

Emergency Superintendent Succession

The Superintendent shall designate at least one other executive staff member who is familiar with the Board's governance process and issues of current concern and is capable of assuming Superintendent responsibilities on an emergency basis.

Further, the Superintendent shall develop and provide for the Board a recommended succession plan in the event of the Superintendent's vacating the position.

Superintendent Interpretation:

- An **executive staff member** shall mean a member of the District's Executive Cabinet.
- The term "**emergency basis**" means a period of time when the Superintendent is not available by any means and a decision that normally falls under the Superintendent's purview must be made to ensure the safety and welfare of students and District personnel, or should such a decision not be made during this period; the District's interests will be substantially damaged. The emergency would end upon the reestablishment of communication with the Superintendent, or, if the Superintendent is deemed by the School Board as incapable of resuming responsibilities, until the School Board appoints an interim Superintendent.

The Board has an expectation that the district will continue to operate in a safe, ethical, responsible manner in the event that illness, injury, or long-term absence cause the superintendent to be unable to manage the day-to-day operation of the school district. The Board's expectation is that at least one person in the organization has the ability and has been supported to exercise the capacity to step in under such circumstances. The Board expects as well that beyond emergency situations, the Board should have a succession plan on file that outlines steps and parameters for securing a new superintendent in the event that the superintendent is incapacitated, dies, is suspended, or terminated for cause. Such a succession plan should provide enough guidance that the Board can move forward with the succession plan and the process for securing new leadership.

Superintendent Indicators of Compliance:

- **Indicator 1:** The current superintendent will have a written emergency succession plan for situations in which he/she is unable to manage the day-to-day operation of the school district.
- **Indicator 2:** The current superintendent will have a written succession plan in the event of the superintendent vacating the position.

We will know we are compliant when:

The Superintendent, with input from Executive members and the School Board, creates a succession list with at least two names (in order of succession) that will fill in for the Superintendent on an emergency basis. This list will be readily available to Board members, Executive members, and building principals. All selected individuals must have a superintendent certification.

As Assistant Superintendents, they work directly with the Superintendent and are familiar with the work of the various departments and all of the major initiatives in the District. The Assistant Superintendents have been involved with Coherent Governance processes and will be able to work with the School Board until the Superintendent is able to resume her/his responsibilities, or until the School Board appoints an interim Superintendent.

The District has an up-to-date crisis plan, which includes a command structure used during crisis situations. All cabinet members play a role on the District Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), with the understanding that the succession list will be followed. The succession list is consistent with the EOP structure. The EOP is consistent with each campus' crisis plan.

Bismarck Public Schools
Superintendent Succession Plan

Board policy OE-2 *Emergency Superintendent Succession* requires that the superintendent provide a succession plan. It states, "The Superintendent shall designate at least one other executive staff member who is familiar with the Board's governance process and issues of current concern and is capable of assuming Superintendent responsibilities on an emergency basis. Further, the Superintendent shall develop and provide for the Board a recommended succession plan in the event of the Superintendent's vacating the position."

Framework for Superintendent Succession Planning

For key leadership positions the plan involves: 1. Emergency succession plan and transferring leadership, and 2. Non-emergency succession.

1. **Emergency succession plans and transferring leadership** is addressed for the superintendent level through OE-2, noted above. The executive team functions collaboratively to make many decisions that fall to the superintendent. With a team approach, the role is more accurately termed "the superintendency." All core team administrators are familiar with, and have participated in training in the Board's governance model. All members of the executive leadership team are kept "up to speed" regarding district operations and one another's areas of responsibility through weekly meetings of the team. Nevertheless, ultimate authority does reside in one person in the event that the team cannot agree, or in decisions in which there is not time to engage a team process. Following is the succession/chain of leadership by position for the 2018-

2019 school year, provided position incumbents remain the same. Persons who are included in the succession sequence are/must be licensed district administrators:

- a. Assistant Superintendent for Secondary – Dr. Ben Johnson
- b. Assistant Superintendent for Elementary – Mr. Brad Barnhardt

The plan must envision cases in which the superintendent might die, be called away for an extended period for family emergencies, become incapacitated or unavailable through illness.

