April 15, 2019

Members of the School Board
Indianapolis Public Schools
120 E. Walnut St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Honorable members of the IPS School Board:

Attached to this letter you will find a thematic summary of the feedback provided during the three open forums and responses shared through the IPS online portal from late March to early April. Offered for further consideration and deliberation, a draft of a leadership profile for the superintendent is also included.

The key point of the review and summary of the community input is that "context matters." Based on the community feedback, the next leader of the district will need to possess particular leadership characteristics, provide leadership to the urban educational ecosystem of IPS and its students for the long-term, foster a culture of inclusivity, listen to the needs of the community, and operate in transparent, data-driven, equity-based decision-making processes across all of the school typologies within the district among other preferred requirements.

The structure of the report will hopefully add to your discussion and deliberation on the next steps in the selection of the next superintendent of IPS. Following our commitment to urban education and community engagement, the IU School of Education at IUPUI is honored to assist IPS in this search and will continue supporting the district and the Indianapolis community through its research, instruction, and engagement.

Sincerely,

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Success for the superintendent will be determined by how well that district leader shares with others, communicates, and builds relationships. Credibility will be determined by honesty and integrity, knowledge of the education system (putting research into practice) and decision-making abilities (fairness and competence). Managerial skills will be determined by the ability to utilize resources to their fullest potential (getting the most out of the taxpayer's dollars) and employee relations. In essence, these skills can be called the four h's: hustle, heart, humor, and humility. (Roberts, Hanna & Womack, 2012, p. 3).

Introduction

Context matters. IPS's current district and community operational environment require a superintendent with a unique skill set. Stakeholder expectations, programmatic initiatives, limited capital and fiscal resources, and personnel leadership all present a complex set of challenges and opportunities in educating the students of IPS. Just because a superintendent was an effective leader in one context; however "effective" is defined, it does not mean that that same superintendent could be equally effective in any other district." (Roegman, 2017). This leadership profile report aims to contribute to the deliberation of the selection process of the next superintendent as the School Boards seeks candidates that can serve the unique community context of IPS.

On February 27th, March 7th and March 13th, community feedback sessions were held at the Hawthorne Community Center, Arsenal Tech High School, and George Washington Carver High School. The first community feedback session at the Hawthorne Community Center was held at noon. The other two took place in the evening to accommodate stakeholder work schedules. In total, 346 community members participated in the superintendent feedback process. Exactly 251 attended all three sessions with some individuals attending more than one. In addition to the community forums, 95 community members were able to share written feedback through the IPS online portal. Community members were asked to respond to five questions. They were the following, with the last question serving as a catch-all for any missing elements that may not have been captured in the previous four questions:

- What is going well in IPS? (Question 1)
- What are the greatest challenges facing IPS going forward? (Question 2)
- What qualifications/traits/characteristics would you like to see in the next IPS superintendent? (Question 3)
- What should the next leader of IPS focus on? (Question 4)

- Anything else the Board of School Commissioners should consider when selecting the next superintendent of Indianapolis Public Schools? (Question 5)

The intent of this report is to provide an accurate and coherent record of the comments shared during the three feedback sessions and the comments collected from the IPS online portal and to serve as a resource for the School Board's deliberations in selecting the new IPS superintendent. The comments are neither prioritized nor rated in the report. Instead they are presented as a structured synthesis of the comments, using a qualitative content analysis and emergent theme process (Kolbacher, 2006). To ensure an objective representation of the documented feedback and commentary, the *NVIVO* software package designed for qualitative data analysis was used for theme identification and word count.

The report is organized into the following sections:

- brief discussion of the statutory requirements for the IPS
- feedback from the first stakeholder feedback question addressing the positive attributes of IPS
- feedback from the second stakeholder feedback question concerning community sentiment on the challenges IPS currently faces
- community sentiment on the preferred qualifications for next IPS superintendent
- a working draft superintendent job description to be used by the School Board as a starting point and guide to facilitate the discussions needed to initiate the search process.

Statutory requirements for the IPS superintendent
The Indiana Code lays out statutory requirements for IPS (IC 20-25). Specifically, Sections 9 and 10 are the only statutory provisions related to the superintendency. These sections state that a superintendent must be appointed when a vacancy occurs and such person may not be appointed for a period longer than four (4) years. The superintendent acts as the general administrator for IPA and makes recommendations to the board upon which the board will act. The superintendent must attend all board meetings, implement board orders, and make decisions and perform duties as prescribed by law or is reasonable within the power and jurisdiction of the superintendent.

The Indiana Code does not prescribe any other requirements for the hiring of the IPS superintendent.

Positive Attributes in IPS (Question 1)
 "What is going well in IPS?"

