

**LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**Wednesday, December 17, 2014**  
**School Administration Building, Gymnasium**  
**146 Maple Street**

**PRESENT: Chair Margaret Coppe, School Committee Members Jessie Steigerwald,  
Judith Crocker, Alessandro Alessandrini**

**Members Absent: William Hurley**

**The minutes were taken by Christine Ashness, Recording Secretary**

**The meeting convened at 7:10pm**

**Call to order and welcome:** Chair Margaret Coppe called the meeting to order, and introduced committee members.

**Agenda:**

**School Committee Interview of Superintendent Finalist Dr. George Entwistle,  
Superintendent Scarborough ME Public Schools**

*Why are you considering leaving your current position and coming to Lexington?*

Lexington has a great reputation, and he knows of Lexington having spent time as superintendent in Belmont, but due to personal and family reasons he was unable to stay in Belmont. He and his wife had plans to relocate back to MA. He has done a great job in Scarborough consistent with the purpose he was hired. He is ready and excited to lead the Lexington schools.

**BIO:** He was born and raised in Massachusetts, educated at the University of Massachusetts, Assumption College, and Boston University. His early career was in mental health, educating residents who were entitled to education. He did some human resource and personnel work and then worked for a large corporation in the private sector, and a small startup company. He then started a company, and helped another company grow. While he enjoyed it, he was on a school committee at the time for 7 years and became intrigued by K-12 organization. He became assistant superintendent of curriculum in Maine. After a year, a position in Falmouth Maine opened and he became superintendent. He was there for 5 years in that high performing school district. He and his wife have always planned relocation back to MA. He has been in Scarborough Maine for the last 4 years and Lexington has lured him.

*Where do you see yourself in 5 to 10 years?*

He sees himself here in Lexington as your superintendent.

*What characteristics do you, as leader, need to exemplify in order to build collaboration amongst administrators in order for the group to be able to work together in the best interest of the district?*

A superintendent needs to have strong core values and also behave in a fashion that people see that the core values are important. He is very much a collaborative worker and believes in the power of a team to problem solve and get work done. He believes in a student-centered approach. He puts students in the center of everything. His team members would say he is

relationship based, and able to establish high level of trust with people he works with, the community, boards, and teachers. People see that his core values are reflected in his behavior.

*Describe examples of difficult decisions that you might consider to be 1) a failure, 2) a success and 3) controversial – how you handled it, how you arrived at your decision, and what you learned from it.*

Failure: Ordinarily decisions are not something he has made on his own. He would like to believe he does not know that there was a decision made by him that was really a failure.

Success: When he was new superintendent in Falmouth Maine he decided to be strategic very differently. It was modeled after open space technology. No agenda, participants create agenda. Students from fifth grade and up were there, parents, staff, community leaders and members, clergy. He thought it would be a good way to do planning. He and the team identified key improvement targets they were receiving from the community and put together an 18-month improvement plan for the district. It was a good practice, made steady progress, and became a very positive success. He continued to use it and that district still does.

Controversial: There may be things others think were controversial, but he does not recall many. Maybe when moving to a delayed start instead of an early release model of the school day could be considered controversial. He does not know that it was truly controversial, but knows some parents had doubts. It is now year 3 and it is going well.

*Please describe your experience in working with ethnically/culturally diverse student population? And why is diversity important?*

Diversity is important because it means different and is different in some way - different ways of thinking, processing a problem, the power of difference. The value of all diversity is that it brings strength. He lives in Portland, which is very diverse. His current district is diverse economically. His teaching at BU where he had one of his most exhilarating experiences was diverse. He loved the experience.

*How would you define success for yourself as a Superintendent, and how would you define success for our students?*

People quickly look to metrics to measure success, but he thinks the measure to look at is all of the measures of the improvements we are making that have been thoughtfully brought in, and putting into place those actions. It is incremental, not big jumps. His measure of success was engaging the community and stakeholders, listening to the voices, thoughtfully analyzing the data, transferring it to a plan, looking at how those measures changed. He also looks at how efficiently the district is running. The metric of being one of the top places to work is something Lexington should be proud of, a good metric of success. It would be a broad base set of metrics.

*What will be the single greatest personal challenge you anticipate in transitioning to the role of superintendent in Lexington?*

He would need to find good running paths! He's very confident in his ability as a school leader. He cannot think of any big personal challenges he would have. He would have to start rebuilding relationships which is always a challenge. It can be demanding, and take a lot of time, but he can do that and do it well.

*Please share a general overview of your approach to developing a budget. Who do you involve? How do you include various stakeholders, including the School Committee, principals, teachers, community, etc.?*

Community dialogue includes all of these stakeholders: students, parents, community leaders, staff, and teachers. Each school looks at what its targets are, what could be committed to a reasonable amount of work, and that then populates the budget. In Scarborough we did a rebuilding of the foreign language program. It clearly became a high priority, was vetted by the leadership team and board to move forward. The community had to vote on the school budget. It was a process of proposing the resourcing to address the needs.

