



**MALDEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Superintendent Search Committee**

**City Hall, 215 Pleasant Street, Room #105
March 27, 2024**

Attendance:

NAME	Present	
Jennifer Spadafora,	√	
Sharyn Rose-Zeiberg,	√	
Adam Weldai, Forestdale	√	
Jane Wright, Salemwood	√	
Todd Cole, MHS	√	
Sonia Miller, Linden	√	
Dr. Brian Sheehan, Salemwood	√	
Cara Hovhanessian, District Wide Stem Director K-5	√	Remote
Stephanie Scalese, District Wide SpED Program Mgr.	√	Remote
Sammantha Dorazio, District Wide Subs. School Nurse	√	
Dawn Marie O’Toole, Beebe ESP	√	
Ashanafi Befekadu	√	
Joshua Gold	√	
Heather Segal	√	
Amanda Ceide	√	
Meklit “Meki” Abel	A	
Kashawna Harling, DEI Officer	A	

Also Present: Maria Luise of the Mayor’s Office serving as Clerk of the Committee and consultant, Glenn Koocher, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC).

1. Call to Order and Roll Call:

Co-Chair Jennifer Spadafora called the meeting to order at 6:03PM and stated that there was a quorum present to conduct business. Maria Luise conducted roll call and the members of the Committee present are noted in the Attendance Chart. As also noted above some members participated in the meeting remotely and a zoom link was also provided for members of the public who wished to attend.

2. Approval of Minutes:

Ms. Spadafora asked if there were any comments or changes to the March 14th meeting minutes which the group had received prior for review. Upon motion of Adam Weldai which was seconded by Heather Segal, it was voted unanimously by roll call vote to approve the minutes.

3. Review of Potential Questions:

Mr. Koocher explained that he had received 31 proposed questions from Committee members prior to the meeting which were distributed to the group in memo form (*See Attachment A*). All comments from question writers along with any rationale were included in the memo. The goal for this meeting is to determine which questions are most important to ask.

Mr. Koocher also explained that any questions that are not used will be forwarded to the School Committee for their consideration at the public interviews.

As the group discussed each question, the following categories (or “buckets”) were formed for organizational purposes: opening questions (background), communications, DEI, leadership style, student-centered questions, community and stakeholders, staff retention, curriculum, English Language Learners and Special Education.

Each question included in *Attachment A* was reviewed and discussed by the group. The author of the question had the opportunity to explain and expand on the rationale for including the particular question. The goal was to narrow it down to around 15 to 17 questions for the interviews. Everyone will have a question to ask. Follow-up questions can be asked.

After discussion, each question was put into a category. Some were revised, consolidated with another question or set aside for the School Committee.

The final tally was as follows:

1. Opening questions (background): to address why Malden, how did you prepare and how would you describe yourself.
2. Communications: (3 questions)
3. DEI: (3 questions)
4. Leadership style: (5 questions)
5. Student-centered questions: (6 questions)
6. Community and stakeholders: (3 questions)
7. Staff retention: (1 question)
8. Student Achievement/
Accountability: (1 question)
9. Curriculum: (3 Questions)
10. English Language Learners
/faculty: (3 Questions)
11. Special Education: (1 Question)

It was discussed that all financial questions should be referred to the School Committee as well as those focused on collective bargaining.

Mr. Koocher recommended that for the most part, there should not be more than 2 questions per category or “bucket,” and he suggested that members volunteer to work on a category that needs to be whittled down. Some of the questions can be combined. Jane Wright and Brian Sheehan offered to work on the Leadership bucket and Todd Cole offered to tackle DEI. Koocher explained that he would provide a document organizing the questions by category within the next day or so. This document will be incorporated in these minutes as *Attachment B*. Members that want to work on a category can let Ms. Spadafora know. All updated questions should be returned by April 2nd.

4. Schedule and planning next steps:

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 9th at 6:00 PM at the Forestdale School. The main topics for discussion will be finalizing the interview questions and considering who to interview.

5. Adjournment:

On a motion by Ms. Dorazio, seconded by Ms. Wright, it was voted unanimously by roll call vote to adjourn.

The Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Maria Luise

DRAFT

ATTACHMENT A

MEMORANDUM

To: Malden Search Committee

From: Alicia Mallon and Glenn Koocher, MASC

Date: Sunday, March 24, 2024 – Revised as of 8:30 p.m.

