

**Joint Cranston School Committee Meeting
And the Superintendent Search Committee
Cranston High School East**

899 Park Avenue

Cranston, RI 02910

July 26, 2012

5:00 p.m.

Minutes

The meeting was held on the above date with the following members present: Chairperson Iannazzi, Mr. Lombardi, Mr. Traficante, Mrs. McFarland, Mrs. Ruggieri, Mrs. Culhane, and Mr. Bloom.

The meeting was called to order at 5:10 p.m. and convened to Executive Session pursuant to RI State Laws PL 42-46-5(a)(1) for Personnel to discuss candidates for the position of Superintendent.

Call to Order – Public Session was called to order at 6:10 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was conducted.

The roll was called; a quorum was present. No votes were taken in Executive Session.

Executive Session minutes sealed – July 26, 2012

A motion to seal these minutes was made by Mr. Lombardi, seconded by Mr. Traficante. All were in favor.

Public interview with the candidate for the position of Superintendent. Chairperson Iannazzi stated the following: there are feedback forms in the front of the auditorium. We would ask that members of the public fill out one form per candidate. At the end of the evening you can submit that form to the box in the front of the auditorium. We

would also like the audience to know that each of the candidates will/have been asked the same questions and the candidates have been sequestered.

Good evening and welcome to our public interviews. We will begin our interviews with a 15-20 minute presentation outlining each candidate's vision and plans for Cranston Public Schools, with particular focus given to the following four questions:

1- What do you believe our vision for the future of Cranston Public Schools should be?

2- Describe your first 90 - 180 day plan of entry

3- How will you promote accountability through the use of performance data and how would you align the standards, curriculum, instructions, assessment, and professional development, and

4- The demographics of Cranston has significantly changed over the past several years to a point where over 40% of the population is now classified as poverty level and 20% is classified with disabilities or ELL- what strategies would you employ to reduce the achievement gap of these students?

Following your presentation, members of the School Committee will pose questions that have been submitted from the larger Cranston community. We ask that you keep your answers to those questions to 2-3 minutes.

Public announcement; thank you to B.A.S.I.C.S. again for providing babysitting services in the Senior Cafeteria.

Dr. Irving stated: I would like to introduce myself to you. I am Davida

Irving. I am very flattered and honored to be invited back to Cranston to talk about what I would like to happen in the Cranston Schools for our Cranston children. Anything I say always goes back to the same goal; we have many goals that help us reach the one most important goal which is to increase our students ability to learn, close their gaps, reach proficiency, in reading, writing, math, social studies, art, music, library, PE and any other course our students take. They need to reach proficiency. For our children who are already on target or beyond we need to stretch them. We can't stop where they are; they need to move forward and we do need to close the gaps of our children who come to us as in poverty, our children who are English Language Learners (ELL) and have a lot of catching up to do and our children with disabilities. We need to put supports in place; we need to have interventions in place. The most important thing we can do. When you look at high performing schools, they have several things in common. The staff expects great things from every student, they have intervention, and support in place. The staff, particularly the teachers, are stable, they've been there a while they are very effective. The schools that are high performing have instructional leaders, a principal, superintendent that doesn't just run the basics of the school, takes a full part in making sure our teachers are teaching our students.

When I look at a 90 day plan, which I have, I have it in three parts. I need to see where we are, I need to ask where are we going, and third, I need to figure out how we're going to get there. That's what the 90 day plan will provide. I look at five goals in the 90 day plan that

if we can get four of them in place the fifth one will be on its way and I'm going to leave the fifth one for last. The first goal – need to improve communication with everyone, every stakeholder, every parent, every community member, every student, every political person in the city, and in the state. We need the support of everyone if we are going to be successful. We cannot do this alone. Everyone needs to take ownership of increasing our students proficiencies, everyone. So if people know what we are doing and we're honest, open and transparent in sharing what we're doing we set ourselves up for the second goal which is to make sure we're collaborating with everyone, again, parents, community members, students, grandparents, just any member of the community or outside of the community. When I say collaborate, they need to be part of the solution, whatever it takes. If we need to provide adult professional development so that our community members can support our students in reading and writing and problem solving we will do that. So the first two goals are to improve our communication and by improving our communication it will allow us to be more collaborative with the whole community. The third goal is to make sure our accountability system is firmly in place, that we are using data to manage our performance and I mean that not just for teachers and administrators, for our students. We now have the ability; technology has come a long way. We can put numbers in a computer, we can have children take a five minute test on the computer and the programs will tell us where the gaps are. They will tell us what we need to concentrate on. Some of the programs you may be familiar

