

	<p>FOUNDING MEMBERS</p> <p>RHEA M BECK RITU PANCHOLY TAWANA BURNETT JULIA H SMITH TANIA M EASTMOND JESSI EMPESTAN PAULA J GOMEZ GAIL GREENSTEIN MICHAEL MINOR</p>
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May 24, 2017

Dear Elizabeth Baker and BOE members,

Thank you for recent communication about the Board of Education’s next steps as the district embarks on another search for a superintendent. Like many in our community, we are disheartened and shocked that Dr. Ramos has chosen to retire after spending two of an expected five years in the district. As you know, it is the students, teachers, and administrators in the district who will pay the highest price for this abrupt departure. As Parents in Partnership for Respect and Equity in South Orange and Maplewood (“PARES”), we believe that we are at a critical juncture and must ensure that the district’s treatment of all students is equitable and the achievement gap is closed. Despite the recent upheaval, the district must not lose sight of this focus.

Because our group represents a diverse group of parents from across the district, we are requesting that PARES be included in the BOE’s process to select a new Superintendent who matches our community’s needs and goals. Our recommendations for a community-based approach to selecting the new superintendent include:

1. The BOE should engage in an open and welcoming dialogue with parents, students, administrators and other community members in order to fully assess the following:
 - What were Dr. Ramos strengths?
 - What were his leadership gaps that we don’t want repeated?
 - What stakeholder groups did he successfully reach?
 - Identify the strengths contained in Ramos’ Strategic plan and prioritize next steps that should be spearheaded by the Interim Superintendent.
 - Use data compiled by consulting firm prior to the hiring Dr. Ramos, which outlined the skills needed in a superintendent.

2. The BOE should invite PARES to serve on the selection committee as part of a community voice in selecting the new superintendent. PARES should have a right to vote, or at least grade all of the applicants, for the superintendent position. This model of community participation is practiced across the nation and should be implemented here in SOMA as well. In addition, PARES members would like to assist with the following tasks:

- Recruitment process (e.g. internal search for candidates, or selection of a search firm that is reasonably priced and paid upon fulfillment of finding the next suitable candidate, etc.)
- Serving on the Interview Committee: Rhea Beck and Michael Minor currently sit on the District's Commitment to Equity Council and are well equipped to represent parent stakeholder needs.
- Participating in the final voting or evaluation of the final candidates.
- Communicating the decision and all relevant deadlines to other parents and stakeholders in the community.

In light of PARES' increasing role as the eyes, ears and voice of the parent constituency, we believe that the district should provide community stakeholders with responsibility and a seat at the table. In order for the new Superintendent to be successful, he or she will have to meet community members from the beginning and win their approval. Furthermore, including community members in the process will signal that the BOE is ready to take action, listen to the community, and be transparent.

Given the typical timelines associated with hiring superintendents, we are aware that an interim may be in place for some time. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the Interim Superintendent that is assigned to replace Dr. Ramos.

We welcome an opportunity to discuss our recommendations in this letter with you in person.

Best Regards,

PARES