

# Farmington River Regional School District

## School Committee Meeting

Meeting #430

Farmington River Elementary School Library  
Monday, April 3rd, 2023  
7:00 PM

MINUTES

**Masks Optional**

*Call in number to listen only, community participation requires being in person.  
Phone number: 605-313-5711 Access code - 7622376*

**Members Present:** Alex Bowman, Deb Fogel, Roger Kohler, Carol Lombardo, Phil Magovern, Carl Nett, Arlene Tolopko

**Also Present:** Eric Jesner, Robert Putnam, Caroline Stamm

- I. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Carol Lombardo.
  - A. **Roll Call:** Alex Bowman, Deb Fogel, Roger Kohler, Carol Lombardo, Phil Magovern, Carl Nett, Arlene Tolopko
- II. **Public Comment:**
  - A. Cecily Goulange presented a statement on behalf of Denise Hardie, who couldn't be present at the meeting. She expressed concerns about her inquiry on subcommittees and her desire for the committee to be open and transparent.
- III. **Acceptance of Minutes:**
  - Notes from Meeting #428 held on March 6th, 2023
  - Notes from the Public Hearing on the FY24 Budget held on March 21st, 2023
  - A. **VOTE:**
    1. Carl Nett motioned to accept the minutes from March 6th & March 21st, 2023
    2. Deb Fogel seconded the motion
    3. Alex Bowman, Deb Fogel, Roger Kohler, Carol Lombardo, Phil Magovern, Carl Nett, Arlene Tolopkower were in favor. There were no objections and the motion passed to accept the minutes from the meetings on March 6th, 2023 and March 21st, 2023.
- IV. **Superintendent's Report:**
  - *Personnel Changes: Eric Jesner*
  - A. **Acknowledgment of Eric Jesner's Resignation:** Rob began his report by acknowledging Eric Jesner's resignation for July 1st, 2023. He spoke about Eric's work and dedication to FRRSD over the last 5 years.
  - B. As the District prepares to hire a number of new administrators, including but not limited to a new Superintendent, Rob emphasized a need to focus on:
    - a) Administrators and School Committee members adhering to their purpose (policy, etc.)
    - b) Retaining administrators long enough to make change
    - c) Strong collaborative leadership with the School Committee and Administration is key
  - 2. School Committee Ethics emphasizes that the committee's focus should be on the students regardless of town politics, and Rob echoed this.

C. Update on Daytime Custodian & Evening Custodian Hire:

1. Rob is pleased to report that we now have a full-time Daytime Custodian: Chris Graceffa (who formerly drove vans for the District over the last few years).
2. He also reported that Elena Starr has been hired as a quasi-Evening Custodian who will be focused on the first floor working alongside Chris, in addition to Michelle Cloran, who has been with us for a few years and will continue working on the 2nd floor.

D. Condition of the White Van:

1. Thanks to the help of John Ayers, the vans have all been examined by the 7D inspector. The vans are required to be inspected 2 times per year.
2. The White Van is still usable at the moment.
  - a) The 7D Inspector noted we might be able to use it for another year but will need to monitor it carefully.

E. Air Quality Inspection with Michael Feeney:

1. Michael spent a few hours last Friday inspecting the entire building. He noted a few things in regards to the air quality that will be featured later in his report.
  - a) There are no glaring issues regarding the air quality.
  - b) There are a number of water drainage issues that we will need to address, which will require a number of capital projects to improve.

F. Update on Bus Routes:

1. Rob, in collaboration with with Terri Gardino from Dufour, Inc., reworked the Bus Routes so that they will only need to have 1 van run in the morning.
  - a) Rob will be reaching out to Rich LeBrea, a transportation specialist, who is willing to consult/analyze our current bus & van runs to make them more streamlined while still being law-abiding to maximize efficiency.
  - b) Rob commended the work of our local Highway Superintendents Brad Curry from Sandisfield and Derek Poirier from Otis who have done a wonderful job communicating with him on road conditions.

G. There was a discussion on how to have discussions on things that are inherently political, such as the budget, in a productive way in Committee Meetings while maintaining the focus on the purpose and responsibilities of the Committee.

1. Rob directed the committee to the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) which offers multiple-module training, and provides guidance and aid to School Committee members in how to be an effective school committee.

V. Formation of the Regional Agreement Amendment Committee (RAAC):

– *The Town of Sandisfield has chosen the following people to serve on the RAAC: Carl Nett, School Committee; Steve Seddon, Select Board; John Field, Select Board; Jonathan Sylbert, Town Manager*

– *The Town of Otis Select Board voted last night to recommend all four interested parties of the School Committee for consideration. They felt the school committee members could then appoint the three they felt were best suited for the committee. Otis recommendations: Frank Tolopko, Sue Brofman, Mary Kay Pinkam, and Denise Hardie.*

- A. Discussion surrounded some confusion on the requirements for the RAAC members from each town. Committee members expressed their thoughts on the comparison of having all town board officials on the committee in comparison to having some members who are not town officials making up the RAAC.

1. Rob noted that the Committee voted to take Dr. Steve Hemman's, from MARS Consultant Services, recommendation. He will consult the exact terms of Steve's recommendation to dissolve any remaining confusion.

**VI. Business Administrator:**

- *3rd Quarter Report on the FY23 Budget*
- *Warrants*
- A. Quarterly Report: Eric distributed the 3rd Quarter Report on the FY23 Budget
  1. Overall takeaway: We currently have a deficit of \$88K which will be covered from the School Choice fund.
- B. Warrants: Eric has the warrants present for anyone's review.

**VII. Process for Superintendent Interviews:**

- *Set April 10th, 2023 for Interviews*
- *Review MASC Publication, Developing Questions for Superintendent Candidates*
- A. Candidates: Currently, 4 people have applied, but we are planning to interview 3. Their resumes will be made available.
- B. Interview Date: The Committee set April 10th, 2023 for Superintendent Interviews.
- C. Questions:
  1. Rob sent out sample questions from MASC to ask Superintendent Candidates
  2. Each School Committee member will select 2 questions and send them to Rob to review (to ensure that there are no duplicate questions)
  3. In order to satisfy Open Meeting Law, at the beginning of the Superintendent Interview Meeting, the School Committee will need to vote on the questions to be used for the interviews.
  4. It is required that both Candidates are asked the same list of questions.

**VIII. Other items for discussion not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours before the meeting:**

- A. There are no other items at this time.

**IX. Agenda Items for May 1, 2023 School Committee Meeting:**

- A. There are no other items at this time.

**X. Executive Session:**

- *To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares;*
- A. Deb Fogel made the motion to exit into executive session at 8:10 PM.
- B. Alex Bowman seconded the motion.
- C. Vote - Roll Call: Alex Bowman, Deb Fogel, Roger Kohler, Carol Lombardo, Phil Magovern, Carl Nett, Arlene Tolopko

**I. Motion to Adjourn:**

- A. Alex Bowman made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:21 PM.
- B. Carl Nett seconded the motion.
- C. Vote - Roll Call: Alex Bowman, Deb Fogel, Roger Kohler, Carol Lombardo, Phil Magovern, Carl Nett, Arlene Tolopko

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Respectfully submitted,  
Caroline Stamm

March 27, 2023

Robert Putnam  
Interim Superintendent  
Farmington River Regional School District  
555 North Main Road  
Otis, MA 01253

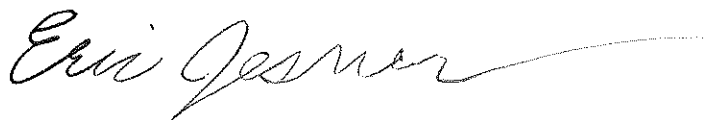
Dear Rob,

I will resign from the Business Manager position at the Farmington River Regional School District as of June 30, 2023, to take on a new job. I have enjoyed my time here and greatly appreciate everything I have learned and the people I have worked with.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if there is anything I can do for you, either during my remaining time here or in the months after. I would be happy to assist you in hiring a replacement or orienting them to the process here at Farmington River.

Thank you so much for your understanding and I hope we can remain in touch in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Eric Jesner". The signature is written in dark ink and has a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Eric Jesner  
383 Washington Mountain Road  
Dalton, MA 01226  
413-717-2351  
ericjesner@gmail.com



