

BEST PRACTICES FOR PRINCIPAL SELECTION

This document guides councils through legal requirements and suggested best practices of the principal selection process. These suggested steps are written with the expectation that everyone involved will follow the spirit and the letter of the law and is committed to acting in the best interest of students.

The document was developed with input from the following groups:

- Kentucky Association of School Administrators
- Kentucky Association of School Councils
- Kentucky Association of School Superintendents
- Kentucky Department of Education
- Kentucky Education Association
- Kentucky School Boards Association
- Jefferson County Teachers Association
- Office of Education Accountability

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR PRINCIPAL SELECTION

KRS 160.345 section 2 (h)

The principal selection process at the school level is set out in KRS 160.345 (2)(h). The relevant parts of the statute read as follows:

1. If the vacancy to be filled is the position of principal, the school council shall select the new principal from among those persons recommended by the local superintendent, except as provided in subparagraph 4. of this paragraph. The superintendent shall provide additional applicants upon request, when qualified applicants are available. The school council shall receive training in recruitment and interviewing techniques prior to carrying out the process of selecting a principal. The council shall select the trainer to deliver the training.
2. Personnel decisions made at the school level under the authority of subparagraphs 1., 2., and 4 of this paragraph shall be binding on the superintendent who completes the hiring process.
3. If the vacancy for the position of principal occurs in a school that has an index score that places it in the lowest one-third (1/3) of all schools below the assistance line and the school has completed a scholastic audit under KRS 158.6455 that includes findings that show a lack of effectiveness of the principal and school council, the superintendent shall appoint the principal after consulting with the school council.
4. Applicants subsequently employed shall provide evidence that they are certified prior to assuming the duties of a position in accordance with KRS 161.020. The superintendent shall provide additional applicants upon request when qualified applicants are available.

Role of the Current Principal in the Selection Process

The statute does not require that the outgoing principal remove himself or herself from the process of selecting the new principal. It is the recommended best practice for the outgoing principal to allow the remaining council members to conduct the selection process without his or her involvement unless the council requests assistance.

Kentucky Supreme Court Opinion regarding Principal Selection Process- Young vs. Hammond, 139 S.W.3d 895 (2004)

The Kentucky Supreme Court rendered an opinion on April 22, 2004 impacting the definition of “qualified applicants” for principal positions. The Supreme Court upheld the ruling of the appellate court that the superintendent’s recommendation is not a statutory requirement and that the superintendent must submit all applications for the position of principal to the school council if requested, as long as the applicants have met all the qualifications required by statute (e.g. a clear criminal records check and appropriate certification).

- An applicant for principal is qualified based on the legal definition rendered by the Kentucky Supreme Court.
- The superintendent may have personnel procedures that can include screening and ranking of all candidates.
- Once screening is complete at the district office, the superintendent is to provide the council with a list of qualified candidates for their consideration.
- If the council asks for more, and continues to ask for more, then the superintendent must provide all candidates that are qualified in a timely fashion.
- If the council asks for all applicants, the superintendent shall provide, in a timely fashion, a list of all qualified applicants for the principal vacancy.
- If the council asks for a principal candidate by name and the superintendent does not include them in the first list of candidates, then the superintendent must include that person’s name on a subsequent list sent to the council.

IMPORTANT DEFINITION FOR THIS DOCUMENT

Criteria — The characteristics sought in a principal for this school. The criteria serves as a guide for question writing, interviewing, and finding the candidate who best meets what the school seeks in a principal. This does not mean conditions for employment.

BEST PRACTICES FOR PRINCIPAL SELECTION

This document represents best practices for the principal selection process. These suggested steps are written with the expectation that all involved parties are following the spirit and the letter of the law and are committed to doing what is in the best interest of the students.

If a step is required by law, it is marked in bold.

Action	Person Responsible	Date
1. Declare Principal Vacancy	Supt	
The superintendent declares a principal vacancy at a school as a result of a principal retirement, resignation, termination, or other reason.		

