

SUPERINTENDENT SELECTION

The selection of a new superintendent is one of the most important decisions a school board will make. The superintendent sets the tone and climate for instructional leadership, student achievement, fiscal responsibility, and communication within the school organization and in the community.

The North Dakota School Boards Association provides three options for guidance to school boards as they engage in the process of selecting a new education leader.

Option One

If your school board decides to conduct the superintendent search without help, here are guidelines to follow:

1. Describe the District

The school district should prepare a brochure for announcing the vacancy and recruiting candidates. Information in the brochure should include:

- A. Name of district
- B. Address and telephone number of district
- C. Chief contact person (e.g., board president or business manager)
- D. Total number of students, teachers, and administrators
- E. Facilities (elementary/secondary buildings, other)
- F. Finances (current valuation, current operating budget)
- G. Population of the community
- H. Time guidelines for filling vacancy:
 - 1) Application deadline
 - 2) Date for selecting finalists
 - 3) Dates for interviewing finalists
 - 4) Date the new superintendent will be selected
 - 5) Starting date

2. Advertising

To advertise the superintendent position, consider the following:

- A. Job Service North Dakota Web page at www.jobsnd.com
- B. Listing in NDSBA *Bulletin*, and NDCEL website

3. Application Form

Applicants should provide a cover letter, information about their education, employment history, goals, contact information, resume, and current letters of recommendation.

4. Screen Candidates and Conduct Reference Checks

Reading applications and contacting references will help properly accomplish this important phase of the process. Some candidates will be easily eliminated when their credentials, experience, attitudes, skills, etc., are too far from the profile that was developed by the board.

5. Top Candidates' Interviews

After three to five top candidates have been selected, invite them for a visit. Remember to tell candidates before they come that all interviews are required by law to be open to the public.

Interviews should allow candidates to obtain firsthand information about the school district and community. Make it a positive experience so that the successful candidate will want to come to the district. Allow key employees in the district to meet and exchange views with the candidates. These activities should enable the board to better determine significant qualities possessed by the candidate.

Some guidelines include allowing time for travel, having a system of hosting the candidate, having a plan for lodging and meals, and generally regarding the person as you would any welcome guest in your community. Board members should study all the information available. Let the candidate know you've done your homework by making positive comments about credentials.

Prior to the interview, the board should develop a list of questions consistent with strengths being sought and district goals. Each member should have a chance to ask questions. Each candidate should have an opportunity to respond to the same set of questions.

It can be helpful to have a system of feedback so that you can obtain input from administrators, teachers, and others who may have met the candidate during the visit.

Length of a candidate's visit to the district varies. Allow some flexibility so candidates can visit administrators, teachers, etc. A meal and social time with the board and candidate can be a valuable part of the process. If the candidate's spouse is along, plan to have someone show him/her the community. The spouse's favorable impression can contribute to an acceptance by the candidate of your choice.

6. Reaching a Decision

The board's discussion and decision must take place at an open meeting, properly noticed. Board members should review their notes on each finalist and review any input from stakeholder groups.

7. Develop and Execute Contract

A sample superintendent contract is available from NDSBA.

Option Two (fee-based)

NDSBA provides assistance that includes the following search components:

- Initial consultation with board members to provide an overview of the process
- Work with the board to establish a timeline

- Provide an application form
- Advertise and post the vacancy on NDSBA and NDCEL websites
- Participate in recruitment of candidate
- Provide interview questions based on district needs
- Provide a list of questions that should NOT be asked
- Assist the board in reviewing candidate applications
- Conduct reference checks on applicants
- Discuss qualifications of finalists selected for an interview
- Manage the application process including written correspondence
- Discuss interview procedures
- Assist the board in developing a compensation package
- Provide a sample superintendent contract

Option Three (fee-based)

NDSBA provides assistance that includes the most comprehensive search components:

- Initial consultation with board members to provide an overview of the process
- Work with the board to establish a timeline
- Assist the board in identifying the skills, qualities, and characteristics that an individual must possess to be a successful superintendent in the district
- Visit with administrators, classified staff, teachers, students, and community members about the school district, community, and what they are looking for in the new superintendent
- Create a brochure highlighting the school district and community
- Provide an application form
- Advertise and post the vacancy on the NDSBA and NDCEL websites
- Participate in recruitment of candidates
- Provide interview questions based on district needs
- Provide a list of questions that should NOT be asked
- Assist the board in reviewing candidate applications
- Conduct reference checks on applicants
- Discuss qualifications of finalists selected for an interview
- Manage the application process including written correspondence
- Discuss interview procedures
- Assist the board in developing a compensation package
- Provide a sample superintendent contract

Note: Items highlighted in yellow are only available with this option