

Monica Henson, EdD

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Barnstead, New Hampshire [REDACTED]

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Monroe, Georgia [REDACTED]

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November 16, 2020

East Baton Rouge Parish School System
RE: Superintendent Posting

To the Search Committee,

I am interested in the position of Superintendent of East Baton Rouge Schools. I am a seasoned superintendent with eight years' experience in public school system leadership in Georgia and New Hampshire, currently serving as an interim superintendent of a three-district school administrative unit in Northwood, New Hampshire, which has afforded me the opportunity to be near my grandchildren during the pandemic. My experiences in education have involved all levels of leadership, administration, supervision, curriculum development, business, finance, and technology in district, charter, and independent public schools, including collaboration with private schools, of varying sizes and demographics in New Hampshire, Connecticut, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, and including regional and statewide leadership in Florida and Georgia. I have a strong background in leading a large organization and collaborating with multiple agencies in my work as a statewide school leader in Georgia, working with the Governor's and Lieutenant Governor's offices, the state legislature, the State Board of Education, the Georgia Department of Education, the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders and the Georgia School Superintendents Association.

My extensive experience demonstrates my proven record of successful executive management. I launched my educational leadership journey after a stellar career in the classroom as a National Board Certified Teacher. I served as an elementary, middle, and high school principal prior to becoming a district leader. I hold a doctorate in educational leadership and did postgraduate study in the National Superintendents Academy of the District Administration Leadership Institute, and I am a diplomate of the Hunt Institute for educational leadership and policy at Duke University. I seek to return to the Southeast for a permanent assignment as a superintendent where my unique skill set, deep knowledge, and varied experience will be best used for the benefit of students, staff, families, and the community.

I have taught in, led, or overseen the leadership of public school campuses in a number of cities: Atlanta, Savannah, Macon, Augusta, Marietta, and Albany, GA; Leominster and Worcester, MA; and Gainesville, Jacksonville, Miami Gardens, and Homestead, FL. I understand how to mobilize teams at both the district and building levels to improve student achievement outcomes at scale and across the state, as demonstrated by my track record of statewide district improvement in Georgia. I have managed progressively larger budgets in each of my three superintendentcies, from \$13M to \$29M to \$39M, demonstrating the ability to run a school system in the black while engineering needed change.

It is my goal to help EBR Schools eliminate achievement gaps between identifiable groups of students, increase opportunities for student success in college and career, ensure that staff,

students, and families feel valued by their schools, and move schools progressively toward improved student outcomes. I have created a track record of leadership that demonstrates my readiness to take EBR Schools into the future and out of the pandemic. My preparation for and experience in school system leadership is exemplary. My longtime mentor has been Dr. David Driscoll, former Commissioner of Education of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. His attention to the classroom work I did in Leominster Public Schools at the inception of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) led to the launch of my educational leadership career. My leadership references in Georgia are equally stellar and include state-level policymakers and educational leaders. I have been invited on occasion by the editorial board of the *Atlanta Journal & Constitution* to write op/ed pieces on education topics. I have been invited to offer testimony from time to time on education issues for the Senate Education & Youth and the House Education Committees of the Georgia state legislature. I have made many presentations over the years to educational leadership associations, serving at times as a featured speaker.

I believe that my personal qualities are an appropriate match for those outlined in the posting. I am frequently described as a strong, motivated, visionary administrator, and my professional record demonstrates all three qualities. I have an established track record of leading instruction at the district level across campuses to generate measurable improvement in teaching and learning at scale. Of my top ten personal strengths measured by the Clifton Strengths Finder instrument, seven are in the domains of Relationship Building and Influencing. I understand how to coach and help building leaders to cultivate a culture of caring and collaboration while holding all constituents accountable for honoring the organization's values.

I understand how to navigate the world of state government effectively. Of my top ten personal strengths measured by the Clifton Strengths Finder instrument, seven are in the domains of Relationship Building and Influencing. I successfully persuaded Georgia legislators and the Governor's Office to agree to an additional \$3,000 per pupil funding structure for the students served by my charter school system. I also secured a \$900,000 one-time state budget line item to overcome an unexpected shortfall due to incorrect guidance provided by the GaDOE in creating our first-year budget. I know how to track legislation and summarize it succinctly for laypersons.