with. Many of the elementary schools use AIMS Web. Middle and high school tend to prefer NWEA. There are others out there; they all provide the same data. We need to across the district, across the schools, across the grades, across the classrooms, and for the individual students we need to make sure we know where they are and make sure that there is growth. We can now calculate that and we need to do that. As for evaluations which are now going to be done by computer. It's going to streamline it and we need to look at evaluations as a positive. It shows us where we need to improve. It's a good thing to be developing. It's a good thing to find out where you may not be very strong. We also find out where you are strong. We need everybody to be part of the solution. That means everybody provides support, teachers to teachers, teachers to students, students to teachers, parents, etc. We need to get parents in the school, volunteers in the school, once again we can't do it alone, and we need everybody at the table. The fourth goal is to assess and make sure that our organization is fiscally responsible and that the organization...and when I say that I mean the parts of the district that take care of busing and lunch and the buildings. We need to make sure that they are working efficiently and effectively. There is no money. We are asked to do more and more and more and we are given less and less to do it with so we need to stop worrying about the money and we need to talk about people. If we can't have the dollars but we have the people, I'd rather have the people. We can and we will make a difference. The fifth goal that every goal will support is to make sure that our students are achieving. We want our

students to achieve higher and higher wherever they are and we need to close the gaps. We can talk about why there are gaps. I'd much rather talk about how we're going to close them. We put interventions in place, we provide support, and we start very, very, early. We start in pre-school. We catch the problems and with the support and the intervention, by the time they are fully immersed in second or third grade we don't necessarily need the special supports. We've done it so we may have to put those programs in to keep us from having to put more extensive programs in later. Everybody needs to teach our children how to read. In high performing schools they always have strong writing programs and they always have strong structured reading programs. Our kids need to be able to read. I don't care what grade they come to us, if they are not reading we can't provide the other core content. So everybody needs to teach reading and when a teacher says to me I don't know how to teach reading, we will teach you, everyone; volunteers, grandparents – a great source. We need to tap those resources. We need everybody at the table. Interventions such a Response to Intervention (RTI) is working if we do the intervention with fidelity and when I say that if the intervention needs forty minutes five times a week and we only do it two or three and we only do it for fifteen minutes, and we say it's not working, it's because we're not doing it with fidelity. I have worked with districts where we have turned things around. We have eliminated the majority of the students who are referred to problem solving. If we can't fix it with RTI maybe it is a special ed need or maybe not. We need to look at all of the different reasons why there may be a gap and we need to

provide the support to close that gap. In order to increase our students proficiency we need to make sure that we have effective teachers in every classroom, every year, that we have strong instructional leaders, principals, assistant principals, and that we have a fiscally responsible organization that we communicate with our stakeholders and that we collaborate with everyone we can get to join us.

In terms of what we want to accomplish, we want to be the top performing district, not just in Rhode Island, in the country. I do believe we will get there. It takes hard work, lots of energy, and lots of time. If I come to your district I hope to see each and every one of you helping to close our gaps in education and increase what our children need to know.

In terms of curriculum, a curriculum is basically what we want our students to know. Instruction is how we teach them what they need to know. So we need both, the curriculum and we need the instruction and the third item that is essential is assessment. It's no longer enough to teach. We can call that input. We now need to know if the kids are learning it so we need to measure the output and that's what assessment does and I don't mean kill the kids with tests and quizzes. We embed the assessment all day long, everywhere. A simple question, did you get it? What did you understand and tell us what else you want to know, simple questions. Explain to me what you just learned. That's assessment. Homework doesn't have to keep a kid up all night just enough to see if they learned enough to use what they've learned. So I am going to stop right now. I know that

there are many questions, I'd like to give time to your questions and I've just touched on topics and I suspect your questions will help me go more deeply into the different areas.

I just wanted to share with you before we start the questions – I decided not to use a Power Point because I felt that would distract from what we are discussing. You came here to see me and to hear me and that's what I want you to do so I didn't bother with the Power Point.

