

*Stakeholder Input Report for*

# **New London Public Schools**

**New London, Connecticut**

*submitted by*



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## EXECUTIVE RECRUITMENT & DEVELOPMENT

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### **New London Public Schools New London, Connecticut District Stakeholder Input**

#### **Executive Summary**

On February 25 and 26, 2014, McPherson & Jacobson consultants conducted eight school/community stakeholder sessions to gather input regarding the selection of a new superintendent for New London Public Schools. In addition, stakeholders who could not attend any of the sessions could submit their responses electronically.

Each group was asked to respond to the same four questions noted in bold below. Consultants provided a review of the timeline and selection process, and stakeholders were given the opportunity to ask questions of the search consultants.

Consistent themes and ideas across stakeholder groups are captured in the Executive Summary below. Following the Executive Summary is a complete record of responses recorded for all stakeholder sessions, as well as those submitted electronically. Statements that were provided to the consultants are included in their entirety in Appendix A.

#### **1. What makes New London a good place to live?**

New London is a small, close knit town whose residents embrace diversity and value the richness it brings to community life. Several colleges and the Coast Guard Academy contribute to the city's diversity on multiple levels. Affordable housing, great beaches, family oriented activities, an emphasis on the arts, museums, and outdoor recreation opportunities all make New London a great place to live. The city has a rich history and there are many historical sites and attractions in the area. Residents also have easy access to Providence, Hartford, Boston and New York if they want a "big city" experience.

#### **2. What makes New London a good school district - for students and staff?**

Overall, the kids are great - bright, thoughtful, and respectful. Most teachers are caring and committed and there are many good administrators. Diversity is valued by students and staff and everyone is made to feel that they belong. The district boasts four new elementary facilities and as well as a new magnet high school. New London is poised to become the first all magnet school district in the state and expects to increase revenues as a result of out of district students coming into the system. A wide variety of program offerings, designed to meet the needs of students and families, demonstrate that New London is on the cutting edge. Examples beyond the magnet high school include an inter-district pre-school magnet program, extended day at

elementary schools, Renzulli academy and STEM/STEAM offerings. The district is making significant progress despite its challenges.

### **3. What are the issues in New London Public Schools that a new superintendent needs to be prepared to handle?**

Communication is very poor across the district. This has fostered mistrust and a sense that it is a deliberate effort to avoid having to engage, consider others' input or provide a rationale for decisions. Because of long term fiscal constraints and flat funded budgets, pay scales are not seen as competitive with other districts and staffing and supports are perceived to be inadequate to meet the needs of the student population. Many staff feel burned out, morale is very low, turnover is high and many are of the opinion that people are not necessarily leaving because of low pay, but because they can't continue to work where they don't feel supported or valued.

People are disheartened by the negative reputation of New London students/schools and feel more needs to be done to combat the misperception. There is frustration over: a sense that testing is overemphasized; that administrators care more about making students follow rules than engaging them in learning; and that a lack of attention to details of magnet implementation, such as differing district calendars and inclement weather decisions, results in interrupted instruction and confusion. Some fear that the push back the district is experiencing from districts that are sending students to New London presages another unintended consequence.

The town is economically divided and the tax burden falls on wealthier residents who may not have children in NLPS. Local politics are seen as a barrier to progress as evidenced by tension between the board and the city, insufficient advocacy at the state and federal levels, and finger pointing instead of accountability regarding resource problems.

The current influence of the state over the district is also seen as a challenge for a new superintendent.

### **4. What skills, qualities and characteristics will the new superintendent need in order to be successful in New London?**

New London Public Schools needs a leader who values diversity, likes children, puts students at the center of all decision-making and has experience with similar student populations. S/he must have excellent communication skills, seek input from affected stakeholders when making decisions and be transparent about their rationales and actions.

The next superintendent should be an experienced education leader, able to make difficult decisions and see them through. Experience with magnet schools and business acumen, especially as it relates to running a magnet district is also needed. S/he must be an advocate for the district at all levels and work collaboratively with the board and the city council.

The community seeks a leader who has integrity, is innovative and open minded, likable, approachable visible and energetic. Finally, while s/he must have a sense of urgency about needed improvements, the superintendent needs to be committed to creating a stable foundation for continuous improvement, not just look for "quick wins" and move on to another position.

**Stakeholder Input**  
**Reported as received from each Stakeholder Group**

**Name of Stakeholder Group:** Department Managers

**School Administrators**

**1. What makes New London a good place to live?**

- This is the best area in the state
- Affordable
- Beaches, ski areas, close to Boston, NY, Providence, - anything you'd like to see or do, you're close to
- Diversity is a benefit
- Homes are not cookie cutters – architecturally interesting and charming
- Restaurants, variety of things to do
- Historical

**2. What makes New London a good school district - for students and staff?**

- Students make it great for staff
- Kids don't take staff for granted – they always speak and go out of their way to say hi outside of school
- Teachers are great
- Caring staff
- Most staff that are here want to be here – most kids understand that we're in this together

**3. What are the issues in New London Public Schools that a new superintendent needs to be prepared to handle?**

- Negative misperceptions about students
- There are “tracks” that run through NL – south end of town is the affluent side
- 50 percent of property is tax exempt and tax burden falls on people in wealthy are of town who may not have kids in the system
- Massive turnover – minimal increases in budget – longest running flat funded budget in state
- No continuity – superintendent churn and principal turnover, two year board turnover, special master – constant state of flux, if not chaos
- Lots of plans pushed down – no time to completely implement them, and no evaluation of their effectiveness before next round is pushed down
- *Despite all this we are performing well!!!*
- NL attracts a transient low-income population and many kids are living in horrific circumstances
- High ELL, high sped pop
- Not enough mental health services
- Some power brokers in city don't send their children to our schools

**4. What skills, qualities and characteristics will the new superintendent need in order to be successful in New London?**

- Don't want the antithesis of what we had – don't need glad handing
- Needs to be committed to the district
- Doesn't have a steep learning curve – we don't have time for that
- Don't want someone who implements the flavor of the day
- Needs to be able to be able to navigate the political organizations for the benefit of the district
- Needs to understand the business aspects of magnet schools program
- New funding needs to be used to rebuild the infrastructure
- Needs to care about kids and put them at the center of decision making
- Needs to be able to work with the board to get the support needed for initiatives
- Needs to make sure we get the basics right – quality teaching in every classroom and leadership in every building
- Someone who has led buildings understands the dynamics of a school and the learning process

## **Central Office Administrators**

### **1. What makes New London a good place to live?**

- Halfway between Boston and N, offers a wide range of social activities
- Community that is well vested in New London
- Issues are not insurmountable
- Local colleges
- Local art museums, including for children
- Into families – offers many activities and supports for families
- Small town atmosphere
- 32 different cultures, but you can get to know people quickly and easily
- Sports are important to the town

### **2. What makes New London a good school district - for students and staff?**

- First and only all magnet district in the state
- Doesn't take long to get to know the players and build networks
- Four out of six school locations are new
- We are successful – data shows that people believe in our programming
- Special education has some of the best programs and practitioners so kids have what they need to be successful
- NL has high standards – we are only district with literacy standard for graduation – we also have academic standards for sports eligibility/participation
- Great school leaders and solid staff who are committed to our kids and stay despite being able to make more money elsewhere
- Innovation has been supported with state funding
- District is cutting edge – new facilities and STEM/STEAM curriculum - our kids have a lot of options
- Wonderful kids – we are more in tune with our students' need than most districts are
- We are inclusive, sense of team and staff who are supportive of parents
- Extended day programs serve children whose parents are working
- We are working with the National Center on Time & Learning to develop and implement high-quality, sustainable, expanded learning time models
- NL has received accolades for academic achievement, evaluation work, etc.
- Flat funding has not kept us from making progress
- We are a team – open to new ideas
- First inter-district magnet - Friendship School is a preK - K partnership with Waterford that prepares students from both district's to navigate a diverse learning community
- “For the good of the district,” is a phrase you hear often – we are improving our ability to attract quality people who are willing to work hard
- Talent office is working on engagement and retention initiatives to retain the talent we have

### **3. What are the issues in New London Public Schools that a new superintendent needs to be prepared to handle?**

- Town is polarized –
- Underfunding
- Morale is poor
- People are burned out
- There is no recognition or understanding of the effort that goes into getting the positive results we see
- Central office and secondary schools are in severely outdated buildings —central office is not accessible to public and barely accessible among the staff inside- sends a message that we are not a state of the art system
- Magnet schools in NL are drawing students out of other districts causing push back from those districts
- Poor connections with state and federal level – our voice is not heard
- While elementary schools are new, we're already running out of space- need to be competitive with class size
- NL has a preK program, and large special education population

#### **4. What skills, qualities and characteristics will the new superintendent need in order to be successful in New London?**