FY23	Budget	November	12/31/22	1/31/2023	3/24/2023	PROJECTED	
SCHL COMM ADVERTISING	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 4,773.00	\$ 5,297.00	\$ 5,297.00	\$ 6,190.00	\$ 6,500.00	
SCHL COMM EXPENSES/MEMBERSHIPS	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 4,292.00	\$ 5,242.00	\$ 5,242.00	\$ 5,242.00	\$ 5,242.00	
SCHL COMM TREASURER EXPENSE	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 1,250.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 3,000.00	
SCHL COMM AUDIT EXPENSE	\$ 38,150.00	\$ 6,900.00	\$ 19,550.00	\$ 19,550.00	\$ 19,550.00	\$ 42,550.00	
SCHL COMM TREASURER SUPPLIES	\$ 1,000.00	\$ -	\$ 59.40	\$ 1,261.33	\$ 1,377.46	\$ 1,400.00	
<b>SCHOOL COMMITTEE TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 52,150.00</b>	<b>\$ 16,465.00</b>	<b>\$ 31,398.40</b>	<b>\$ 32,850.33</b>	<b>\$ 34,359.46</b>	<b>\$ 58,692.00</b>	
ADMINISTRATION SALARIES	\$ 59,708.00	\$ 21,040.79	\$ 28,426.29	\$ 33,796.29	\$ 56,826.29	\$ 78,000.00	Super, Asst
SUPERINTENDENTS MEMBERSHIPS	\$ 1,700.00	\$ 548.00	\$ 548.00	\$ 548.00	\$ 548.00	\$ 700.00	
OTHER ADMIN MEMBERSHIPS	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,200.00	
POSTAGE	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 141.36	\$ 261.67	\$ 517.56	\$ 562.88	\$ 2,000.00	
SUPT. OFFICE EXPENSE	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 479.15	\$ 1,112.44	\$ 1,316.04	\$ 2,083.24	\$ 2,500.00	
<b>SUPERINTENDENT OFFICE TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 65,908.00</b>	<b>\$ 22,209.30</b>	<b>\$ 31,769.65</b>	<b>\$ 37,599.14</b>	<b>\$ 61,735.62</b>	<b>\$ 85,400.00</b>	
BUSINESS OFFICE SALARIES	\$ 113,114.00	\$ 27,464.71	\$ 59,264.80	\$ 68,350.54	\$ 86,522.02	\$ 118,114.00	Manager, Asst
BUS OFFICE PROF FEES	\$ 700.00	\$ 355.00	\$ 355.00	\$ 355.00	\$ 355.00	\$ 700.00	
BUSINESS OFFICE FEES	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 401.85	\$ 401.85	\$ 400.00	
<b>BUSINESS OFFICE TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 113,814.00</b>	<b>\$ 27,819.71</b>	<b>\$ 59,619.80</b>	<b>\$ 69,107.39</b>	<b>\$ 86,877.02</b>	<b>\$ 119,214.00</b>	
SCHL COMM LEGAL SERVICES	\$ 500.00	\$ 18.00	\$ 4,392.00	\$ 4,417.50	\$ 4,570.50	\$ 6,000.00	
<b>LEGAL SERVICES TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 500.00</b>	<b>\$ 18.00</b>	<b>\$ 4,392.00</b>	<b>\$ 4,417.50</b>	<b>\$ 4,570.50</b>	<b>\$ 6,000.00</b>	
EMPLOYEE SEPARATION COST	\$ -	\$ 50,101.32				\$ 150,000.00	
<b>EMPLOYEE SEPARATION COST</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 50,101.32</b>	<b>\$ 83,051.09</b>	<b>\$ 92,465.31</b>	<b>\$ 111,293.75</b>	<b>\$ 150,000.00</b>	
INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES ADMIN	\$ 255,634.00	\$ 37,399.37	\$ 110,185.53	\$ 122,418.29	\$ 146,583.81	\$ 221,183.00	Prin, Asst, SN Admin
OFFICE SUPPLIES - PRINCIPAL	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 246.25	\$ 755.35	\$ 948.06	\$ 1,020.48	\$ 1,500.00	
<b>PRINCIPAL TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 256,634.00</b>	<b>\$ 37,645.62</b>	<b>\$ 110,940.88</b>	<b>\$ 123,366.35</b>	<b>\$ 147,604.29</b>	<b>\$ 222,683.00</b>	
INTERNET CONNECTION	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 460.26	\$ 1,270.00	\$ 1,500.13	\$ 1,825.21	\$ 1,200.00	
MEDIA TECH CONTRACT SERVICES	\$ 3,200.00	\$ 1,978.00	\$ 3,619.00	\$ 3,908.00	\$ 4,581.00	\$ 6,000.00	
TECH SOFTWARE	\$ 12,650.00	\$ 12,179.27	\$ 11,279.63	\$ 12,971.88	\$ 13,238.26	\$ 14,000.00	
TECH EQUIPMENT	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 129.34	\$ 1,389.38	\$ 1,956.87	\$ 2,032.81	\$ 5,000.00	
<b>BUILDING TECHNOLOGY TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 22,050.00</b>	<b>\$ 14,746.87</b>	<b>\$ 17,558.01</b>	<b>\$ 20,336.88</b>	<b>\$ 21,677.28</b>	<b>\$ 26,200.00</b>	
TEACHER SALARIES	\$ 636,976.00	\$ 97,770.97	\$ 314,981.80	\$ 375,843.48	\$ 499,885.26	\$ 636,976.00	
SPEC NEEDS TEACHER SALARIES	\$ 223,681.00	\$ 27,361.98	\$ 91,206.60	\$ 109,679.80	\$ 146,626.20	\$ 226,324.00	& Adj Cnslr
<b>CLASSROOM TEACHERS TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 860,657.00</b>	<b>\$ 125,132.95</b>	<b>\$ 406,188.40</b>	<b>\$ 485,523.28</b>	<b>\$ 646,511.46</b>	<b>\$ 863,300.00</b>	
SPEC NEEDS CONTRACTED SERVICES	\$ 8,000.00	\$ -	\$ 16,521.74	\$ 23,431.74	\$ 44,847.99	\$ 20,000.00	
SPEC NEEDS SPEECH SERVICES	\$ 35,000.00	\$ 600.00	\$ 23,198.75	\$ 23,198.75	\$ 38,130.00	\$ 58,000.00	
SPEC NEEDS OT SERVICES	\$ 12,000.00	\$ 1,087.50	\$ 4,934.94	\$ 4,934.94	\$ 6,372.44	\$ 12,000.00	
SPEC NEEDS PT SERVICES	\$ 7,000.00	\$ 480.00	\$ 4,543.75	\$ 4,543.75	\$ 5,794.25	\$ 7,000.00	
SPEC NEEDS PSYCH EVALS	\$ 12,000.00	\$ -	\$ 900.00	\$ 2,275.00	\$ 11,505.00	\$ 12,000.00	
<b>MEDICAL SERVICES TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 74,000.00</b>	<b>\$ 2,167.50</b>	<b>\$ 50,099.18</b>	<b>\$ 58,384.18</b>	<b>\$ 106,649.68</b>	<b>\$ 93,000.00</b>	
SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS - LONG TERM	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS - SHORT TERM	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 2,145.00	\$ 16,587.60	\$ 18,634.30	\$ 29,607.47	\$ 35,000.00	
<b>SUBSTITUTE TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 30,000.00</b>	<b>\$ 2,145.00</b>	<b>\$ 16,587.60</b>	<b>\$ 18,634.30</b>	<b>\$ 29,607.47</b>	<b>\$ 35,000.00</b>	
PARAPROFESSIONAL COMPENSATION	\$ 83,996.00	\$ 8,784.51	\$ 48,463.58	\$ 58,536.84	\$ 64,754.67	\$ 83,996.00	
SPEC NEEDS PARAPROFESSIONAL	\$ 84,113.00	\$ 8,626.65	\$ 43,838.91	\$ 52,523.34	\$ 3,987.25	\$ 40,000.00	
<b>PARAPROFESSIONAL TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 168,109.00</b>	<b>\$ 17,411.16</b>	<b>\$ 92,302.49</b>	<b>\$ 111,060.18</b>	<b>\$ 68,741.92</b>	<b>\$ 168,109.00</b>	
MEDIA TECH STAFF	\$ 82,671.00	\$ 9,538.95	\$ 31,796.50	\$ 38,155.80	\$ 50,874.40	\$ 82,671.00	
<b>MEDIA TECH / LIBRARY TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 82,671.00</b>	<b>\$ 9,538.95</b>	<b>\$ 31,796.50</b>	<b>\$ 38,155.80</b>	<b>\$ 50,874.40</b>	<b>\$ 82,671.00</b>	
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	\$ 8,000.00	\$ 2,702.90	\$ 5,785.12	\$ 5,785.12	\$ 9,009.52	\$ 8,000.00	
PD OUTSIDE CONTRACTED	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
<b>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 8,000.00</b>	<b>\$ 2,702.90</b>	<b>\$ 5,785.12</b>	<b>\$ 5,785.12</b>	<b>\$ 9,009.52</b>	<b>\$ 8,000.00</b>	
CLASSROOM CURRICULUM SUPPLIES	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 195.00	\$ 195.00	\$ 195.00	\$ -	
SN CLASSROOM CURRICULUM SUPPLIES	\$ 2,000.00	\$ -	\$ 2,085.82	\$ 2,085.82	\$ 5,036.54	\$ 6,000.00	
MUSIC INSTRUCTION SUPPLIES	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 69.95	\$ 1,130.33	\$ 1,130.33	\$ 1,130.33	\$ 1,200.00	
ART INSTRUCTION SUPPLIES	\$ 800.00	\$ -	\$ 739.66	\$ 739.66	\$ 739.66	\$ 800.00	
GYM/HEALTH SUPPLIES	\$ 800.00	\$ 311.84	\$ 311.84	\$ 311.84	\$ 1,114.85	\$ 800.00	
COPIER SUPPLIES	\$ 2,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 57.62	\$ 136.40	\$ 2,000.00	
AFTER SCHOOL SUPPLIES	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 804.88	\$ 1,072.99	\$ 1,382.09	\$ 1,600.00	
<b>CLASSROOM SUPPLIES TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 6,800.00</b>	<b>\$ 381.79</b>	<b>\$ 5,267.53</b>	<b>\$ 5,593.26</b>	<b>\$ 9,734.87</b>	<b>\$ 12,400.00</b>	
GENERAL SUPPLIES	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 1,628.08	\$ 1,887.19	\$ 1,934.26	\$ 1,958.49	\$ 3,000.00	
<b>GENERAL SUPPLIES TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 2,000.00</b>	<b>\$ 1,628.08</b>	<b>\$ 1,887.19</b>	<b>\$ 1,934.26</b>	<b>\$ 1,958.49</b>	<b>\$ 3,000.00</b>	
PK PROGRAM INSTRUCTION	\$ 48,291.00	\$ 4,634.01	\$ 16,996.59	\$ 19,348.47	\$ 26,328.87	\$ 48,291.00	
PK PROGRAM EXPENSES	\$ 1,000.00	\$ -	\$ 609.69	\$ 969.58	\$ 1,335.75	\$ 1,500.00	
SCHOOL PROGRAMS	\$ 3,000.00	\$ -	\$ 1,034.69	\$ 1,034.69	\$ 1,329.50	\$ 3,000.00	
<b>INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 52,291.00</b>	<b>\$ 4,634.01</b>	<b>\$ 18,640.97</b>	<b>\$ 21,352.74</b>	<b>\$ 28,994.12</b>	<b>\$ 52,791.00</b>	
INSTRUCTIONAL SOFTWARE	\$ 8,835.00	\$ 6,571.31	\$ 10,366.98	\$ 10,321.98	\$ 10,351.98	\$ 11,000.00	
<b>INSTRUCTIONAL SOFTWARE TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 8,835.00</b>	<b>\$ 6,571.31</b>	<b>\$ 10,366.98</b>	<b>\$ 10,321.98</b>	<b>\$ 10,351.98</b>	<b>\$ 11,000.00</b>	
HEALTH SALARIES & SUPPLIES	\$ 45,301.00	\$ 6,469.03	\$ 25,158.49	\$ 29,466.19	\$ 38,111.07	\$ 60,000.00	
<b>HEALTH SERVICES TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 45,301.00</b>	<b>\$ 6,469.03</b>	<b>\$ 27,129.66</b>	<b>\$ 31,437.36</b>	<b>\$ 38,111.07</b>	<b>\$ 62,000.00</b>	
BUS DRIVERS SALARIES	\$ 36,977.00	\$ 2,238.30	\$ 12,634.79	\$ 15,429.46	\$ 17,846.47	\$ 30,000.00	
SN BUS DRV SALARIES	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
BUS FUEL	\$ 16,000.00	\$ 2,122.90	\$ 6,541.60	\$ 7,536.72	\$ 9,078.76	\$ 14,000.00	
BUS MAINTENANCE	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 5,780.24	\$ 12,665.98	\$ 13,800.98	\$ 15,864.81	\$ 18,000.00	
BUS CONTRACTS	\$ 299,700.00	\$ 23,976.00	\$ 119,880.00	\$ 119,880.00	\$ 119,880.00	\$ 220,000.00	
SN TRANSPORTATION	\$ 32,000.00	\$ -	\$ 6,017.50	\$ 6,017.50	\$ 10,080.00	\$ 20,000.00	
HOMELESS TRANSPORTATION	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 3,750.00	\$ 5,400.00	\$ 9,300.00	\$ 12,000.00	
BUS DRIVER TRAINING	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,160.00	\$ 1,200.00	
TRANSPORT MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 345.99	\$ 350.00	
Transfer to Transportation Revolving	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
<b>TRANSPORTATION SERVICES TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 399,677.00</b>	<b>\$ 34,117.44</b>	<b>\$ 161,489.87</b>	<b>\$ 168,064.66</b>	<b>\$ 183,556.03</b>	<b>\$ 315,550.00</b>	



