School Reform Commission
Criteria for next SDP Leader

MODERATOR REPORTS

Roxborough High School
February 4, 2012

Group 1
Moderators: Abby Ellis, Marty Molloy, Loretta Raider and Jennie Sparandara

Moderators' description of the group:
We had a high-energy group of 13 people, 8 women and 5 men. The group was mostly white with three African American's. The age ranged from 30's to 60's. Stakeholder groups represented were: teachers, parents, grandparents, educator's in higher education, school advocates, retirees and an educational consultant. The group was highly participative, passionate about the topic and grateful to have the opportunity to share their views.

Hopes and Fears for next leader of the SDP:
Hopes
- Takes ethics seriously and addresses funding discrepancies
- Trust throughout the organization
- Fiscal accountability
- Courageous and change champion, who can lead by example
- Engaged and informed
- Creative problem solver
- Effective educator
- Experienced
- Humility and respectful of neighborhoods
- Prioritizes school safety
- Engages students and other stakeholders in district decisions
- Transparency within the schools and communities
- Accessible with a clear process to hear ideas and grievances
- Partnerships with colleges and universities
- High quality schools
- Genuine understanding and commitment to the District and the city

Fears
- Charter/public rift
- Talk but no action
- This is a predetermined process
- Trust is broken, must be restored

Parts of the Framework that Make sense to participants, and why:
- *# 4 - Team Builder is a critical quality. Several members suggested some language changes. " Manager's" to "Leaders", "Motivate" to "Empower"*
- # 9 – Should be listed as a high priority and moved to number two, another suggestion was to connect # 3 with # 9, the reason is that policy decisions should be informed by engagement of parents, teachers and the community.
- # 3 – Leadership can be an intentional word, cultivate leadership because it is key.
- # 7 – Schools are unique and need to be able to make decisions that suit their unique attributes. Autonomy is key for successful principals. Add " the courage to lead change" There were different views on autonomy in the group (see concerns below).
- # 1 – Everyone agreed on the importance of this criterion with the suggestion to emphasize "ALL".
- # 8 – This makes sense because the leader should influence business not the other way around.

Parts of the Framework about which participants are concerned, and why:
- *There was an overall concern by several members of the group that one the job is too big for one person. PLEASE consider other models, more than one leader, dual leader model or team model.*
- # 7 - There was a lively discussion about autonomy: one size does not fit all, this is a very complex issue, need to look at economies of scale. The question was asked, how do you increase efficiency if autonomy increases?
- # 8 - The direction of this relationship is incredibly important. Higher education and business should not influence education. The question was raised; does this make the role political? In the past there has been too much political influence, which leads to a lack of sustained change.

What difference it would make if the successful candidate is/is not from Philadelphia, and why:
- *New Leader must be an educator*
- *The key is more that they are invested /connected in Philadelphia*
- *Important to live in Phila. post-appointment*
- *Committed to Phila. and willingness to stay*

- *Track record, demonstrating a time commitment to communities in past roles*
- *Analogous highly successful experience in an urban school district and brings best practices*
- Has roots in the area

Other important ideas:
- Missing competencies: outcomes and results oriented, accountability, feedback loops (specific and quantifiable), curricular, fiscal and budgetary complexity and system wide economics.
- Missing Human Qualities: humility, ability to admit mistakes, personal passion, skin in the game, self-awareness, trust and ability to delegate.
- * Please review Haberman's model.
- We need a change agent who can radically restructure the system
- Concern that this is a rubber stamp process we need transparency in the decision making process
- Critical to keep in place the programs/activities that enhance learning
- Important that the new superintendent prioritizes physical environment/well being of school buildings, and sets goals for school safety

Group 2
Moderators: Guillermo Lopez + Franne McNeal + Ashley Brindisi

Moderator's description of the group:

There were 12 people in the group, with six women and six men. There were nine Caucasians and two African-American women and one Latino. There were three retired teachers, three current teachers, one parent, one Philadelphia public school alumni, one adult who works in Juvenile system, one adult who represents a non-for-profit that works with both Charter and Main stream schools to develop partnerships with businesses, one concerned citizen, and one retired administrator who wrote a book on saving the school district. There was a lot of positive passion and energy in the room, and the group was very teacher, student and parent focused.

