



Finding An Exceptional Leader For Your School District

Where Do You Start?

CABE offers a free workshop to all member boards of education on the critical issues in a superintendent search. We give an overview of the search process with time allowed for questions. We also provide information on the hiring of an interim superintendent which should be addressed before a superintendent search begins.

Consulting firms may also offer advice about the hiring of an interim superintendent. A superintendent search cannot begin unless a superintendent of schools has resigned or his or her contract is expiring.

The Superintendent Search Process

Hiring a new superintendent is one of the most important actions that a local board of education will ever undertake. The chief executive officer you appoint will provide leadership and direction for all of the educational activities in your school community. He/she will mold the substance and process of public education and will ensure that your priorities and policies are implemented. The superintendent can make an average school system a sterling example of the very best in educational innovation and substance.

Therefore, the process the local board of education uses to select a new superintendent is of paramount importance. The following variables should be considered by any district looking for a new superintendent. Even if the district decides to turn most of the work over to a consultant, the board needs to have the guidelines and time frame spelled out so that the board is clearly in charge of this critical responsibility.

Any process for hiring a new superintendent should include the following:

1. The board must decide who will do the search. Will the board of education/search committee do the search? Will the board hire a consultant to support its work? What decisions will the board of education make? What role will the consultant have? The board should determine whether there is a board policy that already defines the process for the district. The board can designate itself as the "search committee" upon the commencement of the search and therefore not be subject to Freedom of Information requirements (see 13).

2. The board of education should discuss the process to be followed with the consultant hired to do the search. The options may include (a) the board as a committee of the whole or (b) search committee or (c) a combination of both.
3. The board and/or consultant must establish a time frame for the search. When can you reasonably expect a new superintendent to start work in your district? This process will usually take approximately 4-6 months from the starting date. Allow time for contract negotiations with the selected candidate. Usually, a selected candidate will not resign his/her current position until he/she is satisfied with your contract offer. The selected candidate may have to give 60-90 days notice to his/her current employer before leaving.
4. The board should identify the criteria candidates must meet and the qualities it wants in a new superintendent whatever process is used. Board members, staff, and the community should express their opinions. They should also identify strengths, expectations, problems and/or issues the new superintendent will face.
5. The board must decide on the superintendent's salary range and the length of contract. The pool of candidates may be larger with a higher salary range. However, the board must be willing to pay the highest salary within a salary range, if the qualifications and experience of the selected candidate warrant it. Prior to hiring, the board should also review the current superintendent's contract and prepare to make necessary changes to ensure the new contract is both realistic and attractive to the applicant.
6. The board must review the superintendent's job description to make certain that the document reflects the responsibilities of the role. When was the job description last updated? Is there a date on it? Are the items in the job description measurable in an evaluation? Are the duties and responsibilities current? Do other administrators now handle any of the listed duties? Have other responsibilities been added to the job of superintendent, but not included in the job description? The board should also review any district policies concerning employment and personnel.
7. The board should prepare a budget for the search, and update it as the search progresses. A consultant will be able to provide the board with approximate expenses. The board should also review the current superintendent's contract for costs of leaving or retiring. Will the

superintendent be paid for unused sick or vacation days, retirement bonus, and/or insurance premiums at retirement?

8. A consultant will recommend to the board how, when, and where to advertise the position. The board should approve expenditures of advertising costs before a consultant places advertising. The search committee should approve announcements to be sent to national and state educational organizations and to university placement offices.
9. Consulting firms generally require each candidate to complete an application form. The application can assist the search committee in making decisions about which candidates will be interviewed. An application form requires candidates to provide information not generally included in a resume.
10. After discussions with the search consultant, the board should decide the process for selecting semifinalists and finalists. Will the semifinalists be chosen by the consultant, the board, or the search committee? The process for selection of semifinalists may vary with consulting firms.
11. The board or search committee needs to develop interview questions, and plan the semifinalist interview process: Where will the interviews take place? How many questions will be asked? Who will ask them? Who will provide nameplates for the committee? Who will greet the candidates and introduce them to the board? How many interviews will be done in one day or evening? Will a consultant be present for the interviews of semifinalists? The search committee should commit to clear ground rules for confidentiality.

