



New England School Development Council

28 Lord Road, Marlborough, MA 01752 ➤ Tel: 508-481-9444 ➤ www.nesdec.org

Ipswich Public Schools Superintendent Search

Superintendent Search Focus Group Report

April 10, 2017



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To: The Ipswich School Committee
From: Kenneth L. DeBenedictis, Ed.D.
NESDEC Executive Search Consultant
Re: Superintendent Search Focus Group Report
Date: April 10, 2017

On March 28 and 30 and April 4 and 6, I conducted seven focus group sessions in Ipswich: one with school administrators, one with high school students, one with secondary staff, one with elementary staff, one with the School Committee, one with parents and a final one with community members. The following report includes all responses to two major discussions: 1) The new Superintendent of Schools should possess the following characteristics, skills and background experiences, and 2) The new Superintendent of Schools should begin to address the following questions, issues and concerns within the first six to twelve months in the position.

In the group sessions, which encouraged participants to share their perceptions, beliefs and impressions, attendees were open about their concerns and their hopes and aspirations for the district. In reviewing the process, it is very clear that each group was focused upon issues pertinent to Ipswich. It is also evident that there were shared concerns between the groups and distinct issues specific to each of them.

The report begins with an Executive Summary which represents a composite of the emerging trends that were given the greatest emphasis in the discussions. The Summary is followed by the responses generated by each focus group.

I believe that the information provided by the seven groups will be helpful to all involved in the screening process for the new superintendent. The information should also provide a rich resource for the new superintendent as he/she plans for the transition and entry.

Many people were involved in the focus group sessions and I am very appreciative of their interest and enthusiasm. School Committee members are to be especially commended for their efforts in supporting and organizing these discussions. Their welcoming of community participation will enrich the search process.

IPSWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Discussion #1. The new Superintendent of Schools should possess the following characteristics, skills and background experiences:

Not ranked in priority order:

- **Is an extraordinary school leader.** A visionary who can engage all stakeholders in moving a district forward; has a creative mind; knows how to motivate others and models that skillset. Inspirational: works collaboratively with others to define what could be in curriculum and instruction. Is a big picture thinker. Has the ability to actively listen and follow up; encourages and welcomes the opinions of others. Skilled in working collaboratively with the School Committee. Challenges thinking in the district so that all actions focus on what is right for children. Is viewed as the instructional leader of the district. Works with others to gather curriculum, instruction and assessment best practices and connects that data and information to improve learning opportunities. Knows how to handle conflict and is skilled in helping people to come to consensus on issues. Has a backbone: can stand up and defend causes important to the district. Has strong organizational skills and is goals-focused. Is highly supportive of teachers and publicly celebrates district success stories and accomplishments. Supportive of building-based management: knows the successful models and approaches to support staff initiatives. Successfully experienced with facilities management, business and finance, school law, special education, collective bargaining and technology applications in curriculum, instruction and management. A solid manager of the district and a leader in every dimension of district responsibility. Not hesitant in holding himself/herself accountable and models that responsibility for others. Supports the work of school leaders and helps them to stay focused on district goals. Knows curriculum and instruction and recognizes that 21st Century thinking is a significant driver in successful school programs. Has an innovative approach which causes others to look outside of the box and use creativity in developing program opportunities and the ways to fund them; knows the research, the model sites and all steps and procedures to motivate teachers to build high-quality academic programs. Recognizes the importance of professional development and works collaboratively with others to connect instructional training with goals of the district and identified building needs. Understands the value of collaboration and seeks opportunities to practice team-building when addressing issues and creating new initiatives.
- **Is widely experienced.** Experienced in the classroom and has enjoyed building and system-wide leadership. Has a clear understanding of what is contained in a successful PreK-12 program. Has enjoyed a variety of experiences with advisory groups: values their involvement and recognizes their contributions. Has a special ability to manage conflict and bring to resolution. Knows special education laws and regulations and is skilled with creating in-house local programs which are in compliance with those laws

and regulations. Recognizes his/her own successes and failures and can connect what was learned to personal leadership impact. He/she is a problem solver, coalition developer and creative budget manager who is successful in building trusting community relationships. Knows about and is a user of technology, an integral tool in connecting curriculum, instruction, management and communication. Models creative thinking and encourages and supports that capacity in others: solving problems or developing new instructional strategies. Has a particular strength with 21st Century Learning. A disciple of planning: past experience with strategic planning – knows how to create the plan and is skillful in its implementation, monitoring and assessment. Successfully experienced in collective bargaining. Works closely with state and local officials and understands and provides oversight for laws, rules and regulations and can clearly explain those requirements to Ipswich residents.

