

A graphic of interlocking puzzle pieces in shades of blue, white, and grey, arranged in a pattern that fills the right side and top of the page.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP THAT FITS

*A Guide to Securing the Optimal
School Leadership Position*



**SCHOOL
LEADER
COLLABORATIVE**



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Fit. It is important. Why? Because over the years, it's become apparent that fit is critical for school leaders to realize a long, successful tenure in a leadership position. More important, research reinforces the correlation between the length of a school leader's tenure and impact on student and adult performance.¹ So, once you are hired for a school leadership position, your students, teachers, and community need you there for an extended time.

With the importance of school leaders' tenure in mind, the goals of *School Leadership That Fits* are two-fold. First is to help you determine whether the timing to enter school leadership is right for you. If you determine it is, we then hope to help you secure the school leadership position that is the best fit for your values, personality, skills, expertise, experience, and vision for helping kids. The pages that follow are filled with reflective questions, practical tips, and resources to guide and assist you with this process. Recognize you must be committed and willing to put in the work needed to be successful. However, the payoff is worth it. School leadership, if the right fit for you, offers you an opportunity for impact like few other professions.

One final reminder before digging in. Do not hesitate to contact the SAI office if we can assist you on your journey to find *School Leadership That Fits*. You can reach out anytime at 515-267-1115 or contact us at sai-iowa.org. We wish you the best!

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School Leadership Matters

Why should you even consider taking on the demanding job of school leadership? Put simply—**school leadership matters!** School leadership, particularly principal leadership, is critical to the success of our nation's schools, teachers, and students. Very few professions offer the vast opportunities to influence the lives of so many and leave a forever impact on those served. According to The Wallace Foundation in its 2009 report, *Assessing the Effectiveness of School Leaders: New Directions and New Processes*, Wallace recognized:

Effective leadership is vital to the success of a school. Research and practice confirm that there is a slim chance of creating and sustaining high-quality learning environments without a skilled and committed leader to help shape teaching and learning.²

Several studies back up Wallace's claim, noting school leadership is second to classroom instruction as a primary driver for student performance, both positive and negative.³ In particular, the body of research indicates principals have the greatest impact on student achievement in schools with the greatest needs (i.e., high poverty rates, low student attendance, low graduation rates, and high teacher turnover).⁴ Furthermore, principal leadership is the most important factor for attracting and retaining quality teachers.⁵ Research indicates that the main reason teachers choose whether to stay in a particular school is the quality of support they receive from their principal.⁶ Overall, schools require principals who are capable of collaboratively crafting a vision for student success, cultivating a student-centered culture, building others' leadership capacity, improving instruc-

tion, and leading school improvement efforts.⁷ So if you are looking to make a significant impact on others across a learning organization, school leadership is a profession you should consider.

Do You Possess a School Leader's Mindset?

As you work through the process of determining whether school leadership is right for you, a critical step is to ensure you possess a school leader mindset. Transitioning from the classroom, counselor's office, or other position requires that you make a significant mindset shift. This is not to say that as a teacher or counselor you are not a leader in your own right. You absolutely are. However, you must have the mindset that prepares you for the visibility, scrutiny, and emotional strain of leading a school. Below is a non-exhaustive list of rhetorical questions for you to reflect on as you strive to put yourself in the right mindset for the awesome responsibility of being a school leader.

- Am I prepared to hold myself to the highest ethical standard, choosing to do what is right even when it is difficult or inconvenient?
- Am I prepared to be accountable for my behavior as well as for the behavior of the teachers and students in my school?
- Am I willing to apologize and seek forgiveness for mistakes or wrongdoing even when I am not directly at fault?
- Am I willing to love each student, staff and community member unconditionally, which includes extending grace and forgiveness to those individuals when needed?

- Am I willing to provide equitable opportunities for each student?
- Am I willing to model humble, servant leadership even when it is uncomfortable and inconvenient?
- Am I prepared for the high visibility of the position of a school leader both in and outside of school?
- Am I prepared for the emotional toll of making decisions that are complex, difficult, and unpopular?
- Am I willing to be a learning leader who models continuous personal and professional growth?

Are You Ready to Make the Jump?

With your mind set on school leadership, the next step is to determine if you are ready to make the jump. So, it is time to do some more reflecting. However, the questions that follow are better considered with trusted confidants. Overall, these questions will help you reflect on your current professional status, motivation for a job change, and readiness for a new challenge. Further, the importance of including your immediate family in this discussion cannot be overstated. While you will be the one taking on a new position, the change will significantly impact those you care about both directly and indirectly, especially if you are required to uproot and move to a new community.

- Am I adequately prepared with the right skills, expertise, and experiences required of a school leader overall?
- What is positive/negative about my current situation?
- Why do I want to leave my current role?
- Can I afford to change positions?
- Is the timing right for my family and me?
- Are my family and I willing to move if required?
- What do I expect to gain personally and professionally by changing jobs?
- Are any of the school leadership positions currently available a realistic fit for my family and me?

“School leadership, particularly principal leadership, is critical to the success of our nation's schools, teachers, and students. Very few professions offer the vast opportunities to influence the lives of so many and leave a forever impact on those served.”

- How will changing jobs help me achieve my long-term personal and professional goals?

There are likely other questions that you and your family need to answer as you discern whether a move to school leadership is the right one. But these will get you started. Again, be thoughtful about this part of your school leadership journey. Effective school leaders are those who are reflective and have thought critically about these important decisions. Exceptional school leaders are those who not only think critically but do it in community with those close to them.

So, You're Going for It. Now, Do the Work.

Once you have decided to seek a school leadership position, it is time to focus on what you must do to make your goal a reality. To give yourself an advantage over others who desire the same position, you must be willing to **DO THE WORK**. In the sections that follow, you will find suggestions and resources that will challenge you to carefully consider every detail of the process from how you construct your resume to how you prepare for an interview. As you proceed, you may find the job search process is like having a job. If you reach this point, be confident that you are probably doing something right.

Before you write the first sentence of your cover letter, here are a few things you might consider doing right now that will not only make you a more attractive candidate but will also prepare you for that future position. Further, these activities will look good on your resume.

- Be an all-star in your current position. Whether you are a teacher, counselor or have another position, it is critical for you to do your current job well. For prospective employers to envision you as a school leader, they must see you as a person who has vision, identifies needs, develops strategies to solve problems, and measures your progress with data. You have no better opportunity to demonstrate your leadership abilities than in the position you hold right now.
- Volunteer for your school improvement team or lead school improvement efforts.

“Exceptional school leaders are those who not only think critically but do it in community with those close to them.”

- Start and/or run educational programs in your school (i.e., literacy nights, etc.).
- Join and take leadership positions in professional organizations and community groups.
- Form professional learning networks with educational leaders.
- Publish education-related articles and/or present at education conferences.
- Read education and business leadership books and periodicals.
- Listen to education and business leadership podcasts.

Your Credentials

Your credentials consist of several items, including your cover letter, resume, references and transcripts. Depending on the position you are applying for, you could be asked to submit your education philosophy, a list of accomplishments and other materials. Additionally, you may be wrestling with whether you should prepare a portfolio to have for interviews. This section will provide guidance on these items with most attention being given to your cover letter, resume, and references.