In light of the recent pandemic and the oppressive challenges it has posed to the public schools, I know that safety and funding are the foremost educational issues in Louisiana. I am leading now in a situation where there are isolated COVID-19 cases in my New Hampshire school system, and I am in direct communication with Commissioner Frank Edelblut at the New Hampshire Department of Education along with leadership at the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services via the Bureau of Infectious Disease Control. I have substantial previous experience overseeing instruction in both face-to-face (F2F) and virtual models, along with hybrid scheduling, and I understand how to manage the hard pivots necessary to cope with intermittent outbreaks and suspension of F2F schooling.

I had the pleasure of spending the first seven years of my leadership journey at The Woodstock Academy, a suburban regional high school in Connecticut; a small rural K-12 school in the mountains of western North Carolina; and in urban public high schools in Georgia and Florida. The majority of that time was spent with Atlanta Public Schools and as a regional statewide

administrator of public high schools across Florida, which were all partnerships with Job Corps Centers and school systems for dropout recovery. After moving back to the South, my career progressed to a principalship in a K-12 school in rural western North Carolina, near where I grew up. I went from there to become a charter high school principal for Atlanta Public Schools, taking a dropout recovery high school off the federal Needs Improvement list in two years.

I began my career as a high school English and French teacher and basketball coach at Dacula High School in Gwinnett County Public Schools, the largest school system in Georgia. After a stint as a stay-at-home mother and work-at-home technical writer and editor while my children were small, I moved to central Massachusetts and returned to the classroom as a middle school English and geography teacher in the Leominster Public Schools. I earned National Board Certification and my students posted among the highest scores in the state on the 8th grade English Language Arts portion of the then-new Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System. This brought recognition and a promotion. During this time, I earned a master of arts in education degree in administration and supervision from Seton Hall University.

I was promoted again, this time to become statewide director of Florida operations for the nonprofit charter school operator that had operated the school in Atlanta. As Director of Education Services, I led and managed all operations of the four SIATech Charter High Schools of Florida, all located on the campuses of the Florida Job Corps Centers. I earned my doctorate in educational leadership at Nova Southeastern University during this time. My youngest daughter developed a severe chronic illness while in high school, and I made the decision to step down and spend the next two years working from home as a self-employed educational consultant while we coped with the struggle to get her condition under control.

My next appointment was to launch Georgia's first statewide blended learning alternative high school system. At Graduation Achievement Charter High School, serving as Superintendent and Chief Executive Officer. It was in this role leading GACHS that I demonstrated the ability to mobilize staff to produce increased school effectiveness across multiple campuses at scale. I led the Title I Priority Schools system improvement work in collaboration with a district effectiveness team from the Georgia Department of Education. This effort required that we mobilize an executive leadership team at the central office and building-based teams at each campus, monitoring effectiveness of implementation and producing monthly reports for the board and quarterly reports for the department of education. Our College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) score improved steadily every year. We attained a 60% achievement gap closure rate over three years, leading to our exit from the program. Most recently, as leader of New Hampshire School Administrative Unit 44, I am responsible as the chief executive of the SAU to serve three K-8 school systems and the joint board of education.

I have a strong background in strategic planning and worked with the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia. As a Lead Evaluator for Cognia (formerly AdvancED), I gained valuable insights into the leadership and governance standard of accreditation. I built a strong collaboration with my board, sharing credit with them and the staff for the school system's successes, while making difficult decisions when necessary and shouldering the burden of responsibility for them. My leadership style is collaborative and based on building consensus and mobilizing teams to high performance.

These varied positions have given me the distinction of being an educator with extensive regional and state-level experience, leadership of a complex, large organization, successful turnaround experience, an academic and educational technology background, and significant skills in influencing, advocacy, and networking, all vital to the continued success of the EBR Schools. My own core values of faith, honesty, respect, joy, and humor, along with my professional record, demonstrate my passion and ability for building a strong culture, while significantly improving organizational effectiveness where needed. My experiences have prepared me for the challenge to help the EBR Schools succeed.