*Enrollment is growing and space is limited. Aside from adding additional space, what other options would you explore? What information would you need, and how would you obtain it?*

It is a problem that has accelerated quickly in Lexington. In Scarborough they had neighborhood schools, which were very old and outdated. Middle schools are very crowded. They just built a grade 3-5 school with additional capacity. The board engaged in a facilities study, captured all the details necessary and with that system they are able to run any kind of scenario. Lexington needs to see whether neighborhood schools are still neighborhood schools. Age configuration and grade configuration need to be looked at. Redistricting sometimes needs to be a remedy and when well explained with facts behind it, people are able to accept changes. As he was leaving LHS today, he thought lending learning opportunities – a blended model – independent work in an online fashion, is something to look at. Challenge what is and what needs to be. Thoughtful analysis of the way things are now and what they might be like is a worthwhile conversation.

*How would he implement Elementary World Language and what would he look at?*

He would look at what extent there could be a blended learning option. He feels passionate about learning another language. It is an opportunity, and reinforces skills in your primary language. He would look at resources, progression of reintroducing the program and see how technology could be a support.

*Special education is a large part of a district's budget and can be impacted suddenly by unanticipated costs. How do you plan for unanticipated costs and what preventative measures would you take to mitigate them?*

He would look at the trend and try to figure it out. There will be some degree of variance and it may be a big swing. It is the nature of providing special education services. It is where he started his career so he has a very long and deep commitment to special education. Doing a really good job with the programs you have now is a good way to keep the costs consistent. Be cutting edge, use technology – all of those strategies are within reach.

*Have you had to pare down a school budget? If so, how did you manage that process? How would you set priorities if you had to pare down a budget in the future? How do you incorporate community input?*

Community dialogue is what contributes to the focus of moving schools forward. Dialogue and the process of planning helps with the kinds of things we would need to pare back on. He is a big believer of efficient use of the things we already have. It is a business way of thinking. How could we do the same thing for less money; being creative; use resources wisely; reallocation, paring down to sustain through whatever the difficult time it is.

*Question on how to integrate community dialogue after July regarding unexpected sped costs.*

He would try to make reasonable projections on data and trends. He would have a conversation in the fall with the community, having the process started, priorities, and talk about moving resources.

*Across our state – and even country – we often hear that educators feel that the joy of teaching learning is being compromised by an onslaught of mandated assessments. How will you inspire our teachers and staff during this era?*

He would look at the art and science of teaching. There are certain things that are necessary in order to guide our instruction, things research tells us that are our strategies to help our kids learn. Those are science of teaching. Do we have the data we need to get the student outcomes we are looking for? There does have to be a balance and an opportunity for artistry in the classroom. If teachers are saying that too much teaching to the test is happening, it may be a worthy topic to investigate.

*How do you integrate data with your decision-making for the school district? Are there other lenses from which you view a school system? If so, please share with us.*

Data...when is it too much, what's good, what's bad? Data guides us in changing how we improve instruction, and whether the change has the impact you're looking for.

*Can you define for us the roll of the superintendent and the role of the school committee as you see it?*

He thinks the roles should be well defined and understood. The superintendent runs the day-to-day matters in schools. The community plays a pivotal role. We must identify and advocate for the resources needed to meet the needs of students. The superintendent's main response is to look at and orchestrate resources in the district, meet the needs and serve the students well in a way that builds the trust of the community and engages our staff.

*How do you manage interpersonal conflict? Please give an example of an especially taxing problem you have handled. Would you do it differently today?*

It is critically important to maintain positive relationships with students, staff, teachers, and administrators. When things aren't going as well as they might, and something is happening or misinterpreted, he prides himself on being fairly intuitive with people and his approach is very direct. He has learned that the most important thing to do is talk about it. His strategy is to ask what is going on and if he sees something brewing between people he would start coaching/encouraging them to chat with each other and find out what is going on. Early intervention with conflict is the best course of action.

*What would you do to maintain teacher morale and to support teachers – even in the face of budget constraints, state mandates, increasing testing and standards?*

He is pleased to say that in Scarborough teacher morale is very high. It is a combination of efforts on his team to understand the stresses involved in teaching - the increasing stress of what students are going through and what teachers are dealing with. It is important as a leadership team to make teaching doable. Schools and teachers tend to take on too much. Having a very clear focus and sense of mission and a very manageable plate of responsibilities is key to having people feel good about the work that they are doing. The most important thing to do is listen and ensure there is clarity on expectations and that they are reasonable and can be achieved and celebrate the good work that teachers, staff, custodians, etc. are doing.