As you work to put your credentials together, be sure to keep a couple of things in mind. First, something you have likely been told ad nauseam regarding your cover letter, resume, and other credential materials—**PAY ATTENTION TO DETAIL**.

Spelling, grammar, consistency of fonts and formatting, and ensuring you have the right names and addresses listed are all important. You have likely heard it all before. However, you would be surprised by those who, even though they are asking to be entrusted with running a school full of hundreds or thousands of students, do not care enough to put their absolute best foot forward. Be mindful that the credentials you submit are, in most cases, the first introduction prospective employers have to you.

In addition to paying attention to detail, remember that your credentials, especially your cover letter and resume, allow you to share your leadership story. Obviously, these documents are critical to getting you an interview. Maybe more importantly, though, your credentials provide you an opportunity to express what you value and the “why” that drives your leadership. Whenever possible (and appropriate) during the job search process, be sure to transparently share what you value and why you have chosen the awesome responsibility of school leadership as a career. In return, the school/district you are applying to will hopefully do the same, which will help you determine if that position is a good fit.

Another quick piece of advice, do not forget to have your credentials reviewed by a trusted colleague or someone at SAI. Be sure to ask for feedback about things like content covered, readability, structure, spelling, grammar, etc. No doubt you will find this constructive criticism invaluable as you polish your cover letter, resume, and other paperwork.

COVER LETTER

The cover letter is an important part of the application. The cover letter is your first opportunity to communicate effectively and succinctly with your potential employer. Poorly written cover letters convey a lack of effective communication skills and will often result in the reader dismissing the candidate from consideration.

The cover letter contains five essential components: (1) the heading; (2) the salutation; (3) the body of the letter, (4) the closing, and (5) the signature. Each of the components is detailed on the pages that follow.

THE HEADING

Your cover letter heading should include the current date followed by the name, title, organization name, street address, city, state and zip code of the individual

to whom you are addressing the letter. If you do not know the name of the individual to whom you should address the letter, contact the organization and obtain the person's name (including correct spelling) and title.

THE SALUTATION

Following the heading, you should begin your letter with an appropriate salutation. The cover letter is a formal document, so you address your reader using Dear and his or her formal name and title (e.g., Dear Dr. Jones) followed by a colon.

THE BODY

The body of the letter can be further broken into three parts:

- (1) The introductory paragraph.
- (2) A description of your qualifications and how they will benefit the organization.
- (3) An appreciation for the reader's consideration and your follow-up contact information.

The introductory paragraph. The first paragraph should name the specific job you are applying for and include a strong statement about your interest in the opening as well as the fit between your qualifications and the position.

“Remember that your credentials, especially your cover letter and resume, give you an opportunity to share your leadership story.”

The qualification description paragraph(s).

The qualification section may include a single paragraph or several paragraphs. Strive to keep your cover letter to a single page. Be succinct to provide the reader with insight into your experience and how that experience fits the job description. Use language directly from the job posting to help you craft these statements. Creatively weave your experience and qualifications with the benefits you will bring to the school and, in particular, the students.

The appreciation. Thank the reader for reviewing your application packet and restate your belief in the match between your qualifications and the position. Provide the reader with your contact information, including your email address and phone number, and your eagerness to interview for the position.

THE CLOSING

Following the body, provide a complimentary closing. Appropriate closings include such phrases as “Sincerely,” “With gratitude,” “Respectfully,” “With appreciation,” “With sincere thanks,” “Thank you,” or other short phrases that are professional rather than casual.

THE SIGNATURE

After inserting the complimentary closing, leave four blank lines followed by your typed signature. Once you have finished the letter, print it and add your handwritten signature in ink before mailing or scanning the letter for inclusion in an application packet.

RESUME

The Resources section at the back of this document contains two different sample resumes to consider. If you choose to use one, be sure it represents you and what you want to convey about your skills and experiences appropriately. Overall, you want your resume to be reader-friendly, so it is easy for prospective employers to consume. The list below offers some tips to employ when crafting your resume, but let's dispel one myth right out of the gate. It is perfectly acceptable for your resume to be longer than one page. In fact, it is preferred. School leadership is a challenging and complex job. Further, it is a professional position. Trying to prove you possess the skills and experiences necessary for the role is not possible using one page. Two to four pages are the typical length. Here are some other thoughts to keep in mind.

- Be clear, concise, and accurate. DO NOT embellish your record.
- Use consistent fonts, formatting, and spacing.
- If you choose to include an Objective statement, keep it short and fo-

COVER LETTER TIPS

In addition to what was shared above, here are some other helpful tips to consider when constructing your cover letter.

- Proofread your letter carefully and have another person proof the letter to ensure you have not overlooked any errors. One helpful hint for effective proofreading is to read the letter from left to right (normal reading style) to catch any errors in grammar, usage and context. Read the letter a second time by focusing your eyes from right to left on each line. This forces your eyes to evaluate the words by themselves. Also read the letter out loud to identify errors you may have missed.
- Format the letter using one-inch margins and a font size no less than 10. Select a font that is easy on the reader's eyes. Avoid using script fonts. Popular fonts include Times New Roman, Arial, and Calibri. Your cover letter font should match the font used for your resume.
- Ensure that the names of any individuals (such as the recipient), the organization, and any other references to people or places are accurate.
- Do not simply restate your education and factual experience from your resume. Bring your resume to life for the reader by connecting your “story” with the needs of the organization.
- Ensure you provide an up-to-date email address and phone number so the reader can locate that information quickly. When listing your phone number, be sure to include the area code.

cused on how you plan to serve your prospective employer. Just stating that you hope to obtain a school leadership position is 1) obvious and 2) does nothing for your prospective employer. They want to know what you plan to do for them.

- Right or left justify dates throughout the document to improve readability. Prospective employers will check to see if you have any gaps in your service record. Aligning dates vertically through your resume makes this process easier. Further, this frames-up your resume giving it a better aesthetic. And, be prepared to explain reasons for gaps in service which might include raising kids, a family move, going back to school, etc.
- List experience in reverse chronological order.
- Use bullet points and action words (organized, planned, facilitated) when describing your work experience. A comprehensive list of action words is available in the Resources section.
- When describing your work experience, be sure to do more than just list your job description. Prospective employers are looking for school leaders who can identify needs, develop strategies to meet those needs, implement those strategies, and get results. It is a bonus if you can offer concrete data (student performance, attendance, etc.) to describe the outcomes of your efforts.
- Customize your resume to the position(s) for which you are applying, which means customize it for every position.
- Make sure to balance your resume between being full but not crowded. As was shared previously, your resume is going to need to be longer than one page. However, be sure that your content covers every page from top to bottom, so your resume looks complete. Of course, this does not mean every square inch needs to be filled with text. Adequate white space improves readability and the overall aesthetic of the document.

REFERENCES

No surprise here, an important section of your resume is your list of references. Three to five are common, and it does not hurt to have a few more available to share during an interview in case you are asked.

“When selecting references, it is critical for you to list current and past supervisors. These individuals are deemed most credible to speak objectively about your personality, abilities, and character related to the work you do.”

If you take part in enough interviews, you will likely get this question. So, better to be prepared.

