

New Haven Public Schools / Superintendent Online Application

Highsmith, Gary - AppNo: 18478

Date Last Submitted for Job ID 968:
6/30/2017

Personal Data

Name: Highsmith MR Gary
 (Last) (First) (Middle Initial)

Other name(s) under which transcripts, certificates, and former applications may be listed:

Other: (Last) (First) (Middle Initial)

Email Address: [REDACTED]

Postal Address

Permanent Address

Number & Street: [REDACTED]
 City: NEW HAVEN
 State: CT
 Zip Code: 06515
 Phone Number: [REDACTED]
 Fax Number: [REDACTED]
 Cell Number: [REDACTED]

Work Address

Number & Street: 60 Putnam Avenue
 City: Hamden
 State: CT
 Zip Code: 06514
 Phone Number: 203 407-2059
 Fax Number: 203

Where would you prefer to be contacted: Either

Current Personal Data

Current Employer:	Hamden Board of Education
Current Position:	Director of Human Resources
Years in Position:	Two
Enrollment:	5,200 students
Number of Staff:	1,100
Annual Budget:	90 Million Dollars
Current Gross Income:	\$138,500.00
Type of District/Organization:	K - 12
Most Recent Degree From:	Southern Connecticut State University
Degree Earned:	6th year degree in Education Leadership

Administrative Experience

Employer and Position Title	Location: City, State	Dates: From - To	Primary Supervisor/Board Pres.
Hamden Board of Education/ Director of Human Resources	Hamden, CT	07/15 present	Jody Goeler Superintendent [REDACTED] Adam Sendroff/Board President

Significant accomplishments in this position:

Successfully negotiated multiple collective bargaining agreements; identified areas requiring greater fiscal efficiency and saved the district hundreds of thousands of dollars, completely revised the hiring process, increased the number of minority teachers; hired exceptional candidates, streamlined human resource services, improved reputation of the department; revised significant board policies (i.e. sexual harassment policy);

Reason For Leaving: Still employed

Last Annual Salary: \$138,500 Last Annual Gross: \$175,000 Enrollment: 5,200 District Type: K - 12

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Admin Experience Continued

Employer and Position Title	Location: City, State	Dates: From - To	Primary Supervisor/Board Pres.
Hamden Board of Education/ Principal of Hamden High School	Hamden, CT	07/06 07/15	Jody Goeler, Superintendent Adam Sendroff/Board President
<p>Significant accomplishments in this position: Created Freshman Academy that significantly increased the percentage of freshmen becoming sophomores in their second year (82% to 96%); increased 4-year graduation rates (84% to 94%); led school through successful NEASC Accreditation process (2014-2015 school year); hired outstanding teaching staff; created greater efficiency in the number of certified staff by eliminating positions and redistributing positions; created a "student-centered" culture; revised school policies; significantly reduced in and out of school suspensions; created a safe learning environment; co-developed district improvement plan; reorganized Hamden High School administrative team;</p> <p>Reason For Leaving: Promoted to Director of Human Resources Last Annual Salary: \$134,000 Last Annual Gross: \$162,000 Enrollment: 1900 District Type: High School</p>			
New Haven Board of Education/ Principal, L.W. Beecher Elementary School	New Haven, CT	08/02 07/06	Dr. Reginald Mayo
<p>Significant accomplishments in this position: Developed the Beecher Way, a comprehension and uniformed code of behavior for grades K-5 to improve school climate and decrease undesirable student behaviors. Implemented the Corner Stone Literacy Model. Significantly reduced out-of-school suspensions. Reinvigorated the school's PTA. Utilized existing resources to implement a literacy and math coaching model. Provided scientifically-based professional development to staff on subjects ranging from high-yield instructional strategies to classroom management. Hired and supported highly-effective teachers.</p> <p>Reason For Leaving: Opportunity to serve as Principal of one of Connecticut's largest and most diverse high schools Last Annual Salary: Last Annual Gross: Enrollment: District Type:</p>			
New Haven Board of Education/Assistant Principal/ East Global Studies Magnet School	New Haven, CT	08/00 08/02	Dr. Reginald Mayo
<p>Significant accomplishments in this position: Formally evaluated all academic teachers in grades 5-8. Developed Connecticut Mastery Test preparation guide. Co-authored School Improvement Plan. Revised informal observation protocols. Served as liaison to PTA. Coached Boys' Basketball Team. Tutored and mentored students after school.</p> <p>Reason For Leaving: Promoted to Principal of Beecher Elementary Last Annual Salary: \$78,500.00 Last Annual Gross: \$88,000.00 Enrollment: 900 District Type: Elementary</p>			