- Must be an advocate at local, state and federal level
- Needs to be a consensus builder – able to find common ground and bring people together
- Able to ensure that people understand why initiatives are implemented and be accountable for follow through and sharing results
- Someone who can obtain funding for big operational issues that need to be addressed - must be a good negotiator with the city
- Must be a magnet leader able to compete for students – someone who understands how magnets work, what makes them a good idea, and how to sell them to parents
- A leader who can facilitate change management
- Someone who balances addressing the challenges with recognizing and celebrating the successes
- Able to mentor and support staff in new positions or working in new/difficult situations
- Should be an experienced superintendent
- “Smooth sailing does not a good sailor make” – need someone who has experience addressing similar challenges
- Have urban experience – comfortable working with different groups
- Someone with backbone –
- Committed to bi-lingual education support staff – knows and can communicate fluently in Spanish
- Breadth of skills – must be an educator first and foremost, but should have some construction knowledge
- Appropriately solicits input from affected stakeholders but must be able to make informed decisions quickly
- Committed to long term success of the district
- Someone with coaching skills, not a rookie – someone in the last third of their career
- Someone who doesn’t have baggage
- Someone who puts kids first – their number one motivator is kids
- Keeps people informed about issues so that we don’t hear about them first in the community
- Has an understanding of CT law and regulations – we don’t have time for big learning curve
- Would like to see someone with energy and stamina – five or ten years of experience, doesn’t need to be at the end of their career
- Someone with enough experience to know you can make hard decisions without sacrificing your career
- Someone who wants to accept the challenge and make a difference for our students
- Someone who will applaud the work that our people have done and foster broader recognition and understanding of the effort that goes into getting the positive results we see
- Someone who won’t lose our momentum

## City Council

### **1. What makes New London a good place to live?**

- Beautiful community, culturally diverse
- Terrific setting, especially if you love the water
- A lot to offer because it is so diverse
- Proximity to Boston and New York
- Rich history with many historical sites that make for wonderful day trips
- Host to several excellent colleges
- Access to many interesting towns and places in New England

### **2. What makes New London a good school district - for students and staff?**

- Lovely facilities
- Diverse population that proves to be very interesting and reflects the core of the city
- Moving toward an all magnet school system
- Groups work well together
- Generates very good athletes and strong academic students who go on to good colleges
- Fantastic school principals

### **3. What are the issues in New London Public Schools that a new superintendent needs to be prepared to handle?**

- We have been at the bottom of the state for the quality of our schools for at least 20 years
- The guest students that attend our schools raise our school academic ratings but it is not an accurate picture of what is happening for all students
- Poor tax base compared to other surrounding districts
- Health of the city needs to be tied to the health of the school district
- Resources have not been provided in an equitable manner
- People need to stop seeing our students as not able to achieve as well as students in surrounding districts
- Financial issues facing the district
- No plan on how to use the windfall we may experience when we become an all magnet school district
- Poor relationship in the past between the council and the school district
- A lot has improved in the past three years to improve communications between the City Council and the school district
- Lack of shared information
- The “windfall” will not get us where we need to go with the need for teachers, counselors, buildings, academic excellence and a myriad of basic needs that are currently not be met at an acceptable level
- Some people are able to get information they ask for and others are denied their requests
- Perception is not always true that only students from outside are raising our test scores. Our New London students have been high achievers and gone on to excellent Universities
- Conflict over idea of a shared Finance Department has caused a serious wedge between the City and the Board, causing the state master to become involved

**4. What skills, qualities and characteristics will the new superintendent need in order to be successful in New London?**

- Someone who has a response to questions and comes prepared for all board meetings
- Someone who will develop a protocol for sharing information
- Able to recognize problems and have a complete understanding of the issues in the district
- Relationship with the staff needs to be consistent - doesn't micromanage the teachers.
- Someone who has an open door policy to gather suggestions and ideas on how to improve our school system, they welcome and encourage people to think of a better way to do things
- The citizens do not want someone who does not intend to stay and turn the school district around in a positive way
- Someone who has experience handling various groups and people
- Experience with a similar student demographic profile as New London's
- Someone who will promote consolidation by City and the Board of some similar positions.

## **Name of Stakeholder Group: Students**

### **Students**

#### **1. What makes New London a good place to live?**

- Close knit community
- Lot of diversity but everyone supports each other
- We take a lot of pride in the community and always try to do better
- Equality, everyone is accepted, no matter what their background or orientation

#### **2. What makes New London a good school district - for students and staff?**

- Teachers encourage you and want to make sure you're successful
- At the high school there is a place for everyone
- Lots of options at the high school
- New programs with magnet schools
- Small town allows for small class size, easy to learn
- New offerings, engineering etc. - schools are improving
- Magnet offers options and allows kids to get special treatment
- Students experience diversity, helps prepare you to go to college
- Teachers are dedicated – students are smart
- You almost have to want to fail
- ROTC program one of two in the state
- Staff push kids to go to college and help them navigate the process

#### **3. What are the issues in New London Public Schools that a new superintendent needs to be prepared to handle?**

- Language options aren't as robust as they could be
- Curriculum at NLHS needs to be updated (math in particular)
- Process for application to magnet school puts NL students at a disadvantage - should be just on grades
- Students overwhelmed with tests – math testing every year isn't necessary (state tests)
- Over time, dress code and rules seem to become more important than your education
- Grounds are icy and dangerous – budget cuts shouldn't be at the expense of safety
- Food is bad – even within current fiscal constraints things should be better
- Kids who bring their own food are told they can't (subway sandwich from home)
- Trying to make one size fit all students with lunch portions and offerings – should allow kids to choose
- Whole street should be a school zone – kids walking on streets that are icy when sidewalks are not cleaned
- Emphasis on stupid rules keeps kids out of classrooms – they end up in ADP with work to do on things they haven't been taught
- Rules are not consistent –
- Rules are inappropriately enforced - favoritism is very evident
- Rules are changed without notice

- We understand rules are necessary, but there needs to be a balance
- Kids are treated rudely when accosted over clothing – e.g., pulled by backpack
- One administrator will interrupt your class to catch you on dress code violation – will hound you during the day
- HS and magnet school facilities are inequitable –
- HS is the same as when it was built – in poor shape, no AC sends a message that kids who attend there they are not as valued
- Bathroom doors are wide open in public school but not in magnet school
- Kids miss a lot of learning time with rules about attendance and ADP
- People should be able to be comfortable
- Food is so bad –stories about people feeling sick – used to be good in elementary school, what happened?
- Maggots in the potatoes – roaches seen on the floor a while ago
- Discipline is harsher at HS than magnet, kids not treated equitably when both involved in a problem
- Seems like kids are sent to police for minor infractions – a record will ruin your ability to get into college
- Magnet parking becomes a safety issue with drop off bottleneck
- Ice in parking lot is dangerous for students who drive

#### **4. What skills, qualities and characteristics will the new superintendent need in order to be successful in New London?**

- Needs to involve students in decision making
- Someone who is open to new ideas and innovative
- Superintendent should be able to make sure it is safe for kids to come to school in bad weather
- Should be someone who understands the students' perspective and genuinely like kids
- Should be visible in schools and talk to kids – not blow off their complaints
- Hyper active –willing to take on all the issues!
- Outgoing – willing to participate in the community and community events – involved and able to see the issues for themselves, not just hear them second hand
- Willing to eat lunch and follow up on discipline overkill
- Appreciate current practice of letting kids in to have breakfast – new sup needs to be flexible and help kids get what they need
- Someone who fosters school spirit – promote students activities
- Go to variety of activities, not just the well-known ones
- Personable and willing to get to know students and family
- Needs to be lively
- Needs to try to improve education in every possible way
- Students need to know who the superintendent is – be familiar to students in all schools in the district
- Bring more sports into magnet high school to increase student engagement
- Someone who is willing to push to get their ideas implemented
- Expand dress for success

**Name of Stakeholder Group:** Teachers and other staff

### Teachers

#### **1. What makes New London a good place to live?**

- The location in New England is great- accessible to NY and Boston, Vermont, NH
- Lots to do and see
- Great place to raise a family
- Can be a beach town if that's what you want, but also has city amenities
- Summer Sail Fest is biggest event – fireworks show, lasts all weekend
- Opportunities for activities on two sounds – it's great for water/boating/fishing enthusiasts
- Lawrence Memorial hospital provides quality medical care
- Many local colleges and universities - CT College is one of the most respected colleges in the country Mitchell College has its own beach
- Very diverse, provides richness of experience

#### **2. What makes New London a good school district - for students and staff?**

- Teachers have a positive impact on students – especially those for whom we are perhaps the only positive role model
- All magnet school district – first district in state means additional resources
- Lot of animated teachers who have shown a willingness to change with the new requirements
- Diversity is a benefit to district