RE: Questions Proposed for Initial Confidential Interviews

The following questions have been submitted under the deadline for initial questions. Please review them and identify the ones you think are the most appropriate for the interviews. We can review them all at the next meeting. They are listed in no particular order. A few have been edited minimally. All comments from question writers and all prefaces that ultimately lead to questions have been included. These include explanations of the rationale behind the questions or topics.

This list has been updated on Sunday evening, March 24 with an additional 10 questions submitted after the deadline from committee members, but it excludes questions forwarded only on GoogleDocs. GoogleDocs requires that we give information and register with Google. For that reason, we do not use it. If your questions can be forwarded on WORD or pasted to an e-mail, we can add them to the group prior to the meeting.

About You, The Candidate

How would you describe yourself in one word? (Samantha)

(This question makes the Candidate think on the spot, and really hon in on there most important/special attribute)

If we were to "google" you, is there anything about what we would find that you would want to talk about with this group? (Dawn)

Addressing Race and Bias

How have race and racism played a role in the development of your professional practice? (Todd)

Working with the School Committee

What do you need from the School Committee in order to be successful? (Sharyn)

Hearing the Community - Outreach and Listening

A lot of people don't feel listened too. If selected for Superintendent how will you make staff, students, parents and the community feel heard? **Samantha**

(This is important as it will address needs of staff, student, parents and community)

Whom do you see as the most critical stakeholders for the public schools in Malden? How would you reach out to all of Malden stakeholders to build collaborative relationships? (Dawn)

The Important Role of the Superintendent

What's the most important role of a Superintendent? **Samantha**

(This allows us to see- what the Candidate sees the role is and allows the committee to see if it matches what the community is looking for as well)

Needs of Students and Focus of Teachers

What do you see as the most critical need of students in our school systems? Where should the primary focus be for teachers in the classroom today? **(Todd)**

This question is based on the "Well-Being of Students" question suggested on page 36 of the sample packet we were given. Without giving away this is what I'm looking for, I'd be interested to see if any of the candidates identify "Social and Emotional Learning/Wellbeing" as the primary focus.

Transition plan for the Superintendency

As the new superintendent, what would you do in your first 90 days on the job? What would a transition look like under your leadership?

Diversity and Equity – Serving Advanced Students

What is your view on and experience with creating equitable programs throughout a district for students who are academically advanced for their grade? (Sharyn)

Strategy for Overall District Improvement and Measuring Success (Ashenafi)

What policies will you implement to turn one of the most diverse school districts in the state to a top performing school district while also ensuring every child in the district is well prepared for a future beyond high school. What type of policies and actions lead to such outcomes and what tools/metrics would you use to track progress towards these goals? (Ashenafi)

Improving Outcomes in Math and Literacy

For kids currently underperforming in math and literacy, how do you end the cycle of under performance? What specific and proven /or innovative strategies will you implement in schools to

support teachers/principals/other stakeholders to help their students improve their performance?
(Ashenafi)

Special Education - Philosophy of Inclusion.

What is your philosophy on inclusion for special needs students and can you give an example of an initiative on inclusion you spearheaded in your previous work experience? (Amanda)

Collective Bargaining

How do you see the role of superintendent in collaboration with the school committee using the collective bargaining process to promote student achievement and strategies to improve student learning? (Dawn)

Multilingual Language Learning - (commonly known as ESL/ELL/ELE/ELD)

What is your experience in supporting the needs of language learners? (Sonia)

The following note accompanied the ELL Questions:

Note to Search Committee: there is no interview question that deals directly with English language learners (MLL, formerly ESL/ELL) except by way of "A Diverse Community." Given the numbers of MLLs and their families in Malden - in particular given the surge since the pandemic - it is crucial that our future Superintendents are well-versed in matters of best practices regarding instruction, connection with families, language and cultural challenges in regards to access to special education, social emotional learning, counseling and curriculum instruction in general.

We currently have over 60 different languages in Malden. Relatedly we are in need of additional trained and experienced MLL staff during a time when we're experiencing severe teacher shortages, and a high demand for MLL teachers. Our MLL staff, general education teachers, specialists and education support professionals (ESPs) are in need of appropriate curricula, educational materials, and professional development to assist our MLL students acquire both the English language, as well as academic content.

Children in Distress

How have you provided access to social emotional learning (SEL) or counseling for MLL students, in particular those who were not yet fluent in English? (Sonia)

Balancing Financial Constraints

Can you give me an example of how you have been able to balance financial constraints with the needs of special education students and programming? (Amanda)

Focus on Students with Special Needs (Imene)

There is consensus that it is crucial and essential for the incoming superintendent to have qualifications and experiences in building, leading and implementing inclusion focused programs and best practices. Please share your background working with students with special needs and your view of how best to ensure that students are well served?