*Tell us at least 4 elements for effective instruction in some content area.*

When he goes into a classroom he is first looking for good classroom management, students who are engaged, routines, quick transition, evidence there is an objective in what's happening in the

class at the time. He wants to see students joyful and active, and wants to check with students and see what they say is going on in the classroom and why.

*What curricular innovations have you implemented in your current or previous positions? Why?*

He has been involved in the adoption of many different curriculums. The way we use data is to determine if curriculum is on track and more importantly how we engage our teaching staff. The writing curriculum at the elementary level in his district is an example. They got materials, identified teachers with interest and expertise and a team approach to get exposure to curriculum. They then shared the research with a team of evaluators. They looked at expectations and what they were looking for was using a team process.

*Lexington is a high achieving/high performing school district with very high expectations placed on students. Reducing stress is one aspect of addressing student stress, but another side involves enhancing social-emotional intelligence, promoting pro-social behavior, and building resilience in students. What role should school play in developing these skills and how would you go about it? How have you coped with the issue of student stress in your current district?*

He does not know that we can control all sources of stress in our schools. Students and parents can put a lot of stress on the students for their success. Ensuring the right support resources are there and students have access to them and get them as early as possible is important. School has a responsibility as being an education agent to be aware of hazards and risks of high level of stress. His role would be to create the time and space and to facilitate those conversations. And get them to continue outside of school to address stress.

*What are your thoughts about extending the school day or changing start times?*

Research shows changing the times helps adolescents, but factors need to be weighed to see if it works for Lexington. It is a community decision. It is not something that can happen without a good amount of conversation, but logistical concerns can be accommodated. Late starts in Maine (once a month) are loved by their high school students.

*Question regarding strengths and challenges on technology*

It is an essential component and of great value and critical to schools. It is natural for students, but more difficult for the adults. His assessment would be do we have technology that is creating the capacity we need for teachers to reach students and to engage them in a way that is efficient and effective. The schools he is currently in have just gone through looking into a 1 to 1 program for high school. It is a fundamental tool for ensuring instruction in the twenty-first century.

*There will obviously be some transitions with a new superintendent. How do you propose bridging the gap between the previous administration and your leadership style?*

He is a very different person with a different personality and way of approaching things. He spent his summer, when moving to a new district, inviting many people to speak with him. Community people, teachers and staff, students, town leaders, police, etc. By the end of summer he has a good sense of what is going on. And he will have a contact with a broad swath of the population of Lexington. They will then have a good sense of his approach to know the culture of Lexington, and for them to know him.

*How would you make yourself visible in the district? Why is visibility important for the system? How does it help you?*

He is in his schools on a very regular basis. He conducts an observation and follow-up discussion with all new staff. He also does it with fourth and sixth year staff. There is a level of visibility. He intentionally holds meetings in the schools when he can and has individual meetings with all principals in the schools. He has done extensive outreach with the education foundation and is very involved. He's anywhere people ask him to be. To celebrate successes he has an end of the school year celebration of excellence in teaching. It is a huge, vibrant, noisy celebration of teacher learning. Celebrates successes at school board meetings and has demonstrations from students celebrating their uniqueness, community services, successes, etc.

*Question on student's learning the way he envisions it*

He thinks the superintendent and the school committee are a team. When they are both with the school leaders in the district, it is through the development and adoption of the improvement plan. Important that the goals we try to achieve are extended through all of the schools. He thinks that process of creating the improvement plan involves the government and community people. He meets quarterly with them and all of them know what is happening.

*Where does the school committee come in for that process?*

The committee is at the community dialogue and so is he, from the beginning. You are essentially a partner.

*How would he make this happen here?*

He would hope the school committee would be of the mind that this is how they would want to move forward. It would be why they would want him here. He would guess that that is the approach the school committee is looking for. They would need to work together, spend time together, building relationships. And they need to be a strong team.

*Is there anything else you would like to share with us to support your candidacy?*

He is very thankful for today. It was very busy and energizing. He has talked more than he has in a very long time. It was very productive, and he is very impressed with the people he has met and spoken to. He is very interested in being Lexington's next superintendent. On a personal note, he's a dad of 3 young adults, a big runner and will be running a marathon with his daughter in January. He keeps very active and is also a beekeeper.

Margaret Coppe thanked Dr. Entwistle for meeting with us today and she looks forward to further conversation tomorrow. The committee will deliberate on Friday at 4:00pm in an open session.

***MOTION to adjourn (Steigerwald, Crocker)***

***The Motion was approved 4-0.***

The meeting was adjourned at 8:54pm.

Meeting Materials: Agenda

Voted by the School Committee February 10, 2015