

Charleston County School District
PROTOCOLS FOR INTERVIEWS
AND
OTHER PHASES OF THE SEARCH PROCESS



BWP

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Consultants

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THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

PLANNING THE INTERVIEW

Conducted effectively, the interview is the most useful tool in the hiring process. It produces information about the candidate's interpersonal and professional skills, which are difficult to obtain from applications, resumes, references or site visits. In preparation for the interview, each School Board Member should be familiar with the Applicant Data Form. This practice communicates to the candidate the thoroughness with which the Board is undertaking its selection of a Superintendent. Candidates will feel complimented by your knowledge, and they will feel comfortable that they are communicating with members of a “professional” Board. The application and personnel records of the slate of candidates will be provided via a secured electronic process using a “Dropbox”. Instructions and access to this information will be provided prior to the scheduled interviews. The materials are not to be reproduced or shared unless agreed upon by the Board.

CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

Board Members should remember that the most natural interview setting would be one where reasonable informality exists. The interview will be much more productive and effective if you establish a forum that will encourage interaction between the Board Members and the candidate, but with the calculated assurance that the candidate does most of the talking. We strongly encourage you not to assign one Board Member to pose all of your questions. What you might save in time and "careful listening," you will lose in several other respects from such a stilted unnatural setting. The person with whom you are talking could be your next Superintendent. Consequently, provide an opportunity for a natural exchange where individual and group "chemistry" can develop and be sensed.

Dates and times of First-round Interviews should be confirmed with Board Members. It is best to have in-person interviews. However, we have successfully used the Zoom application during our face-to-face interviews. Be certain to have someone establish and communicate the virtual links to those meetings to all involved.

Dates, location, and any other arrangements for the Second-round interviews should have been tentatively made and should be confirmed. Someone should be assigned to greet each candidate and then at the start, describe the interview protocol to be used (example: “We would like to get to know you and explore with you your experience. We have a number of questions during the next _____ (minutes or hours) and would appreciate complete yet concise responses. We will reserve time at the end of the interview to allow you to ask questions of us.”) We recommend that the Board initially interview each candidate for a period of 1-1/4 to 2 hours.

Interviews are especially productive when the Board has agreed upon a set of questions before starting the interview. We have included a number of questions you may consider for use during the interview process. While these examples are generally based on the “Leadership Profile” that has been developed, Board Members may want to develop or suggest additional questions. A

candidate's response to a preplanned question often will give rise to spontaneous and important follow-up questions. Don't hesitate to ask such questions. (See Attachment 1). However, remember that you want to cover as many questions as possible and try to avoid "over delving" for one specific question. You will also want to ensure that each candidate gets to respond to the same questions. We have provided a sample interview form for your convenience that you may choose to use.

The Board may also desire to pose hypothetical problems or ask for specific experiences. The response to those will reveal the candidate's attitude, reasoning ability, and judgment in areas of particular interest to Board Members.

PROCESSING THE INTERVIEW INTERACTION

Board Members must do more than simply "hear" the responses. They should actively focus on the responses and give the candidate enough feedback to encourage more in-depth answers. For both interviews try to listen not only to what is said but how it is said.

While forming a "reading" of the candidate, Board Members will want to consider such things as:

- depth, specificity, evidence, and thoughtfulness of the responses;
- relevance and insight of the candidate's questions;
- level of mental and physical alertness;
- candidate's reaction and ease when you probe for more specific answers;
- candidate's composure and comfort during the interview;
- degree of creativity in previous positions;
- evidence that the candidate has been successful in problem-solving;
- candidate's ability to simplify complicated issues and problems;
- body language during the interview, especially eye contact;
- firmness of speaking voice;
- ability to communicate accomplishments without overusing the word "I";
- evidence of steady career progress;
- ambitions expressed during the interview;
- willingness to be forthright rather than always providing safe, "middle of the road" responses.

Board Members should recognize that the interview is a reciprocal process. Candidates will be assessing the Board and the District at the same time the Board is evaluating the candidates.

Consequently, the interviews should provide the opportunity for applicants to ask questions or make statements prior to the interview being concluded. Board Members should be prepared to answer questions. For example, a candidate might ask what criteria the Board would want to be used to evaluate a new educational program or strategy. Responses should be brief since the major purpose of the interview is to listen to the candidate.

IMPORTANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Board members should agree not to discuss the candidates and to remain open-minded until all interviews are completed. No candidate is to be discussed in the presence of another candidate. Although media, staff, and some members of the community may be curious about the candidates and the reaction of individual Board Members to them, we strongly urge confidential interactions from Board members in all matters relating to candidates. Breach of confidentiality can place the District and Board Members in jeopardy. Be guarded with your comments to others and keep all of your notes and the candidate's confidential files where only Board Members will have access to them. We will also identify those records that can be made available to the public without violation of privacy regulations. Please be reminded of the confidentiality statement that was referenced at the onset of this training session relative to the sharing of materials.

SELECTING CANDIDATES

It is imperative that Board Members make the final determination of which candidates will be recommended as semi-finalists. If the Board decides to involve staff and community in part of the process, the firm recommends allowing the community input in a manner that does not allow public comparison of candidates. A candidate vote by staff and public will always create dissension. People will never unanimously agree and the final candidate will always be considered a compromise Superintendent. The selection of the superintendent is the sole responsibility of the Board.

THE CANDIDATES' SECOND VISIT

Following the initial interviews with the first group of candidates, the Board should reach a consensus on three candidates (South Carolina law) who they wish to return for a second visit and who then become semi-finalists. The second visit of a candidate to the district should include some formal orientation to the organization and community activities. There are several options to organize "a day in the district" for each candidate. and an opportunity for community engagement.

IDENTIFYING THE FINALIST

After all of the interviews have been completed, the Board is to identify one finalist. The selection of the Superintendent should be a corporate decision, a matter of true consensus. Avoid starting the process with a Board Member championing a favorite candidate. This approach tends to close minds, cement allegiances at an early stage, overlook the alternatives and shut off discussion prematurely, making it unduly difficult to achieve unanimity. It also is important to be vigilant in keeping Board Member differences on other matters from intruding upon this decision.

Preliminary information from reference checks will have been provided for the candidates presented. You should plan to utilize the district's system for conducting formal background checks for your finalist candidate at the district's expense. In addition, the candidate should also be notified that a complete physical examination is required with the cost being borne by the district if this is a part of your hiring process.

While you may have an already established process, we are providing you with several strategies that you may consider in reaching consensus regarding your finalist. For example, you may want to first, narrow your selection by eliminating less suitable candidates. Discuss the relative strengths and possible weaknesses of each candidate and listen to other Board Members' perceptions of all candidates. Each Board Member should address the issue: With the best interest of the CCSD in mind, which candidate appears to be most acceptable to the entire Board and most capable of working with the Board as a whole? This tends to be more productive than addressing the question: Which one is my favorite candidate?