My success as an executive leader has been a result of my ability to work cooperatively with the students, staff, school board members, parents, governmental bodies, nonprofit agencies, and the community to produce positive results for children. This has created an increasingly positive teaching and learning environment and a focus on all stakeholders in the communities I have served. I see the opportunity at East Baton Rouge as interesting and exciting—a new challenge that I would enjoy working to meet. I am confident that I can exercise leadership that will achieve excellent results and fulfill the mission, vision, and values of the EBR Schools board of education and meet the needs of the students, staff, families, and stakeholders of East Baton Rouge.

Thank you for considering my application,

Monica Henson

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SEASONED SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT

PROFILE

*Strategic Executive
Leadership &
Governance*

*District, Regional, &
Statewide School
Administration*

*Expert
Administration of
Virtual & Face-to-
Face Learning,
Hybrid Scheduling
at Scale*

*Skilled Relationship
Builder and
Influencer*

- ❑ **Highly accomplished and focused** leader with proven competencies in achieving outstanding staff performance and academic improvement. Clifton Strengths top five touch all four domains: Relationship Building, Influencing, Strategic Thinking and Executing. Fosters productive partnerships with parents, community, state and local government, and agencies, resulting in the attainment of school district goals.
- ❑ **Establishes and monitors district improvement plans** to ensure success metrics are achieved. Spearheads the development of cross-functional teams to achieve program objectives. Initiates and implements programs that achieve success by mobilizing and empowering staff to rally in support of the strategic vision.
- ❑ **Recognized by peers, colleagues, senior leadership, state policymakers, and national influencers** for tenacity and the ability to gracefully handle the dynamics of the educational environment in the age of accountability. Serves as a collaborative partner; advocates and directs educational initiatives for increased productivity and improved overall student performance. Have served as a Lead Evaluator for AdvancEd (now Cognia) accreditation of K12 institutions.

EDUCATION & POSTGRADUATE STUDY

National Superintendents Academy (2019)

District Administration Leadership Institute

Doctor of Education, Educational Leadership (2008)

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY – North Miami Beach, Florida

Diplomate, Principals Executive Program (2006)

THE HUNT INSTITUTE AT DUKE UNIVERSITY – Cary, North Carolina

Master of Arts in School Administration (2002)

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY – South Orange, New Jersey

Bachelor of Arts in English, *summa* (1984)

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY – Cullowhee, North Carolina

Appointments of Note:

- Georgia Senator P. K. Martin's Education Roundtable 2019
- Georgia Governor's Statewide Task Force on Human Trafficking of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council 2015-2016
- Western Carolina University Alumni Board of Directors since 2015

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

NEW HAMPSHIRE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT #44

2020-present

23 Mountain Avenue, Unit 1, Northwood, NH 03262

Interim Superintendent of Schools

Chief executive officer for a consortium of three K-8 public school districts.

Annual budget \$39 million, 267 staff, enrollment 1,231.

Key Contributions:

- Guiding the transition of Strafford School District out of the SAU effective June 30, 2021.
- Leading a \$1.6 million school construction bond campaign for an addition to Nottingham School.
- Managing the transition from remote learning to hybrid scheduling to full face-to-face learning for all three school districts.

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

2019—2020

Deputy Superintendent of Schools

Chief academic officer for the statewide public school system for adjudicated youth in custody and under community supervision.

Annual budget \$29 million, 250 staff, enrollment 5,500.

Key Contributions:

- Provided the board of directors with a comprehensive evaluation report of academics and operations with recommendations to take the system to the next level.
- Collaborated with the Lt. Governor's office and the CEO of Central Educational Center to create an adaptation of the charter college and career academy model for three GA DJJ locations.

GREATER ATLANTA CHARTER CONSULTANTS, LLC

2018—2020

219 A North Midland Avenue, Monroe GA 30655

Executive Consultant

Executive and technical consulting for public charter and district school clientele.