Remember that during the interview of superintendent candidates, each candidate will also be determining if he/she will have an effective working relationship with the board if the candidate is hired.
12. Keep in mind that job interviews and related meetings for superintendents and other "executive level employment position[s]" are exempt from Freedom of Information requirements.
13. The board should have a discussion on the issue of confidentiality. Many candidates are sitting superintendents and if their candidacies become known in their districts too early in the process, their credibility in their current position may be undermined. This is an issue that should be discussed with your consultant and/or at the board level to ensure a reasonable approach is adopted.

14. Despite number 13, CAGE recommends that the community be kept abreast of the process to the extent practicable without breaking any confidentiality.
15. The consultant, the board and/or the search committee may be involved in checking references of semifinalists and finalists.
16. Semifinalists may be selected by the consultant, the board or the search committee. Finalists should be selected by the board or search committee. All interviews of candidates should be conducted with the board, the search committee and/or the search consultant.
17. The board should conduct interviews with the finalists. Finalists should spend at least one day in the district, meeting with teachers, administrators, community representatives and board members. If there is a spouse, he/she should be invited, (at board expense), to visit the community.
18. Representatives of the board may wish to conduct a site visit to the district of the finalist. The consultant should provide guidelines, questions, and a format for the representative to report back to the board.
19. The board will decide who will be the next superintendent. Two board members should be assigned the responsibility for final contract negotiations. The board attorney should be consulted. Once the "selection" has been made and the candidate has accepted the position, the board must notify the Commissioner of Education within seven days.
20. The board and the selected finalist should agree on plan to handle the transition period from the time the contract is signed until the new superintendent begins work in the district, as well as the first three months. The board should consider paying the new superintendent on a per diem basis to spend a few days in the district with the current superintendent.
21. There should be an introduction of the superintendent to the community (see CAGE's related handbook, *Introducing A New Superintendent*.)

Hiring A Consulting Firm To Do Your Search

One of the first decisions a board of education needs to make is who will do the search. Even if you think you want to do the search yourselves, you should interview 2-3 consulting firms. CAGE can provide a list of available firms.

There are several advantages to hiring a consultant:

- Consultants can get a larger pool of candidates
- Consultants have valuable information on reference checks
- Consultants are aware of deadlines and cost-effective advertising that will get you the largest pool of candidates
- Consultants can assist in "selling" your district
- Consultants can assist a board of education in reaching a consensus on candidates
- Consultants can anticipate problems and questions that occur in a search
- Consultants can assist with contract negotiations

Working With Consultants

- The board or a subcommittee should interview 2-3 firms.
- Interviews of consulting firms may be done in executive session.
- Allow at least an hour to interview each consulting firm.
- Read the proposal of each firm prior to the interview.
- Have prepared interview questions and know who is asking each one.
- Discuss the role of the consultant and the board of education.

The following questions may help you decide which consultant you want to hire to assist in your superintendent search. The list isn't exhaustive but the answers to these questions may be helpful. Check references before you hire a consulting firm.

1. Which boards of education have hired you as a superintendent search consultant? Be sure to get a **complete list** so that you can make reference calls. A district left off the list can be much more revealing than a lengthy list.