Allow sufficient time for full discussion, but try not to let differences delay the final decision too long. Some candidates may interpret a long delay as an indication that the Board is "hung" and may withdraw. The longer the decision is delayed, the greater the risk that a candidate may be lost. Again, experience has shown that it is desirable to identify finalists through a process of eliminating the least suitable candidates rather than voting for favorites.

We have provided a sample rubric that may be used to help focus on the candidates' expertise and experiences relative to your Leadership Profile.

MAKING THE SELECTION

Board Members should feel comfortable that they all have fully deliberated the attributes of the candidate and that they, hopefully, can make the appointment with a unanimous vote. The Board President should offer the position after a full Board vote and only after it is assured that the finalist is ready to sign a contract. The preliminary discussion on details should have provided a reasonable start for this stage.

Publicity about the appointment should be released only after the prospective Superintendent has signed a contract and any South Carolina provisions for public notice have been fulfilled. A prepared news release should be provided simultaneously to the media in your community and the new Superintendent's community.

FINAL STEPS

After the Superintendent is under contract, semi-finalist candidates should be contacted to thank them for their interest in the position and informing them of the Board's selection. The Board President, another Board Member, or the BWP consultants should promptly call the candidates who were interviewed by the Board and the Board President should contact the finalist. BWP consultants will send a letter to all other applicants who applied for the position.

CCSD Leadership Profile

The Charleston County School District (CCSD) is seeking an innovative, visionary, committed servant leader who will work in partnership with diverse community stakeholders to promote equitable opportunities for all students in an environment of trust and transparency. A proven record of success as a superintendent.

The successful candidate will have the following characteristics and skill sets in these areas:

Instructional Leader

- Possesses strong instructional expertise in teaching and learning along with a deep understanding of the entire PK-12 continuum.
- Is skilled in using data and other relevant information to assess the effectiveness of instructional programs.
- Has had successful direct experience in closing achievement gaps.
- Has worked in an environment that includes traditional, neighborhood, magnet and charter schools.
- Has significant teaching and other administrative experience.
- Is tenured; experience with diverse students; cultural understanding of Charleston
- Is innovative; visionary
- Has management skills

Effective Communicator

- Is a consensus builder who has the ability to engage multiple stakeholder groups having differing perspectives.
- Demonstrates excellent interpersonal, communications and media skills.
- Is visible and approachable and willing to work with all segments of the community.
- Is an active listener who promotes transparency and active communication and works to build trust and support.
- Is a thoughtful decision-maker who will consider all points of view before deciding on a course of action.
- Is a strong advocate for students who will rally the entire community around its public schools.

Collaborative Manager

- Values working collaboratively with the school board to evaluate and monitor progress on the district's goals and guardrails for student outcomes.

- Collaborates with the board to establish and review effective guidelines for the board and superintendent's responsibilities to promote students' academic success and well-being.
- Has "hands-on" experience with strategic and long-range planning.
- Has practical expertise in fiscal planning and accountability and in support areas such as human resources, facility management, transportation, and school safety.
- Understands the organizational structure and the importance of the alignment of programs, expectations and accountability.
- Shows a record of success in working with diverse student and community populations.
- Has directed and participated in meaningful systemic change and understands the dynamics of change.
- Is politically astute, and has the ability and experience to work within complex political environments.

Personal Qualities

- Sincerely believes that all children can learn.
- Works with honesty, integrity, and transparency.
- Consistently acts in the best interests of all students.
- Builds trusting relationships with stakeholders and will be visible in the schools and engage students.
- Demonstrates adaptability and flexibility.
- Seeks to be a visible and active part of the greater community.
- Truly values people and the contributions they can make to the district.
- Has a vested interest in longevity with the district
- Is approachable

Charleston County Superintendent Search

Sample Application Review Checklist

Applicants for the Charleston County Superintendent search were required to submit their application via the Frontline applications website. Frontline Education is a fee-based site utilized for many organizational applications including recruiting and hiring. It is secure and password protected. Applicants may download or directly enter requested information.

Applicants are to provide information that will be utilized to determine their appropriateness for the employment position that has been advertised which is then placed in a secured file.

*(Please note that sometimes there are codes/letters/encryptions that may appear in text information that has been copied and pasted in the form. These are not typographical or grammatical errors but are related to the software and systems that don't allow exact transcription.)

Once the applicant has been approved for review, you will receive secured access to the complete file via Dropbox. **PLEASE DO NOT COPY OR SHARE ANY FILE INFORMATION.** (Will not use Dropbox - Notebooks will be provided)

Applicants' files should contain:

Quick Look – Brief resume summary

Online application: Personal data; contact information; employment desired; experience; education; statements about major accomplishment, honors/awards, additional support information; language skills; professional references; general information references; EEO statement; legal information; application acknowledgment agreement; signature

Section on application materials: cover letter of interest; resume; transcripts/certificates; communication log

Section on signed letters of reference

You may want to utilize the following checklist system when reviewing the applicants' file.

Applicants Name _____

Materials	Complete	Partially Complete	Incomplete	Notes/Comments
Comprehensive Quick Look				
Application Information				
Application Materials				
Letters of Reference				
Overall Comments				

**Charleston County Superintendent Search
Interview Protocol and a Sample Possible Interview Questions
For First-and Second-Round Candidates
(Based on the Superintendent Leadership Profile)**

The Leadership Profile provides possible categories of desired skills and characteristics for the new superintendent. All of these characteristics are important and are not in any ranked order. The following are possible questions directly and indirectly related to the profile that may be considered for the upcoming interviews. These are only suggestions some of which may not be applicable to your district. Board members may want to develop their own questions under each topic and/or the topics you have identified in your leadership profile.

We suggest that time is allotted at the end of the interview for the following: Do you have any questions for us?

For the second round of interviews, we suggest that the candidate make a brief (10-15 minute) presentation on a project of the Board's choosing. Examples: 90–100-day entry plan, a Board report on a completed project; student data report or analysis; communications plan or document; project initiative report; a document or project of the candidates own choosing.

Legal Guidelines for Asking Questions

Finally, it is critical to keep in mind those questions that **should not** be asked. Questions relating directly or indirectly to the following aspects of the candidates' backgrounds are prohibited by federal and in many instances state laws:

- **Religion**
- **Race**
- **National origin**
- **Age**
- **Gender**
- **Marital or family status**
- **Lifestyles**
- **Disabilities**
- **Criminal record**
- **Financial affairs**

Contract and Terms of Employment

1. If chosen, would you accept a multi-year contract with student and organizational performance criteria included or a single year contract?
2. How would you propose to have your performance evaluated? By whom? On what criteria? How often?

