Middletown Public Schools
Superintendent Search
Leadership Profile Report
Executive Summary

Prepared for the
Middletown Board of Education
Superintendent Search Committee

By
Cooperative Educational Services
Trumbull, CT 06611
June 29, 2017
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Middletown Public Schools

Middletown Superintendent Leadership Profile

The Middletown Public Schools has begun its search for a superintendent to begin service in Middletown on or about November 7, 2017. Dr. Patricia Charles has served as superintendent since 2012 and will be retiring in November 2017. In hiring Middletown’s new superintendent of schools, the Board’s goal is to secure the services of the most qualified person who is also a good fit with the community. Identifying that person involves a formal search process that includes identifying potential candidates, including qualified internal persons, researching the needs of the school system, and narrowing down the list of applicants to those who are not only qualified but also possess the personal and professional attributes the community, school administration, non-certified staff and teachers identify as being important. The Board believes it has a responsibility to the community to go through an extensive and formal process to ensure the person that is ultimately hired is the most qualified and suitable person to serve as Middletown’s next superintendent.

The Board has engaged the Cooperative Educational Services (C.E.S.) Executive Search Services to assist the Board in conducting the search. The hiring of a superintendent is a state-legislated responsibility of the Board of Education. The search for a superintendent requires a considerable commitment of time, an understanding of the legal issues germane to the search process and a high level of specific expertise in executive search procedures. For these reasons the Board unanimously voted to work with an experienced superintendent search firm. The C.E.S. search firm uses a well-developed process that first identifies, through a series of focus groups and an online survey, the attributes the Middletown community, school administrators, teachers and staff would like to see in the next Middletown school superintendent. The C.E.S. consultants will then cast a wide net to identify potential candidates. Based on candidate qualifications and fit with the community, the search consultants, working with
the Board, will narrow down the applicant pool and will present several highly qualified candidates to the Board for interviews. Ultimately, the decision about who to hire rests solely with the Middletown Board of Education. The C.E.S. search firm will work closely with the Board throughout the entire process to ensure Middletown hires the best person to be superintendent in the challenging times that lie ahead for the Middletown community.

Five focus group sessions were conducted on Monday, June 19, 2017, for the following groups: (1) Administrators; (2) Classified and Central Office Staff; (3) Government Officials; (4) Teachers; (5) Community Members and Parents. A total of 65 people participated in the focus groups. Each group began with introductions and clarification of the purpose of the focus groups and the processes to be used in soliciting participant opinions. Consultants indicated they were there to listen to the opinions of the participants, to facilitate group discussion and to answer questions about search procedures. Each focus group used guiding questions to frame their responses for the consultants. Responses were recorded and participants were asked to verify the accuracy of the record of responses to each question before moving on to the next question. Questions focused on six areas: Professional Experience; Prior Success; Educational Background; Special Knowledge; Personal Characteristics and Final Thoughts as to important issues and most appealing aspects of Middletown Public Schools. The record of opinions for each group is discussed below and can be found at the end of this report.

In addition to the focus group sessions, an online survey was accessible to all Middletown residents -- as well as a few non-residents -- and school employees from Monday, June 19, 2017, through Sunday, June 25, 2017. The online survey utilized questions similar to those included in the focus group question framework. Data from the online survey and focus groups are blended in determining the recommended list of priority attributes for a new superintendent of schools.
The Middletown Community should take pride in the fact that 65 people participated in focus group sessions and 513 (unduplicated count) persons responded to the online survey. This report represents a composite of the Middletown community’s vision of its next superintendent of schools. Upon review and acceptance of this report by the Board of Education, it will be posted on the district website. The profile of the “ideal” superintendent presented in this report will serve as basic criteria for the Board of Education as it focuses on the recruitment and selection of a superintendent of schools.

