



Proposal

for a Superintendent of Schools Search Consultant

Presented to

**Delano Public Schools
School Board**

Submitted by

Ray and Associates, Inc.

RECRUITING. DEVELOPING. ENGAGING

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Working Together: Delano Public Schools and Ray and Associates, Inc.

July 16, 2026

Sue Roeser, Chairperson
Delano Public Schools School Board
700 Elm Ave E
Delano, MN 55328

Dear Chairperson Roeser and Directors of the Delano Public Schools School Board,

On behalf of Ray and Associates, thank you for the opportunity to submit our proposal to assist Delano Public Schools in the selection of your next Superintendent. We appreciate the thoughtful nature of your request and the Board's clear commitment to identifying an exceptional leader who will build upon Delano Public Schools' long-standing tradition of educational excellence.

Delano Public Schools has earned a reputation as one of Minnesota's highly rated school districts through its unwavering commitment to academic achievement, responsible stewardship of public resources, and strong partnerships with students, families, staff, and the broader community. Selecting the next superintendent is not simply about filling a vacancy, it is about identifying a visionary leader who will preserve the district's strengths while guiding its continued growth and innovation for years to come.

For more than five decades, Ray and Associates has specialized exclusively in executive leadership searches for school systems across the nation. Our approach extends well beyond advertising a vacancy. We leverage trusted relationships, confidential outreach, strategic networking, and individualized recruitment to connect with outstanding leaders whose experience, leadership style, and values align with each district we serve. Many of our most successful placements have resulted from direct conversations with exceptional candidates who were not actively pursuing new positions until presented with the right opportunity.

Our commitment to Delano Public School School Board extends beyond recruitment. We believe a successful superintendent search culminates not with the School Board's selection, but with a thoughtful and intentional leadership transition. Whether your selected candidate begins during the school year or on a traditional July 1 timeline, our team remains engaged to support onboarding, facilitate board-superintendent alignment, and provide executive coaching designed to accelerate a successful transition.

This proposal outlines our proven executive search methodology, our strategies for navigating Minnesota's superintendent market during the fall recruitment cycle, our approach to recruiting passive candidates, our contingency planning should the School Board elect to extend the search, and our commitment to transparent pricing with guaranteed not-to-exceed expense caps. We are confident in our experience, relationships, and personalized service at Ray and Associates to successfully guide Delano Public Schools through this important leadership transition.



Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to partner with you. We would be honored to assist the School Board of Delano Public Schools in identifying a superintendent who will continue the district's legacy of excellence while inspiring confidence throughout the community.

We look forward to discussing our proposal with you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Stephanie S. Burrage

Dr. Stephanie Burrage
President/CEO
Ray and Associates, Inc.





Executive Summary

Selecting the next Superintendent of Delano Public Schools represents one of the most significant decisions the School Board will make. The next leader must not only preserve the district's tradition of academic excellence and fiscal responsibility but also inspire confidence among students, staff, families, and the community while positioning Delano for continued success in an evolving educational landscape.

Ray and Associates appreciates that Delano Public Schools' search presents unique opportunities and challenges. By initiating recruitment during the fall, the School Board is entering a highly competitive market when many of Minnesota's strongest educational leaders are focused on launching a new school year and are not actively exploring career opportunities. Successfully recruiting exceptional candidates during this period requires far more than posting a vacancy, it requires a disciplined executive search strategy built upon trusted relationships, confidential outreach, and personalized recruitment.

For more than fifty years, Ray and Associates has specialized exclusively in executive leadership searches for public school districts. Our work is grounded in a simple philosophy: exceptional leaders are recruited, not merely applicants who respond to advertisements. While traditional recruitment remains an important component of every search, our greatest strength lies in identifying, cultivating, and engaging highly accomplished leaders who are succeeding in their current roles and may only consider a new opportunity through a trusted professional relationship.

Our approach begins by listening. We partner with the School Board and stakeholders to develop a comprehensive leadership profile that reflects Delano's culture, values, strategic priorities, and aspirations for the future. This profile becomes the foundation for an intentional recruitment strategy that combines statewide and national outreach with targeted executive recruitment, leveraging our extensive professional network and decades of relationships throughout Minnesota and across the country.

Deep Minnesota Experience

Ray and Associates brings a unique perspective to superintendent searches in Minnesota. Headquartered in Minneapolis and led by President and CEO Dr. Stephanie Burrage, former Minnesota Deputy Commissioner of Education and former superintendent, our firm understands Minnesota's educational landscape, governance expectations, and leadership pipeline. Our consultants have successfully partnered with school boards throughout the state and maintain professional relationships with superintendents, district leaders, and educational organizations across Minnesota. This local knowledge, combined with our national reach, enables us to identify leaders who possess both exceptional credentials and a deep appreciation for Minnesota's educational values and community expectations.

Recognizing the realities of an off-cycle search, our recruitment strategy is designed to remain flexible without compromising quality. We actively engage both active and passive candidates, maintain continuous communication with prospective leaders, and adapt our outreach as market conditions evolve. If the School Board determines that the available candidate pool does not fully meet its expectations, Ray and Associates supports extending recruitment rather than encouraging a decision based solely on timing. We believe selecting the right superintendent is more important than selecting



one quickly.

Equally important is ensuring a successful leadership transition. Whether the successful candidate begins during the school year or assumes responsibilities on a traditional July 1 timeline, our engagement extends beyond the hiring decision. We provide structured onboarding support, executive coaching, Board-superintendent alignment, and transition planning designed to establish a strong foundation for long-term success.

Throughout the process, Delano Public Schools School Board can expect transparent communication, responsive service, and complete financial clarity. Our proposal includes a fixed professional fee and guaranteed not-to-exceed expense caps, providing the School Board with confidence that there will be no unexpected costs. Should circumstances require an extended recruitment timeline, our search guarantee demonstrates our commitment to achieving the outcome the Board expects, identifying the leader who best serves the students, staff, and community of Delano Public Schools.

At Ray and Associates, we believe superintendent searches are ultimately about people, relationships, and trust. Our role is not simply to manage a hiring process, but to serve as a strategic partner, guiding the School Board through each phase with integrity, discretion, and an unwavering commitment to excellence. We would be honored to partner with Delano Public Schools School Board in identifying a superintendent who will build upon the district's remarkable legacy while leading it confidently into the future.

Understanding Delano Public Schools

Delano Public Schools has earned a distinguished reputation as one of Minnesota's highly rated public school districts. Serving approximately 2,400 students in a vibrant and growing community west of the Twin Cities, the district is recognized for its strong academic performance, sound financial stewardship, dedicated staff, engaged families, and enduring commitment to student success. These strengths have established a culture of excellence that is deeply valued by the community and respected throughout the state.

Delano Public Schools occupies a unique position within Minnesota's educational landscape. As a high-performing district located within the rapidly growing western Twin Cities metropolitan area, the district benefits from strong community engagement while also competing for exceptional leadership talent within one of the state's most competitive superintendent markets. Successfully recruiting Delano's next superintendent requires an understanding of both the local educational environment and the broader Minnesota leadership pipeline.

Selecting Delano Public Schools' next superintendent is not about changing direction, it is about building on a strong foundation. The School Board seeks a leader who will preserve the district's tradition of excellence while guiding thoughtful innovation, strengthening relationships, and preparing the district to meet future opportunities and challenges. Achieving that balance requires a superintendent who is a strategic thinker, collaborative leader, skilled communicator, and trusted partner to the Board and community.

We also recognize that Delano Public Schools' reputation creates a unique recruitment opportunity. Outstanding school districts attract outstanding leaders, but many of the most qualified candidates are already serving successfully in leadership roles and are not actively pursuing new positions. Identifying



and engaging these individuals requires an intentional executive search process grounded in trusted relationships, personalized outreach, and a deep understanding of Minnesota's educational leadership landscape.

Your request for proposal reflects a School Board committed to finding the right leader rather than simply filling a vacancy. The thoughtful questions regarding off-cycle recruitment, passive candidate engagement, leadership transitions, and contingency planning demonstrate a focus on quality, long-term success, and responsible governance. Ray and Associates has successfully guided boards through these same challenges by combining relationship-driven executive recruitment with flexible search strategies, comprehensive transition planning, and an unwavering commitment to identifying the right leader—not simply the first available leader.