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Professional Experience

Employer and Position Title	Location: City, State	Dates: From - To	Primary Supervisor/Board Pres.
New Haven Board of Education/Social Studies Teacher/Troup Magnet Academy of Science	NEW HAVEN, CT	08/95 08/20	Richard Kaliszewski (Deceased)
<p>Significant Accomplishments at this position: Taught Social Studies and Language Arts to the school's most academically and behaviorally challenging students. Significantly increased students reading and writing scores on the Connecticut Master Test. Improved students' attendance as compared to their prior years' attendance. Coached students to City-wide Boys' Basketball Championship. Served as Liaison to PTA.</p> <p>Reason For Leaving: Promoted to Assistant Principal at East Rock Global Magnet Studies Last Annual Salary: \$35,000 Last Annual Gross: \$37,500.00</p>			
New Haven Board of Education/Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator/Social Development Department	NEW HAVEN, CT	08/90 08/95	Dr. Tim Shriver
<p>Significant Accomplishments at this position: Developed district's Substance Abuse Prevention Curriculum for grades 11 and 12. Supported teachers in their implementation of Substance Abuse Prevention Curriculum. Guest lecturer on substance abuse prevention at all New Haven high schools.</p> <p>Reason For Leaving: Completed teaching certification program and became a certified teacher in the district. Last Annual Salary: \$25,000.00 Last Annual Gross: \$25,000.00</p>			

Other Experience

Employer and Position Title	Location: City, State	Dates: From - To	Primary Supervisor
Homebound Tutor	NEW HAVEN, CT	09/2000 06/2002	Eleanor Boyd (retired, number unknown)
<p>Significant accomplishments in this position: Provided home bound tutorial for students that were either expelled or unable to attend school due to medical reasons</p> <p>Reason For Leaving: no more students to tutor Last Annual Salary: \$25.00/hour Last Annual Gross:</p>			

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Education

High School Attended: Richard C. Lee High School, New Haven, Connecticut

Colleges, Universities and Technical Schools Attended:

Name and location	Major	Degree	Date Conferred
Southern Connecticut State University	Educational Leadership	Sixth year	2001
Southern Connecticut State University	American History	Masters	1995
Southern Connecticut State University	American History	Bachelors	1989

List honors, awards or distinctions:

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Education Leadership Award (2015)
West Haven Black Coalition Distinguished Citizen Award (2010)
National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa Outstanding Educator Award (2007)
Title I Principal of the Year, New Haven Public School (2006)
Community/Police Award for Distinguished Service (2004)
Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Citizen of the Year (1995)

Please list your professional memberships - please indicate leadership roles you may have had with any of them.

ASCD (2010-present)
Connecticut Association of School Personnel Administrators
National Association of Secondary School Principals

Please list your community and civic memberships and participation.

Board of Directors, Boys and Girls Club of New Haven
President, Mauro-Sheridan PTO (2015-2016)
Greater New Haven NAACP (Chairperson, Education Committee for NAACP 2010-2011)
Connecticut Association of Schools (Class L Representative on Board of Directors)
Member of Connecticut State Legislature's Achievement Gap Committee (2012-2014)
Kiyama Mentoring Program (2015-present)

Please list any publications you may have, including your doctoral and/or master's dissertations, if appropriate.

