

Minutes for Board of Education Special Meeting  
April 7, 2009  
6:30 pm  
Berlin Central Junior Senior High School Media Center

Meeting called to order by Vice President, Tom Morelli at 6:31  
Julie Darling appointed recorder for the meeting

Present: Julie Darling, Donald French, Elizabeth Miller, Thomas Morelli, and Beverly Stewart  
Absent: Frank Zwack, Jeffrey Paine  
Guest : Dr. Vincent J. Coppola, Ed. D.  
Spectators: Mrs. Patrice Nash, Mrs. Madonna Roy

The purpose for tonight's meeting as stated by Mr. Morelli was to listen to a presentation from consultant, Vincent J. Coppola, Ed.D., representing the Superintendent Search Firm, Western New York Educational Service Council .

Mr. Morelli asked each member present to state their expectations for the meeting:

- Hear presentation on superintendent search, compare firms, and move forward with the process
- Listen to Dr. Coppola's presentation
- Hear presentation, compare firms and move the process for replacing the Superintendent search forward
- straight interview of Dr. Coppola, no action to be taken tonight

Mr. Morelli announced that comments or questions would be invited from the spectators at the end of Dr. Coppola's presentation.

**6:34 Overview of presentation by Dr. Coppola**

**Shrinking pool of applicants: 10 yrs ago 70/80      recent 14/29,30  
numbers vary based on salary and location  
takes work to attract applicants**

**Dr. Coppola has completed about 70 searches in past 10+ years**

**Brittonkill, last year (attracted 29 candidates, unusually high),  
South Colonie and Shen in past**

**over 95% of placements still there or retired happily from job**

**No one dismissed/sent home, etc. due to shocking revelations**

**1 incidence of no renewal in 3<sup>rd</sup> year ( tried to do too much to soon, union  
had 2 years without contract)- Vince expressed concern about this 1 case**

**Dr. Coppola worked with Dr. Robert Heller, University of Buffalo, well known across the  
state from 1966-1998, continued his process. Draws candidates from across the state and  
outside of New York State.**

## Data from New York State Council of School Superintendents

03-06 pool of candidates is smaller,  
fewer have doctoral degree,  
57% intend to retire within 5 years  
fewer younger administrators choosing Superintendent's route  
satisfied in 2<sup>nd</sup> chair, pain of 1<sup>st</sup> chair not worth it  
Average age of Superintendents is 48.5 yrs, retiring at 59.3 yrs  
Average length of career 10.9 years as Superintendent's  
45% of veterans have doctoral degree, 33% now  
number of women increasing

### Of those chosen:

65% from outside district, 35% within  
average tenure is 5.5 years  
smaller, rural schools are often used as stepping stone  
5-6 or more years are possible ,depending on treatment  
This area has pleasant locale: near Boston, NYC, Saratoga,  
adjacent to Massachusetts, Vt., Conn, which might be of interest to those who wish to  
continue working beyond their own retirement system

Contracts must be no less than 3 years and no more than 5 years-could be 3,4 or 5

Dr. Coppola emphasized the importance of getting it right the first time , since  
buy out is a critical drawback

Crucial and essential to do all background checks

First question Dr. Coppola asks: "Is there anything in your personal or professional life that will  
embarrass me ( and you) because I *will* find out".

### Review of Packet:

White schedule sheet correction change April 22, last bullet April 23  
Brochure of Brittonkill represents sample of what would be prepared for Berlin Central  
Pink sheet: Presentation Outline for the Berlin Central School District  
firm is housed at the University of Buffalo, not affiliated with it  
expect frequent communications through the President of the Board to be  
distributed to all

Dr. Coppola emphasized: the value of well developed interpersonal skills,  
ability to create common interest.  
track record as more important than “schmooze” ability  
a match of cultures is important( example: candidate from NYC or Long  
Island may not match culture of Berlin Central)  
impeccable integrity  
advocate for children  
willing to take a bit of a risk

Expect 4 face to face meetings with the Board and Dr. Coppola, unless Focus groups are used

Focus groups used less frequently for whole process; can be utilized to start search: rate and rank 20  
characteristics -positive things, negatives, skills necessary. Data with compilation of scores and  
unedited comments will be basis for qualities of candidate ( see blue sheet in packet)  
Focus groups chosen in many ways: invitation to community to meet with Dr. Coppola, 2 reps from  
each constituency, mix of all constituencies

Salary range varies by region and size: Fairport, Warwick \$175,000-\$190,000; Brittonkill up to  
\$150,000 (29 responded)

Small size could be positive: less stress than larger district,manageable staff size, and population;  
could be good fit for first time superintendent.