Our commitment is to help the School Board identify a leader whose experience, leadership style, and values align with Delano Public Schools' vision for the future. Through a collaborative and community-informed process, we will recruit exceptional candidates who not only possess the professional qualifications to lead a high-performing district but also the character, integrity, and commitment necessary to build upon Delano Public Schools' legacy of excellence.

The Ray Difference: Executive Search Through Relationships

At Ray and Associates, we believe the most successful superintendent searches are built on relationships, not résumés. While advertising and public outreach remain important components of every search, they represent only one part of a comprehensive executive recruitment strategy. The strongest educational leaders are often fully engaged in leading successful school systems and are rarely searching job boards or responding to public postings, particularly during the demanding opening months of the school year.

Ray and Associates has earned the trust of school boards and educational leaders across the country by conducting searches with integrity, professionalism, discretion, and an unwavering commitment to excellence. Our reputation and longstanding relationships allow us to engage accomplished leaders in confidential conversations about opportunities that align with their professional aspirations and personal values. This relationship-driven approach consistently expands the candidate pool beyond those actively seeking a new position.

Executive Recruitment Beyond the Posting

Delano's questions recognize an important reality: identifying an exceptional superintendent requires more than announcing a vacancy. It requires purposeful executive recruitment.

Our consultants personally identify and engage highly qualified leaders through confidential outreach, professional referrals, succession planning networks, state and national leadership associations, higher education partnerships, and long-established professional relationships. We actively recruit both active and passive candidates, ensuring the Board has access to an exceptional and diverse pool of educational leaders rather than a pool limited to those who happen to apply.

Every candidate we recruit receives individualized communication about Delano Public Schools, its accomplishments, community, leadership opportunities, and vision for the future. Our goal is to create genuine interest among outstanding leaders who may not have otherwise considered a career move.



Trusted Advisors Throughout the Process

Our commitment extends well beyond recruiting candidates. We serve as strategic advisors to the Board of Education throughout every phase of the search.

From facilitating community engagement and developing the leadership profile to advising on interviews, contract negotiations, reference investigations, and leadership transition planning, our consultants provide objective guidance that supports informed decision-making while respecting the School Board's authority at every step.

This partnership continues after the hiring decision. We remain engaged to support the School Board and the new superintendent through onboarding, executive coaching, governance alignment, and transition planning designed to foster a successful start and long-term leadership success.

A Commitment to Excellence; Not Simply Filling a Position

At Ray and Associates, success is not measured by how quickly a search concludes. It is measured by the quality of the leader selected and the long-term success of that individual within the district.

Should the School Board determine that the available candidate pool does not meet Delano Public Schools' expectations, we will recommend continuing recruitment rather than encouraging a decision based solely on timeline pressures. Our search guarantee reflects our confidence in this philosophy and our commitment to partnering with the School Board until the right leader is identified.

Minnesota Knowledge. National Reach.

Minnesota's superintendent market is distinct. Strong school systems, highly engaged communities, and long-serving educational leaders create a competitive environment where many of the state's most accomplished superintendents remain committed to their districts for many years. Successfully recruiting these leaders requires more than a broad national network, it requires credibility within Minnesota's educational community.

Ray and Associates is uniquely positioned to provide that perspective. With corporate headquarters in Minneapolis and leadership deeply rooted in Minnesota education, our consultants understand the governance expectations, community values, legislative environment, and professional relationships that influence superintendent recruitment throughout the state.

Our team maintains active relationships with educational leaders across Minnesota, including superintendents, cabinet-level administrators, higher education partners, former district leaders, and statewide educational organizations. These relationships allow us to confidentially engage accomplished leaders who may never respond to a public advertisement but are willing to consider the right opportunity through trusted professional conversations.

When combined with our national executive recruitment network, this local expertise allows Delano Public Schools to benefit from both the depth of Minnesota talent and the breadth of exceptional leadership available across the country.



Transparency, Responsiveness, and Partnership

School Boards deserve more than periodic updates, they deserve a partner who communicates openly, responds promptly, and remains fully engaged throughout the search.

Our clients receive regular progress reports, ongoing recruitment updates, transparent financial reporting, and direct access to their lead consultants from the beginning of the search through the successful transition of the new superintendent. We pride ourselves on being accessible, collaborative, and responsive to the School Board's evolving needs.

The Ray Difference

Ray and Associates does not simply manage superintendent searches, we build partnerships with boards of education to identify transformational leaders.

Our relationship-based recruitment philosophy, confidential executive search process, commitment to quality over convenience, transparent pricing, comprehensive transition support, and unwavering dedication to client service distinguish our firm from traditional recruitment models. These principles have guided our work for more than fifty years and continue to help school districts identify leaders who strengthen organizations, inspire communities, and create lasting impact.

For Delano Public Schools, our commitment is clear: we will conduct a thoughtful, proactive, and highly personalized executive search focused on identifying the superintendent who is uniquely equipped to build upon the district's legacy of excellence while leading it confidently into the future.

Understanding the Minnesota Superintendent Marketplace

Identifying an exceptional superintendent for Delano Public Schools requires more than a national search, it requires a deep understanding of Minnesota's educational landscape and the relationships that shape it.

Ray and Associates offers a unique combination of statewide credibility and national executive recruitment expertise.

Our Minnesota Advantage

- Corporate headquarters located in Minneapolis
- Experience partnering with school boards in Minnesota on executive leadership searches
- Established relationships with Minnesota educational leaders, professional organizations, and executive networks
- Knowledge of Minnesota superintendent contracts, governance practices, and leadership transitions
- Regional search associates with Minnesota superintendent experience
- National recruiting capacity that complements—not replaces—our Minnesota relationships

This combination allows Ray and Associates to recruit outstanding leaders who understand Minnesota schools while also expanding Delano Public Schools' access to exceptional candidates throughout the Midwest and across the nation.



Superintendent Search Process and Methodology

Our Process

Ray and Associates' goal is to make the selection process professional, efficient, and successful to ensure your complete satisfaction with our services. Below you will find an overview followed by a walk-through of our process.



Board Input and Preparation

- Meet with entire Board to set timeline
- Finalize procedures and services desired
- Establish Board contact person
- Discuss application process, select advertising campaign and determine salary



Profile Development

- Meet with employees and stakeholders as identified by the Board
- Provide our 31 Qualities survey to all community members - available in any language
- Conduct open forums to gather community input
- Review and make the final decision on the desired profile
- Review and approve flyer and application forms.



Recruiting and Screening

- Advertising and recruitment of candidates for the position.
- Conduct the initial screening of the candidates to present to the Board



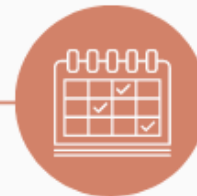
Candidate Presentation

- Bring forward 8-12 top candidates for Board consideration; review application packets and video interviews
- Complete consensus building matrix to determine candidates
- Work with search firm to establish interview format and questions..
- Schedule 1st round interviews



Selection of Finalist

- Interview 1st round candidates
- Complete consensus building matrix to determine finalists.
- Work with search firm to establish interview format and questions
- Conduct interviews of finalists.
- Complete consensus building matrix to determine final candidate
- Announce Board selected Candidate



Future Planning

- Issue Media Releases regarding the process and selection of new District leadership
- Board Assessment is offered with results shared with Board and new leadership



Working with the School Board Through the Search

Our goal is to ensure a professional, efficient, and successful selection process that exceeds the expectations of the School Board. Below is an overview and a detailed walkthrough of our proven search methodology.