Superintendent Search Possible Interview Questions for Consideration

Professional/Personal Information

1. Give a brief and concise review of your career path and your current position and tell why you are interested in the district and position.
2. Highlight briefly a little bit about your professional, educational, and leadership background and experiences including the enrollment of the schools/districts and the demographics of students and families with whom you have worked in your career and most recently.
3. What specific capabilities do you bring and please tell us why you are interested in this position?
4. Please briefly share 2-3 attributes that make you the best person to lead ---- explaining why you would be a good fit and what would be your vision for the district.
5. Based on your research about ----- why do you think you would be a good fit? What attributes make you the best person to lead this district?
6. Please tell us why you are interested in this position.
7. Would you like to tell us about your personal life? Your family, interests, spare time activities.
8. Anything we need to know/anything in your background that could be an issue?
9. Share with us what you do for fun and to balance work and home life.
10. Please tell us a little about your hobbies, interests, spare time activities.

General Information Related to the District or Search

1. Please tell us what you know about our schools and our community.
2. CCSD serves ----- students in ----- schools who come from ----- countries, speaking ----- languages and dialects (or other pertinent information about the diversity of the district). Please briefly share 2-3 attributes that make you the best person to lead _____ explaining why you would be a good fit and what would be your vision for the district.
3. What is your familiarity with the district, community, school board? Have you had an opportunity to visit the area or view the Board in action?
4. Tell us what you have learned about our schools and our community that stood out when researching us. What highlights and challenges garnered your attention? How are those challenges similar or different from your past experiences?

Leadership

1. What steps would you take to energize the district and community to address issues it will face in the coming school year?

2. What decision making strategies will you design and employ to unite the district and continue its forward progress?
3. Provide an example of your approach to problem solving that incorporated issues, solicited suggestions and which resulted in a successful outcome. How were the results shared?
4. Share strategies and programs you have used with school staff to improve student safety and discipline across student populations in a variety of settings.
5. What has been the most challenging task you have faced and how did you deal with it?
6. What activities and strategies do you utilize to listen to feedback, develop and motivate staff, to provide an environment that encourages growth and commitment to students and the community?
7. Share strategic planning and decision-making strategies that you would design and employ to unite the district and be inclusive of all constituent groups?
8. What structures would you put in place to demonstrate support of staff and students, positive interactions with the Board and an inner connectedness with the school communities?
9. What examples can you provide that demonstrate that you are a result driven leader who utilizes evidence-based strategies designed to address student achievement goals and closing educational gaps?
10. Describe your process for strategic plan development, implementation and evaluation.
11. Describe your understanding of the student outcome focused governance model.
12. What experience can you share that demonstrates your ability to be a collaborative team builder?
13. Share activities you have led or participated in with community and organizational partnerships.
14. What successful activities and outreach approaches have you utilized to create a climate of collaboration with families from a variety of cultures and diverse backgrounds?
15. What would staff and colleagues say about your leadership style?
16. Our district may be completing renovation projects in some of our schools. With declining enrollment children may need to be redistricted. Have you ever been directly involved in redistricting/changing boundaries in a school district? Please share with us how you might proceed with this process and who would you engage in the decision-making process and how?
17. How might you go about unifying the culture of an organization so that all stakeholders (Board, administration, teachers/staff, parents, community) are pulling in the same direction and are truly focused on advancing student learning, achievement, and success?
18. If we were to call and speak to a variety of board members, administrators, teachers/staff, students, and community members in your current and past districts, how would the majority of people describe your most commonly utilized decision-making philosophy and methods?

Instructional Knowledge

1. Describe and instructional innovation that you have led which improved student performance and achievement. Did this program reduce or eliminate the achievement gap for students of color, students in poverty or students from culturally diverse backgrounds?

2. Describe an instructional innovation that you have led which improved student performance and achievement. Did this program reduce or eliminate the achievement gap for students of color, students of non-English speaking languages, students in poverty or students from culturally diverse backgrounds?
3. How would you conduct an assessment of the district's academic and extra-curricular programs to determine if the needs of all student groups are being addressed?
4. How would you conduct an assessment of the district's academic and extra-curricular programs to determine if the needs of all student groups are being addressed and describe your philosophy regarding utilization of data relative to review of student performance and achievement.
5. Describe your philosophy regarding utilization of data relative to reviewing student performance and achievement. When looking at outcomes, what are you looking for?
6. What research-based educational trends do you see as having a significant impact on education in the immediate future?
7. Describe successful instructional or programmatic initiatives which you have led to reduce the achievement gap in a school system with a diverse student population and a high level of performance for many of its students.
8. Describe a successful initiative which you led which demonstrates a student-centered approach that inspired people to the highest levels of achievement and accountability and improved student performance. How was this measured?
9. Describe successful instructional initiatives which you led to reduce the achievement gap in a school system with a diverse student population. What was the timeframe? What were your results?
10. How might you assist our district to reengage students to in-person learning while addressing ways to lessen learning gaps and emotional health issues at the start of the new school year?
11. Have you used data to inform instruction and monitor instructional programs? If so, what process was used?
12. How would you conduct an assessment of the district's academic and extra-curricular programs to determine if the needs of all student groups are being addressed and describe your philosophy regarding utilization of data relative to review of student performance and achievement.
13. Share your philosophy regarding professional development and staff accountability.
14. Highlight briefly a little bit about your professional, educational, and leadership background and experiences including the enrollment of the schools/districts and the demographics of students and families with whom you have worked in your career and most recently.
15. How might you continue to assist our district to reengage students to in-person learning while addressing ways to lessen learning gaps and emotional health issues?
16. What would staff and colleagues say about your leadership style?
17. Describe an instructional innovation that you have led which improved student performance and achievement. Did this program reduce or eliminate the achievement gap for students of color, students of non-English speaking languages, students in poverty or students from culturally diverse backgrounds?

18. Have you used data to inform instruction and monitor instructional programs? If so, what process was used?
19. How would you conduct an assessment of the district's academic and extracurricular programs to determine if the needs of all student groups are being addressed and describe your philosophy regarding utilization of data relative to review of student performance and achievement.

Management

1. What would staff say are your biggest strengths? What are areas of weakness where you could improve? How would you go about making those improvements?
2. What is a controversial issue have faced and how did you address it?
3. What structures would you put in place to demonstrate support of staff and students, positive interactions with the Board and an inner connectedness with school communities?
4. How do you manage conflict?
5. What has been the most unpopular decision you have had to make and how did you handle the reaction to this decision?
6. What strategies do you utilize to recruit, employ and retain effective and diverse personnel at both the district and school level? What is your philosophy concerning the recruitment of personnel?
7. How do you maintain a collaborative and productive relationship with the unions?
8. Provide an example of your approach to problem solving that incorporated issues, solicited suggestions and which resulted in a successful outcome. How were the results shared?
9. Describe your managerial skills that demonstrate your flexibility and that enable you to pivot once assessed needs change. How do you communicate this change to the school community?
10. Describe your definition of transparency and accountability.
11. How would you determine and implement short- and long-range goals for the district? How would you monitor and evaluate their implementation? Who would you involve in the planning process?
12. How would you go about evaluating the effectiveness of the administrative team? If you were to decide some re-alignment was necessary, how would you go about making a change?
13. What is your concept of strategic planning and the effective implementation of a strategic plan?
14. A superintendent is constantly juggling multiple responsibilities at the same time. How do you manage and ensure staying organized, effective, and timely?
15. How would you describe your management philosophy? What are your managerial strengths and limitations and how do you hold others accountable?
16. What specific capabilities and skill sets would you bring to this position?
17. How do you identify and support good staff that will enable the creation of a strong supportive team across all schools?