The feedback obtained from the community forums fell into the themes of *engagement, school typology, organizational framing, leadership, curriculum and honorable mention* (that captures smaller scale attributes).

Engagement. Community engagement was one of the most recurring themes throughout the feedback sessions. The word "community" appearing 15 times in responses to the question of what was going well in IPS. Parental/family engagement and IPS as partnership-oriented ("partnership" or "partnerships" repeated 9 times) were additional elements of engagement that appeared in the feedback session comments.

School typology. Community feedback in general demonstrated an awareness of the different types of schools (e.g., traditional, magnets, charter, innovation schools). Furthermore, schools were mentioned by name during the feedback sessions. "Innovation" or its word variant appeared in feedback 29 times during feedback discussions although it is important to note that the use of the term was not always associated with a particular type of school. Strong elementary schools and unique models of schools were also mentioned as positive features of IPS.

Organization framing. "Autonomy" appeared to be one of the more dominant categories in community feedback, occurring 16 times throughout community comments. However, it was used in commentary concerning all types of schools, and not a particular school type. Additionally, "choice" occurred as another repeated category in this theme, appearing 19 times throughout the comments made.

Leadership. Many comments were made about the attributes of leadership. Transparency was mentioned 6 times. As mentioned previously, a word variant of "innovative" occurred 29 times, and promoting "collaboration" was identified 6 times. Other notable comments referred to adaptability, continuity, and the use of research-proven methods.

Curriculum. There were many comments about the curriculum of IPS, addressing it in terms of strengths and recognizing the contributions of special education, the variety of programming offered by the district, high school tracks, college and career pathways, and use of technology.

Honorable mentions. Community feedback listed many attributes of IPS that fit in a human resources category, recognizing the committed and friendly teachers and staff within the district. Challenges, such as teacher pay and teacher retention, were also mentioned. Additionally, the feedback commentaries addressed issues of finance, quality and access. Two comments referred to the recent referendum and sustainability of the district. With quality, a handful of comments referred to the positive reputation of some schools.

Portal responses on positive attributes at IPS
From February 27th to April 1st, IPS received 96 email responses on their online portal. Respondents could leave feedback with their names and emails as their only identifiers. Their feedback aligns with the themes of *organizational framing, safety, graduation, access types of schools, diversity, leadership, engagement, curriculum and human resources*. However, it did not include direct references to *finance, communication,* or *sports and activities.*

Greatest challenges (Question 2)

"What are the greatest challenges facing IPS going forward?"
Equity. Challenges involving equity (5 direct mentions) appeared to be the categories shaping this theme. The frequency of the related mentions manifested itself in comments drawing a link between race, success, resources, support, and discipline. Some of the terms used were "achievement gap" or "opportunity gap" ("gap" mentioned 5 times). In addition, the needs of particular populations arose when discussing the needs of immigrant students and Latino families. Support for non-English speakers was mentioned as a community issue. Observations on segregation of schools and the impact of gentrification were also mentioned as community issues.

Resource management. Issues involving resource management constituted another pronounced theme when asked about challenges. There were different comments relating directly to teacher recruitment, licensure, raises, development, shortages, and burn-out ("teacher" appeared 29 times in comments). However, there were similar concerns expressed about the recruitment and retention of quality staff in general and administration as well. Transportation was a manifest category ("transportation" appeared 13 times in the session feedback) within this theme, although there were no additional information for most of the references. Finally, finance appeared in comments, with concerns about budgetary transparency and the need for increased expenditures for supplies and deferred maintenance, but also in respect to the sources of revenue related to state level funding.

Quality. There were many comments that focused on issues of quality, ranging from observations of what success should look like to which issues of academic outcomes should be alarming (e.g., passage rates in high school tests, ISTEPS scores, math/ELA in the 10th grade). There were some calls to address overcrowded schools, to improve neighborhood schools, to develop better pathways to career or college, or to enhance the overall high school experience.

Curriculum. There were concerns about high school preparation, the maintenance of 20th Century academic preparation in the 21st Century, a lack of focus on soft skills, neglect of the arts, and a call for more attention to after-school activities.

Leadership. Budgetary transparency, unity among the schools, strategic planning for the district, the development of internal systems, the establishment of a vision for the four high schools, the improvement of the district culture, and an assessment of the weaknesses of the district occurred in the commentary focused on leadership needs. Additional comments indicated that there is hope the new superintendent can provide some stability in a role that has experienced turnover. A desire for the new superintendent to fashion a consistent message on what makes IPS great in the community and across the state was expressed.

Negotiating educational typologies. Feedback in this category was mixed. Comments ranged from anywhere from the need to support neighborhood schools to the development of a vision for IPS high schools to a district moratorium on partnerships with charter schools. In addition, there were concerns expressed about the needs of secondary schools, community-based schools, the adoption of a business model for schools, and the need for more equity in the availability of choice, although the word "choice" has several contextual meanings.

