



LEA Statement Regarding the LPS Superintendent Search

In October 2010, the Lincoln Education Association surveyed the membership about what qualities and characteristics were important for the new superintendent to possess. One of the consistent themes to emerge was communication. Members commented that the new superintendent must be “articulate and communicate with the community and LPS staff,” have “visibility in the schools,” “listen carefully and meaningfully to teachers,” and that the superintendent have “the ability to communicate and work with diverse groups.” LEA echoes the importance of these strengths as well as others.

The LEA also believes it is important for the new superintendent to understand the need for a collaborative relationship with the Association. Experience working with an association(s) and/or the willingness to do so in a true collaborative fashion and not just as lip-service is a most desirable quality. The best school districts are those in which the District and the local Association work in a partnership to share ideas, problem solve in a mutually acceptable fashion, and plan together for the best interests of all involved—something that always benefits students and the community as a whole.

Another area of experience of importance for the new superintendent would be to understand the unique needs of a similar sized district to Lincoln. Inevitably, districts of comparable size struggle with a set of many of the same challenges not found in smaller school districts.

Diversity of experience is also important to consider. A candidate who brings a depth of diversity expertise would be an additional asset for that candidate to have. LEA believes that for a superintendent to be successful in Lincoln, they need to have had legitimate, successful experience in the classroom as a teacher, held a variety of leadership roles which has had the candidate working in a collaborative fashion with a variety of people to produce successful results, and must be a person who is familiar with the financial workings of a school district and able to bring all of these experiences and skills acquired together for good, effective public relations.

LEA believes it is vital for the new superintendent to have both a vision and a willingness to see it carried through. Because it is impossible for any one person to be in charge of the entire array of district responsibilities, projects, and implementations, the new superintendent must be one who can delegate responsibilities to others. However, the superintendent cannot be a delegator who blindly trusts that what they want for the District is being carried out in an appropriate fashion. The superintendent must constantly monitor the work of those to whom they delegate responsibility and those people must be held accountable that they are fulfilling their tasks in an appropriate, shared-decision fashion. If those in positions of authority at the district or site level are not approaching their responsibilities in a fitting fashion, the superintendent must be willing to make changes and take all suitable actions. Being unaware of the performance of those around you or not being willing to hold people accountable for their actions is worse than having no vision for the District at all, in the opinion of LEA.

While addressing vision, accountability, and tasks that must be performed throughout the District, LEA believes it indispensable that LPS hire a superintendent who understands the word “priority” and who will prioritize what needs to be accomplished throughout the District. The pattern of constantly adding new curriculum and increasing other demands upon teachers at the same time as well as demanding that teachers perform often redundant and time consuming activities has to not only be examined by the new superintendent, but acted upon. In its search for excellence, an admirable goal, LPS seldom weeds out old requirements and yet continues to add more. Local requirements that have been replaced by state and/or national requirements remain in place along with the new. Everything cannot be a priority. Not everything can or should be done or implemented at the same time.

Finally, LEA wishes to see the new superintendent as someone who acknowledges that the real accomplishments of any school district are achieved day in and day out by the teachers of the district in their classrooms, their media centers, their nursing offices, and elsewhere “on the front lines.” Beyond just acknowledging this to be true in occasional messages to staff or speeches before the public, LEA encourages the Board of Education to hire a superintendent who will give teachers the tools, the time, the environment, the professional treatment, and the positive rewards (including not only the establishment of priorities as stated above, but appropriate compensation) that our teachers so deserve and earn every day they report to duty.