



The Next School District of Philadelphia Superintendent

**A Report on the
Opportunities, the
Challenges, and
the Possibilities
Philadelphia Sees
for Moving the
School District
Forward.**

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PHILADELPHIA



December 2021

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In October 2021 and into the month of November, The School District of Philadelphia’s Board of Education, with the support of over 50 partner organizations across the city, conducted a series of listening sessions to learn the qualities and capabilities that Philadelphians would like in the next superintendent, and what they hope the next School District leader will achieve. This report highlights what was shared.

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WORKING TOGETHER TO FIND THE NEXT SUPERINTENDENT

In September 2021, following Dr. William Hite's announcement that he would transition from his role as superintendent at the end of the current (2021-22) school year after 10 years of service, the Board of Education for The School District of Philadelphia launched the search process for the next superintendent.

No institution is more important to civic life and the future of city residents and businesses than its public schools.

While the superintendent is the CEO of the School District, the Board of Education provides oversight of the superintendent. And when there is a pending vacancy, it is the responsibility of the Board to hire the next leader. Once in place, the Board and the superintendent must become partners as it is only in partnership that we can best serve the School District's students, families and staff.

This is why it is critical that the Board conduct a well thought out and strategic search when called upon to identify the next leader of the School District.

It is also critical that we engage Philadelphians in this process.

Every community, and every industry and sector is impacted by public education. How we educate our children informs how we grow as a city and as a region. It informs our place in the world.

From start to finish, this superintendent search and selection process is informed by the School District's Goals & Guardrails, which prioritize students and their achievements, environments, and families in all decision-making and resource allocation. Public

input is therefore key to this work. So following the September announcement, step one for the Board was to use the month of October and the first week of November to meet Philadelphians where they are - whether it was at their child's school or via Zoom. With the help of diverse organizations and agencies across the city, we asked thousands of Philadelphians: what capabilities and qualities would you like in the next leader of the School District? We also invited everyone to share their concerns, fears, and hopes for their children and all children in this city.

In every conversation, what always rose to the top was the unwavering belief that, when we create an equitable system in which every student can succeed, they can and they will. And in all conversations, everyone agreed that student academic success and outcomes must be central to the next superintendent's work because this is what all Philadelphians want for our children.

This report captures these conversations. It captures where we are as a city and as a School District; and it serves as a playbook for the next superintendent to learn from, add to, and build upon.





Philadelphia is the most populous city in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the sixth most populous city in the United States with roughly 1.6 million residents.

For many years, the driving economic forces in Philadelphia have been the city's higher education and healthcare institutions, known as the "eds and meds" sector. There are 19 colleges in Philadelphia and 96 colleges within 50 miles of the city, according to early 2021 data from U.S. News & World Report - along with a multitude of major health providers and pharmaceutical companies, including Independence Blue Cross, GlaxoSmithKline, Merck, AstraZeneca and Pfizer. This sector has consistently been a growing part of the local economy, and its anchors are Philadelphia's 20 hospitals and its major research universities such as the University of Pennsylvania, Temple University, and Drexel University.

Among Philadelphia's proudest attributes is its long list of notable residents who were educated in The School District of Philadelphia.



"Get in someone's way. Don't whisper your story. Shout it. And be willing to stand your ground."

JUDITH RODIN - Graduate of Philadelphia High School for Girls. A philanthropist, pioneer, innovator, changemaker and global thought leader, Judith Rodin has a long history in U.S. higher education. For over two decades, Rodin led and transformed two global institutions: the Rockefeller Foundation and the University of Pennsylvania.



"I want to take care of people. I want to help people. The maximum joy that I have is when I can create something that makes someone else's life lighter, brighter, or better."

WILL SMITH - Graduate of Overbrook High School. A globally-loved actor, rapper, and film producer, Smith has been nominated for five Golden Globe Awards and two Academy Awards, and has won four Grammy Awards.



"New domains of inquiry have opened up that scarcely existed in the '50s. Students are exploring questions that could not have been formulated a few years ago."

NOAM CHOMSKY - Graduate of Central High School. Sometimes called "the father of modern linguistics," Chomsky is a linguist, philosopher, cognitive scientist, historian, social critic, and political activist. He is also a major figure in analytic philosophy, and one of the founders of the field of cognitive science.



"You can't speed it up, you can't slow it down; but if you are able to be patient, you are going to be successful."

DAWN STALEY - Graduate of The Murrell Dobbins Career and Technical Education High School. An American basketball Hall of Fame player and coach, Staley is a four-time Olympic gold medalist. Staley was inducted into the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame in 2012 and was elected to the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 2013.