CAFETERIA SUBSIDY	\$ 51,387.00	\$ 43,807.17	\$ 22,310.97	\$ 18,483.67	\$ 13,178.89	\$ 40,000.00
SCHOOL LUCH TOTAL	\$ 51,387.00	\$ 43,807.17	\$ 22,310.97	\$ 18,483.67	\$ 13,178.89	\$ 40,000.00
CUSTODIAN SALARY	\$ 98,526.00	\$ 18,386.50	\$ 42,511.43	\$ 48,799.94	\$ 57,048.83	\$ 98,526.00
CUSTODIAL SUPPLIES	\$ 11,000.00	\$ 1,257.98	\$ 3,881.50	\$ 4,262.37	\$ 5,543.57	\$ 8,000.00
CUSTODIAL TOTAL	\$ 109,526.00	\$ 19,644.48	\$ 46,392.93	\$ 53,062.31	\$ 62,592.40	\$ 106,526.00
HEATING OIL	\$ 38,500.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 23,394.00	\$ 23,394.00	\$ 55,000.00
ELECTRICITY	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 3,810.44	\$ 11,221.67	\$ 13,861.47	\$ 22,684.52	\$ 30,000.00
TELEPHONE	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 371.74	\$ 1,138.60	\$ 1,328.01	\$ 1,724.48	\$ 2,500.00
SEWER EXPENSE	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 1,501.43	\$ 3,002.86	\$ 3,002.86	\$ 4,504.29	\$ 6,000.00
UTILITY TOTAL	\$ 77,000.00	\$ 5,683.61	\$ 15,363.13	\$ 41,586.34	\$ 52,307.29	\$ 93,500.00
GROUNDS MAINTENANCE	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 5,483.50	\$ 9,263.50	\$ 12,473.50	\$ 27,348.50	\$ 30,000.00
GROUNDS MAINTENANCE TOTAL	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 5,483.50	\$ 9,263.50	\$ 12,473.50	\$ 27,348.50	\$ 30,000.00
MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS	\$ 28,600.00	\$ 6,153.37	\$ 14,631.34	\$ 16,865.72	\$ 23,552.41	\$ 28,600.00
BUILDING MAINTENANCE CONTRACT SERVI	\$ 35,500.00	\$ 30,104.88	\$ 35,693.41	\$ 36,405.23	\$ 40,314.48	\$ 50,000.00
BUILDING MAINTENANCE SUPPLIES	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 1,266.63	\$ 3,381.85	\$ 3,598.88	\$ 5,130.38	\$ 5,500.00
TRANSFER TO CAPITAL STABILIZATION	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
BUILDING MAINTENANCE TOTAL	\$ 69,100.00	\$ 37,524.88	\$ 53,706.60	\$ 56,869.83	\$ 68,997.27	\$ 84,100.00
BUILDING SECURITY	\$ 1,000.00	\$ -	\$ 698.20	\$ 877.60	\$ 877.60	\$ 1,000.00
BUILDING SECURITY TOTAL	\$ 1,000.00	\$ -	\$ 698.20	\$ 877.60	\$ 877.60	\$ 1,000.00
OFFICE EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 37.49	\$ 89.53	\$ 89.53	\$ 89.53	\$ 1,500.00
EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE	\$ 1,000.00	\$ -	\$ 613.58	\$ 613.58	\$ 871.95	\$ 1,000.00
EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE TOTAL	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 37.49	\$ 703.11	\$ 703.11	\$ 961.48	\$ 2,500.00
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE	\$ 1,991.00	\$ 32.12	\$ 1,169.89	\$ 1,966.24	\$ 2,224.55	\$ 2,600.00
MEDICARE INSURANCE	\$ 28,865.00	\$ 4,967.89	\$ 13,449.69	\$ 15,653.23	\$ 20,282.42	\$ 28,865.00
FSA EXPENSE	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 470.00	\$ 665.00	\$ 665.00	\$ 860.00	\$ 1,200.00
403b ADMIN EXPENSE	\$ 150.00	\$ 24.44	\$ 52.64	\$ 62.04	\$ 90.24	\$ 150.00
BERKSHIRE REGIONAL RETIREMENT	\$ 148,726.00	\$ 74,363.00	\$ 148,726.00	\$ 148,726.00	\$ 148,726.00	\$ 148,726.00
EMPLOYEE BENEFITS & INS TOTAL	\$ 180,932.00	\$ 79,857.45	\$ 164,063.22	\$ 167,072.51	\$ 172,183.21	\$ 181,541.00
HEALTH INSURANCE ACTIVE EMPL.	\$ 627,473.00	\$ 132,386.89	\$ 316,680.43	\$ 363,311.07	\$ 409,941.71	\$ 627,473.00
HEALTH INS OFFSET ACTIVE EMPL	\$ (131,769.00)	\$ -	\$ (37,729.26)	\$ (49,438.42)	\$ (37,729.26)	\$ (131,769.00)
LIFE INSURANCE	\$ 1,700.00	\$ 459.42	\$ 980.58	\$ 1,149.14	\$ 1,486.26	\$ 1,700.00
DISABILITY INSURANCE	\$ -	\$ 1,008.57	\$ 2,622.63	\$ 3,177.30	\$ 3,832.74	\$ -
DISABILITY INSURANCE OFFSET	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (1,271.79)	\$ (2,009.45)	\$ (5,436.75)	\$ -
DENTAL INSURANCE EXPENSE	\$ -	\$ 1,789.57	\$ 4,438.40	\$ 5,120.14	\$ 5,801.88	\$ -
DENTAL INSURANCE OFFSET	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (3,144.36)	\$ (4,780.44)	\$ (4,780.44)	\$ -
VISION INSURANCE EXPENSE	\$ -	\$ 315.77	\$ 464.80	\$ 536.54	\$ 680.02	\$ -
VISION INSURANCE OFFSET	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (337.68)	\$ (475.80)	\$ (475.80)	\$ -
ACTIVE EMP INSURANCE TOTAL	\$ 497,404.00	\$ 135,960.22	\$ 281,282.59	\$ 316,189.64	\$ 372,094.70	\$ 497,404.00
RETIREE HEALTH INS. EXPENSE	\$ 198,733.00	\$ 61,670.97	\$ 142,710.26	\$ 162,251.26	\$ 181,356.85	\$ 198,733.00
MTRS HEALTH INS. OFFSET	\$ (18,521.00)	\$ -	\$ (7,449.85)	\$ (8,954.78)	\$ (13,376.49)	\$ (18,521.00)
BCRS INS. OFFSET	\$ (9,781.00)	\$ (3,729.85)	\$ (7,745.44)	\$ (9,076.40)	\$ (7,006.45)	\$ (9,781.00)
INDIV. RETIREE HEALTH OFFSET	\$ (1,509.00)	\$ -	\$ (1,256.64)	\$ (1,361.36)	\$ (1,151.99)	\$ (1,509.00)
RETIREE DENTAL INSURANCE	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 3,195.77	\$ 3,664.48	\$ 4,133.19	\$ -
RETIREE DENTAL OFFSET	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (1,576.57)	\$ (2,045.28)	\$ (2,044.28)	\$ -
RETIREE VISION INSURANCE	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 428.31	\$ 497.57	\$ 636.09	\$ -
RETIREE VISION OFFSET	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (247.68)	\$ (410.58)	\$ (409.58)	\$ -
RETIREE HEALTH INS TOTAL	\$ 168,922.00	\$ 57,941.12	\$ 126,258.33	\$ 142,858.72	\$ 159,821.92	\$ 168,922.00
COBRA HEALTH INS EXPENSE	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
COBRA INSURANCE OFFSET	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
COBRA TOTAL	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
PROPERTY & CASUALTY INSURANCE	\$ 28,208.00	\$ 27,578.00	\$ 27,578.00	\$ 27,578.00	\$ 27,828.00	\$ 28,208.00
WORKERS COMPENSATION	\$ 16,000.00	\$ 13,812.00	\$ 14,404.00	\$ 14,404.00	\$ 14,404.00	\$ 16,000.00
TREASURERS BOND	\$ 350.00	\$ 385.00	\$ 385.00	\$ 385.00	\$ 674.00	\$ 385.00
NON-EMPLOYEE INSURANCE TOTAL	\$ 44,558.00	\$ 41,775.00	\$ 42,367.00	\$ 42,367.00	\$ 42,906.00	\$ 44,593.00
NEW EQUIPMENT	\$ 5,730.00	\$ 2,636.02	\$ 3,096.34	\$ 3,096.34	\$ 4,397.28	\$ 5,730.00
EQUIPMENT LEASE	\$ 11,000.00	\$ 1,734.43	\$ 5,305.95	\$ 6,208.35	\$ 8,013.15	\$ 11,000.00
ACQUISITION OF EQUIPMENT TOTAL	\$ 16,730.00	\$ 4,370.45	\$ 8,402.29	\$ 9,304.69	\$ 12,410.43	\$ 16,730.00
VAN PURCHASE	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
CAPITAL EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 9,541.36	\$ 9,541.36	\$ -	\$ -
EXTRAORDINARY MAINTENANCE \$150K	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
CAPITAL EXPENDITURE TOTAL	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 9,541.36	\$ 9,541.36	\$ -	\$ -
TUITION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
TUITION MIDDLE SCHOOL	\$ 160,848.00	\$ -	\$ 58,163.00	\$ 67,971.92	\$ 106,558.88	\$ 165,000.00
SN TUITION MIDDLE SCHOOL	\$ 77,172.00	\$ -	\$ 17,283.97	\$ 18,533.97	\$ 33,234.37	\$ 55,000.00
TUITION HIGH SCHOOL	\$ 447,898.00	\$ -	\$ 169,460.86	\$ 202,669.67	\$ 301,900.39	\$ 445,000.00
SN TUITION HIGH SCHOOL	\$ 104,901.00	\$ -	\$ 21,873.08	\$ 23,748.08	\$ 44,043.84	\$ 75,000.00
SN OD PUBLIC SCHOOL TUITION	\$ 53,829.00	\$ 7,013.38	\$ 7,013.38	\$ 7,013.38	\$ 7,013.38	\$ 53,000.00
MASS SCHOOL TUITION TOTAL	\$ 844,648.00	\$ 7,013.38	\$ 273,794.29	\$ 319,937.02	\$ 492,750.86	\$ 793,000.00
SCHOOL CHOICE TUITIONS	\$ 275,368.00	\$ 46,134.00	\$ 133,332.00	\$ 133,332.00	\$ 169,326.00	\$ 275,368.00
SN SCHOOL CHOICE TUITION	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
SCHOOL CHOICE TOTAL	\$ 275,368.00	\$ 46,134.00	\$ 133,332.00	\$ 133,332.00	\$ 169,326.00	\$ 275,368.00
SN OD NON PUBLIC SCHL TUITION	\$ 63,682.00	\$ -	\$ 45.42	\$ 17,387.54	\$ 24,569.35	\$ 60,000.00
Circuit Breaker Revolving Offset	\$ (9,722.00)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (9,722.00)
NON-PUBLIC TUITION TOTAL	\$ 53,960.00	\$ -	\$ 45.42	\$ 17,387.54	\$ 24,569.35	\$ 50,278.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 4,672,432.00	\$ 867,138.69	\$ 2,270,745.17	\$ 2,585,971.55	\$ 3,213,251.08	\$ 4,760,472.00
% EXPENDED		18.56%	48.60%	55.35%	68.77%	(88,040.00)

# DEVELOPING QUESTIONS FOR SUPERINTENDENT CANDIDATES

Sample Questions for Initial Screening,  
Semi-Final, Final Interviews  
and Site Visits

*Including:*

*Frequently Asked Questions*

*Site Visit Questions*

*Response Guide*

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# **I. Questions Sorted by Topic**

## **THIS DISTRICT**

- D.1 Why are you seeking this superintendency? How do you see your particular skill sets working effectively for us and why do your skills match our needs?
- D.2 How would you spend your first three months (your first six months) as a superintendent in our district and what would your initial priorities be?
- D.3 As the new superintendent in our district, what would be your most critical long-range objective?
- D.4 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.
- D.5 How would you develop your plan to prepare for and begin your superintendency? How would you develop your entry plan and prepare for your first few weeks, months or for your first year? Whom would you consider to be essential sources of information, critical friends and strategic allies?