2. **Non-emergency succession.** An additional circumstance might also be the departure of the superintendent through retirement or employment elsewhere, and the Board’s inability to secure a person with the right characteristics and skills in a timely manner. In such cases, depending on the duration of time that an alternate must be in place, the Board may want or need to consider alternatives to this plan, depending upon the persons in the positions named above. It is increasingly common for boards to utilize a person in the chain above, or even an outside person, in the capacity of *interim superintendent*. There are of course advantages and disadvantages to internal versus external interim superintendents as outlined in the following chart. In many instances the decision of whether to hire an interim has to do with the timing of the superintendent’s departure and the relation of that timing to the normal “hiring season.”

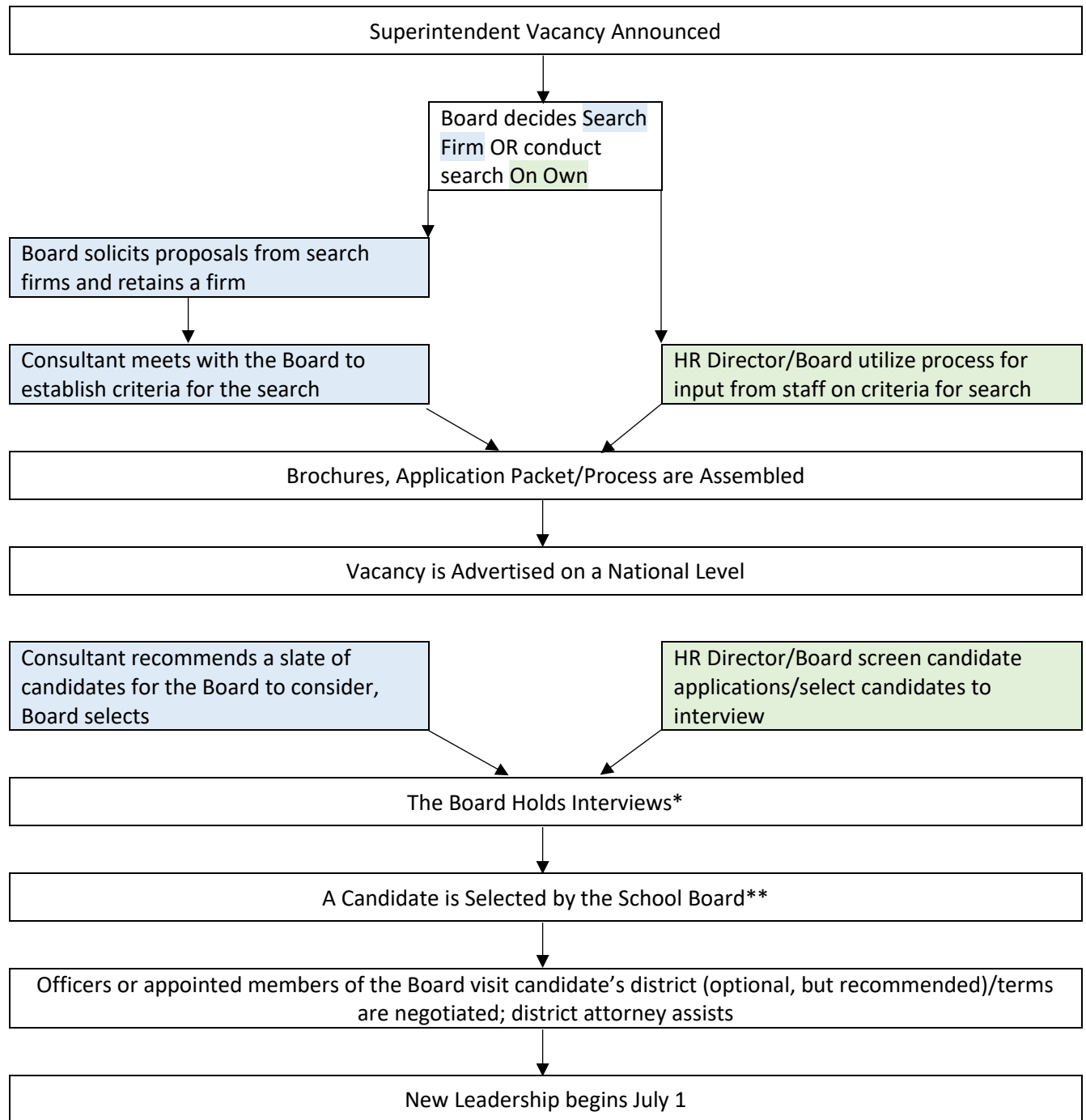
	Advantages	Disadvantages
Internal Interim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knows the system; • Can continue the current direction with less disruption, if that direction remains desirable or acceptable to the Board; • If the internal interim has applied or wants to apply for the position, the interim time gives him/her a change to “try it on for size” and for the Board to evaluate his/her performance; • Would likely not cost as much as the new permanent person, or the additional cost of an outside person. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on the position held by the interim, may be somewhat disruptive (may have to hire or promote behind the interim to accomplish their prior responsibility or portions thereof); • If the internal interim wants the job, but then is not given it at the end of the interim period, there might be an awkwardness among the Board, the staff he/she has supervised, and the interim, should he/she remain in the district; • It would be customary to provide additional compensation and/or benefits for the interim period; both Board and the interim would need to be prepared for this to