A summary of the recommended selection criteria is as follows:

**Suggested selection criteria:**

- Central office leadership experience is expected; superintendent experience is desirable. The candidate’s personal qualities and experience as they relate to the Middletown context is primary.
- The successful candidate will have demonstrated an ability to create a climate of trust in the community at every level.
- The successful candidate will have a record of establishing conditions for ALL students to achieve at high levels: equity of resources, opportunities, and learning outcomes for ALL students, especially those who are underachieving.
- The successful candidate will show evidence of an ability for recruitment of a high-quality and diverse workforce.
- The candidate shall be skilled at developing and managing budgets and will be creative in the use of resources.
- The next superintendent must have the ability to develop a shared vision of equitable, high-quality education and strategic plans to realize that vision.
- The successful candidate will be adept at faculty relations and capable of leading the way to effective professional development.
- The superintendent will be an outspoken advocate for equitable opportunity, academic achievement at high levels and emotional growth for every Middletown student.
• The new superintendent should possess the following personal characteristics:
  Friendly, approachable – well-developed people skills
  Strong work ethic
  Strong ethical values
  Community involvement
  Culturally competent; ability to work well with diverse groups
• The successful candidate will demonstrate a clear understanding of the issues confronting teachers and principals in contemporary schools
• The next superintendent must have an ability to create safe schools that have a positive environment for learning and teaching.
• Skill at working effectively with municipal government and agencies; creating bridges between the educational enterprise and these agencies is critical to the success of the next superintendent.
• An ability to communicate regularly, clearly and honestly toward the end that transparency, trust and respect are engendered throughout the Middletown community and beyond is essential. Middletown expects its superintendent of schools to represent the community with distinction.
ANALYSIS OF FOCUS GROUP AND ONLINE SURVEY DATA

Sixty-five people participated in focus group sessions and 513 responded to an online survey available June 19-25, 2017. Altogether 578 people participated in focus groups and the survey. This represents a large number of people who have participated in the superintendent search process. Clearly the large participation rate indicates that the Middletown community is interested in choosing a superintendent capable of providing outstanding leadership to the Middletown Public Schools and Middletown’s children.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF FOCUS GROUP RESPONDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Members, Parents and Students</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classified and Central Office Staff</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Officials</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and Paraprofessionals</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DEMOGRAPHICS OF ONLINE SURVEY RESPONDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent of Middletown Public Schools Student</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middletown Public Schools, Certified Staff</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident, Not a Parent of a School Age Child</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middletown Public Schools, Non-Certified Staff</td>
<td>43</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent of Children Not in Middletown Public Schools</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middletown Town Official</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middletown Student</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ONLINE SURVEY RESPONSES

Survey Question 1: What professional experience should the successful candidate have in his or her background?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Principal</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Office Administrator (Assistant Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, etc.)</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent of Schools</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Office Supervisor (Curriculum, Personnel, Special Education, etc.)</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Sector Management/Leadership</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion of Focus Group and Survey Responses

During the focus groups, there were three preeminent themes about professional experience that emerged:

1. The new superintendent must understand and be capable of working successfully with a culturally and racially diverse community and student population
2. Experience as a superintendent or significant central office experience is required to effectively deal with the complexity of the school district and its context.
3. The superintendent must understand issues at the classroom and building levels to effectively create the climate and momentum for improved student achievement.

The online survey responses supported these themes. However, survey respondents also indicated a strong interest in candidates with experience as a school principal and very limited interest in private sector management experience.
Survey Question 2: Is it essential to you that the next superintendent have prior experience as a superintendent?

NO, THE BEST PERSON SHOULD GET THE JOB 356

YES, WE NEED AN EXPERIENCED LEADER 158

Discussion of Focus Group and Survey Responses

- Significant central office leadership responsibilities should be required of the new superintendent; all things being equal, superintendent experience is preferred.
- The personal qualities and potential for success working in this diverse community are the most important considerations.
Survey Question 3: What kind of achievement record should the successful candidate be able to demonstrate?

Discussion of Focus Group and Survey Responses

- The new superintendent must demonstrate an ability to create the climate and conditions for setting high standards and improving the achievement of ALL students; there must be equity of resources, opportunities, and learning outcomes for ALL students.
- The new superintendent must demonstrate an ability to work effectively with ALL stakeholders, community groups, and municipal departments; good communication skills, team building and a collaborative decision-making style are critical skills for success.
- The new superintendent must be able to create a positive school district culture that embraces the diversity of the community; this must manifest itself in the increasing diversity of staff, engagement of parents from ALL community sub-groups, and in the motivation and commitment of all school employees to achieve district goals related to equity and high performance.
Survey Question 4: In addition to appropriate certification, what kind of educational background would you like to see in the new superintendent?