*DESE's educational vision is to work with districts, schools, and educators to promote teaching and learning that is **antiracist, inclusive, multilingual, and multicultural**; that values and affirms each and every student and their families; and that creates equitable opportunities and experiences for all students, **particularly those who have been historically underserved**.*

I am hoping the list of candidates we will select from will have these key skills and competency. It is time for Malden to be inclusive and forward thinking for our most vulnerable and segregated students.

Communicating with a Multi-Cultural Constituency

Can you outline your strategies for fostering transparency and effective communication within our diverse and multilingual school district? How do you plan to ensure that all members of the community, regardless of language or cultural background, feel informed and engaged? (Heather)

Communicating within the District

Tell us about a time where you recognized an internal communication gap within the staff of your district. What did you do to address the gap and what was the outcome? (Amanda)

Promoting Equity and Student Success – Economically Vulnerable Students/Families

Can you provide examples of your experience working within a district with a significant number of families living at or below the poverty level? How have you addressed the unique challenges and needs of these students and families, and what strategies have you implemented to promote equity and student success in such environments? (Heather)

Post-Covid – Pursuing an Effective Recovery

Reflecting on the lasting impact of Covid-19 on education, how do you envision addressing the evolving needs of our students and families nearly four years later? What specific strategies and initiatives do you propose to ensure that we meet students and families where they are, considering the diverse challenges they may have faced during this period? (Heather)

Effective Teaching in and Learning in Today's Environment

As parents, we have seen steady growth in the reliance on online resources as educational tools both in and out of the classroom. We recognize that these tools often aid with the ability of the district to standardize curriculum and produce data. We are concerned about the reliability of this data, as well

as the direct negative affects many of these platforms have on the students, particularly in math. From our experience, students are not able to learn the inner workings of the subject and develop deep understanding from these platforms. At best, to get through the processes, students often resort to mindless data entry, learning what the program wants them to input, without understanding why. Conversely, there are also moments when kids understand the problem but the interface creates confusion. And at worst, they are exceedingly frustrating to work with and cause the kids to believe they "hate math." As parents, that's heartbreaking, and frustrating to witness a program that is systematically turning kids away from math (which can, and should be a fascinating, and engaging subject). Empirical data studying the effects of these platforms supports these observations.

What would your plans be moving forward regarding the use of these online platforms? **(Josh)**

Teaching and Learning – Curriculum with MLL Educators

How have you supported MLL educators in providing instruction for MLLs? Beyond the MLL department, what goals or professional development have you set for general education teachers, specialists and/or counselors in helping MLLs succeed? **(Sonia)**

Working with Students and Families with High Needs and Complex Challenges

NOTE: This question has been edited to remove any comments that would violate the privacy rights of students and families.

It is not unusual to serve parents with children who have diagnosed social and emotional health issues that might have in the past required hospitalization. Malden High School, for example, is not equipped to meet the needs of such children. Unless families have the financial flexibility to provide private educational opportunities for their children, they are stuck in this situation.

Currently, there is a transitional program available, but there is not a placement option, which is desperately needed.

Students have spoken about this and their fear that they might be back on the path to requiring hospitalization and that they were trying to find a way to avoid this.

Temporary programs could potentially help some students, but for others, the temporary nature of such a temporary program adds to the stress and anxiety that school can create. Individual families are left to decide the best way to proceed, but challenging the school can become an emotionally challenging process that would certainly take a toll on any family. Although the staff at Malden High School has been supportive and empathetic, faculty can be bound by the structural frameworks available. This is a systemic problem that affects not just the families involved, but the entire school system.

What are your plans and goals to meet the needs of students with social / emotional health issues? **(Josh)**

Succession Planning: Planning for the Future: Growing Aspiring Education Leaders for Malden

In light of the rate of superintendent turnover in Massachusetts, MASC encourages districts with high quality superintendents to identify and nurture aspiring leaders. This would provide aspiring superintendents with the invaluable opportunity of observing a quality leader addressing problems in their own district.

