

## INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS WORKSHOP

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## Overview

In this Workshop, key considerations and best practice action are presented to the Board to:

### 1. Establish a Clear, Transparent Process

- Define the timeline, phases, and stakeholders involved in the interview and selection process.
- Communicate expectations and next steps clearly with candidates and the public.

### 2. Align Questions with Leadership Profile and Strategic Priorities

- Develop interview questions that reflect the **Leadership Profile** and the district's **mission, goals (strategic plan), and key challenges**, for example: equity, academic achievement, financial leadership, community engagement, staff retention and morale, candidates' track records and philosophy on various issues.

### 3. Use Structured, Consistent Interviews

- Ask each candidate the same core set of questions to ensure fairness and make comparisons easier.
- Use decision matrices to evaluate responses objectively and reduce bias.
- Hold debrief sessions to discuss feedback and narrow the candidate pool collaboratively.

### 4. Include Multiple Stakeholder Perspectives

- Consider community forums as part of the process. Ensure a varied constituent base and create space for underrepresented voices to be heard.
- If interviews are public and/or community forums are utilized, Incorporate feedback forms for constituents to express congruence with Leadership Profile.

### 5. Assess Both Competency and Cultural Fit

- Look beyond resumes—evaluate leadership style, communication skills, values, and vision.

- Ask scenario-based or situational questions to understand how candidates handle real challenges.

## **6. Ensure Legal and Ethical Compliance**

- Avoid discriminatory or inappropriate questions (e.g., those related to age, religion, family, or political affiliation).
- Follow proper hiring laws and confidentiality standards.

## **7. Use Multiple Rounds and Contexts**

- Consider layered interviews:
  - Preliminary Screening (selecting who to interview)
  - First round: Performance Interview and in-depth panel interview. The performance interview suggested by HYA is fully described in this workshop.
  - Second round: Traditional format with follow up questions from round one and scenario exploration.
  - Final round: Public presentations or community meet-and-greets

## **8. Communicate Clearly and Professionally**

- Maintain communication with constituents and the broad community on the process, opportunities to participate, and decisions of the Board.
- Maintain communication with all candidates throughout the process. HYA takes care of this.
- Be transparent about decision-making and provide closure to unsuccessful applicants respectfully. HYA takes care of this.

## The Initial Interview

*Note: The Board's attorney shall ensure compliance with open meeting laws throughout the process.*

### Introduction

The interview is a critical tool in the hiring process, revealing interpersonal and professional skills of the candidate that are often difficult to glean from applications, résumés, references or site visits alone. All Board members should be familiar with each candidate's application. Such preparation reveals to the candidate the thoroughness with which the Board is undertaking its selection process.

### Questioning the Candidate

There are two methods to consider for the first round of interviews:

1. Method one is to have each candidate prepare a presentation for the Board that is a SWOT analysis of the District and highlight how they are a match with the Leadership Profile. This gives the Board the opportunity to have a deep dive into the candidate's ability to show they understand the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats the District faces, and how they can provide leadership to move the District forward. It further allows the Board to see the candidate's communication, presentation, and persuasive skills. Finally, this method is less reliant on every Board member's thorough review of an applicant's resume and application materials. This is a great use of interview time and is successful in 45-60 minute time slots.
2. Method two is to plan questions before the start of the interview. A candidate's responses to such prepared questions often give rise to spontaneous and important follow-up questions. Board members should not hesitate to ask such follow-up questions, but should return to the agreed upon line of inquiry after the follow-up question.

The number of questions that could be asked of a candidate are countless. Therefore, the Board must be disciplined in selecting questions (and hypotheticals) that will best serve the Board in its evaluation of the candidate's attitude, reasoning ability, and judgment in areas of particular interest to the Board and Leadership Profile.

It is important to keep in mind questions that should **not** be asked. Such guidelines are set forth in Appendix B. Many questions relating to a candidate's personal background are prohibited by federal and/or state law.

The Board should recognize that the interview is a reciprocal process. Candidates will be sizing up the Board, and each member therein, just as the Board is scrutinizing each candidate. Consequently, the Board should provide applicants the opportunity to ask questions or make statements before concluding an interview. The Board should be prepared to answer questions forthrightly. Candidates are looking for the right match for their career as much as the Board is looking for the right match for their District's needs.