Search Services

Sample Superintendent Search Flow Chart

Board

Selects Consultant
(1)

Develop Selection Criteria
(8)

Conduct Interviews
(16)

Identify Finalists
(18)

Visit Finalists
(20)

Announce Appointment
(23)

Superintendent Assumes
Position
(25)

Consultants

Planning Meeting with Board
(2)

Publish Vacancy
(3)

Contact Statewide Network
(4)

Conduct Interviews with Board of Education, Staff, Students, Parents and Community
(5)

Prepare Advertising Copy (if desired)
(7)

Develop Leadership Profile and Present to Board of Education
(6)

Receive and Process Applications
(9)

Correspond with Candidates
(10)

Analyze Candidates
(11)

Initial Reference Checks
(12)

Deliver Candidates to Board and Arrange Interviews
(15)

Present Seminar to Board of Education on Interview Procedures
(14)

Conduct Initial Interviews
(13)

Conduct Deep Background Checks
(17)

Assist with Site Visit Planning
(19)

Assist with Contract Preparation and Facilitate Negotiations
(21)

Coordinate Announcement of Appointment
(22)

Send Letters of Regrets
(24)

Offer CABE services to Assist with Transition
(25)

2. How many superintendent searches are you currently performing? What other searches are you performing? How many searches can you do well at one time?
3. How do you allow for community input to determine its priorities and concerns about a new superintendent?
4. What level of involvement do you encourage for each member of the board in the search process?
5. How do you include staff in the process?
6. What will you do to help the board develop a list of characteristics they wish to see in a new superintendent?
7. Where will you advertise the position? Who approves the vacancy posting and cost?
8. How do you think the board should find candidates? How actively do you recruit candidates for specific superintendentcies?
9. How do you screen candidates?
10. Do candidates need an initial interview with the consulting firm to be selected a semifinalist?
11. Will you recommend candidates to more than one district at the same time?
12. How can you assure us that reference checks for candidates will provide recent information? Do you do the reference checks for us or do you think we should do them?
13. Will the board or the search committee see the resumes of all the candidates? Do you require an application form?
14. Do you require candidates to be certified to be considered a semifinalist by the search committee?
15. What kind of clerical or secretarial support do you provide?
16. How much will the search cost? How much are consultant fees? What are the other costs? What if the search is reopened? How do you determine the cost? Can you give us options if we want to use a consultant for some, but not all activities connected to the search?

17. How will you help us to conduct the actual interviews?
18. Will you give us any assistance in developing a contract? Is there an additional charge?
19. Do you work alone or are there others who work in your firm? What are their qualifications? Who will be working with our board and in what capacity? What is the role of each partner/consultant?
20. Will you make arrangements for finalists to meet administrators, staff and the public in our district?
21. What kind of follow-up work will you do to ensure the board will work well with our superintendent?

Interim Superintendents

State law requires each district have a designated Superintendent of Schools.

When doing a superintendent search, it is important for a board to allow sufficient time for this important process. There are several situations when an interim superintendent may be hired:

- a. The superintendent has resigned or the contract of the superintendent has not been renewed. The superintendent will be leaving before the search process has begun. In this situation an interim superintendent is hired for at least six months.
- b. The superintendent search is ongoing while the current superintendent is still employed. However, the superintendent's contract expires before the new superintendent starts. In this case an interim superintendent is hired for a period of 1-2 months.
- c. The current superintendent is leaving and the board is considering a reorganization in administration, sharing a superintendent, or changing the position of superintendent (e.g., an indefinite time superintendent/principal; part-time position or full-time position). In this situation an interim superintendent may be hired while the board finalizes the position for which they will be conducting a search.

Who can be hired as an interim superintendent?

- A retired superintendent (you can get names from CABE, CAPSS, or from search consultants).
- One of your current administrators who will **not** be an applicant for the position.
- One of your current administrators who will be an applicant for the position.
- A current administrator to be hired as Acting Superintendent (not certified to be a superintendent) until you hire an interim superintendent. Approval must be obtained from the Commissioner of Education. Appointment is for up to 90 days, unless extended by the Commissioner.

The board needs to decide if the interim superintendent can be an applicant for the position. When an in-house person is appointed interim superintendent, the perception to candidates is that the interim is a candidate for the position. When the interim is an applicant or “insider”, the pool of candidates for the position may be small, because the candidates might think the decision for a new superintendent has already been made.

