

**Public Statement by the Board of Education
of the East Ramapo Central School District
on the status of the Superintendent Search
March 24, 2026**

The Board of Education of the East Ramapo Central School District wishes to provide the public and community with a detailed update on the current status of the search for a new superintendent.

At its March 10, 2026 Board meeting, District Clerk Kathi Kivi shared an update on the search provided by Dr. Harold Coles, District Superintendent of the Southern Westchester BOCES (SWBOCES). The District had originally sought to use the Rockland County BOCES District Superintendent to conduct the search but the Commissioner and the State Monitors directed the District to use the resources of Dr. Coles. The Board followed that directive.

As Ms. Kivi shared, the Board followed every step of the process that Dr. Coles and SWBOCES developed. The Board identified characteristics sought of a new superintendent. The SWBOCES team met with members of the East Ramapo community to solicit input and feedback. This was shared with the Board.

Dr. Coles and his team then posted for a new superintendent. Twenty eight (28) people responded to the posting. The Board was not provided the names or information about these twenty eight candidates. Instead, the SWBOCES team, with the input of the State Monitors reviewed the applicants. From this, SWBOCES team selected twelve candidates who met the Board's expectations for a new superintendent.

On Tuesday January 22, 2026, Dr. Coles presented six (6) candidates to the State Monitors for feedback. The Monitors removed two (2) of those candidates. The remaining four (4) candidates were presented to the Board on Tuesday, January 27, 2026. From this short list, developed by Dr. Coles and the State Monitors, the Board selected three (3) for the first round of interviews on Thursday, February 26, 2026. The fourth candidate was held in reserve.

First round interviews were scheduled for Thursday February 26, 2026 with three (3) of the four (4) candidates. On the evening of February 25, 2026, one of the candidates dropped out of the search unexpectedly. Dr. Coles, working with the State Monitors and the Board added the fourth reserve candidate.

Three (3) candidates, including the newly added one were given first round interviews on Thursday, February 26, 2026. State Monitor Jallow was part of the first round interviews and State Monitor Farr attended virtually. The Board selected two (2) candidates to return with Monitor approval. The Monitors did not disapprove or object to either of the two finalists.

On Thursday March 5, 2026, the two (2) candidates participated in second round of interviews. Again, the Board and State Monitors participated in those interviews. The Board and Monitor Jallow presented suggested round two interview questions to Dr. Coles. Monitor Jallow actively

participated in round two interviews including asking questions of the candidates in those interviews.

Following this very complete process, the Board unanimously decided on a finalist. The Board was impressed with a candidate who was not only a seasoned educator with experience in a multi-cultural and diverse population school districts, she is also Latina and lives in East Ramapo. The Board felt there was no better candidate to serve the students' needs and provide the dedication and leadership our District desperately needs. The Board truly felt this was not only the best choice of candidates but an excellent choice overall. This was also a candidate the Monitors approved moving to the final stage of the process.

The Board sent its letter with its unanimous recommendation to the monitors on March 5, 2026.

In a letter dated March 13, 2026, the state monitors "*commended the work of the Board during the search process done in coordination with Southern Westchester BOCES.*" It then "*disapprove[d] ... the Board's recommendation.*" Despite being involved in every stage of the process including allowing the chosen candidate to advance to the final round, the State Monitors disapproved the Board's unanimous choice without explanation, rationale or guidance. This leaves the Board in a quandary about the criteria being applied or how future decisions will be evaluated.

Yesterday, several Board members met with the State Education Commissioner to express our concern about the Monitor decision. We explained how we followed the complete search process established by Dr. Coles and the SWBOCES. We also explained why we selected the candidate we did. Dr. Coles was at the meeting and confirmed he and the Monitors were part of the entire search and selection process. The Commissioner offered no explanation for the Monitors disapproval.

On the weekend, the Board also learned that SWBOCES reposted the superintendent vacancy. The reposting was done without the Board's knowledge, input or approval. In addition, this bypasses the Board's role in directing the search process and raises concerns about governance and communication. Applicants must respond by April 3. The Board is concerned about the timing of the repost - Good Friday, Passover and close to Easter - may limit the ability to attract a complete, representative pool of candidates.

Hiring a superintendent is the most critical responsibility that a Board of Education has. This Board carried out that responsibility diligently and in full compliance with the process established by the search consultant, SWBOCES and State Monitors. We selected a candidate approved by Dr. Coles and the Monitors only to be rejected. The Board remains committed to working collaboratively with all parties. We expect and hope for a process which is clear, accountable and aligned with the best interests of students and the community we serve.

We will continue to keep you, the public we serve, informed and aware of this process. Our hope is still to hire a qualified candidate we can rely on for the long term in time to start July 1, 2026.