QUESTIONS:

TRAFICANTE: Please explain how your experience as a classroom teacher and building administrator has prepared you for the position of Superintendent and how you will use those experiences to shape decisions that you make in the future.

Dr. Irving replied: Starting out as a classroom teacher I started out as being the most important person in our students' achieving. I was the one in charge of instruction. I was the one who needed to make sure that what I was teaching was being learned. I made lots of mistakes. I started teaching a very, very, long time ago. I went back to school and found that I was ashamed of the way I taught. When I first started teaching it was drill and kill and the teachers stood in the front of the room and just gave the information. We didn't stop to see if the kids understood it. We thought our job was to teach and that's all we did. Now going from the classroom, becoming an administrator as a principal, I was able to take the skills that I learned in the classroom, the strategies that worked and I was able to provide support for the teachers in my building. I was able to model for them. One of my

favorite things was when we couldn't find a sub and guess what, I took advantage. I ran right into that classroom and I was the sub. I often go into classrooms even now and say, let me teach this topic and I do it because I want the teachers to see some of the things I do and how I use certain strategies. It allows me to provide professional development in-house, it allows me to embed the professional development and make sure it is ongoing. So I don't need to bring somebody in and make it a one shot deal. And going from principal to superintendent, well actually, I'm very lucky I am both the superintendent and principal in Foster so this is what happens. My principal turns to her superintendent and says I'd like to try this out and guess what the superintendent turns and says, go ahead. So I have been able to try lots of things working with the teachers, working with the staff, the parents, I get everyone involved. Everybody is responsible. I do not accept excuses. Going from this joint position to a full superintendent, the differences is I am going to have people I can delegate to. That may be difficult but it's going to be good because it will allow me to visit the schools, all of the schools, to get to know the teachers, the principals, the students, the parents. I know what needs to be done as superintendent in a small district has the same responsibilities as a superintendent in a large district. The paperwork is the same as a superintendent in Cranston I will take advantage of everybody on my leadership team and we will turn Cranston into a star where people come to see what we're doing right, they want to come and see why we are high-performing in every school, in every classroom, in every grade.

RUGGIERI: What is your vision of the “ideal” professional learning community and how will you work toward developing a professional learning community (PLC) throughout the district as well as support school-based efforts to develop, implement and sustain professional learning communities within individual buildings? Please provide specific examples of some of the roles/responsibilities you will expect administrators, teachers, support staff, parents and students to assume in an ongoing effort to create an effective PLC(s).

Dr. Irving replied: A Professional Learning Community, what is it? It is a group of people who get together and want to make a difference. They want to learn, they want to take what they learn, they want to apply it, they want to share with other people and that’s what we need. A PLC is where we get a lot done. That’s where we have embedded professional development. That’s where we find what people do really well. That’s where we get people to come in and help. PLC should be and will be in every aspect of the Cranston School Department’s world. It can be three people, it can be ten people, and it can be twenty people. Everyone needs to be a member of a learning community. That is how we get better at everything we do. How will I do it? I will start off by saying, join my professional learning community and when you get sick of meeting with me we’ll expand and you’ll go out and you’ll start another professional learning community and it will grow and pretty soon it won’t just be in our schools, it will be everywhere. We will have everybody part of a learning community.

LOMBARDI: Please detail your experience budgeting, explaining what

process you plan to use and who you will rely on in building the budget.

Dr. Irving replied: Budgets, a superintendent's nightmare. I have worked on three full budgets as the superintendent in Foster. I was directed by my school committee to present a zero increase budget each year and one year the town cut us below so it was not just a level, we had to find money within the budget. So we need to be creative. In a small district, a small amount of money seems like a lot. What did we do, what did I do? You look at all the line items. You look very carefully. What can we do without? What can we eliminate? What can we decrease that will not harm our students? That's the key. We need to keep in place every program, everything that supports our students because we go back to - our students come first. Our students are who we are taking care of. Sometimes we forget and we think it's the adults. We think of the students we take care of the students first. So what can we eliminate when we are looking at a budget? Well, we may have to eliminate some positions. Some people may need to wear several different hats. I've eliminated clerical help, I've eliminated custodial help, and I've put things like the bus contract out to bid and gotten lower bids. I've looked at the number of students riding the bus and found we could eliminate a bus or two. That's \$100,000 per bus that we can recuperate. A very unpopular but effective move because I needed to get that budget to zero, I eliminated bus monitors and we were able to do that by getting a variance from RIDE because our buses do door to the door the elementary students and you are allowed to eliminate bus monitors if