## **LEADERSHIP**

- L.1 How would you describe your leadership style and what particular strengths do you believe you will bring to our school system?
- L.2 What role do you believe the staff should play in decision making? How have you involved your staff in the decision making process?
- L.3 What do you perceive as the superintendent's role in the community?
- L.4 We have all had occasions when we have had to act in a way that is contrary to the policy in effect to accomplish something important or critical. Tell us about a time when you did so.
- L.5 Tell us about a team that you have built; why you chose the people on your team and how you worked together. If you can, please tell us about a specific project or goal that you set out to achieve or complete successfully.
- L.6 Describe your leadership philosophy and how you would build leadership capacity at the district and school levels in our district.

- L.7 What are some of the ways that you have raised the confidence of the people with who you have worked or the students in your school(s)? How did you do it?
- L.8 We all know about courageous leaders, but have you ever had to be a courageous follower in controversial times? Tell us about it.
- L.9 What are the characteristics of good team leaders and good team members that you would seek to carry out the work of the district?
- L.10 How would you expect to be evaluated as the superintendent? On what measurements would you expect to be “graded” after one year, or at two years or at three years? When would be a fair point to evaluate your performance as superintendent?
- L.11 How have you or would you go about developing an effective system for monitoring and reporting on continuous improvement in our district’s public schools?
- L.12 How do you view the role of the school principal, especially in light of the new evaluation process? What do you see as necessary for principals and their schools to succeed?
- L.13 How much independence would you provide to your department heads and principals in selecting their staffs and what would be the role of the superintendent in assessing the effectiveness of administration?

## **MANAGEMENT**

- M.1 Are you satisfied with your current district’s performance? Why or why not? Looking back, is there something you should replicate or might have done differently? Please explain.
- M.2 How do you judge the performance of the staff members who report to you? What characteristics do you see as distinguishing a better employee from one whose performance is simply average? What can you do to try to make superior staff out of average performers?
- M.3 What does strong school-based leadership mean to you as an administrative issue and learning strategy? What is the proper balance between school-based management, central office supervision and school committee policymaking and oversight?
- M.4 Have you had to terminate subordinates because they were ineffective (as opposed to insubordinate or violated the law or policy)? How did you do it, what processes did you use and what have you learned from these experiences?
- M.5 Have you ever had the experience of building a coalition to support an initiative or to change the status quo?

- M.6 What kinds of questions would you ask candidates for principalships that you would have to fill? Also, what kinds of questions would you ask your principals about the teachers they bring forward for you to approve hiring on their recommendation?
- How much autonomy should a principal have in hiring the people they want?
  - What would you want principals to think about when they hire candidates?
  - How do you view the role of advisory committees in the selection of staff at the school and district level?
- M.7 Tell us about a time when you had to address a crisis that posed serious consequences for your district. What was the crisis and how did you, or you and your colleagues, deal with this situation?
- M.8 Our district is a multi-million dollar operation and some people want us to run the district like a business. How do you respond to those people?
- M.9 Do you have staff with performance problems? Please give some examples and explain what you have done to improve performance or correct the problems.

## **DECISION MAKING/JUDGEMENT**

- DM.1 You are proposing a highly controversial program. The school committee is seemingly divided on the issue and a group has formed to oppose the new program. You strongly believe that this new program will be highly beneficial to students. What steps would you take to promote your program?
- DM.2 Can you give us two examples of decisions you had to make in the last six months that have proved to be good ones? What influenced your decision? Why were they good decisions? What were the alternatives?
- DM.3 What is the most important decision you have made in the last year or two? How did you go about developing your decision or course of action? What alternatives did you consider?
- DM.4 Describe your most satisfying and disappointing experience in presenting, securing or failing to secure your committee/staff's support for an idea or proposal. In the case of a disappointment, explain how you feel about it now and describe what you might have done differently.
- DM.5 What was the best idea you ever presented to your committee – the one you feel exemplifies the best in planning, policy, administrative action, etc. Did the committee accept it? What persuaded them to move as they did or what might you do to continue to work with them to accept your recommendation?

## PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES/STYLE

- PA.1 Under what kind of conditions do you work best?
- PA.2 We have all had feelings of frustration and impatience when dealing with committees/the public. Tell us about your most recent experience with your committee or the public and what you did about it.
- PA.3 If your current committee/staff were asked to identify your greatest weakness, what would they say? How do you know they would respond this way?
- PA.4 Tell us of an experience in which you felt you gained something important because you persisted for a length of time.
- PA.5 Describe an experience you had in which you were too persistent? What happened? How could you have improved the outcome?
- PA.6 When have you had to go against general feeling of a group with whom you were working or recommend a change of current policies to accomplish a goal? Tell us about it.
- PA.7 Describe a situation where you had to provide unpleasant news or unpopular recommendations to a group of people. How did you plan for the recommendation and what did you do to convince individuals that this action was necessary?
- PA.8 Who are your mentors or role models and what did you learn from them that you apply to your work?
- PA.9 Have you ever dealt with a problem in which opinions were polarized? (Something akin to a question of capital punishment, choice, fundamentalist beliefs, longstanding political biases, etc.) What did you do, how did you plan and what did you learn?
- PA.10 Decision making is a two-edged sword. Some situations call for decisiveness right at the start, while others involve consensus building. Tell us about a situation where you were decisive and how it worked out for you. Tell us about a time when you were not decisive enough and what you learned from it.
- PA.11 Can you describe for us some of your successes of which you are particularly proud? How did you achieve these successes and what was your role?
- PA.12 With regard to failures, tell us about some occasions when you did not succeed – or in something where you actually failed – and what it was and what you learned from it.
- PA.13 There are times when you are challenged by a situation where you need to call upon every personal skill you have to work it out. Can you tell us about a situation where



you had to use your best skills and judgment to resolve a problem? How can that experience help us appreciate your potential as our superintendent?

- PA.14 What are the core values that drive you as an educator and what core values would you want to see in the staff you hire?
- PA.15 What are your primary and strongest personal attributes that you would hope to apply to our superintendency?
- PA.16 We all have weaknesses. What have you done to recognize and try to overcome those weaknesses that might otherwise make it hard for you to succeed?
- PA.17 Tell us about a time when you had to use your judgment to deal with or avert a crisis of some kind. How can that experience help us appreciate your potential as our superintendent?
- PA.18 What experiences do you have that relate to multi-cultural experiences, especially when some cultures have different values from your own? How do these experiences affect the way you work?
- PA.19 Please describe a time when you made a significant mistake or proposed something that did not work. What was it and what came of that mistake?
- PA.20 Please describe a decision you made that in retrospect you wish you had made differently.

Follow up:

- a. How did you come to understand that the decision was problematic?
- b. What would you do differently and why?
- c. What *did* you do about it and why?
- d. What did you learn from the process/experience?

## **PLANNING & ORGANIZATION**

- PO.1 Tell us about a time you had to prepare for an interview or meeting that was important to you and what you did to get ready?
- PO.2 What organizational changes have you made in the past? Why did you make the change, how did you plan it and what was the outcome?
- PO.3 How do you use data? For example, can you provide us with an example of how you've used data to make decisions, plan, budget or work with others?
- PO.4 Tell us how you organize your day.

- PO.5 What have you done to prepare yourself for the superintendency? What are the strengths that you bring to the position? What would be your personal professional development plan were you to become our superintendent?
- PO.6 How do you determine the success of your district? How would you define success over a short term or over the long run?
- PO.7 How did you go about setting objectives for your district last year? Explain how you involved your School Committee and others in doing this.

## **TEACHING & LEARNING**

- TL.1 How would you approach the district's desire to improve and maintain high academic achievement?
- TL.2 Could you describe for us what the teaching and learning environment might look like in our district five or ten years from now?
- TL.3 We sometimes hear that all kids can learn, but that not all kids DO learn. If that's the case, and we know it is, to what extent is their ability to learn and our ability to serve them a function of curriculum and good classroom instruction ( or a function of good finances; or a function of good facilities) and what can you as superintendent do about this to improve the outcome students have?
- TL.4 What are some of the core competencies that our students need to master a) before they get to high school and b) before they graduate?
- TL.5 What are the kinds of things that you want our kindergartners to know twelve years from now?
- TL.6 How can you, as superintendent, help promote the interests of students if learning and student success are functions of:
- a. Curriculum
  - b. Physical environment
  - c. Emotional safety and security
  - d. Teacher competence
  - e. District leadership, including working with the school committee
  - f. Technology and/or state of the art materials and resources
  - g. Community networking and support (i.e.: mobilizing resources of local social services, corporate, religious, etc.)

## **CURRICULUM/INSTRUCTION**

- CI.1 Can you give examples of quality programs and/or educational policies to improve quality of instruction that you have implemented in another school district? Can you give us examples of programs that were not successful and describe the course of action you took as a result?
- CI.2 What is your experience with curriculum development? How do you implement and maintain the curriculum at each level and across all levels?
- CI.3 How would you align district preK-12 curriculum in ELA and math to ensure that the aligned curriculum is taught in all preK-12 classrooms?
- CI.4 How would you hold educators at all levels accountable for delivering effective instruction?
- CI.5 Tell us about your experience working in the curriculum area that might include identifying a need to revise curriculum, implementing a new curriculum or assessing the curricula that is already in place. What did you learn from these experiences and how would use what you have learned?

## **ASSESSMENT/DATA**

- AD.1 What is the role and value of assessment instruments in a school system today?
- AD.2 How would you develop a centralized student assessment program that would be used to monitor the progress of all students in meeting state and local learning standards? (Most appropriate for large district)
- AD.3 As you lead the district, how would you use student performance results to prioritize use of resources, including money, technology, facilities and human capital?
- AD.4 How would you develop district wide capacity to assess, analyze and monitor student performance?
- AD.5 What are your views about using student achievement data to evaluate educators?
- AD.6 Do you think that “peer evaluation” has potential as a way to assess the performance of educators?

## **MEETING THE NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS**

(Including questions addressing specific student populations)

- MTN.1 Given the financial limitations as hand, what types of creative ideas might you suggest to meet the educational needs of students not being met within the regular budget and program?
- MTN.2 Special Education is a particular challenge because of the complexity of rules, service needs and student and parent concerns. When you assess the effectiveness of your special education programs, what are some of the criteria you use?
- MTN.3 Tell us about a problem or challenge you have addressed involving special education and how you worked this out.
- MTN.4 Given the stress in the lives of young people today and the social, academic and even financial pressures they face, how can educators in general and a superintendent, in particular, have an impact on the emotional wellbeing of students?
- MTN.5 Multi-cultural experiences are much more than just race, language or place of origin. What experiences do you have that relate to multi-cultural experiences, especially when some cultures have different values from your own? How do these experiences affect the way you work?
- MTN.6 How would you develop a program to ensure that highly mobile students have access to quality instruction designed to meet their needs?
- MTN.7 How would you ensure that the district is providing support and enrichment to LEP students who fail to meet or exceed the learning standards?
- MTN.8 Tell us about your experience working with children and families who don't look like you or speak the language you do or who do not have the economic advantages you do. How have these experiences shaped your view of public education and its mission?
- MTN.9 What have you done in your experience to try to make your Special Education department work better? How have you looked at ways to contain costs and how have you balanced the needs of students with the fiscal responsibility of the school department?
- MTN.10 How have you responded to individuals who complain that funding the needs of special education students are unfair to the other students whose programs have been reduced?