### Listening to the Candidate

Board members must do more than simply "listen" during interviews. Rather, members should actively focus on the candidate's responses and give enough feedback to elicit more in-depth answers than would ordinarily result. When taking a "reading" of a candidate, Board members should consider such things as:

- the depth and thoughtfulness of the candidate's answers;
- the relevance and insight of the candidate's questions;
- the candidate's level of engagement;
- the candidate's reaction when probed for more specific answers;
- the candidate's composure, confidence and overall comfort level during the interview;
- the degree of creativity exhibited by the candidate in previous positions;
- the candidate's problem-solving abilities;
- the candidate's capacity to simplify complicated issues and problems;
- the ability of the candidate to communicate accomplishments acknowledging efforts of the team;
- evidence of steady career progress; and
- ambitions expressed during the interview.

### Interview Protocol

While conducting candidate interviews, Board members should conduct themselves according to the following guidelines:

- keep statements brief, as the main purpose of the interview is to listen to the candidate;
- refrain from discussing candidates with other Board members and resolve to remain open-minded until all interviews are completed;

- do not discuss candidate(s) in the presence of other candidate(s); and
- maintain complete confidentiality within the parameters of state statutes in all matters relating to the selection process, in spite of curiosity regarding the candidates by media, staff or members of the community.<sup>1</sup>

The schedule for the first round of interviews should provide for two hours per candidate in a comfortable setting, preferably around a conference table. These exploratory initial interviews should be carefully planned, yet informally conducted, discussions. It is important to seat the candidate so that he/she/they can face each Board member. It is also helpful to have name cards or provide the candidate with a seating chart indicating the names of each Board member.

Ideally, interviews and follow-up discussions should be conducted when all Board members are present. If one or more Board member(s) cannot attend, it is preferable to reschedule an interview. However, if rescheduling would result in an unreasonably long delay and depending on the specific circumstances of that delay, the Board may be better advised to proceed rather than risk losing a qualified candidate(s).

*»Note: The HYA Associate(s) normally assists in scheduling initial interviews.*

## Decision Matrices and Rubrics

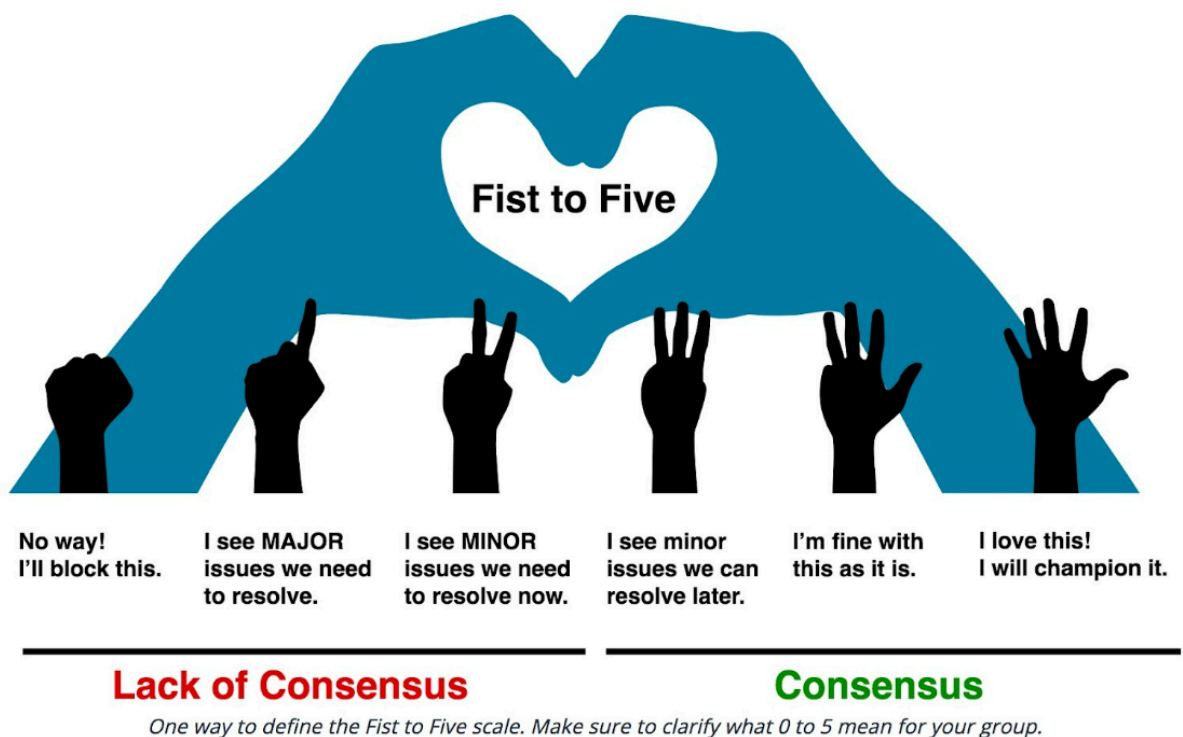
HYA has seen the positive utilization of decision matrices and rubrics.