"Don't show 'em what you've got, at least not right away. You need time to cook... time to be cooked until you're finished, to figure out whether what you love is a hobby or a career."

AHMIR KHALIB THOMPSON - Graduate of High School for Creative & Performing Arts (CAPA). Known professionally as Questlove, Thompson is a Grammy- award winning musician, songwriter, DJ, author, music journalist, and film director. He is the drummer and co-founder (with Philadelphian Tariq "Black Thought" Trotter) of the hip hop band The Roots.



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

The School District of Philadelphia is committed to unlocking the limitless potential of the nearly **120,000 PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS** that it serves.



One of the largest school districts in the United States and the largest public school system in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, The School District of Philadelphia is inspired by our historically and culturally rich location to provide every child in Philadelphia an excellent public school education, and the opportunity to graduate from high school ready to succeed, fully engaged as a citizen of our world.

This means actively living out these core values every day:

- All students can and will learn
- The certainty that high-quality instruction is central to the School District's work
- The philosophy that schools are learning organizations
- Understanding that parents and families are the School District's partners
- Respect for the great responsibility of being trusted stewards of public resources

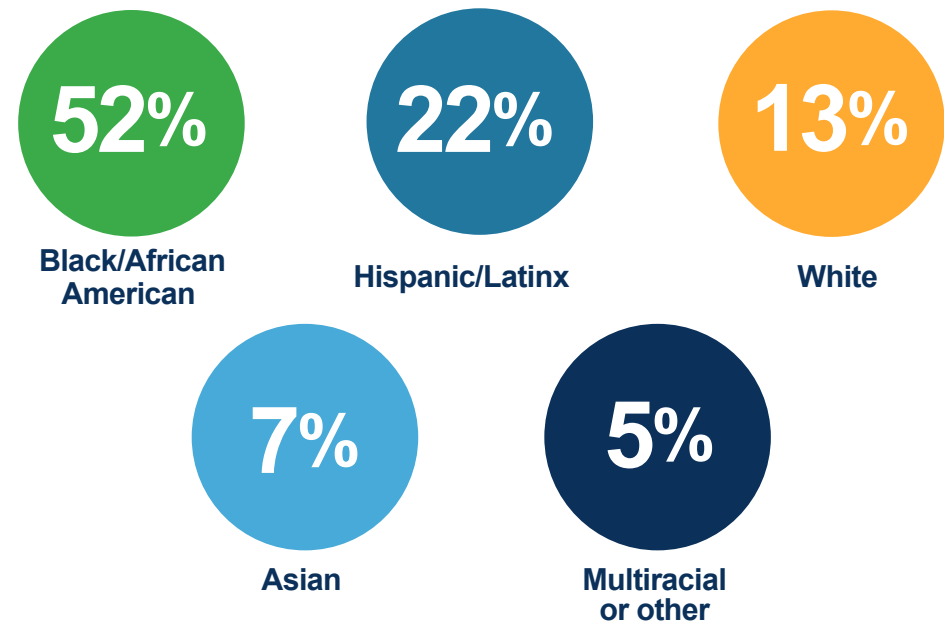


STUDENTS

The School District of Philadelphia's top priority for our students is their academic success and preparing them to thrive, succeed, and lead in a global society.

The School District is the largest educator of public school students in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Additionally, in Philadelphia, nearly 67,000 students are enrolled in a physical charter school, over 2,700 are pursuing alternative education, and over 14,000 attend cyber charter schools or use other education modes.*

Over 150 languages are spoken by School District students and families. The School District also serves a racially, culturally, and ethnically diverse student body.



The graduation rate is 80% for School District schools (72% combined District and Alternative School rate), and we have over 4,300 students enrolled in 31 Advanced Placement courses across the district. The School District also offers 40 career and technical education programs, and eight International Baccalaureate programs.

**Under Pennsylvania law, charter schools are independent educational entities governed by their own boards and subject to specific authorizing laws. It is the role of the superintendent to ensure that all public schools are part of a coherent system of public education and the leader of the Charter Schools Office currently sits on the Superintendent's cabinet.*

FAMILIES

The families and guardians of our student body are active advocates for their children's well-being, and are passionate about ensuring the best possible educational outcomes for their children. The Board of Education shares their belief that students deserve a safe, accessible, well-resourced, and capable school system that meets their needs and earns their trust. A strong partnership between schools, families, and communities is important to

the Board. Through the School District's Office of Family and Community Engagement, families are assisted with navigating the School District, and offered opportunities to actively take part in their children's academic lives. The Office also strives to engage parent leaders and families as essential partners. In recognition of their ongoing commitment to the success of the School District, and in appreciation for the strength

of their work as active parents and guardians, the Board is intentionally and consistently engaging with school families during the superintendent search process - from dedicated feedback sessions as part of the public engagement process to ensuring significant participation from current parents and guardians on the Board's Superintendent Search Advisory Committee, which will aid the Board in reviewing final superintendent candidates.

