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AUTHOR Monahan, William W.
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ABSTRACT

Five steps essential to an effective procedure for selecting a new superintendent are listed. The author suggests that these procedures should provide board members with answers to basic questions, such as who should be involved in the selection process, what the board should expect from the outgoing superintendent, how to attract the right people, what applicants want to know about districts, how to discover whether applicants possess the desired qualifications, how to select the "right" one, and at what point announcement should be made of the new appointment. Also discussed are the two categories of superintendents -- career bound and place bound -- and some characteristics of each that could help the board to decide. (Author/JN)

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SPEAKER: William W. Monahan, Superintendent, Fremont Union High School District, Sunnyvale, Calif.

TOPIC: ON SELECTING A SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

PLACE: Room 321-3-5, Civic Auditorium

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PROGRAM: Page 49

FOR RELEASE UPON DELIVERY

You will notice that even though this section is small, a large number of people will pass by and stick their heads in the door. These are undoubtedly superintendents just making sure.

Before you can choose a new superintendent, you must be rid of the previous one. There are many ways of doing this, but one of the more subtle is to arrange it so that he is the speaker at the AASA Conference on the topic "Choosing A New Superintendent".

My discussion will assume that the school board has been successful in creating a vacancy and is now desirous of making a wise choice in the selection of a new superintendent. In order to do this, the board members must find answers to a number of questions such as: a) What are the essential steps in an effective selection procedure? b) Who should be involved in the selection process? c) What should the board expect from the outgoing superintendent? d) How can able people be attracted? e) What will the applicants want to know about the board and the school district? f) How do you find out if applicants possess the desired qualifications? g) How do you select the "right one"? h) At what point in the selection process should public announcements be made?

Let's go through these questions individually to see if we cannot find some practical guidelines.

What are the essential steps in an effective selection procedure?

The basic procedures for selecting a new superintendent are as follows:

1. Preparing for the search.
 - a. Development of the brochure.
 - b. Development of the job description.
 - c. Development application form.
 - d. Public announcement of the vacancy.
 - e. Procedure for filing applications
2. The search.
 - a. Identify sources for securing candidates.
 - b. Identify who is going to conduct the search.
 1. The school board.
 2. The school board committee.
 3. Consultants.
3. The screening of the initial applicants.

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4. Interviewing finalists.

5. The selection.

Who should be involved in the selection process?

Most authorities recommend that the first step of the school board in selecting a new superintendent is to hire a professional adviser. It is the job of this individual to manage, in essence, the search. Individuals with this type of expertise may be found through the school board association, local universities, administrators association, or from the ranks of local superintendents.

While it is preferred that the adviser not be on the screening committee, it is not uncommon to find him chairman of this group. The initial screening committee should be composed of competent professional educators who have the ability to analyze the applications for the position. It is the mission of this group to meet with the school board to determine the criteria for selection and then to screen the applications to 4 to 6 prospective candidates.

Before the school board makes the final selection from the applicants recommended by the screening committee, it may want to involve other members of the community in evaluating the prospective candidates. This can be touchy business, for if one group is included in the screening process, then there is some obligation to include all similar groups. Community individuals typically involved in the evaluation of candidates are representatives from teacher associations, the administrators association, the students, parent organizations, minority groups, and other special interest factions in the community. In the final analysis however, only the school board can make the appointment from the list of candidates recommended by the screening committee.

What should the board expect from the outgoing superintendent?

The board should expect cooperation at the very least from the outgoing superintendent. The extent of the departing superintendent's role in the selection of the new superintendent depends on many variables. Naturally, if the departing superintendent has been fired it is probably best that his involvement be held to a minimum. On the other hand, if he is leaving under good conditions, then he could be a valuable aid to the school board. In any case, it is not recommended that the departing superintendent play an active role in screening and evaluating candidates. He can be a valuable technical adviser and facilitator, but beyond that, it is best that he remain as neutral and unobtrusive as possible.

How can able people be attracted?

Attracting an able superintendent does not occur just when the previous superintendent departs. It is a continuous activity. A school district usually gets the caliber of superintendent that it deserves. If it is a community which has a history of supporting education, of having a progressive attitude toward learning, and of cooperating with its administrators, then chances are that it will attract a number of good applicants. On the other hand, if the community has a reputation of non-support for education, of internal squabbling, and of harassment of school administration, then the more able applicants will shy away from the position.