Honorable mentions. There were comments referring to enrollment of IPS schools (e.g., population decrease, largeness of IPS, etc.), and mental health support (e.g., "trauma" mentioned directly 7 times, variant references to the word, "psychological", mentioned 4 times). Additionally, issues with engagement appeared and ranged from concerns about parental engagement by the district to engagement across the board with governmental agencies (e.g., mayor's office, state legislature, etc.). Lastly, safety was a less profound category, with concerns raised about overall security in the schools, the need to lower violence in the community, and the physical atmosphere of some of the district buildings.

Portal responses on greatest challenges at IPS
The comments left on the portal mirrored what was shared during the community feedback sessions. The themes of *equity, resource management, quality, curriculum, leadership,* and *negotiating educational typologies* all appeared in the comments left on the IPS portal. In addition, there were comments related to *engagement, mental health support,* and *safety*.

Desired attributes for the next IPS Superintendent (Question 3)
"What qualifications/traits/characteristics would you like to see in the next IPS superintendent? " (see Figure 1)
Experience. The word "experience" was mentioned 27 times during the responses concerning qualifications/traits/characteristics. Other responses were more detailed in their description, articulating that the ideal candidate should have a record of success, urban education experience, and expertise in urban education environments. Particular comments identified experience in teaching, business, or social work environments as important. Lastly, there were five references expressing a preference for the superintendent to have a license, but two of these

references provided an option of an individual working toward a license (e.g., "Has a superintendent license and/or path toward superintendent [license]" and "license or moving toward").

Community connections. Many of the comments indicated that the ideal candidate would be open to engagement with all of the district's stakeholders of the Indy community whether it be community groups, institutions of faith, or the rich depth of diversity in the city's population. The work "community" appeared 36 times and "partnership" 6 times when feedback groups provided their comments. One particular trait that appeared either directly ("local" mentioned 6 times) or indirectly is that the ideal candidate should be a local person from Indianapolis.

Leadership traits. The feedback session groups provided a comprehensive picture of traits that were desired in the next superintendent with some strong sub-themes ("open" occurred 10 times throughout written comments, "innovative" 6 times, "communicator" 6 times, "vision" 6 times). In addition, other traits referenced for the next superintendent included the ability to be entrepreneurial, a listener, a collaborator, and committed to a long-term strategic plan. As in the responses to the other questions, transparency was expressed as a desired trait for the new superintendent.

Inclusivity. Participants expressed that its rich diversity makes Indianapolis special, and several comments made it clear that, because of its diversity, inclusivity was necessary. Many comments were made about the needs of the city's different ethnic cultures including the needs of undocumented families and specific growing ethnic populations like the Burmese and Latinx communities.

Holistic perspective. As was shared earlier in this feedback summary paper, Indianapolis Public Schools include a variety of educational institutions and programs, some of which have specialized needs related to curriculum, staff and students. There were many voices expressing concern about equity in resources and supports for some schools over others (e.g., charters, innovation, traditional schools). One comment included the expression of "fair to all schools" while another asked for a "commitment to public, not charter" and "support of all school models". Additionally, expressed statements also conveyed that the next superintendent should not only be concerned with the "whole child", but also be an "advocate for all kids". Lastly, there were continued statements of concern about trauma and safety for all children. In summarizing the comments, the next superintendent must maintain a holistic perspective, given all of the dynamic parts of IPS.

Portal responses on superintendent attributes (see Figure 2)
The feedback provided by individuals who submitted their feedback on the IPS portal also aligned with the identified themes of *experience, community connections, leadership traits, inclusivity and holistic perspective. Although* there were no new

perspectives compared to the previously received during the community feedback sessions, the tone and directness was considerably sharper. There was a more pointed desire for the next superintendent to be from Indianapolis, remain in the position for the long-term, possess experience as an administrator and/or teacher, and "reflect the children that they serve". There were also more pointed perspectives on charter and innovative schools, varying from comments that were supportive of these models to those who wished for full support of traditional school models. Lastly, like the feedback sessions, there were six comments expressing preference that the next superintendent have certification or a license for the position with one participant stating, "will need to be certified or seeking certification".

Focus areas for the next IPS Superintendent (Question 4)
"What should the next leader of IPS focus on?"
Both the feedback from both the community feedback sessions and the portal were aligned along the themes of *equity, establishing a positive culture for IPS, quality, financial management, negotiating the educational ecosystems, curriculum, strategic vision, engagement*, and *human resources*. Whereas *communication* didn't arise as a theme among the community feedback sessions, the portal feedback listed it as a concern several times. There was substantial overlap in responses to this question and the second question of identifying challenges facing IPS.