THE STAFF, ADMINISTRATORS, AND EDUCATORS

A school district as large as ours requires significant staffing levels to ensure efficient and successful operations. The School District of Philadelphia has over 19,000 caring and dedicated employees including assistant superintendents, hundreds of principals and assistant principals, nearly 9,000 teachers, and thousands of crucial support roles.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

The School District currently employs more than 400 principals and assistant principals – all highly motivated, persistent, and creative educators whose spirit, devotion, and expertise are the keys to successful implementation of the School District's vision. We rely on them to guide the School District's youth and align school resources, systems, and people around a rigorous instructional program.

EDUCATORS

The School District's nearly 9,000 teachers (including Special Education teachers, special assignment teachers, and demonstration teachers) are passionate about working with children and leading innovation to ensure all students achieve. Creativity and an intrinsic desire to improve the academic outcomes for all students are at the heart of our instructors' approach to education.

ADVOCATES AND SUPPORTERS

Countless advocacy groups, City of Philadelphia agencies, elected officials, faith communities, philanthropic partners - alongside dedicated citizens and community groups - support the children educated by the School District of Philadelphia and seek to hold The School District accountable.

Our advocates include both visible or high profile entities, and influential thought leaders and caring individuals based in Philadelphia's communities. These are the people whose devotion never wavers - the neighbors, block captains, small business owners, and community outreach captains - who bring communities together and care about the children of Philadelphia.

A partial list of the District's advocates and supporters includes:

- The parents, guardians, caregivers, and students we proudly serve
- Mayor Jim Kenney, and City departments and agencies that support our students, schools and families
- City Council members
- State legislators
- Faith leaders
- K-12 advocacy groups
- Higher education partners including Dr. Amy Gutman and the University of Pennsylvania, and Drexel University
- The Joseph Neubauer and the Neubauer Family Foundation
- The Lindback Foundation
- Comcast Corporation
- The William Penn Foundation
- Health services supporters including Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and Independence Blue Cross

LOCAL CONTROL

The School District of Philadelphia is governed locally by the Board of Education, composed of nine members appointed by the Mayor of Philadelphia. The Board was reestablished in 2018 by Mayor Jim Kenney after 17 years of state control by the School Reform Commission, which was created in 2001 as a temporary form of governance for the School District.

Collectively, Board members serve in the best interest of every student in Philadelphia. The Board is responsible for overseeing all policies and budgetary decisions of the School District, is the authorizer of all charter schools in Philadelphia, and appoints the School District's superintendent.

The Board entrusts the superintendent with the primary responsibility and authority for the administration of the School District. Proper selection of a superintendent is critical to the effective leadership and management of the School District.

The Board guides all of its work by the non-negotiable principle: “The interests of our students come first.”

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Members of the Board of Education have varying professional backgrounds and interests, but they all share a passion for improving the quality of education for Philadelphia's children. During their tenure, the Board has worked to overhaul the way School District governance looks, feels, and operates in this city.

As the policy-making body for the School District, the Board establishes, reviews, and adopts policies for its organization and operation. In addition to appointing and evaluating the superintendent of schools, the Board's responsibilities include adopting operating and capital budgets; approving investments that align with the Board's priorities; considering the values and voice of all stakeholders; evaluating progress towards the School District's goals; communicating to the public about the Board's priorities, goals, policies, and accomplishments; and authorizing all brick and mortar charter schools in Philadelphia.

Board members believe all of our students deserve access to quality schools, and work to make sure that all children attending public schools – regardless of life circumstances, zip code, behavioral challenges, or disability – have access to great schools.

GOALS & GUARDRAILS

In 2020, the Board introduced Goals & Guardrails, a formal commitment to prioritizing students and their achievement in School District decision-making and when allocating resources. Each month, the Board monitors progress toward Goals and Guardrails as a commitment to Student Outcomes Focused Governance. Goals & Guardrails is a five-year strategic plan to raise student achievement in Philadelphia public schools. It guides our efforts to ensure that all students in the School District are equipped to thrive, succeed and lead in a global society.