#### **3. What are the issues in New London Public Schools that a new superintendent needs to be prepared to handle?**

- On the brink of going to an all magnet district, needs to be cognizant of the impact of decisions e.g. during inclement weather, if NL schools open when others close it means classes at regional magnet have some students who don't come and instruction time is lost, even for those students who do attend
- Distrust of administration – “we want to hear from you” is heard as “say what you want, we're going to do what we want anyway”
- Not treated like professionals
- Retention issue – massive turnover of teachers to surrounding districts – people are not necessarily leaving because of money – how can someone not be valued here and then get a job in a neighboring district with a good reputation?
- It's a tough place to work – need support rather than criticism
- Lack of parental support – evaluation is based on things we don't have control over
- Community involvement is poor and not encouraged
- Teachers are made to feel they are whining when they speak up
- Mistrust is pervasive - morale is terrible
- Rules for students are sometimes unreasonable and distract from learning
- Requirements keep being added without any decrease in prior work load

#### **4. What skills, qualities and characteristics will the new superintendent need in order to be successful in New London?**

- Someone who values diversity and mines the benefits of a diverse community to advance the district
- Needs to give direction rather than criticism
- Energetic and open minded
- Decisive, strong communicator, willing to get to get to know people as people
- Able to make command decisions
- Needs to be savvy about the business end of the work to market and make the magnet program a success
- Needs to be able to balance business acumen with the ability to establish relationships and ensure people understand the importance of their role to the success of the district
- Committed to the district, in it for the long haul
- Able to take criticism, deal with a lot of BS – and politics of city council, mayor, and board
- Someone able to give us a raise!
- Someone who knows how to talk to kids
- Someone who supports teachers on discipline issues
- Someone who involves teachers in decisions affecting teachers
- Innovative and willing to try new ideas and strategies

## **Support Staff**

### **1. What makes New London a good place to live?**

- Diversified and very international
- Has a rich history
- Beaches and the water
- Central location...near Boston and New York
- Easy access to public transportation

### **2. What makes New London a good school district - for students and staff?**

- It is growing in exciting new areas
- Students are exposed to many different cultures and languages
- Diversity, diversity, diversity
- The magnet schools attracts many students because of their diversity – in students and cultures as well as program offerings
- A very welcoming community that embraces new people and cultures
- New and modern elementary and magnet high schools
- Many areas in the town are being restored and preserved
- People are proud of New London
- People of different backgrounds coexist easily and seamlessly

### **3. What are the issues in New London Public Schools that a new superintendent needs to be prepared to handle?**

- Lack of respect for parents
- Unintended consequences and issues that arose with magnet schools , e.g., lack of calendar coordination with sending districts
- Support staff perceive themselves to be at the bottom of the pecking order and not recognized for their contributions. They have never had a meeting with the current Superintendent
- Too strong of emphasis on testing
- Lack of aide support for teachers to meet students' needs
- Lack of support leads to behavior and classroom management problems

### **4. What skills, qualities and characteristics will the new superintendent need in order to be successful in New London?**

- Attuned to and sensitive to the different elements of the community
- Firm and adheres to district, state and national policies
- Supports the staff and doesn't give in to a complaining parent with an unjustified complaint
- Able to deliver customer service while supporting the staff and gaining their trust
- Reassure staff that they are deserving of respect from customers

- Approachable, staff is able to take problems and issues to them
- More attuned to characteristics and issues of magnet schools
- Provides coordination and consistency with magnet school policies and sending districts
- Someone who can think and act regionally
- Sensitive to all the staff and their contributions to the school system
- Sensitive to parents various backgrounds, but makes parents accountable to school's policies and regulations
- Humble, gets to know staff and is more engaged with them
- Recognizes that staff members are an important part of the system and without them things would not work
- Strong leader

**Name of Stakeholder Group:** Parent/Community Groups

**Parents**

**1. What makes New London a good place to live?**

- Very diverse
- Small enough district that we can solve our problems
- Many colleges and higher learning institutions
- Close proximity to large cities such as New York and Boston
- Nice ethnic restaurants
- Lots of places to visit that celebrate art
- Ferries, trains and many modes of public transportation available
- Great hiking, beach and runner trails
- Reasonably priced recreational programs for our children
- Family oriented events and activities bring people together

**2. What makes New London a good school district - for students and staff?**

- Easier for special needs children to get service in New London
- Good teachers who are motivated
- Small enough to get to know the school district staff members

**3. What are the issues in New London Public Schools that a new superintendent needs to be prepared to handle?**

- The district moves too slowly to engage outside agencies who wish to help and be involved with the students
- Communication has broken down because the staff has been cut to the bare bones
- Some teachers don't work well with parent advocates
- Limited resources to meet the students' needs i.e., one guidance counselor for 600 students
- Transparency is not always there
- We aren't recruiting college students and businesses that could provide more robust supports
- Teachers are under a great deal of stress because of the limited resources, lack of support, few classroom aides and deep cuts in staff
- Large class sizes with special need students lack support
- Students begin to shut down because of the atmosphere of overworked teachers and large classroom
- Not enough ELL support
- Board of Education and the City Council rarely have worked well together
- Huge turnover of staff because of little support given to them – we don't think it's always about money
- Difficult to retain good teachers in certain schools that have poor climates
- Parents not always welcomed or respected when they are advocating for their children
- Some school staff do not recognize parents as the people who know their children best

- Façade exists about partnering with parents
- Difficult to engage parents in PTO
- Need a broader array of services to respond the array of children's needs, including gifted and talented students

**4. What skills, qualities and characteristics will the new superintendent need in order to be successful in New London?**

- Professional, down to earth and respectful to parents
- Someone who puts less emphasis on the performance of the state tests from the central office
- Someone who doesn't blame City Council and lack of funding for all problems
- Familiar with urban issues and experience with similar demographics
- Someone who will learn about our students and understand what types of homes they come from
- Someone who will address the full continuum of students needs
- Experienced with building and plant management
- Is able to get to the heart of the problems, dig deep and examine current practices, problems and issues
- Is creative in dealing with parents
- Unafraid to air the dirty laundry and transparent about what is being done about issues
- Clear, concise communicator that follows through with programs and initiatives
- Comfortable with oversight by the state and stakeholders
- Is transparent about budget with the City
- A good mediator and able to work with the City Council and Building committee
- Aware of safety needs i.e., icy roads and sidewalks
- Willing to utilize the facilities for sport events and community meetings
- Is committed to accountability
- Able to work well with various types of people who serve on the Board

## Community

### **1. What makes New London a good place to live?**

- People are very friendly
- Small town feel
- Beaches and our waterfront attract many visitors
- Over 300 years in the making with many historical sites and related activities
- City has been working to update amenities and has opened Waterfront Park, etc., as part of this process
- Two hours from many large cities and many avenues of transportation to reach the cities
- City embraces diversity and residents share their traditions, culture and foods
- More college students here than public school students

### **2. What makes New London a good school district - for students and staff?**

- Dedicated teachers who operate under adverse conditions
- State of the art school buildings
- A real focus on the STEM curriculum
- Career pathways implemented in early grades
- Opportunity to make a difference in multiple students' lives
- Unique situation for new person to build a strong network
- New London students are amazing and terrific
- When students come here from outside they feel welcomed and become part of the school community because "In New London, everybody belongs"
- Some magnet students report that drug problems are greater in their home districts
- The students can benefit from the experiences of other students from outside the city, and vice-versa

### **3. What are the issues in New London Public Schools that a new superintendent needs to be prepared to handle?**

- There is a perception that new London students are less capable than other students in surrounding districts. Many of our students have internalized this belief and this needs to be rectified because it is not true
- Financial issues raise barriers to sustaining our progress
- Need to work on our reputation and focus on the positive things that are happening in our schools
- There are a lot of new initiatives, some local, some (mandated) state or federal – seems like too much to handle at once
- Maintain the momentum of the magnet schools
- Eyes will be on New London because it is the only school district in the state moving to an all magnet school system
- See Appendix A for incorporated statements
- Follow through on initiatives, this has not been done at times in the past
- Lack of trust in the administration
- Insensitivity to bus drivers, staff and students during inclement weather

- Loss of 40 teachers last year, many not through attrition
- The "My Way or the High Way" model has been the standard but not going to work any longer

#### **4. What skills, qualities and characteristics will the new superintendent need in order to be successful in New London?**

