

CORDOVA SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF EDUCATION
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Work Session Notes for Superintendent Search, Process and Timeline Work Session

A work session was held on August 13, 2025 and began at 6:00 pm in the CHS Multipurpose Room

Members Present: Mr. Hoepfner, Ms. Merritt, Mr. Kruithof, Mr. Glasen

Members Present via Zoom: Ms. Trudeau

Staff in Attendance: Principal Paul Tancrede, Technology Director Jason Fastenau, Superintendent Alex Russin, Secretary Kristie Beckett.

Visitors: None

Work Session Overview and Purpose:

Mr. Glasen explained he had asked Mr. Russin to include a timeline template for the Board to review for discussing how to proceed with the superintendent search.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Russin explained to the Board how the timeline document combined prior internal and external search documents by taking key common components over the years to layout the Board's new superintendent search timeline and process needs. He added that the Board should review and discuss whether it wanted to use an external or internal process to conduct the search.

Mr. Russin explained to the Board the job posting date would determine the pace of the timeline and that February was an ideal time to conclude the search and offer the position, since staff were considering their commitment to their current school district at that time. Ms. Merritt knew that filling Alaska and Cordova specific jobs generally took longer than other states and towns in rural Alaska. Mr. Kruithof asked if she wanted to consider closing the job opening before going into winter break or keeping it open through the break.

Ms. Merritt and the Board had questions about the details of services offered by AASB.

Mr. Hoepfner explained that for a \$10,000 base fee, AASB would work with the Board to help outline the search process, identify selection criteria around Board goals, review the recruitment process, online application program development, candidate background verifications, screening to identify finalists, assist in finalist selection via a rubric and logistics, and create the interview process and timelines. He noted other districts in Alaska also pursuing finding a new superintendent, which he felt, Cordova should use AASB's professional search services to find its next superintendent. He commented the first two meetings could be virtual but the third and final meeting should be in person when candidates come to town, which were costs to the district in addition to the base fee. Mr. Hoepfner noted it was the Board's responsibility to call candidate references and off sheet references when making their selection decision.

Ms. Trudeau liked the timeline presented, noting the staff and community survey process, and inquired if AASB had a template for creating the survey to confirm the Board would still pursue that part of the process with AASB. Mr. Hoepfner noted one of the first steps by the Board was to outline what it wanted to see [criteria] in a new superintendent along with a community and staff survey with 45 possible questions. Ms. Trudeau felt Cordova should also offer the survey to the community in Tagalog, to which Mr. Russin noted the District usually put out surveys in English, Spanish, and Tagalog.

Ms. Merritt was in favor and preferred using an external source such as AASB for the search process using their expertise to leverage statewide resources. She valued the survey component, noted AASB also had a two-month search process timeline, however had concerns about the potential number of superintendent positions open in the state.

Mr. Kruithof felt the opposite and wanted to use local resources knowing Cordova had Mr. Hoepfner on the Board and felt that AASB would rely on the Cordova School Board do most of the work in the process. He felt that Mr. Russin had vast contacts in the state of Alaska, had expertise in the superintendent search process and his hiring skills were above what AASB could offer with their guidance. He noted Mr. Russin had already put together a Cordova specific timeline and compiled surveys for the community, staff, and school board. He felt confident in Cordova's ability to work through the search process and was concerned about spending \$14,000 or more on a process where Cordova would do a majority of the leg work.

Ms. Trudeau wanted to use the AASB process since she was new to the Board and needed guidance to learn what was needed in the search process.

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Mr. Hoepfner acknowledged that he valued Mr. Russin's time in running and leading the school district but wanted to leverage AASB's process to offload tasks and streamline the effort for the Board.

Ms. Merritt hoped the school board participated a lot during the superintendent search, adding that she wanted to be heavily involved in the search process and was comfortable in calling references, as she was ready to do the hard work and put in the effort required.

Mr. Glasen wanted to know if there was a superintendent succession process and if it was common for the new candidate to shadow the current. Mr. Russin noted that a person currently employed as a superintendent or district or school administrator would generally not be available to engage until they completed their current contract for their district. Mr. Russin added that he had plans to make himself available to train and lend any assistance to the incoming superintendent into the new school year to ensure their success in Cordova.

Mr. Russin explained for Ms. Merritt that statutorily in Alaska, having a superintendent endorsement on a Type B certificate was not required and that a candidate could work to attain the credential or endorsement within the first year or two of employment. He highlighted that many policies and statutes had been written with the term "Chief Administrator," which was used synonymously with "Superintendent" except that a chief administrator could not evaluate principals without the Type B endorsement. Mr. Hoepfner noted having or applying to obtain a type B certificate was one of the first questions on the application.

Mr. Glasen stated that he was leaning internally to conduct the search process but could go either way, and that he recognized the amount of Mr. Russin's time that would be required no matter which source the Board chose to proceed with. Mr. Hoepfner added that the current superintendent was as involved or uninvolved as the Board wanted them to be. Mr. Glasen commented that Mr. Russin had already been engaged to help AASB gather details of which Mr. Russin noted was available publicly, online.

Ms. Merritt wanted to be on the committee selection and Mr. Hoepfner noted that all Board members engaged in the search process. She wanted to cast a broad net to try to engage a superintendent candidate potentially from the Lower 48, such as Vermont or Massachusetts, which had raised their student achievement results that aligned with Cordova's strategic plan.

Mr. Kruithof added that district-specific results occurred within states, rather than states as a whole, was where growth in student achievement was shown. Ms. Merritt added that she wanted to consider the new candidates school district student data as part of the search criteria and ensure the candidate shared the district's reading and math goals.

Mr. Hoepfner added that the AASB's search would connect nationally through the school board associations when providing their search services, survey creation, and criteria assistance.

Mr. Kruithof was still in favor of an internal search for the new superintendent as he believed Cordova had the talent in-house to conduct the search process.

The Board was leaning in favor of using AASB services for the superintendent search process and hoped AASB could bring information to the workshop next weekend [August 22 & 23, 2025] in the form of a proposal with associated costs for the Board to decide how to proceed.

Mr. Glasen thanked Mr. Russin and the Board for the conversation to begin a new superintendent search and adjourned the Work Session at 6:57 pm, with no questions or comments that followed.