The goals laid out in this plan are simple: every student will read on or above grade level, every student will perform on or above grade level math, and every student will graduate ready for college and career. The reality, however, is that we are currently far from our goals. In 2019, only 35.7% of students in grades 3-8 scored proficient or advanced on Pennsylvania's reading assessment. In 2019, only 21.5% of students in grades 3-8 scored proficient or advanced on Pennsylvania's math assessment. The percentage of students in grades 9-11 who scored proficient or advanced on all three of their state high school assessments was 22.2%.

Raising the academic outcomes of our students will be the core work of the next superintendent. It will be the responsibility of the next superintendent to create and execute a plan to achieve the School District's Goals and Guardrails vision.

Our Guardrails state that every school will be a safe, welcoming & healthy place where our students, staff and community want to be and learn each day, every student will have a well-rounded education with co-curricular opportunities including arts and athletics, and every parent and guardian will be welcomed and encouraged to be partners in their child's school community. In addition, our students' potential will not be limited by practices that perpetuate systemic racism and hinder student achievement.

ROLE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

In the School District, the superintendent is the chief administrative and instructional officer and is responsible for the operation of all schools subject to the policies of the Board, and the supervision of all matters pertaining to instruction in all programs under the direction of the Board.

As the senior leader of the School District, the superintendent must understand the strategic connection between big picture ideals and daily operations. The School District of Philadelphia's superintendent must work deftly to build coalitions with key stakeholders, advocate for the best interests of the district, pursue funding, partnerships, and resources, and manage the daily operational and personnel needs of the institution.

Over the last decade, the School District has transformed from a District in fiscal and academic distress to one that has strong financial management as it makes progress in improving educational experiences and outcomes for students. The School District still, however, requires significantly more resources to fully provide the education our students deserve.

The School District has regained local control, attained an investment grade rating from Moody's Investor Services for the first time since 1977, intentionally cultivated partnerships that have yielded significant supplemental supports for our students, and made strategic, student-centered investments that have laid a strong foundation for the advancement of the Board's Goals & Guardrails going forward.



MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS INCLUDE:

MORE EARLY LITERACY SUPPORTS

- New grade-level libraries in all K-5 classrooms
- Early literacy classroom upgrades in 48 elementary schools

EXPANDED COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS

- Increased Advanced Placement (AP) and dual enrollment course offerings, and more students enrolled in them
- Innovative Career and Technical Education (CTE) and apprenticeship programs focused on high-demand occupations including culinary arts, welding, fire fighting, emergency services, advanced electronics and automated systems, and health-related technology
- More students earning industry certifications
- The first middle college program in Pennsylvania -- Parkway Center City Middle College

NEW AND IMPROVED SCHOOL BUILDINGS

- \$1.1 billion in capital investments, including the construction of 15 new school buildings, 14 building additions and 37 athletic field upgrades
- 122 school buildings Certified Lead Safe and another 21 Certified Lead Free
- Air and surface purifiers in instructional spaces in every school
- Steady efforts to bolster compliance strategies around AHERA management and abatement

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS (cont.)

IMPROVING SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS

- An increase in operating funds per student (\$19,400 in 2020, up from \$15,500 in 2011)
- More than 1,400 partners matched to schools based on needs via the Office of Strategic Partnerships
- A range of strategic partnerships to support: improved attendance strategies; Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports; social emotional learning; restorative justice practices; a Diversion Program for students; and mental health and trauma supports for students, staff and families
- 1:1 Chromebook/learning devices for every student for the first time
- New computer labs in every school
- Free SAT & PSAT test-taking and access to practice tests
- Instrumental music instruction restored in every elementary and middle school

BETTER SCHOOLS AND OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS

- Overall School Progress Report scores improved four years in a row (pre-COVID)
- Doubled the number of higher-performing schools and students in them
- Rising four-year graduation rates
- Ten more schools earned National Blue Ribbon Schools distinction (17 total since the program began in 1982)

A GREATER FOCUS ON EQUITY AND INCLUSION

- A Superintendent's Student Advisory Council to infuse student voice in District decision-making
- A new Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to lead and sustain system-level change in alignment with the School District's Anti-Racism Declaration



While these advancements have been critical, we still have much work to do. Pennsylvania ranks last among all 50 states when it comes to providing additional funding to school districts in poverty. A case is currently underway to fight for fair educational funding across the state. In the meantime, it is the role of the superintendent to continue to advocate for additional funding for our students.

