

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
March 19, 2020
Large Group Instruction Room, Bedford High School

*** Due to the Covid-19 Crisis, this meeting is live streamed and open to conference call with the public in order to adhere with social distancing measures put in place by Governor Baker.*

1. Call to Order

At 7:35 p.m., Ms. Santiago called to order the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. All members of the School Committee were present. There were no student representatives this evening.

2. Comments from Public

None

3. Superintendent Finalist Interviews

An interview of Superintendent finalist Dr. Frank Hackett, Superintendent of Braintree Public Schools was conducted by the School Committee.

Ms. Santiago began the interview by outlining the process to the candidate. She said that there is a total of 90 minutes allotted to each candidate for the interview, which meant that there is about five to six minutes time allowance for each question. The interview questions were provided in advance to each finalist. Each member of the School Committee took turns asking his or her assigned questions to Dr. Hackett.

Ms. Santiago then gave Dr. Hackett the opportunity for an opening statement and to tell the School Committee about himself and why he would like to become the next Superintendent of Bedford Public Schools.

Dr. Hackett began by thanking the School Committee for having him. Dr. Hackett told the School Committee that he is currently in his fifth year as Superintendent of Braintree Public Schools and prior to that, he had been the Superintendent of Schools for Pembroke Public Schools for eight years. He said he was originally from Maine and he comes from a family of educators. Dr. Hackett said that his decision to choose a career in education was due to his experience coaching kids in basketball and soccer while he was in college; that was when he decided that he would like to work with kids.

Before Dr. Hackett came to Massachusetts, he worked as a teacher and then a principal in a small district in Rockport, Maine. He said he had an opportunity to work with a wide range of students in such a rural setting, which included many student who were financially disadvantaged.

Dr. Hackett said that in some of his experience includes redistricting, restructuring and construction/building projects.

The School Committee began their interview questions.

Ms. Santiago: What do you see as the most important roles of a superintendent in a town like Bedford?

Dr. Hackett said that the position of Superintendent is similar to a quasi-mayor position because it is a team environment. Dr. Hackett mentioned the importance of being fiscally responsible, attending community events and being a leader of a town department that families and the community must depend on.

Mr. Brosgol: Tell us about an encouraging education innovation that you are aware of. Why is it innovative, what value could it bring to the Bedford public schools and what steps would you take to implement it?

Dr. Hackett talked about when he lived in Maine and he was part of the Superintendent's task force for technology implementation where he worked with a team to ensure that each student would have a laptop for learning. Dr. Hackett believes that conditions should be created for innovation, to bring people to the table to help form great ideas, spur thoughtful, creative thinking and support the greater mission in which the focus is how to best help and inspire students.

Mr. Morrison: What is your understanding of the role of the school committee? What do you see as the most important element of a strong and successful relationship with the board? In addition, how might you address some of the areas where the role of school committee and the authority of the school committee are blurred?

Dr. Hackett said that he sees himself as part of a team with the School Committee and believes working hand in hand is essential. He also believes that a high functioning School Committee working with the Superintendent is able to accomplish such things as policy and budget as well as make a difference in the lives of the students and the community. Dr. Hackett talked about his experience in Maine where the School Committee was involved in hiring staff and he believes that this should be a responsibility of the Superintendent's office and at school level. He said that he believes that transparency is important for both the School Committee and the Superintendent.

Ms. Scoville: What role would you envision playing in the hiring and retention of teachers, specialists, school administrators and the central office personnel? What are the questions you ask of candidates you interview?

Dr. Hackett said that choosing the people you hire is one of the most important things that you do especially for positions working directly with students. He said that you must make sure that central office has the right people in those roles to work as a team and that they feel supported. Dr. Hackett believes principals are in a critical position to hire the right candidate with the right fit because it has impact on the entire school. His opportunities in the past as a principal gave him the choice to make good selections and to find the right person for each job and that you must be deliberate on how you go after a candidate.

Ms. Santiago had a follow up question: Can you tell me about your perspective on how you would balance principal autonomy with district leadership?

Dr. Hackett said that Massachusetts has been a challenge for him. He reflected on his experience at Pembroke Public Schools. He talked about two boroughs of Pembroke, which had elementary schools and some distinct differences from the other parts of the community. Dr. Hackett talked about how they brought these students from each of the areas together so that they shared a similar experience once at the middle school. He talked about how the kids were brought together as a whole without diminishing their individuality. Dr. Hackett feels strongly on teacher/leadership roles and believes in creating opportunities for staff to grow and that kids should share similar experiences.

Ms. Santiago: Have you ever developed or assisted with the development of a complete school budget? Are you familiar with how the funding formula for the Commonwealth works, including Circuit Breaker and Chapter 70 local funding? What do you know about how Bedford receives funding for education of Hanscom Air Force Base students?