As superintendent, what are some of the leadership opportunities you would put in place for educators and administrators in Malden? (Brian)

Recruiting and Retaining A Superintendent and Leadership Team and Staff

The state of the leadership pipeline in Massachusetts was painted in a negative light when 79% of Massachusetts' superintendents reported their districts have not created a plan for sustained leadership/succession. What initiatives have you worked on in the past to promote sustainability in the top post? (Brian)

What is your experience in hiring and retaining a diverse work staff? (Sharyn)

Attracting and Retaining Good Teachers

As a parent, I am well aware that attracting and retaining the best educators is sometimes challenging. In some cases, schools rely on inexperienced teachers to fill the gaps. How do you ensure high quality education in a challenging environment ? What actions will you take to attract and retain experienced educators? (Ashenafi)

Building Relationships with Partners in Education

The 2020 AASA Decennial Study clearly specified superintendents "must leverage relationships with local universities" to develop a superior teacher talent pipeline. Tell us about the success you've had creating and building these external partnerships. (Brian)

Curriculum

We have participated in curriculum adoption in multiple content areas in the last five years, and we are at different places in those implementations. Please share an experience you have with curriculum adoption, including your role in the adoption, and describe what you would view the role of the superintendent to be in continuing to support those ongoing initiatives. (Cara)

Role of Content Directors

What do you see as the role of content directors in supporting professional growth of staff and how would you work to support their efforts in that role? (Cara)

Potential Additional Questions not formally presented.

Your Values

What are the values that drive you in your work? Should you be encouraging the community to move toward your values where differences occur; or should you, as superintendent move to the values of the community if they can be made mutually workable?

Your Philosophy of Leadership and Leadership Style

How would you describe your leadership style and how you developed it.

Budget and Finance

What is your experience working with the stakeholders, including the school committee, in preparing a budget that meets the goals of the district?

Experience in Generating Positive Change

Can you tell us about a situation or time when your leadership has helped make a positive change in a school, district, or organization?

Maintaining your Balance

The superintendency, central office and principal positions are challenging, exhausting, and can take a toll on those of you who hold those positions. How do you find your balance and how do you relax.

ATTACHMENT B

THE FOLLOWING GROUPINGS (“BUCKETS”) HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED:

1. Opening Questions

An opening question is needed to address a) why Malden; b) how did you prepare for this position; c) How would you want to be described or how would you describe yourself.

2. Student Centered Questions (6 questions)

Needs of Students and Focus of Teachers

What do you see as the most critical need of students in our school systems? Where should the primary focus be for teachers in the classroom today? (Todd)

Diversity and Equity – Serving Advanced Students

What is your view on and experience with creating equitable programs throughout a district for students who are academically advanced for their grade? (Sharyn)

Children in Distress

How have you provided access to social emotional learning (SEL) or counseling for MLL students, in particular those who were not yet fluent in English? (Sonia)

Promoting Equity and Student Success – Economically Vulnerable Students/Families

Can you provide examples of your experience working within a district with a significant number of families living at or below the poverty level? How have you addressed the unique challenges and needs of these students and families, and what strategies have you implemented to promote equity and student success in such environments and give us an example if you can? (Heather)

Post-Covid – Pursuing an Effective Recovery

Reflecting on the lasting impact of Covid-19 on education, how do you envision addressing the evolving needs of our students and families nearly four years later? What specific strategies and initiatives do you propose to ensure that we meet students and families where they are, considering the diverse challenges they may have faced during this period? (Heather)

Working with Students and Families with High Needs and Complex Challenges

What are your plans and goals to meet the needs of students with social / emotional health issues? (Josh)

3. **Communications** (3 Questions)

Collective Bargaining

- In recent years, Collective Bargaining and Teacher Contracts have been in the news across the state. It can either be viewed as confrontational or as an opportunity to be collaborative. Malden will begin the process shortly. Please tell us about your experiences with collective bargaining on both management and the teacher side of the table. What do you feel is the best role for the superintendent? (Dawn)
 - Follow Up: How do you see the role of superintendent in collaboration with the school committee using the collective bargaining process to promote student achievement and strategies to improve student learning? (Dawn)

Communicating with a Multicultural Constituency

- Can you outline your strategies for fostering transparency and effective communication within our diverse and multilingual school district? How do you plan to ensure that all members of the community, regardless of language or cultural background, feel informed and engaged? (Heather)

4. **Community and Stakeholders** (3 Questions)

Hearing the Community - Outreach and Listening

- A lot of people don't feel listened to. If selected for Superintendent how will you make staff, students, parents, and the community feel heard? **Samantha**
- Whom do you see as the most critical stakeholders for the public schools in Malden? How would you reach out to all of Malden stakeholders to build collaborative relationships? (Dawn)

Building Relationships with Partners in Education

- The 2020 AASA Decennial Study clearly specified superintendents "must leverage relationships with local universities" to develop a superior teacher talent pipeline. Tell us about the success you've had creating and building these external partnerships. (Brian)

