

# **SUPERINTENDENT SUCCESSION**

*(Background Information for Policy Review Committee)*

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All superintendencies eventually end. The COVID-19 pandemic emergency situation clearly brought forth the need and increasing importance of a succession plan pertaining to this leadership position. Along with their boards of education, superintendents also have a responsibility to plan for the future of their school districts. Proactive succession planning for key leadership positions minimizes the costs, upheaval, instability and disruption of long-term district goals and initiatives due to leadership turnover.

Departure is difficult. Discussion with board members can be awkward and risk sending the wrong signal, and action steps can be challenging. However, if succession planning is put aside, the district's future and the legacy of the superintendent are placed at risk.

Succession planning provides needed continuity for the board of education. A change of superintendent, especially if a new superintendent wants to move the district in a new direction, can be disruptive. Succession planning pertains to the continuity of key leadership positions. It's also about developing the intellectual capital, as well as providing opportunities to recruit people to the district and within the district with the knowledge that there are individual opportunities for advancement and that the district is willing to provide intentional pathways developed for pursuing those opportunities.

In addition to preparing for a superintendent's succession, the district can create talent pools for succession of assistant principals and principals. Thought needs to be given to executive leadership and the need to create in the administrative ranks the development of executive level leadership. Pathways need to be considered for teachers to move into other district leadership positions, including administrative positions at the school and district level.

Succession planning should take place not only for the superintendent's position but for all district-level positions and principals. It is prudent to build into a school district's processes and culture the concept of succession planning. Donald R. McAdams, in an article written for AASA on this topic stated, "Administrators at every level should be trained to look for employees with growth potential. And when talent is spotted, those with talent should be given opportunities for growth, including broad exposure to the district. For key positions, the superintendent should have a mental list of potential replacements should incumbents suddenly depart."

Succession planning for the superintendent is important because he/she is honor bound to act in the best interest of the district. Further, the superintendent should care about his/her legacy. A successor chosen from the superintendent's own team would provide continuity. Effective promotion from within can build organizational strength but requires succession planning. In the private sector, great companies manage human resources to spot and develop talent which permits promotion from within.

Yet, it is acknowledged that bringing in new talent from outside the district can stimulate innovation. There are times, in all districts when this is necessary and is reflected in recruitment, based upon a thorough assessment of the needs of the district and reflected in district succession planning.

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## **Policy Implications**

Succession planning is a process for identifying and developing new leaders who can replace those leaders who leave for a multitude of reasons. An important first step is the identification of current and future key positions in the organizational structure of the district. Succession planning is a long-term strategy for identifying and developing, both personally and professionally, current high-potential staff members for specific positions. It should encompass those positions that hold high strategic importance and require a very specific set of skills, knowledge, abilities and other characteristics important to the district's organization.

A policy for succession planning outlines the process boards need to use for planning to replace board members, a board chair, or superintendent either because of an existing vacancy, for any number of reasons, or to plan for the future vacancy of a position. Succession planning for board of education positions, including officers of the board, is rooted in town and city charters and state statutes. Local customs, politics and past practices also play a role.

At this time, a new policy pertaining to succession planning for the superintendent's position, policy #2140.1, "Superintendent Succession," has been developed. There are two versions which follow for your consideration and potential modification for use at the local level. The first version is detailed and provides for a number of different scenarios. In addition, it contains in a number of places, alternate language to consider. The second version represents a more succinct, broadly worded version. In these times, this new policy is considered a recommended policy for inclusion in the district's policy manual.

In addition, there are a number of existing policies which pertain to the replacement of a superintendent. These include the following:

- Policy #2131.1 – Appointment of Designee for Superintendent
- Policy #2140 – Superintendent
- Policy #2141 – Recruitment and Appointment of Superintendent

*A sample policy to consider.*

## **Administration**

### **Superintendent of Schools**

### **Superintendent Succession**

#### **Purpose**

The Board of Education (Board) is committed to maintaining a state of readiness for the eventuality of a planned or unplanned change of the District administrative leadership. To that end, it is the policy of the Board to establish and maintain a succession plan to ensure the orderly transition of leadership and the achievement of the District's mission and goals.

In addition, it is the Board's policy to assess the future leadership needs of the District on a planned periodic basis. Such assessment will help to ensure continuity of leadership by the selection of a qualified and capable Superintendent and other District administrators who will be a good fit for the school system as reflected by its mission, vision, goals and philosophy.

