

School Reform Commission

Criteria for next SDP Leader

MODERATOR REPORTS

Strawberry Mansion High School
February 8, 2012

Group 1

Moderators: Franne McNeal, Guillermo Lopez, Vonetta Robinson and Steve Vassor

Moderator's description of the group:

There were 13 people in attendance. Seven African-American's (four males and three females) and six whites (four males and two females). One African-American woman brought her son (under 7 years old). Three of the African-Americans were community leaders. Three of the participants were currently working for the school district (teachers and staff). Two were concerned citizens (white female, African-American male with Military back ground). Five were community leaders representing various organizations, (2 white females, 2 African-American females, 1 African-American male). Two were observing (1 white female and 1 black female). Three were parents (2 African-American females and 1 African-American male who was a grandfather and a member of a local community group). One was a staff member from the school (African-American male). There was one reporter from the Notebook (white male). The group had a lot of energy and passion around the 9 criteria, and genuinely wanted to share their input and have it make a difference in the process.

Hopes and Fears for next leader of the SDP:

Hopes:

- Be strong enough-won't succumb to pressure from community or politicians
- Local person – Qualification
- See the results- graduation & learning. Being prepared for future & technology.
- Equality in the schools & every student has the same resources.
- Promotes the job and not themselves.
- An individual that is more local.
- Someone who focuses on children.
- Passionate about education and is political savvy.
- Amends the school district to have:
 - Better educated teachers.

- Steady employment of teachers in the schools.
- Has the passion which will attract better educated teachers that are passionate and committed.
- Be themselves and advocate.
- Concentrate & works on state level policies.
- Embodies all 9 criteria.

Fears:

- Don't know how they are going to act in office.
- Lacks compassion or passion for the job and does not understand the effect that has on people.
- They fear that school dignitaries are coming just for photo opportunities
- Fear that the new leader will not understand the impact and the effect the swap loans have had. They will need a deep knowledge of the swap loan to understand how it is impacting the resources.

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.#1

- Knows and understands education (not just business) and how system should be run. Perhaps is an educator.
- Commitment to education.
 - Education is a social service, not a business.
 - Without educated people we don't have a good livable city.

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

- Favor MBA and supporting creativity and using CEO skills or military (codes of conduct and structure hierarchy)
 - Does not necessarily mean military is the only way, but it is a very good leadership format.
- Accountable and efficient around finances with union and non-union employees.
 - Strong negotiation skills with a focus on the children while negotiating.
 - Negotiate contracts that tend to create more flexibility for teachers in the class room.
- Need to know how employees work.
 - Should be out of the office and visiting people on the jobs.

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

- You can't build capacity without clear understanding.
 - Know the neighborhoods.
 - Know the people.
 - Know the politics.

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

- Top down vs. Autonomy
 - Top down
 - Looks for large decisions and structures.
 - Insures equality of resources distribution.
 - Autonomy
 - For individual schools.
 - Not an excuse to sustain in equity of resources.
- Decentralization
 - It's ok if resources are shared.

#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

- Connects at state levels especially with funding.
- See big picture and engages in policy.
- Do you need businesses to get involved? (They benefit from communities and give back and support the schools.
- Higher education can help provide technical training.

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

- Active community engagement.
- Should be able to bring people together.
- Mending /visiting with parents and communities helps reduce problems and complaints.
- Good parents feel alienated: this may help the situation.
- Should come down of high horse and engage with students and community.
- Personal contact vs. memos flying around.

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

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

- How much difference does this make?
- Commitment of individual looking at past.
- How do you know they are committed or just here for a big payday, how do you prove?
- Is it a wait and see approach?
- Judge based results/conditions of children.
- We need a report card rating for the superintendent.
- Take a hard look at the candidates' references.

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

and #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

and #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

- One person is not going to make all these points. See the movie "Waiting for Superman".
- Need a person who knows how to operate a large enterprise. They must build partnerships and have the ability to influence all the people around them.
- This person needs to have the ability to make things flow!
 - Have the ability to communicate strongly and in a transparent way.
- Long term commitment, the challenge with that you can't measure that ahead of time. So how do we judge who's going to be committed?
- Hope they don't get comfortable and lose motivation.
- Is going to be hard to accomplish because they have to stay long enough.

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

and #4 – A team-builder able to coordinate and motivate a diverse group of managers and educators of different types of schools in different types of settings

- There is a per ponderous of misinformation and miscommunication by leadership. Information needs to be transparent.
- We cannot have parents making decisions on bad information.
- We need people on the same page.
- Everyone needs to know what's going on with the education of our children.

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

- Charters are just like regular schools, not doing any better than public schools. Both are failing.

#4 – A team-builder able to coordinate and motivate a diverse group of managers and educators of different types of schools in different types of settings

- Empower, not motivate.
- Don't need a business person, too much at stake.
- People should be empowered.

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

- Don't agree at all. Certain things all students, children, schools should have.
- Leaving to individual schools, it won't happen. Schools losing their power by decentralizing too much.
- Not convinced it is either good or bad, what's important is that they are committed to education, technology. That is what is ideal.

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

- *By reaching out to the best minds in the city that can maneuver.*
- *We already have outsiders; let's move in a new direction or at the minimum someone from the state of PA with Harrisburg contacts.*
- *Would prefer from Philadelphia, but not necessary.*
- *They would be more connected and in tuned with our city.*
- *Personal stake in the community.*
- *Agree to engage stake holders.*
 - Engage business owners.
 - Community groups.
 - Parents.
- Dedicated and committed to the city.
- Can look back and see their work.
- Pull best minds and leadership of the region.
- If not from Philadelphia they would not be in touch with Philadelphia, would not relate to being a product of the school district of Philadelphia and they will judge Philadelphia by outside/other standards.
 - Stereotypes of Philadelphia education system not good.
- Knows what's going on and connected to the issues.
 - Some outsiders look at this as just a job. If it's just a job, they really don't have passion.
- Outsiders are not in touch and cannot relate.
- Having the knowledge of being a Philadelphian helps them make judgment calls.
- Can understand and relate how the education system is running.
- Has a personal stake in the community.
- Understands the diverse neighborhoods.
 - This includes business owners, parents, residents and all stake holders.

- The Philadelphia “big wigs” send their kids to private schools, abandoning the public school system. If it’s not good enough for your kids why is it good enough for mine?
- Commitment to Philadelphia education because they have children in the system.
- Shows devotion and commitment to the city. They can look back and see the results because they live here.
- Is ok if not from Philadelphia
- Not necessary to be from Philadelphia and gives us the opportunity to get the best qualified candidate anywhere.
- Just here to do a job.
- I am more interested in the most qualified person if they’re from Philadelphia, that would be great, but not necessary.

Other important ideas:

- More transparency, communication, and news regarding SPD
- Candidate should meet all criteria to deliver
- Tie # 2,6,8, together to set command & tone for all else that happens (Leadership)
- Select someone whose children went to public school (send their kids to private school will it be good enough for my kids)
- 2-8 covers everything; 1 to 9 will be difficult without long term commitment
- Will the info from this process really be used?
- Need some measurables... How do we judge these ideals