Please list major presentations made to national, state or regional audiences.

"The Principal's role in literacy Leadership" - International Reading Conference (2006)
Yale School of Management - Education Conference (2017) - "Charter Schools and Civil Rights Organizations."
Invited to give testimony at NAACP National hearings on Charter Schools (December, 2016)

Please list significant workshops or conferences which you would like to highlight.

International Reading Association
"Schools that Learn with Peter Senge" (2003)

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Certifications

Do you hold the appropriate certificate for this position? **Yes**

Type	State	Certificate Number	Expiration Date	Active?
Superintendent of Schools	CT	EIN 5900772824	April 2020	Yes
6th year - School Administration	CT	EIN 5900772824	7/1/21	Yes
Social Studies 7-12	CT	EIN 5900772824	7/1/21	Yes

Please list all of the endorsements and/or verifications documented on your teaching/administrative certificate(s):

026- History and Social Studies; 092-Intermediate Administration and Supervision; 093 - Superintendent of Schools

Open Ended Questions

For New Haven Public Schools / Superintendent:

1. Please share why you are interested in this position and your unique qualifications for it.

The position of New Haven Public Schools Superintendent is of tremendous interest to me because I have been preparing for this position for nearly three decades. Since the very minute I became an employee of New Haven Public Schools in 1990, I was mentored by then-superintendent John Dow, Jr., Tim Shriver and others so that I had a clear understanding of the functioning of school systems generally, and New Haven Public School system in particular. Since 1990, I have aspired to lead New Haven Public Schools.

Each position I have held in both New Haven and Hamden Public Schools respectively, have given me greater insight into how school systems operate, and showed me the levers necessary for ensuring that such systems are responsive to the needs of all children. Whether serving as a middle school teacher, assistant principal in a K-8 school, elementary principal, high school principal or now as Director of Human Resources, I have always been cognizant of how systems level decision-making impacts the work of each and every person in schools, and, by proxy, impacts each and every child.

It is abundantly clear that I am uniquely qualified for the position of Superintendent of New Haven Public Schools. I was born and raised in New Haven, attended public schools from Head Start through high school in New Haven, I still live in New Haven, my children have both attended New Haven Public Schools since pre-school and Kindergarten, I worked in New Haven Public Schools for 16 years, served as an active member of my children's PTAs, and even served as President of the PTA for the 2015-2016 school year. One would be hard-pressed to find a candidate more invested in and knowledgeable about New Haven Public Schools than me. As a 52 year resident of New Haven, I have clearly demonstrated a commitment to this city that transcends professional opportunities, and reflects a strong personal commitment to New Haven. My cumulative experiences and life-long residency in New Haven will serve as the springboards from which I work tirelessly to provide each and every student the opportunity to reach his or her potential. I look forward to using my skills to better the lives of New Haven Public School students.

For New Haven Public Schools / Superintendent:

2. Please list the five accomplishments in your professional career of which you take the greatest satisfaction and why you do so.

The first accomplishment in my professional career in which I take the greatest satisfaction is the life-long relationships I have formed with all my students when I served as a teacher or school-level administrator. To this day, I still see and communicate with many of my former students, and these enduring relationships continue to be as inspiring for me as they are for my former students.

The second accomplishment would be significantly increasing the Connecticut Mastery Test scores for the students I taught. When I analyzed my students' 6th grade cohort data, I found significant increases in their reading and writing scores. Given that these students spent most of their academic day with me- and we wrote everyday- I was pleased to see such increases. This was even more satisfying because many of my students under-performed prior to being in my class.

The third accomplishment would be the development and implementation of the Beecher Way while I was principal of Beecher Elementary School. The Beecher Way was a school-wide behavior code followed by all students in grades K-5. By clarifying and systematizing expectations, and reinforcing good behaviors among all students, we were able to dramatically reduce out of school suspensions. We also received district-wide recognition for our efforts to improve student behavior.