Discussion of Focus Group and Survey Responses

- Personal qualities experience, and past successes are more important than the degree; all things being equal, the degree would be an asset.
Survey Question 5: Given your understanding of the major issues facing the school district, what personal experience would benefit the next superintendent?

Discussion of Focus Group and Survey Responses

- The new superintendent should have a clear understanding of the demographics and trends in the community to address issues of equity, student achievement, culture of the district, and student advocacy.
- The municipality has multiple unions and a unique relationship with some of those unions and the municipality; the new superintendent will need to quickly learn and effectively deal with the nuances of this context.
- The new superintendent will need to be a highly effective communicator, with diverse groups of stakeholders, maintaining a focus on what is best for students and the stress that change has imposed on teachers and principals.
- School construction issues and declining enrollments will be a predominant component of district leadership over the next several years and, possibly, well into the future.
Survey Question 6: In your mind what personal characteristics best define your ideal superintendent?

- Friendly and approachable; well-developed people skills: 302
- Willing to roll up sleeves and work hard; strong work ethic: 265
- Strong ethical values: 294
- Ability to work well with others; diverse groups: 263
- Good communicator: 241
- Community involvement: 362
- Other: 15

Discussion of Focus Group and Survey Responses

- The overwhelming opinion of participants is that the new superintendent must be an exceptional relationship-builder in the schools and community, along with the many public constituencies interacting with the school department.
- Most participants consider all the items listed on the Focus Group Framework as important considerations.
- The new superintendent will need a good work ethic and strong ethical values.
- The successful candidate will be friendly and approachable and will have well-developed people skills.
**Survey Question 7:** Going forward, what do you believe are the most important issues facing the public schools?

The following chart presents a summary of topics participants took time to write on survey Question 7. Their comments were clustered into topics according to the opinion they expressed and the number of people who expressed similar opinions are indicated in the column on the right.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenging topics</th>
<th>Number of mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor student behavior – school climate - bullying</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited budgets and cuts</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve student performance – school rankings</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals for special education [social-emotional]</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core curriculum – rigor – high standards</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement gaps</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity of opportunity for all children</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent engagement</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political context of the community</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited resources (&amp; personnel) to meet district &amp; diverse student needs</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities (equity throughout the district)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workforce diversity</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Too much testing</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class sizes</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing effectively with children living in poverty</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replace WWMS</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocating for students and the schools</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdated technology (equity)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment decline – school closings</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flight of high achieving students</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty morale</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff retention</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing successes – PR - Communications</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion of Survey Responses

Despite the large volume of comments provided by survey participants, the topics seem to cluster around several large themes that are discussed below. It should be noted that the number of mentions received by an item is not a measure of its significance. It is an indicator of proportionately how many people share similar opinions or concerns about the topic. These opinions vary in intensity and, at times, in direction. The best use of this aspect of the online survey is to use the results to probe more deeply into the various issues during strategic planning processes to determine goals and actions required to address the most critical issues related to improvement of the school district.

1. The most frequently mentioned topic relates to student deportment and how that affects school climate and the environment for learning. Bullying was mentioned specifically, several times, as a factor in school climate.
2. The second most often mentioned item was the impact the school district budget has on providing resources required to address the important learning needs of students, limiting human and material resources for addressing critical learning needs for improving student performance, addressing equity issues, closing the achievement gap, equity in facilities and technology from school to school.

3. There is a strong desire to improve overall district performance and how the schools rank in that regard. Several other issues are related to this concern (goals and support for special education, a rigorous curriculum with high standards for all students, equity of opportunity for all students, mitigating the effects of poverty, and parent engagement).