However, CABE recommends a full search, even if there is an inside candidate. A search ensures due diligence by the board and ultimately shows the public that the in-house candidate fared well in a broad search.

Most people who serve as interim superintendents are retired superintendents with many years of experience in the state of Connecticut. They have experience in curriculum development, budget, community relations, hiring, problem solving, building projects, working with town boards, the press and board of education members. Their experience is invaluable to a district, no matter how large or small a district may be.

Hiring an interim superintendent from outside the district causes less disruption in a district. Often when an in-house person is appointed interim, it means they are doing two jobs instead of one unless another person is appointed to do the job of the administrator.

Interims are paid on a per diem basis plus mileage. They are not paid any fringe benefits. Individual arrangements can be made with a board of education for the number of days per week, either half days or full days.

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION Hartford, Connecticut

June 17, 1993

Series 1993-94
Circular Letter: C-10

TO: Superintendent of Schools

FROM: Vincent Ferrandino

SUBJECT: Notification of Appointment of Superintendents
and Acting Superintendents

This letter will serve to remind you that in 1985, the Connecticut General Assembly passed legislation requiring local and regional boards of education to notify the Commissioner of Education of impending appointments of Superintendents and Acting Superintendents of Schools. Section 10-157 of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) states that, “... no person shall assume the duties and responsibilities of the superintendent until the board receives written confirmation from the commissioner of education that the person to be employed is properly certified...”

Pursuant to Section 10-226 of the Connecticut General Statutes, the local or regional board of education must submit to the Commissioner of Education, the name and address of any person accepting a contract offer as superintendent of schools within seven days after receipt of notice of the candidate’s decision to accept the position.

Additionally, please note that any person who does not hold valid Connecticut certification shall be required to meet testing requirements, including CONNCEPT, pursuant to Section 10-145F(b) of the Connecticut General Statutes. Specifically, this means that anyone not holding a current valid Connecticut certificate, including candidates for positions such as superintendents, must meet the testing requirements of the statute.

Candidates for the superintendent’s certificate should be encouraged to file credentials with the teacher certification office as early in the selection process as possible to provide candidates with the time necessary to obtain and present all required documents to the Bureau of Certification.

A local or regional board of education may, with the approval of the Commissioner of Education, appoint as acting superintendent a person who is not appropriately certified, for a period not to exceed 90 days.

State law contemplates the position of acting superintendent to be of short duration. Extension of approval beyond the 90-day period may be granted only upon a showing of good cause. In this context, please be sure to expedite the process of hiring a new superintendent with the goal of not going beyond the latest extension date.

Criteria to be used by the Commissioner for the approval of acting superintendents of schools are established as follows:

- a) The appointee shall hold or be eligible for Connecticut superintendent of schools certification, or
- b) The appointee shall hold or be eligible for Connecticut Intermediate Administrator or Supervisor Certification or other appropriate Connecticut administrative or supervisory certification.

The local or regional board of education should submit to the Commissioner the name and address of the person to be appointed as acting superintendent of schools as soon as that information is available. The written notification should also include the ***date of beginning service and specified period of time for the appointment, the appointee's social security number, and indication of Connecticut intermediate administrative or supervisory certification or superintendent certification.*** This information is critical to the prompt processing of the request.

Another option available would be to appoint a candidate as superintendent of schools on an interim basis for the specific time period who already holds or is eligible to hold a superintendent certificate needed while pursuing the search for a permanent superintendent of schools. This would eliminate the need to appoint an acting superintendent of schools. The same procedure would be followed for notification of appointment of a superintendent of schools.

Please refer your questions with reference to the appointment of superintendents and acting superintendents of schools to the Chief Bureau of Certification.

Thank you.

VLF:ddc

cc: Chairpersons of Local Boards of Education



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