Key Contributions:

- Engaged by the board of Georgia Online Academy, Inc., to close out all operations of Graduation Achievement Charter High School, attend to disposition of student and employee records, manage IRS and other notifications, and file the final audit. Collaborated with the former Chief Financial Officer and the former board attorney
- Advised charter school leaders and board members in three Southern states on divesting relationships with nonperforming/counterproductive education service providers
- Executive coaching for a superintendent of a Georgia state charter school and director of an online learning academy of an Alaska public school district
- Advised the Georgia Department of Education on policy and procedure considerations in implementing virtual learning and hybrid scheduling at the beginning of the pandemic lockdown

GEORGIA ONLINE ACADEMY, INC.

2011—2018

235 Peachtree Street, N.E., North Tower, Suite 900, Atlanta, GA 30303

Superintendent and Chief Executive Officer, Graduation Achievement Charter High School

Annual budget \$13 million, 88 staff, enrollment 2,800.

Oversight of all aspects of start-up and operations of Georgia's first blended learning statewide alternative charter high school system. Performed all of the functions of superintendency of the school, which was a statewide local educational agency (LEA).

Key Contributions:

- Attained an **achievement gap closure rate** of 60% over the last three years of the charter term—higher than comparator systems (CCRPI 2017)
- Tripled four-year cohort graduation rate prior to exit from the Title I Priority Schools program (CCRPI 2018)
- Produced 67% **certified college-ready graduates** while serving 77% FRL-eligible students (GOSA Report Card 2017), more than 60% of which presented with high-risk factors (Momentum Strategies & Research, 2016)
- **Leveraged relationships** to ensure the process for **successful accreditation** by the Georgia Accrediting Commission in the first year of operation (and by AdvancEd/SACS CASI in the second year), enabling a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Defense to conduct dropout recovery and educational service delivery

- **Established key partnerships** to ensure continued growth in support of the school’s mission to educate historically underserved populations, including Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice; Department of Defense (Georgia National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Academies); Wellspring Living and Georgia Baptist Children’s Home victims of human trafficking; Families First and CHRIS Kids group homes in metropolitan Atlanta; and Marietta City Schools Board of Education
- **Leveraged relationships in the Governor’s Office** of Planning and Budget to secure a **\$900,000 line item** in the State budget in Year One to compensate for interagency communication failure and enable the board to operate the organization in the black
- Negotiated a **favorable funding agreement with the Governor’s Office** of Planning & Budget, state legislators, and the GaDOE Finance and Budget Office to **increase per-pupil allotment \$3,000** in physical campuses statewide

SCHOOLS21 2009—2011

24 Franklin Court, Jasper, GA 30143

Educational Consultant, self-employed

NEW EDUCATION FOR THE WORKPLACE, INC. 2006—2009

2611 Temple Heights Drive, Suite A, Oceanside, CA 92056

Director of Education Services (2008 – 2009); Principal, SIATech Charter High School Atlanta Public Schools. (2006 – 2008)

Regional statewide administrator of Florida operations for a national nonprofit charter school management organization. Oversight of all aspects of operations for four high school campuses in Florida, including human resources, academics, information technology, and facilities, in partnership with Alachua, Duval, and Miami-Dade County public school districts. Supervised and evaluated four principals. Promoted from manager of all site operations for a 100% dropout recovery charter high school in Atlanta. Oversight of all aspects of operations of the school as well as managing the partnership with the Atlanta Job Corps Center and Atlanta Public Schools.

Key Contributions:

- **Directed comprehensive curriculum review and alignment** to customize the California curriculum to the Georgia Performance Standards and the Florida Sunshine State Standards.
- **Managed reaccreditation processes** successfully in Gainesville, Jacksonville, Miami Gardens, and Homestead school sites.
- **Achieved double-digit gains in three of the core academic areas** on the Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHSGT), and exited the school from the federal Needs Improvement list after two years.

