

Interim Superintendent Preliminary Screening Committee Meeting
Tuesday, March 17, 2020
11:00 AM-12:00 PM
Remote

Members present: Helen Charlupski (Chair), Suzanne Federspiel, Jennifer Monopoli, and David Pearlman.

Staff present: Human Resources Director Lisa Richardson and Robin Coyne.

Others present: Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) Executive Director Glenn Koocher.

Ms. Charlupski called the meeting to order at 11:00 AM.

1. Discussion of Interim Superintendent Search Process

Ms. Charlupski explained that the Superintendent Search Public Advisory Committee and the Superintendent Search Committee unanimously determined that it would be in the best interest of the Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) to suspend the Superintendent search and reopen it in the fall of 2020 with the intention of having a new Superintendent in place at the beginning of the 2021-2022 academic year. MASC Executive Director Glenn Koocher referred to the following document: *Plan B: When the First Round of Superintendent Hiring Goes Sideways; Alternate Strategies, Restarting the Search, or Hiring an Interim Leader* (Attachment A).

The Screening Committee agreed on the following:

- That the search for a permanent Superintendent should be restarted in either late summer or early fall;
- As soon as possible, the district should post a notice for an Interim Superintendent, with the expectation that the selected person will start in July 2020;
- That all applications should go to the Director of Human Resources;
- To not include a deadline for applications; and
- That the notice (Attachment B) should indicate 1) that the Interim Superintendent will not be considered as a candidate for the permanent Superintendent role; 2) that the Screening Committee intends to begin review of applications on April 9, 2020 and begin interviews the week of April 13, 2020; and 3) that the Screening Committee will likely conduct all interviews virtually.

The Screening Committee discussed outreach to potential candidates and where the notice could be posted (e.g., PSB Website, SchoolSpring, MASC Website, Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS) Website, diversity websites, and through School Leadership graduate programs). Ms. Charlupski will check whether the New England School Development Council (NESDEC) will be able to provide any assistance.

Ms. Charlupski will update the School Committee during the March 19, 2020 meeting. The next meeting of the Screening Committee will take place on April 9, 2020, at 5:00 PM.

Ms. Charlupski adjourned the meeting at 12:00 PM.

PLAN B: When the First Round of Superintendent Hiring Goes Sideways
Alternate Strategies, Restarting the Search, or Hiring an Interim Leader

While it is not the standard, from time to time a superintendent search is initially unsuccessful. In those instances, the School Committee has several options.

As you prepare for “Plan B” keep these important principles in mind:

- The school committee should not accept a candidate in whom they lack confidence. There are many options available to the school committee should the pool of candidates or finalists be insufficient, or if candidates withdraw leaving you with only one or two people.
- School districts are rumor mills. Be clear with the community and the faculty what you plan to do and be careful not to discredit fine people whom you are passing over.
- If your search failed because of the influence of particular special interests,¹ you should be mindful of this and try to avoid inappropriate efforts to undermine the process.
- The public nature of a search process and the involvement of many special interests can complicate the process. Failure to find a candidate is not an indication that the hiring district is undesirable, but more a function of a lot of factors not coming together.
- If you are using a search consultant, you should not pay anybody anything until you have signed a contract with a permanent, and not an interim or temporary, superintendent. The obligation of the consultant is to work with you until the process is completed – i.e., a signed contract.

OPTION 1: Restart the process and look for a superintendent to start in July or September.

Occasionally, the search fails because candidates drop out, leaving you with an insufficient pool, or your pool of finalists was too small to find an acceptable candidate. The school committee can restart and cast the net again. Sometimes candidates who failed to apply because they feared competing with an internal candidate realize their concerns were misplaced and will apply in a second round. Particularly if it is still early in the school year (many searches begin in January) or if there are fewer districts actually looking for superintendents, you can restart the process right after deciding to do so. A second round can be expedited because you would only need to advertise for 3-4 weeks and avoids focus groups and surveys which are already done.

OPTION 2: Find an interim superintendent for the next year and restart the search at the beginning of the school year.

