did not know what people were talking about. Reputation of a dangerous school. School community walk through each month, with a theme, such as ELL, people began to realize it was not scary. Set the stage and give them opportunity to participate.

Mrs. Reed Question #2

Our superintendents have always been present in schools and at activities. How do you plan to be connected?

Dr. Carlson said she is a huge sports fan, loves the arts, and has learned to be in the community as well, at senior centers, and not just those events that are happening within the schools. She wants to know the community in which she works. Dr. Carlson describes herself as curious and not a shy person.

Mrs. Carmignani Question #1

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

Dr. Carlson said she uses data all the time. She said data can tell you whatever you want it to. She has used data to drive professional learning cycles. She said data is integral, in special education, and in everyday occurrences.

Mrs. Carmignani Question #2

What research have you done with our district data? And have you recognized any trends?

Dr. Carlson said she has noticed an increase in out of district school choice, and asked how the district is attracting students to the district to bring dollars to our community? She suggested a marketing campaign, and arranging bus stops in different communities to bring students in. She noticed the ELL numbers have increased, and noted recent additional staffing. Dr. Carlson said she has viewed school the district's strategic plan, and asked what has been done to note accomplishments and next steps.

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. Carlson serves currently on a parent advisory group at her son's middle school. She said it is very important to include parents in decisions we are making. This can sometimes be accomplished by just acknowledging that things need to happen. Parent advisory councils are formed for different key initiatives, similar to a search committee. They can be assembled to look at a new high school, get

parents involved in what type of school we want it to be. She is an advocate of school-community walk-throughs.

Mrs. Aucoin Question #2

We have outstanding candidates. How can you convince us that you are the candidate for this job?

Dr. Carlson said she does not want the board to convince her; she wants the board to want to hire her. She said there is an excitement factor about Dudley-Charlton. She said she would be the first female permanent superintendent, and this will be a change for the district. She said she has an opinion and will state it, but she is also collaborative. She said she also wants to have fun as she loves what she does.

Mrs. Antocci Question #1

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

Dr. Carlson said she worked in the business world for quite some time, and said the answer is yes and no. She said kids are the easy part; business is another ball game. She said a school district can be strategic and business like, but businesses don't look at teaching and learning. She said students are not a product, not a commodity, and not expendable.

Mrs. Antocci Question #2

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. Carlson referred to a YouTube video produced with students from the high school where she was principal. It contained elements that would lure high school students on the first day of school. They sent out Tweets, Facebook announcements, Instagram and Snap Chats. This resulted in the highest first day attendance in the school's history. Dr. Carlson said when the kids came they saw that the staff cared about them. Dr. Carlson said an afterschool program with a 21st Century Grant to keep kids in a safe area of the city. The school also partnered with Sedexo to provide food for students in the afterschool program. The key is in knowing the students well enough to support them.

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. Carlson said from her experience, as vice principal it was exciting to be in control; however, she said she feels more in control when she is collaborative. Communication is key, but not everyone will be happy about every decision made. Dr. Carlson said she is open to feedback and criticism.

Mrs. Kabala Question #2

How would you form the budget?

Dr. Carlson said he is a fan of line item budgeting, and asking administrators to define what they can live without to be able to add something new.

Jamie Terry Question #1

Our district has many great aspects, what steps would be first to taking on bettering our district?

Dr. Carlson said she is unable to answer that question after only a couple of visits. She said she would need to dive in, to get to know people better. Her entry plan would include a listening tour to seek to understand the district and its people and to gather feedback.

Mrs. Terry Question #2

What is the hardest decision you ever had to make and how did you make it?

Dr. Carlson said she made the decision to go back to school to earn her master's degree shortly after having her first child. This required her to be away from her child part of a week and one weekend per month. She did this as she felt she could affect change having earned this degree and gaining the experience.

Closing remarks: Dr. Carlson said she is honored to be here right now. She was told about the job and said she frankly did not want to fall in love with the district, but did on her site visit. Dr. Carlson said he does not work in isolation, and is very eager to lead the district.

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

Dr. Carlson left the room at 7:12 p.m.

A motion by M. Antocci, seconded by C. Carmignani to adjourn the meeting was approved by unanimous vote at 7:12 p.m.