- MTN.11 Have you had to deal with children and families in distressful situations? Without identifying anyone, can you tell us of situations where the social and emotional needs of children and their families moved you to action?
- MTN.12 Like many school districts in Massachusetts, some of our students, especially those in identifies subgroups are struggling to reach proficiency on standardized testing. Many students are not “college ready” and require remediation during their freshman year of college. Tell us how you have or would address these issues.
- MTN.13 How do you envision the schools and the school district communicating with the people who care for children at home and in the community? How can the district reach out to families in social and economic distress to support their children?
- MTN.14 As you plan to close the achievement gap and help all students reach the highest possible goals, how do you thing about the social and emotional wellbeing of students?
- MTN.15 How do you view the social and emotional wellbeing of children in the context of establishing a high performing school population in the decade ahead?
- MTN.16 What kind of a relationship should the superintendent have with students in a school district of our size?
- MTN.17 How do you maintain a close relationship with students and what strategies do you use to keep in touch with the realities of daily student life?

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- PD.1 How would you develop and sustain a preK-12 comprehensive professional development program?
- PD.2 Across the different levels of the district, describe how you will know whether professional development programs and initiatives have affected the knowledge, skills and practices of educators in the district?
- PD.3 What can you as superintendent do to help recruit the best and most appropriate teachers to want to work here?
- PD.4 When you consider how to fill vacancies, what are some of the things you consider in making a hire or in working with principals to make the hires at their schools? How much autonomy should a principal have in hiring the people they want?
- What would you want principals to think about when they hire their candidates?
  - Who do you view the role of advisory committees in the selection of staff at the school and district level?

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

- COM.1 How would you build rapport with your administrators? With teaching staff? With the support staff?
- COM.2 How would you work with local municipal officials to generate support and trust for the schools?
- COM.3 How would you ascertain the public's perception of the school system and what steps would you take to improve or sustain that perception?
- COM.4 People who have moved from direct supervision to management often cite the subtle differences in having to persuade rather than to direct staff and colleagues to make and accept change, address problems or deal with subordinates. How have you adjusted (or, how would you adapt) to having to use persuasion vs. direction at a management position.
- COM.5 How have you built lines of communication with the various district stakeholders such as your leadership team, the faculty, community leaders, business interests and families?

## **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

- PR.1 What has been your practice for interacting and involving yourself with students, parents and the community?
- PR.2 Whom do you see as the most critical stakeholders for the public schools in our community?
- PR.3 Tell us how you have reached out to build up a community constituency and strengthen relationships with the local stakeholders.
  - a. Follow-up (if needed): In particular, could you talk about how you would build a line of communications to the municipal leadership and the media.
- PR.4 What is your experience dealing with various media who cover your district?
- PR.5 Please tell us about a time when you mobilized, or attempted to mobilize the agencies and personnel in other parts of the municipal and state social services network to support children and families. How would you go about getting those who do not report to you in making the schools successful?

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE RELATIONS**

- SCR.1 How do you keep your committee informed? In particular, what is your strategy around issues that are your responsibility but where the School Committee may have an interest? What has been their response and feedback?
- SCR.2 How do you go about discerning your committee's likes or dislikes? How does that influence you?
- SCR.3 Describe those occasions when you feel it is necessary to consult your committee before taking action.
- SCR.4 Describe an incident where you disagreed with your committee. How was it settled?
- SCR.5 The roles and responsibilities of school committees and superintendents are sometimes clear and sometimes ambiguous. For example, budget approval vs. budget implementation; or personnel policy and finance vs. personnel administration; or even dealing with parents and teachers with concerns or complaints. Can you describe some situations where these roles and responsibilities have challenged you and how you would work to address them were you our superintendent?
- SCR.6 What has been your experience working with a school committee and how do you see the role of the superintendent as the chief executive officer reporting to a committee that is, in fact, a municipal legislature for schools, in leading the district?
- SCR.7 In your experience how have you (or how would you) deal with the school committee on matters where law or policy provide little guidance on authority or roles and responsibilities? For example, how do you see the line of demarcation between the policy making role of the committee and the administrative responsibilities of the school committee and what you do when the lines blur?
- SCR.8 What do you envision as the key challenges in communicating with the committee?

## **BUDGETING/FINANCIAL**

- BF.1 What is your role in budget planning and development? How much involvement do you have in financial decisions during the year, once the budget is approved?

- BF.2 How do you envision the relationship between policy making and the budget process?
- BF.3 If you needed to make significant changes in a budget in the middle of an academic year, how would you go about doing so?
- BF.4 When you prepare your budget for the school committee, how do you go about this and what happens before the proposal reaches the committee?
- BF.5 How do you advise your staff and school committee about setting budgetary priorities in perilous economic times?
- BF.6 Have you ever had to convince a committee to do more with less?
- BF.7 The citizens in our community demand value for their tax dollars and transparency in fiscal accountability. In this light, tell us about how you have ensured that the budget you propose and the financial plan that you oversee as approved by the school committee is as compact and efficient as possible?
- a. How do you develop the district budget proposal?
  - b. Whose input do you solicit in developing the budget?
  - c. What has been your history working with municipal officials like a town manager, finance committee, city council or mayor in supporting your budget?
  - d. What inter-municipal collaborations would you pursue or avoid?

## **COLLECTIVE BARGAINING/RELATIONSHIPS WITH UNIONS**

- CB.1 Please tell us about the experiences you have had with collective bargaining on both management and the teacher side of the table. What is the best role for the superintendent?
- CB.2 What kind of advice and guidance would you give to the school committee to bargain for strategies to improve student learning?
- CB.3 How can we prepare to come to the negotiations table with tactics and strategies to use our union contracts in ways that are student centered and focus on helping our students grow academically?
- CB.4 How do you see the role of the superintendent in collaboration with the school committee using the collective bargaining process to promote student achievement for a sustainable period of time?



- CB.5 How do you envision establishing various criteria for educator evaluation given that they will apply not only to unionized educators but also to administrators including the superintendent?
- CB.6 Districts across Massachusetts have implemented a new educator evaluation system.
- What do you see as the important challenges we face as a district to implement the system?
  - How can we make this a force for good outcomes?
- CB.7 What is the best role of the superintendent in collective bargaining in your opinion? What are your experiences at the bargaining table? How would you propose that we use the bargaining process to promote student achievement as well as control our expenses?

## **ETHICS IN PRACTICE & ADMINISTRATION**

- EA.1 Sometimes less than honest behavior in organizations is not simply an individual response to a situation, but an outcome of organizational dynamics. Less than honest behavior can, with the best of intentions, be a result of organizational dynamics. In addition, a case can be made that less-than-honest behavior is sometimes the most humane, compassionate, and ethical way one can act:
- Can you give examples of this in your school district? Are there situations that unduly pressure people in your district? Has the pressure ever been so great that unethical practices result? As a superintendent, how could you address this kind of situation?
- EA.2 Describe a situation in which you have benefited from or been hurt by what you believe was a less-than-honest practice of another. How did you handle the situation? Would you do the same thing to or for another person? Has this situation changed the way you work?
- EA.3 At times, we all have to deal with situations in our work which we find ethically compromising. Tell me about a specific situation in which you have felt ethically compromised, or a situation that has left you carrying a very big burden for a long time. What kinds of situations in your work do you find to be ethically compromising, or which are “no-win” situations or “damned if you do, damned if you don’t” situations?
- EA.4 Often while moving into a new job or a new position, a mentor guides a protégé in adapting to the new position. Have you ever been guided, mentored, or advised regarding “the way we do things where” in a manner that made you feel ethically uncomfortable or ethically compromised? How did you learn to survive

in your new culture? Have you ever felt obligated to follow a mentor's advice about which you felt uncomfortable?

- a. Follow Up: How have your experiences guided you in mentoring others or how might you use them to establish a mentoring or internship program?
- b. Follow Up: What kinds of advice would you give to beginning administrators, including principals, about how to deal with ethically compromising situations?

## **TECHNOLOGY**

TECH.1 How do you feel technology should be applied in or to education? Has it begun to happen in your most recent school district?

TECH.2 What would be your curriculum plan for technology intervention in students' lives?

TECH.3 How would you budget for technology upgrades?

TECH.4 Do you think technology has really changed education beyond the bells and whistles that we all see? How do you see our district assessing our technology needs and how would you go about looking at a technology plan for our future? Who would you involve in that discussion?

## **BUILDING CONSTRUCTION AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS**

BC.1 Can you tell us about any experience you may have planning and renovating or rebuilding or how you would approach the critical issues this brings?

## **STATE LEVEL**

BCSL.1 What is your knowledge of the Massachusetts accountability systems and how will our measures of proficiency and our state's standards help or challenge you as you undertake our superintendency?

BCSL.2 What is your experience working with your state education department?

BCSL.3 Have you been involved in state level activity related to public education? How would you see yourself representing our district lobbying or participating on task forces and working groups? What issues are of most concern to you?

BCSL.4 Have you ever lobbied for legislation, funding or for an issue? How do you see your role in public policy?

## II. Model Interview with Annotated Questions

*In responding to these questions, please reference your own experiences or be specific to distinguish your own experience vs. examples you draw from the work of others.*

- I. What examples would you offer for effective evaluation processes for teachers and administrators that actually work to improve performance and motivate teachers and administrators? How would a process like this be consistent with the current requirements of the professional standards, curriculum frameworks, and proper roles and responsibilities? In particular, describe a process that would work best, in your opinion, over a reasonable period of time.

What to look for in the response:

- What does the candidate know about evaluations?
  - Has the candidate researched or used innovative models and what made them different or effective?
  - Does the candidate have a thorough view of the evaluation process over a period of time or years for individuals?
  - Does the candidate demonstrate knowledge of the constructive, remedial, and long term benefit of a good process as well as how evaluations can be effective tools for coaching people to more effective positions or leaving the district?
2. What are your strategies for fostering a positive relationship with the School Committee regarding a) making educational policy for the district; b) setting budget priorities and formal spending plans; c) engaging in collective bargaining, and d) creating a solid administrative and policy making team that supports the district's goals and objectives?

What to look for:

Some candidates foolishly explain that their top priority is to build a solid working relationship with the School Committee. This does serious damage to credibility because even board members know the highest priority is academic achievement and good schools. However, a good response will answer these questions:

- Does the candidate understand the relationship under Massachusetts Education Reform that clarifies policy making (School Committee) with administration (Superintendent, Principals, etc.)?
- Does the candidate understand all the various elements of policy making (e.g., formal policy documents, student handbooks, collective bargaining, budgeting, grant writing, etc.)?

