

# **SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH**

**GARY COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION  
GARY, INDIANA**

## **FINAL REPORT TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**MARCH 20, 2024**

### **CONSULTANTS:**

**DR. DEBRA HILL  
DR. ANNE NOLAND  
DR. MARCUS ALEXANDER  
MR. XAVIER BOTANA**



## **Gary Community School Corporation Superintendent Search**

### **Consultants' Final Report**

This report presents the results of BWP & Associates' search for candidates for the position of Superintendent of Schools for the Gary Community School Corporation in Gary, Indiana and contains information to assist the Board of Education in conducting and completing the search process.

After a brief presentation to the School Board in a public session and shortly after the Board's January 4, 2024 appointment of BWP & Associates, we began the initial phase of the search process. A Board Search Committee planning session was conducted on January 22, 2024 to outline all aspects of the search and prepare for recommendations to the full Board for each segment of the search. The Search Committee was comprised of Dr. Danita Johnson - Committee Chair, Mr. Michael Suggs - Board Chair, and Attorney Michael Tolbert - Liaison. The BWP and Associates Gary Community School Corporation Superintendent Search Team consisted of Dr. Debra Hill and Dr. Anne Noland - Co-Lead Consultants, Dr. Marcus Alexander and Mr. Xavier Botana - Associates who was subsequently added to the consultant list.

A number of planning meetings followed which included: preparation and execution of a vacancy posting; professional organization advertisements; a communication strategy outline, which included media outreach. The Board received four (4) updates on the status of the search activities that were shared with the public at their regular meetings.

A virtual oral summary of "The Community Engagement Audit and Report" was presented to the Board and the public on March 4, 2024. The purpose of the community engagement audit was to seek both quantitative and qualitative data from members of the Gary Community, representing the thoughts, ideas, concerns, and profile of a quality leader. A "Leadership Profile" was developed and approved by the Board of Education. This profile will be used by all those engaged in the search process as the basis for the recruitment, identification and selection of the next superintendent.

The information provided reflected the overall themes that emerged from input and feedback gathered between February 12 through March 9, 2024 with School Board Members and numerous constituent groups in GCSC. A total of approximately five-hundred twenty-one (521) constituents participated in: individual phone interviews with Board Members, liaisons or administrative staff and a community member; ten (10) focus groups; two (2) community forums and four-hundred fifty-six (456) online surveys received via SurveyMonkey. All community engagement activities were conducted by BWP consultants onsite and virtually as well as via three (3) emails sent directly to the consultants and incorporated into the data.

Vacancy postings, ads and the Leadership Profile were listed on the BWP national website and with national organizations. A unique link for the search was established on the District website, which provided access to search documents. The application process concluded on March 9, 2024.

As per BWP policy as a private entity and in keeping with the Letter of Understanding with the Board, information about the applicants has been kept confidential and is the property of BWP until such time as their names and information are presented as potential candidates and approved by the Board. The information will remain confidential until such time that the Board determines information should be shared based on laws related to personnel issues. This procedure also serves: to protect the applicants' information and not place their current employment status in jeopardy if they applied and were not selected to move forward; did not meet the Leadership Profile at a level deemed appropriate for this search; or they decide not to pursue the position.

The pre-established protocol, agreed to by the Board, indicated that if successful interviews were completed and the consultants, based on professional judgement, felt that these applicants met the Leadership Profile at an 80% or more level, they would recommend a slate of 4-6 possible candidates for Board consideration on March 20, 2024 in closed session. If the consultants did not feel the pool yielded qualified candidates, they would recommend that the search application deadline be extended, the search continued, and that the search calendar be modified and adjusted. The search would then continue until a finalist was identified and selected.

Within the search process, there were approximately fifteen (15) individuals who inquired or were contacted by the consultants regarding this position. By the March 9, 2024 deadline, there were thirty-six (36) applicants who had complete online applications, two (2) additional candidates submitted their application just past the deadline and their material was also reviewed for a total of thirty-eight (38) completed and reviewed applications. A breakout of the data indicates positions held by the thirty-eight (38) applicants and the states from which they applied demonstrates that this was a national search (Appendix A). It is inappropriate to indicate gender or race/ethnicity of the applicants and questions to that affect were not included in the application process.