The School District's Office of Strategic Partnerships has a long history of collaborating with District schools, offices, and partner organizations to help foster trusting and purposeful relationships that contribute to school communities where students thrive. The work is centered on assisting each school in identifying and leveraging partner support to further their mission and progress towards the School District's Goals & Guardrails.

With over 100 partner programs with School Partner Agreements, covering 600+ distinct relationships between programs and schools, School District schools are supported by a rich tapestry of school-based partner programs from practically every industry. These programs operate both during and after the traditional school day and focus on a diverse range of impact areas including college and career readiness, academic support, mentorship and the arts, supporting our goal of providing a high quality education that enables our students to achieve their full intellectual and social potential.

Here are examples of partnerships supporting our students:

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

- **Steppingstone Scholars**, an educational social mobility organization for low income students, which builds robust pipelines to college and career for thousands of young people in Philadelphia. Through Steppingstone's three-tier programmatic approach, 2,500 District students are served annually through college and workforce programs, pursuit of college dual enrollment credits, and programs such as Steppingstone Academy, Pathways, and Ventures.
- **Philadelphia Futures**, supports low-income, first generation-to-college students with the tools, resources, and opportunities necessary for college success. Futures supports students through their Sponsor-A-Scholar and College Connection programs, and through their implementation of the Ellis Trust.
- **Career Week - Dare to Dream**, a collaborative effort with the Office of Pennsylvania Attorney General and The School District of Philadelphia that exposes young people in Career and Technical Education programs to local, traditional and non-traditional career options, through interactive experiences and conversations with diverse, local professionals.



STEM-RELATED LEARNING AND PROGRAMMING

- **Philly Nature Kids**, a program created by the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge. Before students are expected to become stewards and changemakers, they must first care about and familiarize themselves with their local environment. Building a strong science background and land ethic requires repeated, immersive, and high-quality outdoor experiences.

READING AND LITERACY SUPPORT

- **Historic Fair Hill**, an example of how deep, community-rooted school partnerships can enrich our schools and strengthen ties between families, communities and schools. Historic Fair Hill's work focuses specifically on helping caregivers and community members collaborate with teachers around literacy at schools in the Fairhill neighborhood.

ENRICHING AND WELL-ROUNDED SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

- **Girls Inc.**, offers programs designed with each girl in mind, helping them develop the attitude and aptitude necessary to make healthy decisions and achieve their academic and professional goals. Girls Inc. programs focus on healthy living, academic enrichment and leadership development.
- **ASAP**, develops and supports high-quality after school activities. Each year, ASAP coordinates 300 after school and summer enrichment programs in partnership with more than 200 schools, libraries, recreation centers, and community-based organizations throughout Philadelphia. Each of these programs has a focus on one of the four ASAP initiatives: Chess, Debate, Scrabble, or Drama.





THE NEXT SUPERINTENDENT OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

“We need someone who understands what it means to be in class every day.”

- Ellie, 15

“We need someone who believes in us.”

- Lyannie, 16

“[We need someone who is] committed to communication with school communities, transparency with parents and the public, and accountability for themselves and senior staff.”

- participant in the October 27 listening session.

“We can teach the artist to be a technician; we can’t teach the technician to be an artist. We need someone who will understand the important roles of teachers, families, and students to this District.”

- participant in the November 4 listening session.

THE COMMUNITY INPUT PROCESS

The Board of Education launched the superintendent search process in September 2021 following Dr. William Hite’s announcement that he would transition from his role as superintendent at the end of the current (2021-22) school year, following 10 years of service.

The Board-led search is being operated with the highest diligence, including the conclusion of the Board’s first formal phase of activity: a public engagement process that invited Philadelphia parents and guardians, students, teachers, School District employees, community members and other partners who help power this School District and believe in the possibilities of our children to share what they would like to see in our next superintendent

Over the course of **25 days** during the month of October 2021 and into November, the Board worked alongside **53 community organizations** to host or participate in **48 surveying and listening sessions**. The Board engaged directly with **1,317 participants** via:



**school-based
surveying sessions**



**in-person
listening sessions**



**virtual
listening sessions**

What’s more, **11 additional community organizations and advocacy groups** hosted their own listening sessions, and reported a collective attendance of **523 individuals**.