	Ray and Associates	Board/District
Stage One: Board Input and Preparation	- Meet with the Board members individually to obtain input for profile development. - Meet with the entire Board to set a timeline, finalize procedures and services desired, establish Board contact person, discuss application process, set advertising and determine salary.	- Provide individual input for profile development. - Set the timeline, finalize procedures and services desired, provide Board contact person, set advertising and salary. - Prepare stakeholder meeting schedule and public/invite groups.
Stage Two: Profile Development and Process	- Meet with employees and stakeholders as identified by the Board. - Hold morning and evening open forums to collect community input.	- Review and make the final decision on the desired profile. - Review and approve flyer and application forms.
Stage Three: Recruiting and Screening	- Advertising and recruitment of candidates for the position. - Screening of the candidates to bring forward the candidates that match the Board's criteria.	
Stage Four: Candidate Presentation	- Bring forward 8–12 top candidates for Board consideration. - Provide a matrix to assess the top candidates. - Provide a summary of the individual Board responses. - Assist in establishing interview format and interview questions. - Schedule 1st round interviews.	- Review application packets. - View video interviews. - Complete consensus building matrix to determine candidates to interview in 1st round. - Work with a search firm to establish interview format and questions.
Stage Five: Selection of Finalist and Future Planning	- Following 1st round interviews, lead the Board through consensus building activity to reach determination of finalists. - Assist in establishing interview format and questions. - Schedule interviews of finalists and moderate forums with finalists. - Lead Board through a consensus building activity to determine the final candidate.	- Interview 1st round candidates - Complete consensus building matrix to determine finalists. - Work with a search firm to establish interview format and questions. - Conduct interviews of finalists. - Complete consensus building matrix to determine final candidate. - Announce Board Selected Candidate.



Stage One: Discovery - School Board Input and Preparation

During the first stage, our goal is to learn more about your specifications and unique district culture to target needs with precision. The firm will meet with each Board member individually to obtain input for the profile development. We will also meet with the entire Board to determine details like setting the timeline for the search, finalizing procedures and services desired by the Board, establishing the Board contact person(s), discussing the application process, setting the advertising, and determining the salary, among other details.

Action Items

- Customize the search process to meet the needs and expectations of the District.
- Conduct individual Board member interviews to assess the Board's priorities, goals, and objectives to aid in the development of the criteria and qualifications for the Superintendent position.
- Work with the Board to establish a timeline that lists each step in the search process.
- Discuss with the Board the requirements and salary range for the Superintendent position.
- Work with the District staff and those selected by the Board in the development of an accurate informational flyer/video and online application form.
- Create the District's promotional flyer or video if desired.

USA SCHOOL DISTRICT	
SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH SUGGESTED PROCESS AND TIMELINE	
Items highlighted in yellow indicate an in-person meeting with the consultant(s)	
DATE	
Stage 1 Board Input & Preparation	Consultant planning meeting with the Board and individual Board member interviews. (Time: TBD) (option to conduct via Zoom, conference call or gotomeetings.com) Begin preparing information for the District promotional flyer and online application form with the District liaison representative(s). Notify all associates and other professional contacts of vacancy. Contact constituents and stakeholders for input meetings on _____.
Stage 2 Profile Development & Process	Online survey link, for input on developing the profile, available on District website from _____ to _____. Meetings with constituent and stakeholder group representatives. 8 a.m. deadline for survey/input from constituents, stakeholders and Board members, including online survey. Promotional flyer draft due. Board to finalize Superintendent profile for the promotional flyer and online application form. (Time: TBD) (option to conduct via Zoom, conference call or gotomeetings.com)
Stage 3 Recruiting & Screening	Print promotional flyer. Forward to consultant. E-mail promotional flyer and online application instructions to interested candidates. Deadline for all application materials. (*See note below.)
Stage 4 Candidate Presentation	Consultant develops and finalizes interview questions and procedures with the Board. Top candidates are presented to the Board and consultant assists the Board in selecting finalists for the interviews. If desired by the Board, consultant will meet with constituents and staff interview group(s) to discuss their roles. (Time: TBD) Interview candidates (1st round). Meeting with consultant following the last interview. (Time: TBD)
Stage 5 Selection of Finalist & Future Planning	Interview finalist candidates (2nd round). (Optional) Final meeting with consultant following the last interview. (Time: TBD) (option to conduct via Zoom, conference call or gotomeetings.com) Consultant will discuss contract terms with the finalist. Offer the contract. Press release of new Superintendent. Board Self-Assessment Survey Results presented to the Board.

*All applications will be reviewed. Materials received after the closing date may be given full consideration depending upon the number of applications received and other factors.

(Actual dates to be determined in the first meeting with the Board.)

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Stage Two: Profile Development

Following the initial **Discovery stage** with the Board, Ray and Associates begins the formal **Profile Development** process. We firmly believe that parent, student, staff, and community participation is essential to building an accurate portrait of the ideal leader. By engaging Board-selected constituent groups and the community at large, we ensure the final profile reflects the unique needs and aspirations of the District.

Inclusive Feedback Sessions

- **Board Consultations:** Individual interviews with each Board member to establish a baseline of leadership expectations.
- **Stakeholder Forums:** In-person and virtual sessions held at varying times (morning and evening) to maximize accessibility and facilitate meaningful dialogue.
- **Community-Wide Outreach:** Open meetings designed to educate the public on the search process while gathering the qualitative data necessary to define a "best-fit" candidate.

Multilingual Online Survey

To capture broad community input, we provide a customized online survey that includes space for qualitative comments and recommendations.

- **Language Access:** Available in **English and Spanish at no additional charge** (other languages available upon request).
- **Seamless Integration:** We provide a dedicated link for the district website and digital distribution.
- **Data Analysis:** Our team manages all data collection and analysis, delivering a synthesized report of findings directly to the Board.

The 31 Desirable Characteristics Survey

Our proprietary **31 Desirable Characteristics Survey** identifies the specific leadership traits most valued by your constituents. We present these results in a tabulated, graphic report that highlights commonalities across different stakeholder groups.

- **Strategic Recruitment:** The characteristics identified as top priorities are used to craft promotional materials and frame candidate screening.
- **Tailored Interviewing:** Findings that are unique to specific groups are utilized to develop targeted interview questions, ensuring the Board can probe for the qualities most important to the community.



How We Engage



Individual and Group Interviews

We are eager to interview each Board member individually as well as visit with designated stakeholder groups as identified by the Board. From Administrators to Support Staff, the designated group bring unique perspectives to help us develop a comprehensive profile for leadership.



Open Community Forums

In addition to interviews, we host community forums and invite all community members, staff and parents to participate. With forums in both the morning and evening, we maximize attendance of constituents. These forums help us solicit input via the survey process and create dialogue by asking a series of questions related to the desired characteristics of the new Superintendent.

The purpose of these meetings will be to educate stakeholders about the process as well as to gather and organize information that will contribute to the development of an accurate profile for the position.



31 Desirable Characteristics Survey

In addition to scheduled meetings and forums, we offer an online profile survey option, our exclusive 31 Desirable Characteristics Survey. This survey has space for written comments and recommendations. The survey is available in various languages to be placed on the District website.

Results of our dialogue

The results of the stakeholder input is summarized in a report **shared with the Board and community** regarding **our findings and recommendations**.

We will present a tabulated and analyzed graphic report in which Board members' and stakeholders' survey responses are reviewed looking for those characteristics chosen most in common by the various groups and indicate those recommended or those thought to be worthy of consideration.

Our dialogue with constituents and interviews with individual Board members, coupled with survey results and comments, provide our firm with an accurate profile that is employed in the recruiting and careful screening of applicants. The characteristics most commonly selected will be used later in promotional materials.

"In a somewhat constricted timetable, Ray & Associates lead a process to gather information from all stakeholder groups on the characteristics that should be prioritized in the search, managed the application and interview process, and organized a busy day of in-person forums and zoom meetings for stakeholder groups."

**- Ms. Victoria Powers
Bexley City Schools Board VP**



Examples of Community Engagement

Our firm provides all clients with the option to involve the community in the search process; from building the profile to the interview. Please see below for a sample schedule for community input sessions.

YOUR LOGO HERE

USA School District REVISED 31 Qualities Survey 7-29-21

QUALITIES DESIRED IN THE NEW SUPERINTENDENT

* 1. Which group do you represent? (Please select only one) 0

☐ Teacher

☐ Administrator

☐ Support Staff

☐ Parent

☐ Student

☐ Non-Parent Community Member

INDIVIDUAL/CONSTITUENT/GROUP QUESTIONS

DATE: → → → →

TIME: → → →

LOCATION: →

1. → What do you consider as the significant strengths of the school district?