There are many current superintendents who retired and eager to be an interim leader. Others may be working but 1-2 years away from retirement, or who, despite their current job, would risk being an

¹ Experience shows that some of the special interest strategies can include a) efforts by unsuccessful candidates to disrupt the process, hoping it will restart. This is a frequent outcome when an internal candidate fails to become a finalist. b) special efforts by discrete constituencies to undermine candidates whom they view as a threat or unsympathetic to their agenda; c) information coming from those who want to discredit or stalk a candidate.

interim in the hope of auditioning for the job. They often seek to move to another district for a short or longer transitional period.

Interim superintendents have unique advantages: a) they can make badly needed quick changes without having to risk alienating people whose support they need to cultivate; b) an interim can stabilize things in the district while the faculty keeps the district working; c) they can take risks and not have to worry about retaliation; and d) everyone in the school district is on their best behavior during an interim superintendency because the interim will brief the next permanent superintendent on transition issues and school personnel want to be described favorably.

Finding an Interim Superintendent

The process for finding an interim superintendent bears a close relationship to the formal process for a permanent leader. There are some differences:

1. Interim searches can be directed by the school committee and need not necessarily require executive sessions because the candidates are rarely worried about the relationship with a current employer as would be a current superintendent.
2. The recruiting process can be discreet without attracting attention of undesired candidates, or more open by casting a wide net.
3. MASC retains a list of interested persons who include retirees who want to work and earn the additional income, recent retirees who may realize a decision to leave was premature, currently working educators who want the experience of leading a district or those who wish to “audition” for the school committee that might wish to retain them.
4. Retirees can have some earnings restrictions, but if a district meets the criteria for an interim superintendent under a “critical shortage waiver” the interim superintendency can mean legally earning both a pension and salary simultaneously. This is an extremely powerful incentive for competent individuals to return to the workforce.

Interim superintendents have specific advantages in that:

1. They may work for less than what you were paying your departing leader (but not much less.)
2. Employees of the district are usually on their best behavior during an interim superintendency because of concerns that underperformance, or insubordinate or sinister behaviors would be reported to the next permanent leader.
3. Interim superintendents can take very difficult or unpopular steps that need to be made, but which could be lethal for a new superintendent hoping to build a constituency in the district.

Screening and interviewing an interim superintendent is similar to the normal process, but there is less of a need for a search committee since the candidates will not often seek confidentiality. Thus there is less chance of the faculty, union leaders, administrators, or special interest constituencies trying to use the privacy of a search committee to pursue their agenda as opposed to that of the school committee. However, many interviews for interim superintendents do include some specific questions about how to lead on an interim basis, how to mentor subordinates to ascend to the superintendency, how to make process during a short term without suffering regressions, and how to work with municipal leaders.

Most interim superintendents have restrictions on their ability to earn because of state retirement regulations and law. Generally, a superintendent from out of state has no restrictions, creating an active

market for retirees from New England or opportunity for former MA educators to return long enough to acquire necessary extra years to reach ten in Massachusetts in order to become vested in a second state pension system. In any calendar year, a retiree from MA can earn up to the amount being earned by the person holding the job from which they retired plus \$15,000 minus the pension currently earned.

Example: Fran retired from Mayberry in 2015 at a salary of \$150,000 per year and an annual pension of \$120,000. The current superintendent in Mayberry earns \$175,000. Fran may work in retirement without loss of pension and earn:

Salary earned by person in Terry's former position:	\$ 175,000
Plus \$15,000	15,000
Minus Fran's Pension	<u>(\$ 120,000)</u>
Calendar Year Allowed Earnings	\$70,000

By skillfully apportioning this, Fran may earn \$70,000 between July and December of 2019 and another \$70,000 between the following January and June of 2020. However, Fran has lost the right to earn more than \$70,000 in 2010.

A Critical Shortage Waiver may be granted by the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education if certain criteria are met, including that the district has conducted a legitimate search that has failed and that no qualified candidate remains accessible to them. A district must explain why any disqualified candidate has been ruled out. This may include lack of necessary or relevant experience, absence of a valid license, etc.

OPTION 3: Go back to your original pool of candidates and rethink interviewing one or more of them.