1. One technique HYA recommends for choosing which candidates to interview, which candidates to move to finalist status, and even the final selection of a candidate is the **Delphi Technique**. The technique requires each board member to make a forced choice by doing a head-to-head comparison of each candidate.
2. HYA also recommends using a **Feedback Form** for the Board to evaluate a candidate during and after an interview. The collective responses are then shared with the Board which helps when reviewing each candidate's candidacy. HYA recommends using an electronic Feedback Form whereby each question is listed that the Board has decided to ask candidates. For each question, the Board simply rates the response from Poor to Excellent on a five point likert scale and is given the opportunity to add comments.

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<sup>1</sup> Breach of confidentiality concerning candidate material may place the District and/or the Board in legal jeopardy.

3. Another technique is to narrow the list by **eliminating candidates that are least likely to achieve a consensus**. After the Board discusses the candidate pool, each Board member should “vote” (i.e., identify on a slip of paper) for the candidate he/she/they is **least** interested in pursuing further. Votes should be given to the president/chair/facilitator. If a majority of the Board identifies a single candidate, that individual is eliminated. If no candidate receives a majority, the president/chair/facilitator shares the names of the candidates that were voted for, and the group then discusses those individuals. After this discussion is completed, the Board proceeds with another vote. Continue in this manner until all but three preferred candidates remain.
4. **Fist to five** is a technique for quickly getting feedback or gauging consensus during a meeting. The leader makes a statement, then asks everyone to show their level of agreement with the statement by holding up a number of fingers, from 5 for wild enthusiasm (jazz hands!) down to a clenched fist for vehement opposition.



5. If the Board wants to use a **rubric with points**, HYA recommends reflecting on natural breaks in total scores to help place candidates into bands to advance (or not) to additional rounds of interviews - not cut scores or ranking to produce a "winner."

## Choosing Finalists

After all initial interviews are complete, the Board should meet to identify finalists (usually three). The selection of the superintendent should be a corporate decision—a matter of true consensus. Avoid starting the process with a Board member championing a favorite candidate. This approach makes it unduly difficult to achieve unanimity, as it tends to close minds, cement allegiances too early in the process, overlook alternatives and shut down discussion prematurely. It also is important to be vigilant at keeping Board differences on other matters from intruding upon the selection process.

When Board members like many or all of the candidates, the Board should narrow the list by eliminating candidates that are **least** likely to achieve a consensus. This course—first eliminating the candidates with the least potential of achieving Board consensus rather than the most—is **strongly** recommended. The following selection process has proved effective:

- STEP #1: Utilizing the Feedback Form, each Board member should individually consider the following questions as applied to each candidate:
  - o "What candidate is most aligned to the Leadership Profile?"
  - o "What can this candidate bring to our District to move it to a higher level of excellence?"
  - o "What candidate can connect with our students, their families, teachers and the community?"
  - o "Which candidate appears to be most acceptable to the entire Board?"
  - o "Which candidate seems most capable of working with the Board as a whole?"

Examining the candidates in this way is more productive than simply asking the question, "Which individual is my favorite candidate?"



- STEP #2: After each Board member has individually considered each candidate, the Board—as a whole—should discuss the candidates. When discussing the candidates as a group, Board members should articulate:

- ❖ What strengths does the candidate bring to the District?
- ❖ What concerns, issues or questions do you have about the candidate's ability to be successful at the District?

As Board members share their thoughts, the Board should take note of common perceptions of each candidate. Consider each candidate, one-by-one, until all candidates are discussed. *(These two questions are also what is recommended for the community panel. They can be provided via a QR Code/Google Form allowing for the Board to see reactions in real time and closing the comments as soon as the panel is complete.)*

- STEP #3: After the Board discusses the candidate pool, each Board member should "vote" (i.e., identify on a slip of paper) for the candidate he/she/they is **least** interested in pursuing further. Votes should be given to the president/chair/facilitator. If a majority of the Board identifies a single candidate, that individual is eliminated. If no candidate receives a majority, the president/chair/facilitator shares the names of the candidates that were voted for, and the group then discusses those individuals. After this discussion is completed, the Board proceeds with another vote. Continue in this manner until all but three preferred candidates remain.