Hopes and Fears for next leader of the SDP:
Hopes:
- Allows people to be creative
- Collegial and collaborative leader
- Involves family
- Promotes excellence from within, people doing great work are not minded for their ideas
- Intelligence already there will be used, mined (general gets informed from the front line
- Think of urban education vs. inner-city education (y-urban education is a true advantage); take advantage of all of stakeholders, museums, hospitals, pharmaceutical industry, history, different public/private entities who want to help
- Next leaders respect collective bargaining
- Next leader has political skill
- Will empower local schools; principal/parents empower to operate in neighborhoods interest
- Will break down school into smaller units (10 in the area), now called region. 10 schools report directly to associate superintendent. I need superintendent
- Will be an educator/true leader
- Parent oriented/concerned about family
- Respects collective bargaining

Fears:
- Support given to charter school and the same thing will happen in Philadelphia, that happened after the civil rights. We will support private schools and not the public school system
- English language learners will get less services (schools have lost language translation service), special-education services will be decreased
- Leader will not have power. Will they be able to make changes?

- Leader cannot be a leader, the SRC is the leader, superintendent are a layer after SRC, will the leader be a leader, is the leader to be chosen to replace the system, do we need a superintendent, we have a leadership structure, a leader needs to make the final decision

Parts of the Framework that Make sense to participants, and why:
#2 – Knowledge and capacity to run a large enterprise or organization
- Makes sense (28 years, 5 superintendent), they are education based or financed base. Maybe need 2 people - who are a team - one educator + one finance
- #2- Think about business (proud- education, get a diploma after 12 years in system, we have 38% graduation rate. On the education side. Too top-heavy with administration.
- #2-We are not serving our customer – students able to look at different models of governance i.e. independent schools

#7 – Ability to rethink the district's service model, moving closer to autonomy for individual schools and decreased centralization.
- Autonomy - charter schools are able to make more decisions easier. Hope given the autonomy, have intelligent people running the schools/master's degree,
- This and #9 are similar, dependent on school/neighborhood, needs of students vary, autonomy will allow school to address needs
- Visited every school in district in last 10 years. Autonomy will allow schools to adjust to area/neighborhood/needs - resources in community. What schools need is autonomy and support to be autonomous. Stakeholders look for funding - that is school specific - that is where management can be helpful. Vs. mgmt. telling them what they need
- Autonomy - is the only point that could be argued positive or negative. Offers insight into what could be a positive insight
- Different model of autonomy (may be provision of independent - hybrid charter/public). Also constitutional model.

Parts of the Framework about which participants are concerned, and why:
#5 – Embraces the idea of a portfolio of schools and advocates for high-quality schools, regardless of the provider (district or charter)
- Supports all type of schools, funding comes from a different .Why can one retain/not retain busing.
- We need someone that needs to talk about issues of charter. Charter - 50% of charter are in Philadelphia. Needs to be a balance.
- #If this person has to stay quiet about charter, because SRC tells them what to do, then it is not fair to superintendent.
- SRC makes decision. Conflict of interest. Not fair to bring someone in that "has to be quite".
- Limits leadership, needs to embrace education, but portfolio schools is limiting. Stating person has to play ball.

- If included, change "portfolio" vs. "diversity". Portfolio seems corporate.
- When put things in writing, and then connect to dollars and sense. Are we going to allow what happened in last 4 years, happen again? Give them more money. We lost $28 faculty members in 6 months.
  Wailing Wall re: this criterion
  - New cyber schools. Surprised at 4000 number. If not participating, not learning social skills. Situation -> credits all in electives, but has criminal history -> individual set up on Cyber School. Only choice because of age, credits, life situation. Need a leader that can support diversity, because Cyber School may be last choice. Don't need a person who stands quiet.
  - School systems have very little money to support children who cannot support kids who cannot behave in school. Charter schools don't see kids with severe disabilities. District has the charge to educate the hardest to educate (social, behavior, health).
  - School needs to ask - why can't population spread across all schools -> full portfolio. Influx of kids, kicked out of other schools, then public schools get left over –
  - Those families don't have "choice".

#7 – Ability to rethink the district's service model, moving closer to autonomy for individual schools and decreased centralization.
- Helps address issue (schools has autonomy), then will address issue of poverty/inequality.