When selecting references, you must list current and past supervisors. These individuals are deemed most credible to speak objectively about your personality, abilities, and character related to the work you do. Next on the list are college professors and community leaders. Obviously, peers, subordinates, friends, and family members are not viable references. However, anyone is fair game as an informal reference. Trust that individuals associated with wherever you apply will contact those in their personal networks to learn as much about you as they can. In fact, they will likely trust these sources of information more so than the references you provide.

Once you are ready to solicit references, it is important that supervisors, especially your current one, learn that you are looking for a new job from one person: You. Ideally, you should speak with your current supervisor about your desire to secure a new position at the beginning of the job search process. This allows you to work from a position of transparency while you apply and interview for a new job. You will not have to worry about what happens if a prospective employer chooses to reach out to your boss. Further, you may find that your current supervisor is able and willing to advocate on your behalf beyond writing a letter or waiting for a phone call.

As you work to identify and solicit references, you may be uncomfortable with telling your boss early in your search process. Or, you may not want to list this

person as a reference at all. If you feel this way, be sure to reflect on the pros and cons of not saying anything to your boss. For example, what happens if this person finds out you applied for a new job without saying anything, but then you do not get the job? Obviously, this could impact your future working relationship. If you decide that it is best not to share anything upfront, be prepared with a well-reasoned response for your current boss if that person finds out and approaches you. Additionally, you also need to have a satisfactory explanation for a prospective employer for why your boss is not listed.

TO PORTFOLIO OR NOT TO PORTFOLIO?

You may wonder whether you should have a portfolio for an interview. Unless you are specifically told to bring a physical portfolio with you, they tend to be more of a nuisance than a help. Typically, portfolios are bulky and one more thing you must manage when you are trying to shake hands, learn names, and focus on answering questions. Also, prospective employers do not have that much time to read them. Thus, consider creating a digital portfolio. Several user-friendly web-based programs exist that make it easy for you to create one prospective employers can access on their time. Here, you can go beyond your resume by including your education philosophy and creatively showcasing the work you have done. Be sure the site is concise, uncluttered, and easy to navigate. Ensuring it is mobile friendly so it can be conveniently accessed on a smartphone is a bonus.

Securing a School Leadership Position that Fits

Up to this point, we have discussed several key items including the mindset shift required when taking on the awesome responsibility of school leadership, questions that must be considered when deciding whether to pursue school leadership as a career and prepping your credentials for the job search process. Congratulations, if you have done the hard and meticulous work of thoughtfully considering whether school leadership is right for you, and if so, crafting a cover letter, resume and other materials you are proud to share with a prospective employer. Be sure to take a moment and celebrate. You deserve it. Moving forward are recommendations for finding and applying for school leadership

positions, interview strategies and the wait.

FINDING AND APPLYING FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Iowa education openings can be found at TeachIowa.gov. Additionally, it is good to leverage your professional network to see if they are aware of current or job openings. In cases where a member of your network is aware of an opening, this person may have a relationship with someone where the opening exists and might be able to speak on your behalf.

Once you have decided on which position(s) to consider applying for, your next step is to spend time researching the position, school, district, and community. Before detailing how to do this, here's why it's important. First, extensively studying a prospective position will help tailor your application materials to the job for which you are applying. For example, you may find through your research that a district you are interested in needs help developing its curriculum, and you just helped lead this process in your current school. Thus, you will want to highlight this work in your application materials. Second, and more importantly than customizing your credentials, doing your due diligence about a school leadership position and the surrounding school community will help you determine whether a job is the right fit for you and your family. Of course, the sooner you figure this out the better. So, here are several questions you may want to be answered as you decide where to apply.

- If the new position requires my family and me to move, does the new community possess the homes, schools, recreation, and cultural opportunities that suit us?
- Is the community supportive of its schools?
- What is the district's financial health?
- Is the district's enrollment growing, shrinking, or stable?
- What are the school's achievement levels?
- What are the community and district's expectations of its principals?
- Is my personality, expertise, experience, and educational leadership philosophy a good fit for the prospective position and surrounding community?

- What is the history of the job I am seeking? In other words, has there been stability or significant turnover? Why is the position open right now? (i.e., promotion, retirement, dismissal, etc.)
- What is the status of the school board's relationships with the superintendent, building leaders, teachers, and community?
- Can I work for the superintendent? Does that person possess a leadership style I am comfortable with?

Now that we have covered why doing this research is important, you may ask, "How do I go about getting answers to these questions?" You may not be able to answer them all. But there are several different avenues you can take to make an informed decision about a position that interests you. Obviously, go online. Visit the school, district, and community websites as well as the Iowa School Performance Profiles (iaschoolperformance.gov). Further, set up a Google alert so you receive regular news updates about what is happening at the school. Take time to engage with your personal and professional networks to gain insight into where you are applying. If they do not have any information to share, ask if they have a trusted source who might. Additionally, consider visiting the community to look around, eat at a local restaurant, and talk with community members about their school. If time permits, you may want to attend an extra-curricular activity or athletic event. Again, you may not find the answers to all your questions through these efforts, but they will help inform your decision about whether you should apply for a position.

After you have conducted your due diligence with thorough and deliberate research, it is time to prepare your applica-

tion materials for a position that appears to be a good fit for you. It is important to provide a prospective employer with the exact application materials requested. An incomplete application will disqualify you from consideration. Too much information may be viewed by some as being cumbersome and annoying. If you have already crafted a quality cover letter and resume, you have completed a significant amount of the work needed for your application. Remember that as you finalize your submission materials, it is critical to make them job-specific. For example, be sure to list the position you are applying for by name in your cover letter. Additionally, highlight your expertise and experiences that align with the needs of the school. Lastly, do one final check for spelling, grammar, and other mistakes before mailing your materials or uploading them into the online application software, which should be done well in advance of the application deadline.

Now, you wait. But it does not mean that you sit still. First, touch base with a prospective employer to make sure your application materials were received. Second, take this time to begin preparing for an interview.

THE INTERVIEW

The interview process can be thought of as having pre-game, game time, and post-game components. Before getting into each component, though, do not forget that the interview process is a two-way communication between you and a prospective employer. While you hope to secure a job, a school, district, and community hope to have a school leader who is excited to become part of their learning organization for years to come. Thus, quality organizations recognize that you are interviewing them as much as they are interviewing you.

YOUR DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

With the idea of creating a digital portfolio fresh in your mind, it is important to discuss your overall digital footprint. Surely you have heard it before, but it bears repeating: Everything you post online remains there permanently. Every Tweet, Facebook post, Instagram picture, and Snapchat message becomes part of your permanent digital footprint. Be mindful of this when and how you choose to post on social media, especially when you are in an emotionally charged state of mind. Tone and intent are always difficult to capture in writing, so unless your posts are positive, be cautious.

In addition to being careful about what you post online, a good rule of thumb is to occasionally Google (or search) yourself to see if others have posted anything about you. While you cannot control what others say, you should be aware of it and be prepared to answer questions about the content. This may not seem fair, but it is a reality in our hyper-connected society.

PRE-INTERVIEW

Preparation for an interview is critical, and it is something you can begin gearing up for even before you get a call. Below are some ways you can get ready.

