



Date: August 23, 2009
To: Board of Education
From: Dr. Brian Sarvis, Superintendent
Subject: Release of Questions Used in Interviewing the Executive Director of Special Education

Board Brief

Background

At the August 12, 2009 meeting, a board member suggested releasing the specific questions asked of the candidate for executive director of special education in closed session. As part of the overall interview and selection process for executive director, many questions were asked of the candidate including questions about the candidate's experience and educational background, interest in special education, expertise in special education, explanation of job changes, past successes in special education, leadership style and leadership strategies, vision for special education, strategy for developing a common vision with broad support from parents and staff, plans to establish good working relationships with parents, ability to work collaboratively with the SELPA, measures to build collaboration with many people (including site administrators, special education department chairs, school psychologists, nurses, and other related services), state and federal rights and protections for students/families under IDEIA, changing the discrepancy model to identify students suspected of having learning disabilities, how to remedy deficits in special education department oversight and use of systematic approaches across sites, understanding of FCMAT findings and recommendations, ability to resolve deficits identified in the FCMAT study, suggested priorities and approach to addressing FCMAT recommendations, ways to facilitate communication with the special education community (including parents, public, staff, administration, and school board), ways to develop collaborative relations with special education advocates, changes in IDEIA and state directions, expertise in Response to Intervention (RTI), the role of standards-based education in developing an appropriate IEP, delivery of effective instructional programs, increasing achievement levels for students with disabilities, knowledge of effective programs for autistic students, the appropriate role of instructional assistants including 1:1 assistants, training for instructional assistants, ability to evaluate the effectiveness of the special education programs and implement program improvement strategies. Experience in planning staff development, planning for trainings identified in FCMAT recommendations, how to make IEP development a true team process, how to resolve disagreements over the assessment and placement of potential special education students, addressing the FCMAT findings of over-identification of students with disabilities, ability to make contentious IEP meetings successful, appropriate roles for ombudsperson, identification of key issues in overcoming our difficulties in writing legally defensible IEPs, the appropriate role of legal counsel in special education, knowledge of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), how to reduce legal fees, expertise in budget management, ability to manage increasing encroachment of the general fund and adhere to maintenance of effort. Understanding of new Section 504 requirements including eligibility considerations and procedures, ability to build a team (e.g. directors, program specialists, and related services staff), ability to exercise independent ethical judgment, and knowledge of future challenges of special education.

The applicant was interviewed on three separate occasions and numerous contacts were made as background checks and to verify the applicant's answers. Questions about the areas listed above were asked over five hours of questions and discussions. In some cases, multiple questions were asked about an area. Please note that the areas listed above are not listed in a priority sequence. Nor does the listing reveal whether questions in these or other areas were asked by the board in closed session.

Release of Specific Questions

The repercussions of releasing questions used in the interview process are that the questions could not be used in their current form again in the future and that there is a danger in disclosing information from closed session. Additionally, questions asked may have been part of a discussion and may not be comprehensible without the context for the question. Since discussions in closed session are confidential, any release of closed session information must be authorized by the board of education.

It is recommended that the actual interview questions asked of the candidates for executive director for special education not be released.