The fourth accomplishment would be the development and implementation of the Freshman Academy at Hamden High School. Prior to my tenure, only 85% of freshmen became sophomores in their second year, and the graduate rate was 86%. Today, 97% of freshmen become sophomores their second year and the 4-year graduation rate is above 95%. There is also a considerable decrease in both in and out of school suspensions for freshmen.

The final professional accomplishment in which I take the greatest satisfaction would be finding significant savings in personnel costs

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Question Continued

for Hamden Public Schools. For example, I worked with the Hamden Education Association (Teachers Union) to develop an Early Retirement Incentive that saved the district more than \$300,000.00 in salary costs. In addition, I worked collaboratively with school-level administrators to right-size certified and non-certified staff, saving Hamden Public Schools more than \$500,000.00 in addition to the Early Retirement Incentive.

Language Skills

Do you know any language other than English? No

Professional References

	Reference 1 of 3	Reference 2 of 3
Name:	Dr. Burt Saxon	Jody Goeler
School/Org:		Hamden Public Schools
Current Position:	Retired Teacher	Superintendent
Home Phone:	[REDACTED]	
Cell Phone:	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Work Phone:		
Mailing Address:		60 Putnam Avenue Hamden, CT 06514
Email:	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Relationship to Candidate:	Former Teacher	Supervisor
Years Known:	38	3
	Reference 3 of 3	
Name:	Tim Dunn	
School/Org:		
Current Position:	Human Resource Consultant	
Home Phone:		
Cell Phone:	[REDACTED]	
Work Phone:	[REDACTED]	
Mailing Address:	[REDACTED] West Hartford, CT 06107	
Email:	[REDACTED]	
Relationship to Candidate:	Consultant/Mentor	
Years Known:	2	

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General Information

List any additional information which will support your candidacy.

Are you presently under contract? Yes
When does contract expire? Contract is year to year
Have you ever failed to have your contract renewed, be rehired, been asked to resign a position, or resigned to avoid termination? No
If yes, explain.
Have you ever had a credential or certificate revoked, suspended or annulled in any state, territory or foreign country? No
If yes, explain.
Where did you hear of our vacancy?

Referrals

How did you hear about employment with us?

HYA Website

Other: Word of mouth

Legal Information

1. Are you eligible to work in the United States? Yes
2. Have you ever been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor involving a sex offense or a controlled substance? No
If yes, explain, giving dates:
3. Have you ever had any indicated finding of child abuse filed in your name? No
If yes, explain, giving dates:
4. Have you ever been convicted of any crime? No
If yes, explain, giving dates:

Confirmation

I authorize the organization(s) to which I am applying and Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates, Ltd. to contact my references or any other references deemed necessary to ascertain the merits of my candidacy for this position. I authorize references to discuss my application and/or release information concerning me, and agree to hold them, the District, and the consultants harmless for providing and/or utilizing any information requested and/or provided.

I also request that my application and interest in the administrative position remain as confidential as possible under the applicable laws of the state. I understand that my candidacy may become a matter of public record when I am presented to the Board. I further understand that elements of my resume may be available to the public and the news media at such time. However, I request that reasonable effort be taken to maintain the confidentiality of this application and other documents and information which accompany my application for the position for which I am applying. (Note: In some states, such as Florida, there can be no confidential written correspondence. Please call HYA if interested in one of these positions.)

If you answer "yes" to any of the above questions, you must submit official copies of court records including disposition of the case(s).

I hereby affirm that there are no misrepresentations, omissions or falsifications in the foregoing statements and answers, and that the entries made by me are true, complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I acknowledge that any misrepresentations, omissions or falsifications might be grounds for dismissal if employed for this position.

Gary Highsmith

It is both an honor and a thrill for me to recommend Gary Highsmith as the next Superintendent of New Haven Public Schools. I have known Gary since 1979, when he was a freshman in my Advanced Urban Studies Class at Richard C. Lee High School in New Haven.