Dr. Debra Hill, Dr. Anne Noland, Dr. Marcus Alexander and Mr. Xavier Botana reviewed applicants' online information independently and collectively. Upon review, a number of candidates were identified for further screening and examination. Screening interviews for twelve (12) applicants were scheduled via Zoom March 11, 2024 through March 13, 2024. Ten (10) interviews were conducted. Two (2) candidates were unavailable for interview. Appendix B lists the BWP interview questions used relative to the Leadership Profile.

In order to reassure the Board that there were viable candidates who met the Leadership Profile criteria and to adhere to the Letter of Understanding regarding development of a slate, the names of six (6) highly qualified persons are being recommended to the Board for their consideration on March 20, 2024 in a separate document. These persons, in our professional judgment, best meet the leadership characteristics and criteria published by the Board in the vacancy announcement and were best matches to the Leadership Profile. We also contacted other professionals in the field for additional information. Using a triangulation process, we based our selections and opinions of each candidate on their application information, interview, and initial reference checks. We are presenting this slate of candidates for the Board's consideration.

As a personnel issue, the BWP consultants will discuss the recommended candidates with the full Board in executive session at the March 20, 2024 meeting. At the meeting, the Board will be provided

with confidential “Candidate Facts” (a comparative data table) which provides demographics relative to the search and the proposed slate identifying the candidates in alphabetical order. Protocols for Interviews and Other Phases of the Search Process have been provided and will be reviewed with the Board at their training session on March 20, 2024.

The candidate listing has not been rank ordered. A summary document for each of the candidates will be presented and provided to the Board as a personnel document to further assist members in identifying and selecting candidates for further interviews. We conducted Google searches for all the candidates we will be presenting. Please note our statement regarding Google searches in Appendix D. Once the slate is reviewed and candidates are identified for interviews by the Board, you will receive secured electronic access to the candidates’ files in preparation for interviews and further discussion.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Debra Hill  
Dr. Anne Noland  
Dr. Marcus Alexander  
Mr. Xavier Botana  
BWP & Associates, Ltd.

## **Appendices**

**Appendix A:** Applicant Demographics

**Appendix B:** BWP Candidate Zoom Interview Questions

**Appendix C:** Applicant versus Leadership Profile

**Appendix D:** Candidate Internet Research Notation

# Appendix A

## Superintendent Search Gary Community School Corporation

### Applicant Demographics (38)

**Total # Completed Applications (38)**

**Positions held currently by Applicants:**

<b>Superintendent</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Assoc./Deputy</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Exec./Chief/Director</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Principal</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Consultant</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>

**States from which applicants applied (14 states):**

Arizona	1	Michigan	1
Connecticut	1	Minnesota	1
Georgia	1	Missouri	3
Iowa	1	New York	1
Illinois	14	Pennsylvania	1
Indiana	7	Tennessee	3
Massachusetts	1	Wisconsin	2
		<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>

## Appendix B

### Gary Community School Corporation BWP Preliminary Candidate ZOOM Interview Questions

#### Gary Interview Questions (\*leadership profile connection)

#	Questions	*Profile
1.	Give a brief and concise review of your career path and your current position. Based on your research about Gary CSC tell us why you are interested in the position and what attributes make you a good fit and the best person to lead this district?	1, 9
2.	Provide an example of your approach to problem solving that incorporated issues, solicited suggestions and which resulted in a successful outcome. How were the results shared?	2, 3
3.	Describe your experience with the implementation of strategies designed to ensure safety and discipline and academic success for every student taking in to consideration the merits of diversity, inclusion and equity.	5, 6
4.	Please provide one or two examples that demonstrate that you are a result driven leader who utilizes evidence-based strategies designed to address student achievement goals and closing educational gaps?	3, 10
5.	What structures would you put in place to demonstrate support of staff and students, positive relations and interactions with the Board and an inner connectedness with school communities?	3, 8, 9
6.	What strategies have you utilized to demonstrate that you will be visible and are a good listener, approachable, accountable and inclusive of all segments of the community?	3, 8
7.	How familiar are you with ----- state school finances? Describe any experience you have had with taxing issues, school overcrowding, school closings and appropriate budgeting, state takeovers due to financial issues?	4
8.	What activities have you engaged in with local, state or national political leaders?	7
9.	Share with us 1 or 2 activities that you have engaged in that demonstrates cultural competency, knowledge about curriculum and instruction, teaching and learning, professional development and utilization of data.	5, 6
10.	What would staff say are your biggest strengths? What are areas of weakness where you could improve? How would you go about making those improvements?	2, 6
11.	Share with us what you do for fun and to balance work and home life.	1, 9
12.	Anything we need to know/anything in your background that could be an issue?	3
13.	Provide next steps - Do you have any questions for us?	