you have door to door busing. We calculated and found out the savings was worth it to continue to have the door to door saved another \$100,000. Each year when it becomes budget time I close myself into my office. I have our business manager on speed dial. We look at what we can decrease first before we eliminate, again, not the programs. When I say not the teachers, we may have to increase a class size by one or two but not enough to make the class size, make the classroom ineffective. Basically we look at what we can eliminate and sometimes we need to have a pay freeze. I have a great relationship with my teachers and I went to them and I said, we have a problem, they took a pay freeze. What I did was, you take a pay freeze, and I take a pay freeze. Your health insurance premiums, you're responsible for 20%, not the 3% that you had last year, if you have to pay 20%, I'll pay 20%. It hurts but we're all in it together. I have worked on three budgets, I've presented three budgets with no increase, and the town has accepted our budget each time. When we have line items that go over I find it in another line item and I will work with my school committee to transfer from one line to another when it is appropriate and at the end of the year, each year, we've had a balanced budget. We have never gone over.

MCFARLAND: How will you help and support our Title One schools especially the ones with high poverty. What do you see as the challenges and how will you support our ESL students in these schools?

Dr. Irving replied: First we'll talk about Title I schools and some schools are not completely Title I, they're just targeted Title I. First of

all the moment you are Title I you do get some grant money through the CRP. It's not a whole lot but it helps. We are able to provide intervention for the students who are in poverty that is assuming there is a gap between what they are learning, what they know, and the children who are achieving on standard. What we put in place again, supports, interventions, we need to start early. We need to start in preschool. This way not be popular with many. You, we do need a full day kindergarten. We work very hard in the preschool to prepare and then we get to the kindergarten. Our state standards, the GLE's, in the Common Core which we are adopting, are based on a full day kindergarten so as long as we have half day, right from day one, our students are behind. So we need that time to have the interventions in place so by the time they get to second, third grade, they won't have the gaps, and they won't need the interventions. Insofar as our ELL's, if they are coming in in kindergarten it's not a problem. They will be bilingual, they'll pick up the English and their critical thinking skills will be very sharp. Anybody who speaks two languages, anybody who is bilingual has strong critical thinking skills and it makes sense. Think about it in your brain. You are juggling two cultures, two languages, all the time. So when it comes to taking tests, you have to problem solve, you're already ahead of the game just because you speak another language. But then you have the L's who come in third grade, fifth grade, 7th grade, they're not reading, they're not writing, they're way behind academically, they've never been in school, can't hold a pencil...what are we going to do? We're going to teach them how to read. We start with the reading. We are

going to teach them how to read through contents because the more we teach them English and English alone the further away the students get from learning the academics, the contents, and that gap gets bigger. We need to teach the English language through the content area and we need our ELL's to be given time. They can't learn English in a day, week, year, it takes 3 to 7 years so we need to be patiently impatient or impatiently patient. Whichever way it's going to take time if we provide the supports and interventions they will learn English and they will be successful.

CULHANE: What do you feel have been the ramifications of losing the EPIC enrichment and music programs?

Dr. Irving replied: Well, I find that I'm going to say sad. I think that's a pretty good word. I look at what is important. We talk about STEM all the time, STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. We should not just be using the word STEM. We need to be using the word STEAM – we need that A to stand for arts. We need all of it. We teach reading, writing, math, through the arts. The enrichment allows our students to reach. We want all of our students to dream, we want them to reach, and we want them to succeed. They can't reach if we don't give them the opportunity so if there are programs eliminated because of money we start to provide volunteer programs. We get staff to provide the enrichment. Is it the best of all worlds? No. Does it work? Yes.

BLOOM: Have you examined the performance of our school system both prior and post program cuts and what is your plan to reinstate the budget to make such programs possible again if deemed of

value?

