



Superintendent Profile Report

**Compiled from Focus Group and On-line
Survey Responses**

**Cohasset Public Schools
Cohasset, Massachusetts**

March 2019

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McCORMACK GRADUATE SCHOOL OF POLICY AND GLOBAL STUDIES

CANDIDATE PROFILE

The Collins Center, on behalf of the Cohasset School Committee, conducted six (6) public focus groups and discussions to solicit input from various stakeholder groups within the school district and in the community to build a superintendent profile which will inform the selection of the next superintendent of the Cohasset Public Schools. In addition, an on-line survey, containing the same questions posed to the focus group participants, was made available. The Focus Groups took place between March 5th and 6th with a total of 68 participants; the on-line survey was available on March 6th and closed on March 9th with a total of 164 responses. A schedule of the focus groups and the questions asked is attached to this report along with a summary of participants in the Focus Groups and respondents to the online survey.

Gathering input from members of the broader school community plays an important role in the search process. The information gathered allows us to create a profile of the next successful superintendent of schools. This profile informs the School Committee in their work to identify finalists. Potential applicants will review this report as they learn more about the position. Finally, the findings provide the person selected for the role with rich information to develop his/her initial entry plan. Participating in a focus groups also causes participants to reflect and think more deeply about the position and what makes a superintendent successful in Cohasset.

The negative publicity emanating from the incident at the Middle School has impacted the entire school community and was a significant issue in both the Focus Groups and the online survey. As a result, many of the qualities the community is seeking and the priorities identified for the new Superintendent relate directly to this incident. It is not unusual for a district that experiences such an incident to place an emphasis on ensuring that the new Superintendent has the qualities needed to restore the community's trust and confidence in the district's leadership. That is evident in the results of the Focus Groups and the online survey, but it is also clear that the community wishes to get back to focusing on the quality of education in Cohasset. As the community looks ahead, it seeks a leader who can not only restore the trust and confidence in its leadership, but can also restore the excellent academic reputation that the Cohasset schools have always enjoyed and valued.

On behalf of the Cohasset School Committee, we thank everyone who participated in person or on-line in making this a meaningful process and in making these data and analysis rich and helpful.

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Successful Superintendent desired characteristics

Several themes emerged from the input provided that would describe the characteristics, skills, experience and core values of the next successful superintendent. The new superintendent shall possess knowledge or skills, or demonstrated experience, in order to provide the following:

- Leadership for the district that has unquestionable integrity and honesty as the foundation of its work;
- Strong verbal and written communications with attention to content, ensuring that all communications are well written, timely, informative and accurate;
- A vision of education in Cohasset that takes advantage of a skilled teaching faculty, motivated students and parents who will be excellent partners in the education of their children;
- A collaborator who understands and appreciates the value of working together and listens to relevant stakeholders before acting;
- A leader committed to engaging families and the broader community in the effort to make the Cohasset schools the best that they can be;
- A strategic planner who can engage the school community in how best to use the resources available in the community to advance teaching and learning through innovation and creativity;
- A Central Office that embraces transparency and facilitates access for all stakeholders;
- Leadership that places students at the center of all decisions, especially those that may impact their health and safety.

Participants in the Focus Groups and information we received from the online survey helped identify the priorities that they would like to see in the new Superintendent's Entry Plan. Many of these align with the desired characteristics identified above and will address many of the concerns that the respondents had about the negative impact of the incident on the district over the past several months.

Issues to be addressed in the first 6-12 months by the Superintendent

- Restore trust and confidence in the Central Office through open and honest dialogue and communications with stakeholders;
- Celebrate and emphasize the many positive aspects of education in Cohasset and create an atmosphere of optimism and joy about our schools;
- Engage with and be visible to all stakeholders, especially the staff and students in our schools, to create a sense of unity around the core mission of excellence in our schools;
- Provide a strong sense of stability by providing both short-term successes and longer-term achievable aspirations for the district along with a commitment to both;

- Understand that the district has gone through a difficult time and will need strong but sensitive leadership in order to heal;
- Formulate a plan for genuine family engagement and enlist the broader community in the creation of a vibrant and exciting school experience for our students.

With a strong desire to look forward and not backwards, the respondents identified a number of areas where the new Superintendent must focus their attention and energies in order to fulfill the high expectations of the community for its students and its schools. We asked them to identify those things that makes Cohasset Public Schools special and what are the core values that must be respected and preserved.

- There is a perception that the district's reputation of having an excellent academic program has suffered and must be a top priority moving forward;
- Staff feel that they have not been seen as a valued partner in the educational enterprise and very much want to become engaged in any conversations about teaching and learning;
- The need to revisit the district's Strategic Plan and formulating a district improvement plan was a common theme not only among staff, but also among other stakeholders including parents;
- Many stakeholders seek opportunities to collaborate with the district to support teaching and learning, but do not see avenues for their involvement;
- All stakeholders expressed a genuine interest in creating a vision for the Cohasset Public Schools that will solidify the district's place as one of the top performing districts in the state.

CONCLUSION

Despite the disappointment and embarrassment caused by the incident, the school community as a whole is still heavily invested in their schools and have not lost faith in the school leadership. However, the new Superintendent will need to address the issues and concerns, especially about communications and the health and safety of students, and place them at the top of their priority list. The central issue is one of trust, and trust can only be restored by open communications and consistent actions over time that build confidence in leadership. There is a unique opportunity for the new Superintendent to build a leadership team for Cohasset that understands and appreciates the task at hand and is willing and able to do what is necessary to restore trust in the district's leadership. This will require that the hiring process for these critical positions be as open and transparent as this search for a new Superintendent has been. The district has started the hiring process and will need to build into that process some of very important components that the community wants and expects – an honest, open and inclusive process to identify candidates that have the qualities and characteristics needed for a leadership position in Cohasset.