When Gary became a certified teacher, he requested a tough teaching assignment at Troup Middle School, volunteering to teach the most challenging students in the school. He quickly became a key member of the faculty and then did very well as a middle school assistant principal and elementary school principal in New Haven. Hamden Superintendent of Schools Alida Begina heard about Gary and recruited him. Gary joined the Hamden School District as high school principal. He did a wonderful job as principal of one of the state's largest high schools - and Connecticut's most diverse. Recently he moved into the central office in Hamden, further preparing himself to lead a school district. Gary's background suggests that he would do best in a school district that is either urban or what could be called semi-urban.

While Gary Highsmith pays attention to all the details of every position he has held, his greatest strength is as an inspirational leader. He holds several strong beliefs and he puts these beliefs into practice each and every day. Let me list some of these beliefs:

1. Gary is a traditional educator in that he believes the primary purpose of schools is academic instruction. As principal, Gary spent a great deal of his time in classrooms trying to improve instruction. Hard-working, dedicated teachers welcomed his assistance. Those trying to coast did not.
2. Gary is a modern educator in his belief that educators should deal with all aspects of the development of young people. Gary particularly realizes the importance of mentoring students. In his own career, Gary has been mentored by a long list of fine educators including Lubbie Harper, John Dow, Tim Shriver, Rich Kaliszewski, and Sal Punzo, all of whom held significant leadership roles in the New Haven Public School System.
3. Gary believes educational leaders need to be not only inspirational, but also people-centered. Gary will be visible in all the schools in the district. He will assemble a strong central office team and will rely on them to help put his vision into practice.
4. Gary has a deep commitment to public education. He believes free public education is at the heart of American democracy.

Gary possesses several skills necessary for strong educational leadership:

1. His writing and speaking skills are extremely strong. Gary likes to write and will no doubt communicate with staff, students, parents, and the general public both in person and on paper.
2. Gary has a very strong moral and ethical base. He is a spiritual person as well.

Gary's commitment to social and economic justice stems from his spiritual and ethical foundation.

3. Gary has taught in middle and high schools and has been an administrator in elementary, middle, and high schools. This type of experience is both rare and invaluable for a superintendent.

As an educator for more than 40 years, I have had the opportunity to see many leaders in action at the school and district levels, respectively. I can say with absolute certainty that Gary is as good as any other administrator I have seen over the course of my career. For the last 38 years, I have had the opportunity to watch Gary become one of the most effective, thoughtful and contemplative people I know, and certainly one of the sharpest, people-centered and forward-thinking school administrators in the State of Connecticut. Gary is held in very high esteem by a variety of stakeholders throughout Connecticut, and his selection as Superintendent of New Haven Public Schools would not only be a source of inspiration for each and every student in the district, but would also ensure that the district has a leader that understands the unique challenges that New Haven public school students face on a daily basis. Gary is fond of saying that he intends to stay in New Haven his entire life, and his 52 years as a resident is certainly proof of his commitment to the New Haven community. Gary Highsmith is ready and able to become your next Superintendent of Schools. I hope you give him that opportunity.

Sincerely,

Burt Saxon, Ed.D., Lh.D.
retired teacher, Lee and Hillhouse High Schools
Connecticut Teacher of the Year, 2005

[REDACTED]

June 8, 2017

To Whom It May Concern,

When Gary Highsmith informed me that he was applying for the New Haven Public Schools Superintendent position, I was encouraged to know that he decided to do so. In fact, I had had previous conversations with Gary regarding his career trajectory, and during the conversations, Gary did reveal to me that he desired to be a superintendent in an urban district. Given that New Haven is Gary's hometown, he graduated from New Haven Public Schools, worked in the school system and still has a child enrolled in a New Haven Public School, it seems logical that he would be interested in the superintendent position.

Gary has had a wide range of professional experiences that make him an ideal candidate for the position. He has served as a classroom teacher, assistant principal, elementary school principal, high school principal, and has served as the Human Resources Director for Hamden Public Schools since July of 2016. I can say with confidence that not many educators have such a career trajectory and if they do, I am sure that Gary's successes in all of his roles would distinguish him from such educators.

