

School Reform Commission

Criteria for next SDP Leader

MODERATOR REPORTS

Bartram High School
February 16, 2012

Group 1

Moderators: Carol Lydon, Steve Vassor and Ashley Brindisi

Moderator's description of the group:

The group consisted of 8 women: Seven were African-American, one was Asian; one was a student at Bartram and four were teachers at Bartram. Several had children in the Philadelphia School District. They lived in Cobbs Creek, Southwest Philadelphia, South Philadelphia and one was a student at Haverford College.

It took some time for the group to warm up to the process, but once they did, they were on board. Several people expressed after that they felt their voices were going to be heard and were hopeful. Many were teachers who had planned to leave early, but all stayed until the end.

Hopes and Fears for next leader of the SDP:

Hopes:

- A shadowing process, so that they might see the discrepancy between schools
- Respect teachers and keep their integrity
- Has knowledge of 21st Century technology and is able to convey it to school leaders
- Has a sense of how to manage and coordinate short, interim and long-term projections
- Has a vested interest in Philadelphia
- Homegrown – knows the city, knows the people
- Knows education and children are supposed to be taught
- Not a CEO
- LOVES educating
- Knows what it is to be a teacher and the difficulty of teaching
- Understands that people are different
- Will LISTEN

- Has a sense of discipline
- Have a say in all schools
- Has interacted in a multitude of schools

Fears:

- Another carpetbagger
- Equity in education in one school is not the same as equity in education in ALL schools
- Ego – “leave it out”
- *****BUDGET CUTS*****
- Fear of going to a DC model, where all schools are charter schools, which leads to losing track of kids/kids falling through the cracks

Parts of the Framework that Make sense to participants, and why:

1 – A commitment to education and an overall passion to ensure learning for all children.

- Like the word “commitment”
- Strong support for this Criteria #1 – 3 people had strong support

#2 – Knowledge and Capacity to run a large enterprise or organization - Philadelphia is large and diverse with macro underpinnings

- Superintendent needs knowledge and expertise around this
- The language of #2 is good

#3 – A clear understanding of the way management decisions affect teaching, training and leadership development among principals

- Need a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the job
- Keep the “what if” in mind (short, interim and long-term progress/measures)
- Add “differentiation” in training and decision-making

#5 –Embraces the idea of a portfolio of schools and advocates for high-quality schools regardless of the provider (district or charter)

- Embraces core curriculum in order to create high performing schools
- Superintendent should embrace whole system to effectively deal with inequities and close achievement gap
- Keep moving until change happens
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#6 – A relationship builder who is able to build creative partnership with numerous external stakeholders to bring resources to individual schools and groups of schools

- People skills are key and relationship building in Philadelphia is key, especially with parents

#7 – Ability to rethink the district's service model, moving closer to autonomy for individual schools and decreased centralization

- Good to rethink model and be able to get rid of “dead weight”
- More autonomy becomes “fact”

#8 – Ability to influence the public, business community, higher education community, and legislative leaders on the value of public education and the commitments necessary to achieve notable progress

- How will funds be allocated if more autonomous?

#9 – Is committed to actively engaging with students, parents and community stakeholders

- Needs to understand and effectively interact with parents – engage with them on a regular basis
- Add visibility to all schools; historically, this has been lacking. Visit schools; see the buildings and the community.
- Students need to be involved and their voices heard.

Parts of the Framework about which participants are concerned, and why:

#2 – Knowledge and Capacity to run a large enterprise or organization

- Dislike the business language
- The focus isn't on teach for the betterment of students, but competing for students (hierarchy of schools)
- It's about the way teachers teach
- They should have run a system larger than one of the Philadelphia school district's regions

#3 – A clear understanding of the way management decisions affect teaching, training and leadership development among principals

- Active use of research to inform decision-making (academic expertise)

#5 – Embraces the idea of a portfolio of schools and advocates for high-quality schools regardless of the provider (district or charter)

- Need to embrace and revamp Special Education. It is growing and the superintendent will need expertise and be proactive about solutions. It should be treated as intervention, not permanent placement
- This would contradict #1 because high-quality schools = high test scores which = low creativity, which is *not* the best education

#7 – Ability to rethink the district's service model, moving closer to autonomy for individual schools and decreased centralization

- Worried that decentralization will result in competition between students and schools for resources

#8 – Ability to influence the public, business community, higher education community, and legislative leaders on the value of public education and the commitments necessary to achieve notable progress

- Explicit -- more male teachers – look at different models, e.g. gendered schools

#9 – Is committed to actively engaging with students, parents and community stakeholders

- Needs to find a way to motivate parents to be more involved. Educate parents and students so that all needs are met (Title 1)
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What difference it would make if the successful candidate is/is not from Philadelphia, and why:

YES/NEED TO BE FROM PHILADELPHIA:

- Needs to be a part of Philadelphia culture
- Historically, those hired from outside haven't respected Philadelphia staff
- Needs to have taught in Philadelphia
- Historically, those who have been recruited from outside have been unsuccessful
- Has experience with Philadelphia school, "someone in the immediate family"

NO/IT DOESN'T MATTER:

- As long as investment is students, schools and understanding process, it doesn't matter.
- However, they need to come from a school district either the same size as or bigger than Philadelphia, **not** smaller
- They must have come up *through the trenches*, i.e. worked as an educator, teacher or principal
- They **MUST** have had direct contact with students and classroom; not have worked in a office or been more of a scholar of education
- Doesn't matter as long as they have skills
- Don't set superintendent up to fail by limiting them to Philadelphia – keep the options open

Other important ideas:

Once criteria are set, Superintendent has to stick to what they agreed to with job description.