- The Resources section in the back contains a long list of potential school leader interview questions. Review this list frequently and take time to write out responses to the questions. Two of the more difficult questions you should be prepared to answer are 1) “Why should we hire you for this position?” and 2) “If we offer you the job, will you accept it?” The second question may seem like an obvious “yes.” However, something concerning may come up during the interview that may give you pause. The issue may not be a deal-breaker, so you must be prepared with a response that keeps you engaged in the process yet buys you some time.
- From your research of the position you applied for, anticipate questions you may be asked based on the local context and needs of the school. Again, write out responses to these questions.
- Practice giving oral responses to questions by recording your responses on your phone or another device. Then play your responses back to yourself to determine where you sound confident and where you need to improve.
- Complete a mock interview.
- Once you get a call for an interview, be sure to find out where and with whom you will be interviewing. For example, will the interview be with just the superintendent, a leadership team, teachers, students, parents, and/or the board of education? Also, determine how much time you need to schedule? It is not unreasonable to block out a day to make sure you have all the time you need to dedicate to the process. Plus, you will be tired once you are done. At the very least, you want to be sure not to schedule another important appointment close to or on top of your interview, so you do not feel rushed.
- Prepare a list of a few questions you may want to ask during the interview. In addition to you learning more about the position, asking

some thoughtful questions also allows you to show that you have done your homework about the job, school, district, and community. Be aware, though, that these questions should not include requests for information about salary, benefits, and working conditions. These and similar items can be addressed once a job offer has been made and you begin negotiating the details of your contract. Questions to consider include:

- What are the community’s expectations of me as this school’s principal?
 - Where do principals fit in the district’s hierarchy?
 - Are site-based management concepts in place?
 - How much control do I have over my building’s budget?
 - What support staff do I have?
 - What is the status of the school improvement plan?
 - What am I free to change? How quickly?
- Two to three weeks before the interview, make sure you have the clothes you need to dress the part.
 - A day or two before the interview, gas-up, wash and clean out your car. Psychologically, a clean car will help you get into the right frame of mind as you drive to your interview, and you never know who you may be giving a ride once you are there. On a related note, determine the directions and distance to where you are traveling. The day of your interview is the wrong day to find out if Google maps do not have the directions just right or there is road construction that will add 30 minutes to your drive time. Also, take note of where to park.
 - Make your final preparations the day before game time. Press your clothes and shine your shoes. You want to look sharp. Further, put together a few materials to take with you like an extra copy of your resume, a list of additional references, a list of a few questions you may want to ask, and a legal pad to take notes. These items (and a pen) should be placed in a thin leather folder/portfolio that looks good and is easy to carry.

INTERVIEW DAY

Up to this point in the search process, you have carefully considered whether you are ready to take on the awesome responsibility of school leadership, thoroughly researched where to apply, meticulously crafted your credentials, and practiced answering interview question after interview question. Now, it is game time. Time to show a prospective employer who you are and what you have to offer as a school leader. And due to your vast preparation, YOU’VE GOT THIS. Below are some final tips as you head to the interview.

- Be early and recognize that the interview begins as soon as you arrive.
- Before leaving your car, put your phone away or be sure it is turned off, so it does not become a distraction.
- Be kind to everyone you encounter, especially the administrative support staff. Their opinions are very important to the decision-makers.
- Introduce yourself confidently to everyone by offering a firm handshake, speaking clearly, and looking people in the eyes.
- Sit up and use good posture.
- Be positive and self-confident. Most importantly, be yourself.
- Address the interviewer(s) by name and maintain eye contact.
- Pay attention to body language and non-verbal cues.
- Give clear, concise, and truthful answers. If you do not know something, say so.
- If you do not understand a question, ask for clarification.
- Explain your strengths, leadership style, and beliefs about education in your answers.
- Show you have done your homework by highlighting what you know about the school, district, and community in your responses.
- Do not make disparaging comments about current or former employers.
- Ask meaningful questions from your prepared list as well as from what you heard during the interview.
- End by thanking everyone, shaking hands, and addressing people by name.

POST-INTERVIEW

Once the interview is over, give yourself time to take a deep breath and decompress. The drive home is helpful for this.

Next, send handwritten thank-you notes to everyone you interviewed with if possible. While an email is quicker, nothing beats the personal touch of a card sent via snail mail. To speed up the process, have thank-you notes addressed in advance to send out the day of the interview if you know with whom you will interview.

Additionally, take time to reflect on the interview. Do you still feel like the position is a good fit for you? Were there any red flags? What about the interview went well? Where might you have done better? Were there any questions you were not prepared for? Take note of these so you are ready for them if asked again in the future.

With the interview phase of the search process ending, more waiting is ahead. This could be long or short depending on the school district. Like when you were waiting for the call to be interviewed, you should not be sitting still. There are three potential outcomes to prepare for, they're covered next.

Three Ways It Could Go

To recap, the purpose of the job search process is for you to find a school leadership position that fits you and your prospective employer to find a school leader that fits for them. Assuming you and the school district feel you are a good match, consider the important process of negotiating your contract. This includes making sure you are clear on all the district expects of you before you sign on the dotted line. However, there are two other ways the job search process could go: 1) you may decide the district is not a good fit for you; or 2) the district determines you are not a good fit for them. Let us dig into each of these scenarios.

THIS JUST ISN'T GOING TO WORK. WHEN DO I EXIT THE PROCESS?

The answer to this question is as soon as possible, which is why you should spend time thoroughly researching a school district even before you apply. You can save yourself and a prospective employer a lot of time and energy if you determine

a district is not a good fit before you apply. For positions you do apply for, it is important for you to continuously reflect on whether a job is the right fit for you. While no position is perfect, be on the lookout for anything that makes you uneasy from a legal or ethical perspective or if you are going to be asked to do something you are not comfortable with, like releasing several veteran teachers.

Up to the point you sign an employment contract, there is time to take yourself out of the job search process. And if there is something about a prospective position that does not feel right, remove yourself. Better to do it before you and the district must suffer through a difficult contract separation. However, the longer you engage with a prospective employer the more delicately you need to handle the situation. Obviously, you do not want to burn bridges with a district you may want to work for in the future. Further, you do not want to gain a reputation as someone who wastes people's valuable time. So once you decide to remove yourself from a search process, especially if you have interviewed with a district, the best thing you can do is call the district contact, thank that person for the opportunity, and explain that the position is not the right fit. Be prepared for a few questions, but do not feel the need to share details beyond your comfort level.

“Take time to reflect on the interview. Do you still feel like the position is a good fit for you? Were there any red flags? What about the interview went well? Where might you have done better?”

You may ask, “What do I do if I have signed an employment contract and can no longer take the position?” In extreme circumstances, like you learn something concerning about the district or position or you have a significant life change, you and the district can probably separate amicably. Otherwise, be prepared for potential legal and licensure ramifications as well as harm to your professional reputation.

SORRY, YOU ARE NOT THE RIGHT FIT FOR US.

Considering the time, sweat equity, and emotional investment you pour into the application process for a prospective school leadership position, the last news you want to receive is, “Sorry, you are not the right fit for us.” Being passed over for a job you desire and work hard for stings. When this call comes, and it will if you apply for enough positions, be sure to express your gratitude for the opportunity so you leave yourself open to being considered again in the future. Depending on the rapport you developed with those in the district, you may feel comfortable enough to ask how you could have improved your standing through the process. After the dust settles and hindsight sets in, be assured you will be thankful for jobs you do not get. Even if you still want to work for a district that turns you down, do not forget that the right thing is only the right thing when the timing is right.

