

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 625  
SAINT PAUL, MN  
MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING**

**November 16, 2009**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

PRESENT: Mr. Hardy, Ms. Kong-Thao, Ms. O'Connell, Ms. Varro, Mr. Brodrick, Ms. Street-Stewart, Ms. Carroll

**III ORDER OF THE AGENDA**

The Chair stated the purposed of meeting was the interview of Dr. Charles Hopson for the position of Superintendent for Saint Paul Public Schools.

Dr. Hopson was welcomed and the interview was conducted with the following questions being asked of Dr. Hopson.

1. You indicated that Saint Paul Public Schools is not a career stepping stone, and you wish to come to Saint Paul because of our strong commitment to meet high achievement goals. If offered the Superintendent position, beyond your everyday work here and in our buildings, how would you demonstrate your "leadership of presence," throughout the community?
2. You have a track record of successfully turning around failing schools, and in particular, schools with a high population of African American students. In contrast to many other districts, St. Paul Public Schools has an exceptionally diverse student body, with no "majority" group. How would your efforts to increase the academic proficiency of African-American students in Portland also help students in other demographic groups increase their achievement, and how might your learnings apply to St. Paul?
3. Let's transition, now, to the superintendency. What role will you take as superintendent to ensure the successful elimination of the achievement gap and raising standards for our very diverse student population in SPPS?
4. Please share your vision for and some examples of how families and districts can interact successfully in support of student success. In particular, what different roles and relationships can families have, and how would you as superintendent provide the necessary leadership to ensure this?
  - FOLLOW-UP: You mentioned looking at opportunities to support families who were inexperienced with or uncomfortable with participating, how would you support your staff to reach out successfully and respectfully to such families.
5. We know that collaborative relationships and partnerships are critical to student's success. What have you done to build external relationships that have measurably improved student outcomes, and how would your particular leadership skills shape how that would be done under your tenure?

- FOLLOW-UP: Once those relationships are built, what have you learned about maintaining relationships like this that you would bring with you as Superintendent in St. Paul?
6. We anticipate budget cuts for several more years, and are considering using a Zero Based Budgeting approach for our 2010-11 fiscal year. Of course, some funds are legally or otherwise restricted or targeted, and you should also know we have a long-history of site-based budgeting. So thinking much more broadly, as our superintendent, what kind of process might you follow to prepare a draft budget?
  7. Give us your best 3-minute speech convincing families to send their children to St. Paul Public Schools.
  8. There is concern that our District needs healing in key relationships. Tell us about a time when you moved into a group with trust issues. What did you do to improve the situation? What skills are critical in situations like this, and what behaviors would you expect your direct reports to model?
  9. What has been your experience with a unionized workforce? What successes or failures have you had moving achievement forward in collaboration with unionized staff? What have you learned from those situations?
  10. How have you blended your deep respect and humility with the courage and sometimes very lonely leadership required to make long-term, successful change happen on behalf of all students?  
Difficulty of supt. Bring together so many different factions don't have to consider in other positions.
  11. To what extent in the recent past have you demonstrated your willingness and ability to carry on work that began before you arrived, while still providing vision and leadership to take a district, program, or school to the next level?
  12. What leadership roles have you played on critical education issues at the state, regional, or national level? What difference did you make? How might you use those learnings to elevate critical issues as superintendent of St. Paul Public Schools?
  13. What experience or knowledge do you have with any system that relates pay to performance? If any, please provide a complete description of the process, partners, pitfalls, and outcomes. If not, provide us your thoughts on such an approach.
  14. Let's talk for a moment about the students for whom traditional schools do not work. Please share your experience, philosophy, and organizational approach to alternative education.
  15. Please give us an example of a high performing, multi-cultural team where you had a leadership role. How did the group do their work and what was the result?
  16. You mentioned your strengths as a leader in our earlier interview, but did not share with us those areas where people who know you would say you need to grow. What are those areas?
  17. The guidelines for the second round of ARRA funding, Race to the Top, just came out last week. We don't expect instant expertise with those, but as our superintendent, how would you work with the MN Department of Education to ensure that St. Paul would be well positioned to access those funds?

18. What are your beliefs about using interim assessments during the year and from year to year to drive instructional practices, and, as superintendent, what leadership would you provide on using evaluation to inform decision making.
19. When you leave St. Paul after 10 great years as Superintendent of St. Paul Schools, what stories will be told by people in different St. Paul communities about your time here?
20. This is a question about information technology related specifically to students but also wanting to know what strategies you think might be necessary for parents to increase their digital literacy to help their students. Tell us first the type of technology necessary for all St. Paul students to be equipped to make use of the web and also what is necessary for their parents.
21. This refers back to question 4 specifically; we have talked in St. Paul about the concept of concept of shared accountability. How would you specifically communicate to our families and students what their responsibilities and behaviors must be to ensure the kind of success wanted for the children?
22. In this new situation you may find yourself in being Superintendent where you don't get to do the fun stuff any more, where you don't have the day-to-day relationship with the teachers and students, what would you have to learn to give up and what would you take on that would be different that that would make it a fulfilling position?
23. The questions have been positioned in terms of your ideals and your plans for student achievement; however, you will be coming to a capitol city of a state that ranks 50<sup>th</sup> in percentage of graduating African American students. Expanding on your response to question 12, how would you parley your particular experience of helping students of African descent to excel academically how would you parlay that into the conversation you would have as the SPPS Superintendent with the governor, the Department of Education Commissioner and other elected leaders and how they can look at the state of school districts, particularly St. Paul, in improving that graduation rate for students of African descent?
24. One of the pieces I am interested in, as you know we have a very diverse student population and over 70% are students of color, I am interested in hearing what your thoughts are in regard to recruiting, retaining a diverse group of staff that would reflect at all levels the district student population and how would you go about working with the organization, the unions, partners to make sure this happens?
25. What would you do about succession planning and the leadership role, how can that be sustained over time?

Dr. Hopson was then offered the opportunity to make a closing statement or ask a question of the Board. He asked the Board, as a Board, what do you collectively see as some of your greatest successes and what do you envision to be some of the challenges?

The interview concluded at 8:27 p.m.

#### IV RECESS

MOTION: Ms. Carroll moved the meeting recess until 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, November 18, 2009. Motion seconded by Ms. Street-Stewart.

The motion passed with the following roll call vote:

Mr. Hardy

Yes

Ms. Kong-Thao	Yes
Mr. O'Connell	Yes
Ms. Varro	Yes
Mr. Brodrick	Yes
Ms. Street-Stewart	Yes
Ms. Carroll	Yes

The meeting recessed at 8:28 p.m.

For clarity and to facilitate research, these minutes reflect the order of the Agenda and not necessarily the time during the meeting the items were discussed.

Prepared and submitted by  
Marilyn Polsfuss  
Assistant Clerk, St. Paul Public Schools Board of Education