



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Somerville Public Schools Announces Four Finalists for Somerville High School Principal Position

Somerville, MA – Somerville Public Schools Superintendent Mary Skipper is pleased to announce that the Somerville High School Principal Search Screening Committee has forwarded the names of four finalists out of an initial slate of 33 applicants, for consideration as the school's next principal. Earlier this year, current SHS Principal Sebastian "Sibby" LaGambina, also a graduate of SHS, announced his plans to retire at the end of this school year after an outstanding 35-year career with the district, including the last four as Principal of SHS.

After the application deadline of February 19, 2021, 33 applications were forwarded to the 11-member Screening Committee for initial review. On February 24, following a thorough review of the written application materials, the Screening Committee met and engaged in an extended discussion of each candidate, ultimately reaching consensus to invite six candidates for initial interviews. All six candidates accepted the invitation although one withdrew prior to their scheduled interview. The Screening Committee interviewed the remaining five candidates over the course of two evenings, March 8 and March 10.

On March 12, the eleven members of the Screening Committee reached consensus on the finalists and forwarded the following four educators for consideration as the next Somerville High School Principal (in last name alphabetical order):

Matthew J. Buchanan

Matthew Buchanan is currently the principal of Hope High School in the Providence Public Schools in Rhode Island. Mr. Buchanan has more than 20 years of experience in teaching, counseling and program development in a variety of settings in the Providence area. He has taught Health/Physical Education at a middle school and has been a Middle School Assistant Principal, High School Assistant Principal, and High School Principal at an alternative evening program. In 2019, Mr. Buchanan became the Principal of Hope High School. He has a Bachelor of Science degree in Human Development and Family Studies with a minor in African American Studies from the University of Rhode Island, and a Master of Education degree in Educational Leadership from Rhode Island College.

Elvis R. Henriquez

Elvis Henriquez is currently the Principal of the John W. McCormack Middle School in the Boston Public Schools. Mr. Henriquez taught for 15 years as an 8-12 mathematics teacher at Boston English High School and Josiah Quincy Upper School in Boston. He has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education and a Master of Education degree in Secondary Teaching in Mathematics from the Boston College Lynch School of Education. Currently, Mr. Henriquez is a doctoral candidate in Education Leadership at The George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

Elizabeth Murray



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Elizabeth Murray is currently the Director of Innovation and Learning at the Prospect Hill Academy Charter School in Cambridge and Somerville. She has been a middle school humanities teacher at Our Lady of Lourdes School in Boston, a middle school humanities teacher, middle school principal, and the K-12 Director of Leadership and Professional Development at the Prospect Hill Charter School. She has also been the Chief Academic Officer at the Phoenix Charter Academy Network in three Massachusetts communities. Ms. Murray has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Government and International Politics from Wesleyan University and a Master of Education degree in Teaching and Curriculum from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Tamara I. Stras

Tamara Stras is currently the Assistant Principal at Haverhill High School in Haverhill, MA and has been in that role since September 2017. Ms. Stras was also a biology teacher, Acting Assistant Principal, Science Department Head, and a science teacher at Lawrence High School from 2012-2017. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in Zoology and Biochemistry from St. Xavier College in Mumbai, India and a Master of Education degree in Secondary Education – Biology from Boston College Lynch School of Education.

The Somerville High School community will have the opportunity to meet all four finalists through a series of Zoom forums, which will be held during the week of March 22nd. Each finalist will participate in a 30-minute forum where students, parents and staff will have the opportunity to ask questions. Zoom links for the forums will be sent directly to members of the SHS community.

SHS Principal Finalists Forums

March 23, 2021	5:30 – 7:30pm	Student Forum
March 24, 2021	5:30 – 7:30pm	Parent Forum
March 25, 2021	5:30 – 7:30pm	Staff Forum

Superintendent Skipper will conduct final interviews with the four candidates the week of March 29th, and plans to make her final decision the week of April 5th.

A special thanks to the members of the Screening Committee for their extraordinary dedication and commitment to this search process. The Screening Committee met on four different evenings and one afternoon to prepare, review, interview, debate, deliberate and select the finalists for consideration for this important school leadership position. Members of the Screening Committee included Dr. Jessica Boston Davis, Francesca Broekman, Paul Cooley, Barbara Favalaro, Isaias Hernandez Rivera, Aidaratou Koita, Teresa Martinez, Chad Mazza, Jodi Remington, Beatriz Thomas, and Grace Torino.

Assisting the Screening Committee in this process were search consultants Dr. Ray Shurtleff and Dr. Anne Wilson from the Edward J. Collins, Jr. Center for Public Management at UMass Boston.

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