



Facilitator Guide for Superintendent Search Community Conversations

Stand for Children and its coalition partners are so happy that you and your group have decided to host a conversation on what you all want to see in the next superintendent, and we look forward to hearing back from your group!

Summary of What Happens in a Community Conversation:

A community of folks gathers to discuss an important topic, gearing the conversation toward taking a next step together.

Structure of a Community Conversation:

- ☑ Who: Any group of friends or colleagues - from three to thirty people
- ☑ What: One host will guide the conversation using the facilitator guide and the PowerPoint provided
- ☑ When: April 27 (or earlier)
- ☑ Where: Wherever you want - homes, churches, barber shops, schools, you name it!
- ☑ How long: 1 hour- 30 minutes to mingle, 30 minutes for the actual conversation. If a group wants more discussion time, allot for that by reducing the time spent mingling.

Materials Provided:

- ☑ PowerPoint (pdf file) that guides the conversation
- ☑ Facilitator guide that helps the host to lead the conversation effectively
- ☑ Form for participants to provide us with their feedback. (Don't forget this step!)

Overall Goal:

Stand will use feedback from these meetings as a basis for a comprehensive report to the School Board, to help elected officials choose the right superintendent. We believe true community feedback is essential to the selection process, so we want to build a bridge between the board and its constituents in diverse places all across our county. This is why it is very important for all participants to complete the feedback form at the end.

Presentation Guide

As you go through the PowerPoint slides, use this guide on what to say and when. **Try to speak the phrases in quotation marks exactly**, but feel free to add your own style and voice to the conversation. Often, the slide can be read directly.

Slide 1: Title Slide

Slide 2: What is our goal today? (2 minutes)

- ☑ Stand for Children – *Describe the organization.*
- ☑ Our goal today - *Mention that the conversation will last 30-40 minutes.*
- ☑ Introduce Stand’s partners in this effort – and yourself as host of this conversation. *Describe your connection to the work. Why are you hosting this conversation? What inspired you to get involved? Why is it important that everyone participate fully?*

Slide 3: Timeline for the Superintendent Search (2 minutes)

- ☑ Note each element of the timeline. *Explain that the dates ahead have changed many times and may change again. But the goal is to have a superintendent in place by June, so we need to provide feedback now to have an impact on the selection process.*

Slide 4: Educational Landscape of Shelby County- (5 minutes)

“To be successful, our new superintendent will need to be aware of several aspects of the current education environment before beginning the job. Here are four critical issues that he or she will need to consider ...“

☑ **The Budget Deficit**

“The merged district has a deficit of \$145 million for multiple reasons:

- **the money owed from the city of Memphis,**
- **a limited base of funds from the state,**
- **less and less allocated from the county.**

A superintendent will have to make tough recommendations regarding what programs, services and positions to keep or to cut.”

☑ **Current Reform Work**

“MCS and SCS had several reform efforts under way before merging. In particular, MCS is deeply committed to the Teacher Effectiveness Initiative, an effort funded by a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to support teachers and improve

teaching quality. The superintendent will need to know what the districts have achieved, and retain the practices that work well while discarding those that don't."

The Merger

"The new superintendent will need to understand critical elements of the merger of MCS and SCS and help to guide that process fairly and put children's interests first."

Raising Student Achievement

"Perhaps most importantly, the superintendent will be responsible for raising student-achievement levels. Currently, only 24 percent of our county's public school students (4 percent in MCS, 20 percent in SCS) qualify as college-ready when they take the ACT. We must do better, and the superintendent must guide that work."

Slide 5: What are a Superintendent's Responsibilities? (1 minute)

"It is important to first fully understand what a superintendent's responsibilities are in order to envision the right person for the job."

A superintendent ...

- Serves as the academic leader and crafts the vision for the district
- Chooses or creates programs and initiatives
- Is responsible for ensuring students' academic achievement
- Makes policy and regulatory recommendations to the School Board
- Acts as direct manager to regional superintendents, who directly manage principals

Slide 6: So What Makes a Strong Superintendent? (3 minutes)

"Before we begin a conversation about our opinions on what makes a strong superintendent, it is important to investigate what research tells us. Research suggests that successful superintendents share five major characteristics."

- Vision
- High Expectations (for ALL, not just some)
- Effective Communicator
- Data Driven
- Successful management experience

Participant Response: Take two responses to these question:

"Quick temperature check- which of these seems most important to you? Why?"

Slide 7: National Superintendent Searches: What were they seeking? (5 minutes)

“In other superintendent searches that yielded good candidates, districts looked for those five characteristics we just discussed, but also more specific things. Let’s take a look at those specifics and how those searches fared.”

Seattle

Read a few descriptors from the slide

Dallas

Read a few descriptors from the slide

Fairfax County

Read a few descriptors from the slide

Participant Response: “What themes emerged in all three cities?”

Slide 8: Shelby County Superintendent Search (3 minutes)

“Our school board has produced, with the help of the PROACT Search firm, a list of the qualities to seek in superintendent candidates. Not only do school board members want the five key characteristics of good superintendents, they also want specific attributes that they feel a person would need in order to be successful in Shelby County.”

- (Read the characteristics directly from the slide)

Participant Response: “Do you think this is a comprehensive list? What is it missing? What are you glad that board members included?”

Discussion Questions

“Now let’s hear what YOU are seeking in a superintendent for our children. Following are four discussion questions. No answer is wrong or right, and all perspectives are important and welcome. Make sure you allow everyone to speak, share the air space, and respect different points of view. Each question should take a total of 5-7 minutes to answer.”

Slide 9: Question 1

- A superintendent can be thought of as the head educator of the district. We know what makes a good teacher and principal, so what qualities can be scaled up and expected of a leader for the new consolidated school district?

Slide 10: Question 2

- When thinking of the consolidated district over the next three years, what are the top priorities a superintendent should have?

Slide 11: Question 3

- If you were interviewing a superintendent candidate, what essential questions would you ask?

Slide 12: Question 4

- Finally- what key things do you think are critical for a superintendent to know about our district and community so that they can be successful?

Final Steps – and After the Conversation

Slide 13: Feedback Form

“Your feedback is critical to this process. Please take a moment to fill out the feedback form honestly. No answer is wrong, right, too long, or too short. We need your voice! Thank you for contributing and we look forward to presenting the results to the board!”

- All participants complete feedback form

Slide 14: Next Steps

“Let’s not stop the conversation here! If you enjoyed this event and want to hear what fellow participants elsewhere in the community had to say, join us at the School Board meeting!”

- School Board meeting details
- Joining/Finding out more about Stand for Children
- Thank You!

Closing Directions for Host:

- Collect and keep the completed feedback forms from your conversation.
- Contact Jaclyn Suffel at jsuffel@stand.org about turning them back in. She will arrange a time and place to meet you to collect them.
- Keep in touch with us by attending the School Board meeting on May 3!

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