»Note: In some cases, this process will produce only two preferred candidates. Although it is recommended to proceed with three finalists, limiting the finalists to two is appropriate when the Board feels there is a significant difference between the top two candidates and the others. In rare instances, this process results in the identification of only one preferred candidate after only one interview. In this case, the Board should discuss the situation with its HYA Associates before proceeding, as the Board could put the District at a disadvantage by immediately identifying the preferred candidate after only one interview. The HYA Associates will assist the Board in reevaluating the candidates to either (i) re-administer and oversee another selection process in order to produce two additional preferred candidates from the original pool, or (ii) take a more thorough look at the Board's chosen candidate without eliminating all others prematurely.

Allow plenty of time for full discussion but try not to let differences delay final decisions. Some candidates may interpret a long delay as an indication that the Board has lost interest and thus withdraw their applications. Additionally, finalists will likely be highly competent administrators who may be under consideration by other Districts. The longer the selection process takes, the greater the risk that a preferred candidate may accept another position or decide not to move at all. Yet, a unanimous vote by the Board on the finalists is **highly** desirable, and thus every effort should be made to achieve such a result.

## Conducting Second Interviews

### Confidential Searches

Upon identification of the most promising candidates (usually three), the Board should invite the candidates for a second interview. Whenever possible, it is highly recommended that this stage of the interviewing continues to provide confidentiality for the candidates. Experience has demonstrated that the best candidates make themselves available for consideration only when their confidentiality can be assured through this point in the selection process.

The second interview will provide time for an in-depth examination of each candidate's views, practices, style, competencies, accomplishments and philosophy, as well as questions that emerged from the community panel. The second interview is also a time to discuss with the candidate any questions, issues or concerns that may have been raised during the discussion about the candidate following his/her/their first interview with the Board. The second interview also provides an appropriate opportunity to raise topics and issues of relevance to your District and to discover how each candidate might respond to them.

During the second interview phase, the Board may wish to consider scheduling a dinner with the candidate (and if mentioned by the candidate, possibly his/her/their significant other). The informal setting allows for a more relaxed and personable interaction. Usually, if included, the dinner is conducted before the second interview.

### Community Panel

Candidates should be advised that the second visit will not be confidential as soon as invitations are extended. Candidates who do not want to forsake their

confidentiality should be given the opportunity to withdraw their candidacy before that point. It is imperative that candidates give their consent to have their names released before Boards do so.

Guidelines and procedures for including others in the search process are provided in Appendix E. The favored approach used by most Boards is to hold a public reception to introduce the candidates to those who participated in the development of the *Leadership Profile Report*, as well as any others a given Board may desire to include. For cases wherein the above approach is used, an alternative suggested schedule for the candidate's second interview is provided in Appendix F. Additionally, Appendix G, provides a sample form for soliciting input from those in the community who participated in the selection process, and thus interacted with the candidates during their visits.

### Meeting with Finalist(s)

The primary purpose of the meeting/exit session with the finalist(s) is to answer any final questions the candidate might have, determine the candidate's continuing interest in the position, and clarify compensation and contractual expectations with sufficient specificity to avoid any potential misunderstandings in the event that the Board wishes to make a firm offer. It is important to gain such mutual understanding while two or more viable candidates are under consideration. Deferring the conversation until a candidate realizes he/she/they is the Board's first/only choice needlessly shifts bargaining leverage to the candidate, increasing the potential for a more costly contract. Also, it is important to know at an early stage of negotiation what, if any, contractual conditions and/or provisions constitute "deal breakers" for the candidate. Without such information, the Board could waste valuable time and effort pursuing a candidacy destined to collapse in the final critical days of the selection process.

The meeting is typically handled by the Board president/chair and another Board member or, if appropriate, the Board attorney. Such "witnessing" of the contract dialogue precludes later shifting of positions and gives more than one reading of subtle messages either party may be attempting to convey. The Board can choose in which form—written or oral—it wants to learn of the candidate's compensation expectations. Yet, regardless of the form, it is critical that each candidate leave his/her/their meeting with some sort of writing reflecting the **mutual** understanding of the parties as to the candidate's salary and contractual expectations.

It is important that the meeting be conducted in a candid, forthright manner, yet in a relaxed and informal atmosphere. The discussion should never be able to be construed as a negotiation nor allowed to take on an argumentative or adversarial tone.

## Recommended Approaches

When conducting the exit session, the Board president and vice president should attempt to solicit from the candidate answers to three fundamental questions.

- (1) "Do you have any additional questions?"
- (2) "Are you still interested in the position?"
- (3) "If yes, what will it take to bring you here?"

On the subject of compensation, there are three recommended approaches for soliciting such key information.