The Board received over 3,900 survey responses. The survey was distributed:

- Online at philasd.org/schoolboard/search
- In-person at schools and at in-person listening sessions
- Via community partners

KEY AUDIENCES ENGAGED ACROSS ALL EFFORTS

- Parents/Guardians: 25.23%
- Teachers: 22.98%
- School District of Philadelphia employees: 18.46%
- Students: 11.31%
- Community members: 11.29%
- Business community: 3.12%
- Clergy: 2.19%

ETHNICITIES

- White: 41.6%
- African American: 39.09%
- Hispanic/Latinx: 7.11%
- Asian American, Pacific Islander: 6.07%
- Multi-racial: 4.13%

- We need an effective communicator who will lead with honesty and transparency...
- Someone who will listen and will prioritize rebuilding trust between 440 and families.
- An inspirational leader who will think bigger and think bolder, and will lead with moral courage.
- Someone with a track record of managing big systems and diverse environments, while leading with humility and moral courage.
- A diverse leader with culturally-relevant lived experiences. A leader who can connect with and relate to the student and family population they are serving.

The next superintendent for The School District of Philadelphia will come in at a time when the School District's challenges mirror those of other districts across the country: aging buildings; inadequate state and federal funding; overwhelmed staff, principals, teachers, counselors and paraprofessionals; and a COVID-19 pandemic that has completely reshaped education and consequently, the nature of the superintendent role.

Additionally, in the City of Philadelphia, the delivery of education is impacted by citywide gun violence; the trauma and ramifications to mental health resulting from an unprecedented pandemic; and the continued existence of regional poverty that has only perpetuated an inequitable system for our families.

While our current challenges are great, the next superintendent will have the opportunity to rethink and reimagine how we prepare our children for the future. They will arrive with a blueprint already set by the Board's Goals & Guardrails vision - to buy into, and to take it many steps further. The superintendent will also enter at a point where they can build on the successes of the last 10 years including growing financial stability, the opening of new innovative high schools, expanded successful school models, and in-district turnarounds and redesigned schools in partnership with communities. Lastly, the next superintendent will arrive with the opportunity to listen, to set the path for this District - and then creatively and effectively communicate leading priorities to the District's families, students, educators and partners as the first of many steps for coalition building.

Overwhelmingly, those who participated in the Board of Education's 25-day community input process understood and acknowledged that there is a very short list of individuals who can do this work. What we heard, however, is that at their core, the next superintendent must believe in the capability of every single child that is educated in Philadelphia's public schools. Every Philadelphian we heard from agreed that our children's success should be what guides the next superintendent. It is only then that the next leader will be able to successfully:

- Redefine community engagement, making it so that students, parents, educators and District staff have an equal voice in the School District;
- Effectively engage with all of Philadelphia's communities, so that they can best support the whole child by understanding the environments in which our students live and how that informs learning;
- Commit to dismantling system inequities and building equity through anti-racist policies; and
- Advance Philadelphia's place in the ever-changing public education landscape, creating a system in which all of our children are set up for success, and our faculty, staff, leadership, alumni, friends, trustees, local community members, and business, educational and governmental partners truly believe in the work that we are doing, and are its biggest champions.

What every person who participated in this process expressed is that the next superintendent cannot place ineffective, temporary fixes on open issues. Our children and our families need someone who can do the job effectively and equitably.

What follows is a comprehensive recap of what the Board heard during this process.

EXPERIENCES THAT ARE DESIRED

Philadelphians are looking for a superintendent who is a coalition builder with educational experience and an unwavering commitment to equity; sees inclusion as an imperative; has a track record of listening to, engaging with, and working alongside diverse communities in an urban setting; and is committed to transparency, effective communication, and setting the benchmark for every single child in the School District to compete in a global society.

HAS EXPANDED OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIVERSE AND HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED STUDENTS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES

- Many individuals hope that the next superintendent will have direct - or adaptive - classroom experience that includes leading and executing successful education models and curriculum to students at all levels: K - 12; special education and disabilities; multilingual and multicultural; ESL and non-English speaking learners; and social emotional learning. There was also strong support for the next superintendent to have a track record of raising student performance in neighborhood schools, and to have experience working within a diverse school district that is experiencing comparable systematic challenges.

OPERATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND THE PROVEN ABILITY TO MAINTAIN A STRONG AND EFFECTIVE BENCH OF LEADERSHIP

- One job, one person - that's the superintendent role. What the Board heard during this process was a desire for the next superintendent to have relatable experience with building a strong Cabinet that can make the necessary long-term commitment to our children and their success and are just as committed to improvement and transparency. These leaders must be able to see where gaps exist and fill them; but the superintendent must be able to recruit, retain and manage these diverse individuals and hold them accountable, while also deputizing and motivating them. Equally important is the next superintendent's track record of running a major system like the School District. Individuals shared that the next leader should show their experience in navigating all major district operations including, but not limited to, finances, facilities and infrastructure, and equitable distribution of resources. What's more, the next leader should show experience in managing predictable and unpredictable events including staffing shortages, transportation issues, and charter/district relations.