CONGRATULATIONS! WELCOME TO OUR LEARNING ORGANIZATION.

The call you have been waiting anxiously for has finally arrived. Congratulations! Your hard work has paid off, and you are very close to beginning a new chapter in your professional career. But before you submit your resignation letter for your current position and start packing your bags, there is one important item of business that must be completed first: your contract.

Prior to working one minute in your new position as a school leader, it is critical that you have an agreed-upon, attorney reviewed, and signed contract with your new employer. As you know, school leadership is a wonderful, yet challenging job. You will be required to make difficult decisions that will make some individuals unhappy, maybe even key decision-makers like school board members. To protect yourself, your family, your livelihood, and your professional reputation, a legally

binding contract between you and your employer is essential. However, you may wonder, “How do I get started?”

Where your contract is concerned, your new school district should take the lead by providing you language to consider. Believe it or not, though, some districts still have not taken the steps to ensure their building leaders have formal contracts. In either case, there is a Model Contract in the Resources section that contains both essential and recommended elements for your employment agreement. You can use this to compare to the contract language your new employer has given you to review or as the starting point for a contract if the school district does not have one.

Not surprisingly, negotiating your salary and benefits may cause you some discomfort. Talking about money is not easy, especially if you have never done it before in this context. During your initial research of the job opportunity, you can access the [Iowa Department of Education website](#) for the average principal salary and benefits for the district. This will give you an idea of number you will be working with when talking with the district. An accomplished, veteran school leader may be able to demand the same or an even more lucrative salary and benefits package than your predecessor. If this is your first school leadership position, do not be surprised to be offered less. And while you may be comfortable taking less, do not sell yourself too short. You are being asked to do the same job at the same high standard. Additionally, significant adjustments to your salary later can be challenging due to public pressure and statutory limitations. Thus, it is important to get a salary you feel good about from the start.

As you work through the process of negotiating your contract, it is important to remember that “unvoiced expectations lead to frustration” for both sides. And while it is not realistic to put everything in writing, below are some additional questions you may want to be answered before signing the final agreement.

- Do I have any district responsibilities? i.e., transportation, facilities, grants, etc.?
- What are the expectations for my attendance at meetings and extra-curricular activities?
- Will I receive a mentor or coach?
- What opportunities will I have for professional learning?

“Be assured you will be thankful for jobs you do not get. Even if you still want to work for a district that turns you down, do not forget that the right thing is only the right thing when the timing is right.”

- Will my involvement with my professional organization be supported?
- How will I be evaluated?
- Will I receive moving expenses?

Lastly, be sure to have your contract reviewed by legal counsel. While this may seem obvious, it can be easy to get caught up in the excitement of landing a new job and feeling pressured by the school district to get your contract signed quickly. Be sure to pause and run your employment agreement past your attorney to ensure you are not being taken unfair advantage of and that everything you agreed upon with the district is explicitly spelled out. As an SAI member, you can contact the association to review your contract.

Final Thoughts and Reminders

Securing a school leadership position that fits takes a significant amount of work. If done properly, the process of finding the right job can in and of itself feel like a job. However, the payoff is worth it once you find yourself working within a learning organization where your values align and you can work effectively with your community to do what is best for your students. Through the search process, be sure to do your homework, pay attention to detail, and practice for the interview. Lastly, do not forget that the SAI staff is here to support you at every step. Just give us a call. Best wishes!

Endnotes

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RESOURCE

School Leadership That Fits Checklist

Use this checklist to make sure you have completed the critical tasks necessary to help improve your chances to find *School Leadership That Fits*.

- Do I possess a school leader's mindset?
- Am I (and my family, as applicable) ready to make the jump?
- Am I taking the steps needed now to prepare me for a school leadership position?
- Have I put in the work necessary to create high-quality credentials?
- Have I proofed my credentials in detail?
- Have I had another professional proof my credentials for feedback?
- Have I spent time reviewing my digital footprint?
- Have I thoroughly researched school leadership positions that interest me?
- When applying for a school leadership position, have I provided exactly what was asked?
- Have I thoroughly prepared for an interview including answering potential questions and/or taking part in a mock interview?
- Did I send thank-you notes to those individuals I interviewed with?
- Does the contract I am presented to sign contain the essential elements of the Model Principal's Contract?

RESOURCE: SAMPLE RESUME 1

Chris Sample

1515 Anystreet
Anytown, IA 62555
555-555-5555
csample@anyemail.com

Education & Certifications

Education Specialist	Any University Major: Educational Leadership	2013
Master of Science	Any University Major: Educational Leadership	2010
Bachelor of Science	Any University Major: Math Education	2004
Iowa Educator License	Specialist Endorsement Principal Endorsement Secondary School Math Endorsement	

Employment

High School Principal, Any High School, Anytown, IA 2014-Present

- 1,000 students/100 staff
- Led the development of a new school vision statement, core values, and student motto
- Led the implementation of an evidence-based school improvement process
- Led the implementation of a new student management software system which improved teacher use of data and home-to-school communication
- Created a database to track student achievement and demographic data
- Led the implementation of curriculum mapping
- Enhanced the leadership of department chairs by clarifying their role and leading the study of leadership principles
- Enhanced the use of 8-block teaching strategies through in-service training and weekly email tips
- Initiated Multi-Tiered Systems of Support in order to provide students differentiated instruction and needed educational supports
- Collaborate with staff to implement restorative justice practices to better serve at-risk students
- Enhanced staff professional growth by encouraging and recognizing teachers involved in National Board Certification
- Improved relationships with the Anytown Athletic Boosters by assisting with revising the booster's bylaws and developing team budgets
- Developed a Principal's Cabinet comprised of students to meet each month to discuss and implement ways to improve Anytown High School
- Created an in-house TV broadcast to effectively communicate to and stay connected with students
- Met diverse student learning needs by implementing team taught Enhanced Learning periods and developing a class called Learning for Life
- Wrote and obtained grant to improve broadband connectivity, reliability, and speed
- Led the development of the Anytown Political Action Committee

High School Principal, Othertown High School, Othertown, IA 2011-2014

- 285 students/30 staff
- Led the development of a new school mission statement as well as student, staff, and personal school commitment statements
- Led the development of a data-driven internal review process
- Led the development and implementation of a new teacher evaluation system based on the Danielson Framework
- Initiated Multi-Tiered Systems of Support in order to provide students differentiated instruction and needed educational supports
- Led the development of a new teacher mentoring program to assist first-year teachers with classroom management and quality instruction
- Created and implemented peer coaching training to raise the level of teacher professionalism and provide teachers with recertification credit
- Led the creation of the DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) Program to provide time during the school day for sustained silent reading and increase student motivation to read

RESOURCE: SAMPLE RESUME 1

- Led the development and implementation of a student Service Learning Program
- Led the revision of the school's Crisis Management Plan
- Worked with high school staff, school board, and community members to revise the school's Athletic Code
- Increased student involvement in the school decision-making process by seeking frequent input from the student council
- Co-authored a monthly newspaper article titled "From the Administrator's Desk" which focused on informing the public of educational issues and helping parents assist their children to get the most out of their educational opportunities