Fiscal

1. What would be your approach to developing budget priorities?

2. How familiar are you with ----- state school finances? Describe any experience you have had with taxing issues, school overcrowding, school closings and appropriate budgeting.
3. How would you conduct an assessment of the district's academic and extra-curricular programs to determine if the needs of all student groups are being addressed?
4. If you discover that some schools have more resources than others, what information would you review and what ideas do you have for making sure that all schools are capable of meeting the needs of all students?
5. Share your experience and expertise in seeking grants, funding, operating and managing a budget and demonstrating fiscal accountability.
6. Please describe your understanding of (state) school finance, your experiences and successes in seeking and securing additional resources, and your skills and abilities in the area of school district budgeting.
7. Our district may be completing renovation projects in some of our schools. With declining enrollment children may need to be redistricted. Have you ever been directly involved in redistricting/changing boundaries in a school district? Please share with us how you might proceed with this process and who would you engage in the decision-making process and how?
8. How large of a budget have you managed? Describe the budget-making processes you have used and prefer; and how you decide where to make reductions and redirect funds for other determined priorities.

Political

1. Describe your effectiveness in working in the political arena.
2. Describe your effectiveness in working in the political arena towards goals that are student-focused.
3. How do you represent the district and community in the political arena?
4. What activities have you engaged in with local or national political leaders?
5. What experiences have you had working with legislators, other superintendents, and other community leaders?
6. As with any district, politics play a role in day-to-day operations. What skills do you bring to manage politics in the district, the city, the BOE and local politicians?
7. How would you prepare the Board to make a decision on a politically sensitive or controversial issue?
8. Our city (schools) has an engaging history and as such, the superintendent of must be politically savvy and be sensitive to multiple political agendas. Please share with us the skills and abilities you possess that would make you the best candidate to fill the requirements of

Collaborative Manager

1. A superintendent is constantly juggling multiple responsibilities at the same time. How do you manage and ensure staying organized, effective, and timely?
2. How would you describe your management philosophy? What are your managerial strengths and limitations and how do you hold others accountable?

3. What specific capabilities and skill sets would you bring to this position?
4. How do you identify and support good staff that will enable the creation of a strong supportive team across all schools?
5. Tell us what you have learned about our schools and our community that stood out when researching us. What highlights and challenges garnered your attention? How are those challenges similar or different from your past experiences?
6. What successful activities and outreach approaches have you utilized to create a climate of collaboration with families from a variety of cultures and diverse backgrounds?
7. Please describe your understanding of South Carolina school finance, your experiences and successes in seeking and securing additional resources, and your skills and abilities in the area of school district budgeting.
8. How large of a budget have you managed? Describe the budget-making processes you have used and prefer; and how you decide where to make reductions and redirect funds for other determined priorities.
9. Charleston has an engaging history and as such, the superintendent of must be politically savvy and be sensitive to multiple political agendas. Please share with us the skills and abilities you possess that would make you the best candidate to fill the requirements of working with the legislature, executive offices, county government, and other agencies or groups.
10. What experiences have you had working with legislators, other superintendents, and other community leaders?
11. How would you assist the Board in policy development versus micro-management?

Effective Communicator

1. Describe your oral and written communication strategies for both internal and external stakeholders.
2. How would you introduce yourself to _____ and the community at large? Describe the communication plan you would implement.
3. What strategies have you utilized to demonstrate that you are a good listener, approachable, accountable and inclusive of all segments of the community?
4. How would you engage students and staff in decision making?
5. What technology platforms are you familiar with and utilize?
6. Which social media platforms are you familiar with and share how you use them as a component of your communication strategies.
7. Share one or two successful communication strategies you have employed in working with staff, parents, community organizations and students.
8. What is your greatest strength as a communicator?
9. Describe how you keep the Board fully informed between meetings? How do you go about developing a positive relationship with the BOE?
10. Share with us your experiences and interactions with community partners.
11. Provide information about one community partner which was especially successful.

12. Provide several specific examples of ways you have successfully communicated with students, teachers/staff, parents, community/business members.
13. If we were to speak to some members of the school district, such as teachers, how would they describe your communication acumen and style?
14. What successful activities and outreach approaches have you utilized to create a climate of collaboration with families from a variety of cultures and diverse backgrounds?
15. Share with us your experiences and interactions with community partners.
16. Provide information about one community partner which was especially successful.
17. Do you serve on any community board or committee? If so, please describe your role.
18. Tell us what you have learned about our schools and our community that stood out when researching us. What highlights and challenges garnered your attention? How are those challenges similar or different from your past experiences?
19. How important do you believe it is for the Superintendent to be visible throughout the schools and the community? Describe how you are currently engaged in your current district
20. Provide several specific examples of ways you have successfully communicated with students, teachers/staff, parents, community/business members.
21. If we were to speak to some members of the school district, such as teachers, how would they describe your communication acumen and style?
22. Which social media platforms are you familiar and share how you would use them as a component of your communication strategies? Share one or two successful communication strategies you have employed in working with staff, parents, community organizations, and students.

Personal Qualities

1. Share with us your philosophy about students, their education and their well-being.
2. List 5 words or phrases which describe the personal qualities you bring to your work.
3. How would you describe yourself? What is your approach to handling interpersonal conflict?
4. What examples do you have that demonstrate strong values of integrity, honesty, and commitment?
5. Do you view yourself as a courageous leader? Why?
6. What would you do to demonstrate your ability to listen and appreciate differing points of view?
7. What are your long-term professional goals and how would you demonstrate your commitment to the Charleston County community?
8. Do you view yourself as a courageous leader? Why?
9. What would you do to demonstrate your ability to listen and appreciate differing points of view?
10. How do you handle conflict?
11. How might you go about unifying the culture of an organization so that all stakeholders (Board, administration, teachers/staff, parents, community) are pulling in the same direction and are truly focused on advancing student learning, achievement, and success?
12. Describe to us a major problem or conflict that occurred in your school district and how you solved or resolved the problem or conflict.