Dr. Irving replied: Well, that's a difficult question because I need to...your budget is over 300 pages long and looking at it I don't really have a good handle on how many interventions and supports need to be put in place in every school. I would need to see the cost, I would also need to see how much of that can be done in-house. How many of our teachers can provide the support. How many of the programs can be provided through volunteers. We need to bring back what we can. If we don't have the money we need to work without it. Again, we go back to if we don't have the money we still have the people and it's the people that going to improve our students' achievement. If we cut programs, that's not good. We can't always bring them back. We have to find another way to incorporate the content of those programs. We can do it. We need to look at the budget. I need to look at...I know there's no fluff in Cranston. I need to look at what I can trade off and I have to be honest, looking at the 300 pages I did say, another day.

IANNAZZI: What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the Cranston School Department and how would you use the strengths/weaknesses to improve the teaching and learning in Cranston?

Dr. Irving replied: The strengths are the people, the students, the teachers, and the community. It's a fabulous place to live. The weakness is that our kids are not performing on target in many of our schools. Math is a real problem. Science is a real problem here. We need to...would you forgive me, I forgot the question. Would you repeat it for me? (The question was repeated and Dr. Irving

continued). The weaknesses are within our schools, within certain classrooms where the gaps of our students who are underperforming are getting larger and larger and larger. That's the weakness. We need to make sure that the instruction in these classrooms is effective. That the teachers have support. The students have support. Again, we go back to intervention. We go back...that's a weakness when we don't have the money to provide the support. The strength is we have the people. We will find the people to come in and provide that support. It's a question of being creative. What kind of rewards can we give and I'm not talking financial rewards. How can we thank, how can we honor these great people that provide this support? If we're creative, we will bring back these programs if we are creative the weaknesses will disappear and the strengths, we will be such a fantastic school district that everyone will want to move to Cranston and the real estate prices will go sky high and then we'll get more tax money to support our schools.

TRAFICANTE: Doctor, many of our top administrators over the years in Cranston and neighborhood communities seem to have adopted a policy of three years and out. If you are selected as the Superintendent, realistically how long are you planning on staying in this position?

Dr. Irving replied: I need to tell you a story in order to answer that. I was born in Providence, I went to school in Providence, I graduated from Rhode Island College as an undergraduate and then I left and I was gone for almost thirty-five years. I left with a spouse, I left for career reasons and I've lived in many, many places. I always planned

to come home and I didn't know when and I was afraid that people who said to me once you leave home you can't go back. Eight years ago my father was ill, he's a Rhode Islander, born in Rhode Island, and I needed to come back. I came back. I joined the Pawtucket School District and then I remembered what it's like to be a Rhode Islander. The coffee cabinets, the Dell lemonade but what really brought home that was you can take a Rhode Islander out of Rhode Island but you can't take Rhode Island out of a Rhode Islander. I was looking at a place to live and I was in Pawtucket and I went across the border to South Attleboro and I was looking at a condo and it was really very, very nice and it was less than five minutes from the office. As I crossed the border from Massachusetts to Rhode Island I said, I can't move to Massachusetts because my license plate is 4361. I inherited that from my father and as any good Rhode Islander knows we don't give up these license plates. In the past when people asked my children where their answer is home always was wherever our mom happens to be. Since I have come back to Rhode Island, when they are asked that question they answer is Rhode Island. They never really lived here, they have grandparents, aunts and uncles but they know Rhode Island through me. I am very happy in Rhode Island. I'm home. It takes at least three years to turn things around to see the changes. If I am going to institute change, I want to be here to see the results so I will stay as long as you will have me and my commitment to Cranston is this – I'm renting a home in North Scituate, four minutes from my office, I don't like to travel a whole lot to work because I go back and forth. I plan to move to Cranston. I want to be a

part of the community and I would not do that for just three years, this is permanent. When I retire 10-15 years down the road I will be in Cranston. Maybe I will be on the school committee, maybe I'll be on the town council. I'm not leaving. I want to be here. I hope that helps.

RUGGIERI: What are your plans to recruit and retain high quality administrators and teachers and build capacity within the district?