[A knowledgeable candidate will explain to the School Committee that policy is a broad area, and there are situations where policy making and administrative lines may blur. A good response will explain how a superintendent would respect policy making responsibilities, facilitate them, and guide the board away from where it shouldn't be. A candidate who does not appreciate that budgeting, for example, is a critical policy task, or that collective bargaining is essentially your personnel policy, or that grant applications may include commitments to the district that aren't always obvious, may run into trouble later. Some superintendent search consultants have taken the position that School Committees should not engage in collective bargaining but, instead should defer to the superintendent. Probe this carefully. It's one thing to use your expert professionals to deploy their skills in bargaining with well represented unions. It's another to think that School Committees don't have a role. ]

- Does the superintendent understand that, on occasion, School Committee members may overstep their roles vis-à-vis administration? In dealing with this, does the candidate use a good strategy for dealing with individual members or groups of members to address these transgressions?
  - Does the candidate have a good strategy for speaking with individual members who may engage in inappropriate tactics or activities?
3. There are several areas where clear delineation of authority becomes more blurred than clear. For example, several areas touch both policy and administrative operations, and it may not be fully clear about where the school committee's responsibilities end and where the administration's begins. Give me some examples of how you have worked (in any capacity) with your school committees to resolve these potential conflicts?

Potential areas of conflict include:

- Parents who complain to an elected school committee member who has the right and obligation to hear the constituent but not the ability to resolve the problem.
- Collective Bargaining (including impact bargaining) situations where certain items being negotiated or grieved may impair the administrator's legal obligation to manage the district or school.
- Budget and Fiscal Administration where the level of board control varies depending upon the level.
- Working the District Legal Counsel who is employed by the school committee but who may serve the superintendent or principals in confidential personnel matters not under the jurisdiction of the committee.
- Confidential Information and informing the school committee of pending issues over which they may not have jurisdiction but about which they are likely to read in the newspaper before hearing about it from the superintendent.
- Staff and School Restructuring if there are collective bargaining and budget and policy implications.

- Problem Principals and Administrators over whom the superintendent has full authority but who may generate complaints to the school committee.
- School Committee Rules of Order that may not please the superintendent.

What to look for:

- Does the superintendent acknowledge that the lines of authority are not cut and dry?
  - Does the superintendent recognize the importance of keeping the school committee informed?
  - Does the candidate appreciate the fine line that separates responsibilities and is the candidate sympathetic or understanding of the importance of working with the board on these situations?
  - How does the candidate see the allocation of power and responsibility and is this candidacy a quest for authority as opposed to a desire to advance the district's agenda?
  - How will this candidate view a collaborative relationship with the school committee?
4. There are times when simple intelligence is not enough to resolve a problem. Can you describe a complex problem, situation, or crisis that you confronted where you had to rely on more than intelligence, but when you had to call upon your other skills and abilities for, say, communicating, thinking quickly, working with people, political savvy, instincts, academic training, and intellect?

What to look for:

This is a great question because it allows candidates to show how skillful they are and to demonstrate such virtues as tact, discretion, communication skills, fast thinking, interpersonal savvy, etc. Ask for several examples, and let candidates put the question off to the end if they need time. You can even alert them to this question, or allow them to expand at a subsequent interview.

- Does the candidate know how to use resources, colleagues, team members, and other individuals and appreciate their roles?
  - Is the candidate resourceful?
  - Is the candidate honest and honorable in dealing with problems?
5. How comfortable and knowledgeable are you with the Massachusetts education reform structure, the relationships it provides for superintendent/School Committee operations, and its various levels of accountability? How would you guide this community as it continues to maneuver through a changing period in educational public policy?

6. Can you give us some examples of how you have worked with parents (and students) to build support for the public schools in your previous positions?

What to look for:

- Does the candidate have a solid understanding of the law's specifics and goals for the long term?
- Does the candidate have a good understanding of a communications strategy around achievement levels and accountability for when the local press publishes scores (out of context)?

7. Can you give us some examples of how you have worked with parents (and students) to build support for the public schools in your previous positions?

What to look for:

- Does the candidate really respect parents or view them as a necessary nuisance?
- Is the candidate a good collaborator with community resources?
- How does the superintendent view the importance of attending to the needs and concerns of parents?

8. Can you give us examples of how you have worked with community leaders to build support for public schools?

What to look for:

- Is the candidate a good external communicator?
- Does the candidate know how to find the key people to meet and find as partners. Is the candidate astute at identifying key community partners?
- Does the candidate think differently about how to deploy community allies?
- Did the candidate promote the schools or himself/herself with community leaders?

9. Give us some examples of how you have worked with principals to improve their performance in the following cases: a) being instructional leaders; b) improvement of administrative performance; c) knowing how to interview and hire good teachers; d) working with parents; e) working with faculty and colleagues in the school district.

What to look for:

- What does the candidate know about instructional leadership? Can the candidate offer good strategies? Does the candidate know what works in professional development strategies? Does the candidate know how to deploy tactics to improve student achievement?
- How has the candidate interviewed professional educators, aides, or support people before? What are some of the questions he/she would ask? What does he/she look for in a prospective school district employee?

- Does the candidate respect parents? (School Committee members are very astute at deducing a candidate's strength or weakness here.)
- What does the candidate do to earn respect from district team members?

10. What is your view of the role of the superintendent vis-à-vis the district's chief financial officer? In other words, how do you build a budget, monitor the district's finances, and develop a good reporting system?

What to look for:

- Does the candidate understand the budget process, or is the candidate uncomfortable with it and with financial accountability.
- Can the candidate be comfortable explaining the district's budget to the school community, the public at large, the city or town's governing authorities (e.g., Finance Committee, Town Administrator, Town Meeting, Mayor, City Manager, or City Council)

11. Tell us about your experiences with collective bargaining. Then describe how you view the role of the school committee in the various stages of the collective bargaining process. (NOTE: Some consultants believe that the school committee should take a minimal role in collective bargaining, deferring instead to the superintendent and management team. Some School Committees agree while others support an active role for their members. This question is also an appropriate one for you to ask your search consultant before inquiring of the candidate as it may have influenced the selection of candidates presented to you.)

What to look for:

- Does the candidate know about collective bargaining?
- Does the candidate believe the school committee should have a greater or lesser role?
- What process would the candidate use to involve the board in preparing for bargaining vs. face to face negotiations, mediation, or the final steps toward a contract?

12. What is your recommendation to a school committee member who receives a complaint from a parent regarding a school related matter?

What to look for:

- Does the candidate respect parents who generate complaints?
- How will the candidate mediate the parental complaints with the need to support the administrative team?
- Does the candidate respect the delicate position in which the school committee member sits?

- Does the candidate have a good sense of the right of a parent to exercise the right to petition elected officials even though they may not have the ability to resolve the problems or concerns?

13. In three years, how would you define success for your superintendency?

What to look for:

This is your candidates' opportunity to recommend some standards to which they will be held and to demonstrate that they have vision. If the answer is substantive, it will be an important guide. If the answer is vague or standard generalities, you must probe for specifics.

- Are the definitions of success realistic?
- Are these definitions consistent with what you want from your district?

14. We've heard people talk about using "state of the art" curriculum and teaching technologies. That means different things to different people. For example, to a medical person it means proven research that advances on what we know or that produces better outcomes. Given that teaching and learning has gone on for thousands of years, can we really have 'state of the art' curriculum or learning tools in our education system.

What to look for:

- Does the candidate go beyond a technical response?
- Can the candidate offer perspective on evolving technologies, theories, and trends?
- Can the candidate defend traditionalism or progressive trends effectively?

15. We have had people tell us that while "all kids can learn," not all kids do learn. If that is a function of a) curriculum, or b) teaching competence, or c) the teaching environment, or d) something else, please tell us what we can do to help use curriculum/teaching competence/teaching environment/something else, to ensure that more kids will learn?

What to look for:

- Real knowledge about teaching and learning.
- Understanding of diverse learning styles.
- Basics of effective teaching and learning that shows technical knowledge and the ability to inspire and motivate students.

16. Please tell us about an important project that was assigned to you, how you handled it, challenges you encountered, and the outcome? What did you learn from this experience that will make you a better leader?



What to look for:

- How does one begin to organize around a project?
- How does one manage other people in planning and executing?
- Are the lessons valuable ones and are they the right ones?

17. Tell us about your experiences working with educators who resist your recommendations, including veteran educators who were skeptical about your plans.

What to look for:

- How does one win over colleagues?
- Can the candidate make reasonable adaptations, if appropriate?
- Does one respect the concerns of veterans even if they cannot be accommodated?

18. Please explain to us how a skillful supervisor looks for in a teacher observation and how you can guide your subordinates to do this more effectively?

What to look for:

- Does the candidate truly understand the elements of teacher evaluation?
- Does the candidate understand coaching?

19. What professional development would you be seeking for your own professional development goals or plans?

What to look for:

- What can the candidate tell you about him/herself? (This would be a great opportunity to learn appropriately about the candidate as a person.)

21. A lot of students tell us that technology is useful to someone, but not to them. That might be because the technology is out of date, or not used effectively. What kinds of technology are most effective in your opinion, and why do they work?

What to look for:

- Can the candidate make the link between the emerging technologies and student achievement in a way that is more than simple admiration for the technological innovations?
- Is the candidate capable of adopting new technologies as they emerge?

22. How would you explain the Common Core to a room full of parents who might range from sophisticated to the curriculum to those who have never heard of it?

What to look for:

- Ability to explain a complex system in a way that the general audience can understand.
- Does the candidate actually understand the common Core and PARCC?

23. What are the key characteristics you seek when you are assessing an outstanding teacher or administrator? What are some of the characteristics that you have found consistent among the most effective educators?

What to look for:

- How well does the candidate understand good teaching and good management?

### III. SCENARIOS FOR CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

#### Constituent Complaint

- Parent Terry Smith, the parent of an eighth grader objects to the teaching technique of math teacher Pat Jones. Pat assigns a weekend “problem of the week,” a series of progressively difficult brainteasers that require that students to deploy various strategies to solve a problem by Monday. Unfortunately, the teacher refuses to give the answer and method for finding it, frustrating some students who cannot find the answer. Parents who have been trying to help their children solve the problems note that some kids spend hours of weekend time wrestling with the challenge – often failing. Requests by parents to share the answers after the fact fall on deaf ears. Things come to a head at the PTA meeting when a parent with an advanced degree in math points out that some problems pose a challenge for college math majors. Jones, however, is adamant. He responds that “It’s my classroom, and I do what I want. I want the kids to think about the problem more than I want them to solve it. It helps me understand their thinking process.” The principal who hired Pat defends the math teacher and explains that it’s important for kids to have questions unanswered in their lives. Parents confront a school committee member at the supermarket and explains that their children are feeling bad about math and demand that this practice stop. Some of their kids are being turned off to math and feel humiliated by the teacher. The board member calls the superintendent and demands that something be done.

#### Censorship

- The student “Current Events Club” tries to present a balanced view on the issues its takes up. Next week they will discuss the topic “Liberal or Conservative – Which is More Effective.” Club Members post a meeting with several web sites that students may access for different perspectives on issues. However, one web site links students directly to graphic video of live scenes of human torture and the actual beheadings of hostages. The principal demands the students remove the offending web link. Students demand their “Freedom of Speech” rights to post the full notice. At tonight’s School Committee meeting, the subject will be raised at public comment period and action is demanded by various factions in the community.

