

299P Superintendent Search Procedure

I. General

Selecting a superintendent is the single most important decision the Fridley Public School Board makes. Deliberate and thoughtful discussions are necessary in ensuring that high quality applicants are encouraged to apply and interview for the position, and ultimately the best candidate is chosen to meet the current future needs of Fridley Public Schools. This procedure is meant as a guide to assist in the search process.

II. Procedure

Factors that must be considered for a successful hire include budget, timeline, specific job description, using a consultant versus keeping it in-house, announcing the vacancy, recruiting and screening candidates, reference checks, deciding upon the interview questions, selecting finalist(s), site visits, communications with staff and community, and negotiating a contract with the chosen candidate.

A. Budget

Work with the Director of Finance to establish a budget for the superintendent search. Budget considerations should include costs for staff time, advertising, postage, legal fees, travel expenses for candidates and board members, stipend for search committee chair, and consultant fees if used.

B. Timeline

A timeline will need to be developed outline when each major step of the process is to occur. Milestones to be included are budget preparation, job description completion, consultant hiring process (bids, interviews, and contracting) if using a consultant, vacancy announcement, application preparation, application due date, applicant review meeting, background/reference check, initial interviews, finalist interviews, site visits, new Superintendent announcement, and contract negotiations.

C. Board Run vs. Consultant Lead Search

The Board must decide whether to conduct the search on its own or if they should hire a search consultant to assist them. The superintendent hiring process is time consuming and potentially expensive process. The Board should determine if there is 1 or 2 individuals that are willing and have the needed experience and skill set to conduct a successful search. A job description for a Superintendent Search Chair is attached to provide an idea of the requirements of the position. While this person may be leading the search, all members of the school board should be involved in the search and hiring process. If there isn't an individual or individuals with necessary skillset or willingness to take this role on, then a search consultant is recommended. Hiring a consultant will be more expensive, but will reduce the workload of the Board. If a consultant is to be used, get written quotations from several (3-4) consultants and remember that the consultant works for you and that the Board is in control of the hiring process.

D. Job Description

The existing job description for the superintendent position should be thoroughly reviewed and updated to meet the current and future needs of the district.

- E. Vacancy Announcement and Application**
Discuss with the Director of Communications and Human Resource (HR) Director the timing and what is to be included in the vacancy announcement and application package. Decide what questions will be used to screen the applicants and include these with the application package. Be aware that once the announcement is made, media and community members will be looking for information. Direct all information requests to the Director of Communications for a consistent message and transparency in the hiring process. A thorough announcement and application package should be designed to attract promising candidates with the specific skills and experiences needed in the next Superintendent of Fridley Public Schools.
- F. Screening and Reference Checks**
Once the application deadline passes, all applications need to be reviewed by all board members. A meeting to screen the applicants and determine which applicants will be brought in for an interview must be conducted. Note that while this meeting is subject to open meeting laws, all personal applicant information is private. Applicants should be referred to by letter or number. Reference checks should be made on any individuals identified during the screening process as finalists to be interviewed prior to scheduling of any interviews.
- G. Interviews**
With the assistance of the HR Director, develop specific, open ended questions to be asked of all candidates that relate directly to the needs of the District. To minimize the potential for bias, each question should be asked of each candidate by the same board member in the same order. All board members need to be active participants during the interview process. Schedule the interviews in a timely manner when all board members can be present. Take notes during the interviews, but remember that all notes are available to the candidates and public for viewing. After board members ask their questions, allow the candidates to ask their own questions of the board. Be prepared to answer questions on topics such as goals of the district, strengths and weaknesses, financial condition, school board's role, superintendent's role, etc. Provide details on the next steps in the hiring process, and who and when candidates will be contacted regarding the board's decision. Second/final interviews are to be handled in a similar manner.
- H. Site Visits**
Two or three board members should conduct a site visit with the top candidate. Additional visits with other candidates can be made as needed. Meet with board members, superintendent, administrators, and staff in the candidate's home district. Predetermine what job-related questions will be asked regarding the candidate.
- I. Final Decision and Contract Negotiations**
Once site visits are completed, convene a meeting to discuss all candidates and to choose the best candidate for the position. Remember that this is a public meeting and focus on the positive attributes of the candidates and base the decision on the hiring criteria originally established. Notify all candidates of the board's decision, and working with the Director of Communications, publically announce the next Superintendent. Begin contract negotiations with the chosen candidate, establishing a positive working relationship between the School Board and Superintendent.