- Ability to improve morale with the staff
- No embarrassing postings on social sites
- Demonstrate success working in urban settings
- Recognize students have different needs and strengths
- Treat all students equally
- Work transparently with school district, community and parents
- With so many new initiatives, the Supt. will have to strike a balance on what will be implemented and how much can be accomplished
- Someone who only starts well researched projects
- Commitment to educating the whole child
- Possess knowledge of research that will move all students forward academically
- See Appendix A for incorporated statements
- They need to be involved with the community and introduce themselves to the entire staff and students at the beginning of their tenure
- Improve teaching conditions
- Allocate monies to the classrooms and students and understand what is needed by the teachers and students
- Vested in the community. A time commitment to ensure the changes they implement are carried out and this needs more than a few years
- Willing to do the hard work and create sustainable changes that will move the district forward
- Stay and stick with us until the whole magnet system is working well
- Ability to work well with the Board of Education and ensures that the Board is well informed and makes sound decisions from data that is been given to them well in advance
- Complies with Board policies and does not have their own agenda
- Provide clear and concise communication that does not patronize the parents and staff
- Understand the politics of the district
- Willing to make tough decisions to keep only our best teachers
- Follow up with all inquiries by parents and give them the respect they deserve
- Work collectively with parents to help all of the students
- Establish partnerships and build networks throughout the community
- Should be a minority and preferably bi-lingual
- Reach out to the community and allow them to use the facilities and not scare parents away. It should be a seamless connection between the district and the community.
- Transparency and improved public relations
- Prefers someone with a doctorate and one who is well versed in educational research and remains current with new and emerging educational practices
- Courage to change the disciplinary system that is isolating our students

- Needs to work to find solutions and not throw up roadblocks to progress and community involvement
- Increase revenues coming into the district
- A team player with all the stakeholders
- Someone who can lead our children down the right educational path and believe in them.
- Someone comfortable and adept at working with all diverse groups
- Allow and encourage teachers to be creative in engaging all learners
- A person of color, any color, who is a righteous person

*Survey Monkey Results for New London Public Schools  
March 2014*

*(NOTE—these responses have not been edited,  
they are printed as entered by the stakeholders)*

*12 responses*

**Administrators**

**1. Tell us the good things about your community.**

- Diverse Community, manageable school system. WONDERFUL STUDENTS, caring school staff, More involved parents. Need to keep parents more informed about curriculum expectations and budget.
- Diverse
- Very diverse population, beautiful location.
- historically significant shoreline community with a wealth of diverse outlooks, people, and resources.

**2. Tell us the good things about your schools.**

- Have become more adept at strengthen student progress, Great magnet themes - Jennings Dual Language and foreign language, Winthrop math and science and Nathan Hale - the arts. Some schools still struggling, Weighted budget should help next year
- Caring faculty, excellent administrators. Schools are moving forward.
- three new elementary school facilities; a community with a diverse student body and staff;
- Well educated staff, brand new buildings, large schools, magnet theme

**3. What issues should the superintendent be aware of as he/she comes into the district?**

- There are many divergent opinions in New London, yet to build support for our school, the new superintendent MUST be able to build relations and collaborate positively with City Council, regional groups etc.
- Not enough resources for our students' needs: for example, need bilingual personnel: social workers/school psychologists/special ed teachers
- the community needs a unifying personality, someone who can galvanize sectors of the community which have worked at cross purposes; a creative problem solver who will take a stand against the intrusion of wealthy business interests who want to privatize our schools
- The district is in flux, therefore there is high turnover in staff due to uncertainty and stress. The all magnet theme is the first in the state, therefore there are plenty of opportunities for success, but a lot of uncharted territory and plenty of room the failure due to the unknown. All of New London's eggs are in one basket shall we say. The city is suffering great financial instability, which is effecting the school budget and surplus.

**4. What skills, qualities or characteristics should the new superintendent possess to be successful here?**

- Articulate problem solver - Balance --> Supportive yet demanding high performance form students and staff. And very important to model that him or herself!!!! - Lead by example

- Knowledgeable of urban settings, of ELL laws, practices and issues, SPED laws, practices and issues, good listener, good negotiator,
- the successful candidate should have a history of working in under resourced communities of color; the candidate should be experienced as a superintendent--this should NOT be his/her first superintendent level position; the candidate should not be someone from one of the charter school management companies like Achievement First or KIPP.
- The superintendent needs to be a very open and likeable person. Should be very well versed in the issues of New London, and the community as a whole. They should have great experience working with districts in transition, and have experience successfully turning struggling districts around.

## **Support Staff**

### **1. Tell us the good things about your community.**

- New London is a small city with a growing interest in the arts. We have many historic sites in our area, and our shoreline and beaches are beautiful.
- New London is diverse but also tight-knit. The business community has a strong community involvement ethos. The city has a creative, activist element, independent groups that are trying to make things better in NL
- The diversity of the community.

### **2. Tell us the good things about your schools.**

- Schools need repair but the learning achieved is fantastic.
- Our teachers are sincerely invested in our children. The emphasis is on providing guidance for safe and responsible behavior, and our school reflects that. Children are guided in behavior that encourages being respectful and learning. Our children, are incredibly sweet and adorable. It's true! It is a joy to work with our students. They often have backgrounds that mean they appreciate everything you do for them, and even the little things mean so much to them. This makes helping them a joy in a special way that you do not find in every school.
- The teachers for the most part, put in 100%
- The support staff and teachers in the district.

### **3. What issues should the superintendent be aware of as he/she comes into the district?**

- Economic status of many of the families in NL. Poor condition of middle and high schools.
- Employees come from all over the state. having school when it snows is awful.
- New London is like every small town or city. It is heavily political. This is just our reality. Be savvy about politics, the politics of people, or you may not do as well. New London is trying to help the children catch up to other districts, and teachers are overloaded, but that is not going to help children. Weed out what is not directly helpful to teachers in helping children. Weed out what is a time and energy waster, from what is actually useful. Testing can be overdone. Give teachers an opportunity to give real feedback on what they feel works best, because they do know best, rather than rely on an expert's opinion. Take what works, but let teachers teach. Also, children need to PLAY. They need more play and social opportunities built into their day. We must not forget that children need these skills and also fun physical activities in their day in order to be able to focus their minds on an increasing cognitive demand. Please keep that in mind for the children's sake.
- That the teachers put in 100%. Most students do not WANT to go to college; many parents have little experience themselves with education, being either immigrants or generational welfare recipients
- This is a really, really hard district. We need somebody with a lot of backbone to turn this district around but they have to have the ability to lead in such a way to include all staff - no matter what their capacity as part of the team. A "top down" administration has not worked in the past and will not work now. All employees need to feel secure in the jobs and feel like they are making a difference. This is not happening. There is too many secrets and the staff is the last ones to know what is going on. Not good. Administrative communication sticks right now and this has to change. You need to make people feel good about whatever role they play -- and they will work harder for you.

#### **4. What skills, qualities or characteristics should the new superintendent possess to be successful here?**

- Reasonably young, with a lot of ambition to take on the work load. Knowledgeable about STEM or various Arts
- flexible, dedicated and not over powerful. the candidate should be approachable
- Politically savvy. Be a superintendent who takes the time to talk to people involved rather than rely on the few close people in your circle. As superintendent, you must know that sometimes the people closest to you are not making the best decisions or being the leaders you think they are. Find out for yourself, particularly in a conflict. This requires interpersonal skills and wisdom. In other words, don't believe everything you hear. We cannot adopt everything that comes "down the pike". Get feedback from teachers and select a few things to implement. Weed out goals, because too many goals means lack of focus and is going to completely drain your staff of enthusiasm and energy. Then the children don't benefit. Pick a few. This requires the ability to prioritize and accept not all worthy goals are reasonable. The ability to work comfortably and gain the confidence of diverse groups of people. We are not one cultural group but a few. Our children and families often have significant financial needs. Have an understanding in a real way, of that. Our children need support in order to be successful in school. Put our children's needs first when hiring. Never compromise on children's safety and determining the background of anyone who is hired, that they be a person of good moral character in order to be someone with whom our precious children can be trusted.
- What Clouet had -- common sense, integrity
- Must have a collaborative style, but have a backbone and stand fast when necessary. Must be a great negotiator. We don't need somebody brand new and we don't need somebody ready for the pasture/retire. We need somebody that is going commit to New London and be accountable and assertive with moving us forward.

