



January 21, 2022

Alabama Association of School Boards
Superintendent Search
43 South Jackson Street
Montgomery, AL 36104

To Whom It May Concern,

We are writing today as the Presidents of the Forest Avenue Academic Magnet (FAAM) Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and the Baldwin Arts & Academics Magnet (Baldwin) Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA). We respectfully submit the following in response to the Alabama Association of School Boards "Community Input: Montgomery County Superintendent Search" questions.

Together we represent two of the academic magnet track schools, as well as the arts middle school magnet with a total of 1200 students and over 400 PTA/PTSA members. While parents, teachers and students at FAAM and Baldwin have completed the online survey and attended the in-person forums, we also wanted to provide you with collective input as you guide Montgomery through its Superintendent search.

We are all committed not just to the success of the schools we represent, but to a thriving public education system in Montgomery. This may be the most important decision Montgomery is currently facing, as a robust public school system is vital to the future of Montgomery. We hope our collective voices underscore the importance of this search and that you find our inputs from our perspective as parents of students in the magnet programs useful.

Community Input: Montgomery County Superintendent Search

1. What are the most challenging issues the next superintendent will face?

Continue to provide high quality magnet school options while also improving the educational outcomes of the traditional public schools to ensure all Montgomery students are college and career ready.

Many parents who have the means to do so would leave the Montgomery Public School system if it were not for the magnet programs. In fact families with the ability to do so have left MPS in recent years for private schools, to homeschool or to move to a surrounding community. Retaining and attracting families to MPS is vital to maintain state funding levels and for the growth and future of Montgomery as a whole.

Part of any retention and attraction effort must include regaining and maintaining the trust of the Montgomery community. This will require a transparency that has not been perceived as present in recent years. With regards to magnet schools particularly, magnet school qualifications must be clear, publicly available and adhered to. The application process must be consistent and transparent to all.

Throughout the system there is a need to retain and recruit qualified faculty and attract new talent to MPS. No school is immune to quality teachers leaving for opportunities in neighboring school districts. While retaining, recruiting and rewarding quality faculty and administrators is important, so too is parting with those in the system who are underperforming.

2. What skills/experience will someone need in order to tackle those challenges?

Montgomery needs a Superintendent who is a strong leader. The next Superintendent needs to be able to build a team and to develop leaders. Strong problem solving and critical thinking skills are imperative. There are numerous challenges facing MPS. The Superintendent needs to be someone who can look at those challenges, think through solutions and set a vision for tackling them. He or she must be able to communicate that vision with MPS employees and the community at large. The next superintendent must be willing to take risk, to make difficult decisions, to accept the criticism that will inevitably come, but be able to stand by decisions made for the benefit of MPS.

3. What other skills will the next superintendent need in order to be successful?

MPS, particularly within its magnet programs, is both socioeconomically and culturally diverse. The Superintendent needs to be someone who is visible within the community, who gets to know the community and who can relate to a diverse Montgomery. The issues MPS faces cannot be solved by the school system alone. Partnerships with local universities, businesses, community organizations and parents are vital to ensuring a thriving MPS. The schools we represent have strong parental engagement. A Superintendent will be successful if he or she values, supports and utilizes that engagement.

4. Alabama requires that superintendents have at least a master's degree. Is that sufficient for this system? Should the board specifically look for a superintendent who holds a doctorate?

As noted in a previous answer, Montgomery Public Schools needs a strong leader. Those leadership qualities and experiences should take priority over a terminal degree.

5. How do you feel about requiring applicants to have superintendent experience?

Montgomery's next Superintendent needs executive level experience. Superintendent experience, even as an Assistant or Associate Superintendent in a similarly situated school district will be important in tackling the myriad of issues facing MPS. The Superintendent need

not be a lifelong educator. Many of the soft skills needed to succeed in this role are transferable. However, some educational experience is desirable.

6. Is there anything else you would like the board to keep in mind as they select the next superintendent?

While Montgomery schools have seen success as of late in coming out of state intervention and in securing the tax increase, MPS cannot just continue doing business as usual. A strong, creative, innovative, leader is necessary to move MPS forward.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our input. We look forward to meeting the candidates who are selected to interview.

Sincerely,



Manisha Patel
FAAM PTA President



Jon Carroll
Baldwin PTSA President