2. → What do you feel are the positives of the community/communities?

3. → What are qualities/management styles you would like to see in the new Superintendent?

4. → What are the critical issues the new Superintendent will face in this position?

SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH - COMMUNITY INPUT SESSIONS

Location: _____

Date: _____

TIME	GROUP
7:15 to 8:15 AM	Board of Education Employees
8:45 to 9:45 AM	Businesses, Gov't Officials & Community Organizations
10:15 to 11:15 AM	Parents, Community Members & Mentors
11:45 AM to 12:45 PM	Government Officials, Former Board of Education Members & Higher Education Partners
Lunch Break	Students
1:30 to 2:30 PM	School Administrators & Education Associations
2:45 to 3:45 PM	Community Organizations & Faith Leaders/Members
4:00 to 5:00 PM	Board of Education Employees
Dinner Break	
6:00 to 7:00 PM	Open Meeting
7:30 to 8:30 PM	Open Meeting



Sample of Survey Results Provided to the Board

Qualities Desired in a New Superintendent	Teachers	Administrators	Support Staff	Parents	Students	Non-Parent Community Members	Board of Education	Total	Combined Ranking	Consultant Recommendation	Abbreviated Definition of Quality and Characteristics
	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank	Raw	Rank		
1	3	3	2	7	2	6	21	44	6	Consider	1. Willing to listen to input, but is a decision maker
2	9	7	10	5	8	1	1	41	4	Recommend	2. Has leadership skills to respond to opportunities/challenges of diverse student body and community
3	30	27	30	31	15	29	29	191	31		3. Able to work with legislators and lead organization through legislative process
4	28	27	31	30	24	27	21	188	29		4. Ed.D. or Ph.D.
5	4	3	3	4	2	3	2	21	1	Recommend	5. Strong moral compass rooted in justice and equality
6	7	3	8	3	5	5	9	40	3	Recommend	6. Strong communicator in speaking, listening and writing
7	17	11	16	21	15	18	9	107	17		7. Commitment to visibility and actively engaged in a broad range of community groups
8	6	19	5	1	17	8	14	70	11	Consider	8. Has experience recruiting and maintaining exceptional staff for the district and schools
9	24	11	15	24	17	12	14	117	18		9. Ability to build consensus and commitment among individuals & groups
10	12	27	17	29	27	21	29	162	27		10. Has experience working effectively with employee representative groups/unions
11	19	7	8	15	10	21	7	87	13	Recommend	11. Ability to delegate and oversee work of staff and maintain accountability
12	15	11	13	13	17	12	14	95	14	Consider	12. Experience with effective management that will benefit the long-term financial health of district
13	14	11	5	19	10	12	14	85	12		13. Possesses excellent interpersonal skills and can present a positive image of district
14	31	27	26	28	17	31	29	189	30		14. Non-traditional or "hybrid" with background in business and/or education
15	7	1	11	8	1	18	7	53	7	Recommend	15. Strongly committed to "student centered" philosophy in all decisions
16	22	6	23	17	27	21	21	137	21		16. Ability to develop both short and long range goals
17	22	18	26	20	24	8	21	139	22		17. Ability to develop and communicate a vision of quality education
18	21	21	20	21	27	18	14	142	24		18. Experience in selection and implementation of educational priorities
19	15	21	29	12	8	21	21	127	19		19. Commitment to both academic and extracurricular programs

Qualities Desired in a New District Administrator	Teachers (75)		Administrators (12 Eng. + 1 Sp.) = 13		Support Staff (33)		Parents (235 Eng. + 2 Sp.) = 237		Students (15)		Non-Parent Community Members (25)		Board of Education (8)		Total	Combined Ranking	Consultant Recommendation	Abbreviated Definition of Quality and Characteristics
	Raw	Rank	Raw	Rank	Raw	Rank	Raw	Rank	Raw	Rank	Raw	Rank	Raw	Rank				
1	47	3	8	3	23	2	109	7	11	2	11	6	1	21	1	1	1	1. Willing to listen to input, and is a decision maker
2	35	9	6	7	14	10	121	5	7	8	18	1	7	1	1	1	1	2. Has leadership skills to respond to opportunities/challenges of diverse student body and community
3	4	30	0	27	2	30	24	31	4	15	2	29	0	29	3	3	3	3. Able to work with legislators and lead organization through legislative process
4	9	28	0	27	1	31	25	30	2	24	4	27	1	21	4	4	4	4. Ed.D. or Ph.D.
5	41	4	8	3	22	3	123	4	11	2	15	3	6	2	5	5	5	5. Strong moral compass rooted in justice and equality
6	36	7	8	3	15	8	133	3	8	5	12	5	3	9	6	6	6	6. Strong communicator in speaking, listening and writing
7	19	17	5	11	9	16	57	21	4	15	7	18	3	9	7	7	7	7. Commitment to visibility and actively engaged in a broad range of community groups
8	38	6	3	19	16	5	145	1	3	17	9	8	2	14	8	8	8	8. Has experience recruiting and maintaining exceptional staff for the district and schools
9	12	24	5	11	10	15	51	24	3	17	8	12	2	14	9	9	9	9. Ability to build consensus and commitment among individuals & groups
10	26	12	0	27	8	17	26	29	1	27	6	21	0	29	10	10	10	10. Has experience working effectively with employee representative groups/unions
11	17	19	6	7	15	8	73	15	6	10	6	21	4	7	11	11	11	11. Ability to delegate and oversee work of staff and maintain accountability
12	22	15	5	11	11	13	77	13	3	17	8	12	2	14	12	12	12	12. Experience with effective management that will benefit the long-term financial health of district
13	23	14	5	11	16	5	62	19	6	10	8	12	2	14	13	13	13	13. Possesses excellent interpersonal skills and can present a positive image of district
14	3	31	0	27	5	26	30	28	3	17	1	31	0	29	14	14	14	14. Non-traditional or "hybrid" with background in business and/or education
15	36	7	10	1	13	11	103	8	12	1	7	18	4	7	15	15	15	15. Strongly committed to "student centered" philosophy in all decisions
16	14	22	7	6	6	23	70	17	1	27	6	21	1	21	16	16	16	16. Ability to develop both short and long range goals
17	14	22	4	18	5	26	61	20	2	24	9	8	1	21	17	17	17	17. Ability to develop and communicate a vision of quality education
18	16	21	2	21	7	20	57	21	1	27	7	18	2	14	18	18	18	18. Experience in selection and implementation of educational priorities
19	22	15	2	21	4	29	80	12	7	8	6	21	1	21	19	19	19	19. Commitment to both academic and extracurricular programs



Stage Three: Recruitment, Advertising, and Screening

Using the newly Board-approved profile as our guide, Ray and Associates will begin searching our extensive network of professionals to find the perfect match. Our firm interviews each viable candidate that meets Board criteria and verifies their qualifications and experience to ensure only the best matches are presented to the Board.

Advertising

Ray and Associates is here to share your message utilizing the robust Ray and Associates website paired with productive educational advertising venues and social media channels.

National Advertisement – External Platforms

- School superintendents' association (AASA)
- Education Week newspaper and website
- National Association of School Superintendents (NASS)
- State administrators and state association of school Boards publications
- The school administrator publication, executives only website
- Association of Latino administrators and Superintendents (ALAS)
- National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE)
- American Association of School Personnel Administrators (AASPA)

National Advertisement – Ray and Associates' Internal Platforms

- Website
- Candidate database
- Social media channels

This network paired with our website averaging 28,000 views per month allows us to recruit highly qualified individuals.

Recruitment

We believe the best candidates need to be recruited. Ray and Associates will conduct all aspects of the recruitment process on a statewide, regional and national basis as follows:

- Contact individuals in our firm's database of nearly 4,000 school administrators whose interests match the district's criteria.
- Solicit nominations from our network groups:
 - Our Associates Team from across the nation
 - Ray and Associates' national advisory committee
 - Contacts from within various professional education organizations
 - Professional consultants in private and public sectors

Confidential Executive Recruitment

While advertising creates awareness, confidential executive recruitment identifies exceptional leaders who are unlikely to apply through traditional channels. Throughout every search, Ray and Associates conducts a deliberate outreach campaign focused on educational leaders whose experience, leadership style, and professional accomplishments align with the Board's desired profile.