## **Teachers**

### **1. Tell us the good things about your community.**

- the ocean, the diversity of people, the feeling that when you become an active member, you are welcome anywhere
- A variety of cultures and experiences are presented in our community. Most parents care about their students' education. It is a physically beautiful part of the state. There are many cultural activities organized by community members and also activities sponsored by Connecticut College. There are many people who support and are willing to work for positive change in the community.
- Small community near great parks and beaches with city perks such as art and restaurants.
- Multiple languages
- New London has a strong core of citizens who care. We have teachers who have stayed in the city despite misrule of the district leadership. We have parents who are interested in their students doing well. We have strong support groups that a skilled and personable superintendent should be able to marshal to help educate our young.
- New London community has a lot of potential for becoming a very prosperous area. It has a great downtown with an emphasis on culture, diversity, and the arts.
- All parents care about their children. They are all unique and doing the best they can.
- Good resources for all, including needy families. Families strongly bond with each other whether or not they are blood relatives.
- Hard working teachers.
- It's a beautiful location. Schools are brand new. Great staff! There's lots of things to do around here including a beautiful beach, free concerts, etc.
- People love New London - it is a city with history and diversity.
- Diverse. Many community events and opportunities to get involved.
- Lovely setting. Seacoast, boating. Rich history. The Captain's Walk area has been suitable for a tourist destination. Close to Mystic Seaport, Mystic Aquarium and other educational places of interest. Health food store. Excellent international restaurants. Coast Guard provides valuable resources to the community.
- NL is very multicultural. We also have a rich art program and maritime connection. I'm hoping the new superintendent will work harder to connect the schools with these community resources.
- Strong history of diversity, artistic and scientific influences abound. Very solid sports programs that are great character building environments.
- small city with a large heart wealth of interesting and rich history ,students that are successful and a wonderful mix of individuals that make up the City of New London

### **2. Tell us the good things about your schools.**

- Despite the negative publicity, the education is excellent despite all the obstacles
- We have extremely dedicated teachers. We have students who are eager to learn. We have a diverse student body that brings a myriad of experiences to their education.
- It's a system with great needs but small size of the system with a tight small community makes change more obtainable.
- Dual language. Empowerment of different cultures
- The teachers are extremely dedicated.
- still some dedicated teachers that haven't been driven out.

- There are many dedicated teachers and staff members who go above and beyond the call of duty every day.
- Teachers are very hard-working, intelligent, problem solvers, learners themselves and care deeply about students and families.
- Caring and devoted teachers who go above and beyond. New facilities with great potential.
- Hard working and dedicated staff members
- We have new equipment (computers) and new buildings.
- Teachers and students.
- Dedicated teachers who go above and beyond for their students
- I can only speak about the Middle School. BDJMS has excellent building administrators! The custodial staff is definitely part of the team, and the School Safety Officers contribute much to the level of respect for education. The school provides a safe, warm haven for children from sometimes chaotic homes who live in the 35th ranked most dangerous city in the US. Most of the students appreciate the meals that are provided throughout the day.
- Our schools are full of teachers who absolutely adore these kids. We work many extra hours (mainly unpaid) to help make sure these students have all the help they need to be successful. Even when every chair is full in a class of 28, I love my job, but my heart aches for the students who are missed because of the overcrowding. We'd like a superintendent that will really consider where the money is best spent - on yet another six figure salary for central office, or on another teacher to lessen the load and increase the amount of time each student gets with their teacher?
- NL schools are becoming an example of how to develop strong Magnet themes.
- Dedicated teachers willing to go the limit to have our students be academically strong

### **3. What issues should the superintendent be aware of as he/she comes into the district?**

- NO MONEY, staff feels abused and unappreciated. Need more staff to work with the social issues that our kids come to school with. Involve the staff in decision making like we used to be.
- Many New London students have issues in their lives that affect their ability to learn in a regular school setting. Instability of the household, anger issues, feelings of low self-esteem, lack of readiness for school, and the absence of adults who can help them with academics, are just a few of the challenges that confront our students. The new superintendent will need to fight for these students and insist that they be given the extra support they need in terms of small group learning, additional social workers in the schools, and other programs. Currently we hear that the only problem faced by our students is low expectations on the part of the adults who teach them. On the contrary, the problem is that the administration refuses to admit that our very intelligent students have huge needs that need to be addressed in order for them to make adequate progress. One teacher in a classroom cannot do it all. The new superintendent also needs to know that teachers are the district's best resource, and that teacher morale is at an all-time low, thanks to the constant increase in unreasonable expectations, and the diminishing support that they receive. Developmentally inappropriate curriculum in kindergarten is another problem that ultimately leads to students lacking in foundational interpersonal skills, love of literature, and awareness of life. Being able to read in kindergarten is not a predictor of success in life. Educational assistants are relied on a great deal in the schools but they often lack adequate training. In addition, they are paid so poorly that they often must find

other jobs in order to support themselves. We need well-trained and well-compensated support staff.

- The city is somewhat politically and racially divided yet there is quite a sense of Whaler pride that it's a unifying factor.
- Linguistic diversity is complicated and requires expertise in staff
- The teachers want to be a part of the solution in turning our district into a high quality school system that consistently excels academically. We want to be treated professionally, with the respect we deserve. The top down approach of dictating mandates has led to extremely low morale.
- That this is a town with crushing poverty and wealth. New London has big city issues in a small town. Students are grossly under-prepared - largely because of a culture of reactionary policies and inconsistency in pedagogy. Tax base is non-existent and the board and city sides have a culture of animosity. It will take a leader to heal this rift.
- The leadership at the schools are ineffective. Many events that take place are not well organized. There is very low parental involvement within the schools, especially at the high school level. Many teachers and staff members do not feel well supported. The observation process for teachers is not realistic or valid. Many students who come into high school are far below grade level and lack the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful in high school. There is not much, if any, communication across departments.
- School climate is a significant problem as the lack of trust between teachers and building administrators and then teachers and central office administration is so damaged. It will need to be a priority for the new superintendent before any other problems can be solved.
- Too many initiatives, too little follow through. Too much assessing with no time to implement changes to meet instructional needs.
- In previous years we have had witch hunts to get rid of teachers who are on top of the scale. Moral is very low due to this.
- How will he repair and build trust between the teachers and administration. Morale is in the dumpster. We have lost so many staff members because of the treatment and stress that everyone is waiting figuring they could be the next one to be picked on. Testing and Data is ruling the district - we need to be able to teach students before we can test them. Top heavy administration. Budgets are now school based - very difficult. We do not have enough people that "spend face" time with students instead of with numbers and data.
- How difficult it is to keep good teachers when there are so many step and pay freezes. They work very hard and are not compensated enough. Many of our teachers transfer to other districts w/ less of a workload and higher pay.
- Our best teachers leave the district after a few years to find better-paying / less stressful jobs elsewhere. Maintaining discipline in order to encourage learning is a constant struggle.
- Our special education department is an absolute nightmare. We do not have the reading intervention systems in place that are necessary for students who enter school this far behind. Our case managers are overloaded, and IEPs are often not followed because we do not have the resources to make it happen. Some classes are more than 50% SPED or ELL with no support. A maximum percentage on this threshold would ensure students are in classes that are manageable and it is actually possible for a teacher to meet the needs of all students. Teacher are afraid to speak out. When we voice our opinions or advocate too strongly for students and the administration doesn't want to hear the truth about what they need because it means more money or new interventions, those teachers are forced out of their jobs. We are honestly afraid to speak up for what these kids need. XXXXXX

said we should focus on what students need, not the resources we have, and that the district would make those things possible, but absolutely nothing has changed. We can scream it from the rooftop, but we never get the resources or teachers we need, we just get intimidated into being quiet.

- Teacher retention is low due to one reason....salaries are not competitive with surrounding towns. The state took Hartford to task and recognized this and helped the powers that be upgrade the salaries. I believe New London can prevent the brain drain of teaching talent by raising its salaries.
- Treat everyone with respect no bullying towards staff Acknowledge hard from staff more then once in three year period.

#### **4. What skills, qualities or characteristics should the new superintendent possess to be successful here?**

- Good communicator. Active in the community where they will live. Understand the life of an urban student and their family
- The superintendent should have been an excellent teacher, and should have understanding and respect for the challenges that teachers face. S/he needs to have an open mind about educational programs and a healthy skepticism about data and the Common Core. S/he needs to be prepared to fight for students' needs. It is the superintendent's job to advocate, not to run a business. Educating our needy students is not a business. The superintendent should have experience working in a district that faces similar challenges to those of New London. The superintendent should be open and honest and be prepared to work with New London staff people.
- The superintendent must be a dynamic, charismatic, engaging individual that is willing to talk openly about her challenges as well as successes. Also, this individual must understand that in order to engage much of our disempowered population, education must be respectful of individual intellectual and emotional strengths so that our children will choose to learn from us.
- Knowledge of linguistic and cultural diversity - best if first hand experience
- The superintendent needs to be a LEADER who motivates all stakeholders to continually improve. She needs to develop relationships and value employees knowledge base and expertise which will empower stakeholders and create accountability to results. All students and teachers should know the superintendent, which is currently not the case
- Needs to be a leader not a thug. The ability to bring people together and not maintain control by setting different groups and buildings against each other...this was the leadership 'style' of the last two superintendents and has caused serious damage to our school system. No more faux educational leaders. We need a person who has chalk time and isn't just a slave to the 'guru du jour.' The next superintendent needs to be able to look at his leadership and clean house. We cannot afford any leadership in any of our buildings who can't be effective teachers - under that ludicrous TEP. We have at least a few administrators with 5 or so years of classroom experience. This is not acceptable in any district, let alone ours.
- The new superintendent needs to be a strong leader who is strict but fair. The superintendent needs to be more visible in the schools and community. He or she needs to give the students, staff, and community a change to voice their opinions frequently in an environment where they feel safe, much like online surveys. He or she needs to have extensive experience being a teacher and leader in an inner city environment. He or she

needs to have a clear vision for the school's future that is in line with the beliefs of the students, staff, and community.

