

September 22, 2011

Lawrence School Committee  
255 Essex Street  
Lawrence, MA 01840

Dear Mr. Chairman and School Committee Members:

The committee I chaired screened superintendent job applicants. It did not conduct a national search. The School Committee placed Lawrence Superintendent job advertisements in a variety of national publications but your efforts unfortunately coincided with the start of a new school year - when most high level educational leaders are already committed.

Our committee was asked to recommend the Superintendent Job applicants who we considered able to lead transformative improvements throughout the Lawrence Public School System. Our first priority was to screen and select candidates who have, and will, make a clear difference in helping children learn and improve their life chances. Along with this criterion, we also sought candidates able to work well with various constituencies.

Mayor Lantigua appointed the members of the screening committee. No person or entity attempted to influence our deliberations. We considered the need to immediately recommend qualified applicants, and thus help the School Committee resolve the important issue of school leadership facing the City of Lawrence. But our Committee found that need less important than recommending suitable professionals who can clearly lead transformative improvements.

It is my responsibility to report that no two of the current applicants were found suitable for recommendation by the Screening Committee. In keeping with public and executive meeting statutes, and in order to facilitate future searches, we hope to keep all candidate names confidential. We recognize that excellent and worthy candidates submitted applications but it was decided that none was the right fit for this City.

The Committee was tasked with screening to a very high standard. As a result, after interviewing four of seventeen candidates, conducting extensive reference checks, and reflecting on the charge given to the Screening Committee, our committee voted not to recommend candidates for School Committee review.

The Lawrence Superintendent Screening Committee recommends that the posting remain open and that you initiate a nationwide search that includes the recruitment of candidates having the leadership skills, qualifications and successful experience needed to work with this committee to lead the Lawrence Public Schools in its efforts to become a high-performing school district.

Thank you,

Rafael Abislaiman, Chairman  
Lawrence Superintendent Screening Committee