To help prospective candidates analyze the position of superintendent, a school board should develop clear statements regarding its superintendent/board relations. The board's expectation of the superintendent should cover the following items: 1) his role as adviser to the school board, 2) his role in developing policies, 3) the areas and the degree in which the board wishes to be informed on school matters, 4) his role as educational leader in the district, 5) his part in the evaluation of personnel and

programs, 6) school community relations responsibilities, 7) participation in community activities and organizations, 8) his role in recommending appointments to vacancies or new positions, 9) his purchasing responsibilities, 10) his budget responsibilities.

There should also be a clear statement covering these items of what the superintendent may expect from the board: 1) the role of the school board individually and collectively in proffering advice to the superintendent, 2) the board's definition of executive functions, 3) statement of the board's relationship with district employees, 4) how the board refers complaints and communications, 5) statement of the board's support of administrative decisions.

What will the applicants want to know about the board and the school district?

Besides the information contained above, the applicant will wish to know a number of things about the school district before he applies and also before he makes a final decision. The primary means of informing applicants of these matters is through a brochure. The brochure should be as attractive as possible and should contain this basic information: 1) qualifications desired for the new superintendent and salary range, 2) the application procedures, 3) the selection procedures, 4) description of the community, 5) description of the school district, 6) the basic philosophy of the district, 7) outstanding features of the educational programs, 8) the financial situation of the district.

How do you find out if applicants possess the desired qualifications?

The initial applications of the candidates can include a good deal of essential information regarding qualifications. Applications should include the candidate's professional file which contains confidential evaluations from former associates of the applicant. Because these evaluations are solicited by the applicant himself, it is to be expected that they will all be rather complimentary. The screening committee, therefore, should make liberal use of the telephone to verify the applicant's qualifications. In some instances, the screening committee may wish to have a preliminary interview with the candidate before recommending him to the school board.

The school board, after reviewing the recommendations of the screening committee and after familiarizing itself with the files of the recommended candidates, should then hold interviews. These interviews should permit time for formal as well as informal discussion.

It is best to structure rather carefully a time when the board can formally interview a candidate. Someone should act as chairman and designate other members to ask particular questions. Some suggested questions might be the following: 1) What criteria do you use in evaluating an educational program? 2) What major problems have you faced in your present or previous administrative positions? How did you solve these problems? 3) Have you improved the school system now under your direction? How? 4) How do you recruit qualified staff? 5) Have you been successful in obtaining support from the voters for levies and bond issues? How? 6) What is your concept of the role of the board of education and that of the superintendent? 7) How would you try to keep the public informed of the work of the schools? 8) What do you consider to be your greatest assets and abilities?

It is also essential that representatives of the school board visit the prospective candidate's community. This may be done as a final check on the final candidate's qualifications, or can be done in screening the final two or three candidates. This can

be a ticklish situation for the candidate, particularly if he is not selected. Obviously, the intrusion of outside board members will be interpreted that the candidate is considering moving. The situation has to be handled sensibly with the feelings of the candidate well understood.

When board representatives visit the community, there are some suggested procedures. These include:

1. Request the candidate after informing him of the intent and purpose of the community visitation to suggest a list of:
 - a. Individuals favorable to him as an administrator.
 - b. Individuals he considers unfavorable to him.
 - c. Individuals who are uncommitted or neutral.
2. Decide on a list of key organizations the leader of which is to be interviewed consistently in each community of all prospective candidates.
3. Decide on a process by which additional individuals will be added as the interviews progress. Unless circumstances are unusual, keep this process.
4. Decide on a policy of how the interviews are to be conducted and what disposition is to be made of news media inquiries, etc., when the interviews are started.

In summary, the school board should reach consensus on what qualification it desires in its superintendent. These qualifications should cover credentials, degrees, experience, personal qualifications, integrity, and personality. After consensus has been reached on desired qualifications, the board should take every measure possible to assure itself that it has the right man for the right job. Too many school boards scour the country to find the "right man", then after they've appointed him, they do everything possible to prove that they made the wrong decision.

How do you select the "right one"?

While this entire paper has been directed to answer this question, it might be worthwhile at this time to look at the characteristics of school superintendents. Recent research by the Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration at the University of Oregon has made a penetrating analysis of the man at the top of education today.

First of all, it is difficult to describe the characteristics of the school superintendent. Those qualifications needed to be superintendent of a small rural district have very little bearing on the qualifications needed to administer a large city school district. A superintendent is not a superintendent. With this understanding in mind, however, there are some generalities which one can make. For example, of all the professions, the role of the school superintendent seems to be most open to qualified individuals. There is very little correlation between parental background, the prestige of the college which the individual attended, other economic indicators, and an individual's opportunity to become a school superintendent.