- APPROACH #1: The candidate is provided with a written form on which he/she/they conveys his/her/their salary expectations. The candidate then brings this completed form to the exit session.
  - The sample script below illustrates how Board representatives may initiate an explicit discussion regarding compensation using Approach #1.
    - "Please share with us the compensation form that the Associates asked you to complete and bring with you today."
    - or*
    - "What will you require in order to accept this position? We are interested in your salary expectations as well as any non-standard contractual conditions."
- APPROACH #2: Board representatives attempt to elicit compensation expectations during the exit session discussion.
  - The sample script below presents several introductory comments to begin an exit session discussion, during which Board representatives may attempt to elicit desired information using Approach #2.
    - "Now that you have had an opportunity to reflect on the busy day you had yesterday, are there any additional questions you might have for us?" *or*

- "We enjoyed visiting with you yesterday. In a few days, we will be making a decision on our next superintendent. Can we assume you are still interested in the position?"
- APPROACH #3: The Board directly addresses the issue of compensation by making the candidate a firm offer, to which the candidate can respond.
  - The sample script below illustrates how Board representatives may initiate an explicit discussion on compensation using Approach #3.
    - "As you are aware, the Board will be meeting soon to determine which of the candidates it will select as the District's next superintendent. If you are our choice, we would be prepared to offer you a \_\_ year contract with the following provisions: [itemize provisions]. Would this compensation package be acceptable to you?"

Regardless of which approach is used, the subjects and issues discussed at the exit session should be put in writing. This writing requirement is a non-issue if the candidate completes a prepared salary expectations form (Approach #1) or the Board presents the candidate with a prepared compensation proposal (Approach #3). However, if the Board prefers to elicit salary information from the candidate during the exit session (Approach #2), the Board should follow and fill in the recommended outline presented directly below in order to summarize the deal points discussed. Copies of the outline should be prepared for both the candidate and the Board representatives present.

SAMPLE OUTLINE – EXIT SESSION DISCUSSION
<p>"Pursuant to this discussion, and assuming you are the Board's chosen candidate, you are prepared to accept the position of superintendent if the Board offers a contract with the following provisions:"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Salary:</li> <li>● Other Financial Terms:</li> <li>● Auto or Auto Allowance:</li> <li>● Insurance Provision:</li> <li>● Other Provisions:</li> </ul>

## Dealing with Certain Eventualities

Sometimes a candidate decides that he/she/they is no longer interested in the position and communicates this loss of interest at the breakfast meeting/exit session. In this situation, Board representatives should proceed as follows:

- Inquire as to why the candidate changed his/her/their mind.
- Probe the candidate's comments in order to ascertain whether his/her/their decision resulted from:
  - something the Board or Board member(s) did or said;
  - reactions to the staff or other school or community representative(s);
  - observations of the issues and/or needs of the District;
  - treatment of the candidate; or
  - other reason(s).

Board representatives at the exit session should correct any unfounded issues or concerns the candidate may have while refraining from attempting to convince the candidate to change his/her/their mind. If the Board wants to further pursue a particular candidate, such pursuit is generally handled more effectively by Associates.

## Selecting a Preferred Candidate and Making an Offer

After meeting the finalists, the Board should select its preferred candidate by employing the same three-step process recommended for the first round interviews. Prior to the Board's discussion, and if applicable, Board members should review the comments and general feedback provided by others involved in the selection process.

Again, the Board should resist the temptation to quickly decide on a favorite candidate. During the final stages of selection, a favored candidate may withdraw, or events may occur that cause Board members to look more favorably upon a candidate who was only the second or third choice initially. Keeping an open mind about **all** candidates throughout the **entire** selection process only maximizes the strength of the final decision.

The Board should offer the position to its preferred candidate with the following conditions:

- Review of Executive Due Diligence (Background Check) reports;
- Mutually Board agreed upon contract terms.

The Board's decision to hire or not hire a particular candidate is at the sole discretion of the Board; and the Board takes responsibility for that decision.

## Final Steps

The announcement of the new superintendent should be released to the media and the public only after the finalist has signed either (i) the Intent To Sign contract form (Appendix C) or (ii) the final, written contract. In making the announcement, the Board should coordinate with the new superintendent to confirm that all who should be advised of the appointment have been notified before the press is able to contact them. **In some states, there is a waiting period by which the finalist, sometimes referred to as the lone finalist, is announced and no Contract can be solidified until after the waiting period. Depending on the state this is usually 14 to 21 days.**

A prepared news release should be provided to the media in both your community and the new superintendent's current community simultaneously. A feature story on the new superintendent should be included in the District's newsletter.