## Appendix C

### Gary Community School Corporation Applicant versus Leadership Profile

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Applicants	1 (L)	2	3	4	5 (H)
<u>Characteristics/Skills</u>					
Background as an educator					
a. Administrative					
b. Teaching					
<b>1. Strong Visionary Leader</b> A transformational visionary who is familiar with the history of Gary and has with the ability to develop a strategic vision as a futuristic thinker who can embrace what is possible for the future;					
<b>2. Student centered leader</b> A person who has a passion for “putting students first” and can bring people together by working with the School Board and all constituent groups in a collaborative and all-inclusive manner;					
<b>3. Visible and Excellent Communicator</b> Someone who will be visible in the schools and community, is a good listener and communicator welcoming feedback, has integrity and is strong and confident in making tough decisions;					
<b>4. Fiscal Leader</b> Strong in their knowledge of budgeting, Indiana finances, with experience in capital building projects;					

<b>5. Diversity and Equity Leader</b> Able to demonstrate a proven track record of success that is data driven and has evidence of the academic achievement improvement for all children especially special needs populations, African America students and children from income challenged families and have an aggressive plan to address the chronic failures in students' State proficiency (test scores);					
<b>6. Knowledgeable Educator</b> A professional who has demonstrated knowledge, skills and understanding of curriculum, instruction and assessment and how children learn and achieve;					
<b>7. Politically savvy leader</b> An individual who can demonstrate political savvy in working with local, state, and national government representatives and has an understanding of the ramifications of a state takeover;					
<b>8. Personable leader</b> A cheerleader who can highlight Gary's successful programs and who will develop strategies to support, encourage and improve enrollment;					
<b>9. Communication and Commitment</b> A person who will be committed to the Gary community and schools, transparent in their communication and has the ability to connect and build supportive partnerships;					
<b>10. Experience in Management</b> An individual who has a background or experience in school turnaround management and has a very strong perspective in pushing student opportunities and access in sports, industrial education, and post-secondary opportunities.					



## Appendix C

### Applicant versus Leadership Profile (cont....) Gary Community School Corporation

Applicants	1 (L)	2	3	4	5 (H)
<b><u>Other Attributes</u></b>					
a. No major negative issues					
b. Commitment to District					
c. Knowledge of educational trends and C&I issues					
<b><u>Overall Written Application</u></b>					
a. Cohesive					
b. Cover Letter					
c. References					
d. Complete					
<b>Total Percentage</b>					
<b>Comments:</b>					

## **Appendix D**

### **Gary Community School Corporation Candidate Internet Research**

Included with our verbal description of each candidate is information that we found or did not find when conducting a Google search. The purpose of our Google research is to get an idea of what will pop up when your community searches the names of the finalists or when the Board researches the names of the recommended slate on the internet. We want to try to eliminate any surprises as much as possible.

We search particularly for articles that indicate controversy or raise questions that we may need to follow up on with the candidates to secure explanations.

Some of the candidates have hundreds of files listed under their names, and many are simply repetitive or just related to the ordinary functions of their jobs.

The stories in the Google files may not be in chronological order because they are not listed that way. Also, the name of the publication is not always listed. It is important to note that when a Google search is done, some of the articles are from reputable, established news outlets, and some may be from personal, professional, or political blogs. Like all things on the internet, the reader needs to be judicious in factoring out truth. Our inclusion of something from our research does not necessarily mean we have judged its content to be valid.

If you decide to do your own Internet research, please remember that there may be multiple people across the country with the same names as the candidates. Be sure you have the right person.