Math Teacher/Coach, Finaltown High School, Finaltown, IA

2004-2011

- Led the development and implementation of a math curriculum for an eight-block schedule
- Wrote grant proposals for and successfully obtained new Chromebooks for classroom
- Increased enrollment in Calculus from an average of 34 students to an average of 71 students

Professional Organizations and Honors

School Administrators of Iowa

2011-Present

National Association of Secondary School Principals

2011-Present

Phi Delta Kappa

2011-Present

Educational Leadership Award

2015

Scholarship Award Winner

2012

State FFA Degree

2000

Other Experience

- Volunteer with Anytown United Way
- Radio Personality
- Robotics Team Coach

2014 - Present

2005-2009

2001-2005

References

Joyce Davis, Superintendent

Anytown CSD

555 Anystreet

Anytown, IA 55555

333-333-3333

Jeff Stanford, Superintendent

Othertown CSD

555 Othertown

Othertown, IA 50325

444-444-4444

Camila Hernandez, Principal

Finaltown High School

555 Finaltown

Finaltown, IA 50263

777-777-7777

RESOURCE: SAMPLE RESUME 2

CHRIS SAMPLE

1515 Anystreet, Anytown, IA 50325
555-555-5555 • csample@anyemail.com

CAREER PROFILE

Visionary, student-centered learning leader able to facilitate systems, learning and school culture to guide continuous improvement for educational stakeholders and a proven track record of increasing student achievement at the high school level. Educational optimist who believes that lives are truly touched, and the future shaped, by extraordinary teachers.

EDUCATION

Most Recent University – City, State Ed.S., Educational Leadership	Year
Next Most Recent University - City, State M.S.Ed., Educational Leadership	Year
Next Most Recent University – City, State B.S., Math Education	Year

LICENSES AND CERTIFICATION

IOWA PROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR LICENSE No. 123456

Endorsements: General Administrative K-12; Language Arts 6-8; Mathematics 6-8; Mathematics Senior High 9-12
Evaluator Designations: Teacher and Principal Evaluator Designation

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

TITLE, ANY HIGH SCHOOL Anytown, State <i>1,000 students / 100 staff members</i>	Start Year – End Year
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Major Accomplishments

- Led the development of a new school vision statement, core values, and student motto.
- Led the implementation of an evidence-based (hyphen added) school improvement process.
- Led the implementation of a new student management software system which improved teacher use of data and home-to-school communication.
- Created a database to track student achievement and demographic data.
- Led the implementation of curriculum mapping.
- Enhanced the leadership of department chairs by clarifying their role and leading the study of leadership principles.
- Enhanced the use of 8-block teaching strategies through in-service training and weekly email tips.
- Initiated Multi-Tiered Systems of Support in order to provide students differentiated instruction and needed educational supports.
- Collaborate with staff to implement restorative justice practices to better serve at-risk students.
- Enhanced staff professional growth by encouraging and recognizing teachers involved in National Board Certification.

RESOURCE: SAMPLE RESUME 2

TITLE, OTHER TOWN HIGH SCHOOL

Other Town, State

285 students / 30 staff members

Start Year – End Year

Major Accomplishments

- Led the development of a new school mission statement as well as student, staff, and personal school commitment statements.
- Led the development of a data driven internal review process.
- Led the development and implementation of a new teacher evaluation system based on the Danielson Framework.
- Initiated Multi-Tiered Systems of Support in order to provide students differentiated instruction and needed educational supports.
- Led the development of a new teacher mentoring program to assist first-year teachers with classroom management and quality instruction.
- Created and implemented peer coaching training to raise the level of teacher professionalism and provide teachers with re-certification credit.
- Led the creation of the DEAR (Drop Everything AND Read) Program to provide time during the school day for sustained silent reading and increase student motivation to read.
- Led the development and implementation of a student Service Learning Program.
- Led the revision of the school's Crisis Management Plan.
- Worked with high school staff, school board, and community members to revise the school's Athletic Code.
- Increased student involvement in the school decision making process by seeking frequent input from the student council.
- Co-authored a monthly newspaper article called "From the Administrator's Desk" which focused on informing the public of educational issues and helping parents assist their children to get the most out of their educational opportunities.

MATH TEACHER/COACH, NAME OF SCHOOL

City, State

Start Year – End Year

Major Accomplishments

- Led the development and implementation of a math curriculum for an eight-block schedule
- Wrote grant proposals for and successfully obtained new Chromebooks for classroom
- Increased enrollment in Calculus from an average of 34 students to an average of 71 students

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND HONORS

- School Administrators of Iowa Year – Year
- National Association of Secondary School Principals Year – Year
- Phi Delta Kappa Year – Year
- Educational Leadership Award Year
- Scholarship Award Winner Year

GRANT WRITING EXPERIENCE

Authored and/or co-authored grants, including:

- Title I, II, II-D and V Grants (federal; allocation)
- IDEA (federal; allocation)
- National Science Foundation Math/Science Grant (regional; competitive)

RESOURCE: SAMPLE RESUME 2

GRADUATE TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Adjunct instructor, Name of University, School of Education, Educational Leadership Department.
Courses taught: List names of courses

PRESENTATIONS

- *Moving at the Speed of Success* – City, State (Year)
- *Achieving Greatness* – City, State (Year)
- *Charlotte Danielson Domain 4 - Professional Responsibilities* – City, State (Year)
- *Tackling the Issue of Educator Ethics* – City, State (Year)
- *Becoming an Educator Who Matters* – City, State (Year)
- *Succeeding as a Teacher Mentor* – City, State (Year)
- *Invisible Enemies: The Case for Internet Safety* – City, State (Year)
- *A Road to Somewhere—Delivering High Stakes Data to the Classroom Teacher* – City, State (Year)

REFERENCES

Joyce Davis, Superintendent
Anytown CSD
555 Anystreet
Anytown, IA 62555
333-333-3333
email address

Jeff Stanford, Superintendent
Othertown CSD
555 Othertown
Othertown, IA 63555
444-444-4444
email address

Camila Hernandez, Principal
Finaltown High School
555 Finaltown
Finaltown, IA 64555
777-777-7777
email address

Dr. Stacey Jensen
Board of Education Member
Anytown CSD
555 Anystreet
Anytown, IA 62555
333-333-3334
email address

Dr. David Teacher
Assistant Professor
Any University
987 Anystreet
University Town, IA 11111
111-111-1111
email address

RESOURCE: ACTION WORDS

The following are action verbs that relate to leadership skills. Use words like these to describe the accomplishments you list on your resume and speak to during an interview.

