Tukwila School District community:

The TSD Board of Directors is pleased to announce the selection of our new superintendent, Dr. Lester “Flip” Herndon, Jr.

Dr. Herndon comes to Tukwila with a wealth of educational experience in K-12 instruction and leadership. He has been in the classroom as a middle school and high school teacher and has building administrative experience as both an assistant principal and principal at the elementary and middle school levels. He was the Superintendent of the Bremerton School District for four years and the Associate Superintendent of Operations for Seattle Public Schools, overseeing bond and capital projects valued at nearly one billion dollars, for five years. Dr. Herndon is a thoughtful, thorough planner who focuses on inclusion of multiple stakeholder viewpoints before making decisions that affect the district’s students and staff. He is a professional, results-oriented, visionary leader who is focused on K-12 alignment within the district, including the development of a universal pre-kindergarten program. The board is eager to work alongside him as we navigate our current budget issues and capital projects, as his years of experience and successes are sure to benefit the Tukwila School District.

In his six months as Interim Superintendent, Dr. Herndon carefully followed the board’s directives to provide stability and support to students and staff after the difficulties of the beginning of the academic year. His methodical and patient approach to problem solving was a benefit to us during his tenure as Interim Superintendent, as he was sure to operate within the established parameters of the district’s procedures except where immediate change was necessary.

The superintendent search process began late last year when the board chose a consultant firm, MacPherson and Jacobson, to facilitate the superintendent search. This decision was made after several discussions in which we realized that as a young board tasked with what truly is the most important decision we make, the most responsible path forward involved a partnership with an experienced organization to guide and support us.

The next step of the process involved gathering feedback from stakeholders in a variety of ways, including an online survey, posters in the staff rooms of each school, meetings with students from the middle and high schools, and several stakeholder meetings conducted with invaluable facilitation assistance provided by our team of family liaisons, our HR department, and the administrative assistant to the board. This feedback was vital to the board’s first important step, which was establishing a set of criteria statements: a list of qualifications we, as a board and a school district community, desire to see in our new superintendent. The statements are:

- **Organizational and Operational Management Skills**
  Is a systems thinker who builds organizational infrastructure (procedures, systems, structures, operating norms and accountability), clarifies appropriate roles, responsibilities and expectations throughout the district. Works for and maintains high levels of service to students, staff and families. Effectively manages day-to-day operations to ensure an appropriate environment to support student growth and achievement.

- **Excellence in School Finance and Budgeting**
  Has specific experience in working with a team to assemble a school district budget, as well as
involvement in implementing changes in operations and staffing to support the budget. Monitors district operations, programs, budgets, and related activities for the purpose of ensuring that objectives are attained within budget and in compliance with established regulations and operational practices. Ability to lead a team to ensure successful completion of capital projects and bond/levy funded activities within budget and on schedule.

- **Cultural Competence**
  Is an educational leader with experience in improving learning and achievement for each student by understanding and responding to the specific needs of a diverse community, especially with regard to race, ethnicity, faith background, and socioeconomic status. Committed to creating a culture free of harassment, intimidation, and bullying for students and staff.

- **Relationship Building**
  Actively participates in collaboration within and across all levels of the organization, including the board of directors, administrators, building leadership, staff, students, families, and community, with an authentic desire to listen, learn, and incorporate input into decision making. Models exemplary interpersonal skills and acts as a leader in transforming organizational culture where needed. Dedicated to ensuring an environment of respect, trust, and teamwork to support student growth and achievement.

- **Proactive Communicator**
  Is dedicated to providing transparent, frequent, timely and responsive communication across all levels of the organization. Effectively involves families and community members in the educational process and in district decision making. Develops two-way communication strategies to reach families, and other individuals, agencies, or community members.

MacPherson and Jacobson advertised our superintendent opening and shared our criteria statements with all potential applicants. In total there were twenty-three well-qualified educators from all over the country interested in leading our district, though the majority were local to Washington state. The board reviewed each applicant’s resume as well as the background checks and reference results provided by MacPherson and Jacobson. Our review meeting resulted in a list of six semi-finalists, each of whom were invited for a formal interview with the board. The board met again to discuss the qualifications of each semi-finalist, deliberated with care and respect for one another, and ultimately decided to bring two final candidates to the community for consideration. Each candidate was scheduled for a twelve-hour interview day in the Tukwila School District which included tours of each school building to interact with staff and students, meet-and-greet opportunities with staff (administration building, transportation building, and service center), two forums, and an executive session with the board. All stakeholders were provided with feedback forms, which the board collected for careful review during today’s meeting.

The board’s final decision to select Dr. Herndon was not easy. Each candidate brought strengths and skillsets that would benefit the students, families, staff, and community of the Tukwila School District. Ultimately, the board chose the candidate whose qualifications we felt matched our most urgent needs while still having a vision and a plan to move the district forward to a place of stability and excellence.

The board learned of our own strengths and weaknesses throughout the search process. We are a young but strong board with a diversity of experiences and a high level of respect for one another, and each of us ultimately desire for the success of every student in our care. We are learning and growing in
our roles and responsibilities and realize that a continued and intensified focus on transparency and communication are vital aspects of our leadership. We would like to thank each of our stakeholders—students, families, staff, and community members—for their patience, trust, and feedback during the search and selection process.

The completion of the superintendent search does not represent an end to our desire for feedback. Please email your thoughts and comments to the board (tsdboard@tukwila.wednet.edu) or contact any board member individually.

Most sincerely,

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