4. The issue of effectively dealing with a diverse school and community population was frequently mentioned through write-in responses. Specifically related to this theme are workforce diversity, achievement gaps, equity of opportunity, parent engagement, and professional development of teachers and administrators.

5. Finally, understanding the political context of the city and its relationship to the school district is a major factor in creating conditions for effectively addressing the critical needs of the school district.
Survey Question 7 (continued): If you were to interview the top candidate for superintendent, what would you share with him/her that you find most appealing about our school district?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appealing topics</th>
<th>Number of mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diverse community cultures</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged, dedicated and caring teachers/administrators</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents willing to help</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of community - caring</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great arts programs</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports activities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvements in the school district</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vo-Ag program</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student involvement</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum &amp; instruction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wide variety of programs</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wesleyan</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community-based elementary schools</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for improvement &amp; success</td>
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</table>

Discussion of Survey Responses

There is a great deal of consensus from survey participants who elected to comment about the most appealing aspects of the Middletown Public Schools. Overwhelmingly, they indicated that (1) the diversity of the community and its schools are a very attractive characteristic for a superintendent willing to embrace the community and work with its varying constituents, stakeholders, students, and public officials. Similarly, a clear majority of survey participants also expressed the opinion that (2) most staff and administrators are dedicated and caring professionals, another feature that should attract superintendent candidates.
APPENDIX A

Focus Group Analysis Results

ACHIEVEMENT RECORD

Conclusions:

1. The new superintendent must demonstrate an ability to create the climate and conditions for setting high standards and improving the achievement of ALL students; there must be equity of resources, opportunities, and learning outcomes for ALL students.

2. The new superintendent must demonstrate an ability to work effectively with ALL stakeholders, community groups, and municipal departments; good communication skills, team building and a collaborative decision-making style are critical skills for success.

3. The new superintendent must be able to create a positive school district culture that embraces the diversity of the community; this must manifest itself in the increasing diversity of staff, engagement of parents from ALL community sub-groups, and in the motivation and commitment of all school employees to achieve district goals related to equity and high performance.

EDUCATION BACKGROUND

Conclusion:

1. Personal qualities experience, and past successes are more important than the degree; all things being equal, the degree would be an asset.

EXPERIENCE AS A SUPERINTENDENT

Conclusions:

1. Significant central office leadership responsibilities should be required of the new superintendent; all things being equal, superintendent experience is preferred

2. The personal qualities and potential for success working in this diverse community are the most important considerations.
MAJOR ISSUES – EXPERTISE

Conclusions:
1. The new superintendent should have a clear understanding of the demographics and trends in the community in order to address issues of equity, student achievement, culture of the district, and student advocacy.
2. The MPS has multiple unions and a unique relationship with some of those unions and the municipality; the new superintendent will need to quickly learn and effectively deal with the nuances of this context.
3. The new superintendent will need to be a highly effective communicator, with diverse groups of stakeholder, maintaining a focus on what is best for students and the stress that change has imposed on teachers and principals.
4. School construction issues and declining enrollments will be a predominant component of district leadership over the next several years and, possibly, well into the future.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Conclusions:
1. The overwhelming opinion of participants is that the new superintendent must be an exceptional relationship builder in the schools and community, and with the many public constituencies interacting with the school department.
2. Most participants consider all of the items listed on the Focus Group Framework as important considerations.
3. The new superintendent will need a good work ethic and strong ethical values.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Conclusions:
Three themes about professional experience emerge as pre-eminent from the focus groups.
4. The new superintendent must understand and be capable of working successfully with a culturally and racially diverse community and student population.
5. Experience as a superintendent or significant central office experience is required to effectively deal with the complexity of the school district and its context.
6. The new superintendent must understand the issues at the classroom and building level in order to effectively create the climate and momentum for improved student achievement for all students.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Conclusions:

Positive Aspects of the District:

- Strong leadership team in the school district; progressive teachers and school leaders; great workforce – dedicated and loyal
- Many initiatives to help families
- Curriculum is focused and up-to-date
- Diversity of the community is a strength
- Good schools that are improving; need to market the good things happening

Challenges:

- All students achieving at high levels; equity of opportunity for all students; poverty
- Declining enrollment
- Budget
- Town political structure; working effectively in the community context
- Leader must be a strong advocate for students
- Demand for greater performance with fewer resources
APPENDIX B

Focus Group Responses

There were five focus group sessions at which 65 members of the school district and Middletown community had an opportunity to express their views as to the desirable characteristics of the next Middletown superintendent. The comments offered by focus group participants are shown below.

