

SCHOOL COMMITTEE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COACH

RATIONALE

Professional development is most effective when it is ongoing and embedded in the work environment of an individual or a collection of individuals. The South Kingstown School Committee confronts challenges that are shared by many committees within the state. However, policy development within the district also is configured to the unique needs of the Town. An individual that carefully observes the Committee's work will be more capable in providing guidance on how to be more effective in this environment. Coaching is an interactive, continuous process. The coach will listen and observe not simply to critique, but to help elicit solutions and strategies from the Committee. While the coach provides objective feedback, the Committee is responsible in producing the desired results. The coach's job is to provide support to enhance the skills, creativity and natural strengths of the Committee.

CHARACTERISTICS

Coaching is an important relationship. Optimally, a bond should develop between the Committee and its coach. In selecting a coach we should decide on what personal characteristics and qualifications are important to us. For example: Is it important to select an individual with knowledge of educational issues and policy or do we want coaching from an individual with experience in the business sector? Are we more comfortable with being nurtured or are we looking to be pressed? Should the individual come from within or outside the district? Meeting the individual prior to the coaching is essential. We should define our professional development objectives and obtain feedback from the individual on what coaching strategies he/she will implement to help achieve them.

JOB DESCRIPTION

It is difficult to design a complete job description without an understanding of our professional development objectives. However, there are certain expectations that would seem necessary for effective coaching. These include:

- The coach should have the time to observe the actions of the Committee in a variety of settings. This would include public meetings, goal setting sessions, and joint work sessions.
- The coach should have an understanding of the rules in which the Committee governs. This should not only include our Bylaws but a general understanding of the Town Charter as it applies to the Committee.
- Optimally, the coach should plan on working with the Committee for its minimal lifespan (2 years).
- The coach should take time not only to counsel and advise the Committee but also to provide individual assessments. This may be needed due to an individual's unique responsibilities (chair), lack of experience (newly elected) or disruptive activities.
- The coach should assist in arranging educational activities for the Committee.

This is intended to be a starting point for the discussion about the School Committee coach. As we define our professional development objectives, then we can add specifics to the job description. We also need to determine to what extent compensation will define our job description for this position. I look forward to more discussion.