13. If we were to call and speak to a variety of board members, administrators, teachers/staff, students, and community members in your current and past districts, how would the majority of people describe your most commonly utilized decision -making philosophy and methods?
14. What specific capabilities and skill sets would you bring to this position and would make you a good fit?
15. What are your long-term professional goals and how would you demonstrate your commitment to the Charleston community?

Relationships – Board/Staff/Community

1. What would you do to develop positive relationships with school board members?
2. How important do you believe it is for the superintendent to be visible throughout the community? How would you go about being visible?
3. How important do you believe it is for the Superintendent to be visible throughout the schools and the community? Describe how you are currently engaged in your current district.
4. How would you decide what activities/organizations are worth the time and effort of active participation?
5. What steps would you take to energize the district and community to address issues it will face in the coming school year?
6. How do you identify and support good staff?
7. Share strategic planning and decision-making strategies that you would design and employ to unite the district and be inclusive of all constituent groups?
8. How have you worked with community partners and multiple constituent groups with different points of view to encourage optimal outcomes for students? Provide 1 or 2 examples.
9. Do you serve on any community board or committee? If so, please describe your role.
10. How would you assist the Board in policy development versus micro-management?

Miscellaneous

1. Do you have questions for us?
2. Are you involved in any other searches at this time?
3. Your current district size: Racial composition: F/R lunch:
4. What is the largest size district you have worked in at an upper level or in an administrative position?
5. What subject did you teach?
6. What are the terms of your current contract? (release date)
7. If chosen, would you accept a multi-year contract with student and organizational performance criteria included or a single year contract?
8. How would you propose to have your performance evaluated? By whom? On what criteria? How often?
9. If selected, when could you report?
10. What benefits are you most interested in requesting?
11. If offered, would you accept this position? Will your family relocate to the district?
12. Are you considering any other offers or are you being interviewed for any other positions?
13. Anything in particular you want to stress to the Board about you?

14. Would you approve the district conducting a formal deep background check? Anything we need to know?
15. Would you agree to a complete physical examination if requested and paid for by the Board?

Attachment 4

**Scoring/Rating Rubric Option 1
(Matrix Score is placed in margin next to question)**

- 1- (Not Satisfactory) - Has no experience. Cannot articulate essential skills in responses. Appears unsure of knowledge in this area or responses and shares no solid examples, data, evidence, research, etc.; has no grasp of process or his/her need to ensure follow through on promises/directives. Does not have essential skills to perform job adequately. Responses are inconsistent with desired qualities.
- 2- (Good) - Has some experience and essential skills. Can provide good articulation of topic. Communicates vague understanding and some knowledge of topic and some evidence to support responses. Does provide limited examples, data, evidence, research, etc.; does indicate some ways to ensure follow through on promises/directives. Has some solid skills to perform job functions. Most responses are consistent with desired qualities.
- 3- (Outstanding) - Has extensive experience. Can articulate strong responses. Communicates with depth and ease his/her detailed responses clearly delineating a leadership and possesses strong understanding of topic with thorough examples, data, evidence, research, etc.; understands fully how to ensure consistency in practice throughout the organization and how to make this transparent to community. Has elaborated on superior skills to perform job functions. Responses indicate an excellent match to desired qualities.

Sample Interview Form

(Adapt to Questions Chosen for Round 1 and Round 2)

(Place Score 1, 2, or 3 Next to Profile Attribute)

This rubric would be developed and completed based on the selected questions.

Name of Candidate _____ Date _____

- Example - (A.)* Has had successful direct experience in closing achievement gaps.**

1. Highlight briefly a little bit about your professional, educational, and leadership background and experiences including the enrollment of the schools/districts and the demographics of students and families with whom you have worked in your career and most recently and evidence that strategies you may have utilized were successful in closing an educational gap.

Rating

Notes:

- Example - (C.)* possesses strong instructional expertise for teaching and learning, along with a deep understanding an educator that is knowledgeable about curriculum/instruction and professional development based on their expertise, passion and understanding of the entire PK – 12 xntinium.**

1. Charleston has an engaging history and as such, the superintendent of must be politically savvy and be sensitive to multiple political agendas. Please share with us the skills and abilities you possess that would make you the best candidate to fill the requirements of working with the legislature, executive offices, county government, and other agencies or groups.

Rating

Notes:

Articles for Superintendent Search Processes

(Excerpts from the Washington State School Directors Association Handbook 2011)

Washington State School Directors' Association 221 College Street NE Olympia, WA 98516-5313
Telephone: (360) 493-9231 Fax: (360) 493-9247 E-mail: mail@wssda.org Internet: www.wssda.org

Provided by the Washington State School Directors' Association, Michael R. Boring, and Ed. D.

Confidentiality

“It is normal for the application materials submitted to a school district for a superintendent position to be accepted and handled in confidence. This would be the expectation of applicants; if for any reason the district chooses not to follow that pattern, it would be absolutely critical to make that known to potential applicants before they make application. The Association strongly recommends that these materials be treated confidentially. The application materials should be handled only by staff who are charged with and able to observe confidentiality.... If possible, the applications should be received by one person with secure filing space available. Any communications regarding the applicants should be handled carefully so as not to risk a breach of confidentiality. At the conclusion of the search process, the original application materials should be kept on file by the school district. ...The application of the person selected as superintendent should be transferred to his or her official personnel file. The confidential materials which accompanied that application, such as a college placement file, should be destroyed.”

Initial Interviews

“Prior to the initial interviews, the consultant should assist the board in developing questions and other activities that board members might wish to include (such as a written exercise). A typical interview time would be an hour and it is usual for there to be 10 to 15 questions for applicants. There should be time at the end preserved for applicants to summarize and/or ask something of the board. The time set for the interviews should be adhered to. It is helpful to the process for questions to be assigned to board members so that there is consistency in the way they are asked... Following the interviews of semi-finalists, the board must deliberate as to which applicants should be invited back for final interviews and other activities. The board now has the application materials to refer to as well as the performance of the applicants in the interview activities. As with the earlier deliberations in the initial screening, the major criteria identified for the position should provide the fundamental framework for a decision. The notes and reactions of board members to the applicant's performance in the interview provides another dimension and the degree to which the applicant seems too 'fit' the board's expectations can be more fully explored. The consultant may be able to assist the board at this point in the process as in the earlier stages by helping provide decision making techniques or tools. It is prudent to identify one or two alternates to the list of selected finalists in case one or two of those invited to come to the district as a finalist decline.”