After the superintendent is under contract, a letter should be sent to all applicants thanking them for their interest in the position and informing them of the Board's selection. Letters sent to the candidates interviewed by the Board should be sent with the signature of the Board President. A sample thank you letter to finalists is provided in Appendix D. Letters to all other applicants will be sent by the HYA Associates.



## Appendix B

The following information was taken from the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM), The American Association of Superintendents (AASA) and the National School Board Association (NSBA) as guidelines for avoiding inquiries based on an applicant's protected class - age, color, national origin, race, religion, gender or veteran status. In addition, as stated previously, many state employment laws expressly forbid certain types of questions. The following is a representative list of unacceptable and acceptable questions. **Please note that this list is NOT all-inclusive.** Should the Board have questions regarding permissible and impermissible line of inquiry, the Board should consult their attorney.

### APPENDIX B

<b>Interview Guidelines</b> <b>Permissible &amp; Impermissible Lines of Inquiry*</b>		
<b><u>Subject</u></b>	<b><u>Permissible</u></b>	<b><u>Impermissible</u></b>
National origin/ancestry		"How long have you been a resident of the U.S?  Nationality of applicant's parents or spouse.  Maiden name of applicant's spouse or mother; Surname of father.
Race or color		Color of eyes or hair or any questions that would indicate race or origin.
Education	Inquiry into what academic, professional, or vocational schools attended.  Inquiry into what languages <b>(plural)</b> the applicant reads, speaks or writes fluently that would help the community access their schools.	Any inquiry asking about nationality, race, or religious affiliation .  Language commonly used by applicant: "What is your mother tongue?" "What was your first language?"

Photographs	May be required <u>after</u> employment for identification purposes.	Requirements or requests that ask an applicant to affix a photograph to the employment application form.
Religion		Any inquiry to indicate or identify religious denomination or affiliation, church, parish pastor or religious holidays observed.  Any inquiry about applicant's attendance at a house of worship.
Organizations	Inquiry into the professional organizations of which an applicant is a member, excluding organizations that have a name or character that indicates the race or national origin of its members.	"List all clubs, societies and lodges to which you belong."

Marital status/Sexual Orientation	Status <u>after</u> hiring for insurance purposes.	"Are you married? Single? Divorced? Engaged? Living with anyone?  "Do you see your ex-spouse?"
Children	Number and ages of children <u>after</u> hiring for insurance purposes.	"Do you have children? How old? Who cares for them? Do you plan to have more children? What are your child care arrangements?"
Physical data	Explain physical requirements of the job; require physical exam.	"How tall are you? How heavy?"  Questions about physical disabilities.
Military status	To actively take steps to recruit and hire veterans:  "Do you have experience relevant to the position from your service?"	"What type of discharge do you have?" "What branch did you serve in?"  "Are you in the reserves? Could you be deployed?"

Disability	Can you perform the duties of the position?	Do you have any disabilities? Have you ever filed a workers' compensation claim?
Housing	"How can we reach you?"	"Do you own your home? Do you rent? Do you live in an apartment or house?"
Financial		Questions about credit or credit rating.  Questions about garnished wages.  Questions about debts and to whom debts are owed.
Criminal record	The following security clearance ____ is necessary/required by law ...	"Have you ever been arrested, convicted, or spent time in jail?"
Age	"Are you willing to make an ____ year commitment to this District?"	What is your date of birth? How old are you? When are you going to retire? When did you graduate high school?
Miscellaneous	"By whom were you referred to a position here?"	"How many dependents do you have?"  "Do you have any friends or relatives working here?"  Name and address of a <u>relative</u> to be notified.

\*Based on a document from AASA, American Association of School Administrators and National School Boards Association and SHRM

## Sample Intent to Sign Form

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

This document verifies that, subject to a successful site visit by Board representatives, a satisfactory background check and the inclusion of salary and benefits discussed and mutually agreed upon in a contract, I will accept the position of superintendent of schools for the \_\_\_\_\_ School District effective \_\_\_\_\_.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Sample Thank You Letter to Finalists

### On District Letterhead

Date

Dr. \_\_\_\_\_

Address

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

On behalf of our Board of Education, thank you for your interest in our superintendency and the time you spent with us. We enjoyed getting to know you and discussing a number of topics that were of interest to us. We especially enjoyed our discussion on *(you may put in whatever you would like to include)*.

After careful consideration of each of the candidates and the contributions that we feel they might be able to provide for our District, the Board has offered the position to \_\_\_\_\_ who currently is superintendent or other position of \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ (or if not public yet, another candidate). The Board had a difficult time in making this selection because of the caliber of the candidates we had an opportunity to meet. Be assured you were among an elite group of excellent finalists.

