

The Public Schools of Brookline
School Committee Meeting of Thursday, January 5, 2017
Superintendent Report
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Superintendent of Schools

Update on the Heath School and Runkle School Principal Searches

The postings for both the Heath School and Runkle School principal positions closed today. We received 30 applications for the Heath School position, of which twenty percent are from applicants of color. We received 33 applications for the Runkle School position, of which thirty percent are from applicants of color.

A leadership profile was developed for each position following a 3-step process. First, the faculty and families of each school were given the opportunity to provide thoughts and feedback through an online survey. Twenty-one (21) Heath staff members and 117 Heath families, and forty (40) Runkle staff and 126 Runkle families, responded to the initial online survey at each school.

During the month of December, separate in-person meetings were scheduled at each school with families and with staff. All comments and responses to questions at these meetings were recorded and, at the end of each session, parents and school staff were asked to prioritize the leadership qualities most important to them.

Information from the surveys and the in-person meetings was used to create the Runkle School and Heath School leadership profiles, both of which are attached to this report. These leadership profiles will be used by the Search Committee members as they read candidate applications and the profiles will be an important tool for the successful candidates in their work, once appointed to the principal position at either school.

The Search Committee members received all applications today and I anticipate presenting the successful candidates to the School Committee at the February 9 meeting.

School Visits

Prior to the December break, Senior Director for Elementary Teaching and Learning Lesley Ryan Miller and I observed in several middle school English classes at Lincoln School and Pierce School. Tomorrow (Friday, 1/6) we will visit several more middle school English classes, tentatively planned for Lawrence, Heath and Baker Schools. Following these visits, Lesley will begin working with grade 6-8 English teachers to facilitate the sharing of best practices, innovative ideas and student accomplishments. This sharing of practices, and the opportunity to work together across schools in the coming months, is an important part of our work to collaborate and build upon the strengths and expertise that exist within our schools.

This morning I had the opportunity to visit kindergarten, first, second and third grade classes during literacy instruction at Lincoln School. Of note was the deep level of individualized instruction within the context of the larger class. From support for developing writing skills, to the application of discrete phonics skills while reading a challenging text; from working on comprehension to building student independence - students were highly engaged in their work.

Leadership Profile for Heath School Principal Search

This Leadership Profile for the Runkle School summarizes the characteristics and issues cited most often during staff and community focus groups and surveys made available to the entire Runkle school community. More than 200 Heath staff, parents, and community members participated in a focus group or survey that were designed to gather input on two basic questions:

- What leadership strengths, characteristics, and experience are essential for Heath's next principal?
- What are the goals or school improvement needs of the Heath School that the incoming principal should be aware of?

The Principal Search Committee and School District leaders will use this Leadership Profile when vetting and interviewing candidates. Each list is organized from most frequently heard to less frequently.

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### **Leadership Characteristics and Experience:**

The Heath School Community is looking to hire a candidate who:

- Is encouraging and supportive of staff; values and respects staff and supports their wellness; asks for staff input and collaborates well.
- Is an effective communicator who has strong written and verbal communication skills.
  - Can provide detailed and clear and expectations to staff and families.
- Practices shared leadership, but can make, and stand behind, difficult decisions.
- Is approachable, transparent, and trustworthy
- Will push students and staff to be more creative and innovative to make sure our school community focuses on improving the educational outcomes of the whole child.
- Cares deeply about equity and has experience working with diverse student bodies (diversity of race, ethnicity, language, learning styles, needs).
- Demonstrates commitment towards closing the achievement gap and helping all students learn.
- Works in partnership with the entire school community and fosters collaboration among his/her staff and among his/her families.
- Has prior experience as a principal in the grade levels served by the Heath school.
- Does what they say they will; has excellent follow through

### **Primary Issues and School Improvement Needs: Heath School**

The school community identified the following needs the incoming Principal should be aware of:

- Our commitment to a diverse student and staff population that feels welcomed and included.
- Maintaining and deepening our sense of community and a sense of connection among staff and among the whole school community as we grow.
- New and innovative ideas for instruction, scheduling, and space.
- Increasing our focus on STEM education including the use of technology in the classroom.
- Higher expectations for all students and staff around academic achievement and rigorous instruction.
- A safe and supportive school environment where the needs of all students are met.
- More support for ELA/Literacy learning and instruction especially in middle school grade levels.
- Meaningful and purposeful collaboration between staff, leadership, and families.
- An emphasis on educating the whole child with a focus on increasing students' cognitive skills such as growth-mindset.

## **Leadership Profile for Runkle School Principal Search**

This Leadership Profile for the Runkle School summarizes the characteristics and issues cited most often during staff and community focus groups and surveys made available to the entire Runkle school community. More than 200 Runkle staff, parents, and community members participated in a focus group or survey that were designed to gather input on two basic questions:

- What leadership strengths, characteristics, and experience are essential for Runkle’s next principal?
- What are the goals or school improvement needs of the Runkle School that the incoming principal should be aware of?

The Principal Search Committee and School District leaders will use this Leadership Profile when vetting and interviewing candidates. Each list is organized from most frequently heard to less frequently.



### **Leadership Characteristics and Experience:**

The Runkle School Community is looking to hire a candidate who:

- Is encouraging and supportive of all staff, values and respects staff experience, and asks for staff input.
- Works in partnership with the entire school community and fosters collaboration among his/her staff.
- Can balance competing priorities and constituencies. Someone who makes necessary but difficult decisions, communicates their thinking and rationale, stands firm in those decisions, and sets appropriate boundaries.
- Has instructional experience in the K-8 environment especially in understanding the developmental needs of children as they change over the span of K-8.
- Is a reflective listener and strong communicator who regularly interacts with (and responds to) staff and parents.
- Will push students and staff to be more creative and innovative to create a school focused on more rigorous academics as well as the whole child.
- Has experience in and understanding of Special Education instruction and regulations in order to support the expanding RISE program and differing needs of students and families.
- Cares deeply about equity and has experience working with diverse student bodies (diversity of race, ethnicity, language, learning styles, needs)
- Has a clear vision for our school that aligns with district goals and priorities as well as school and student needs/challenges. Commitment to the school for the long hall is a priority.

Runkle School: Leadership Characteristics and Experience (continued)

- Is approachable, supportive, and trustworthy
  - Will support staff in further developing their craft
  - Is open-minded with staff and families
  - Builds trust with the school community

**Primary Issues and School Improvement Needs**

The school community identified the following needs the incoming Principal should be aware of:

- Need a creative approach to scheduling that takes into account necessary instructional criteria, diverse needs of students, and intentional staff collaboration
- Higher expectations for students and staff around academic achievement and rigorous instruction.
- The school has a sought after Special Education program (RISE) that continues to expand and is deeply valued by the school community
- Continue to build a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment for all students, staff and families that celebrates our diversity.
- More professional development and support for teachers; especially those working in specialized programming.
- More holistic skill building and extracurricular opportunities for students.
- Meaningful and purposeful collaboration between staff including teacher teams, instructional blocks, and vertical alignment.
  - Meaningful and purposeful collaboration should also be increased among staff and families.
- Creating a strong inclusion and Response to Intervention (RTI) model.
- Address increasing enrollment and continue to support small class sizes