#### Police in the Schools

- Following a shouting match with fellow senior Sally Smith, Jane Jones asks her friend, senior Cynthia Brown, to beat up Sally for \$25. Cynthia accepts the assignment and “sucker punches” Sally outside the cafeteria. Sally, blindsided, doesn’t have time to respond before teachers separate them and secure the area. Sally emerges with a sore jaw but otherwise without serious harm, but she is very upset. Her parents are called and they take her home for the day. Cynthia’s parents are also called to school where they and their daughter learn of a five day suspension for fighting. Mr. and Mrs. Smith, however, are outraged that this was allowed to happen, especially because they do not know why the assault took place. The principal has a very poor relationship with the

Chief of Police and, fearing the bad publicity, explains to the Smiths that he will investigate himself before going to the local authorities. When they hear nothing for three days, the Smiths file a criminal complaint with the local police. The local reporter is “tipped off” and finds the complaint on the police blotter. It is a lead story in the local weekly’s next edition several days later. That’s where the School Committee learns about it. Assess this situation.

## **Public Relations Crisis**

- Using the school district as an out-of-context example for political purposes, and after recklessly misinterpreting MCAS test data, a candidate for the legislature calls for higher standards, less every district end up “like another (your community).” Those with a solid foundation for No Child Left Behind and MCAS testing understand that this claim is false, if not slanderous, but the public’s complexity tolerance is very low. What can you do in this situation?

## **School Budget on Municipal Election**

- You’ve just settled the union contracts and they’re set for the next three years with raises of 1% in each year; but you’ll need a Proposition 2 ½ override to fund what you need in order to avoid severe program cuts. A critic of the schools claims that you’ve “given the teachers a 12% raise.”) It’s time to respond, but what would you do?

*(What the critic doesn’t explain is that he has compared the salary of an entry level teacher in 2010 with that same hypothetical teacher in 2013, after three years of step increases, attainment of a new Master’s degree plus additional graduate training, plus taking on a new stipended-curricular coaching position.)*

## **Charter School Decides to Recruit Your Students**

- A group of parents who are dissatisfied with the schools organizes an effort to establish a charter school in (your community). They recruit an experienced charter school consultant, do their homework, speak with community members and prepare their application to the Board of Education which will is expected to approve it. Every student the charter enrolls will mean the loss of thousands of dollars in state aid to (your community) public schools. What would you do?

## **A Death in the School Family**

- A student dies from an adverse reaction to drugs purchased from a school-based dealer. Some demand a crackdown and heightened security, plus police presence in the building. They demand that students be questioned, lockers be searched, and students be subjected to drug sniffing dogs. Others argue for a more cautious, sensitive approach and want to focus on the needs of students sharing the trauma of the loss.

- A popular teacher is killed in an unfortunate accident and the school family must come together to help everyone.

## **Union Pickets the Home of Board Members**

- Teacher union negotiations have broken down. The issues are over economics and the inability of the district to provide the desired package. To pressure the School Committee, union members vote to picket the homes of board members. Some of the members with young children are concerned that their children will be traumatized, their neighbors annoyed, and their families harassed. The strike vote is scheduled for Thursday, and today is Tuesday. Picketing will begin after school.

## **The Strike Deadline has Passed**

- The strike has begun and teachers have voted on Thursday afternoon to stay home until agreement is reached on a new contract. Some parents offer to cover classrooms. Others demand the striking teachers be fired. The board members whose homes were picketed are most adamant that the board not cave in to the union.

## **Obnoxious, Persistent Reporter**

A student has complained to police that he/she was harassed in a locker room by members of his/her lacrosse team. The abuse included pushing, hazing, verbal taunting, and, possibly actions with sexual overtones. The parents of the alleged victim want a criminal complaint issued and investigated. The alleged victim is a juvenile and the perpetrators may also be juveniles. A local reporter gets wind of the story from student sources inside the school and has some names of involved persons. You've had a mixed relationship with this paper. The reporter contacts the superintendent with some of the following questions:

- Can you confirm that it was the lacrosse team?
- Has the school department issued the appropriate mandated reports on the victims?
- We're told this has happened before so what can you tell us?
- If you stonewall us, we'll report that as well because we think some of the students are not eligible for protection as juvenile sources?

What are some of the things you think about as superintendent, and how do you respond?

## **Parents Intervene for Sanctioned Students**

- Your high school has a National Honor Society chapter that admits students who meet specified high academic achievement of 3.5 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Before being admitted to NHS, students must be evaluated by a faculty review panel that will also consider community and school service, integrity, and character criteria. Of the thirty students who met the academic requirements for admission in the junior year, five were not recommended by the faculty screening committee for membership, meaning they will not be able to include NHS in their college applications.

Parents of these five students appeal to the School Committee to have the decision overturned.

- How do you advise the school committee prior to the meeting?
- What do you do to prepare for the meeting?

## **Redistricting**

- You realize that the student enrollment is shifting. You know that you will greatly alleviate budget pressures and balance the student population more equitably among the schools if you redistrict the elementary children.

How would you begin to address this theoretical question, and redistrict the schools, knowing the following?

Parents, generally do not like to change schools and disrupt the children's' routines and relationships associated with a move.

One of the schools is very new and one is very old. Yet students will be leaving and going into each under any new plan.

## **Ethical Situation**

A student, using a small camera, recorded a teacher and then played the recording on YouTube complete with inappropriate commentary. The film is clean and the teacher is acting appropriately, but the comments are derogatory - but not obscene. What action would you take as superintendent?

## Curriculum, Teaching and School Management <sup>1</sup>

This question could be provided ahead of time.

Parent Terry Smith, the parent of an eighth grader objects to the teaching technique of math teacher Pat Jones. Pat assigns a weekend “problem of the week,” over the year - a series of progressively difficult brainteasers that require that students to deploy various strategies to solve a math problem by Monday.

However, if no student can solve the problem and explain the method to the class, the teacher refuses to give the answer or a method for finding it.

Parents who have been trying to help their children solve the problems note that some kids spend hours of weekend time wrestling with the challenge – often failing. Requests by parents to give the answers and method to the students later on fall on deaf ears.

Things come to a head at the PTA meeting when a parent with an advanced degree in math points out that some problems pose a challenge for college math majors and failing to give answers builds esteem problems for students, especially girls who are stereotyped unfairly as not ready for math.

Teacher Jones, however, is adamant. He responds that “It’s my classroom, and I do what I want.” The principal who hired Pat defends the math teacher and explains that it’s important for kids to recognize the role of unanswered questions in their lives.

Parents confront a school committee member at the supermarket and demand that this practice stop. Some of their kids are being turned off to math and feel humiliated by the teacher. The board member calls the superintendent and demands that something be done.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a real situation from an actual Massachusetts school. It poses several layers of questions around things like appropriate teaching styles, management of teachers, supervision of principals, intervention by the superintendent, and how one deals with a runaway teacher who rejects supervision. Or, it could be about a thoughtful teacher who challenges students.

## **IV. SAMPLE OF SOME SITE VISIT QUESTIONS ASKED BY SCHOOL COMMITTEES**

**(Questions should be identified for appropriate persons. Not all questions should be asked to all interviewees.)**

1. In what capacity and for how long did you work with the candidate?
2. Please summarize what you believe are the candidate's major strengths and weaknesses?
3. As in every school district, there must have been issues (i.e. staff, parent grievances, or performance problems) that developed in one school or another over the years. Was the candidate quick to identify these issues? Was the candidate quick to resolve these issues? Or did she/he tend to avoid confrontation, therefore allowing issues to fester and grow? Describe how she/he would bring these issues to resolution. Give a couple of examples?
4. Describe the candidate's leadership style. Describe his management and supervision styles? (This is a particularly important question to ask of superiors and direct-report subordinates.)

People aren't usually objective about their kids, their neighborhoods, their schools or their jobs. Sometimes a leader has to tell people things they don't want to hear, or say "no" to requests from people who believe they deserve what they seek, or take an action that makes some parents or teachers unhappy or feeling the decision is unfair. How has the candidate handled situations like this?
5. How did the candidate handle parent complaints, including those complaints that parents make to school committee members before they use the official "chain of command"? Does she/he have an open door policy? How often did complaints make it all the way to the School Committee? How many grievances were filed during the candidate's superintendency and what does this volume tell us?
6. How did the candidate go about building the school budget? Who did she/he involve in the process? How did she/he prioritize? How well did she/he present his budget and sell it to the community, including the municipal officials? (This question is particularly important for principals, staff, town manager or mayor, and Finance Committee members in towns.)
7. When a problem would arise, how does the candidate go about dealing with it? How does the candidate think about the situation and plan to resolve it?

How did the candidate perform under fire? Describe situations when he had to do so? How did he do during the town's override battles?



8. How would the candidate handle an underperforming or troublesome employee? Would she/he let the situation continue or resolve it early? Is she/he tough when he has to be?

9. If the candidate gets the job, he may have an experienced staff member who also sought the superintendency as an internal candidate. How do you think the candidate would handle that situation? Do you think he will succeed in keeping this subordinate and work effectively with this person?

10. How was the candidate perceived by the community, by employees, or by the School Committee, the town manager, or Finance Committee?

11. Did the candidate tend to give greater priority or emphasis to special needs students, average students, or advanced learners? Or did she/he balance his priorities, efforts, and initiatives across all three groups? Give specific examples of things he initiated for each group?

12. How did the candidate go about improving academic performance?

13. How savvy is the candidate in dealing with the media?

14. How has the candidate handled relationships with the police and managed the police/school liaison function?

15. "Control" is a very important element of managing school districts. How does the candidate manage to be in control with or without being overly "controlling"? Or is control a problem with the candidate's administrative style?

16. If we hire the candidate, what will we be saying about that decision 5 years from now?

Not every question was asked of every person. You'll find that the sessions go quickly. Certain questions were more applicable to certain people. However, this covers just about the entire range of questions. I hope it helps.

## V. WHAT MENTORS ADVISE CANDIDATES PRIOR TO THEIR INTERVIEWS

*The following points were developed by individuals who guide superintendent candidates through the search process.*

### THE FIRST COMMANDMENT OF PUBLIC MEETINGS AND INTERVIEWS:

#### **“Brief is Good”**

1. Above all, demonstrate that you have a commitment to the children of the public schools. Many candidates bring superior skills to the interview process: administrative talents, legal acumen, budget knowledge, analytic capabilities, and even vision. But do you care about kids and do you have a passion for making their education a fulfilling experience? Many good candidates are brilliant and talented, but, if they do not communicate their love of children and a commitment to the mission of educating them, the interviewers may see you as more ambitious than caring, and more concerned with authority, power, and a higher average salary for pension purposes: and they might be right.
2. Do not underestimate the intelligence of the school committee members. They are elected officials who are almost always very skilled at relating to other people, sensing nuance, seeing through rhetoric, and appreciating their own district’s best interests. If you are meeting with a search committee, the same caveats apply. Moreover, some search committee members hope to serve on the School Committee, so consider them as your potential future employers.
3. It is always helpful to know who’s in the room. Some school committee and search committee members are expert at educational issues. Many are teachers, principals, college faculty and might know more than on some topics than the superintendent they seek. Others often have strong background in several professional areas. Moreover, most are parents who have experience with the public schools.
4. Remember that School Board members sense “bull” right away when candidates get careless with the truth, exaggerate, pander, or revert to clichés and other stereotypical comments. Be sensitive to that. They are more likely to tune out if they feel they are wasting intellectual energy during an interview.