Rather than waiting for candidates to express interest, our consultants initiate confidential conversations with sitting superintendents, deputy and assistant superintendents, cabinet-level administrators, and other highly accomplished educational executives. These conversations allow us to present the opportunity personally, answer questions candidly, and determine whether Delano Public Schools represents the right professional fit.

This proactive approach consistently expands the candidate pool beyond traditional applicants and provides the Board with access to exceptional leaders who otherwise would never have entered the process.



Screening

Once viable candidates have been identified, Ray and Associates will contact their references. Our background research team then conducts an extensive background investigation of the top candidate through our comprehensive system.

These investigations go well beyond listed references and their current position to include contacts with state associations and national leadership organizations. A complete check of a candidate's work history is also completed utilizing online search engines as well as social media. We not only vet candidates extensively in their professional career, we also review publicly available information that could affect the candidate's ability to serve successfully in the role. The candidates who meet the qualifications selected by the Board become top candidates.

Professional Objective

Our professional objective is to **aggressively recruit and advertise** for the best candidate who meets the qualifications and characteristics of a superintendent as set forth by the Board. Our recruitment process is very comprehensive, highlighted by the following steps:

- Largest recruiting network in the country.
- Inform the firm's associates of the position and seek recommendations.
- Advertise in local, regional, national and diverse venues known for high readership by school leaders which venues are approved by the Board such as: EdWeek, AASA, NABSE and ALAS.
- Consult our extensive database for precise matches between district and candidate profiles.



- **Aggressively recruit successful school leaders who are not currently seeking a new position to invite them to consider the superintendent positions.**
- Contact other organizations at state, regional and national levels regarding the position.
- Proactively seek out potential candidates at state and national conventions.

At Ray and Associates, we are deeply committed to ensuring that the recruitment process is equitable, accessible, and inclusive, particularly for candidates from communities that have been historically marginalized. We recognize that recruiting diverse leaders isn't just about expanding the applicant pool but also about actively addressing systemic barriers and implicit biases that can limit opportunities for underrepresented candidates.

To ensure an equitable and accessible process, we take several deliberate steps:

- **Outreach to Diverse Communities:** We proactively engage with networks, professional organizations, and affinity groups that serve historically marginalized communities, ensuring our outreach goes beyond traditional channels. This helps us attract diverse talent, particularly candidates from BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and other underrepresented groups, ensuring they are well-represented in the applicant pool.
- **Removing Barriers to Entry:** We critically examine job descriptions and qualifications to ensure they are inclusive and do not create unnecessary barriers for capable candidates. For example, instead of emphasizing traditional metrics like years of experience, we focus on skills, lived experiences, and the potential for impact, creating more opportunities for candidates from diverse backgrounds.
- **Equity in the Screening Process:** We use structured, equitable evaluation criteria to assess candidates based on their competencies, experiences, and values rather than relying on subjective impressions. By using a standardized framework, we minimize the potential for unconscious bias to affect how candidates are reviewed.
- **Transparency and Accessibility:** We ensure the recruitment process is accessible by offering multiple ways for candidates to apply, providing accommodation when needed, and maintaining transparent communication throughout the process. Our goal is to create a recruitment experience where all candidates feel welcomed and supported.

By implementing these strategies, we aim to build an applicant pool that is not only diverse but also reflective of the communities our schools serve. We believe that addressing implicit bias and ensuring equitable access are critical to finding leaders who can drive positive, inclusive change within each District's educational landscape.



Stage Four: Candidate Presentation

Ray and Associates will present 8–12 top-tier candidates for the Board’s consideration. Each candidate is meticulously vetted to ensure they meet the specific qualifications and leadership traits identified during the Profile Development stage. Our screening process includes:

Comprehensive Candidate Vetting

- **Digital and Social Media Audit:** We conduct deep-web searches and social media reviews to identify any public-facing concerns or relevant media coverage.
- **Direct Interviews:** We engage each candidate to confirm their continued interest, contract status, and history. We pose targeted questions regarding their professional record and specific district-related challenges.
- **360-Degree Reference Checks:** We speak with both listed references and independent professional contacts to gain a holistic view of the candidate’s performance and character.

Advanced Evaluation Tools

To provide the Board with a dynamic view of each applicant, we utilize the following:

- **One-Way Video Interviews:** Candidates complete a video introduction via Spark Hire, allowing the Board to assess communication style and presence before the first round of formal interviews.
- **Candidate Dossiers:** For every viable candidate, we provide a full application packet, the Spark Hire video, and a summary of our screening findings to assist the Board in their deliberations.

Collaborative Decision-Making

Our process is designed to ensure every Board member has an equal voice in the selection:

- **Assessment Matrix:** Board members individually evaluate each candidate against a standardized rubric based on the Leadership Profile.
- **Consensus Building:** Ray and Associates provides a tabulated summary of these individual assessments. This data-driven approach helps the Board reach a professional consensus on which candidates to advance to the first round of interviews.



Stage Five: Selection of Finalist and Future Planning

The Interview and Selection Process

Ray and Associates manages all logistics of the interview phase, providing the Board with a structured framework for evaluation. We assist in establishing the interview format, developing targeted questions, moderating forums, and facilitating post-interview debriefs.

Preliminary Interviews (First Round)

Typically involving 6–8 candidates, the first round of interviews can be conducted virtually to maximize cost savings or in-person at the Board's discretion.

- **Evaluation:** Following these sessions, we utilize a standardized assessment matrix to narrow the pool to two or three finalists.

Finalist Interviews and Community Engagement

Final interviews are conducted on-site. To ensure a comprehensive evaluation, the Board may elect to include stakeholder engagement:

- **Finalist Forums:** We moderate sessions between finalists and key constituent groups (administrators, teachers, support staff, and community members).
- **Stakeholder Feedback:** We provide QR codes and digital survey links for participants to submit feedback. This data is synthesized and presented to the Board to inform the final selection.

Final Due Diligence and Background Verification

Before an offer is extended, we conduct an exhaustive background verification on the top candidate through an external professional service at no additional cost. This includes:

- Criminal and civil litigation history
- Sex offender registry and social security verification
- Motor vehicle record checks
- Verification of educational degrees (*Comprehensive reports for additional finalists are available for a supplemental fee.*)

Negotiation and Appointment

Once a preferred candidate is identified, we help lay the foundation for a successful appointment. Our team works directly with the District's legal counsel to negotiate the contract and secure the candidate—a service provided at no additional cost to the District.



Addressing Delano's Strategic Search Priorities

1. Navigating Contractual Barriers

Delano Public Schools is correct in recognizing that many of Minnesota's highest-performing superintendents begin each school year committed to leading their districts and fulfilling contractual obligations. Rather than viewing these contractual commitments as barriers, Ray and Associates views them as an important part of a professional and ethical recruitment process.

Our approach begins with confidential executive outreach. Rather than relying on public postings, our consultants personally engage highly respected superintendents and executive leaders through trusted professional relationships. Initial conversations focus on career aspirations, leadership philosophy, and alignment with Delano Public Schools' vision before discussing logistics or timing.

If a candidate emerges who is under contract, we work collaboratively with the candidate, the School Board, and legal counsel to develop an orderly transition that minimizes disruption for students and staff. We have successfully assisted districts in negotiating mutually agreeable release dates, phased transitions, and delayed start dates that respect contractual obligations while allowing the receiving district to secure its preferred candidate.

Our philosophy is simple: we never encourage candidates to disregard professional commitments. Instead, we help facilitate respectful transitions that protect the interests of all parties while enabling Delano Public Schools to recruit the strongest possible leadership.

2. Contingency Plan: "No Preferred Candidate Found"

Ray and Associates believes selecting the right superintendent is far more important than meeting a predetermined timeline. If the School Board concludes that the fall applicant pool does not fully meet Delano Public Schools' expectations, we will recommend continuing recruitment rather than encouraging a compromise appointment.

