

## **Confirm the fit before you apply**



Choosing the right district for your next move is essential. It is a major mistake to presume you can be successful in any district, and the wrong selection can prove disastrous for your career. In particular, you should invest significant time in learning answers to the following and factoring them into your decision to apply:

- You need to understand the culture and climate of the district and its community to be sure your style and values will not be in conflict those of the district's stakeholders.
- You need to know as much as possible about the board's expectations of its relationship with the superintendent to be certain your philosophy and values are compatible with theirs.

You should look for answers to questions that include but are not limited to the following:

- What is the board like?
- When do the board members' terms expire?
- Why is the current superintendent leaving?
- Is there an inside candidate?
- Are there any major controversies I should know about?
- What are the major challenges facing the district?

To be sure the effort involved in preparing the application package will be worth your time, it is also a good idea to have these answers as well:

- Is this a closed or open search process?
- How will the process be conducted and what is the timeline?

■ What is the proposed compensation range?

It's often very helpful to call the current superintendent for information; however, be sure to confirm that it is acceptable with the application contact person in advance. It's possible that the consultants or the board may prefer that candidates not speak with the current superintendent for a variety of reasons, particularly in cases involving the superintendent's forced resignation or retirement.

In the event it is an option, most sitting superintendents are only too willing to answer questions about the district, and it can be an excellent way to gain detailed insight. Take care to avoid appearing interested in gossip or "skeletons in the closet."

If you need information unavailable through other sources, reach out to the

search contact person. There is no harm in demonstrating your interest in the district at this point as well.

As a practical matter, while you are doing your preliminary investigation, keep in mind that district background information will be fundamental to the application process. In the event you decide to proceed with the application, you will need detailed information about the district issues, programs, budget, achievement ratings, and more. Not only are key issues facing the district likely to be the subject of interview questions, the board will be looking for you to display extensive knowledge about the district to confirm that you have a genuine interest in the position.

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