MACON COUNTY SCHOOLS 2004—2006

1202 Old Murphy Road, Franklin, NC 28734

Principal, Highlands School

WOODSTOCK ACADEMY 2002—2004

57 Academy Road, Woodstock CT 06281

Dean of Curriculum and Instruction

BUILDING EXCELLENT SCHOOLS 2001—2002

31 Milk Street, Floor 6, Boston, MA 02109

Fellow

LEOMINSTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS 1995—2001

24 Church Street, Leominster, MA 01453

Department Chair of English, Leominster High School (1999-2001); Teacher, Johnny Appleseed School (1995-1999)

TRI-COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE 1993—1994

21 Campus Circle, Murphy, NC 28906

Instructor, Guided Studies

LIFE OFFICE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION
6190 Powers Ferry Road, NW, #600, Atlanta, GA 30339
Associate Technical Writer and Editor

1989—1991

Wrote and edited education and training materials for agents entering the life and health insurance industry in North America. Traveled to French Canada regularly to conduct review sessions in French with industry experts.

GWINNETT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
437 Old Peachtree Road, NW, Suwanee, GA 30024
English Teacher, Dacula High School

1985—1988

PRESENTATIONS, PUBLICATIONS, & AWARDS

Featured speaker:

- Testimonies to the Georgia House Education Committee, Senate Education and Youth Committee 2020
- Georgia Association of Educational Leaders Summer Conference 2017 (Jekyll Island, GA)
- Clayton State University School Justice Summit 2017 (Jonesboro, GA)
- North Carolina Alliance for Public Charter Schools 2010 (Raleigh, NC)
- National Dropout Prevention Network, 2009, 2012, 2013 (Myrtle Beach, SC; Chicago, IL; Atlanta, GA)
- National Charter Schools Conference 2011 (Washington, DC)
- Georgia Charter School Association, 2008, 2009, 2014 (Atlanta); Co-presented with Todd Ziebarth, Vice President for State Advocacy and Support, National Association of Public Charter Schools (2009), (2014)
- Reaching At-Promise Students Association annual conference, 2009 (San Diego)
- America's Promise Alliance conference, 2008 (Clearwater, FL)

Publications:

- Review, "The Fight for the Best Public Charter Schools in the Nation," Dr. Cara Candal, *The Journal of School Choice*, Spring 2019.
- Article, "Writing across the Curriculum: Research on the Effects of Writing Practice on Standardized Test Results for High School Students," *Reaching At-Promise Students Association (RAPSA) quarterly journal*, 2007. [no longer in print]

Awards and Distinctions:

- Massachusetts Teacher Leadership Academy, 2002
- Adrin Staton Memorial Scholarship for New Teachers, Gwinnett County Public Schools, 1986
- American Association of University Women "University Woman of the Year," 1983, WCU chapter

Monica Henson, EdD

REFERENCES

Dr. David Driscoll
Retired Commissioner of Education, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dr. Garry McGiboney
Retired Deputy Superintendent, Georgia Department of Education
Executive Director of Education Programs, Sharecare

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dr. Eve Carney
Deputy Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Education

[REDACTED]
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[REDACTED]

Lt. Commander Herbert Jones (USN, Ret.)—former supervisor
Former board chair, Graduation Achievement Charter High School

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dr. Peter Gorman
Former superintendent, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
National Superintendents Academy, District Administration Leadership Institute

[REDACTED]
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[REDACTED]

Scott Johnson
Georgia State Board of Education, 11th Congressional District

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Sherry Culves, Esq.
Partner, Nelson Mullins Riley Scarborough
Former board attorney, Graduation Achievement Charter High School

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Marshall Orson
Chair, DeKalb County School District Board of Education
Former founding board member, Graduation Achievement Charter High School

[REDACTED]
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Peter K. Martin, IV
State Senate of Georgia, Youth and Education Committee Chair

[REDACTED]
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Dr. Mike Dishman
Professor, Department of Educational Leadership, Kennesaw State University
Former board trainer for Graduation Achievement Charter High School, school board attorney

[REDACTED]
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Dr. Jimmy Stokes
Director of Policy
Georgia Association of Educational Leaders

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
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Mark Peevy
Assistant Commissioner for Secondary Initiatives, Technical College System of Georgia
Former board member, Graduation Achievement Charter High School

[REDACTED]
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Dr. Rufus Johnson
Executive Director of Leadership, Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
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Susan Levenson, Joint Board Chair, New Hampshire School Administrative Unit 44

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
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Bruce Patrick, School Board Chair, Strafford School District

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