#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.
- Funding is unfair, Harrisburg, every public student gets some dollar per head. . School, funded by taxes, which vary
- If you went for team leadership - education, finance, social/behavior

 # 9 – Is committed to actively engaging with students, parents and community stakeholders
- Commit to actively engage - why are teachers missing.
- No teacher on search committee
- Lots of children in public schools don't have family to support them. How is leader going to reach out to families" if family is not there? There is greater picture of poverty. Rescued by teachers, not the system. Kids kicked out house, live in apt by them self. Kids are throw-away kids.
- Counselor - kids who don't have what they need to grow. How do we deal with the most vulnerable of the kids? 15% of kids use all resources. Elephant in the room - huge issue
- Autonomy, use of school based experience
- Great in theory, but never happens in practice. The leader is in ivy tower/downtown. The leader needs to come to school for a week, see what it is like to be a teacher Issue of poverty, affects all of the 9 key criteria - must be addressed (among poorest children).
- Most of key criteria are too general (except #7)

- Not an issue of social policy, not an issue of education. How is democracy going to deal with this? What is happening in poorest area, not because parents don't care? Real things. The most at-risk - behavioral health issues
- In the nine criteria the issue of poverty is missing a characteristic. Poverty is a huge issue --> this person/people, need to be thoroughly conversant and understanding of how poverty and inequality and how it affects education, impacts on learning and the school system, and all students.

What difference it would make if the successful candidate is/is not from Philadelphia, and why:
- Leader does not have to be native Philadelphian, but need to be here a while. Politics are unique to each city. Need to understand how to play the local politics, know neighborhoods, how they look like. Tale of 12 cities (vs. tale of 2 cities). To play the whole game
- Leader has to be a stakeholder - ex -teacher, done something hear that creates a sense of responsibility, it prevent things from blow up, have a kid in the school, stakeholder in the area
- Leader must have background of experience in something they are trying to comprehend. Different than knowledge.
- Strategically better if leader is from Philadelphia. Needs to know the neighborhood. Have to listen. If not from Philadelphia, they have to understand these kinds of things. (Example: Vallas closed a HS school for its violence. He sent half of the students to South Philadelphia High School and half of the students to Furness, but provided no additional teachers, no additional support, no control. Kids have been fighting for 50 years in Phila, but he created a powder keg, and the schools were forced to deal with climate control issues. This would not have happened if the Superintendent understood Philadelphia. The Leader should be from Philadelphia, and have an understanding of politics and the fact that Philadelphia is a city of neighborhoods.
- Leader must understand that neighborhoods have own norms
- In Philadelphia, things based on "old" gang war lines - has to be understood
- Philadelphia is a City of neighborhoods
- Parole officers - understand the "neighborhood"

Other important ideas:
- Would like to have an additional point/or modification, have a concern for the poorest kids. Important issue. The poorest and least able into the system. Need somebody who is school familiar, has worked with issues of urban education. Missing a characteristic - poverty is a huge issue --> this person/people, need to be thoroughly conversant and understanding of how poverty and inequality and how it affects education, impact on learning and the school system, and all students.

- Consider team leadership, covering 3 areas: one person focused on education, one person focused on finance, one person focused on social/behavioral/cultural issues
- Team leadership could be expensive - especially autonomy -> does not go with #7
- Team builder, collegial, collaborative, works with people - no one person has expertise to run whole district.
- With SRC in place - is person leader in name or is person able to make final decision/or does SRC make the decisions there another layer.
- Poverty does matter - has to be a voice for the voiceless, support those are the voice of the voiceless
- We need a leader (vision), need SRC to get resources. Do we just need SRC or a leader or do we need both. (Fact - every school district - board/policy, leaders - inform policy/implement policy)
- Would like to see a collaboration (leader and SRC)
- Good leader has to be collaborative
- Top #4-blended - concern (NYC, every 8-10 months, new leaders, who is power, decision making). Person must be able to balance the politics with the need to serve the children. They must be able to handle the pressure of power.

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Closing Session Discussion

- Agreement that the person, whether from Philadelphia or not, needs to have a stake in Philadelphia
  - o An understanding of Philadelphia,
  - o An understanding of the different communities that comprise Philadelphia and how to work with them
- Both groups were concerned about autonomy for schools
  - o Not universal agreement on what this means.
  - o Curriculum, personnel, finances, across the board
- Shared concern about the language being business-drive
- Shared belief that expertise and experience in the classroom is a key

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Wailing Wall

- Why are not teachers (or staff) on the Search Committee?
- Are notes from these sessions going to be published/shared?
- Are the students from Levering going to be told their choices?
- Ensure school safety: have a good plan and follow it.
- How about current high school students or grads on the search committee?
- Some schools are top-heavy.
- Cuts in funds should not be cutting programs essential to schools such as arts/music to CAPA, police, Nurses.
    - All schools need arts.
    - I second this.
- Where are all the federal dollars and grant monies going?
- Decentralize $ contracts.
- Are any Philadelphia parents on the search committee, whose kids are currently enrolled in public school.
    - Parents AKA: the user of the product
- Who leads the School District of Philadelphia, or will lead? Check one:
    - The SRC?
    - New superintendent?
- Shouldn't the district be run by local shareholders? Isn't it time to eliminate the SRC?