Planning Finalist Interviews and Activities

“When the board has arrived at a decision, the consultant and the board should determine a schedule for finalist interviews and activities. The time gap between semi-finalist interviews and the finalist interviews and activities should be as short as possible. It is conceivable, of course that the schedule as projected at the beginning of the search might have to be slightly different to accommodate that of board members and the actual finalists. There should be contact with the finalists to invite them to the district for the finalist activities. The board should consider the following points and have agreement on the ones that apply to this stage of the search prior to contacting the candidates. This information can be conveyed to the candidate by phone and by other means as well:

- Dates available for the finalist activities;
- Time and place for arrival;
- General agenda anticipated for the day;
- Request to bring spouse/family/ or whether this is not expected; if family members will be invited, a description of what will be done by way of activities for them (e.g., dinner with the board);
- The district’s willingness to pay expenses, how much;
- The materials to be made available to the candidate in advance; e.g., budget, collective bargaining agreements, publications, etc.;
- The board’s intended timeline for arriving at a final decision; or
- A contact person or method for communication prior to the finalist day. The experience for finalists in the school district has evolved into a kind of “marathon” of activities. It is typical for the day to begin by 8:00 a.m. and conclude sometime after 9:00 p.m. in the evening. The superintendent candidates may be involved in meetings with individuals, groups, the board, interview settings, lunch and dinner meetings, etc. While the frenetic pace imposes a burden upon the school district, board members and the candidates themselves, there is merit in this combination of efforts. One of the values of this variety of activity is that people can observe the candidates in several different contexts; this is frequently helpful in gauging how an individual might function in the hectic pace of the superintendent role. This also gives the board members an additional opportunity to assess how they would feel in working with the candidate. There is normally a formal interview with the board during this day which gives time to follow up on questions generated from the initial interview. The candidate also can learn a great deal during this day since there is exposure to a cross section of staff members, citizens, students, board members, the media, etc. “

Community Feedback

“The board gains major insights during this day from the perceptions of individuals and groups who meet the candidate. It is wise to design some method of feedback to the board which is uniform and easily analyzed so that board members can quickly profit from the perceptions of others regarding the candidates. A simple written feedback form can be utilized in each setting and collected for the board’s perusal. It will be tempting for people to want to indicate their ‘top choice.’ It is advisable to structure

the feedback form and to counsel them to report relative strengths. It is unrealistic to expect that people will not have favorites, but in general it is best to try to avoid the popularity contest syndrome so the board's decision is as unfettered by interest group expectations as possible. The flavor of people's perceptions, however, should be of great interest to the board. It may be a helpful factor in an otherwise very close deliberation. The size of the school district, the timing of the search, the availability of staff and other factors

The size of the school district, the timing of the search, the availability of staff and other factors certainly play a part in determining how to structure a day for finalists in the district. It would be impractical to try to carry out a tour W 26 WSSDA Superintendent Search Handbook of schools in a large district for example. In such a case, a virtual or sample tour might substitute. The same is true of the community. The school district should also expect that finalists would gain familiarity with the district and community on an independent basis, given the importance of the job for them personally.

The Association suggests the schedule below as a sample to consider when making plans in a local school district: Morning The finalist reports to the school district office and is welcomed by at least one board member, the incumbent superintendent if possible and appropriate and/or other administrators. The agenda for the day is reviewed and some time is allowed to discuss what will occur. It is assumed that the finalist would have been given some prior notice of what to expect. Frequently some tour is provided to help the candidate become oriented. Since the school district office is the working home for the superintendent, it is wise to provide an introduction to the staff and the facility itself. A tour of schools, maintenance, transportation and food service facilities is certainly helpful if practical in terms of the schedule. One of the guiding principles for organizing this day should be to provide representative contact with all elements of the staff — teachers, administrative and supervisory staff, office staff, custodians, maintenance employees, food service employees, transportation employees, etc. In most cases, this will involve meeting with representatives of these employee groups, but it is important to send a message to both the candidate and staff that the district recognizes and values all of those who contribute to helping students learn.

A meeting with the central administrators/supervisors is normally very helpful. These staff members are crucial to the school district's success and their perceptions of the candidate are very important. And, the candidate would find this opportunity of great interest since these people form the closest part of the superintendent's partnership with the staff. It is also wise to provide a meeting with principals since it is unlikely that touring buildings will provide a meaningful chance to form accurate impressions. The principals are another critical element in the work of the superintendent; their impressions are important to the district and board and the candidate will welcome the chance for a meeting as well. It is common to combine lunch with some other objective for the day — perhaps a meeting with the incumbent superintendent, business leaders, community officials, etc.

Afternoon and Evening if there is time in the schedule and it is considered of enough importance, the candidate can be given time to peruse a variety of documents that can contribute to a more complete understanding of the district. Board minutes, policies, organization charts, job descriptions, collective bargaining history, fiscal information, etc. all may be of interest. If the schedule is too full to allow this kind of activity, it may be possible to provide summary information or direct the candidate to electronic files that could be examined. One of the major decisions the board must make is whether some representative group will be offered the opportunity to 'interview' the finalists. This is frequently

requested by people in the community and is a delicate issue to decide upon. The positive aspects of providing this opportunity include reinforcing to the community that the board welcomes involvement. The positive aspects of providing this opportunity include reinforcing to the community that the board welcomes involvement. Another positive element is that the feedback from the interview can be truly helpful to the board's deliberations. A potential question is that the board is the legal entity charged with the selection/employment of the superintendent. There should be no abrogation of that authority either real or perceived. If the board chooses to provide this additional interview setting, there should be orientation for the participants, a clear statement of their role of providing feedback and not a decision, and a simple, uniform way to gain the feedback of the group regarding the finalists. It is also helpful to provide a chance for representatives of the various unions to meet with the finalists. This can be done in a group setting in order to expedite the schedule for the day. A meeting with community/business leaders, public officials might be considered... Parent leaders from the PTA, PTO, Booster Club, Foundation, etc. might also form a group with interest in being involved.

There should be a structured interview with the board as well that provides for asking different questions from the initial interviews if they were conducted, for follow up questions and for more questions from the candidate. The style of boards and consultants vary significantly at this stage. If there is not another scheduled point for a general discussion of the range of salary, benefits and length of contract, it would be appropriate to include it here.

It is common for the board to have dinner with the candidate and spouse. This provides a more relaxed setting than other meetings and the opportunity for the various people to get a chance to know each other informally. The final activity for the day is frequently some kind of 'community forum' at which the candidate is introduced to a group of citizens. Usually this has been a well-publicized meeting with an open invitation to attend. Some districts have found it helpful to provide special encouragement to attend to key people to ensure a reasonable turnout. It is appreciated by those attending if there is some mechanism for providing feedback to the board about their impressions. This can be done through a written form, turned in at the end of the meeting or by various other devices including use of technology in various forms. The arrangements that make sense are associated with the size of the school system, timing, facilities and other factors. Finally, some boards choose to set aside one day for each finalist, others have several finalists cycling through each phase of the day's activities at different points, so that the work can be accomplished more quickly. There is no right or wrong answer, the choice depends on the circumstances in that specific district."