Administrators (14)

Professional Experience
• Experience as a principal
• CO experience; superintendent experience desired
• Personal qualities most important
• Understands the issues and demands at the building level
• Experience or demonstrated understanding of urban education
• Understanding of issues of poverty and special needs of a diverse population

Experience as a Superintendent
• Should be required = 1
• Should not be required = 13

Achievement Record
• Raising student achievement
• Advocates a growth model – growth mindset – achievement measures not just test scores
• Demonstrated effective leadership actions that have led to improvement
• Can work effectively with a variety of stakeholders with differing opinions
• Strength of convictions for quality education and the focus of the school district – the ability to promote such sentiments among diverse stakeholders
• Coalesce BOE and other stakeholders members around the critical issues of the district and promote their advocacy for the issues
• Team building and collaborative decision-making for common goals
Education Background
• Personal qualities and past success for important than the degree

Major Issues – Personal Expertise
• A leader who is strategic in developing a common vision and actions to achieve it
• Budget development, marketing, and management
• Facilities management – school construction – managing enrollment decline
• Special education – understanding of issues
• Ability to communicate & deal effectively with multiple unions
• Ability to build on the success of the school district; respect previous work accomplished; no pre-conceived agenda
• Faculty relations and development; positive climate

Personal Characteristics
• Collaborative decision-maker; values input of administrators and acts on it; decisive
• Strong communicator and promotes this throughout the district; builds a team of strong communicators
• Support and values the administrative team; empowers the leadership team
• Strong ethical values

Final Thoughts
• There is a strong leadership team in the school district; support for the superintendent by the leadership team
• Progressive teachers and administrators
• Lot of good initiatives that are helping families & students; lot of good things in place; avoid initiative overload
• Curriculum, instruction, and assessment – focused and up to date
• Work with leadership to prioritize needs
• Challenge of working with a diverse population so all students achieve at high levels
• Budget resources to accomplish district goals
• Making decision re: declining enrollment
• Understands and can work with the dynamics of the town political structure
**Classified and Central Office Staff (20)**

**Professional Experience**
- Superintendent level experience desired; CO experience at a minimum
- Private & business experience could be helpful; good value; need business insight; an out-of-the-box lens – balanced perspective
- Principal experience needed
- Know how schools and a school system runs
- Mutual respect between school & business operations – balanced perspective [BOE & city]

**Experience as a Superintendent**
- Should be required =0
- Should not be required =19

**Achievement Record**
- Trustworthy
- Positive school district culture – racial equity
- Approachable – listens – objective – provide feedback; respects opinions of others
- Effective communicator
- Understands budget – building, management
- Do what is right for kids; advocate for staff & students; looking for an educator
- Understands the work and is willing to engage in the work
- Ethical
- Systems thinker
- Deal effectively with multiple unions

**Education Background**
- Personal qualities and past success more important; doctoral degree preferred
- Gap in HR & business leadership now – background would be helpful – systems approaches

**Major Issues – Personal Expertise**
- Broad perspective – CO experience
- All items listed are important
- Understand technology systems for management & instruction
• School construction
• Contract negotiations – good union relationships
• Instructional leadership – focus on learning – excellence & equity

**Personal Characteristics**

• Strong ethical behavior; integrity
• Good communicator
• Strong work ethic
• Approachable, friendly; works well with the team; fosters a team approach
• All items on the list are important
• Involvement in the school and community; invested in the community
• Understands how to work with a diverse community and all stakeholders
• Community partnerships – non-profits, businesses & other agencies
• Thoughtful decision-maker