Smaller district with lower salary might be of interest to out of state retired

*“Good Leader will get good results”*

**Read: Why Searches Go Wrong**

See yellow sheet for additional services

Purple sheet shows examples of advertising options

NYS Councilgram

AASA \$449.

website for neighboring states

Q and A followed presentation

Don: Is there much interest from out of state?

1/3 of candidates come from out of state

interim situation, 65 and over can earn- in NYS must wait before returning to own district

choose jobs usually within commuting distance

Liz: Give us 3 good reasons why we shouldn't go with BOCES, where we will save money?

1. BOCES Superintendent has full time job, search is an extra assignment. As CEO of district and pay in 6 figure salary ,BOCES Superintendent is busy. We need someone who devotes full time on Berlin's needs.
2. Dr. Coppola can recruit all across the state and out of state, BOCES is restricted to their own region.
3. After candidate is hired, Dr. Coppola has no more relationship with him/her. BOCES will have a relationship with the candidate.. Their job is to sell services- Questar will want the new Superintendent to support their programs. Who will new Superintendent be beholding to,who will allegiance be expected of?

Tom: What would be your guideline for characteristics of successful performance?

Recruit and hire best people they can find,  
Proven track record to improve performance  
Put energies up front in selection process  
Someone who will review report card, budgets,etc. Take time and then make plan  
"Inspector Clouseau" ability to investigate needs of district  
Setting specific goals and objectives and set benchmarks  
[move teachers if needed]  
Reports progress to all  
Celebrates successes  
Sees one school system PreK-12 with everyone rowing in the same direction

Beverly: How many searches are ongoing at one time?

Medina, 1900 students until April 30; Warwick until June 17; and Berlin, if chosen, so there would be 2 or 3

Liz: Do you find people coming only from the local area?

No set pattern, general area wide-western, central, northern NY, southern tier, Mass.  
Border opportunities here, manageable size is also asset.  
Dr. Coppola showed awareness of "closing" issue, stating "...there is no Shangrila", each district has its own issues

Bev: If you go to process and none of candidates are adequate, is there additional fee?

Only travel expense-\$.55/mile,advertising

Will you re-recruit your candidate away from Berlin? No, only above board negotiations when a district and candidate agree that it is not a good match.

Julie:In your view,what gives a BOE a negative label?

Meetings last more than 3 hours  
Members have shorter terms  
Doesn't have clarity of purpose  
Language and civil tone  
What a board does affects the atmosphere

Not potted plants, right to ask questions, but do it in respectful way

Improve communication by inviting NYSSBA or other to give workshop,create a code of conduct , sign a contract of behavior

There were no questions from the public.

Dr. Coppola thanked the group for their time. He suggested that further questions be submitted to Beverly Stewart to be forwarded to him.

Discussion proceeded on whether to choose between QUESTAR or hiring an external search firm tonight.

Bev.- Decision tonight; Don and Tom-ready to vote now; Julie-not sure, but leaning toward making the decision now; Liz-needs time, rather not choose tonight, very impressed with Dr. Coppola, try Questar first, \$15,000 is not huge but does but things, use Questar then go to outside firm; Tom: Value of independence and transparency is high, history of the district to date, placing resource on most important decision is worth it; capture more contemporary aspects of outside candidates.

It was moved by Beverly Stewart and seconded by Don French that the Berlin Central School District hire an external firm to conduct a Superintendent's Search. Group identified pros and cons to each.

The vote: Yes 4 ( Tom, Don, Beverly, Julie) No 1 (Liz) Absent 2 (Frank, Jeff)  
to hire an external firm to conduct a Superintendent's Search.

Bev moved and Don seconded a motion for the Berlin Central School District to hire Western New York Educational Service Council, represented by Dr. Vincent Coppola.

Discussion and comparison of the firms followed.

The vote: Yes 5 (Don, Tom, Bev, Julie, Liz) No 0 Absent 2 ( Frank, Jeff)

Executive Session was requested for a personnel matter

Short discussion followed about the need for another budget hearing, that questions still exist, that decisions have not yet been finalized.

Don moved and Beverly seconded a motion to go into executive session.

8:47 Tom moved to open exec session for personnel matter, Bev seconded

9:30 Bev moved and Don seconded out of executive session

It was moved by Bev that " the term date for the current Superintendent would be June 30, 2009, that the Board appoint one of current administrators as acting Superintendent for the summer. The savings would cover the cost of the superintendent's search. If at the end of the summer the search is not complete, the BOE could have one of the administrators fill the spot or hire an interim for a short period of time. It is further moved that from today forward, the current interim strictly run the day to day operations of the district and no more. This day to day operation to be defined by the Board of Education.

Seconded by Don French

The Vote: Yes 4 ( Tom, Bev, Don, Julie) No 1 (Liz) Absent 2 (Frank, Jeff)

Liz moved to adjourn, second by Beverly

The vote: Yes 5 No 0 Absent 2