- **Is knowledgeable and well-read.** Knows learning and teaching: understands and is successful with assessment. Encourages and nurtures teacher leadership. Skillful in interpreting data and knows how data is best used to inform instruction and decision-making. Knows the research and the model sites and is able to connect that information with district program needs; has resource capacity to work with others to support successful programs, initiatives and action plan improvement strategies. Understands the value of effective and timely professional development and works collaboratively with staff to create meaningful and useful programs and opportunities. An excellent, creative budget developer who knows how to connect program and student needs to the process; skillfully works with others to create a clearly understood, transparent budget containing steps to implement, monitor and report in a timely and consistent manner.
- **Outstanding personal qualities.** Warm, welcoming, inclusive. Has a great sense of humor. Highly visible everywhere and accessible. A creative, outside-of-the-box thinker. Brings energy to the position; is inspirational and highly motivational. Models the benefits of working together. Builds relationships with various constituent groups in the community. Values others' opinions: open-minded without preconceived notions or closed decisions. Can say "no" if necessary and appropriate to do so. Highly ethical with strong integrity. Holds all accountable for actions, including himself/ herself.
- **Has well-developed communication skills.** Bright, articulate, with excellent written and oral skills. Actively listens in conversations and values opinions of others, provides appropriate follow up. Maintains communication with the community: regularly distributes notices and a variety of electronic and printed messages and reports. Values meeting with various constituent groups and arranges opportunities for open conversations. Works successfully with State and local departments, agencies, officials and the media.

While no candidate can possess all of the qualities and experiences noted above, considering candidates who best match the profile, during the screening and interview process, will help the screening committee recommend a strong group of candidates to the School Committee. The profile will also assist the School Committee in selecting the candidate who is best suited for the position.

Discussion #2. The new Superintendent of Schools should begin to address the following questions, issues and concerns within the first six to twelve months in the position:

Not ranked in priority order:

- **Develop strong community relationships.** Become highly-visible; develop trusting relationships with the school community, townspeople and town elected and appointed officials to cooperatively engage. Begin the development of a positive, collaborative relationship with School Committee members. Get to know building administrators and central office personnel. Meet with varied constituent groups to welcome and encourage involvement. Actively listen and respond. Visit the schools and staff; recognize past accomplishments and celebrate successes. Energize and excite the community about the possibilities. Communicate with townspeople through emails, notices, mailings, school visits, visits to varied community groups and organizations.
- **Assess the strengths and needs of the district.** Identify educational priorities by assessing strengths and needs of the district; generate inclusive outreach, gather and examine data and begin to think about next best steps. Consider a review of the planning process for all components of the district. In the focus groups, it became increasingly clear that a review of planning is necessary to better coordinate the district. Some of the observations included: questions about curriculum alignment and articulation (covered in a following section). The need for new elementary construction due to current conditions of the two elementary schools – significant infrastructure conditions exist: leaking roofs, heating and cooling, technology connections, etc. The community effort to come together to enable this project to move forward will be high on the new superintendent's "to do" list. Some suggestion of the need for a maintenance plan was offered in some of the groups. With such a plan in place, some of the current facility issues might have been prevented. Collective bargaining will be on the agenda soon; examine past initiatives and establish the necessary ground work to facilitate the process. Take a look at the district vision. Does it align with goals and are there monitoring and assessment steps to determine success? Provide a fresh pair of eyes to help; be open to suggestions and feedback. Ipswich has a wonderfully successful history of positive school/community relationships. More than once it was mentioned that school successes are directly related to this experience. Encourage the continuance of this success through outreach, welcoming involvement and celebration.
- **Examine the budget development process.** Understand the budget requirements of the district and work collaboratively with all stakeholders to build and organize a defensible and understandable budget. Are there ways to become more cost-efficient? Finances are increasingly becoming a concern. Are there ways to look at people, time and money so that program integrity is maintained while costs are managed? A declining enrollment is forecast for the district. Student projections need to be carefully reviewed along with related facility and staffing needs. Several participants suggested that a budget shortfall could be in the district's future: creative, out of the box thinking and trusting connections with the community will help to address this potential issue.