Many good candidates do not make it to the interview stage or are not moved forward after an initial interview because they can't win the support of the search committee for any number of reasons.

OPTION 4: Scan the field for potential candidates who did not apply in the first go-round because they were not approached.

We often recommend in these situations that the chair of the school committee and one or two others meet informally with potential superintendents who are sought out directly. This approach has been successful elsewhere in attracting sitting superintendents who might appreciate a more discreet opportunity to meet informally with representatives of the school committee².

² Recently a district found its pool of candidates inadequate. Following interviews, they decided not to start over right away. The search consultant discreetly identified several individuals who seemed competent and highly appropriate for the district but who did not apply because of the public nature of the search process and the risk of not being hired. The consultant reached out to the candidates to have an informal meeting with the mayor, school committee chair, and another member – avoiding a majority of the board. After the informal meeting, they particularly liked a one candidate whom they found ideal and asked that candidate to attend a school committee

It can be helpful to reach out to people who refer candidates to superintendent searchers, including the state superintendents' associations and those point people at graduate schools or leaders of superintendent training programs.

Districts in the MA Association of School Committees may receive assistance in recruiting, finding and contracting with an interim superintendent as an MASC member service and without a fee. This includes, but is not limited to distribution of notices of vacancy to the MASC recruiting network, posting on the association web site, consulting advice on compliance with law and regulation, question development, and contracting.

meeting where the candidate would be interviewed publicly on a Saturday morning. The board offered the position to the candidate and the process was concluded.

Brookline School District

Interim Superintendent 2020-2021 School Year (310599001)

JOB POSTING

Job Details

Title **Interim Superintendent 2020-2021 School Year**

Posting ID **310599001**

Description

District Profile

The Public Schools of Brookline, with a staff of approximately 1600, supported by \$115M budget, provide an extraordinary education for every child. Eight K-8 schools feed into one comprehensive high school. Brookline's Pre K-8 system provides distinct advantages for children. Each child's unique path to achievement is supported in academically exciting and programmatically rich environments. A dynamic, diverse community of teaching professionals works collaboratively, innovating and inspiring each other and their students. Staff gets to know students intellectually, developmentally and culturally. For more information about The Public Schools of Brookline please visit our website at www.brookline.k12.ma.us

Job Details

The Public Schools of Brookline invite qualified candidates to apply for the position of Interim Superintendent for the 2020-2021 school year.

The successful candidate for the position should:

- Be appropriately MA DESE licensed or licensed eligible
- Have 5 years of prior experience as a Superintendent of Schools
- Be familiar with the current short-term and long-term initiatives in Brookline;
- Have demonstrated ability to lead our schools and move our long-term initiatives forward from day one;
- Have excellent communication skills
- Have a Master's degree; advanced degree preferred.
- Have experience and knowledge of school finance and budget development and management. Experience with curriculum and school based technology.
- Possess knowledge of collective bargaining issues, including an ability to recruit, develop, and retain high quality staff
- Possess knowledge of state and town government functions

The Interim Superintendent will not be considered as a candidate for the permanent Superintendent role.

The School Committee offers a contract and salary commensurate with qualifications and experience. Applicants should include a letter of interest, résumé, 3 current references, and appropriate MA DESE licensure to lisa_richardson@psbma.org The posting will remain open until the position is filled, though the Screening Committee intends to begin review of applications on April 9, 2020 and begin interviews the week of April 13, 2020.

The Screening Committee is committed to helping in the fight to slow the spread of COVID-19 and will therefore likely conduct all interviews virtually.

Equal Opportunity Employer

Brookline Public Schools is committed to maintaining a work and learning environment free from discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, pregnancy, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital/civil union status, ancestry, place of birth, age, citizenship status, veteran status, political affiliation, genetic information or disability, as defined and required by state and federal laws. Additionally, we prohibit retaliation against individuals who oppose such discrimination and harassment or who participate in an equal opportunity investigation.

Shift Type

Full-Time

Salary Range

Per Year

Location

Public Schools of Brookline Administrative Offices - Town Hall

Applications Accepted

Start Date

03/20/2020