2. Post the Vacancy	Supt	
<p>Post vacancy according to KRS 160.380(2)(b) and (c). This requires a 30-day posting of the vacancy prior to employing someone. The position must be posted at the district central office for public viewing and must also be listed in a statewide registry maintained by the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE).</p> <p>The superintendent may, with the council's agreement and in emergency circumstances, ask for KDE's approval of a waiver to permit employing before the 30 days elapse.</p>		
3. Meet with School Council (open meeting)	Supt	
<p>The superintendent meets with the school council in an open meeting to discuss the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The desire to work collaboratively and cooperatively with the council to select a principal who meets the unique needs of the school, based on superintendent and council criteria. <input type="checkbox"/> District recruiting strategies/activities. <input type="checkbox"/> Timeline for providing recommended applicants for council consideration. <input type="checkbox"/> Methods to be used to gather information/screen applicants in making final recommendations. <input type="checkbox"/> Applicants receiving superintendent recommendation will be those who best meet the council's and superintendent's criteria. <input type="checkbox"/> If the council requests additional applicants, the superintendent will provide all the applicants who meet the qualifications required by statute, following the 2004 Kentucky Supreme Court ruling, <i>Young vs. Hammond</i>, cited earlier in this document. <input type="checkbox"/> The possible need for an interim administrator being appointed until such time that the council selects a principal, and an explanation of the process of selection. <input type="checkbox"/> A date to meet with the council again to share the superintendent's draft of written criteria for the position. <input type="checkbox"/> Required training of the council in the principal selection process according to KRS 160.345(2)(h) (Legally required — Council selects the trainer.) <input type="checkbox"/> The suggested best practice of getting a trainer from outside the school district, booking a trainer who will be available for follow-up questions, and the intention for the district to pay for the principal selection training selected by the council. 		

4. Set Up Principal Selection Training for the Council	Council	
<p>Principal selection training is required by KRS 160.345(2)(h). The council selects the trainer and the length of the training. Three (3) hours is a suggested minimum with the trainer available for follow-up questions. It is best practice for the district to pay for this training, but is not a requirement. It is also best practice to use a trainer from outside the district.</p> <p>The following are suggested topics to request the trainer to cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> How to review applications and resumes. <input type="checkbox"/> How to use electronic search to gather information about the candidates. <input type="checkbox"/> How to conduct in-person interviews — Develop interview questions based on criteria. Review what questions a council can legally ask a candidate and which questions or topics to avoid. <input type="checkbox"/> How to conduct reference and work experience checks. <input type="checkbox"/> How to prepare, conduct, and evaluate open response or written interviews. <input type="checkbox"/> How to review the candidates’ portfolios and resumes. <input type="checkbox"/> How to prepare, conduct, and review a performance event. <input type="checkbox"/> When and how to request additional candidates from the superintendent. <input type="checkbox"/> When and how to discuss employment issues in open or closed session. Be sure your council follows open meetings laws for open and closed sessions. KRS 61.810-61.815 		
5. Establish Council Timeline and Plan for Principal Selection Process (open meeting)	Council	
<p>Start with the target date for selecting a principal and work backwards to decide a timeline and plan for your work.</p>		
6. Recruit Principal Candidates and Establish Screening Process	Supt	
<p>Beyond posting the position with KDE and at the school and district level, then:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Advertise in local and state publications. <input type="checkbox"/> Seek input in establishing criteria and the process for gathering information about applicants. <input type="checkbox"/> The district committee will be involved in all steps to develop criteria and gather information before a list of recommended applicants is provided the council. <input type="checkbox"/> Recruit minority applicants according to KRS 160.380(2)(d). Some recruiting resources include: Division of Minority Educator Recruitment and Retention at the KDE, (502) 564-2672; Administrative Leadership Institute (ALI) at Western Kentucky University, (270) 745-4950; Kentucky Educator Placement Service (KEPS) — current openings can be matched with potential applicants and applicants receive information through automatic e-mail services. http://apps.kde.state.ky.us/keps/index.cfm. 		

7. Establish Principal Candidate Criteria (open meeting)	Council	
<input type="checkbox"/> Review attributes and needs of the school. <input type="checkbox"/> Gather input from constituents.		
8. Establish Draft of Principal Candidate Criteria	Supt	
<p>The superintendent will develop draft written criteria for selection of applicants to be recommended to the school council based on district expectations, standards of performance, job descriptions, etc.</p>		
9. Call Joint Meeting to Discuss Criteria (open meeting)	Council	
<p>Council and superintendent share criteria, discuss the timeline of the process, and ask specifically about minority recruitment.</p>		
10. Establish Final Principal Candidate Criteria	Supt	
<p>Based on the conversation with the council, the superintendent will decide final written criteria for the position and send a copy to the school council.</p>		
11. Decide Information-Gathering Process (open meeting)	Council	
<p>The council should meet and <u>establish the procedures</u> they will follow for the principal selection process and create required documents. How will the council...?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Review applications, resumes, portfolios, and other relevant materials. <input type="checkbox"/> Use electronic search to gather additional information about the candidates. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop interview questions based on criteria. <input type="checkbox"/> Call listed references and others who have worked with the candidates — decide standard and follow-up questions to ask. <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct interviews. <i>(The council is deciding the <u>procedure</u> for the interviews in open session, not conducting the actual interviews.)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Hold a forum to meet the candidates. <i>(If you do this, the forum has to be very structured and all questions screened before being asked so no hiring laws are violated.)</i> This is not a debate. Candidates should not respond to each other's comments. <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare performance events if they will be used. Performance events could include, but not be limited to, response to scenarios or open-ended questions about pertinent topics for the school. Having the candidates respond on a computer also gives the council some insight about basic technology and written communication skills. 		

