

March 9, 2020

Of the 23 applicants for the Superintendent position that is currently open in East Baton Rouge Parish School System (EBRPSS), a number of them are highly qualified with decades of experience in education. A Texas consulting firm recommended 14 of them to continue in the hunt. At last week's meeting, the School Board selected 5 candidates to advance to the interview round of the process and despite his notable community presence and career as an educator, Lamont Cole was not one of them.

While there are a number of qualified candidates in this race to become the next superintendent, we believe that Lamont Cole, the students and their families and our community at large were done a disservice by not allowing Cole the opportunity to interview for this position. There are still some local candidates who by their credentials and accomplishments are deserving of further consideration that are still eligible. However, we believe that Cole should have been included in that number.

Cole has served the children and families of the EBR School System for the last twenty-two years of his life. Of these twenty-two years, sixteen have been in some leadership capacity. Mr. Cole has served as assistant principal, principal, and leader of a network of schools. He has been the leader at Capitol Middle and Park Forest Middle. Beyond this, he provides leadership for the Community Schools for Apprenticeship Learning network as the Chief Academic Officer. In this role he is responsible for leading instruction, academic programs and professional development for all the CSAL Inc. schools.

We challenge you to consider, how are we to challenge students to aspire to success and pursue their dreams, when someone many of them respect and admire is dismissed from contention with no explanation? How are families and community members expected to engage and invest in a system that ignores someone they see actively attempting to change the narrative in their communities? How are many of the teachers and administrators in the system to believe in opportunities within the system when faced with casting the side of a colleague who has checked most, if not all, of the boxes in plain view?

The simple, yet important point in all of this is Lamont Cole has been, and remains a recognized and respected leader in education for our community. To in one fell swoop declare this distinguished leadership to be unworthy of further consideration was short-sighted and disrespectful. This damage of this decision is only exacerbated by the paltry nature of the justifications being offered.

To reiterate there are still some local candidates that are qualified for this position that have not been dismissed. We would like to ensure the public that we are not promoting one candidate over the other, but are simply suggesting that a system that has had a continuous history with communities of color, and in particular with Black boys and men, should be more inclusive when it comes to considering future leaders. Furthermore, we owe it to our kids, their families and to our community at large to be more transparent in the decision making process.