

Minutes of June 13, 2017.

Present – Caroline O’Neill, Nancy DeLuca, Jane Martin, Jacqueline Weisman, Dr. Lisha Cabral, Dr. Leslie Scollins

The only item on the Agenda is the School Committee interview of Assistant Superintendent Finalist Dr. Leslie Scollins.

Chair Weisman opened the meeting at 3:30 and welcomed Dr. Scollins. Chair Weisman informed Dr. Scollins of the format to be followed which was: the introduction of School Committee Members, followed by Dr. Scollins’ opening statement (5 minutes), School Committee questions and follow-up (40 minutes), Dr. Scollins’ closing statement (5 minutes), and questions for the Committee (10 minutes).

Dr. Scollins made an opening statement.

Dr. Scollins, who has spent much of her professional career, is Marshfield, talked about the opportunity to expand her horizons outside of Marshfield. While she saw many similarities between Easton and Marshfield, she also thought that Easton presented opportunities that were not available in her present District. She was excited about the possibility to join a District where she could meet new people, bring her experience to the table and help a District grow and improve.

Ms. O’Neill asked the following questions:

1. Please describe your involvement, if any, in the recruitment and hiring of teachers or other staff. Our building principals are primarily responsible for overseeing the selection process of new faculty, but what specific practices would you encourage to promote consistency across schools? What ideas do you have about how a district can attract and retain outstanding educators?

“The most important thing we do for our students is hiring and it can be very costly for our children when we don’t do it well.” Dr. Scollins discussed her experience with the hiring process which focused on the following points:

- Executing a thorough and exhaustive search process
- Giving peers an opportunity to provide input to the process
- Listening carefully to references
- Staying connected to colleges and universities (such as BSU, Curry, etc.)

After the hire, Dr. Scollins discussed the importance of providing guidance on both the District culture and the expectations of the position. It is important that “when they arrive, we do not forget about them”. She connected a strong teacher induction program with success in the first few years and with the ability for a District to develop and retain good educators.

Dr. Scollins has been responsible for hiring staff within her building and has also participated on other District-wide search committees. She believes that it is important for a District to be thinking of new ways to attract qualified candidates, whether through career fairs, making connections with other industries, and providing opportunities for professionals who may be making career transitions.

2. Can you describe a time when you tried to convince the administrators and faculty of an individual school, or of an entire district, to adopt a significant change in practice? How did it go? What did you learn from the experience?

Dr. Scollins discussed the need to advocate for her students to ensure that they are successful and prepared to move forward in the District. She discussed a time when the District was pursuing the adoption of a new reading anthology. It was a challenging time because it highlighted the philosophical differences that existing around teaching young children to read. The process highlighted the need to attack reading from a variety of perspectives and methods. There was some push back because there was a sense that the decision-making process was happening from a “top-down” approach and there was a need to ensure that the final decision would feel collaborative. Once the decision was made, Dr. Scollins discussed the importance of an implementation process that brought together different perspectives to embrace the new reading program. The District discovered ways to weave in various approaches that would support and supplement the new program. “Now we have an amazing collaboration.”

3. What experience do you have in grant writing? Have any of your grant proposals resulted in funding?

Dr. Scollins outlined her grant writing experience in various areas. She has been successful at obtaining grants in the 10K – 15K amount from the Marshfield Educational Foundation. Some of these grants were for technology in the classrooms, several were focused on classroom libraries and Steam Labs. She was particularly proud of the grant that established outdoor garden classrooms. This highlighted the building of communities and included a relationship with the High School where all participants “are equal in a garden”. Dr. Scollins has also worked with the local CPA board to obtain funds to build an ADA compliant playground. She was open about her limited experience with both title I and title II grants, however, was confident that she could quickly fill that gap if she were to be offered the position of Assistant Superintendent.

Ms. DeLuca asked the following questions:

1. What has been your experience with the educator evaluation process? What impact do you think the process has on the quality of instruction in the classroom?

Dr. Scollins believes that the educator evaluation process allows for better conversations with educators around teaching and learning; it truly allows for meaningful moments without being intimidating. Dr. Scollins was involved with the implementation of the new educator evaluation process and the tool – Teach point – which is used in the Marshfield School District. The District has continued to work with teachers to customize and streamline the process. The educator evaluation process has allowed the District to improve goal setting at both an individual and District-wide level. As with many Districts, Marshfield has experienced the time-constraints associated with evaluation development and implementation, however they continue to work with and rely on DESE for resources and tools which assist with the adoption.

2. Describe the methods of communication you have found to be most effective when communicating with students, faculty, staff and parents. How do you adapt when your methods don't seem to be working?

Dr. Scollins believes that one of the most important elements for successful communication is accessibility – being out in public, being visible and available at a Pre-K through 12 level and working hard to remain approachable for staff, parents, members of the community, and students.

As principal, Dr. Scollins creates a culture in her building which is focused on kindness and a consistent set of rules and expectations. She knows the name of every student in her building and creates personal relationships with her teachers. Dr. Scollins also makes use of email, newsletters, daily notices, Sunday phone calls and websites to provide multiple vehicles for communication within her building and the parents and community. She is committed to a 24-hour response time with any inquiry or issue which is brought to her attention.