- **Assess curriculum and instruction.** Determine if needs of all children are being met by program offerings. Ascertain if consistency and coordination of instruction is in alignment with district goals and objectives. There were several questions raised about curriculum in the discussion groups: there is a perceived need for greater articulation and coordination of curriculum between grades and among the buildings of the district. Some observed that the curriculum is “siloed” and needs more vertical clarity and integration. Additionally, there are questions about the thoroughness of outcomes and expectations at various intervals in the spectrum. Some suggested that a review of the roles and responsibilities of the curriculum organization might be in order: who does what and why? Support for STEAM and a review of COMPASS were also mentioned. Further suggested was a review of the district professional development effort and the importance of collaborating with staff K-12 to determine if programs are timely, meaningful and supportive of best practices. Other related areas: Is there a robust data analysis system that informs and impacts curriculum, instruction and management? How are special education students doing in terms of needs and programs provided? (Examine the staffing, costs and success.) Is the professional staff held accountable to the high standards of the district? Is curriculum reflective of education for the 21st Century thinking: is technology a critical part of the program?

**IPSWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY REPORT**

School Administrators

(9 Participants)

March 28, 2017

Discussion #1. The new Superintendent of Schools should possess the following characteristics, skills and background experiences, not in priority order:

- Experience as a school administrator.
- Develops an understanding of the Ipswich Public Schools and the culture of the community.
- Good communication skills: has the ability to effectively connect with all stakeholders so that understanding and support develops.
- Can make effective connections and successfully bridge gaps.
- Demonstrates active listening skills.
- Understands systems and the impact they have in the schools and community.
- He/she is a reflective decision maker.
- Appreciates and supportive of district initiatives and experiences: knows how to further nurture them: i.e. inclusive special education and STEAM.
- A flexible problem solver who is particularly skilled when the answer isn't obvious or there are no easy ways out.
- An innovative leader.
- Collaboratively works with the leadership team.
- Respects the leadership team's knowledge base.
- Coordinates the school district through a balance of philosophical and practical approaches.
- Models effective decision-making and masterful in nurturing that skill with leadership team members.
- Well-read or versed in current educational trends and practices.
- Possesses a strong grounding in financial practices: can make budget decisions without negatively impacting programs.
- There are school district systems in place that need ongoing support; accomplish this by keeping a focus on the big picture.
- The new superintendent is a learner who is interested in understanding what successfully is in place and can move the district forward.
- Someone who has the back of the administrators: supportive of initiatives and risk taking.
- Understands the importance of professional development for teachers and administrators and encourages programs and activities to promote growth.
- Supportive of building based management once plans are articulated and accepted.
- Knows how to connect the community resources for specific projects: possible school construction plan.
- Invested in all levels, grades Pre-K through 12.
- Appreciates that Ipswich is unique; there is a strong involvement of the community. It is the backbone of district success.

- A skillful strategic planner: knows its value and experienced in developing collaboratively focused efforts and successes.
- Able and successfully experienced in working in a community with broad socioeconomic diversity.
- Has a respected connection with teachers; helps them feel that he/she is one of them.
- Skillful in collaborating with others to develop a strategy to support the inclusiveness of special education and the related costs.
- Appreciates and supportive of the whole child: values the humanities, performing and visual arts, athletics and other and other contributing programs.
- Maintains the curriculum-instruction and assessment model with a focus on outcomes and expectations.
- Has a solid curriculum background: knows articulation and skillful in working with others to clarify central office and building administrative roles and responsibilities in planning and implementation.

Following this discussion, the administrators examined the groupings or trends that were emerging from the listing. They identified the following as critically important, not in priority order:

- Someone who can assess the current district effort and collaboratively work with others to analyze and strategically plan a road map for district improvement.
- Has the leadership skillset to work with the staff to continue the investments in place and connect with the community to further advance these initiatives.
- Relationships...relationships...relationships. Communicates well, encourages and promotes active participation, values the opinions of others and builds bridges with all stake holders. Recognizes and appreciates the critical role of the community in advocating for the schools and building partnerships and connections.

Discussion #2. The new Superintendent of Schools should begin to address the following questions, issues and concerns within the first six to twelve months in the position, not in priority order.

- School building project.
- Organize a comprehensive plan for professional development.
- Embrace the value of authentic relationship building. It must be real, sincere and honest and must connect the schools with the community.
- Provide an effective balance of management responsibility with educational leadership.
- Promote, advocate for and support the vertical alignment of curriculum and establish student outcomes and expectations at all levels.
- A budget shortfall may develop in the near future. The next superintendent needs to be creatively skilled in approaching this potential development. He/she will need to engage the community to collaboratively develop action plans to identify funding sources to support students and the schools.

**IPSWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY REPORT**

Students

(15 Participants)

March 28, 2017

Discussion #1. The new Superintendent of Schools should possess the following characteristics, skills and background experiences, not in priority order:

- Someone who wants to become involved in the schools.
- A superintendent who knows how to become familiar with the students.
- Has a successful background in teaching.
- Widely experienced in places other than Ipswich.
- Gets to know Ipswich: its values/culture/history.
- Leadership experienced.
- Dedicated and willing to successfully place the effort in the position.
- Remains in Ipswich for a while.
- Focuses on improvement, not just maintaining the status quo.
- Easy to talk to: personable, welcoming, friendly.
- Actively involved in the schools: visits classrooms, attends functions and activities-games, concerts, performances, etc.
- Views himself as an equal with faculty and parents; does not appear to be above everyone.
- A nice/approachable/friendly person.
- Establishes goals for the job, through collaboration with others and immediately and actively works on them.

Discussion #2. The new Superintendent of Schools should begin to address the following questions, issues and concerns within the first six to twelve months in the position, not in priority order:

- Establishing positive working relationships with faculty, students and parents and the other groups in the community.
- Streamline the high school schedule: transitioned from “block to waterfall”; needs analysis and support to make it more workable and manageable.
- Needs to bring the community together to examine and plan for the potential new elementary school.
- Needs to create a more equitable funding approach for all departments in the school.
- Maintain school successes while looking for new ways to improve.

**IPSWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY REPORT**

Secondary Teachers

(14 Participants)

March 28, 2017

Discussion #1. The new Superintendent of Schools should possess the following characteristics, skills and background experiences, not in priority order:

- Decisive.
- Respects teachers as professionals. Provides the time and resources to do what needs to be done; assists teachers and collaborates with them. Not top down management.
- Prioritizes the needs and supports the effort.
- Rights the ship; pulled into a number of directions currently.
- The district was site based focused; now changing to top down.
- We're hard working professionals and need support – support for initiatives and innovations. Want innovative teacher directed instruction, not top down.
- Someone who enters the district and comes to know the district well; could provide quality leadership with this understanding.
- There needs to be a good match of the superintendent with the district.
- Assess the quality of the district and through outreach and collaboration, strengthen those which are good and effective and improve areas of need, but not through top down directives.
- A solid relationship builder who connects all stakeholders to the mission of the schools/ town.
- Develops trusting relationships: open, willingness to listen, values the opinions of others, even if those judgements are critical.
- Supportive of teacher efforts and provides push back for them when needed.
- Open to international/global partnerships.
- Knows curriculum, instruction and assessment: its alignment and articulation.
- Enables us to do what we do well and not concentrate on the weaknesses to the exclusion of the strengths.
- Knows budget development and can help the district to envision where budget needs are going; collaboratively create opportunities for the future.
- Understands the value of professional development; open to re-envisioning the district professional development effort which should be collaboratively developed and based upon district need.
- Highly skilled in team-building; effectively utilizes personal skills to make this happen.
- Demonstrated passion and excitement about education. Has a capacity and experience with district renewal; is inspirational and motivational.
- Recognizes the leaders of instruction in the district; encourages their work. Allows them to model excellence in instruction.
- STEAM is developing; need to encourage and support its growth. Critical/creative thinking is focused upon and strengthened.

Discussion #2. The new Superintendent of Schools should begin to address the following questions, issues and concerns within the first six to twelve months in the position, not in priority order:

- Literacy needed K-12 in all areas. Should be carefully examined and aligned so that students entering high school are coming with less need for academic support.
- Curriculum K-12 should be assessed for vertical alignment and articulation.
- Examine and assess the district through outreach and collaboration. A strategic plan should then be created: strengths and weaknesses identified, priorities established, goals developed, professional development organized and funding and assessment planned.
- The COMPASS Committee should be better defined with the roles of administrators and teachers clarified. There needs to be better alignment of the roles of Director of Teaching and Learning, building administrators and teachers.
- Examine the current proposal for a new elementary school and help the community to work together to define a direction.
- Elementary schools are “siloed” with different expectations and outcomes. A plan needs to be created so that both staffs will successfully work together when they come together.
- There is a perceived disconnect between the high school and middle school. There is a need to examine if this is accurate and to improve as needed. Indications offered included: homework policy and procedures, textbook alignment, note-taking skills, late work acceptance...to name a few.

**IPSWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY REPORT**

Elementary Teachers

(15 Participants)

March 30, 2017

Discussion #1. The new Superintendent of Schools should possess the following characteristics, skills and background experiences, not in priority order:

- Open minded.
- Early childhood/elementary experienced.
- Classroom experienced.
- An experienced leader who can help the district to envision.
- One who knows how to successfully assess school districts.
- Appreciates the culture of the school district.
- Knows how to balance top down and bottom up.
- Knows the latest research.
- Friendly and outgoing.
- Experienced with very, very early childhood.
- Actively listens with effective follow up.
- Accessible, welcoming.
- Open to new ideas and receptive to opposing ideas.
- A collaborator.
- High visibility: knows the buildings, programs, staff, students.
- An effective manager of people
- Inspires people to work together.
- Has a passion and an understanding of special education.
- Scholarly and up-to-date: can translate the research and introduce it to the district and bring into practice.
- Has a proven track record of success.
- Can model for others good practice.
- Not a stranger to the classroom.
- Can connect with the community: all stake holders; an effective ambassador for the district.
- Thinks out of the box when addressing financial issues.
- Experienced with building consensus.
- Knows how to work collaboratively with the professional education association.
- Stays connected with the superintendent's professional association and is aware and knowledgeable successful practices elsewhere.
- A strong advocate for timely, appropriate and meaningful professional development.
- Views teachers, administrators and support staff as part of the team; treats them as colleagues.
- Has expertise in involving, including and valuing the leadership team.
- Successfully experienced with school construction projects.
- Possesses oral and written articulation qualities.

Following the listing of the indicators, the elementary teachers next identified several emerging trends or directions:

- A successful two-directional communicator with community and all constituent groups, professionals, etc.
- Experienced as an educator in a variety of elementary to secondary capacities; teacher to administrator.
- Inspirational, motivational, a visionary. An effective leader. A consensus builder with the broad constituency group. Can effectively action plan and implement.
- Connections: research, other professionals, model sites, expert capacities.
- Has a strong respect for staff: demonstrates an appreciation and value of program successes: knows how to further develop them.
- Financially savvy: outside-of-the-box, creative thinker about funding.
- Supportive of the variety of needs in Ipswich. Kids must come first.
- Ipswich was a model site at one time. It was grass roots led and underscored the value of personal relationships. As a result, staff and administrators became inspired and motivated and many creative and exciting programs and initiatives developed. We need to return to that.
- A strategic plan should be collaboratively developed: assess district strengths and needs, action plan improvements and invite all constituencies to join in implementation.

Discussion #2. The new Superintendent of Schools should begin to address the following questions, issues and concerns within the first six to twelve months in the position, not in priority order:

- Learn about the district: its strengths and needs.
- Build respectful relationships with the leadership team and all constituent groups.
- Spend time in each building to get to know it: culture, values, issues, successes. Report and discuss with each building what was learned. Collaborating with each staff on approaches to enhance and improve.
- Work on the elementary building project.
- Examine finances and develop creative approaches to continue to support programs and opportunities.
- Respect time: time management, use and availability.

**IPSWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY REPORT**

School Committee

(4 participants)

March 30, 2017

Discussion#1. The next superintendent of schools should possess the following characteristics, skills and background experiences, not in priority order:

- An engaging leader.
- Background in teaching.
- Community leadership experienced.
- Management (personnel) experience.
- Budget experience.
- A great communicator.
- Curious.
- Can change and be flexible: to modify based upon what is heard and learned.
- Develops meaningful, positive working relationships with board members and all constituencies.
- Inspiring and motivating.
- Any administrative experience.
- Comfortable in the role as the face of the Ipswich Public Schools.
- Understands the community: shared mission and values. Acknowledge what is in place and take us to the next level.
- Not change for change sake.
- Accessible, responsive, process person who can make and execute the decision.
- Part of the school, not a visitor. Highly visible everywhere.
- Strong ability to oversee curriculum alignment: move from silos to seamless scope and sequence.
- Experienced with site based management: knows it/lives it; balances it with centralized decision making.
- At the end of the day, he/she can make the tough decision.
- Appreciation for the diversity of extra-curricular, enrichment and expansion opportunities.
- Recognizes district strength and encourages/nurtures growth.
- Understands the full spectrum of learners: knows differentiation of instruction; knows what it is and can lead by example.
- Building partnerships, external ones, to further expand district opportunities.
- Uses data to inform best practices: interprets test results and incorporates that information into curriculum, instruction and assessment.
- Has the ability to step into complex issues and get up to speed quickly.
- School construction experienced.
- Understands and effectively practices accountability with all responsibilities.
- Experienced with the elementary to secondary education spectrum.