"Catch-all" feedback (Question 5)
"Anything else the Board of School Commissioners should consider when selecting the next superintendent of Indianapolis Public Schools?"
Designed as a "catch-all", the last and fifth question garnered the least number of responses. From the feedback garnered, most of the responses reiterated previous statements made in the first four questions with two exceptions. First, there were comments relating to the process of selecting the superintendent, with some comments providing suggestions of either a slower or faster pace. *Transparency* and *public vetting of candidates* was a pronounce theme across the critical mass of the comments.

Brief draft job description
As a starting point for deliberation of a job description, the themes of the desired attributes of the next superintendent could be applied (e.g., *experience, community connections, desired leadership traits, and holistic perspective*) in addition to the *four h's (hustle, heart, humor, and humility)* (Roberts, Hanna & Womack, 2012) and the Great Eight competency factors (Kurz & Bartram, 2002) that can be used as guiding principles in the selection of finalists for the School Board's consideration, but tailored to the needs of the educational environment of IPS (see Table 1).

Desired leadership profile of the next IPS Superintendent

Following the solicitation of open feedback through three open forums and the IPS online portal, the School Board of the Indianapolis Public School (IPS) welcomes applications from individuals who has experience as a community-based servant leader, establishes and values practice of engagement with all of the district's stakeholders of the Indianapolis community, fosters a culture of inclusivity throughout the entire district, and takes a holistic approach in serving the needs of the "whole child". Our next superintendent will maintain a successful track record in leading urban education and possess the virtues of honesty, collaboration, humility, heart, and transparency in their work and interaction with others.

The ideal candidate will fully appreciate the dynamic educational ecosystem of IPS that is comprised of different school models, have a deep appreciation and intimate understanding of the children that they serve, maintain the integrity of what is expected as a "teacher-in-chief", communicate their innovative vision to the community of Indianapolis clearly, and collaboratively engage with teachers, staff and community members on issues that can enhance the education quality of the children of IPS.

Additionally, our ideal IPS Superintendent will demonstrate the proficiency in the following:

- Lead the district's teachers, staff, and administrator in a highly dynamic urban education ecosystem of different school models with a emphasis on culturally competent instruction, best practices for inclusion and equity-based policy development;
- Collaborate and engage both internal and external stakeholders of IPS in building positive relationships;
- Communicate with the IPS community in a transparent manner;
- Foster and support a positive academic and administrative culture within IPS that set high standards for both students and personnel alike;
- Recruit, retain, and develop thoughtful teachers, staff, and administrators within IPS to best serve our children and families;
- Develop a strategic plan that will guide IPS as a national model for urban education for the benefit of the children and families;
- Utilize a decision-making approach that is respectful of both quantitative and qualitative data and tailored to the needs and rich culture of the community; and
- Approach their work with an open-mind and handle challenges with creativity.

Figure 1. Word cloud from feedback sessions, "What qualifications/traits/characteristics would you like to see in the next superintendent?"

Figure 1. Word cloud from email portal, "What qualifications/traits/characteristics would you like to see in the next superintendent?"

Table 1. Titles and High-Level Definitions of the Great Eight Competencies.

Competency domain title	Competency domain definition
Leading and Deciding	Takes control and exercises leadership. Initiates action, gives direction, and takes responsibility.
Supporting and Cooperating	Supports others and shows respect and positive regard for them in social situations. Puts people first, working effectively with individuals and teams, clients, and staff. Behaves consistently with clear personal values that complement those of the organization.
Interacting and Presenting	Communicates and networks effectively. Successfully persuades and influences others. Relates to others in a confident, relaxed manner.
Analyzing and Interpreting	Shows evidence of clear analytical thinking. Gets to the heart of complex problems and issues. Applies own expertise effectively. Quickly takes on new technology. Communicates well in writing.
Creating and Conceptualizing	Works well in situations requiring openness to new ideas and experiences. Seeks out learning opportunities. Handles situations and problems with innovation and creativity. Thinks broadly and strategically. Supports and drives organizational change.
Organizing and Executing	Plans ahead and works in a systematic and organized way. Follows directions and procedures. Focuses on customer satisfaction and delivers a quality service or product to the agreed standards.
Adapting and Coping	Adapts and responds well to change. Manages pressure effectively and copes well with setbacks.
Enterprising and Performing	Focuses on results and achieving personal work objectives. Works best when work is related closely to results and the impact of personal efforts is obvious. Shows an understanding of business, commerce, and finance. Seeks opportunities for self-development and career advancement.

* from Bartram, D. (2005). "The Great Eight Competencies: A Criterion-Centric Approach to Validation. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 90(6), 1185-1203.

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