- The new superintendent should have a proven track record in improving parent involvement. Simple lip service in the face of research proving the importance of this skill is not sufficient. 2. Courage to intervene when building supervisors/administrators are in need of significant guidance. Possible question: How would you know if a school Principal was skirting/breaking the law in the area of state testing, or sexual harassment, or special education, or homelessness law, or child endangerment? Another possible question: How would you collect data to know if a building administrator was a good leader?
- The ability to look objectively at the financial picture to better place funding to directly assist students. This includes competitive salaries for teachers to attract quality teachers who will invest themselves in our community and stay in NL. Ability to commit to an educational plan for a few years so that growth can be shown. (Allowing for small tweaking as necessary.)
- A superintendent who respects the teachers and listens to their input and makes the best decision for all involved.
- He/She should be visual and "helpful" ...come in to find the good things we are doing and NOT to find fault. We need a positive person whose best interest is our students!
- Respect teachers, believe we can teach and are working hard, be approachable and able to contact. don't have spies, realize the difficulties we face teaching in a priority school.
- Someone who truly values teacher inputs, recognizes that too many factors go into a good teacher that cannot be measured.
- Ability to work with limited funds. Shared vision with BoE and community. Ability to engage in meaningful dialog with groups from many economic, ethnic and racial backgrounds. Respect for the city's limited ability to finance needed repairs to school buildings.
- Knowledge of underperforming districts Knowledge of special education laws and reforms Ability to work well and communicate with teachers and staff members - not just other administrators. Someone who will be in the buildings more frequently, actually in classrooms seeing the struggles teachers face so they know why our turnover rate is so extreme (and don't need a survey to see that we're underpaid and overcrowded). Someone who will be advocating for building repairs and improvements to the city council alongside board members.
- Personable; intelligent; avoid bureaucratic "think tank" types go with educators first. Educators respect educators, not people who come from political organizations.
- Understands our diverse of groups of our small city understands how much teachers are attempting to accomplish with our students

## **Community Members**

### **1. Tell us the good things about your community.**

- The arts community is a highlight. The beach is fantastic as are the state beaches nearby. We have easy access to Providence and its airport. Using the ferries from New London, you can go to Long Island and Block Island.
- Dynamic, diverse, strong grassroots/community-based support, desire to rebuild and refocus.
- A diverse community with many different cultural communities that need to be invited and welcomed into our schools.
- It is a diverse community.
- New London is a diverse and friendly city with great people and organizations, a beautiful coastline, colleges, restaurants, a train station right downtown, an arts community... The list goes on!
- The diversity of families and proximity to the ocean
- diversity tolerance
- Young people in our community have lots of creative ideas and energy and with the right support they can be possible resources who can help solve problems facing our schools and communities.

### **2. Tell us the good things about your schools.**

- The students are fantastic. They are very appreciative of caring adults.
- Many of the teachers and administrators within the school system have students' best interests at heart and do everything in their power to support students' success. That being said, it appears that many are either burned out, lackadaisical, or stuck between a rock and a hard place due to stringent rules and the disproportionate emphasis placed on TESTING rather than LEARNING.
- Diverse population of students. Many teachers who have been with the system for many years.
- Regardless of what our Board of Education would have us think, what our local newspaper would have us think, and what surrounding communities think, our school system is making progress and is filled with dedicated teachers and awesome students. The current superintendent should be given kudos for the progress instead of the boot.
- Three main things to say here: 1.) the diversity! 2.) The young people of New London. And 3) some highly dedicated and accomplished teachers who are doing great work, sometimes in the face of resource shortages, a toxic (nation-wide) discourse about teachers, and a policy context that increasingly seeks to strip them of their professionalism by over-scripting and standardizing their work. The diversity of the student body is such an asset. The young people of New London want to learn and, when treated with respect by their school system and their city, flourish. There are some great teachers who will rise to the occasion on behalf of young people and their profession.
- Diversity of students Deep experiential knowledge of students with some of the most pressing issues of our time
- diversity tolerance new buildings, updated curricula
- There are many dedicated school leaders and teachers in our schools.

### **3. What issues should the superintendent be aware of as he/she comes into the district?**

- The Board and City government officials operate in the most dysfunctional manner possible. They evidence little care for the students; many in fact are racist and don't expect our students to amount to much. In spite of the efforts of state officials to "train" the School Board, most are not trainable. The City is broke and is on the verge of bankruptcy. I would advise any applicant to simply not come here.
- The New London public school system has a painfully small budget with little wiggle room. The schools are short on important resources and struggle to offer students the type of support they deserve. New London has an active base of community engagement and parent support, but struggles to provide quality education to our students.
- The amount of testing required within the district is overwhelming.
- He or she should keep his resume handy. If he colors outside of the political lines as drawn by the politicians (and those lines can change weekly) he or she should be prepared to find a new position, regardless of what educational progress is being made.
- The funding challenges are an issue, and demand a kind of creativity in maximizing and distributing equitably. Leadership is needed on this; we simply can't have our building falling apart, our pool cracked and in a state of disrepair, our roofs leaking... these facilities issues, and the budget issues more broadly, send message to children and conspire against pride in one's city, one's school, and oneself. The historic lack of transparency within the system, in so far as the community stakeholders are concerned, is an issue that needs attention; when caring, engaged community members can't get answers to questions about the budget, the strategic operating plan, the school-based leadership process, etc. this is a sign that things need to change, and the superintendent has a huge role to play in setting the tone for transparency as a norm... as an essential foundational feature of democratic public schooling. There are lots of non-fiscal resources in the area that could be tapped into more strategically, even for fiscal purposes (e.g., the writing of cross-institution grants, for example, to support innovative programming). That said, these resources are not well organized systemically; so much more could be done with what's here. (The colleges are a case-in-point; a bunch of volunteers in the schools is all well-and-good, but there's actually more people power here if we had a wraparound plan that engages all community assets strategically and for mutual benefit.)
- Given its diversity NL is not amenable to cookie cutter tests or curricula
- our politics are the ugliest on earth! We have a city council that not only believes it knows everything there is to know about running a city, but thinks it can run a school system as well.
- There is an achievement gap in the district where historically under-served groups are not doing as well academically. To ensure that all students have access to a relevant, engaging, challenging and empowering curriculum it may be important to implement a culturally responsive curriculum and teaching strategies.

### **4. What skills, qualities or characteristics should the new superintendent possess to be successful here?**

- It truly doesn't matter about the quality of the new superintendent; the School Board and City government officials will not allow that person to succeed.
- Leadership, patience, ability to work with a wide variety of people and perspectives, desire to collaborate, willing to take feedback and work for positive change, loyal, honest, humble, goal-oriented, determined.

- An ability to communicate with empathy and humor. Experience in the classroom, managing a building and living in a small community that has many small subcultures and communities in its town.
- Rhinoceros skin.
- Here I want to be really succinct, so I'm going to offer bullets that indicate priority skills, qualities or characteristics for the new superintendent. In no specific order of importance:
  - \*significant experience in under-resourced school districts, with demonstrated record of savvy resource acquisition and management (and significant to me means many years... 10 or more)
  - \* commitment to working with diverse students and families, and demonstrated capacity to do so (record of collaboration with communities of color and non-native English speaking families would be a huge plus, as would bilingualism in a community language other than English)
  - \* commitment to public education, and demonstrated connection to public education as a student (having attended all or most of k-12 in public schools), teacher (having taught in public schools for at least 5 years) (experience as a student, teacher or administrator in public schools with demographics and issues similar to those in New London would be a big plus)
  - \* evident commitment to public schools remaining public - this is a huge one; we are in a fiscal bind in New London and the vultures are circling in terms of those who would like to make money off the struggles our city and its schools... this is not the answer
  - \* received administrative training, for superintendency especially, at an accredited University-based program
  - \* demonstrated commitment to the community first, and not beholden to any interests outside the community (no pet projects or favorite programs or networks that will trump community interest)
  - \* demonstrated record of working collaboratively with Board Members, including doing what is needed (in a timely fashion) to support Board Members in making informed decisions - this means engaging with Board Members in good faith and making available well in advance of Board Meetings any and all necessary data and documents, including - as appropriate - research (and by research, I mean here high-caliber, peer-reviewed research in education and related disciplines) [As an aside, it would be highly meaningful to hire someone who will live in New London and, if applicable, send their own children to its schools.]
- Many years of experience in under-resourced school districts Deep experiential knowledge with successfully working with diverse students and families Attended public schools Taught in public schools for at least 7 years Is invested in public schools remaining public Trained as a Supt. in a legitimate accredited university program
- The next superintendent needs to stand up to the bullies at city hall. S/he must NOT allow the board's finances to be merged with the city's. S/he must be an instructional leader who can work well with teachers and administrators. S/he must embrace the philosophy that all children can learn, and that learning and success in school is the shared responsibility of our schools, our communities and our students' families/caregivers.
- The ability to listen to teachers, school leaders and students.

