

School Reform Commission

Criteria for next SDP Leader

MODERATOR REPORTS

Edison High School
February 9, 2012

Group 1

Moderators: Ted Enoch and Shakira Abdul-Ali

Moderator's description of the group:

The small group discussion tonight at Edison High was comprised of an exciting, passionate and diverse group of about 15 people. The group was a mix of men and women, African Americans, Latinos and Caucasians. There was a considerable span of ages, ranging from early twenties to late seventies. Included in the group were parents and grandparents of Philadelphia school district student, while several were also alumni of the district. Some of the participants attended or had children attend traditional schools, while others had children in charter schools. Some in attendance worked directly for the school district, while others worked in partnership with the district. Many had strongly held beliefs and positions about and for the next leader of the school district, but all in attendance were engaged in the process and really listened to one another and built upon each other's ideas. Many in this group could have talked until deep into the night about the school district and its next leader. This moderator was very impressed and inspired by the insights and commitment of the group.

Hopes and Fears for next leader of the SDP:

- (Hope/Fear) That we are at rock bottom and can only get better from here...
- (Hope) That the leader can find a way to achieve equality for all of our schools. All schools, communities and neighborhoods deserve quality schools.
- (Hope) Per scope of Job (?): Acknowledge needs in each specific neighborhood.
- (Fears) That the new superintendent will be given unbridled power, and that there will be no checks and balances... Afraid that we will keep repeating the same mistakes we've been making... Also afraid that we will keep trending towards more and more charter schools.
- (Hope) That the person is not autocratic, that s/he appreciate differences in neighborhoods and that they not try to reinvent the wheel – and miss things that are working

- (Fear) That the leader will rely on expelling students too often, too much reliance on zero tolerance...
- (Hope) That s/he connects with parents, inspires their involvement, that s/he elicits others to work with him/her...
- (Hope) That the leader helps to ensure that adults and students in the community don't give up hope for our system...
- (Hope) That s/he takes a look at how our system operates, down to the local/school level. A learner/listener who doesn't create an Us versus Them mentality.
- (Hope) That s/he comes from this area, knows what is working here, and can apply proper (Dept. of Ed) standards and curriculum.
- (Fear) That this will be too politicized and as always, we will see more children's services, education and programs cut.
- (Hope) Wants someone who can lead with a minimum of change/chaos. Keep what's working!
- (Hope) That the leader is bilingual, who knows both cultures. Who is ready to understand our kids and communities.
- (Hope) That we have a Polyglot – a dual language proponent, a leader who recognizes the growth and expansion of our multi-cultural realities. (Philadelphia is growing thanks to our immigrants.) Align our budget and personnel with the interests and demographics of our communities.
- (Hope) That we find a leader with guts, who stands up to the political climate, one who is not swayed, but stays the course – one who provides for diverse needs of the students. One who maintains a balance between what worked in the past (vo-tech programs) with the advances of the present and future. Don't forget the arts.
- (Hope) One who is willing to get out of the limelight as soon as possible, who generates a team from our neighborhoods/communities; someone who LOVES Philadelphia
- (Fear) That the big paycheck attracts the wrong person is not fit for what we really need
- (Hope) That we rely on the assets and resources that exist and are working in the greater Philadelphia community.

Parts of the Framework that Make sense and/or are of concern to participants, and why:

1. Commitment to education ... passion to ensure learning for all

- This should be NUMBER ONE – necessary to overcome cynicism, e.g. comes with a mindset that “**Every** child can learn!”
- Understand the importance of a well-rounded curriculum for special needs/special education students

- Re above, the same importance should be accorded for ESL students
- Must appreciate and understand Diversity

2. Knowledge / capacity to run a large enterprise / organization

- This criteria might lead to an outside candidate
- If a leader can hold people accountable, delegate, and be fearless (i.e., be a champion for kids), this should trump “running a large system”
- MUST be an Education Leader (with experience) – or at least APPRECIATE Education
- OK to have staff with “large system” experience

3. Clear understanding of how management decisions affect teaching, training and leadership in schools

- New leader must support teachers in helping students to “learn how to learn”
- Acknowledge that there are 9 styles of learning – let’s have a system that uses all / more ways of learning
- Needs to take better care of **teachers**
- See how policies affect impact classes
- Recognize the need for “in school” services e.g., social, psychological, family services, health
- Recognize that services already exist and need to be coordinated

4. Team-builder; ability to coordinate & motivate a diverse group of managers and educators and different schools / settings

- **Educator** who is a team builder
- Services need to address multiple cultures with competence
- Important to acknowledge cultural and religious differences
- Someone with a vision and acknowledges Philadelphia history as leader in education

5. Embraces idea of portfolio of schools and advocates for high quality schools, regardless of provider (PSD or Charter)

- Replicate models that work (e.g., the turn-around at Stetson) through-out the system

6. Relationship builder – builds partners with many external stakeholders to bring resources to individual schools and groups of schools

- Don’t forget CTE as an important option – take them as industry partners
- What about **teachers** as stakeholders
- Leader “sets the tone” for coordination of services

- Sees the schools as a microcosm of the community
- Acknowledges and value the community and sees the schools as a community schools

7. *Ability to rethink district service model, moving closer to autonomy for individual schools and decreased centralization*

- Lots of great ideas come from community members
- Each school is different with different needs
- Schools have been failing because they haven't engaged the parents and community
- Every school should develop its own offerings and character; schools might then become competitive
- Decentralization can work if leader holds principals accountable for what occurs in that school
- Accountability is key – principals mess up and move on while teachers stay with the mess
- Leader can work to assist parents in becoming more accountable
- Needs to discourage “training for the test” in favor of a more creative and wholistic process of education
- Keep in mind of 9 styles of learning

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

- Needs to be strong in the face of media sharks, etc.
- Acknowledge that all models have use / value
- Stop focusing on failing schools

9. *Committed to activity engaging with students, parents and community stakeholders*

- New leader must get in the trenches and make the students feel valued
- If parents are given an opportunity they can influence the students favorably; they can reinforce the role of the teachers
- New leader needs to “get hands dirty” – going into the schools
- “Engaging” is too vague; a better word might be “listening”
- Should conduct a survey at the beginning and end of the each year, engaging both teachers and students, to assess progress
- Consider teachers as stakeholders
- Leader must be humble enough to listen to the ones that know the schools / students best (teachers; principals; students; parents)
- Get off their ‘Island’
- Liked the Parent Roundtables – let's keep them – each school should be doing this each month; commit to a time and a date

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

- Leader needs to appreciate how the system has evolved
- A LOCAL person who is committed and has passion because Philadelphia is important
- Someone with a child in the public school system so as to get first-hand view from a student / parent perspective
- Must appreciate Diversity
- Must understand Philly's strength
- Needs to be committed to the success of young people
- Needs to be willing to observe the system for a while – maybe 18 months – before making many changes
- Needs to appreciate how the system has evolved

Other important ideas:

- Most comments suggest that being a Philadelphian is less important than having specific characteristics
- Also – there was an expressed concern for the level of Authority – e.g., AUTOCRACY – relative to decision-making, that this new leader would have

Group 2

Moderators: _____

Moderator's description of the group:

PUT DESCRIPTION HERE

Hopes and Fears for next leader of the SDP:

Hopes:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Fears:

- _____
- _____
- _____

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

#X – Criteria inserted in italics

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#X – Criteria inserted in italics

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#X – Criteria inserted in italics

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

#X – Criteria inserted in italics

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#X – Criteria inserted in italics

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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:

- _____
- _____
- _____

NO/IT DOESN'T MATTER:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Other important ideas:

- _____
- _____
- _____