Should the School Board elect to extend the search into the traditional winter or spring hiring season, our professional fee remains unchanged under our Search Guarantee. We will continue confidential recruitment, refresh marketing materials, expand executive outreach, and present additional qualified candidates without charging an additional professional search fee. The District would remain responsible only for any previously approved direct expenses associated with continuing the search.

This approach allows the School Board to make its decision based solely on candidate quality, not calendar pressure.

3. Transition Strategy for a Mid-Year vs. July 1 Start

Whether the selected superintendent begins November 1, December 1, or July 1, Ray and Associates remains actively engaged beyond the hiring decision.



Our transition support includes development of a customized 90-day entry plan, facilitated Board–Superintendent alignment meetings, executive coaching, stakeholder listening sessions, introductions to community and civic leaders, cabinet transition planning, and ongoing consultation during the superintendent's first months.

For mid-year transitions, we place particular emphasis on helping the new superintendent understand the district's instructional priorities, budget cycle, labor environment, and community expectations while ensuring continuity of district operations. Our goal is to help the superintendent enter the organization with clarity, confidence, and strong relationships from day one.

4. The High-Performer "Passive" Recruitment Strategy

Exceptional leaders rarely apply for superintendent positions during the opening months of the school year. That reality makes executive recruitment, not advertising, the defining element of a successful fall search.

Ray and Associates utilizes a relationship-based recruitment model built upon decades of professional connections across Minnesota and the nation. Our consultants personally identify and contact sitting superintendents, deputy and assistant superintendents, cabinet leaders, and other accomplished executives whose experience aligns with Delano Public Schools' leadership profile.

We also leverage referrals from current and former superintendents, state leadership organizations, university preparation programs, retired educational leaders, and our extensive database of executive candidates. Every prospective candidate receives a personalized introduction highlighting Delano Public Schools' strengths, strategic opportunities, and community values.

Many of our strongest superintendent placements have resulted from confidential conversations with leaders who had no intention of changing districts until presented with an opportunity uniquely aligned with their professional aspirations.

5. Transitioning from "Active Search" to "Continuous Recruitment"

Should Delano Public Schools extend the search into the traditional January–March hiring cycle, Ray and Associates transitions from an advertised search to a continuous executive recruitment strategy.

Rather than leaving the original posting unchanged, we refresh all marketing materials, update position messaging based on stakeholder feedback, relaunch targeted communications, and initiate a new wave of confidential outreach. Candidates entering the market in January encounter a renewed opportunity that reflects the School Board's continued commitment to finding the right leader—not a position that appears to have lingered without success.

Throughout the extended search, our consultants continue identifying emerging leaders, cultivating relationships with prospective candidates, and providing the Board with regular recruitment updates. This continuous recruitment model ensures the candidate pool remains dynamic, competitive, and aligned with Delano Public Schools' expectations until the School Board confidently selects its next superintendent.



Proposed Search Timeline

SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH *SUGGESTED* PROCESS AND TIMELINE

Items highlighted in yellow indicate an in-person meeting with the consultant(s)

DATE

Stage 1 Board Input & Preparation	<u>08/24/2026</u>	Consultant planning meeting with the Board and individual Board member interviews. <i>(Time: TBD) (option to conduct virtually via Zoom)</i>
	<u>08/26/2026</u>	Begin preparing information for the <u>District</u> promotional video or job description and online application form with the <u>District</u> liaison representative(s).
	<u>08/26/2026</u>	Notify all associates and other professional contacts of vacancy.
	<u>08/26/2026</u>	Contact constituents and stakeholders for input meetings on 09/14-15/2026.
Stage 2 Profile Development & Process	<u>09/02/2026</u>	Online survey link, for input on developing the profile, available on District website from <u>09/02/2026</u> to <u>09/18/2026</u> .
	<u>09/14-15/26</u>	Meetings with constituent and stakeholder group representatives.
	<u>09/18/2026</u>	8 a.m. deadline for survey/input from constituents, stakeholders and Board members, including online survey.
	<u>09/21/2026</u>	Promotional video due.
	<u>09/28/2026</u>	Board to finalize Superintendent profile for the promotional flyer or job description and online application form. <i>(Time: TBD) (option to conduct virtually via Zoom)</i>
Stage 3 Recruiting & Screening	<u>10/02/2026</u>	E-mail promotional video and online application instructions to interested candidates.
	<u>10/28/2026</u>	Deadline for all application materials. <i>(*See note below.)</i>
Stage 4 Candidate Presentation	<u>11/02/2026</u>	Consultant develops and finalizes interview questions and procedures with the Board. Top candidates are presented to the <u>Board</u> and consultant assists the Board in selecting finalists for the interviews. If desired, consultant will meet with constituents and staff interview group(s) to discuss their roles. <i>(Time: TBD)</i>
	<u>Wk of 11/09/26</u>	Interview top candidates (1 st round).
	<u>Wk of 11/09/26</u>	Meeting with consultant following the last interview. <i>(Time: TBD)</i>
Stage 5 Selection of Finalist & Future Planning	<u>Wk of 11/16/26</u>	Interview finalist candidates (2 nd round). <i>(Optional)</i>
	<u>Wk of 11/16/26</u>	Final meeting with consultant following the last interview. <i>(Time: TBD) (option to conduct via virtually Zoom)</i>
	<u>TBD</u>	Consultant will discuss contract terms with the finalist.
	<u>TBD</u>	Press release of new Superintendent.
	<u>TBD</u>	Board Self-Assessment Survey Results presented to the Board.

**All applications will be reviewed. Materials received after the closing date may be given full consideration depending upon the number of applications received and other factors.*

(Actual dates to be determined in the first meeting with the Board.)



Superintendent Transition Support

Ray and Associates believes selecting the right superintendent is only the beginning. Sustainable district success requires intentional leadership development, governance excellence, and strong alignment between the Board and Superintendent. Following appointment, Ray and Associates remains available to support the Board–Superintendent transition through executive coaching, governance alignment, and onboarding through our retainer-based strategic leadership partnership.

Executive Coaching and Thought Partnership

We provide senior leaders with a confidential, trusted space to navigate complex challenges and access national best practices. Our personalized coaching focuses on:

- **Leadership Effectiveness:** Enhancing decision-making, communication, and executive presence.
- **Strategic Growth:** Facilitating intentional reflection to drive long-term organizational impact.
- **Confidential Advisory:** Serving as a professional sounding board for high-stakes leadership transitions and institutional strategy.

Board Governance and Facilitation

We partner with Boards of Education to design and facilitate purposeful, results-driven retreats. Whether focused on goal-setting or governance transitions, our approach is grounded in national best practices and tailored to your specific objectives. Our end-to-end support includes:

- **Strategic Session Design:** Customized curriculum and material development.
- **Active Facilitation:** Expertly guided sessions to ensure engagement and alignment.
- **Post-Retreat Synthesis:** A structured debrief and formal report identifying key patterns, insights, and actionable recommendations to ensure the retreat's impact extends into daily operations.



Fee Proposal

The cost of our proposal is for completing a comprehensive superintendent search for the Delano Public Schools School Board.

Professional Fee

\$20,000

Includes:

- Search planning and project management
- Stakeholder engagement and leadership profile development
- Recruitment and candidate outreach
- Advertising and position marketing
- Candidate screening and evaluation
- Consultant travel and related search expenses
- Facilitation of Board interviews and selection activities
- Reference checking
- Background investigations for finalist candidates, including:
 - Criminal background check
 - Civil litigation review
 - Social Security verification
 - Motor vehicle records review
 - Sex offender registry review
 - Verification of educational credentials
- Contract negotiation support and consultation

There are no additional charges for advertising, consultant travel, candidate recruitment activities, or standard background investigations included within the scope of this proposal.

Additional background investigations requested by the Board beyond those identified above may be provided at cost upon request.

All expenses are estimates, based on past experiences. The District will be billed for only the actual expenses incurred. Any requests above and beyond this proposal will be invoiced at a rate of \$50/hour for administrative work and \$200/hour for associate work.