		<p>be adjusted at the end of the interim period;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be more difficult for an internal interim to make major changes in direction during the interim year, if that is what the Board desires.
External Interim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competent people are available to do interim jobs, particularly if the goal is to “keep the lid on” and maintain the status quo; • If one or two major, controversial changes are desired by the Board, sometimes an external person can be tasked to accomplish such changes without the long-term fallout that would accrue to a new “permanent” superintendent given such expectations. • Does not require major adjustments in existing executive level staff—they continue to do their jobs and support the interim; • Usually would not cost as much as the new permanent person. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would take time to learn the system and get up to speed; • Would likely not be able, nor would it be wise to expect, to lead or facilitate any new strategic direction or initiative—usually these are left to the new superintendent/Board team.

Transfer of leadership to new leadership at the superintendent level can occur under a variety of scenarios. If the transition is to a person already on staff, the process can be more prolonged and systematic. If the incoming leader is from outside the district, then the transition will be different. It can occur through one-on-one conversations between exiting administration and the incoming administrator. A short transition period, or a limited number of transition activities/meetings are best. The focus should be on the incoming administrator receiving information and procedural orientations, not opinions or biases regarding staff or future directions. Once these activities are accomplished, the exiting administrator should leave the position as quickly as possible to allow the incoming person an opportunity to establish a leadership system and assert his/her own style. Even if the exiting administrator remains in the community or the system in some capacity, they should err on the side of distancing themselves in terms of both presence and all means of communication, and should avoid any appearance of continuing influence.

In most instances the superintendent will announce his/her retirement; that he/she has taken another position; or the Board will ask the superintendent to leave/not renew the contract. All of these scenarios will create the possibility either of filling the position on a short term using an interim (see above), or in a normal search process. For a district of Bismarck's size, it will likely be required or advisable to conduct a regional or national search. The following graphic outlines the general steps in the superintendent search process.

General Steps in a Superintendent Search Process



* It is advisable to engage ad hoc advisory committees of staff and community in addition to the Board.
 ** In the event that the Board does not find a candidate who matches criteria and expectations, then conducting this process again, or appointing an interim, may be appropriate.