Thank you again for your interest in the \_\_\_\_\_. Our best wishes to you for continuing successes in your future endeavors.

Sincerely,  
President  
Board of Education

## Inclusion of Others in Candidate Evaluation (Non-Confidential Search)

### Introduction

In many searches, an early and persistent issue confronting the Board concerns the role, if any, of persons other than Board members in the evaluation of finalist candidates.

Basically, it is the Board's responsibility to make the selection. Only the Board will be held accountable for the decision, regardless of the involvement of others. Some Boards, therefore, prefer to keep this decision entirely within their purview. Some, however, choose to involve others. If a Board elects to include others, that general decision needs to be announced early and publicly to remove speculation and alleviate pressure on the Board. Apart from political considerations, there may be other valid reasons for the Board to involve others, including:

- a sincere interest in and reliance upon the views of others in the Board's deliberations;
- a desire for staff and community "investment" in the person appointed, thereby improving the likelihood of his/her/their success;
- a precedent of involving others in selection of principals and central office personnel; or
- an opportunity for the candidates to learn "firsthand" about staff/community concerns, expectations, problems, issues, etc. beyond the interpretation of such from the Board members or associates.

Generally, it is best to keep the details of the search from the involvement by others until later in the process because:

- it affords the Board time to consider carefully how others will be included;
- candidate(s) preferences may influence the Board's decision as to the role of others in the interview process. Some individuals refuse to be considered for other positions unless their confidentiality can be guaranteed.;
- the details of how others are included can invite argument and negotiation when there is already a contentious climate within the District.

## When?

When considering the role of others in candidate evaluation, the Board must first decide *at which point* in the search process others should become involved. The Board must address concerns at the point at which others become involved. There are three stages during which the Board can choose to involve others, and therefore, there are three options:

- ROUND ONE, during which six or more candidates could be under consideration. Unless public exposure of the candidates' names is required by state law, HYA strongly discourages such early involvement and, in fact, actively recommends against it because:
  - it makes the identity of candidates public before there is a firmly rooted interest by the candidates in the position or by the Board in the candidates;
  - it may cause certain candidates to withdraw their application for fear their interest in another position will be discovered by their current employer. Candidates will be especially disinclined to take such a risk when the number of candidates under consideration is large and Board interest in their candidacy has not been established; and
  - a large number of people considering a large pool of candidates simply increases the potential for disagreement, as well as causing dissipation of time and energy.
- ROUND TWO, during which two or three candidates are still under consideration, is the preferred point for involvement by others when such involvement is the Board's preference;
- FINAL SELECTION, during which only one candidate remains under consideration, is generally not a satisfying option for many. However, if the Board chooses to involve others at this point in the process, the Board needs to emphasize that it, and it alone, is making the decision, and that the introduction of others into the process serves only to confirm and/or validate the Board's decision.

## Who?

Second, the Board must decide *who*—or which groups of others—to include in the search process. Typically, Boards include teachers, administrators and parents, or some grouping thereof. Large Districts are more inclined to broaden the representation to community members without school-age children and to the business and corporate community. There is no right or wrong range of participants, but involvement of individuals beyond the immediate stakeholders usually is not productive.

## How?

Third, the Board must decide *how* the included groups are to be structured and organized in order to be constructively involved. Generally, Districts choose among three options:

- OPTION #1: Representatives of all groups are combined to form one or more candidate review committees.
- OPTION #2: Representatives of each group meet with candidates independently of all other groups.
- OPTION #3: Representatives of all groups are invited to informal receptions for each remaining candidate (usually three). During each reception, the candidate makes a 10-15 minute presentation followed by about 30 minutes of questions. Such questions may be posed from those in attendance or they may be pre-selected and then proffered by a designated Board member.

Options #1 and #3 are favored, as they both limit the candidate's ability to pander to the interests of a particular group. These two options also have the advantage of conserving candidate time and energy.

Option #3 has become the preferred choice of school Boards who choose to involve others in the selection process. The option, and its characterizing receptions, affords the Board an opportunity to observe the candidate interacting informally with a large number of constituents. The receptions also allow the Board to assess the candidate's ability to speak publicly and respond to questions. In some situations, however, options #1 and #3 risk enabling teachers and principals to dominate the questioning by invoking their "technical" authority on educational topics. Therefore, Boards should prepare for this potentiality by ensuring that all attendees have an opportunity to interact with the candidates.