Gathering and Evaluating Information about Finalists

"The activity of gathering information about the finalists occurs throughout the search process. The application materials themselves provide a foundation upon which to build, telephone and personal contacts with references or other informed individuals make a contribution, independent contacts between the consultant and the applicants may yield information, the interview process and finalist activities will produce further data, visitations to the district/community of the finalists also provide help. Some of these resources should be sought in a structured fashion to assist in reliability. A few points are listed below:

- The assessment of the application materials should, as mentioned earlier in this document, be carried out with an analytical and systematic approach that produces a comprehensive summary for the board that treats each candidate fairly.
- Telephone contacts should be undertaken in a careful, uniform way with notes or a report of the results for the consultant and board to utilize.
- Interviews should be planned so that questions are selected with care, there is a set pattern for questioning, there is provision for taking notes and that spontaneous or follow-up questions are presented appropriately.
- There are a number of legal constraints that bear upon interviews of job applicants. Board members should be provided with orientation to interviewing protocols. If the board has provided opportunity for other groups to conduct a structured ‘interview’ of candidates, then orientation to these interviewing guidelines should be provided for individuals involved in that process as well.
- Visitations by board members to the home districts or communities of finalists are important to help with a final selection. The candidate should assist with the general organization of the visit, but there should be opportunity to reach out to people not suggested by the candidate as well. Community officials, business persons, staff members, students, all may be possible ad hoc references during the visitation. As with other parts of the search, the information should be gathered in a simple, uniform way to share with other board members. Typically, the visitations are carried out by individual board members or two board members working as a team. There are a number of legal constraints that bear upon interviews of job applicants.”

Deliberations

“The process of deliberating upon the finalists is very important, but also somewhat cumbersome... The board should schedule a meeting with an announced executive session to deliberate about the qualifications of the finalists. This is frequently a session with an unpredictable time length; it should be estimated and then corrected during the process as required by law. The board may use many ways of evaluating the qualifications of the finalists and may be assisted by the consultant in the work. The board is expected to deliberate fully as to the finalists and to come to a point of readiness to make a final decision in open session to offer the position. The board should refrain from coming to that selection until back in regular open session. Thus, it is advisable to avoid polling the board or asking for a ‘straw vote’ prior to going back into regular session. It is, of course, advisable to ask for the readiness of each individual to come to a vote on the final selection. In most cases, if board members have already indicated readiness to make a decision, it is likely that there will emerge a natural consensus once the board is in regular session. Should there be hesitancy, the board should be careful to limit the discussion to non-confidential information and avoid polarization of the board if possible. If the board is ready to vote then the chair/president should proceed. If not, it would be possible to go back into executive session following appropriate legal notice to try to satisfy any need for further discussion of finalists. A candidate will feel best if the decision to offer the position is unanimous.

Interviewing Tips

The following tips may be helpful to board members in the interview process.

- Think about what you most need to know and what the answers to each question will reveal. Do not spend time probing for answers that are not important.
- Usually, the best questions are open-ended, requiring a thoughtful and detailed response. It is helpful to avoid framing the questions in a way that signals the preferred answers, values, etc.
- Allow candidates the opportunity to raise questions based on board questions. This creates a conversational atmosphere which is much less sterile than a “question/answer” format. Candidates should be given leeway to raise questions that are important to them.
- Allow each board member enough time to ask a follow up question if a response seems unclear or incomplete.
- Although the planned questions are important, the art of listening has an important role as well. Attentive listening will help candidates feel their thoughts have been truly communicated.
- Interview questions tend to prompt a response from the “I” perspective. Try to see if the candidate truly involves others in his or her style of work.
- Ask candidates to elaborate on answers and demonstrate their experiences. (What did that involve? How many people assisted you? What responsibilities did you carry out on a weekly/monthly basis?)
- Decide who will ask each question and use the same format throughout. Let the candidates know how many questions there are and the time allotted for the interview. Be sure to ask all of the identified questions of each candidate unless a candidate fails to use the interview time wisely.
- Questions should be straight forward and asked the same way of each candidate. Those giving the questions should do so in a neutral way and respond without obvious judgment about the responses.
- Allow some silence to ensue following a candidate’s initial response to help stimulate further thought and information.”

Things to Watch for During Interviews

“The overall perspective for judging the responses of candidates should be directly related to the major criteria for the position as decided upon by the board at the inception of the search. These should be applied as equally to the candidates as possible. There are some factors to be aware of in the interview that are of some special help:

1. Does the candidate answer the questions or reword the questions and answer something else?
2. Does the candidate talk a question to death? Does the candidate give too many examples or draw so many variables into the situation that no real answer was given?
3. Does the candidate display a sense of humor and humility? Does the candidate seem to be knowledgeable without appearing to be a ‘know it all’?

4. Does the candidate deal realistically with questions? Does the candidate know enough about your school district and community's power groups to answer from an informed perspective?
5. Does the candidate seem more liberal or conservative than what might be typical for the community?
6. Does the candidate listen and watch for board cues before answering?
7. How does the candidate sell, or not sell, himself or herself to you?
8. Does the candidate really answer the questions well or is personality the most persuasive characteristic of the candidate's performance?
9. When provided an opportunity to ask questions, are the candidate's questions reasonable and helpful or superficial?
10. Do the candidate's questions and answers reflect a serious amount of preparation and study of the position, district and community?
11. Do board members feel that the interview has accurately portrayed this candidate's answers, personality and administrative leadership? Does the candidate fit the board's perception of the kind of leader who is needed?
12. If the candidate has not yet been a superintendent, do responses seem practical to the actual district setting and not too theoretical?
13. Do the candidate's responses reveal an interest in students and if so, how? Is there a sense of honest, strong commitment to public education?"

Questions You May Be Asked by the Applicants at the End of an Interview

“It is customary to invite the candidate to ask questions of the board. It is usually helpful if all board members feel free to respond or participate in the answers. In many respects, the candidate is also interviewing the board. The questions below are illustrative of those that may occur:

1. Are there any issues below the surface that I should know about?
2. Are there serious personnel problems? Staff members on probation? If so, what is the status?
3. What does the board do in terms of professional development for board members and as a unit?
4. What is the pattern for board voting on significant issues? (5-0, 4-1, 3-2) Is this a consistent pattern with the same alignment?
5. How involved is the community in support of school and district activities?
6. What is the tenure of the current board members and are there plans to run again?
7. How many and what kind of grievances have occurred in the past three years?

8. If I were selected as superintendent, how would you help me become familiar with and involved in the district and the community?
9. Using the standard grading system of A, B, C, D, F, how would you rate each school and the district as a whole?
10. Using the same grading system, how would you rate the effectiveness of this board?
11. How would you grade the district office?
12. What are the top two or three priorities for the board members?
13. Why are you on the board?
14. What do you like most about being a board member? What do you like least?
15. Please describe the ideal superintendent for this school district?
16. Please define board micro-management and to what degree it is evident in the school district?
17. When do an individual board members activities become intrusive in the school district?"