**Final Thoughts**

• Great workforce in the school district – committed, dedicated, enjoy their work, loyal
• BOE & City operations somewhat contentious; need someone who can navigate the political landscape; morale being effected; focus needs to be on educating the children
• Leader needs to be a strong advocate for students and the school district
• Diversity of the community is a strength; cultural diversity is a plus
• Great school leaders in the community
• Equity; deep understanding of families in poverty & special needs of students

**Teachers and Paraprofessionals (2)**

**Professional Experience**

• Need experience as a superintendent; or strong leadership at CO
• Classroom teaching experience; knowledge of all levels; understand needs at all levels
• Track record of serving students from families of color
• Independent thinker
• Knowing curriculum
**Experience as a Superintendent**
- Should be required = unless CO experience is broad and significant in terms of time served
- Should not be required = not absolutely essential

**Achievement Record**
- Promoting high levels of student achievement; how achievement is measured
- Positive culture & climate – morale & motivation
- Help teachers understand the importance of their role and value their contributions
- Highly effective professional development
- Close the achievement gap for all subgroups
- Critically examines how achievement has been and should be measured going forward – what does educational success look like going forward

**Education Background**
- Advanced degree
- Understanding of budgets
- Personal qualities more important than degree
- Need to understand how to deal with the diverse community as well as an ability to navigate the political context
- Significant knowledge of African-American studies – multi-culturalism – need an anthropology lens

**Major Issues – Personal Expertise**
- Budget; develop & manage
- School construction
- Increasing student achievement
- Faculty relations
- Stress due to change [initiative] overload;
- Discipline – training of teachers in a consistent approach – rates of reported infractions down but not because of changed student behavior – causes lower staff morale
- Willingness to learn from the diversity in the Middletown as related to the cultural context [racial, ethnic, class] of the community [prior experience in this domain]
**Personal Characteristics**

- Ability to work well with others
- Friendly & approachable
- Flexible
- Community involvement
- Work with a diverse population
- Keep the momentum of movement toward a more positive climate
- Strong work ethic
- Effective communicator – good listener – synthesizer of information, different points of view
- Committed to the long-term
- Positive public persona – politically savvy

**Final Thoughts**

- Relationship with BOE & mayor needs to develop more constructively
- Redistricting & school closing – need to plan carefully – need to engage the community in the process
- Educational equity – aware of historical trends of subgroups being underserved in the school district; actively engaged in building best practices in serving those students – this needs to be a priority in terms of actions taken – vision & programming needs to be inclusive of all students – build on the assets already in the community to provide greater opportunities for all students; engaging underserved students in order to lift the achievement levels of all students
- Build on the cultural diversity as points of learning to provide a very rich social, moral, intellectual experience for ALL students – the experience is richer as a result of diversity of opinion represented in classrooms
- Diversity is a very attractive feature of the community

**Community and Parents (20)**

**Professional Experience**

- Superintendent experience; policy development background
- Someone from who knows the school districts in CT and in this area; marketing skills [social media – work with the press]
- Ability to recruit and hire high quality personnel; set high goals and get people to achieve them
- Need a new perspective for Middletown
• Familiar with working with diverse communities- need to see the bigger picture – need to understand where students are coming from – cares about growing all students
• Teaching experience; understands the work in the contemporary classroom; someone who demonstrated care about the education process for all students
• Understands problems of students and is interested in solving them
• Understanding how to serve communities of color; empower people

**Experience as a Superintendent**

• Should be required = 6
• Should not be required = 12

**Achievement Record**

• Critical thinking; problem analysis & strategic problem solving
• A vision for equitable resources and schools for all students; need to raise the bar for all kids – equity in resources and outcomes
• Cultural sensitivity – find a way to bring the community together; all kids to benefit from school opportunities; help staff understand how to effectively teach all kids effectively
• Need someone to close the opportunity gap [race & racism]– needs to clarify the issues & create effective policies and implement effective programs for achievement of all – access to AP classes
• Treat parents as partners; understand where kids are coming from – make a better system for communication
• Recruit, train and retain a high quality diverse staff
• More than 60% at or above grade level; truancy rates, etc.
• Knowledge of effective education research & developmentally appropriate approaches increasing student engagement
• Knowledge of effective curriculum, instruction, & assessment processes; set high expectations for teaching & learning
• Committed to restorative justice
• Creative budget management
• Graduation follow-up studies
**Education Background**