COALITION BUILDER WITH PROVEN SUCCESS IN MANAGING SIZABLE BUREAUCRACIES

- Collaboration is key to the role of superintendent, and there was an overwhelming desire for the next leader of the District to be able to bring diverse voices to the table internally and externally in order to provide the best future for our children. Internally, the next superintendent must have experience building a collaborative culture where any problems are framed as organizational issues for everyone to work together to correct, and any silos are eradicated in order for information and data to be exchanged across all departments and providers. In bringing district leaders, educators and paraprofessionals to the table, the next superintendent must show experience where lines of open communication were created, proper supports were provided, and input was valued. Externally, the next superintendent will need to show strong leadership in navigating heavy political landscapes and a track record of bringing or developing strategies to bring diverse stakeholders to the table, and getting them each aligned with the mission and focus of the School District in a way that encourages them each to work alongside the School District towards tangible solutions. The next leader needs to show how they recognized students and parents/guardians, labor unions, elected officials, advocates, faith-based and interfaith leaders, business and civic leaders, for example, as partners in this work, and worked alongside them to effect sizable and meaningful change.

EYES ON THE COMMUNITY AND A PULSE ON THE CITY

- The population of Philadelphia has increased in the last 10 years primarily due to increasing Asian American, Pacific Islander and Hispanic populations. For many Philadelphians, it is imperative that the next superintendent show experience in listening to and learning from diverse and multicultural communities, and bringing them in as partners in this work. More than working with the community, the next superintendent should show an understanding of the diverse needs of multicultural populations - and the issues affecting them - in order to best serve our children and their families. It is also necessary that the next superintendent understand the concept of intersectionality and has put that understanding into action, evidenced by programs they have executed to meet the needs of diverse learners. When it comes to the city as a whole, the next superintendent should know - or is open to learning - how Philadelphia's wheels turn. They will need to understand how this city moves and what motivates the public and the private sector in this city to act.

POSSESSES A RECORD OF COMMITMENT TO ANTI-RACISM, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

- "The ideal candidate should see equity as a default position, not as an initiative" is an exact statement that was shared - and often echoed - in the community input process. The next leader of the School District should be able to speak to strategies they have implemented to create inclusive school communities and ensure that every school is one where parents want to send their children. Many people expressed a desire to have a superintendent with a history of implementing equitable practices, and instances of going in, evaluating systems, and implementing anti-racist and anti-ableist policies that harm teachers, students and families - and taking action to prevent bullying and harm.

ADVANCE THE MISSION OF CREATING 21ST CENTURY CLASSROOMS

- With Goals & Guardrails as the vision to be reached, many people described the need for a new superintendent to understand that every child learns differently and that the path for post-secondary learning varies per child. Participants wanted a superintendent who is able to align public education with the future of work and the future of cities. The next superintendent should be someone who can bring innovation to scale; someone who is future-focused and will look at educational systems across the U.S. and worldwide and adopt best practices.

MORE QUALITIES THE BOARD HEARD ALONG THE WAY ARE THE ABILITIES TO:

- Recruit, retain and engage diverse and multicultural teachers
- Eliminate barriers that prevent our immigrant population and persons with disabilities from being active and supported members in this system
- Advocate for better funding from Harrisburg
- Prioritize and establish deep and meaningful ties with all Philadelphia neighborhoods
- Create better systems of active and ongoing communication between the School District and families
- Build on the successes of the School District instead of starting from scratch
- Challenge the status quo thoughtfully and deliberately

CHARACTERISTICS THAT ARE SOUGHT

Most individuals expressed the desire to see a new superintendent who is an effective communicator who values the role that teachers, principals, and staff members play in powering the District, values parents and caregivers as partners, and demonstrates the ability to think strategically to develop and communicate a shared vision for the institution.

