

Why We Didn't Choose Adam Smith

We, four of five EBR School Board members who chose not to include Adam Smith among our list of finalists for the position of Superintendent, want to share our reasoning for doing so with the community. We have tremendous respect for Mr. Smith. He has earned the gratitude of the four of us, and the entire community, for his dedication to the schools and students in EBR. In his own words, he is a “company man,” and this is why we turned to him to serve as interim superintendent.

Respecting someone’s character, conduct, and longevity is not the same thing as believing that person is the leader needed to successfully execute significant and needed change in a district of our complexity, size, and challenges. A “company man” is often well-suited to serve as an interim, to keep the system functioning, but is not the right choice to bring much-needed change to the system.

Mr. Smith had a 6-month audition for this role, so board members and the public have had ample opportunity to see what his vision is for EBR and how he executes the job. Those of us who voted for other candidates found Mr. Smith’s audition was lacking. In general, he did not appear to us to be willing to make strong, bold decisions to improve our schools. As interim, as well as in his application, he did not show a comprehensive vision for the future that would rapidly bring 10 and 20 points of improvement to our traditional neighborhood schools.

All but one of our traditional neighborhood high schools is rated D or F, meaning the average student is not graduating on time, earning a college-going ACT score, or reading or doing math on grade level. That’s reflected across our district at all grade levels, where fewer than 35% of children are actually reading or doing math on grade level, a number inflated by the performance of children in our magnet programs.

All of us, and nearly every person in this parish, want our schools to be better, stronger, fairer, more transparent, and simply more successful at preparing a much greater number of children for their futures. We are looking for someone not only of good character, but who also inspires confidence through a bold plan and successful past experience dramatically improving a deeply challenged education system.

We are not looking for a leader who makes us comfortable; we are looking for a leader who will partner with the board to bring significant and systemic change for our children, particularly in our traditional neighborhood schools.

Signed:

Patrick Martin, Mark Bellue, Nathan Rust, Emily Soulé

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