## **Parents**

### **1. Tell us the good things about your community.**

- great location, beaches, ethnic restaurants, the Garde, art museums, CGA, Conn College, Mitchell college, diversity, affordable recreation programs for children, ferry station
- Underdog status, diversity, location to water, history
- Our community is caring, giving and invested.
- I love the diversity of New London. There is a lot to do in the area for everyone.
- The best thing about my community is that it is a community, a family. We fight but we make up.
- Cultural diversity is New London's main asset, and should be embraced and celebrated.
- The schools are doing a better job of working with the community.
- Tight Knit, Vocal, Concerned, Diverse
- That we have many resources available to us, even in this small city. We are diverse. Our children love to learn when schools and teachers are motivated to be here. We have a region of children attending our schools.
- Lovely setting. Seacoast, boating. Rich history. The Captain's Walk area has been suitable for a tourist destination. Close to Mystic Seaport, Mystic Aquarium and other educational places of interest. Health food store. Excellent international restaurants. Coast Guard provides valuable resources to the community.
- The diversity. For example, we have so many different Latin American countries represented in New London and a great leader who embrace and celebrate that, along with all other ethnicities. We used to have great events at our schools to celebrate diversity.
- The good things would be the type of diversity present in our schools and our city and the accepting nature of the people who live in our communities.

### **2. Tell us the good things about your schools.**

- Teachers/staff, Renzulli Academy, new buildings, lots of community resources available to us, Nathan Hale has made academic progress, Science and Tech. High School has interesting classes, good clubs and team sports at
- Prepares our kids for the real world not only academically but socially and culturally. Our schools are not a phony representation of the real world like suburban schools are. Good and bad, our kids see it all and will not be shocked by the real world when they enter it as adults. New London kids are tough and resilient because of the schools.
- Teachers, staff, students
- Diversity should be considered the best thing about New London Public Schools. We are opting to send our daughter to the STEM Magnet School partially so that she goes through her entire developmental years interacting with, learning with and learning from people who do not all look like her. We need to identify diversity as a strength and build on it. Beyond that, the STEM Magnet school is everything we could want in terms of a caring, nurturing, community for our daughter to learn to love learning.
- The current superintendent has made great incremental progress. To be clear, nobody I know understands why his contract was not renewed. It seems like the Board of Education needed a fall guy. None of them understands that instant jello pudding does not work with schools.
- Talented teachers. Good facilities for elementary schools. Good partnerships with community groups.

- The middle school is investing in their teachers and people are happy to work there.
- Dedicated teachers, staff and administration; They need a good leader to tie them together a mitigate the often-externally influenced internal acrimony.
- RMMS is my child's school. It is diverse, has a social-emotional focus that is critical, and supports children from all different backgrounds. The nutrition program is improving. While in school, children are engaged with learning.
- The teachers themselves are actually very caring, genuinely concerned, are good at what they do, and for me, have "always" contacted me when I've asked, and we have kept ongoing communication. That's it, as the administration for the most part are horribly negative
- The teachers that have stayed, are committed and hard-working individuals who are knowledgeable about their fields and need someone who will recognize that and invite them to the decision-making table. I also enjoy the idea of this dual language pathway as well as the others.
- Students are given the opportunity to meet so many different cultures face to face and not just in books.
- At my child's school one administrator is very responsive and another not responsive at all
- The caring and empathy displayed by students and the majority of our staff

### **3. What issues should the superintendent be aware of as he/she comes into the district?**

- State is overseeing schools, City council and BOE haven't had a healthy working relationship, BDJMS and High School facilities have serious issues that have been neglected for years, Talented and Gifted students have Renzulli Academy and that is a good thing, Expanded Learning time (it is NOT a good idea for our family), the High School pool wasn't maintained and now there is NO community pool except for the outside one at Ocean Beach that isn't free, New London can be slow to warm up to "newcomers"
- Too often you cannot win in New London when it comes to politics. Scores are on the rise, a magnet school plan in place, and present at nearly every school event but the superintendent is sent packing because the embarrassingly ineffective and stunningly inept previous Board of Ed was miffed because they felt he did not communicate with them. I heard too many asinine questions and comments at BOE meetings to believe they are allowed to decide the fate of our kids.
- Everyone has an opinion. and it will always be your fault. Your high school building needs to be rebuilt. We have amazing parents, students, teachers, and staff. People make up their minds before they hear or see all the facts. We have made many positive changes.
- Behavior is a major issue. Students with behavioral issues are given much more time and attention than students who are in school to learn and do well. Students disrupt class with bad language and bad behavior with little to no consequences. They don't care about having their color changed or going to the dean's office and blatantly disrespect staff. Something needs to be done about it.
- New London gets a worse rap than it deserves, the schools get a worse rap than they deserve, the administration gets a worse rap than it deserves. The next Superintendent needs to have a thick skin while at the same time be able to really connect with people and let them feel that their opinions and concerns matter to him/her. Fair or not, all the

good intentions and caring in the world will go unnoticed if the person seems that they are blind and deaf to what the community thinks.

- A failure to immediately fix all of the issues will lead to his own non renewal.
- Schools need more parental involvement. This will involve building relationships with them, not just sending home flyers or automated calls. With parental involvement, children can get the support they need at home. District support staff need to be better trained and stop talking down to students. There needs to be an understanding throughout the district that children are to be respected and built up.
- The current Central Office staff is out of touch with what is happening at the building level. The magnet plan does not exist. It is too much happening all at once. There is no way the district can do all of these initiatives and do them well.
- He/She needs to continually stay engaged with the community. It is not enough to simply 'manage' the district, he/she needs to be willing to integrate with the community to truly understand the public's perceptions of issues with the Board of Ed.
- That children from all across the region attend school here in New London (by choice). We want to feel connected to the New London residents, schools and businesses too. That special needs children need better support in the school system. There are too few people to serve them all and too few supports so that behaviors are really affecting the other learners too. This isn't the way it is meant to be. There also needs to be more positive things going on in the community consistently so our children and youth are engaged and do not get into trouble.
- There is absolutely NO leadership in ANY area in New London schools. Why do you think the state has taken over?
- The climate issues among staff, lack of oversight in terms of administrators throughout the district, teachers being on a step freeze, lack of parent involvement, lack of student accountability in exchange for social promotion and graduation.
- students come from a diverse set of nations, socioeconomic backgrounds and skill levels, many of them plagued by issues like poverty, abuse and homelessness. sometimes no matter how hard a student strives academically and behaviorally they still have negative feedback, negative role models as parents or guardians. Many parents today don't see education as a high priority. Many students finish high school wanting to go to college but can't because of the ignorance they are living with at home won't allow them to have access to important things needed to pursue that career. simple things like denying his or her son or daughter parents W-2 forms for FAFSA applications will deter the student from being able to apply. Need to educate the parents before we think we are helping our students. Students come from unstable homes, go to school hungry and with inadequate healthcare. These are certainly not ideal circumstances for learning, nor are classrooms full of grumpies an environment for teaching.
- Teachers are rude to children where I volunteer very often and see it for myself. The teacher aides dress unprofessional in jeans and see throw clothes they eat food during school hours in front of the children.
- He should be aware of the fact that as a parent who is involved in the schools, I feel as though the schools do not do enough to make parents feel welcome or that their voice matters and I also believe that they do not do enough to allow our children to feel as though they can have any real sense of ownership in and of their schools.