For example, when citing what you might have as your priorities, the most foolish thing you can do is to tell them that your relationship with the board is your highest priority. You will lose credibility at once if you do that. The next most foolish thing you can do is to start with the buzzwords and “insider” lingo of education that will alienate your interviewers.

5. As a style point, be controlled, but don’t hide your enthusiasm for students or public education. School Board members sense that public education is under assault and a superintendent who wants to help them fight for public schools will earn respect.
6. Be attentive to the board at all times during an interview and subsequent discussion. Show confidence without arrogance (which shows through in candidates better than they can hide it). Demonstrate that you are a serious person who can also laugh and be light when it’s appropriate, but not someone who looks more for fun than work. (Often candidates turn into comedians. It’s fun, but they don’t go to the second round.)

7. A special skill that is invaluable is to be brilliant, yet modest, understandable and personable, rather than having to let the board know you're smarter than they are. Most board members don't have Ed.Ds (and even more aren't necessarily as impressed with the academic credentialing as the academics are themselves). Board members who didn't go to college can turn off very quickly if you must be known as Dr. \_\_\_\_\_. After all, whose appendix did you take out?
8. Identify some talking points that clearly distinguish you from others because they show you really know what you're talking about and that you've studied more than one approach to a problem. Quality candidates are in very short supply, and even some of the good ones don't have a personality, demonstrate intellect, or give a good reason. Here are some of those critical areas:
  - Teacher Recruitment. Successful candidates can tell stories of how they push principals and department heads to keep trying until they get an educator they really want, rather than the best of a mediocre crop of candidates. Others describe outstanding hiring decisions that were both academically and strategically effective – like the mathematician who had outstanding communication skills for reaching to the youngest as well as the oldest students.
  - Teacher Evaluation. Most answers here are full of clichés and sound the same. Try to identify some angles that are both unique and reflect that you've studied this question. Among the more creative answers that have worked well are:
    - Those who talk about “the work being done to evaluate teachers both as individuals and as part of a team evaluation process so that teachers are accountable both for themselves and as a group.”
    - Responses demonstrating that the evaluation process can be one way to tell teachers that they're doing a great job as well as a vehicle for constructive improvement (or intense remediation for failure).
    - Responses that show how to use testing data appropriately to identify teachers who need extra support.
    - Ones that appreciate how much teachers need support and encouragement. It's a tough job.
  - Special Education. This is a very sensitive issue, and if you don't know it, don't try to fake it. Many board members ran for office because of a special education concern.
  - Education Reform and Critical Public Policy Questions. Demonstrate that you have a thorough understanding of Education Reform and the financing side as it has evolved to include various federal initiatives and issues (i.e., Adequate Yearly Progress; Race to the Top; Massachusetts's 2010 Education Reform II statute). Show that you know that the system includes standards, accountability measures for teachers, students, schools, and school districts. That it is very complex and defies a simple explanation.

In particular, make sure you can explain state governance laws, appreciate good theory on board roles and responsibilities, and show respect for the School Board at the same time. There are many gray areas in law or in practice where the law or good practice would exclude school board involvement. Some superintendents finesse this, or guide boards through it, while others ignore the need to collaborate with the board until they get caught. It's important to identify those areas where there is less black and white than gray: collective bargaining, grievance remediation, addressing budgetary line items, dealing with parents, etc. Yes, you may have the power, but it's the board that has to face the people in the coffee shop, PTA meetings, town meetings, and in the media.

Also on the financing side, make sure they know that you know that the “Foundation Budget” concept employed in many states is simply the way the state tries to establish a base for funding districts. Explain that, totally separate from the Foundation Budget is the state’s reimbursement formula for disbursing the aid and that the real solution to the reimbursement shortage is: a) greater state allocation; b) an equitable state formula that incorporates special education student needs; c) holds harmless districts with declining enrollment and gives every district a per pupil base set to inflation; and d) better state funding for school building assistance and SPED.

- Curriculum. Everyone seems to have to answer an obligatory question(s) on curriculum. Good responses have referenced the state frameworks as a very helpful outline where districts can fill in the specifics. Note that the state accountability system (Regents, MCAS, etc.) can play a valuable, appropriate role in measuring how well your district may be aligned with the Frameworks, but also that districts must work carefully to secure a thorough curriculum into which teachers and principals buy in. The superintendent has to work closely with principals to make sure they understand just how important a solid, aligned, and defensible curriculum is. Also, demonstrate good strategies that develop and revise curriculum, including using the evaluation tool to make sure that people contribute to the curriculum development process and meet the goals they set.
  - School Committee Roles. The board members are your partners. Don’t threaten them with best practice theory or state reform legislation, or discourage them from coming to the superintendent with legitimate concerns from their parent/neighbors. A very good response to this question was that “the School Board’s role as the principal policy maker is incredibly powerful. The Board can set the standards and hold us to them; they can establish our operating policies and hold the superintendent accountable; they can use the budget making process not only to set financial parameters, but to set the appropriate policy to go with it. Their role is usually underappreciated, but significant.”  
Also, make sure that they know that you know that the board’s job is the toughest role in American elective politics. You respond to the citizens at their very grassroots, the ones that lead up to their doors.
  - Budget Development. Give some concrete experiences about how you’ve conceived, developed, and implemented a budget in collaboration with various boards and superintendents. Many superintendents get into trouble by handling the politics of budget issues poorly.
9. Be able to explain your leadership style and your ability to collaborate without being controlling. School Committee members are particularly sensitive to the “controlling” personality and want to be sure that their superintendent will facilitate full discussion by sharing information, allow the board plenty of time to consider and make informed decisions, and make people feel empowered.
  10. Demonstrate a genuine respect for parents in terms of being accessible to them, a recognition that while they’re single issue constituents (i.e., their children), they are also invaluable advocates to the community at large. If you can’t give examples, offer ideas.
  11. Demonstrate that you know how to build a constituency for the public schools by:
    - Understanding how to incorporate School Board members into the communications strategy.

- Demonstrating that you would not turn the school system into your personal show, but use everyone as part of the school/community communications team.
  - Cultivating the people who cover your community with accurate information.
  - Being an ambassador and “cheer leader” for the public schools.
  - BEING UBIQUITOUS: attending community events, meeting with parents, contacting community business people (Rotary, Kiwanis, etc.), getting to know religious leaders, etc.
  - Linking with local and legislative leaders. (Know the local legislators’ names and something about them. Meet them if you can.)
12. Be credible about why you want to make a job change, if you’re coming from a current superintendency. Be truthful and explain anything that might appear to be a bad situation. (Don’t blame the school board, because if you blamed your past employers, you’ll be just as predisposed to blaming the next one – and the prospective next one knows it.)

Legitimate and credible reasons for change include:

- A professional advancement.
  - The outstanding opportunity posed by the hiring district.
  - A change in your previous board’s philosophy.
  - You had to “fall on your sword” because the financial situation was bad or someone you hired messed up.
  - A desire to get closer to home or to relocate to a specific location.
  - A desire to deploy your education and training more effectively.
  - Your district no longer needs the special skills you brought (new buildings are complete, curricula are implemented, restructuring is in place, new financial system is now working, etc.)
12. Practice responding to difficult questions and go over them again and again, and again until you’re comfortable with the tone, text, and content. (That’s why we have long walks and drives.) You don’t want to be perceived as reciting a memorized response – it never works and the interviewers will know it immediately. By working on your responses, you will have command of the talking points and intellectual arguments and will be able to explain them clearly.

*A closing thought:*

*Mary B. Newman, a distinguished Massachusetts legislator who was respected on both sides of the aisle, always evaluated her colleagues in government by posing three sets of questions:*

1. *Who is this person? What formed the person’s background, values, and standards? What in this person’s background will tell me that he/she is a good person whom I can trust and whom others can depend upon to act in the public interest and not one’s own?*
2. *How does this person think? How does this person tackle a problem? Is there a clear thought process that uses many criteria and avoids biases that get in the way of sound judgment? Does this person use others to plan and implement?*

3. Finally, if I had a problem, would this person care about me?

*In your interview, try to draw out clear responses from the candidate.*

*If you are being interviewed, demonstrate what a quality candidate you are; how you value good judgment, teamwork, and collaboration; and not only how you want to make things better for the community, but also that you care about individuals and their needs.*

## VII. WHAT YOU MAY ASK AND WHAT YOU MAY NOT ASK OF CANDIDATES FOR SUPERINTENDENT

<u>AREA OF INQUIRY</u>	<u>LIMITATIONS ON QUESTIONING</u>
<b>EDUCATION</b>	<p>You should not ask about a candidate's education as a means to ascertain age.</p> <p><u>You may ask about schools attended, confirmation (but not year) of graduation, work experience, references.</u></p>
<b>RACE or COLOR</b>	<p>Questions about race are not allowed and photographs may not be solicited.</p>
<b>RELIGION</b>	<p>Questions about religion are not allowed.</p> <p><u>You may ask if a candidate can meet your attendance requirements including weekend or evening meetings as long as they are not designed to ascertain religious information.</u></p>
<b>AGE</b>	<p>Inquiry about age, including date of birth, is not allowed.</p>
<b>SEX</b>	<p>Generally no questions are allowed.</p>
<b>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</b>	<p>Questions, including those about relationships or living arrangements, including marital status, are not allowed.</p>
<b>HEALTH STATUS</b>	<p>Questions about height and weight may not be asked.</p>
<b>HANDICAP or DISABILITY</b>	<p>Specific questions about whether a candidate has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ a disability,</li> <li>○ received Workers' Compensation,</li> <li>○ been in a hospital,</li> <li>○ been treated for a mental health condition,</li> <li>○ addicted to or treated for drug abuse or alcoholism,</li> <li>○ been in or completed a rehabilitation for drugs or alcohol,</li> <li>○ been absent from work because of illness.</li> <li>○ <u>You may ask about a previous attendance record at other jobs without referencing illness.</u></li> <li>○</li> </ul> <p>NOTE: if a candidate offers information on an illness or disability, you may not inquire as to the kind, severity, ongoing treatment or likelihood of recovery.</p>

You may not ask the candidate to take a physical examination prior to making a job offer. You may, after a position has been offered, require a physical exam to ensure that the candidate will be able to fulfill the job requirements.

## **NATIONAL ORIGIN**

Place of birth, original home of parents, ancestry or ethnicity of applicant or parents.

**You may ask if the candidate may legally work in the USA.**

## **MILITARY SERVICE**

You may not inquire about service connected disabilities, the nature of military discharge, foreign service, draft status or reserve status.

**You may ask if a candidate is a military veteran and about military service history.**

## **RESIDENCE**

Questions about living arrangements, ownership or renting are not allowed. You may ask if a candidate would be willing to move into the district.

## **CRIMINAL RECORDS**

You may not ask about arrests, detention, or case disposition where there is no conviction.

You may not ask about *first* convictions for misdemeanors (i.e., drunkenness, speeding, minor traffic violations, disturbing the peace).

You may not inquire of convictions for **any** misdemeanors within the last five years.

**You may ask the following questions:**

- **Have you ever been convicted of a felony?**
- **(Excluding those listed above), have you been convicted of a misdemeanor within the last five years?**
- **Excluding misdemeanors listed above, have you completed a period of incarceration within the past five years for any misdemeanor?**

All school employees who have unsupervised contact with students, including the superintendent, must submit to a criminal records check every three years.

In Massachusetts it is illegal to administer a polygraph (Lie Detector) to an employee or candidate.