



CHATTANOOGA
AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

May 25, 2011

Members of the Hamilton County Board of Education
3074 Hickory Valley Road
Chattanooga, TN 37421

Dear Board of Education Members,

On behalf of the Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce Board, I am writing to encourage the Hamilton County Board of Education to cast a wide net in searching for a new Superintendent to lead Hamilton County's schools. One can easily argue the advantages and disadvantages of hiring either a local candidate or a national candidate. A local candidate would be more familiar with our schools and what makes them work. A national candidate would bring a fresh perspective to the educational issues that have been a continuous challenge for our community. In the abstract, it is impossible to judge which approach would produce the best result, but by aggressively soliciting applications from a wide range of potential leaders, we can ensure a rich talent pool for identifying the best candidate regardless of his or her place of origin.

In addition, this search should not be limited to hiring a headhunting firm that specializes in education. For example, organizations like the Broad Academy are preparing experienced business and military leaders to serve as school superintendents, and a number of success stories from school systems across the U.S. have shown that non-traditional school leaders can achieve impressive results. We urge the School Board to consider how the search process might attract applications from both traditional and non-traditional candidates and consider not only their credentials but whether they have a proven ability to produce the kind of results we all expect an excellent school system to deliver.

As the primary consumer of the graduates of Hamilton County's schools, the business community has a deep understanding of the value of a quality public education system. Our members depend on Hamilton County schools to produce graduates that will help their companies compete in the global marketplace. Since the Superintendent leads and sets the tone for the entire school system, we view the selection of a Superintendent as one of the most critical decisions impacting the future competitiveness of our businesses in the County. As such, the Chamber and the leaders of the business community stand ready to participate in the search process and look forward to the opportunity to do so.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this letter.

Sincerely,

Tom Edd Wilson
President & CEO

Cc: Mayor Jim Coppinger
Members of the Hamilton County Commission
Media Outlets