Tips on Telephone Reference Checks

“Frequently the board members as well as the consultant are involved in performing telephone reference checks. Normally, this occurs only in the final stages of the search when finalists have been identified. While the calls may be made to a variety of people, experience has demonstrated that board members and others in a finalist’s district may feel particularly responsible for candor when talking to a board member from the searching district. Some tips may help:

1. Have questions written out. They should be pertinent, job related.
2. Call former employers as well as current employers.
3. Try to make the calls at a time and place that will be free of interruptions.
4. Be sure to clarify that you are talking to the appropriate person.
5. Try to establish a friendly atmosphere in beginning the conversation.
6. Ask open ended questions.
7. Ask for more than one example of the candidate’s job performance across several dimensions of administration.
8. Be ready to probe for more information if a response seems incomplete or unclear.
9. Be alert to responses that seem deliberately vague; try to follow up with that person or someone else regarding the topic.
10. Ask if the person would hire or recommend the candidate again and why or why not.
11. Ask about areas of weakness or areas in which growth is needed.

12. Ask about relationships with other people and groups (secretaries, teachers, administrators, custodians, etc.)
13. Ask for examples of the candidate's common sense, wisdom, leadership.
14. BE WELL PREPARED TO TAKE NOTES AS YOU TALK.

Considerations Regarding Board-Superintendent Relations

“The philosophical views of the board regarding the nature of board-superintendent relations are critical to the superintendent search process, the type of person who will best fit the school district and the performance of the superintendent following selection. While much of the relationship will be dynamic and developed over time, there are principles that should be considered along the way. Effective public education requires strong school boards and strong superintendents who are willing to assume leadership roles. In a very real sense, the success of students is directly related to the positive nature of the board-superintendent partnership. The board and superintendent are a team; its strength is dependent upon informed, intelligent and balanced cooperation. It is important for the board and superintendent to have a clear understanding of their respective roles, to agree on them and to carry them out.

Strategies for Reaching Consensus

Consensus Building

By Heidi Burgess, Brad Spangler - September 2003

What is Consensus Building?

Consensus building (also known as collaborative problem solving or collaboration) is a conflict-resolution process used mainly to settle complex, multiparty disputes. Since the 1980s, it has become widely used in the environmental and public policy arena in the United States, but is useful whenever multiple parties are involved in a complex dispute or conflict. The process allows various stakeholders (parties with an interest in the problem or issue) to work together to develop a mutually acceptable solution.

Like a town meeting, consensus building is based on the principles of local participation and ownership of decisions. Ideally, the consensus reached will meet all of the relevant interests of stakeholders, who thereby come to a unanimous agreement. While everyone may not get everything they initially wanted, "consensus has been reached when everyone agrees they can live with whatever is proposed after every effort has been made to meet the interests of all stake holding parties." [1]

Defining Success

It is critical that the definition of success is made clear from the beginning of any consensus-building process. Most consensus-building efforts set out to achieve unanimity. However, sometimes there are "holdouts" who believe their interests will be better served by resisting the proposed agreement. In such cases, it is acceptable for a consensus-building effort to settle for overwhelming agreement that gets as close as possible to meeting the interests of every stakeholder. If some people are not in agreement and might be excluded from the final solution, participants have a duty to make sure that every effort has been made to meet the interests of the holdouts. (This is to their advantage as well, as holdouts may become "spoilers," -- people who try to "spoil" or block implementation of any agreement that is reached.)

Why is Consensus Building Important?

Consensus building is important in today's interconnected society because many problems exist that affect diverse groups of people with different interests. As problems mount, the organizations that deal with society's problems come to rely on each other for help -- they are interdependent. The parties affected by decisions are often interdependent as well. Therefore, it is extremely difficult and often ineffective for organizations to try to solve controversial problems on their own. Consensus building offers a way for individual citizens and organizations to collaborate on solving complex problems in ways that are acceptable to all.

Possible Decision-Making Strategies

Rank Order Elimination

Participants rank order their choices from top to bottom with the most favored listed at the top. Comparisons are made to see how many individuals have similar rank ordered their choices. Those with the lowest ranking are reviewed and eliminated from the pool. Those that remain can be rank ordered again.

Pairwise Comparison

Each voter gives a complete ranking of the candidates. For each pair of candidates, the number of voters preferring each are compared. The candidate receiving more votes (just like in Plurality) receives one point.

Fist-to-Five Consensus-Building

Whenever a group is discussing a possible solution or coming to a decision on any matter, Fist- To-Five is a good tool to determine what each person's opinion is at any given time.



COMBINING YOUR TEAM'S IDEAS: BUILDING CONSENSUS USING FIST-TO-FIVE



To use this technique the Team Leader restates a decision the group may make and asks everyone to show their level of support. Each person responds by showing a fist or a number of fingers that corresponds to their opinion.

Fist

A no vote - a way to block consensus. I need to talk more on the proposal and require changes for it to pass.

1 Finger

I still need to discuss certain issues and suggest changes that should be made.

2 Fingers

I am more comfortable with the proposal but would like to discuss some minor issues.

3 Fingers

I'm not in total agreement but feel comfortable to let this decision or a proposal pass without further discussion.

4 Fingers

I think it's a good idea/decision and will work for it.

5 Fingers

It's a great idea and I will be one of the leaders in implementing it.

If anyone holds up fewer than three fingers, they should be given the opportunity to state their objections and the team should address their concerns. Teams continue the Fist-to-Five process until they achieve consensus (a minimum of three fingers or higher) or determine they must move on to the next issue.)

Suggested Citation

Fletcher, A. (2002). *FireStarter Youth Power Curriculum: Participant Guidebook*. Olympia, WA: Freechild Project

The Scoring System

This is a way to reduce your decision down to a game of numbers. Assign positive or negative points to each quality associated with each of your decisions, and keep a total score running for each one.

Another Option for Reaching Consensus Not listed in the Article Above

Thumbs

This strategy is simple and easy to use with larger groups, is easy to visual and assess, and can quickly lead to consensus. It also lends itself to expanding understanding of others' views and perspectives, as well as highlighting facts that may have been overlooked or missed by other participants.

A thumb pointed up signifies one's full agreement and support.

A thumb positioned side-ways indicates that one is in the neutral zone and requires more discussion and clarification to more clearly expand understanding in order to move to a thumb up or down.

A thumb pointed down indicates that a person is not supportive at this time and requires far more clarification, answers, and understanding.

The overall goal is to move everyone to a thumbs up position or minimally a thumbs side-ways position. This would indicate a decision being made that is based on discussed viewpoints, perspectives, and clarification of facts gleaned, so that everyone can support a decision despite some members having other preferences.

Formative Consensus Building Rating System

- Thumb up represents complete understanding and support.
- Thumb to the side indicates some understanding, support and agreement, however a little more discussion is warranted.
- Thumb down represents the need for more discussion and answers to specific questions in order to agree and support.

