

Choosing Your Next Educational Leader

A superintendent is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by:

- facilitating the development, articulation, implementation and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.
- advocating, nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional development.
- ensuring management of the organization, operations and resources for a safe, efficient and effective learning environment.
- collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
- acting with integrity, fairness and in an ethical manner.
- understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal and cultural context.

The Iowa Standards for School Leaders (ISSL)



Iowa Association of
School Boards
700 Second Ave., Ste. 100
Des Moines, Iowa 50309-1731

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Whether you hire a search consultant firm or conduct the superintendent search yourself, here are some important points to remember when hiring the best educational leader for the students in your school district.

Developing Hiring Criteria



Managerial skills should be considered entry-level prerequisites, not the total picture of what you're looking for. Choose people to interview who are:

- skilled in budgeting and school finance.
- knowledgeable about the legal requirements of the superintendency.
- effective in communicating with a variety of audiences.
- effective in building good board relations.
- lifelong learners.
- personally and professionally ethical.

To promote student success, your superintendent must be highly versed in:

- accountability systems designed to improve achievement for all students.
- effective professional development strategies that help staff learn and grow.
- equity issues and ways to close the achievement gap.
- ways to engage others in a vision for school improvement and implementing improvement plans.

- facilitating group decision-making opportunities.
- involving parents and other patrons in providing opportunities for all students to achieve.

Tips for Conducting Powerful Interviews



- Focus on having the candidate provide concrete examples of how he or she has excelled at the priorities you've listed in your hiring criteria.
- Keep the goals in your comprehensive school improvement plan and the district's initiatives in mind as you go through the interview process. Ask the candidates about their abilities and experiences in providing continuity to your goals.
- Get multiple perspectives on your candidates. Use several interview teams composed of a cross section of interest groups. Don't ask the teams to rank the candidates. Instead, ask them to provide feedback about each candidate's strengths and concerns.
- Adhere to all the parameters of what is legal and not legal to ask in an interview. Do not discriminate against candidates on the basis of age, race, gender, ethnicity, disability or marital status.
- Look for someone who will do what is best for all kids, not who is best at interviewing.

Resources that Can Help



School Administrators of Iowa (SAI) and the Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB) have developed a model superintendent evaluation process that is available on their Web sites, www.sai-iowa.org and www.ia-sb.org. This resource provides helpful information that can be used in your superintendent search. It contains:

- a list of sample indicators that can be used as a guide for many of your interview questions.
- a sample job description for a superintendent.
- sample job targets that can give you specific examples of typical superintendent goals.

Team Leadership for Student Achievement was sent in 2002 to every school district in Iowa by IASB and SAI. The book has nine chapters dealing with the key leadership roles of the school board and superintendent and provides a comprehensive overview of the major roles of those responsible for the governance of the district. If you can't find your copy or would like more information on conducting superintendent searches, call IASB at (515) 288-1991 or SAI at (515) 267-1115. You can also contact the Iowa Association of School Business Officials (IASBO) at (515) 294-9468.