Dr. Hackett spoke of his twenty years' experience with budgeting. He said that he is very familiar with Impact Aid and the formula to determine the cost per pupil. Dr. Hackett also said that he has also worked with Chapter 70. He went on to say that, Circuit Breaker is key for Braintree and finds it critical to be familiar. Dr. Hackett said that he believes in inclusion and that he prefers to keep students with special needs, in the community, in the schools and in the district. Dr. Hackett said that he uses insight and enrollment projections well enough in advance to help forecast upcoming budgets. Some of his experience includes construction budgets for increased space for students, which at one time he saw a 10% increase in growth. Dr. Hackett feels that it is an important part of the strategic plan and one should budget responsibly.

Mr. Morrison: How have you used data to inform your decisions? Please explain to what extent data can be relied upon in contrast to other factors that should be considered in assessing student performance, administrator performance and overall district success and strategic and budget planning.

Dr. Hackett mentioned that he had a lot of experience with data. He said that he created a database for the schools when he worked in Maine to track things such as student performance and local comprehensive assessments. Dr. Hackett said that he assessed the curriculum and not just the MCAS. He believes data creates validity and believes assessment data is important but can be limited. He also finds that MCAS data does not necessarily show data on individual student performance. Dr. Hackett believes that data is important for the school system but it is also to reassure individual student performance.

Ms. Scoville: Bedford Public Schools have made a significant commitment to implementing a co-teaching model at all schools within the district. What experiences and understanding do you have with co-teaching, specifically in the areas of staff training, implementation and evaluation of its effectiveness in the classroom?

Dr. Hackett finds the co-teaching model is a great resource to students. He thinks that two professionals in the room is a benefit to the student and that math and literacy co-teaching is

very important. Dr. Hackett says that he loves the peer-to-peer, colleague to colleague sharing practices and finds it effective instruction.

Mr. Brosgol: What are some recent or emerging curricular innovations that excite you? Explain what they are and how they would improve student successes. What do you think about when you assess the need or likelihood of changing or updating curricula?

Dr. Hackett finds curriculum renewal refreshing and feels that it should be ongoing. He believes when the state makes changes in standards, we have an obligation to change our curriculum to reflect those standards and he believes that is a driver. Dr. Hackett believes that classroom teachers should be involved in developing the curriculum especially because it is developed as a part of units of instruction. He believes that it is important to have a common set of standards and measuring these standards should be handled locally at the school level versus the state level. Dr. Hackett believes that curriculum development and renewal should be a local process with teachers and administrators.

Mr. Brosgol: Discuss your success in improving test scores for all learners including high-performing students and subgroups at either high school or elementary school level?

Dr. Hackett said that it depends on the data and that he noticed some gaps in Bedford that quite a lot of communities are struggling with as well. He believes we have to be mindful of results especially when the results do not seem to change. Dr. Hackett believes that we need to determine what is important first and that should be defined by the school system as well as understanding the environment that you are working in. He says that the first discussion would be what is valued, what we are doing with the data and that we must look at each assessment portfolio.

Ms. Guay: A very large percentage of Bedford High School graduates go on to attend college. There are, however, a number of students who do not plan to attend college and are interested in beginning work after graduation. How should the district curriculum be split between college prep and vocational programs?

Dr. Hackett believes that every student should have an option. He agrees that college is not for everyone and that students should have time to recognize whether college is for them rather than try to help them go into their chosen direction instead of continuing to prepare them for college if it is not their choice. Dr. Hackett believes students should be prepared and be ready for the path that they choose. He believes in student engagement in vocational courses. Dr. Hackett spoke about his work with the MTA to try to increase AP involvement with students and that it should be fair for all students.

Mr. Morrison: Our town's educational priorities include equity, social emotional support for student, and quality in district special education programming. How might you deliver on these priorities to three distinct student populations?

Dr. Hackett believes that all of these priorities are the most important priorities. He talked about his work giving new life to the METCO program in Braintree, which was not doing very well when he arrived to that district. Dr. Hackett appreciates the sacrifices that the METCO students make each day by getting up earlier and working later in the day than most students do. He

believes in cultural acceptance and promoting an environment that supports the students, their culture and who they are as individuals. Dr. Hackett also said that he finds that special needs students are also a top priority saying that schools should be inclusive of all students and all students should have the support that they need no matter who they are, what their needs are or where they come from.

Mr. Morrison: What might be your involvement with community relations, how would you form community relationships and visibility?

Dr. Hackett responded by saying that he planned to immerse himself into community events and that he would socialize in large and small group settings with parents and the community to maintain visibility, he believes smaller group settings have a larger impact. He said that he believes that the Superintendent's position is a connection point and a reflection of what the school system is all about.

Ms. Guay: What is your experience advocating for education resources at the town, state or federal level?

Dr. Hackett said that advocacy must be sincere; sometimes it is a matter of there is only so much money in the budget. He believes that it is important to be credible and to earn trust. Relationships are important and you must mean what you say. He talked about an example where there was a surplus at the end of the year in his district and funds were given back to the town. Dr. Hackett said that by returning the funds, he was building credibility so that if the need to advocate for more funds arose in the future, the town may be more willing to agree.

