



Five ways to be positioned to apply

Even if it's not on your radar now, unless you are approaching retirement, it is likely that at some point you will be ready to move. It's not unusual for a superintendent to simply realize a need for a new challenge. Perhaps the political climate where you are will shift or maybe an exciting new opportunity will open.

Then there's the old axiom often repeated at U.S.C.: After three years, you should be looking; after five years you should be applying; and after seven years you need to accept that it's

time for a new superintendent with a fresh assessment to take the district to a new level.

Whatever your philosophy or your current outlook, you should recognize the importance of being prepared. Obviously candidates who consciously organized themselves in anticipation of a move are in a position able to put together the most impressive applications. It's not difficult, but it does require ongoing attention to the following:

1. REFERENCE LETTERS

A search firm or district office will require a placement file, a portfolio, or at least five letters of recommendation. Accumulating formal endorsements as opportunities arise is much better than annoying important contacts with rushed requests on a short timeline. Ask at least one board member or ranking associate to write a letter for your file at least once every six months, preferably at points in time when you've achieved something notable. This collection will serve you well when you are ready to assemble an application package.

2. NETWORK

Identify the key employment consultants and search firms in your state or targeted area and make it a point to connect with them and other key contacts well in advance of applying. Introduce yourself, briefly describe your background, and let them know that at some point you will have an interest in a new position. Learn what you can about what they like to see in an applicant, what processes they use, and any tips they can offer. Remember, placement firms like to be able to represent themselves as widely networked, and they welcome meeting potential candidates.

3. SAFEGUARD

Regularly monitor your internet reputation. Never doubt that candidates are scrutinized and Google may not be your friend. Learn how to leverage the internet in your favor.

4. PROMOTE

Be open to awards and recognitions for your district, your staff, and yourself. Actively publicize your district's achievements. Good press can be pivotal in a selection process, and a new board will want to point to their choice with pride. Once you find yourself in a new community where you have to build new relationships and political support it can be the boost you need.

5. FORESHADOW

Groom your board and community tactfully by using appropriate moments to share reasonable motives for eventually moving on. It may feel a bit uncomfortable and you may be concerned about possibly undermining your effectiveness, but it's a courtesy they deserve. It will serve you much better than a sudden announcement that leaves them feeling betrayed and you facing unpleasant backlash.