3. How have you demonstrated an ability to establish a positive change in the overall performance of a district? How did it turn out? What would you do differently?

While a principal, Dr. Scollins was able to move a building in AYP trouble to a level 1 performing school. She accomplished this through a holistic approach with her staff. She enabled more common planning time and emphasized a data driven approach to improve student performance. She created intervention teams who were focused on specific students and student outcomes; constantly looking at benchmark and MCAS data to identify areas for improvement.

Ms. Martin asked the following questions:

1. How have you motivated staff members who may be struggling with their instructional practice? Can you give some specific examples and how have

you followed up to ensure there has been improvement?

Dr. Scollins is a strong proponent of instructional rounds. She works with her leadership team to determine focus areas and will proactively identify “experts” in critical areas. Participation in instructional rounds is a voluntary, however, it has opened doors for educators and truly encourages an environment of collaboration. Dr. Scollins also believes that the educator evaluation tool provides an opportunity to continually monitor and access a problem area. She has also worked to develop relationships across other schools in her District; she emphasized the importance of starting with a “soft touch” but firmly believes that supporting teachers and providing opportunities for teachers to develop their skills is something that must include school leaders, the union and senior administrators in the District.

2. What programs have you implemented that have used technology to improve the educational process? What were the outcomes? What would you change about these programs to make them more effective?

Dr. Scollins discussed the importance of using technology that makes sense for the situation and the need to not just see technology as an “add on” but to truly embed technology in the learning environment. Dr. Scollins talked about listening to teachers to hear how they would like to be able to use technology. The District implements 1 to 1 technology at the High School via Chromebooks and there is the use of interactive whiteboards and document cameras throughout her building. Dr. Scollins connected the effective use of technology to support the English Language Learners in her District; there are 7 Languages in her building and highlighted how technology can be used to jumpstart summer programs.

3. Describe some ways that you have been involved with your school community outside of your job responsibilities. How has your school district benefited from these activities?

Dr. Scollins has integrated the spirit of volunteerism within her school and this is reflected in her connection to the community of Marshfield. She volunteers in her Church, teaches CCD, has volunteered for Safe Grad night. She believes it is important to stay connected and “throw our hat in the ring” so that there is an understanding of the true nature of a community; what is important to its citizens. She believes that this effort builds social capital that is beneficial to her school and the District.

Chair Weisman asked the following questions:

1. Describe the involvement you have had in developing and evaluating curriculum. Describe the process you used, who was involved, and how you evaluated whether the curriculum resulted in improved student learning.

Dr. Scollins believes it is important to constantly review curriculum; she described a process of constantly circling back to make sure the curriculum content and delivery is working for students. As part of this effort, Dr. Scollins established a committee (K-6) to look at curriculum standards, determine an end point, "where we want to go", and develop an adoption template to get there. Dr. Scollins described an example when the District was looking at a new math program. There was an initial phase which narrowed down the selection from 6 to 2 choices. Both of those programs were brought into the schools for lessons and evaluations by educators. The purpose was to let staff evaluate the programs based on the rubrics which they had developed. Once selected, Dr. Scollins discussed the importance of implementing a new program with fidelity and to look for gaps that are identified, circle back and improve.

2. What, if any, programs in your current district do you think would work well in Easton and how would you implement those programs?

Dr. Scollins gave several examples where she believed her experience might be particularly beneficial to Easton. These areas included:

- Response to Intervention – sharing the model used in Marshfield with our District
- English Language Learners – looking at how we provide services to these students
- Connections between School Levels – Marshfield works to establish and maintain connections between school levels (for example, High School students' coordination of time to attend recess at the elementary schools) which Dr. Scollins believes would be beneficial in Easton

3. The assistant superintendent's busiest time of the day is usually 2:30 to 5:30 because that is when teachers and staff are available to meet with her. In addition, the assistant superintendent also must attend a number of evening events and meetings (including school committee meetings). Do you see a problem in maintaining that schedule?

Dr. Scollins saw no significant difference between the time demands of her current position and the time demands of the Assistant Superintendent. She currently attends several evening meetings and understand the priority is on the needs of the District and that her schedule must be adjusted to accommodate those needs. She believes that the spotlight must be on excellence and that meeting that expectation is a priority.

4. Based upon what you have learned about the Easton Public Schools, what is your impression of our district?

Dr. Scollins saw many similarities between Easton and Marshfield. She observed that they had both experienced a “shift around economics” in recent years and that perhaps the District had funding levels which were not where they needed to be. Her experience in Marshfield would be useful here because she understands the importance of connecting with the community around the needs in the Schools. She believes that there are many opportunities for dialogue and she would look forward to those opportunities. Dr. Scollins highlighted the idea that it is important to respect the community while you are trying to move things forward; there is a balance to maintain between that “push/pull” so that you can be successful.

In closing, Dr. Scollins thanked the Committee for the opportunity to interview for this position. She commended the work of the Search Committee and said that she had thoroughly enjoyed this process. It was clear to her that Easton is an open community, focused on the needs of the students and that she was excited about the possibility presented by the position – the District is clearly a good place to share and to grow.

On a motion by Chair Weisman, seconded by Ms. DeLuca, with a 4-0 vote, the Committee adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ms. Jane Martin
Secretary