The Board, upon the announcement of resignation or absence of the Superintendent will put this Succession Plan into effect.

#### **Alternate language for this section (Purpose) of the policy:**

The Board of Education (Board) understands the importance of succession planning whereby the \_\_\_\_\_ School District leadership will be in place to provide for effective day-to-day operations should the Superintendent be absent through an emergency, short-term or permanent leave or departure. Such planning supports organizational stability and sustainability by ensuring there is an established process in place to replace the Superintendent, either permanently or temporarily. Recognizing that changes in staffing are inevitable, the Board has established this succession planning process to provide needed continuity in staffing and to avoid extended and costly vacancies in the position.

#### **Desired Outcomes**

Through this policy, the Board seeks to ensure:

1. Replacements are identified and developed for key positions in the District, including the Superintendent; and
2. Proper oversight and continuity of the day-to-day operations of the District is in place at all times.

## Administration

### Superintendent of Schools

#### Superintendent Succession (continued)

#### Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

1. **“Succession Planning”** is an organized, proactive process designed to ensure that the appropriate people will be in place to sustain and promote the culture and goals of the District into the future. It involves the development of existing staff to fill key leadership positions in the District. There are two components of the plan: (1) emergency/short-term transition, and (2) permanent leadership change.
2. **“Acting” or “Interim”** are terms which a school district may use which refer to a person assigned to fill a position on a temporary basis to replace a regular employee on an emergency or short-term basis. It is the expectation that the regular employee will be returning to his/her regular position in the future. However, these terms can, within the statutory requirements, be used to refer to a person designated to fill a position on a temporary basis while a search is being conducted to permanently fill the position.

#### Governing Principles

1. Succession planning for the Superintendent is an organized, proactive process of preparing for the loss of the individual filling this critical position in order to sustain, protect, and promote the culture and goals of the District into the future. This increases the availability of experienced and capable employees to be prepared to assume critical roles when necessary.
2. The District seeks to identify and develop employees who possess the potential to fill key leadership positions, to include administrative roles in schools.
3. The Board is committed to a comprehensive District-wide program for developing leaders who are dedicated, prepared, and equipped to increase achievement for all students and continue with initiatives in place without disruption to the system.
4. Succession planning addressed in this policy includes emergency or short-term change of the Superintendent and permanent change of the Superintendent.

*Note: Superintendents should make sure that deputies are broadly exposed to districtwide issues. In addition, it is not inappropriate for the Superintendent, from time to time, to share with the leadership of the Board comments on the growth and potential of selected deputies and other members of the administrative staff. However, Superintendents should be careful to never suggest an heir apparent. This could undermine their leadership and divide the administrative management team. The final decision must always rest with the Board.*

## **Administration**

### **Superintendent of Schools**

#### **Superintendent Succession** (continued)

#### **Governing Practices**

1. The Board directs the Superintendent, in cooperation with the District's administrative staff, to develop a succession plan to build a list of qualified leadership candidates while anticipating future District needs.

#### **An alternate approach:**

A Succession Planning Committee (Committee) shall prepare for and manage a planned or unplanned change of leadership of the Superintendent. The Succession Planning Committee membership will include the Superintendent, Chairperson of the Board of Education, Board Vice Chairperson and the immediate past Board Chairperson. If the immediate past Board Chairperson is no longer a member of the Board, the Board Secretary will sit on the Committee.

Annually, the Committee will:

- i. Review the District's mission, vision and goals which will become the basis for determining the key leadership competencies and qualifications necessary to further the District's progress and review and update the Succession Plan. Changes to the Plan shall require Board approval. (The Committee is subject to FOI.)
  - ii. Consult with the incumbent Superintendent, in executive session, regarding his/her career plans to provide for an informed Succession Plan.
  - iii. Review the District's emergency/short-term transition plan which shall include:
    - The Superintendent's recommendation for an Acting Superintendent who would replace him/her in the case of a temporary absence and a timeline for appointment.
    - The Board shall formally approve for the school year, the individual so designated.
2. The Superintendent shall ensure the Assistant Superintendent, and other appropriate administrative staff become familiar with Board and Superintendent issues and processes. Such knowledge, to include Board policies, legal, personnel, and financial issues, shall enable the designee to assume the role of Acting/Interim Superintendent with reasonable proficiency and be fully accountable to the Board for all Superintendent authority.

