



Hiring a Superintendent: Process Considerations

The hiring of a superintendent is probably the most far-reaching and important decision a board can make. The following major considerations are for the board to think about before they begin the search.

Establish and Affirm Goals and Priorities

- a. Ideally, the board has already approved goals for the district and superintendent, established either separately or in the superintendent evaluation process. These goals can serve as a basis for discussion to help maintain or reestablish the focus of the superintendent's work.
- b. Identify or clarify four or five priorities that are important for the district to accomplish in the next few years. Then, discuss what these priorities mean for the kinds of leadership you are going to need and expect from your new superintendent. During the hiring process, the skills required to accomplish these goals should be your primary concern.
- c. Determine how the board is going to engage the community and staff and gain their input.
- d. Review and update, as necessary, the job description for the superintendent to ensure it aligns with key job expectations and responsibilities.

Use the Iowa Leadership Standards

- e. This list will help you home in on specific qualities and characteristics you think the new superintendent should possess.
- f. Reduce the list down to a few essential qualities.
- g. If appropriate, consider involving other stakeholders such as staff, parents and community to provide input into this process.

Determine Who Will Conduct the Search Process

- h. You may want to hire an outside firm to organize and conduct the process or portions of the process.
- i. You may have sufficient knowledge and skills in the district to conduct the process.

Establish Timelines and Costs

- j. Develop timelines for the overall process. Begin as soon as possible!
- k. Estimate costs associated with staff, materials, advertising, credit and background checks, interview costs, etc.
- l. Estimate expenses for visits to the finalists' or priority candidate's communities.
- m. Consider pursuing an interim superintendent, sharing agreement or other alternatives.

Set a Comprehensive Salary and Benefit Package

- n. A major decision of the board will be the salary and benefits package. Having predetermined what the district can and can't afford is essential. It is a major consideration for prospective candidates!
- o. Remember to determine payment for interview expenses for all finalists and an amount for moving expenses for the selected candidate.

As You Move Forward, Think About Who Is Going To...

Getting Started:

- Be the main point person with the authority to make decisions regarding the process
- Check on legal specifics regarding the application and interview process
- Create the application, response letters
- Develop interview questions that allow you to gather information and not violate the candidates' civil rights
- Make advertising decisions (for example: which newspapers, organizations, websites, etc.)
- Create a promotional brochure or gather information about the community for applicants
- Determine if you will involve stakeholders in the interview process

During the Process:

- Send out, receive and process all application materials in a timely and professional manner
- Read and review all completed files (applications, resumes, credential files and letters of recommendations of all applicants)
- Identify and encourage quality candidates
- Get accurate and complete information on each applicant without violating their civil rights
- Screen and evaluate each applicant against the selection criteria
- Establish a realistic interview schedule
- Determine if the interviews will be conducted in open or closed session
- Narrow the number of applicants to a list of final candidates you wish to interview
- Conduct formal and informal interviews
- Involve the spouses of the candidates in the interview process
- Answer questions from candidates
- Call references for each applicant
- Identify and call references not listed

- Keep all applicants informed of their status in the search process
- Conduct final background checks on final candidates including criminal background checks and verification of certification
- Visit the home district of the final candidate

Wrapping up:

- Negotiate terms and conditions of the contract
- Offer the position to your final candidate
- Once you have an agreement, notify all applicants that the position has been filled

The process is important. The decision is important. Thinking about these considerations should prepare the board for successful conversations as they begin...