

MEMORANDUM TO SEATTLE SCHOOL BOARD DIRECTORS

TO: Seattle School Board of Directors
FROM: Alliance for Education Executive Committee
DATE: November 9, 2011
RE: **Answering Your Request for Input on Our Next Long-Term Superintendent**

On March 2, 2011, the School Board appointed Dr. Susan Enfield as Interim Superintendent. At that time, the Board indicated it would “[consider] whether to extend a longer term employment agreement to Dr. Enfield or conduct a search for a permanent Superintendent prior to January 19, 2012.”¹ We understand the School Board now seeks public input on “the traits members of the public would like to see in a Superintendent.”²

ACCELERATING PROGRESS

According to the Office of Public Instruction, during the 2010-2011 academic year, students in SPS met or exceeded standard on state exams at a higher rate than the statewide average in every tested subject in grades 3-8; FRL students demonstrated large gains in reading proficiency; and several individual schools showed remarkable aggregate progress.

Much work remains to deliver on the promise of a high quality education for all Seattle Public School children. Through fundraising, advocacy and community engagement, The Alliance for Education pursues its mission to ensure every child in Seattle Public Schools is prepared for success in college, career and life. We are encouraged by the results cited above and believe a reasonable link can be made between them and the work Interim Superintendent Enfield initiated during her tenure as Chief Academic Officer.

Meaningful student gains, a second consecutive year of increased enrollment, and a landmark new collective bargaining agreement with educators are all the mark of a district with momentum. **As a means of continuing and accelerating these gains, we strongly urge the School Board to convert Interim Superintendent Enfield’s contract to permanent without delay.**

Seattle Public Schools has had five Superintendents in sixteen years. This degree of leadership churn has been a significant barrier to sustained progress and has negatively impacted both public confidence and staff morale. Today, we have a strong, capable and effective leader in place. Voluntarily thrusting the district yet again into leadership limbo (by initiating a search) is unnecessary and counter-productive.

EXPECTATIONS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

The Superintendent of a large urban district is a public figure and high-profile community leader. He or she must possess the leadership and political skills to meet the needs of multiple constituencies. The Superintendent also has significant operational responsibilities. Accordingly, the next long-term Superintendent of Seattle Public Schools should:

¹ School Board Announcement:

<http://www.seattleschools.org/modules/cms/pages.phtml?sessionid=a95701979c34c98a71a89b8a5d734eed&pageid=220026&sessionid=a95701979c34c98a71a89b8a5d734eed>.

² <http://seattlecouncilpta.org/>

Beliefs & Values

- Demonstrate a genuine belief in the moral and economic imperative of high quality public education as the cornerstone of democracy;
- Value the community as the “owner” of its schools;
- Bring the ethos of continuous improvement to the system;
- Leave no doubt as to his/her commitment to acting as a faithful steward of public dollars;
- Make decisions large and small through the lens of what best serves the interests of students.

Leadership Profile

- Model high expectations for all staff and all students;
- Lead by example in taking a “no excuses” approach to improving public education for all students;
- Exude confidence and optimism about what we can achieve as a district and a city;
- Be a visible leader, present in schools and the community;
- Seek broad counsel but have the courage to act decisively;
- Be unafraid to make decisions that may be unpopular with specific constituencies but will serve students well.

Skills & Experience

- Bring the financial, political and managerial expertise required to run a complex, half-billion dollar public institution;
- Demonstrate strong interpersonal skills that show an ability to listen well and communicate effectively with diverse audiences;
- Bring established relationships with Seattle educators, parents, legislators, media and other community members;
- Have proven experience establishing a culture of accountability that extends to district faculty, staff, families and community partners. This includes an unwavering commitment to the successful implementation of the 2010-2013 collective bargaining agreement between Seattle Public Schools and the Seattle Education Association.

EXPECTATIONS OF THE SCHOOL BOARD

School Board directors consistently face a demanding and complex set of issues that must be resolved in a public and often politically charged environment. We appreciate your dedication, especially as volunteers, to effectively govern a system that serves over 48,000 Seattle children. Our expectations around educational leadership in Seattle extend beyond the Superintendent; our school system simply cannot function well without a stable, focused, high caliber board. Specifically, we expect School Board members to:

- Exhibit true leadership in defining for the community what excellence in public education looks like;
- Work together as a team;
- Be financially literate or become so within a reasonable period of time after election to the board;
- Execute the responsibilities of governing, rather than managing, the school district;
- Effectively balance the responsibilities of constituent services and system oversight;
- Establish mechanisms to solicit input from representative samples of the public, not only self-selected individuals or subgroups;
- Demand the best from the Superintendent and his/her leadership team *and then* actively support and champion him or her – publicly and privately – when warranted.

WEIGHING TWO OPTIONS

As you consider your options with regard to the Superintendent, we strongly urge you to:

- Give significant weight to the leadership exhibited by Interim Superintendent Enfield since her appointment in March. She has established necessary financial controls, committed herself to extensive community outreach, invested time and resources in the principal and teacher corps, and demonstrated a passionate commitment to all students' academic progress;
- Carefully consider the cost of a search. A search of choice will sap the system of time, attention and resources. We feel, as we assume you do, a strong sense of urgency to focus our collective energy and all available resources on efforts that support students and teachers in their classrooms and principals in their buildings.

We will – as we know you will, too – hold our next permanent Superintendent to a high standard. We expect results on behalf of the children of Seattle. We urge you to give Seattle Public Schools the chance to flourish under Dr. Enfield's leadership.

We appreciate your commitment to public education and look forward to our continued partnership.

Sincerely,

The Alliance for Education Executive Committee

Pam MacEwan
Executive Vice President
Group Health Cooperative

Brad Hoff
Member
Foster Pepper LLC

Matthew Paddock
Director
Metzler North America

Jon Bridge
Co-CEO
Ben Bridge Jewelers, Inc.

Ali Khatibi
West Regional Manager
Teknion

Jena Thornton
Senior Vice President
Bentall Kennedy (U.S.) LP

Jane Broom
Director
Microsoft Corporation

Chase Morgan
Partner
Bridge Partners LLC

Liz Vivian
CEO
Vivian Consulting

Lynnette Frank
Partner
Deloitte

Sara Morris
President & CEO
Alliance for Education