



South Lane School District Superintendent Search Frequently Asked Questions

Selecting a new Superintendent is one of the most important decisions a school board can make. The South Lane School District Board of Directors is committed to finding the right leader for our unique and wonderful community and we have chosen to hire a search consultant to help plan the process and conduct a nationwide search for leaders of enormous potential. After researching and talking to several firms, the Board selected Human Capital Enterprises to lead the board in a comprehensive recruitment process that will span the next several months.

How does the search process work?

The Board is working with Human Capital Enterprises to conduct a rigorous search. The Board will seek, receive, and review all input from the community; review all candidate applications; interview candidates determined by the Board; and select the new Superintendent.

When will the new Superintendent be hired?

The Board has set a timeline to recruit, interview, and hire the new Superintendent of Schools to begin their term on July 1, 2025.

How and when do parents and other education partners weigh-in?

The Board has begun the process of soliciting public input on the characteristics, experience, and skills desired in the next superintendent through an online survey and in-person focus group sessions which will take place the first week of January, 2025.

When will the District share the collected input with the public?

All information gathered through focus groups and the Superintendent Search Survey will be compiled, summarized, and incorporated into the "Next Superintendent Criteria", which will be published here for community feedback on January 21, 2025.

Who will make the final selection?

By law, the Board is solely responsible for hiring the new Superintendent. The Board will seek, receive, and consider all input from the community, review all applications, interview those candidates determined by the Board, and select the new Superintendent.

Can we find out who is applying?

All application materials, including the names of applicants and any other personally identifiable information, are confidential.

How does this search differ from previous South Lane School District Superintendent searches?

South Lane's recent superintendent searches culminated in a process whereby finalists (typically two or three) were introduced to the community through a series of public events. Stakeholders – whether parents, students, staff, or community members – weighed in and provided feedback regarding the candidates. The Board then deliberated and selected their preferred finalist to be the next Superintendent of Schools.

In this search, the Board has chosen to engage with the community through Focus Groups and a Superintendent Search Survey with the intention of seeking high-level, high-leverage input from our stakeholders. Additionally, a group of stakeholders, the Community Engagement Interview Panel, will interview the finalists and share their feedback with the Board prior to the final interviews and the Board's deliberation process. This process does not include a public pronouncement of finalists, which as we discuss below can create a serious impediment to attracting the most exceptional talent. At the same time, it augments rather than reduces the quality of community feedback regarding the finalists.

What is the rationale for taking a different approach in this search?

1. Quality of Pool

Top-tier, experienced superintendent candidates are shying away from superintendent search processes in which their names are surfaced publicly prior to selection. This has always been problematic – but in the current era, where superintendents of great talent are in higher demand than ever before – top-drawer candidates are increasingly selective. Many successful superintendents will opt out of a search process where they will be publicly identified as finalists for a job that they may not ultimately get.

Recent superintendent searches from districts where finalists' names are publicly revealed evidence that experienced superintendents are opting out of this kind of a process.

2. Quality of Community Feedback

Although there is sometimes a tendency to think that more feedback is better, in actuality that's not our experience. Large-scale qualitative feedback is very difficult –if not impossible-- to turn into usable feedback for the Board in the short turnaround time that is required. Other areas of concern, such as feedback from stakeholders who may have only watched a single candidate – or who have a strong bias toward a candidate and a large network of friends and colleagues – creates some complexities. Quantitative feedback on finalists in a Superintendent search is of some, but limited, value.

3. Equity

In searches where there is a large-scale amount of feedback, it can feel overwhelming to Board Directors to make sense of the various voices providing feedback. When that happens, it is not atypical that we, human beings that we are, elevate the voices most proximate to us to a higher level of influence: our spouses and partners; our neighbors; our kids; our friends; our colleagues. Members of our close circles will have observed finalist processes and they will have their opinions that they eagerly share with us. Because their opinions matter to us, we are influenced by them.

But in a search where a finite number of individuals are providing feedback – individuals who for the most part are not identifiable and represent a broad and diverse array of stakeholders – the Board will truly hear the diverse voices of a representative sample of the community.

Has this been done before?

Yes, in many places. Recent searches in Medford, Beaverton, Ashland, High Desert ESD, Tillamook, San Francisco, and Salem-Keizer all employed a similar path.

How can the public follow this process?

Updates regarding the Superintendent search process will be posted on our website. The Board will also provide updates at its regularly scheduled board meetings and future press releases. If you have questions about the search process or timeline we invite you to connect with us at superintendentsearch@slane.k12.or.us