Candidate Expenses

The number of candidates interviewed is at the discretion of the School Board. The estimated cost to interview a candidate is approximately \$2,000 which may include travel, lodging and meals for the candidate and spouse. This estimate is dependent on the candidate's geographic location and the Board's reimbursement policy. Candidates will submit all receipts and expense documentation to a designated individual at the District. Said expenses will be reimbursed by the District as they occur not to exceed Board-approved limits.



Cost Saving Options

Ray and Associates is aware of budget concerns and offers several cost-saving options including:

- Conduct meetings with our associates via Zoom to minimize associate travel expenses.
- Review and utilize meeting materials electronically via email, shared drive, etc.
- Conduct first round candidate interviews via Zoom to reduce candidate travel expenses.

Our process is designed to be flexible and responsive to the School Board's unique needs. **Should the School Board desire modifications to the proposed process or additional services beyond those outlined in this proposal, Ray and Associates will work collaboratively with the Board to customize the engagement accordingly. Note that our fees and expenses will be adjusted accordingly.** Ray and Associates will discuss any modifications relating to the search fee regarding our services at the formal presentation during Stage One of the search process.

Payment Schedule

The lump-sum fee shall be paid in three installments:

- 50% due upon execution of the contract
- 25% due upon completion of stakeholder engagement meetings
- 25% due upon appointment of the superintendent

Leadership
  That
Lifts  
Communities



Our Team and Professional Approach

The Ray and Associates team possesses a depth of expertise unmatched in the executive search industry. Our consultants are former superintendents, educational executives, state education leaders, and governance experts who understand firsthand the complexities of educational leadership. We do not simply recruit candidates; we serve as strategic advisors to School Boards throughout the search, selection, onboarding, and transition processes.

Beyond our corporate headquarters in Minneapolis, our associates are strategically located across the country to provide national reach with local insights. Supported by a full-time administrative staff, our team maintains the highest standards of:

- **Confidentiality:** Protecting the integrity of the search for both the client and the candidates.
- **Ethical Practice:** Adhering to strict professional standards and transparent business conduct.
- **Discretion:** Ensuring a smooth, professional experience for all stakeholders.

Commitment to Success

Ray and Associates measures success not solely by the appointment of a superintendent, but by the long-term impact of that leader on student achievement, organizational effectiveness, staff engagement, and community confidence. The majority of our superintendent placements remain in their positions well beyond the minimum twelve-month benchmark identified in this RFP, with many serving multiple years and leading significant organizational improvements. We are confident that our proven process will secure a superintendent capable of driving sustained success and positive outcomes for the Delano Public Schools' students, staff, and community.

Meet Our Team

The School Board will be supported by an experienced leadership team led by **Dr. Stephanie Burrage** and **Molly Schwarzhoff**. Together, they bring a unique combination of executive educational leadership, governance expertise, stakeholder engagement, and nationally recognized superintendent search experience.



Dr. Burrage serves as President and CEO of Ray and Associates and brings more than three decades of experience as a superintendent, principal, teacher, state educational leader, and executive. Her career includes serving as Minnesota's first Chief Equity Officer, Deputy Commissioner of Education, and superintendent-level leader, providing her with a deep understanding of the complex challenges and opportunities facing Boards of Education and school systems today. Dr. Burrage's expertise in governance, leadership development, strategic planning, and executive coaching allows her to guide Boards through a thoughtful and comprehensive superintendent selection process focused on long-term organizational success.



Partnering with Dr. Burrage is Molly Schwarzhoff, Vice President, an accomplished executive search consultant with extensive experience managing and facilitating superintendent and executive leadership searches across the country. Molly is known for her exceptional organizational leadership, candidate recruitment strategies, stakeholder engagement processes, and commitment to ensuring a seamless experience for Boards and candidates alike. Her ability to identify high-quality



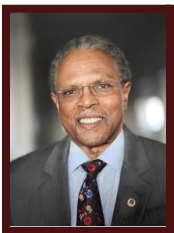
candidates, coordinate complex search activities, and maintain the highest standards of confidentiality has contributed to numerous successful superintendent appointments. **Molly will be the District liaison's main point of contact.**

Together, Dr. Burrage and Molly Schwarzhoff provide a highly responsive and collaborative partnership, combining strategic leadership insight with proven search execution, to identify, recruit, and support the selection of exceptional leaders who will advance the missions of the District.

Search Team for Delano Public Schools

The coordinators and associates listed below will lead the recruitment, screening, and background check processes. By strategically selecting associates from across the country, we ensure comprehensive national coverage and access to an elite pool of candidates.

Our team prioritizes local presence, pairing our national network with associates who understand your region's specific landscape. This local expertise fosters the "personable connection" necessary to elicit honest, high-quality feedback from your stakeholders while ensuring a deep, nuanced understanding of the district's needs.



Dr. Michael Rush, Director of Special Projects and Networking

Dr. Rush serves our firm as Director of Special Projects and Networking. He oversees major searches conducted by the firm and will directly interact with school board members and any committee overseeing the superintendent search as well as other cabinet level positions. He earned his doctorate in Educational Leadership from Nova Southeastern University and was an Assistant Commissioner of Education, a State

Fiscal Monitor, a Superintendent, a Deputy Superintendent, a Principal, a Supervisor of Special Education and a Teacher all in the state of New Jersey. Dr. Rush served as a school board member as well.

Dr. Rush is a State Approved Mentor for School Superintendents and other cabinet level positions for individuals pursuing their superintendent license in New Jersey. He has been with our firm for more than 15 years and has traveled to several states assisting school board members in their pursuit of seeking a superintendent to lead their school district.



Dr. Klint Willert, Regional Search Associate

Dr. Willert serves our firm as a Regional Search Associate, team member and background investigator for the recruitment and screening of candidates. He received a Bachelors in Elementary Education from Dakota State University, a Masters in Educational Leadership from the University of Montana and an Educational Doctorate degree from the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota. Dr.

Willert has more than 20 years of experience in the education field having served as a Teacher, Principal, School Counselor and Superintendent in Montana, South Dakota, Iowa and Minnesota.



Dr. Greg Batenhorst, Regional Search Associate

Dr. Batenhorst is a seasoned educator and public school administrator who now serves our firm as a Regional Search Associate, team member and background investigator for the recruitment and screening of candidates. He received a bachelor's degree in History and a master's degree in Counseling, both from Creighton University. He earned a doctoral degree in Educational Administration from St. Louis University.

During his career, Dr. Batenhorst served as a Teacher, School Counselor, Middle School Assistant Principal, Middle School Principal, and Assistant Superintendent of Student Services. He retired in June 2024 from his role as Superintendent for the Mt. Vernon Community School District. Dr. Batenhorst has a passion for sports, both as a fan and athlete. He is an avid golfer and runner and enjoys traveling with his wife who also served as a lifelong educator.



Dr. Susan Savaglio Jarvis, Regional Search Associate

Dr. Savaglio Jarvis serves our firm as a Regional Search Associate, team member and background investigator for the recruitment and screening of candidates. She received a B.A. in Physical Education, an M.A. in Secondary Curriculum and Instruction as well as her Ed.D. in Administrative Leadership and Supervision all from Arizona State University. Dr. Savaglio Jarvis has extensive experience in the education field having served as a Physical Education Teacher, Assistant Principal, Elementary Principal, High School Principal, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning. In June 2021, Dr. Savaglio Jarvis retired as Superintendent of the Kenosha Unified School District.

As a Regional Search Associate, Dr. Savaglio Jarvis uses her skills and experience to find highly-qualified individuals to fill leadership positions in school districts. She loves the outdoors, enjoying walks, hikes and bike rides whenever she has the chance and always loves spending time with her family and close friends.



Ray & Associates



Relevant Experience

Proven Success and Search History

Of the searches we have conducted, **98% have resulted in the successful placement of a leader in an executive position**. Our firm will continue the search as long as necessary to find a fit for the person who meets the profile. Our placement tenure averages approximately eight (8) years within the last several years. Successful placement is defined as working with the board through the search process with the end result being the hiring of a candidate who encompasses the qualities and experience that our clients are looking for.