Dr. Irving replied: It's difficult to find administrators that have strong instructional abilities. A lot of where we find strong administrators and effective teachers is through networking. Rhode Island is a very small state. If you've never left Rhode Island it may not seem that. If you've lived in Texas, Rhode Island is very small. The networking works. Superintendents do know where the good teachers are, where the strong administrators are and as much as we work together and we support each other, we'll steal that good administrator and teacher away from any district that we can because we want them here in Cranston and once we have them we need to keep them. How are we going to keep them? We need to provide the professional development so they want to stay here. We need to provide them the tools to provide the interventions and the support for our struggling students. The students that aren't struggling, not a problem...who want to come here if they feel like they're not going to be thanked, appreciated, we need to learn how to say thank you, and we need to show appreciation. It doesn't need to be through dollars. It can be through our human communication. It's difficult, we do need strong administrators, we do need strong teachers, I will not settle for somebody who is not effective or strong. If we have to go without for

a bit we'll do that because I will not put an ineffective teacher in front of any class in Cranston.

LOMBARDI: In your opinion, in what ways do Cranston Public Schools' stand out from other similar districts? What would make a family new to Rhode Island consider moving to our school system?

Dr. Irving replied: A family who wants to be in a city and a lot of families do, cities offer a lot, a lot of extracurricular activities, and good restaurants, good gyms, great shopping, and we've got Garden City among other things. Our schools, the high performing schools attract people in those neighborhoods. We need all of the schools to be high performing. People will come. You know that...I think there was a film...build the field and they will come... make sure we have high performing schools and families will come to Cranston. It's close to Providence without the mess. It's a manageable school district. A larger city is not. A smaller city or district doesn't have the choice that you have in Cranston. You are large enough that there are choices. This is what will keep our families here, will encourage them to come. We do have a lot of work ahead of us though. We need every school high performing. I want it to be written everywhere...Cranston is the place to be.

MCFARLAND: Now that you have them here in Cranston, what are your beliefs about parent involvement in district issues and how would you convince parents that it is worth their time to become and stay involved?

Dr. Irving replied: My first statement usually when I talk about education is students are always first. The second statement I make

is parents are partners. Parents need to work with us and if they don't come in on their own we're going to find a way to challenge them to help us whether it's a fundraiser, whether it's coming in to tutor, whether it's coming in to help paint a building because we don't have the money in the budget to clean it up. We can get parents in. We need to make sure that they feel safe, comfortable and wanted. We need to invite them and once they come we need to make them feel so comfortable that they don't want to leave. When I walk into a building and that front office is not friendly, is not helpful, the people have long faces, they don't take care of me, and that's a problem. Every school needs to be welcoming. Parents will come if we invite them and they see it's a good place to be they will come back.

CULHANE: Could you please summarize your experiences in special education, including whether you have ever been involved with a Special Education Advisory Committee and what role you think a local advisory committee should play in the district.

Dr. Irving replied: I have been on the advisory board when I was in Pawtucket so I was for three years. I play a very active role in special ed right now because I wear so many hats and our special ed director doesn't just take care of Foster, takes care of several districts so we don't have an in-house special ed director. I attend every IEP meeting, I attend every 504 meeting, I study the data for every student that is being referred to special ed. I look at what strategies we are putting in place, what teachers are going to be providing the support above and beyond the classroom teacher, I make sure the teacher assistants are effective. Where I feel I have a closeness to special ed is this, my

background is teaching linguistically and culturally diverse students. I find very often there's confusion. A ESL is referred to special ed because they're not getting it, they're not making progress and I find that some ELL are not making progress and it really does seem that they may have a disability. It's hard sometimes to see the difference. I discovered that we were making some mistakes so I started going to IEP meetings as an advocate for the ELL. By doing that I sure learned a lot about the whole process even something as simple as how a psychologist tests an ELL. (Dr. Irving gave a couple of examples). Our IEP students, our special ed students need to be mainstreamed into our classrooms. They need to be part of it even if we have to send a special ed teacher assistant in. They need to be part of it. IEP students will learn more in a classroom where they have positive role models. Our parents need to advocate for that. I will always.

BLOOM: Cranston is a large district that covers a wide socio-economic range. Sometimes these differences show up in a school's infrastructure, sometimes these differences show up in test scores and high-school graduation rates. What would you do as superintendent to ameliorate these differences in building infrastructure and academic outcomes?