Over his more than two decades as a certified educator in the State of Connecticut, Gary has acquired the skills, dispositions and experience to effectively lead any Connecticut school district. Gary is a critical thinker who understands the importance of strategic thinking, relationship building, leading by example, and ensuring that the right people are in the right places. Gary's thinking is not confined by present day orthodoxy, or by what the flavor of the month may be at any given time. He has displayed the ability to question his own assumptions and beliefs, to work collaboratively with diverse groups of stakeholders, and to make decisions after being contemplative and reflective.

Gary's current position as Human Resource Director was an Assistant Superintendent for Personnel position up until 2013. At that time, then-Superintendent Fran Rabinowitz changed the position to Director of Human Resources. Despite the change in title, the responsibilities of the position remained the same. Since the very start of Gary's tenure, not only has he taken on all the responsibilities inherent in the position, he quickly became a valued member of my inner-circle of decision-makers. In such a capacity, Gary routinely adds valuable input that significantly impacts the direction of the district.

The challenges that districts face in finding high-quality superintendent candidates is well-documented and does not require further elaboration here. It is important to note, however, that Gary represents a new generation of district leaders who possess the drive, skills, charisma, passion, and out-of-the-box thinking necessary to bring about the types of changes needed in education today. Gary's professional experiences have clearly prepared him to assume the highest level of leadership possible in a school district. I cannot think of another candidate whose career is better aligned to the New Haven Public Schools' Superintendent position than Gary Highsmith's. Gary has my strongest recommendation.

Sincerely,

Jody Ian Goeler

Superintendent, Hamden Public Schools

June 29, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to offer this letter of recommendation on behalf of Mr. Gary Highsmith for the position of superintendent of schools for the New Haven Public Schools. As a consultant for the Hamden Public Schools I work closely with Gary in his role as Director of Human Resources. I have observed Gary's work and effectiveness in a wide variety of leadership areas such as community relations, staff development initiatives, bargaining unit negotiations, sensitive personnel matters, system wide budgeting, media relations, and the implementation of a wide variety of educational programs.

Gary Highsmith is a talented, knowledgeable and effective leader. His past accomplishments as a gifted teacher, extremely effective building principal at the elementary and secondary level and as a central office leader charged with a wide range of system-wide areas of responsibilities have prepared him well to be the next superintendent of the New Haven Public Schools.

Gary is a lifelong resident of New Haven and is a proud product of the public schools. Gary chose to raise his family in New Haven and support the school system as a parent, teacher, principal and active community member. The New Haven Public Schools will benefit greatly from Gary's belief in the city and the importance the school system plays in the lives of students and families. He knows the needs of New Haven and its schools and will quickly involve the community, parents, students and staff in an agenda that builds on what has worked and move forward on what needs to be done to fulfill every parent's wish for their child's future. Gary will inspire confidence by his tireless work ethic, broad knowledge of what works in education and what doesn't, strong interpersonal skills, excellent communication ability, commitment to the community and his personal integrity. Gary is honest, straight forward and has the courage to confront issues that need to be addressed. His insight and commitment to doing what is right is what every school system needs in a superintendent.

I have spent over thirty years as an administrator in the public schools with 26 of those years with the West Hartford Public Schools here in Connecticut. As the director of human resources for over two decades I was involved in screening and selecting many candidates for leadership positions including the superintendency. I now serve as a consultant to schools systems across the state and region in selecting school leaders. In working with Gary for over two years and observing his work closely, I place him in the top 5% of all administrators with whom I've worked.

The New Haven Public Schools will be fortunate to have Gary Highsmith as superintendent. He will represent the system with pride and distinction. I endorse his selection with confidence and enthusiasm. Please contact me if I can provide further information about this outstanding candidate.

Sincerely,

Timothy Dunn

[REDACTED]
West Hartford, CT 06107

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]