#### **4. What skills, qualities or characteristics should the new superintendent possess to be successful here?**

- Able to work with lots of different people, understands urban issues, knows how to find ways to raise funds, networks well with community resources, advocates for students and teachers, sees parents as partners
- Be ready for the unknown, knowledge of urban living and urban schools.
- Strong, able to work with many people who all have a different opinion, able to see through all the talk and see what important for the children of New London. Thick skin. Promote the great things so we can change our unjust image.
- One very important quality is being able to understand what is best for the students and what they need to succeed. Not someone who is impersonal and distant.
- Value diversity. Understand the social, economic and health issues that contribute to education success/failure. Understand the history of racism, what institutional racism is and looks like, that racism is alive and well and be committed to racial justice for New London's children. Be ready to build real relationships and partnerships - with community organizations, faculty, parents and students.
- A cool head. An ability to suffer fools with a smile. An understanding of small town politics on an urban stage. All of the other pieces are already in place.
- Must be approachable and down to earth. Have good knowledge of latest trends and research in quality education practices. A team-builder who can set a standard of quality throughout the district. Support and recognize teachers and staff.
- The candidate should represent the population of students in the schools (50% Hispanic). He/She should have national level experience and been recognized for these achievements....the school system has always employed people who talk about achievement, but who don't have real results. Is there someone out there who has transformed middle and high schools into 6-12 schools?
- A diverse and thorough experience list, i.e., they need to be able to check the box at all professional levels - classroom teacher, building admin and central office. Additionally, the most recent experience should have been in a demographically diverse district. Ensuring this will mitigate needless criticism from naysayers. Additionally, the candidate needs to be grounded, humble and amiable with the public. Our Mayor and his behavior is a great example of how NOT to ingratiate yourself with the community at large.
- Organized, and good communicator. Diplomacy, to deal with the politics. We are a City, even if we are small. We need someone who understands what that means. We need to focus on our children and youth more.
- LEADERSHIP #1!!! Someone who will be willing to and more importantly, be able to designate authority, yet do it with respect, in order to get everything and everyone straightened out properly. Plus do it very thoroughly, gently, with care & concern, as people can see right through a fake/phony person. Presently, there is a great deal of animosity and resentment throughout and moral is extremely LOW!!!!
- Someone that will reach out to parents and get them involved and recognize the parents that are doing a great job. Someone that will celebrate our diversity and acknowledge our out of district parents/families are equal participants. Someone who will support teachers and begin to hold administrators more accountable for retaining teachers through creating more positive relationships, no more us/tem mentality with admin and teachers. Someone who will look for creative ways to spend the budget so teachers are paid what they are due and more resources are get to the students. Create buildings that are community buildings and not just for students and staff.

- The new superintendent needs to DEMAND more from parents. A high standard needs to be set; zero tolerance for violence. If uniforms are going to continue there needs to be a firm understanding of what is and what shouldn't be a uniform. Skinny leggings are not a uniform simply because they are the correct color. This superintendent needs to come in expecting to step on toes and set a tone to make some changes for the benefit of the district. The new superintendent should not be afraid to take risks and or make a commitment.
- Skills needed .. be more aware of the things that are going on in each school . The extended days are not being used ti full extent I volunteer every week and see during extended hours kids are on school ipads playing games etc.
- A willingness to be open and listen to ideas, someone who is willing to share his vision of our schools that would include everyone and not someone who only has ears for those who live in certain areas of our city. Someone with the fortitude and backbone that is able to avoid the same politics as usual routine that is present ...

# Appendix A

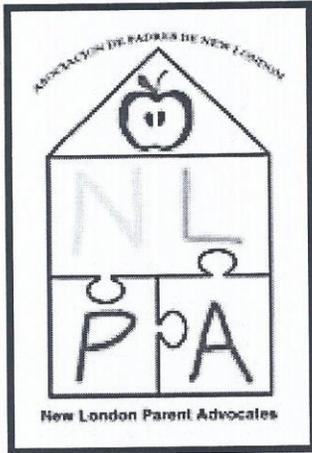
**Statements from:**

**New London Parent Advocates**

**Elizabeth Teresa Rodriguez**

**Helen M. Sandalls**

**Martha Bauduccio**



New London Parent Advocates (NLPA) is pleased to be part of the search committee for New London Public School's next superintendent. It is critical for all of the stakeholder's in a student's life to be a part of this important process and NLPA is honored to serve as the voice of New London families.

NLPA will advocate for the hiring of a superintendent with the following qualities and experience:

- Demonstrated success working in an urban school district by creating an environment that values and fosters the unique strengths of students from a population with diversity in race, ethnicity, language, and socio-economic status, and by meeting student's challenges and needs with creative, localized solutions. We do not accept that our children's difference is seen as deficit.
- Demonstrates commitment to reevaluating, restructuring and enforcing NLPS disciplinary policies to ensure that all students, regardless of race, are treated equally and given the opportunity for therapeutic behavioral interventions and restorative discipline.
- Has a proven record, with concrete examples of efforts made in previous districts, of communication and transparency. We expect a superintendent to work transparently and to communicate with parents, students, staff and the governing members of the city (Mayor and City Council). We seek a superintendent who has concrete ideas about how to involve parents, students, and the community in district decision-making.
- Demonstrated commitment to educating the whole child by addressing students' academic, physical, creative, social, and emotional needs through holistic assessments and curricular models, and other alternatives to standardized testing and Common Core.

2/25/13

Community Forum

Input

Hello my name is <sup>teresa</sup> Elizabeth Rodriguez.

Im a senior at New London High school. Im here tonight to talk about what I want from the next Super intendent. In my school I've experienced racism and discrimination and unfair treatment of Black and Latino Students. I want a Super intendent who is going to <sup>resolve</sup> these problems.

Another problem at my school is that many students get arrested and suspended and this can be a way for them not to graduate. We expect the next Super intendent to decrease the number of arrest and suspension in school. ~~Finally~~; To many students dont graduate, one way is due to losing credits and there isn't a way for them to catch up. We expect the next Super intendent to come up with a program to help those student regain credits. finally ~~we~~ Students should be offered the knowledge they need to apply for collage. Student should receive the knowledge from 9<sup>th</sup> grade on.

Thank you

for your time

SUPERINTENDENT:  
QUALIFICATIONS & QUALITIES

Helen M. Sandalls  
202 Glenwood Ave.  
New London, CT 06320

Thank you for inviting me to provide input on critical characteristics and qualities of the next New London Superintendent of Schools.

Like many others who've provided input, I also believe that you need to identify candidates with excellent academic credentials, with experience and with a willingness to be open to the input of the community, parents, teachers and students.

But at least as important as any of those is a candidate's consistent record of working well with the School Board.

Although I taught high school German and French language, literature and culture over a period of 9 years, my perspective tonight comes from my 20-plus subsequent years as a corporate attorney.

As with corporate CEOs and corporate boards of directors, a Superintendent is the School Board's primary employee, charged with implementing the Board's decisions and policies. And each New London School Board member was elected and is committed to make those decisions and policies in the best interests of all of New London's students.

I'm here to urge you to ensure that every candidate you recommend for an interview has a unequivocally clear track record of working well with their school boards.

- FIRST: Please document for the New London School Board that each candidate was consistently committed to ensuring that their School Board's decisions, actions and policy were informed and responsible, and that the candidates consistently provided to their School Boards documentation and data:
- a. that was representative of both sides of the issues requiring Board action;
  - b. and that had been peer reviewed by respected educational institutions;

- c. and that was provided to the Board well in advance of decision deadlines, so that the Board members (who typically hold down jobs and have other time commitments) had sufficient time to digest and evaluate the information and data.

The candidates should also have shown themselves to be responsive to Board requests for additional supporting data.

SECOND I urge you to verify that all candidates for interview - as the Board's primary employee - consistently implemented and complied with the policies of their School Board.

FINALLY regarding the candidate's management of his or her Administrative Staff: Often School Districts operate with fewer Administrative Staff than a Superintendent might like.

I urge you to verify that all candidates for interview have consistently demonstrated that limited Administrative staffing is no reason for not meeting their obligation to ensure proper deliberation by the Board, well in advance of any statutory, regulatory or other deadline. Instead, limited Administrative staffing should result in advance planning and preparation, rather than in last-minute Board policy decisions.

Thank you for your time.

Requested qualifications for New London Superintendent

1. Adequate experience as a teacher and principal
2. Doctorate in education (school administration) preferred but not required; signifying sound professional training and keeping abreast of latest initiatives
3. Experience in a diverse, urban school district
4. Must have experience in the development of magnet schools and remain involved throughout the process and beyond (New London to be the first all magnet district in CT)
5. Strong interpersonal skills - students, staff, parents, community leaders
6. Proven track record working with local government personnel
7. Encourage parent and community participation in the schools
8. Expand community partnerships to promote learning and real-life experiences for students
9. Visible in the schools/classrooms; attends wide variety of school functions
10. Encourage creativity in the classroom
11. Does not intimidate staff
12. Compassionate but firm
13. Ensures response to all concerns brought to his/her office
14. Ensures Board concerns receive response/action in timely manner
15. Promote safe and secure learning environment
16. Knowledge of budget process
17. Be integral part of the community via residency
18. Not a retired superintendent looking for another job

*Martha Bauderccio*