On the other hand, there are some community biases which seem to work either for or against an individual. Experience would indicate that a married man with children has much

greater opportunity than a bachelor. It goes without saying that there are very few female superintendents. A curious religious factor seems to place greater emphasis on a superintendent than on other educational positions. A survey taken in 1968 indicated that 87% of school superintendents were protestants, 73.5% of the principals were protestants, and 67.4% of the teachers were protestants.

The research from the University of Oregon delineates superintendents into two categories: career bound superintendents and place bound superintendents. Differentiating characteristics might be listed as follows:

<u>Career bound</u>	<u>Place bound</u>
Had a plan to be superintendent.	Opportunity showed up.
Early formal education.	Delayed advanced training.
Attended prestigious colleges.	Attended less prestigious colleges.
More doctorates.	Fewer doctorates
More progressive.	More conservative.
Likes superintendent career more.	Likes superintendent career less.
Likes job less.	Likes job more.
Higher aspirations.	Lower aspirations.
A crusader.	More ritualistic.
More mobile.	Less mobile.

When a school board replaces a superintendent, it must make a choice between career bound or a place bound superintendent. Experience indicates that if the system is doing well, then the board usually looks within to see if it has a qualified candidate. If it does, it then selects this person. If a qualified candidate cannot be found within the organization, then it searches outside for a career bound superintendent.

If, however, the school system is in trouble, it is almost certain that the school board will select a career bound superintendent. When there has been a drastic change in the membership of the school board, you can almost be certain that a career bound superintendent will be selected.

Here are the most important reasons a school board should consider hiring either a career or a place bound superintendent:

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| 1. Wants the instructional program improved | |
| 2. Some other aspect of the system needs improvement. | |
| 3. Start a building program. | reasons a career |
| 4. Looking for experience. | bound superin- |
| | tendent was hired. |
| 1. Keep the present system going. | |
| 2. Knows local problems. | |
| 3. Good past performance. | reasons a place |
| 4. Good personality. | bound superin- |
| | tendent was hired. |

In discussing the place bound - career bound dichotomy, certain axioms have developed. They could be summarized as follows: 1) The longer a superintendent is in office, the less innovated he becomes. Therefore, the career bound superintendent of today can become the place bound superintendent of tomorrow. 2) Two place bound superintendents in a row might be one too many. 3) When a superintendent has been in office too long, it is now time for a career bound man. 4) Outstanding school superintendents are usually followed by a place bound successor.

At what point in the selection process should public announcement be made?

The California School Board Association and the California Association of School Administrators in a publication make the following recommendation regarding public announcements:

"The timing of the official selection of the new superintendent and the announcement of it should be checked carefully so that the resignation and release of the successful candidate can be processed in a professional and ethical manner.

"When the candidate has accepted the position, the school board should prepare a written news release announcing the selection to the press, television, and radio stations. This should be coordinated with the board of the district from which the superintendent is resigning so that there is simultaneous release of information.

"Usual courtesy requires that the unsuccessful candidates receive notification of final action of the board before it is released to the news media. This is sometimes difficult to do. A courteous letter expressing appreciation to each candidate should notify him of the selection".

Administrative Team

A school board should consider the composition of the entire administrative team when it selects a new superintendent. A new superintendent no matter how skillful his administrative talents may be, is headed toward an unhappy experience if he inherits an administrative team whose philosophy is contrary to his own. He faces two alternatives. The first is to work to discharge the incumbent administrators. This process inevitably causes a lowering of morale and factionalizing within the district. His second alternative is to modify and compromise his own behavior. In this instance, he may find himself in trouble with the school board because he is not carrying out their expressed mandates. A new superintendent, therefore, should have wide prerogatives in making appointments and rearranging assignments within the district office. It should be considered whether top incumbent administrators should automatically tender their resignation. It should be considered whether the incoming superintendent should be able to bring with him two and three assistants for the top posts in the district. Administering schools today may be too complicated and too important a task to be hampered by preserving a few individuals in key positions.

Conclusion

There is a rich amount of talent waiting to fill school superintendent vacancies today. It is not unusual to have over 100 well qualified applicants for any one opening. Therefore, if the school board follows the procedures outlined in this paper, it can be reasonably assured that it will obtain a good man. If one of the major tasks of a school board is to designate a new superintendent, then the other one is to make sure that he is successful. This will involve frank discussions between the superintendent and the school board about where the school system should be going and the superintendent's aspirations. This is absolutely essential if the relationship between the board and the superintendent is not to turn sour. The superintendent is dead! Long live the superintendent!