Individuals also expressed wanting a superintendent who will:

- **Be a problem solver.** They will identify issues and actively collaborate with staff and other stakeholders to come to and implement tangible solutions.
- **Be a change agent.** They will not be afraid to reimagine how we best serve our children and their families.
- **Have a people-first approach to decision making.** They will listen to understand, then move towards action - making sure that at the center of all decisions is how the needs of students, families, and teachers are best met.
- **Be culturally competent.** They will possess the self-awareness, skills and knowledge necessary to appreciate, respect, and work with individuals from different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds; and the ability to utilize clinical skills and practices as needed.
- **Be courageous and have the audacity to challenge the status quo.** They will have the confidence to make difficult changes when needed; they will be bold in their approach to reassess what education looks and feels like in our ever changing society; and they will have the courage to advocate for what is right and fair for our children and our teachers.
- **Build trust with our children, our families, and our District staff and leaders.** They will lead with honesty and integrity.
- **Make communication a priority, whether the news is good or bad.** Transparency and authenticity are key. Philadelphia's families want to be engaged - whether it's surveys or town halls - and they want to see the fruits of their labor, no matter the final decision.
- **Recognize the many stars in the District and be their advocate - from educators to students, from counselors to bus drivers.** They will be their champion.
- **Have a commitment to public education.** They will have a commitment to public service and in building pride among all individuals who power this school system.
- **Enjoy connecting with our neighborhood schools.** They will be willing to visit each and every school and listen and connect with our students.
- **Believe in safe schools for all students.** And work to ensure that every school is safe for our children to attend.
- **Partner with the business community.** These relationships provide meaningful career path opportunities, internships and mentored relationships for students.
- **Most of all, believe in the abilities of our children.**

PRIORITIES HEARD DURING THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The next superintendent will have a lot of things set before them to tackle, but at the foundation of it all is the work of raising success and outcomes for all students across the District. During the public engagement process, the Board heard that Philadelphians want a leader who will zero in on human capital and infrastructure; create an equitable system for all students; and offer better professional support for the individuals who help power the District - all of which is in service to our children to equip them to compete in a global economy.

- 1 **Philadelphians are looking for the next superintendent to ensure the District invests in its people and its buildings.** When discussing staff and leadership capacity, overwhelmingly, Philadelphians expressed a need for investing in the development of teachers and staff and increased opportunities for professional growth. Additionally, the leading priority is funding to fix old buildings and improve the School District's education facilities. Infrastructure is a leading priority for Philadelphians.
- 2 **Philadelphians want an equitable, non-racist public education system.** One listening session participant stated: "The next superintendent should visit every school and ask themselves 'What is needed to make this a school that my children can attend?'" The next leader should work to balance the scales - not doling out resources equally across the District; rather, providing resources at a rate that completely fills the gap so that all students are on the same course and all students are able to achieve. The next superintendent should design strategies that involve and engage non-English speaking families, immigrant communities, persons with disabilities, and all others that have been pushed to the margins. They will need to always take an anti-racist stance and discontinue all practices that favor one group over another. Lastly, they will need to know how things outside of the school doors (violence; trauma; etc) affect and inform the classroom environment, and work to provide solutions to help better support all children and teachers.
- 3 **Philadelphians want more support: for teachers, for School District staff, for paraprofessionals, for students, and for families.** The next superintendent should work to prioritize ESL supports for schools; mental health supports for staff, teachers; better systems of personal and professional support for nurses, counselors and paraprofessionals; and investment into efforts that upend the areas that undermine student success such as lack of food access and lack of access to trauma-informed health supports. The COVID-19 pandemic affected every individual who helps power this District, and exposed issues that had been left untreated or unassisted. The next superintendent must come in with a holistic approach to moving the School District forward.

PHILADELPHIANS ALSO SHARED A DESIRE FOR THE NEXT SUPERINTENDENT TO UNDERSTAND

- That equality and equity are not one and the same. All schools need support, but not every school has the same needs.
- That “city of neighborhoods” is not just a marketing tagline; rather, there is historical context.
- That Philadelphia is a complex city. But if the next superintendent is honest, transparent, and comes in ready to listen first, then roll up their sleeves and get to work, this District’s families, advocates and stakeholders will support them.



Philadelphia is a proud city.

Like any major city, it has its quirks and its challenges, but this city also has a population of people who continue to believe in its successes and its possibilities. So, it was no surprise when, in less than 30 days, more than 5,300 of you told the Board what you wanted in the next superintendent. In a world class city, our children deserve a world class education. That is what Philadelphians told us. And that is what further unites us.

It takes an exceptional person with a unique skill set to be effective in the role of superintendent, but the Board is committed to identifying the next individual to move this School District forward. Along with the Goals & Guardrails blueprint and the feedback collected during the public input phase, their success will also require the support of this city. The students, the families, the School District staff, the advocates, the civic and business leaders, the elected officials - the next leader of the School District will need the support of every corner of Philadelphia in order to give our children what they need to achieve.

It is the Board’s hope that this report captures this sentiment and serves as a rallying point for not just the next superintendent, but for us all.

To stay up to date on the superintendent search process, visit philasd.org/schoolboard/search.



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