A

Accelerated
Accomplished
Achieved
Acted
Activated
Adapted
Addressed
Adjusted
Administered
Advanced
Advertised
Advised
Advocated
Aided
Allocated
Analyzed
Answered
Applied
Appraised
Approved
Arbitrated
Arranged
Ascertained
Assembled
Assessed
Assigned
Assisted
Attained
Augmented
Authorized
Awarded

B

Balanced
Began
Boosted
Briefed
Budgeted
Built

C

Calculated
Captured
Cataloged
Centralized
Chaired

Charted
Checked
Clarified
Classified
Coached
Collaborated
Collected
Combined
Communicated
Compared
Compiled
Completed
Composed
Computed
Conceived
Conceptualized
Condensed
Conducted
Conferred
Conserved
Consolidated
Constructed
Consulted
Contacted
Continued
Contributed
Controlled
Converted
Conveyed
Convinced
Coordinated
Corresponded
Counseled
Created
Critiqued
Cultivated
Customized

D

Debugged
Decided
Defined
Delegated
Delivered
Demonstrated
Designated
Designed
Detected
Determined
Developed
Devised
Diagnosed

Directed
Discovered
Dispensed
Displayed
Dissected
Distributed
Diverted
Documented
Drafted

E

Earned
Edited
Educated
Effected
Eliminated
Emphasized
Employed
Encouraged
Enforced
Engineered
Enhanced
Enlarged
Enlisted
Ensured
Entertained
Established
Estimated
Evaluated
Examined
Executed
Expanded
Expedited
Experimented
Explained
Explored
Expressed
Extended
Extracted

F

Fabricated
Facilitated
Fashioned
Finalized
Fixed
Focused
Forecasted
Formed

Formulated
Fostered
Found
Fulfilled
Furnished

G

Gained
Gathered
Generated
Governed
Grossed
Guided

H

Handled
Headed
Heightened
Helped
Hired
Honed
Hosted
Hypothesized

I

Identified
Illustrated
Imagined
Implemented
Improved
Improvised
Incorporated
Increased
Indexed
Influenced
Informed
Initiated
Innovated
Inspected
Inspired
Installed
Instituted
Integrated
Interacted
Interpreted

Interviewed
Introduced
Invented
Inventoried
Investigated
Involved
Issued

J

Joined
Judged

K

Kept

L

Launched
Learned
Lectured
Led
Lifted
Listened
Located
Logged

M

Maintained
Managed
Manipulated
Marketed
Maximized
Measured
Mediated
Merged
Mobilized
Modified
Monitored
Motivated

RESOURCE: ACTION WORDS

N

Navigated
Negotiated
Netted

O

Observed
Obtained
Opened
Operated
Ordered
Orchestrated
Organized
Originated
Outlined
Overcame
Overhauled
Oversaw

P

Participated
Performed
Persuaded
Photographed
Pinpointed
Piloted
Pioneered
Placed
Planned
Played
Predicted
Prepared
Prescribed
Presented
Presided
Prevented
Printed
Prioritized
Processed
Produced
Programmed
Projected
Promoted
Proofread
Proposed
Protected
Proved
Provided
Publicized
Purchased

Q

Qualified
Questioned

R

Raised
Ran
Rated
Reached
Realized
Reasoned
Received
Recommended
Reconciled
Recorded
Recruited
Reduced
Referred
Regulated
Rehabilitated
Related
Remodeled
Rendered
Reorganized
Repaired
Replaced
Reported
Represented
Researched
Reshaped
Resolved
Responded
Restored
Retrieved
Reviewed
Revised
Revitalized
Routed

S

Saved
Scheduled
Screened
Searched
Secured
Selected
Separated
Served
Shaped
Shared
Simplified
Simulated

Sketched
Sold
Solved
Sorted
Spearheaded
Specialized
Specified
Spoke
Sponsored
Staffed
Standardized
Started
Streamlined
Strengthened
Structured
Studied
Suggested
Summarized
Supervised
Supplied
Supported
Surpassed
Surveyed
Sustained
Synthesized
Systematized

T

Targeted
Taught
Terminated
Tested
Tightened
Totalled
Tracked
Traded
Trained
Transcribed
Transformed
Transmitted
Translated
Traveled
Tutored

U

Uncovered
Undertook
Unified
United
Updated
Upgraded
Used
Utilized

V

Validated
Verbalized
Verified
Vitalized
Volunteered

W

Weighed
Widened
Won
Worked
Wrote

RESOURCE: SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell us about your educational background.
2. Tell us about your professional experience.
3. Why do you want to become a school leader? Or, why do you want this position?
4. Talk about what you consider your greatest strengths. What are your greatest potential growth areas?
5. What are the three most important qualities a principal must possess?
6. What have you done to keep abreast of developments in the field of education and school leadership?
7. What do you do to sustain your own personal and professional wellness?
8. What do you consider to be a principal's biggest pressure?
9. Describe your entry plan as you prepare to assume the leadership of your school.
10. What system do you use to manage your time and leadership responsibilities?
11. What is your role as principal (assistant principal, dean, etc.) in creating a culture of excellence for students and staff?
12. What strategies will you rely on to sustain and improve staff and student morale?
13. How do you involve students in the decision-making process?
14. How do you involve teachers in the decision-making process?
15. What do you do to keep your implicit biases in check?
16. Describe an improvement process you led either in your current/previous classroom or leadership position. Did you achieve the expected outcome? Why or why not?
17. Discuss your philosophy of discipline. Include effective methods you have used in the past. What's your perspective on restorative justice practices?
18. What policies and procedures might a school put in place to address any identified discrepancies in the rates of suspension and expulsion of students of color or students with disabilities? How might proactive behavior practices impact suspension and expulsion rates?
19. How would you handle this situation? A teacher sends a student to you for disciplinary measures. You administer the consequences. The teacher gets upset and feels the student did not receive enough punishment.
20. A student comes to you and reports that another student has brought drugs into the building. What would you do?
21. You receive information that requires the school to go into lockdown. Explain the procedures you would use in this situation.
22. Several teachers have been grumbling in the lounge about lack of administrative support. What would you do?
23. How would you motivate unmotivated students? Similarly, how would you build rapport with students who do not want to build a rapport with you?
24. What experience do you have with special education (IEPs) and with 504 plans?
25. What is your vision for special education?
26. How would you ensure we provide equitable educational opportunities for all of our students?
27. How would you ensure all students and staff feel emotionally connected to and valued by our school community?
28. How would you describe your conflict resolution style?
29. What processes will you use to empower and develop the capacity of your teachers and staff overall?
30. What do you look for when assessing teacher performance? What steps will you take to assist a teacher who is struggling?
31. You have an experienced teacher who is using outdated instructional practices. You speak with them about it and offer some research-based suggestions to improve. They inform you that their 25 years of experience surpass any research you could find. What, if anything, do you do?
32. How will you resolve a parental complaint when you know the teacher is in error?
33. What strategies would you use to continuously share your school's story?
34. What strategies would you use to effectively engage with families and the greater community?
35. What steps would you take to ensure your effectively communicate with staff, students, and parents?
36. What experience do you have with:
 - a. Data-Driven Analysis
 - b. Curriculum Development
 - c. Monitoring Curriculum
 - d. Addressing Needs of At-Risk Students/Parents
 - e. Master Scheduling
 - f. Developing Teams/Programs
 - g. Encouraging Parent Involvement
 - h. School Improvement Planning
37. What are essential elements of quality schools?
38. What methods will you use to evaluate your school and its programs?
39. Are there any questions we did not ask you that you wish we had? If so, what are they?
40. Why do you feel you are the best candidate for this position?