5. Leadership/Leadership Style (5 Questions)

Why Malden – Applying Your Strengths

- It takes a team of people to run the School department well. Can you describe what strengths you believe you bring to the team and what qualities/strengths you will be looking for in your central administrative team? (Jane)
- What is the one thing you learned from each step in your career (teacher, admin, district) that you think has helped you to become the type of superintendent our district needs? (Jane)

Communicating within the District

- Tell us about a time where you recognized an internal communication gap within the staff of your district. What did you do to address the gap and what was the outcome? (Amanda)

Succession Planning: Planning for the Future: Growing Aspiring Education Leaders for Malden

- In light of the rate of superintendent turnover in Massachusetts, MASC encourages districts with high quality superintendents to identify and nurture aspiring leaders. This would provide aspiring superintendents with the invaluable opportunity of observing a quality leader addressing problems in their own district. As superintendent, what are some of the leadership opportunities you would put in place for educators and administrators in Malden? (Brian)

Recruiting and Retaining A Superintendent and Leadership Team and Staff

- The state of the leadership pipeline in Massachusetts was painted in a negative light when 79% of Massachusetts' superintendents reported their districts have not created a plan for sustained leadership/succession. What initiatives have you worked on in the past to promote sustainability in the top post? (Brian)

6. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (3 Questions)

Addressing Race and Bias

- How have race and racism played a role in the development of your professional practice? (Todd)

Focus on Students with Special Needs (Imene)

- There is consensus that it is crucial and essential for the incoming superintendent to have qualifications and experiences in building, leading and implementing inclusion focused programs and best practices. Please share your background working with

students with special needs and your view of how best to ensure that students are well served?

- What are your experiences hiring and retaining a diverse staff? (Sharyn)

7. **Staff Retention** (1 Question)

Attracting and Retaining Good Teachers

- As a parent, I am well aware that attracting and retaining the best educators is sometimes challenging. In some cases, schools rely on inexperienced teachers to fill the gaps. How do you ensure high quality education in a challenging environment? What actions will you take to attract and retain experienced educators? (Ashenafi)

8. **Student Achievement/Accountability** (1 Question)

- What policies will you implement to turn one of the most diverse school districts in the state to a top performing school district while also ensuring every child in the district is well prepared for a future beyond high school?
- What type of policies and actions lead to such outcomes and what tools or metrics would you use to track progress towards the goal of ensuring that every child is well prepared for beyond high school? (Ashenafi)

9. **Curriculum** (3 Questions)

- What type of policies and actions lead to such outcomes and what tools/metrics would you use to track progress towards these goals? (Ashenafi)

Improving Outcomes in Math and Literacy

- For kids currently underperforming in math and literacy, how do you end the cycle of under performance? What specific and proven /or innovative strategies will you implement in schools to support teachers/principals/other stakeholders to help their students improve their performance? (Ashenafi)

Curriculum

- We have participated in curriculum adoption in multiple content areas in the last five years, and we are at different places in those implementations. Please share an experience you have with curriculum adoption, including your role in the adoption, and describe what you would view the role of the superintendent to be in continuing to support those ongoing initiatives. (Cara)

10. Special Education (1 Question)

Special Education – Philosophy of Inclusion

- What is your philosophy on inclusion for special needs students and can you give an example of an initiative to promote initiatives in the past to support professional development for teachers to support inclusion. (Amanda)

11. English Language Learners and Faculty (3 Questions)

Multilingual Language Learning - (commonly known as ESL/ELL/ELE/ELD)

- What is your experience in supporting the needs of language learners? (Sonia)

Teaching and Learning – Curriculum with MLL Educators

- How have you supported MLL educators in providing instruction for MLLs? Beyond the MLL department, what goals or professional development have you set for general education teachers, specialists and/or counselors in helping MLLs succeed? (Sonia)
- How have you provided access to social emotional learning (SEL) or counseling for MLL students, in particular those who were not yet fluent in English? (Sonia)

Questions Referred to the School Committee

Finance: All financial questions are referred to the school committee.

Balancing Financial Constraints

Can you give me an example of how you have been able to balance financial constraints with the needs of special education students and programming? (Amanda)

How have you provided access to social emotional learning (SEL) or counseling for MLL students, in particular those who were not yet fluent in English? (Sonia)

Working with the School Committee

What do you need from the School Committee in order to be successful? (Sharyn)

Collective Bargaining

How do you see the role of the superintendent in collaboration with the school committee using the collective bargaining process to promote student achievement and strategies to improve student learning? (Dawn)