

Edina School Board Update: Superintendent Process

January 6, 2025

Background

At the board's 12/19 (recessed and continued on 12/20) special meeting, the governance committee was given permission to explore the following options in order to move forward with the district's superintendent search:

- Begin search with outside search firm assistance
- Begin search for interim superintendent

Many different variables will determine the board's approach to determining the next superintendent, but the governance committee and board want to ensure we are exploring all available options in order to be thorough and prepared.

Work To Date

- An assessment of executive search firms was completed with a recommendation of four firms to get additional information from
- A landscape analysis was done by contacting the MSBA and other experts in the field and by reading industry research

Landscape Analysis

Challenges

- The available pool of Superintendents is increasingly smaller due to the stress of the position, the changing landscape of public education and what is required of this role.
 - Many Assistant Superintendents are staying in that role, as opposed to being interested in being Superintendent.
 - The likelihood of attracting a superintendent from a "like" district from a different state is extremely small. This is due to several factors including the average salary of Minnesota superintendents (see below*). The district would have to invest a significant amount of money in order to attract talent from out of state unless we would be interested in grooming an Assistant Superintendent.
 - Minneapolis attracted finalist from TN, Minnetonka had a finalist from OH who backed out when offered the position, Duluth (2020 hired from WI), Kasson-Mantorville (2023 hired from IA)
- There are a lot of superintendents at larger/like districts (where we might be most interested in recruiting) that have been in place for many years and are likely at the end of their careers and not looking to make a move.

Assets

- Our district is seen as a marquee district across the state of Minnesota and a desirable place to work. We have heard this several times from various entities over the past few weeks.
- Our board is seen as a functional, desirable board to work with.
- We will be able to attract a robust group of candidates.
- The average search in MN is 3 ½ months with most lasting between 3 and 6 months.

**Consortium 2035 School Superintendent Salaries:* Eanes Westlake Independent School District (Austin, TX) = \$280,000; Highland Park Independent School District (University Park, TX) = \$315,000; Manhattan Beach Unified School District (Manhattan Beach, CA) = in 2022 \$305,000; New Trier Township High School District (Northfield, IL) = \$315,000; San Mateo Union High School District (San Mateo, CA) = \$338,000; Westside Community Schools (Omaha, NE) = \$249,000

Search Firm Refinement

The below firms were researched and reviewed against the criteria we reviewed at the special meeting:

1. Success in past
2. Representative client lists
3. Experience with high performing districts
4. Experience with similar district
5. Knowledge of district
6. No preconceived notions as to what is best
7. Ability to work with and guide board
8. Cost

Question: How many firms would the board want to interview? The governance committee is recommending the top three to further investigate, with the whole board interviewing 2-3.

School Exec Connect

- Conducted our last superintendent search (Dr. Stanley)
- Very knowledgeable about both Edina and the state of Minnesota
 - Completed searches performed: Anoka-Hennepin, Brainerd, Burnsville, Chaska, Wayzata
 - Have experience with high performing district, especially in Illinois: Lake Geneva, Lake Forest, New Trier
- Specialize in boards of education and superintendent searches
- Comes recommended from governance research

Hazard Young

- Located in Arlington Heights, Illinois
- Were a finalist for the board for the last superintendent search
- Specialize in boards of education and superintendent searches

- More of a national search company and have experience in Minnesota, but not as extensive as other search companies
- Comes recommended from governance research

Ray and Associates

- Specialize in educational executive leadership searches
- Recognized by "The School Administrator" journal as one of the top search firms in the country
- Located in Cedar Rapids, Iowa
- Comes recommended from governance research

BWP and Associates

- Edina utilized this firm for search that hired John Schultz
- Minneapolis, St. Paul and Minnetonka have all recently used

Baker Tilly

- They were the board's second choice in the last superintendent search, but have since closed their St. Paul office which specialized in educational searches and the state of Minnesota

MSBA

- Work mostly with rural and smaller districts
- Would not likely be able to expand reach beyond the state of Minnesota

McPherson and Jacobson

- Located in Omaha, Nebraska
- Specialize in educational executive leadership searches
- Have nationwide reach, but have never done any searches in Minnesota

Recommended Board Structure

Governance team is recommended to lead the search due to redundancy of likely board members on the search team (chair and vice chair).

Potential Pathways

1. Interim superintendent
 - a. If needed for the short term; need information from Dr. Stanley regarding contract negotiations with St. Paul Public Schools and contract release negotiations with the Edina School Board.
 - b. If needed for the short term and potentially 2025-2026 school year in order to give Edina a longer timeline for finding superintendent.
2. Hire search firm
3. Evaluate past Edina administrators
 - a. Could be done in conjunction with interim superintendent options

Potential Next Steps Pending Board Agreement

1. The Governance committee will return to the board on 1/21 to bring forth further information regarding each pathway including information on the recommended two to three search firms.
2. Board narrow search firm list to three to four firms to consider as semi-finalists
 - a. Governance committee to gather more information on semi-finalist firms to recommend finalists for the full board to interview.
 - b. If the board moves forward with hiring a search firm, tentative target interview completion by the end of the week of 1/24
 - c. At 1/21 work session the board will have a short overview of interview process and recommend interview questions
3. Talk to district communications team about how to regularly update the community on superintendent search. Suggestions are:
 - a. Separate tab on website
 - b. Weekly update in community and staff newsletters
 - c. Monthly board updates
 - d. Emails direct to the community only as needed for major updates