A related consideration is whether the "others"—regardless of group composition—meet with all the remaining candidates, or just one. Having each group meet with just one candidate allows the Board to increase the number of people participating in the process. The approach also precludes comparison or ranking of the candidates, often subjecting the Board to unwanted and unnecessary pressure. The Board, therefore, must emphasize to the others involved in the process that their knowledge of the candidates is largely limited to the résumé, interview and unofficial inquiries made in the candidate's home



District. Only the Board and HYA Associates have access to the full range of information regarding each candidate.

The Board must next address the sensitive matter of how to designate group representatives. The Board's decision is usually heavily influenced by the size of the District as well as the trust level and relationship history between the Board and others, but there are numerous options that address how to choose a representative, including:

- Each group selects its own representative;
  - » Note: Frequently Boards have existing governance or decision-making structures to draw upon; however, in the absence of such, it is not unusual for teacher and administrative organizations to name their own representatives.
- The Board appoints the representatives;
  - » Note: This option may be seen as manipulative and controlling, and therefore risks casting an aura of cynicism around the Board's choice of superintendent.
- Random selection.
  - » Note: Large Districts often rely on this method, taking regions of the District and/or its organizational sub-divisions (*e.g.*, elementary, secondary) into account.

After choosing representatives, the Board must consider the feedback of those representatives, specifically the *nature and scope* of the feedback it wishes to gather from others. Options include:

- a response related to the attributes noted in the Leadership Profile Report (preferred);
- a straightforward expression of perceived strengths and weaknesses (preferred); or
- a comparison of candidates where more than one candidate is met by the group (discouraged).

On a related note, Boards also must consider the *mode* of providing feedback. Again, options include:

- written responses from each participant using a format created by the Board (preferred);
- written responses from each group conveying the group's consensus;
- meeting between the whole group and the entire Board; or
- meeting between a group spokesperson(s) and the entire Board.

Finally, the Board must consider the *timing* of the feedback. Options include:

- immediately, in writing (preferred);
- immediately, by means of an oral presentation to the Board;
  - » Note: immediacy minimizes behind-the-scenes politicking or domination of individual opinion over that of the group.
- defer until the group has an opportunity to deliberate and reach consensus; or
- defer until the group or representative has met all candidates;
  - » Note: deferment maximizes the potential for lobbying and invites comparisons and rankings, which the Board may wish to avoid.

Clearly there is no “one way” to include others. Experience has demonstrated, however, that an otherwise well managed search can collapse if a Board does not carefully plan for the involvement of others in the process. Reliance on Associates’ experiences in this area is highly recommended.

<b>Non-confidential Superintendent Search</b> Sample Schedule For Candidates' Second Visit*		
<b><u>Time</u></b>	<b><u>Activity</u></b>	<b><u>Persons Included</u></b>
8:15 - 9:00 AM	Orientation to the District	Board president or designated Board member with optional inclusion of superintendent, assistant superintendents, etc.
9:00 – 11:15 AM	Escorted tours of selected schools and community	Principal of school conducts tour and takes candidate to next principal.
11:30 AM – 1:00 PM	Lunch	Key central office administrators
1:15 – 3:45 PM	Escorted tours of selected schools and community	Principal of school conducts tour and takes candidate to next principal.
4:00 – 5:30 PM	Candidate Reception**	<p>An opportunity for selected community members, staff and others to meet and interact with candidate.</p> <p>Some questions from the audience can take place but this should be limited to provide the candidate an opportunity to informally interact with the various invited constituencies.</p>
5:30 – 6:00 PM	Rest and Free Time	Candidate
6:00 – 8:00 PM	Dinner	Board, candidate and candidate's partner if candidate has included them on the trip
8:00 – 10:00 PM	Interview	Board and candidate
Following morning	Breakfast	Board president, another Board member and candidate

\* If a partner or family members have accompanied the candidate for the visit, arrangements might be made for the partner/family to examine real estate, cultural or occupational interests.

\*\* This has been a very successful approach for introducing the candidate to the community and providing an opportunity for interaction with the various constituencies in the District. If the Board

*desires to involve representatives from the community, administration and staff in a more formal process, we will discuss different strategies that have been used successfully.*

## Sample Community Input Form

\*Repeat form if community is meeting more than one candidate

### Superintendent Search

Thank you for taking the time to meet our candidate(s). As you leave today, please share with us your observations and leave this form in the box by the exit.

or

Thank you for taking the time to meet our candidate(s). You have been emailed a google form to share with us your observations. This form will only be available until \_\_\_\_ time.

Sincerely,  
The Board of Education

Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_

From your observations, please share with us those things that you feel this candidate can contribute to the **Name of Your** School District.

### Option 2-

Google Form:

Two questions for each candidate:

- What strengths does the candidate bring to the District?
- What would concern you if this person was hired?