## **Administration**

### **Superintendent of Schools**

#### **Superintendent Succession**

#### **Governing Practices (continued)**

### **3. Short-Term/Emergency Change in Superintendent's Position**

- a. In order to protect the Board and District and to maintain consistent day-to-day operations of the District, upon the sudden loss of the Superintendent, the Assistant Superintendent/Deputy Superintendent shall serve as Acting Superintendent pending formal action by the Board to select an Acting/Interim Superintendent.

*Alternate language:*

- i. In the absence of the Superintendent, it shall be the responsibility of the other District administrators to assume, from its ranks, the Superintendent's duties. The succession of authority shall be, in this order: the Assistant Superintendent, the High School Principal, the Junior High/Middle School Principal and then an Elementary Principal chosen at the discretion of the administration. Such succession of authority is subject to the approval of the Board.
- ii. In order to provide for unforeseen circumstances, the Superintendent shall appoint a designee. This designee shall function only when the Superintendent is out of the District and in emergency situations. Such appointment shall be reported to the Board at a regular meeting of the Board. The individual appointed shall be a full-time administrator in the District.

The designee shall report/consult immediately with the Chairman of the Board of Education on any actions taken. The designee shall report to the Superintendent of Schools on any action taken upon the Superintendent's return to the District.

- b. The inability of the Superintendent to continue to fulfill the responsibilities of his/her position, as enumerated in the position's job description shall be communicated to District staff, as well as to the public, by the Chairperson of the Board.
- c. If the absence of the Superintendent is temporary, the successor shall assume only those duties and responsibilities of the Superintendent that require immediate action. If the Superintendent's absence will be a lengthy one, as determined by the Board, the Board shall appoint an Acting Superintendent, in concert with District policy and/or state statutes.

## **Administration**

### **Superintendent of Schools**

#### **Superintendent Succession**

##### **Governing Practices (continued)**

- d. It shall be the responsibility of the Superintendent, if possible, to inform the successor of the Superintendent's absence. If unable to do so, it shall be the responsibility of the successor to assume the Superintendent's duties, in accordance with this policy, when the successor learns of the absence and its length.
- e. The Acting Superintendent shall consult with the Superintendent, if available and possible, on major decisions and continue to implement the District's goals, initiatives and Strategic Plan.
- f. If the short-term absence is determined to be long-term or permanent, the Board will take action to formally appoint an Acting Superintendent and determine the process to be utilized for hiring a new Superintendent.

#### **4. Unplanned Permanent Leadership Change**

- a. Upon announcement of the resignation or vacancy of the Superintendent, the Board will put the Succession Plan into effect.
- b. This plan shall include the following:
  - i. Communication Plan outlining the selection process:
    - Announcement of the Superintendent's resignation or vacancy to be shared with both staff and community. Following Board approval, a statement of the Succession Plan and process for filling the vacancy will be announced; and
    - The Board Chairperson shall be the official spokesperson representing the District in all media contacts and inquiries.
  - ii. The process for identifying executive search consulting services. The Board may choose to retain consultants and issue a Request for Proposal (RFP);
    - A timetable and schedule of recruitment selection activities including opportunities for input from key stakeholders and community members;
    - A transition time period between the outgoing Superintendent and the incoming Superintendent;
    - Negotiation of the Superintendent's contract; and
    - Appointment of the new Superintendent and assistance in the transition during his/her first year of employment

## **Administration**

### **Superintendent of Schools**

#### **Superintendent Succession**

#### **Governing Practices (continued)**

##### **5. Planned Permanent Leadership Change**

- a. Upon the announcement of the resignation or vacancy of the Superintendent's position the Board will begin the recruitment and hiring process.
- b. The Board will determine the procedures to be followed and the process for filling the vacancy.
- c. In such situations where the succession of the Superintendent can be planned, the Board shall initiate an internal, District-wide assessment of the District's administrative needs, desires and qualities of a new Superintendent. Such assessment will begin as soon as possible upon the Board learning of the planned permanent leadership change.
- d. The steps outlined above for the replacement of the Superintendent in an unplanned circumstance are also applicable in this situation.
- e. A vote of the majority of the Board members, present at a Board meeting for which due notice has been given of the intended action, will be required for the appointment of the Superintendent.
- f. Upon approval of a successor by the Board, the Superintendent shall develop and implement a transition plan to orient the selected appointee to all duties and responsibilities of the position and ensure continuity of all District strategies and goals.