Ms. Santiago: How will you go about deciding on a snow day? A 45-second answer will suffice.

Dr. Hackett knows that there are many factors involved in making a snow day decision. He would not jeopardize the safety of the staff or the students and he would make that decision after consulting with the town's DPW as well as other town agencies. Dr. Hackett said that it all comes down to the conditions on that particular day.

Ms. Santiago: Each morning, almost 2700 students arrive at one of our four schools to learn. Some walk, some drive their own cars, others ride a bicycle, or are dropped off by their parents. Many students arrive by bus, coming from Bedford, Boston or Hanscom Air Force Base. Some of our students are from families that have lived in town for three generations, others have moved here from other states and other countries. Some of our students have private tutors to help with schoolwork, while close to nine percent are economically disadvantaged. Sixteen point six percent are on IEPs, eighteen percent of our students' first language is not English and close to seven percent are English Language Learners. Finally, some of our students' educational needs are so complex that they require an out of district placement. What are your experiences working with families with different needs and expectations regarding public education? What have you learned from your experience and how would you make those experiences work for you in Bedford?

Dr. Hackett stated that diverse communities are more than common than ever at this time. He said that he has dealt with families who have lived in Braintree for many generations and over time, many diverse families have moved there and that Braintree is very inclusive. Dr. Hackett

said that it is important to make all schools welcoming. He mentioned that he worked with roughly fifty families from Puerto Rico that were affected by Hurricane Maria. Dr. Hackett ensured translation was available when necessary and that there was help for the families so that they could navigate through the school system, technology for students was provided to students as well as support for academic and emotional needs.

Ms. Guay: What is your view of the role of dissent, disagreement and even conflict in the leadership of a school department? Can you tell us about a situation where you intervened to address conflict and what was the outcome? What did you learn from it?

Dr. Hackett started by saying that there should be a level of civility among the leadership team and he believes in an environment for respectful disagreement. Staff should be role models for students and for the community. Dr. Hackett said that dissent and disagreement are healthy and can be a learning experience where staff members can share new ideas.

Ms. Scoville: What is your experience working with School Resource Officers? What are your thoughts on the role of restorative justice in the school setting and how it impacts school discipline?

Dr. Hackett talked of his experience working with an exceptional Resource Officers. He believes the RO relationship with students includes meeting with students, building a rapport and getting to know them. Dr. Hackett believes the perception of the RO should be as helpful, part of the community, viewed in a positive way and respectful of the culture of the community.

Dr. Hackett said that he has not had a lot of experience with restorative justice but has seen it in action and thinks it is a great opportunity to engage students in reflecting on their actions.

As the interview ended, the School Committee gave the Dr. Hackett an opportunity to ask questions of the School Committee and then was given an opportunity to give his closing remarks.

Dr. Hackett's first question asked the School Committee what they are most proud of in Bedford.

Mr. Brosgol mentioned that Bedford is still a small town and the kids come first. He is proud that the Town and Schools work together in support of the students, leadership and the faculty.

Mr. Morrison agreed with Mr. Brosgol and stated that he believes that this is because Bedford has real, sincere values.

Ms. Guay said that she is proud because the community is committed to public education. She mentioned that although Bedford has resources, the Town does not spend extravagantly. Ms. Guay went on to say she likes that the town responds and reacts to challenges and that the School Committee itself brings different strengths to the table.

Ms. Scoville agrees with everything said by the other School Committee members. She said that she believes that Bedford is a well-run town and that it is great that different committees work towards common goals. She enjoys the small town feel.

Ms. Santiago is proud of the holistic wellness of students. She likes that Bedford's focus is on the whole student, and not only the academics and that everyone works together and does their best.

Dr. Hackett then gave his closing statement. He stated that he appreciates being invited, having this conversation and he feels confident in his abilities. Dr. Hackett talked about his experience dealing with crises, town finance committees and emergencies. He said that he has learned from them all. Dr. Hackett told the School Committee that he feels good about being here in Bedford and commented on how well the School Committee worked together saying that they asked good questions and that they are diversified and thoughtful. He thanked the School Committee and commented that they had done a great job accommodating the situation.

The School Committee thanked Dr. Hackett.

Ms. Santiago thanked Dr. Hackett and said that she appreciates his flexibility during the state emergency, and thanked him for his continued interest.

Ms. Santiago also went on to thank Bedford Cable Access Television for their amazing help and flexibility.

5. Adjournment

Ms. Santiago made the following motion:

MOVED: Motion to adjourn into Executive Session for the purpose of Contract Negotiations with the Bedford Education Association at 9:10 p.m., not to reopen.


MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Brosgol

MOTION APPROVED 5-0-0

Mr. Brosgol	Yes
Ms. Santiago	Yes
Ms. Scoville	Yes
Ms. Guay	Yes
Mr. Morrison	Yes



School Committee Secretary



Date