Dr. Irving replied: It goes back to curriculum, instruction, assessment. If these three are in place, if you have a strong challenging curriculum, if you have effective instruction and you have assessment ongoing, formative assessment, that tells us what our students are learning and what they are not learning, those schools that are struggling will come out as struggling. We need to put the

resources into these schools. The infrastructure needs help. We need our best teachers, our most effective teachers in these schools. We need our strong instructional leaders in these schools. We need the community support in these schools. With those and the interventions and the support that infrastructure will be strong as it is in the high performing schools. We cannot have Cranston divided into the halves and halves not. We can't do much about it in terms of income or where you live but we can do something about it in our schools. All of our schools need to be top notch and it is our job to make sure they are and whatever it takes we do.

IANNAZZI: Doctor, you have already asked this question but I am going to ask it and you can probably be very brief - What are your feelings about all-day kindergarten? Do you see this as a priority to bring to Cranston?

Dr. Irving replied: Absolutely, unequivocally, full day kindergarten is mandatory. I cannot imagine a city like Cranston not having full day kindergarten and let me explain why I say that. Our state's standards are based on a full day kindergarten so if our kids are only here half day from the first day of kindergarten they are behind the other kids in Rhode Island. I have had many people say to me, they have done the research and half day kindergarten kids and full day kindergarten kids level out by grade 3. Have any of you heard that? So why do we need it? That is accurate if we don't make changes in the first, second and third grade. If we have full day kindergarten the curriculum, what we teach, how we teach, has to change so we get better and better along the way. They will only level out if we don't change what we are

doing in the other grades so the full day kindergarten is the catalyst for change all the way up the ladder. In my district we did not have full day kindergarten. I fought for three years. I had my parent groups out I had my parents doing the research. I brought my parents to the school committee, I brought my parents to the town council, and I brought in the early childhood educators from RIDE. I tried and tried and then one day I found the money in the budget, the school committee was in a good mood and they approved it and our teachers are so excited, are so sure this is the right way to go, let me tell you what they did. Two kindergarten classes going full time, how do we pay for it? By eliminating the mid-day bus run. Our problem, we have maximum twenty students in our kindergarten classes per teacher contract. This year we're already up to twenty-three in a class. My school committee said to me it can't cost anymore. If I open up a third class I need another full time teacher. I said to my teachers we need to trouble shoot. Are you willing, one time only, to take the overage in your kindergarten class? Let's decide, is it more important to have our kids full day in a larger class or half day in a smaller class? Full day won. My teachers signed a Memorandum of Agreement saying that they would accept up to and including twenty-five students in each kindergarten class. That's how important my staff felt it was. That's a big thing. It needs to be here. We will find the resources. I find another problem is where are we going to put it, we'll find the place. We need the full day kindergarten. It's not a question of it would be nice or we would like it, we need it, we will have it.

TRAFICANTE: Our previous Superintendent believed in honest and frequent communication with the School Committee. Please describe your leadership style and examples of past collaboration with School Boards.

Dr. Irving replied: I also do believe in open and honest communication and I believe in transparency. When it comes the time for example to put an agenda together for the school committee meeting I meet with the chair. We sit down, we go over the previous minutes, we look at what needs to be there, what should be there, I put together the packets, put the information in, make sure my school committee members have the packets at least five days in advance. I prefer to have the school committee members come in to pick up their packets. Why? So they can come into my office and we can talk. We can go over every piece of information. I don't want any surprises at the school committee meeting; they don't want any surprises at the school committee meeting. We need to know what each other is doing. We don't have to agree on everything but we need to support each other. School committee members are very important. I need my school committee members to know what we are doing, how we're doing it, why we're doing it. The only way they can know that is if I share with them speaking with each school committee member once a week is not too much. My school committee members on a regular basis stop in my office, we chat. Some people think I'm crazy. My school committee members know it's okay when they need to talk about something and they don't want the distractions they'll call me on a Sunday morning at 9 o'clock, they'll call me 10 o'clock at night,

they'll call me when I'm on vacation or a day off because we have a trust and they would never abuse that. If we trust each other we will communicate as often as we need to. It's important and it's important that I not just speak with one or two school committee members; I need to know what each and every school committee member is thinking, what they want and why they want it and can I help.

Chairperson Iannazzi stated that concludes our public interview for this evening. The School Committee would like to recognize our phenomenal superintendent emeritus who is present, Superintendent Nero.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Lombardi and seconded by Mrs. Ruggieri. The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank S. Lombardi,

Clerk