- Personal qualities and experience more important than the degree, all things considered a doctorate degree is preferred

**Major Issues – Personal Expertise**

- Flexibility, communication skills, strength of convictions and character; ability to work in a complex context; a good negotiator
- Know the demographics – make the curriculum culturally inclusive
- Culture & climate; experience with district-wide programs
- Move beyond punitive discipline – restorative justice
- Skill at negotiations
- Understands effective communications – can build an effective network; appreciates the value of effective communication
- Networking for finding effective solutions
- Racial equity; experience and/or commitment
- Collaborative problem solver – grass roots – build from the ground up
- Comfortable with transparency [inform parents of PD]
- School construction
- Transition of students from one building to another
- Management of enrollment decline
- Distinct plan for orientation & training of new hires; evaluate effectiveness
- Fix achievement gap [opportunity gap]
- Budget management

**Personal Characteristics**

- Relationship builder; build relationships with students – know issues students are facing
- Create a vision, communicate the vision and get people to buy-in to implement the vision
- Schools are community places – celebrate success together & accept responsibility for outcomes
- Empathetic
- Not afraid to take risks or make mistakes – willing to take criticism
- Ability to work in the political context
- Committed to public education
- Establish relations with the religious community
• Superintendent. willing to base his/her pay on student achievement
• Racially aware
• Current on education and related issues
• Visible in school and community; knows kids and what they are doing
• Good listener; accessible

*Final Thoughts*
• Kids have been successful in the schools – living good professional lives
• Diversity is a strength – it is what makes Middletown unique
• Administrators care about teachers and students
• Funding is an issue – it is a challenge
• Championship DECA team – many examples of student success
• Some very caring teachers in the district
• Very ambitious people in the schools who need support; strong relationships with teachers & students
• Very active Chamber of Commerce; many community accolades over the years
• Leader in behavioral health partnerships

Public Officials (9)

*Professional Experience*
• Teaching experience
• Central office experience – need a broad vision and skills to run a district
• Executive leadership experience – internships
• Demonstrated ability to work with a diverse community
• Understanding of various cultures

*Experience as a Superintendent*
• Need significant CO experience – do not limit only to superintendent experience

*Achievement Record*
• All items on the list are important (See Focus Group Framework)
• Honest and forthright with all stakeholders
• Takes ownership and responsibility for challenges
• Ability to work collaboratively
• Succeeded in overcoming obstacles or failure
• Understands the political context of a community – not a politician or political in behavior – understands how to operate in a political environment
• Needs to understand how finance, human resources operate in the context of Middletown
• Collaborates effectively with city departments and employees
• Understands how to identify and address achievement gaps
• Advocates for the city; willing to challenge the State on what is good/right for students and the school district
• Delegates responsibility – fosters positive relationships and builds leadership capacity
• Understands that grants are not permanent – plans appropriately for the cessation of funds
• Avoids power struggles over issues – understands the uniqueness of the City Charter; builds a strong and positive relationship with the city – trust is a critical factor
• Good communication is essential – understands how the system works
• The 2017-18 budget process worked well – need to learn from that experience
• Parent involvement [knowing who is not in the room and fostering their engagement]

**Education Background**

• Doctorate degree preferred but not necessary

**Major Issues – Personal Expertise**

• Ability to relate to people from all walks of life
• Labor relationships
• Understanding cultural diversity
• School construction planning and management
• Management of enrollment decline
• Develops and communicates a vision of equity within the school district [race, ethnicity, integration, sexual preference, etc.]
• A strong advocate for all students – equity
• Ability to look inside the school district to identify issues and priorities
**Personal Characteristics**

- All items on the list are important (See Focus Group Framework)

**Final Thoughts**

- Embrace the community and it will reward you
- Good schools that are improving; need to market the schools and communicate the good things happening as well as the successes achieved
- Challenge the State on reform initiatives and support for schools
- A current challenge is greater performance demands with fewer resources
- This is a very challenging school district – the leader must have a strong work ethic and drive