Following the listing of the experience, behavior and skillset indicators, school committee members next identified the emerging trends, not in priority order:

- Management experience.
- Interpersonal skills.
- Preserving what is successful in the district and not changing for change sake.
- A successful instructional leader and district manager.
- Highly developed skills and appreciation for the value of relationship building: critical to everything done.
- Commanding a presence: inclusive/welcoming/warm/accepting...
- Possesses strong communication skills; verbally and in written form.

Discussion#2. The following are immediate issues, questions and concerns that the next superintendent of schools needs to begin addressing within the first six to twelve months in the position, not in priority order:

- Build a coalition for the new school.
- Oversee and support the merging of the two elementary school cultures.
- Selling and marketing the project itself.
- Extending the life of the override.
- Supporting the entry of two new school committee members.
- Keeping the momentum for 21st Century Learning Skills.
- Collective bargaining.
- Helping the community to deal/manage declining enrollment.
- Developing greater collaboration with town boards and services.
- Examine the special education program: success/ staffing/ costs.

**IPSWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY REPORT**

Parents
(2 participants)
April 4, 2017

Discussion#1. The new Superintendent of Schools should possess the following characteristics, skills and background experiences, not in priority order:

- Experience as a superintendent or assistant superintendent of schools.
- A data-driven leader who can incorporate declining enrolment issues with district need.
- Possesses a presence: articulate/welcoming/knowledgeable.
- Politically savvy; state issues, funding problems, override questions.
- Financially knowledgeable.
- Capacity to deal with less than adequate facilities: elementary buildings, delayed maintenance issues, mechanical problems.
- A preventative maintenance schedule plan is needed with someone identified to oversee the issues.
- A planner; someone who knows strategic planning; can organize it and keep it focused.
- A former athlete or musician; appreciates and values the arts and athletics and understands how these areas impact the whole child.
- Flexible: knows how to deal with challenges; is positive and creative.
- Knows best practices and relates 21st Century Learning to program and activities.
- Can implement the big ideas: knows latest research and model sites and can relate to Ipswich.
- Someone who is there for the students: dedicated to the profession.
- Experienced as a teacher and a principal.
- Knows how to assess the district: programs, facilities, curriculum, staff, students. Can take data from this analysis and work with others to action plan.

Discussion#2. The following are immediate issues, questions and concerns that the next Superintendent of Schools should begin to address within the first six to twelve months in the position, not in priority order:

- Become knowledgeable about the Town's history, culture, strengths and needs.
- Examine the Town Master Plan and incorporate components into the strategic plan for the schools.
- Elementary building plan: understand the many steps involved and hit the ground running after hired.
- Examine budget in relationship to program needs. Do we have needed programs in place?

- Examine past eliminated programs, due to budget reductions and determine if these programs can be returned: in what format and how? (math, foreign language)
- Special education is successfully supported. Are we denying other needs; high end students, for example, as a result?
- Relationship building: connect, connect; listen, listen.
- Attention needed for the creation of a facility plan; maintenance, contracts, etc.
- Replacements: (roofing, carpeting, equipment, etc.) staffing, calendar, costs, coordination.

**IPSWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY REPORT**

Community
(1 participant)
April 6, 2017

Discussion #1. The new superintendent of schools should possess the following characteristics, skills and background experiences, not in priority order:

- Administrative experience in other districts. Someone who is new to the superintendent's position might have difficulty in hitting the ground running.
- Personable: a great communicator both internally and externally.
- Self-motivated and forward-thinking. A decision on the elementary school will be made by the time he/she begins. There will be a need to quickly ascertain next steps and work with the community to develop an action plan.
- Strong organizational skills.
- A willingness to actively participate in community events; high visibility.

Discussion #2. The following are immediate issues, questions and concerns that the new superintendent of schools should begin to address within the first six to twelve months in the position, not in priority order:

- A decision on the elementary school will be made in May. It will be necessary for the new superintendent to follow up with a next- steps plan collaboratively developed with all stake holders.
- An override was funded in the past. The community will request an explanation of the request for additional funds (budget increases, new school, etc). Need to carefully assess budget process and communicate requests and recommendations; clarity, transparency and accountability must frame the discussion.
- Convey the impression that the superintendent works in collaboration with the town. This will go a long way in developing trust.
- Opiate issues exist in Ipswich and surrounding communities. Ascertain what is Ipswich doing to manage the problem? What programs are in place and are there additional steps necessary to combat the problem?