RESOURCE: SAMPLE PRINCIPAL'S CONTRACT

SAMPLE PRINCIPAL'S CONTRACT (TWO-YEAR)

THIS CONTRACT is entered into by and between the Board of Directors (hereinafter referred to as "The Board") of the _____ Community School District, located in _____ County, Iowa, (hereinafter "the District"), and _____ (hereinafter, "the Principal"), for the position of principal of _____.

The Board hereby agrees to employ the Principal for a period of two years, such employment to begin on _____, 20____. The Principal and Board agree to such term of employment under the following conditions:

1. The annual salary paid to the Principal shall be _____, (\$ _____) per contract year during the first year of the contract. This represents a monthly salary of _____, (_____) per month of four consecutive weeks. Principal's annual salary shall be paid in equal installments in accordance with the policies, rules and regulations of the Board governing payment of salary to other certified members of the professional staff. Annual salary modifications shall be mutually agreed to in each of the remaining years of this contract, provided said salary in each subsequent year shall not be less than the salary paid in the preceding year. This contract will automatically renew for equivalent two-year periods if not terminated, resigned, or modified by mutual agreement; renewal will occur on March 15 of the first year of the contract unless another date is mutually agreed to.
2. This contract requires the services of the Principal for two hundred sixty (260) days per year. Principal's work year shall include regular workdays during the term of the contract, except that the Principal shall not be required to work on legal school holidays, or breaks or days on the school calendar when Principal is not required to work.
3. The Principal agrees to perform well and faithfully the duties of Principal, having such powers and duties as may be prescribed by law or by the Board from time to time, as set forth in Principal's job description, a copy of which is attached to this contract as Exhibit A, and those obligations imposed by the law of the State of Iowa upon principals.
4. The Principal shall furnish throughout the life of this contract a valid and appropriate license to act as principal in the State of Iowa.
5. The Principal agrees to devote the Principal's time, skill, labor and attention to said employment during the term of this contract. However, the Principal, with the prior approval of the Board, may undertake consultative work, speaking engagements, writing, lecturing, or other professional duties and obligations.
6. The Principal's immediate supervisor shall annually provide the Principal with a written evaluation based upon a mutually agreed-upon evaluation instrument, with periodic opportunities to review and discuss the Principal's personnel records and performance at reasonable times as mutually agreed upon by the Principal and the Principal's evaluator.
7. The Principal shall receive _____ (____) days of vacation annually, exclusive of legal holidays and other school vacations. Vacation days shall accrue during the period of employment of the Principal. In the event this contract is terminated by mutual agreement prior to its expiration date, the Board shall compensate the Principal for any unused vacation days accrued from the previous years and on a pro-rata basis for the then current year.
8. The Principal shall be entitled to _____ () days of leave per year for illness, which may accumulate to a total of _____ () days [no fewer than 90]. The Principal may carry over _____ () sick days from the Principal's previous employment.
9. Deductions for absence for which pay is not allowed shall be made in an amount equal to 1/260th of the Principal's annual salary per day of absence.
10. The Board shall allow the Principal mileage reimbursed at no less than the rate established by law for the use of the Principal's personal car for travel completed for business purposes, as defined by District policy, both inside and outside the District. The Principal shall also be reimbursed for personal expenses incidental to the travel when an itemized statement of travel and expense is submitted to and approved by the Board.
11. The Board shall, by direct payment or reimbursement, pay the professional dues for the Principal's memberships in School Administrators of Iowa and one national organization as designated by the Principal.

Principal's Initials _____ Board President's Initials _____

RESOURCE: SAMPLE PRINCIPAL'S CONTRACT

12. The Principal shall attend appropriate professional meetings and conferences at the local, regional, state, and national levels. The Board shall reimburse the Principal for actual expenses incurred in carrying out the Principal's professional activities when an authorized statement is submitted to and approved by the Board.

13. The Principal, with prior Board approval, shall be allowed time to further the Principal's formal education at a recognized college or university without loss of pay or vacation during the months when school is not in session.

14. The Board shall provide to the Principal, at District expense, family-level coverage for major medical insurance, including health, dental, and hospitalization; long-term disability insurance for at least 60 percent of Principal's base salary under this contract; and a life insurance policy in a face amount not less than the Principal's annual salary.

15. To the extent that any employer-paid group life, accident, or health plan benefits become taxable to the Principal, the District shall pay additional compensation to the Principal at a rate determined to be in compliance with current Internal Revenue Service regulations to maintain the contracted level of compensation to the Principal of the value of the employer-paid benefits or contributions subjected to the tax.

16. The school district agrees that it shall defend, hold harmless and indemnify the Principal for any all demands, claims, suits, actions, and legal proceedings brought against the Principal in the Principal's individual capacity, or in the Principal's official capacity as agent and employee of the school district; provided the incident arose while the Principal was acting within the scope of the Principal's employment.

17. The Board shall fairly consider releasing the Principal from this contract should the opportunity arise for professional advancement.

18. In the absence of mutual agreement or lesser statutory requirements regarding the termination of probationary administrators, this contract may only be terminated by the Board upon a showing of "just cause" and in accordance with procedures established by Iowa law. "Just cause" for termination under this contract must relate to Principal's performance and not District financial considerations.

19. This contract has been executed in Iowa and shall be governed in accordance with the laws of the State of Iowa in every respect.

20. This contract contains all of the terms agreed upon by the parties with respect to the subject matter of this contract and supersedes all prior agreements, arrangements and communications between the parties concerning such subject matter whether oral or written. Unless otherwise indicated, all amendments and modifications made during the life of this contract shall supplement and become part of this contract and shall not be deemed in and of themselves separate contracts.

21. If any provision of this contract is found invalid or is incapable of being enforced, all other provisions contained herein shall nevertheless remain in full force and effect.

THIS CONTRACT shall be invalid if Principal is under contract with another board of directors in this state covering the same period of time, until such contract is terminated or the Principal is released therefrom.

Dated this ___ day of _____, 20__.

By _____
Principal

Dated this ___ day of _____, 20__.

By _____
President, Board of Directors

This document is intended as a sample only. It is not the intent of School Administrators of Iowa that this sample be adopted in its entirety without further review. Individual school districts and administrators may wish to add or delete paragraphs as deemed necessary or pursuant to negotiations. As with any legal document, individuals and local school boards should consult with private legal counsel for advice prior to entering into an employment contract.

RESOURCE: SAMPLE PRINCIPAL'S CONTRACT

ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

(FOR MOVING EXPENSES)

The Board shall reimburse the Principal for expenses incurred in moving the Principal's furniture, household goods, and related personal belongings to the District, such expenses not to exceed _____ dollars (\$ _____).

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NOTES



Illinois Principals Association
ilprincipals.org | 217.525.1383



Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association
mespa.net | 651.999.7310



School Administrators Association of New York State
saanys.org | 518.782.0600



Indiana Association of School Principals
iasp.org | 317.891.9900



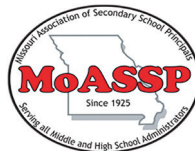
Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals
maesp.com | 573.638.2460



Association of Washington School Principals
awsp.org | 360.357.7951



School Administrators of Iowa
sai-iowa.org | 515.267.1115



Missouri Association of Secondary School Principals
moassp.org | 573.445.5071



Association of Wisconsin School Administrators
awsa.org | 608.241.0300



New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association
njpsa.org | 609.860.1200

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