Group 2

Moderator: Guillermo Lopez

Moderator's description of the group:

8 people

One of them was a student black male who was very outspoken about the need to educate versus discipline. There was one parent/grandfather who is a black male was also very concerned with the quality of education that his children/grandchildren receive. The principal of the school a black female is very outspoken about the need of the superintendent to grant autonomy to principals who know what they're doing there were one black male who was a staff person and another black male was part of the support organization and a white male part of the businesses and Marty Molloy from United Way. The discussion revolved around autonomy and accountability, and the thought that one person would not be able to do this. There was more discussion in this group and many other groups I've been with about possibly it not being a one-person position.

Hopes and Fears for next leader of the SDP:

Hopes:

- Better management of the budget
- specific voice for young people
- Works well with public and private schools, political skills.
- Values experienced educators
- special focus on underserved population in the schools and communities
- from the city and understands diverse neighborhoods
- ability to create partnerships
- autonomy to run schools/creates coalitions
- understands complexities of education
- Treats public and charters as equals
- Students have better opportunities

Fears:

- resistance from staff at 440
- Poorly Educated students
- unfair distribution of public funds
- do more with less
- make bricks without straw, equals no support
- system won't allow success
- too much pay without results
- no one should make more than the mayor
- students not excited about learning

Parts of the Framework that Make sense to participants, and why:

#3 – A clear understanding of the way management decisions affect teaching, training and leadership development among principals

- #3 is the glue that holds all the other criteria's in place.
- Principals need to regain autonomy in the schools for fourth
- is important for understanding of pedagogy/education, visit schools to make more informed decisions
- we want principals to be able to make decisions, and not have to be “creatively insubordinate”, like seeking forgiveness versus permission
- we also need a system changer

#6 – A relationship builder who is able to build creative partnership with numerous external stakeholders to bring resources to individual schools and groups of schools

- there are vast resources that can be used, but it is too difficult. But there are other ways to get resources. Resources create a win-win situation.
- We need to do a better job of tapping local resources, (volunteers/dollars)
- too much red tape are people that want to help.
- New leader needs to get out and be an educator leader
- do things that the less concerned with business expertise
- education expertise is the most important
- More instruction delivery.

Parts of the Framework about which participants are concerned, and why:

1 – A commitment to education and an overall passion to ensure learning for all children.

- we have a problem with educational environment, created by school district officials
 - an example of that is all the contracts are connected to friends and relatives. These contracts are more important than the education of our children.
- When schools do better neighborhoods do better
 - healthy communities is exactly what we need

#5 –Embraces the idea of a portfolio of schools and advocates for high-quality schools regardless of the provider (district or charter)

- inequality of the neighborhood environments
 - take away high-performing schools to support low performing schools is not the way to fix school systems that it is

#7 – Ability to rethink the district's service model, moving closer to autonomy for individual schools and decreased centralization

- seems impossible, because there is too much control/power away from the schools, which is why you have charters schools
- the ability to maintain discipline, with all the violence that has been occurring, this is a particular concern.

- You the principals of autonomy to do the job,
- we can treat them all the same though, you have good principals and you have bad principals.
- School district won't let go of the reins

#9 – Is committed to actively engaging with students, parents and community stakeholders

- This category needs to be higher than number nine
 - parental engagement
 - language in this category is not strong enough
- this language should include cultural competency, recognizing diversity, and each person is important
- have less days off to keep kids in school

What difference it would make if the successful candidate is/is not from Philadelphia, and why:

YES/NEED TO BE FROM PHILADELPHIA:

- from Philadelphia
 - who would understand more than someone who went through the school district?
 - Need individual who came up through the system and the neighborhoods, who better than that
 - Philadelphia is unique and neighborhood-based

NO/IT DOESN'T MATTER:

- talent is talent.
- This skill set for this is rare
- fresh eyes are a good thing for Philadelphia
- Philadelphia is insular outside people will not necessarily repeat the same mistakes
- they could be from the outside and have a stake in but they need some knowledge of the city
- who out of the lead. They must have a stake in the thing that, a person like a child, or some connection, so that they have a personal stake
- should have experience in underserved communities and be familiar with the experience
- CEO and CEA model like Connie Clayton and the doctor (don't remember his name)
- don't have to be but have to know what students go through on a daily basis
- they have to understand the ethnic backgrounds of all the students
- they need is the historical knowledge of how the school system has changed over time.

Other important ideas:

- education is the primary service of the superintendent
- the way the system is built referring to funding and other resources, it can't be successful they have to build a team around themselves this cannot be an individual driven person. It has to be someone who build a team and rely on them.
- Number three is the glue to everything. Empowering principals will make a difference in the lives of students. We can have all autonomy and accountability that is possible