Recent Minnesota Leadership Searches

- Forest Lake Area Schools
- Monticello Public Schools
- Wright Technical Center
- Eastern Carver County Schools
- Additional executive leadership searches across Minnesota, including St. Paul Public Schools and Burnsville–Eagan–Savage School District 191

Our experience in Minnesota has provided valuable insight into the state's leadership pipeline, governance expectations, and educational priorities, enabling us to successfully recruit leaders who align with the values and expectations of Minnesota communities.

Our History of Searches in the Past 3–5 Years

Below is a representative sample of clients served by Ray and Associates through executive and leadership searches completed within the past three to five years. This list includes colleges, universities, and state agencies, charter organizations, and state education agencies and reflects our breadth of experience conducting searches for senior leadership roles such as Chief Academic Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Chief Financial Officer, **Superintendent**, President, and State Education Commissioner. We are happy to provide references upon request.

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Allentown School District (PA) | • Juneau City School District (AK) |
| • DeKalb County School District (GA) | • PA Virtual Charter School (PA) |
| • Williston Basin School District #7 (ND) | • Manatee School for the Arts (FL) |
| • Cary School District 26 (IL) | • Innovation Montessori (FL) |
| • Little Rock School District (AR) | • Kalamazoo Public Schools (MI) |
| • Geneva Community Unit School District 304 (IL) | • Wayne County Public Schools (NC) |
| • Anchorage Independent School District (KY) | • Englewood Public School District (NJ) |
| • St. Louis Public Schools (MO) | • ACERO Schools (IL) |
| • West Allis–West Milwaukee School District (WI) | • Columbus City Schools (OH) |
| • Montgomery Public Schools (AL) | • Ohio Department of Education (OH) |
| • School District of Lancaster (PA) | • Bessemer City Schools (AL) |
| • Wichita Public Schools USD 259 (KS) | • Akron Public Schools (OH) |
| • Alaska Department of Education & Early Development (AK) | • Brentwood School District (MO) |
| • Fairbanks North Star Borough School Dist (AK) | • Mount Vernon CSD (IA) |
| | • Higley Unified School District (AZ) |
| | • Evansville Community School District (WI) |
| | • Ferndale Public Schools (MI) |



- North Thurston Public Schools (WA)
- Rochester Community Schools (MI)
- **Eastern Carver County Schools (MN)**
- Cleveland City Schools (TN)
- Roosevelt Union Free School District (NY)
- Wyandanch Union Free School District (NY)
- North Mason School District (WA)
- Littleton Elementary School District (AZ)
- Garden City Public Schools (KS)
- Erie's Public Schools (PA)
- Bay City Public Schools (MI)
- Baltimore County Schools (MD)
- Fargo Public Schools (ND)
- **Wright Technical Center (MN)**
- Bremerton School District (WA)
- Christina School District (DE)
- Williamsburg–James City Co. Public Schools (VA)
- Northshore School District (WA)
- **Monticello Public Schools (MN)**
- **Forest Lake Public Schools (MN)**
- Council Bluffs Community School District (IA)

References

Below are references selected from completed searches.

SCHOOL DISTRICT	LOCATION	CONTACT PERSON	TITLE OF CONTACT	PHONE NUMBERS/ E-MAIL
Monticello School District	Monticello, MN	Jamie Sieben	Board President	jamie.sieben@monticello.k12.mn.us
Wright Technical Center	Buffalo, MN	Eric Olson	Board member	Office: 763-272-2001 eric.olson@monticello.k12.mn.us
Eastern Carver County Schools	Chaska, MN	Tim Klein	Board member	Cell: 612-963-1150 kleintim@district112.org
Erie's Public Schools	Erie, PA	Dr. Jay Breneman	Board President	Cell: 814-490-6872 jbreneman@eriesd.org
Williamsburg–James City County Schools	Williamsburg, VA	Sarah Ortego	Board President	Cell: 202-744-3946 sarah.ortego@wiccschools.org
Fargo Public Schools	Fargo, ND	Katie Christensen Mineer	Board President	Cell: 701- 388-7369 christk3@fargo.k12.nd.us



WHAT OUR DISTRICTS SAY



"Ray & Associates guided a seamless and transparent process from start to finish. Kathy and Bridget facilitated each step, beginning with gathering community input and assisting the board in identifying our priority characteristics. They made sure our search was visible nationally, and the result was a large number of highly-qualified candidates. They used their considerable talent and experience to gather input from each of our stakeholder groups, which provided the board with valuable information as we faced the most important decision of our tenure. Throughout the entire process, Kathy and Bridget provided excellent communication of expectations and timelines. They facilitated a high-stakes, complicated situation with integrity and fidelity while also making it enjoyable. Their greatest strength was unifying the very different personalities and priorities of our board members, allowing us to come to a unanimous vote for our next district leader."

Ms. Stacy Jolley, Board President & Ms. Linda Poole, Board Vice President
Millard Public Schools, NE



"Your team guided us through the process in a seamless and transparent manner making sure our search was visible nationally, gathering input from each of our stakeholder groups, and providing the Board with valuable information as we moved toward the final selection of our next Superintendent. Our point person from Ray & Associates kept us updated and was always available to respond to our questions in a timely manner. Our overall experience with Ray & Associates exceeded our expectations, and I would not hesitate to recommend your company to other school districts."

Mr. Alan Strauss, Chief Human Resources & Equity Officer
Broward County Public Schools, FL



"As a large, public urban school district with a richly diverse student population, one of our top priorities was to conduct a national search intentionally reaching diverse candidates. Upon hire, Ray & Associates immediately heard our values and quickly proved their ability to access a multitude of resources and networks ensuring a wide range of candidates throughout our selection process. In addition to their commitment to our values, Ray & Associates was a consistent and constant guide throughout the process. Our board of education always knew what the next step in the process would be and was confident that we would be prepared for effective and wise decision-making."

Ms. Jen Schottke, Board President
Grand Rapids Public Schools, MI



Our Commitment to Delano Public Schools School Board

Ray and Associates will provide Delano Public Schools with the highest quality services to assist the School Board in hiring leaders who will meet district specific needs and positively impact the education of all students.

Ray and Associates is committed to identifying the best candidates ensuring each student will have the resources and support needed for their educational journey each and every day. We understand that students, staff, families and the community are the foundation and as our goal, we commit to finding the best candidates that will do the following:

- Provide quality instruction for each student.
- Include all students, families, staff, and community members.
- Transform systems that contribute to inequities.
- Develop relationships that are intentional and reciprocal.
- Collaborate with families, students, staff, and community.
- Communicate in an honest, open, and courageous manner.

Join us as we **ASK questions. LISTEN fully. WORK together. ACT meaningfully!**

Satisfaction Guaranteed

Ray and Associates or Delano Public Schools may terminate this contract at any time for any reason by giving at least fourteen (14) days' notice in writing. If the contract is terminated by the District as provided herein, Ray and Associates shall be paid a mutually agreed upon payment as negotiated between Ray and Associates and the District for the work completed as of the date of notification of termination. Ray and Associates shall incur no additional fees and expenses payable by the District after notice of termination without written authorization from the District.

If any of the hired candidates depart from the position(s) during the first year due to dissatisfaction and not health related matters, personal or familial reasons, Ray and Associates will recruit new candidates for the District at no additional cost barring travel, advertising, and due diligence expenses.

Confidentiality

The nature of our work and our ability to carry out our responsibility to you is directly related and dependent upon our present and past experience in providing similar services to others. **Ray and Associates will preserve the confidential nature of any information which becomes available to the firm resulting from the services rendered to the District.** As our client, you also need to maintain the confidentiality of information provided by Ray and Associates.

Our Focus: Your Peace of Mind

Delano Public Schools has earned its reputation through decades of visionary leadership, engaged governance, and unwavering commitment to students. Selecting your next superintendent is not simply about continuing that legacy, it is about ensuring it grows stronger. Ray and Associates would be honored to partner with the School Board to identify the leader who will preserve what makes Delano Public Schools exceptional while preparing the district for its next generation of success.