##### **6. Appointment of an Acting Superintendent**

The Board may employ an Acting/Interim Superintendent, properly certified or not, for a probationary specified period, not to exceed one school year, with the approval of the Commissioner of Education. Such time may be extended by the Commissioner for good cause shown. During such probationary period, the Acting Superintendent shall assume all duties of the Superintendent for the time specified and shall successfully complete a school leadership program, approved by the State Board of Education, offered at a public or private institution of higher education in the State. At the conclusion of the probationary period, the Board may request the Commissioner of Education to grant a waiver of certification for the Acting Superintendent, allowing the Board, if desired, to appoint the Acting Superintendent as the District's permanent Superintendent or a one-time extension of such probationary period, not to exceed one additional school year, if the Commissioner determines that the Board has demonstrated a significant need or hardship for such extension.



## Administration

### Superintendent of Schools

### Superintendent Succession

### Governing Practices (continued)

*Note: The Commissioner may waive certification for a school Superintendent who (1) has at least three years of experience in the past ten years as a certified administrator with a Superintendent certificate issued by another state, or (2) has successfully completed the probationary period as an Acting Superintendent and the Commissioner deems the individual to be exceptionally qualified for the position of Superintendent.*

(cf. 0000 – Mission and Functions)

(cf. 0100 – Mission Statement/Purposes)

(cf. 0200 – Goals/Objectives)

(cf. 1112 – News Media Relationships)

(cf. 1160 – Responsibilities of Boards of Education)

(cf. 2000.1 – Board-Superintendent Relationship)

(cf. 2001 – Participatory Management)

(cf. 2110 – Management Position Team)

(cf. 2131 – Superintendent of Schools)

(cf. 2131.1 – Appointment of Designee for Superintendent)

(cf. 2141 – Recruitment and Appointment of Superintendent)

(cf. 2151 – Recruitment of Administrative Staff)

(cf. 9012 – Legal Responsibilities of Boards of Education)

(cf. 9020 – Public Statements)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-157 Superintendents. (as amended by June 2017 Special Session PA 17-2, Section 152 and Section 267)

10-222 Reports to state board of education.

Policy adopted:

cps 6/20

*Another, more succinct, version of this policy to consider.*

## **Administration**

### **Superintendent of Schools**

#### **Superintendent Succession Plan**

The Board of Education (Board) needs to be prepared for an eventual permanent change in its Superintendent, whether such change is either planned or unplanned, to insure the stability and accountability of the school system until such time as a new permanent Superintendent is appointed. The Board's Succession Plan is based upon the deliberate and systematic effort to project its leadership needs.

It is the policy of the Board to assess the permanent leadership needs of the District to help insure the selection of a qualified and capable leader who is representative of the community, a good fit for the mission, vision, values, goals and objectives identified by the Board, and who has the necessary skills, professional talents and background to be the District's Superintendent.

To insure the District's operations are not interrupted while the Board assesses the leadership needs and recruits a permanent Superintendent, the Board may appoint a properly qualified Interim Acting Superintendent. The Interim Acting Superintendent shall ensure that the school system continues to operate without disruption and that all organizational commitments are properly and adequately executed.

It is also the policy of the Board to recruit/develop a diverse pool of candidates and consider at least three final candidates for its permanent Superintendent position. The Board *shall/may* implement an external recruitment and selection process, while at the same time encouraging the professional development and advancement of current District staff members.

When the Superintendent separates from the District as part of a plan, retirement, disability, emergency, contract nonrenewal, etc., the Board, as appointing authority, will publicly communicate an approach regarding the recruitment and selection of a replacement. The recruitment and selection process will include consultation with community officials and key stakeholders, and may or may not include the assistance from the vacating Superintendent. In addition, the assistance of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) and the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) may also be utilized.

- (cf. 0000 – Mission and Functions)
- (cf. 0100 – Mission Statement/Purposes)
- (cf. 0200 – Goals/Objectives)
- (cf. 1112 – News Media Relationships)
- (cf. 1160 – Responsibilities of Boards of Education)
- (cf. 2000.1 – Board-Superintendent Relationship)
- (cf. 2001 – Participatory Management)
- (cf. 2110 – Management Position Team)
- (cf. 2131 – Superintendent of Schools)

## **Administration**

### **Superintendent of Schools**

#### **Superintendent Succession Plan** (continued)

(cf. 2131.1 – Appointment of Designee for Superintendent)  
(cf. 2141 – Recruitment and Appointment of Superintendent)  
(cf. 2151 – Recruitment of Administrative Staff)  
(cf. 9012 – Legal Responsibilities of Boards of Education)  
(cf. 9020 – Public Statements)

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