12. Screen and Interview Candidates	Supt	
<input type="checkbox"/> Gather information on applicants (resumes, applications, professional portfolios, reference checks, writing prompts/performance events, etc.) to screen for a personal interview. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop questions for personal interview and writing prompt/performance event. <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct personal interviews and written performance events. <input type="checkbox"/> Share employee salary / benefits, job description, etc. with applicants.		
13. Send List of Recommended Applicants and All Other Qualified Applicants to the Council	Supt	
<input type="checkbox"/> Send a written list of recommended applicants and all other qualified applicants to the council. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide a written reminder of the process for selection of an interim administrator and the intent to provide additional qualified applicants who may apply in the future. <input type="checkbox"/> Express, in writing, a willingness to share opinions of the strengths and weaknesses of each recommended applicant after the council has gathered their information about each applicant. <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid ranking the recommended applicants. Remember, no matter whom the council hires, the superintendent must work with him/her as immediate supervisor. A recommendation should mean that the person has the confidence and support of the superintendent.		
14. Review the Applicants and Decide Whom to Interview (closed session)	Council	
<input type="checkbox"/> Review the recommended applicants from the superintendent to decide who best meets established criteria and select the applicants to interview. (The council should give serious consideration to interviewing applicants recommended by the superintendent.) <input type="checkbox"/> Send letters notifying applicants who were not selected for an interview. Thank them for their interest in the school. This is an important courtesy and good public relations for your school.		
15. Interview the Candidates (closed session)	Council	
<p>At the end of the interview:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Ask candidate if he/she has any questions. <input type="checkbox"/> Let the candidate know the date and time of selection meeting. <input type="checkbox"/> Get phone numbers (home, cell, and work) for reaching the candidate on the day and time of the meeting when the council will select the new principal. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask each candidate to be ready to let you know if they will take the job, if offered.		
16. Evaluate the Candidates Using the Agreed-Upon Selection Process (closed session)	Council	

17. Discuss Candidates with Superintendent (closed session)	Council	
After all information-gathering is complete, the council and superintendent could meet to discuss relative strengths and weaknesses of the candidates, if the council sees a need.		
18. Prepare for the Principal Selection Meeting	Council	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Decide who will communicate with the candidates.</p> <p>The council should be ready to communicate with both the person chosen and those applicants who were interviewed but not selected. Another option is for the council to ask the superintendent to communicate with all the candidates about the final selection.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Contact the candidates before the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Remind the candidates of the upcoming principal selection meeting and the approximate time you will be contacting them of the council's selection. ○ Explain to the candidates that if offered the job, the council will want an answer that evening. Each of the candidates need to be prepared to provide a yes/no answer. ○ Tell candidates that you will want a biographical sketch and a photo sent by email from the candidate selected. <p><input type="checkbox"/> Be sure you have a phone number to contact each candidate when you go into closed session to discuss the candidates.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Draft the official motion to select the principal.</p> <p>This motion also serves as a public statement, so drafting everything, except the name of the person selected, ahead of time is a good way to be prepared. The motion might say something like: "Based on the criteria established by the council, with significant input from stakeholders and following our identified process, we have found the most qualified applicant to serve as our principal. I move that we select _____ as our new principal."</p>		

19. Select the Principal (It is legally required that the council select the principal. Best-practice advice for the process is also included)	Council	
<input type="checkbox"/> After the council interviews all candidates, the council should call a special meeting to discuss the candidates. Make sure that actions of the council comply with the Open Meetings requirements of KRS 61.823 for a special-called meeting. <input type="checkbox"/> Go into closed session to discuss the candidates and determine whether to offer the job to one of the interviewed candidates. <input type="checkbox"/> When it's clear which candidate will be selected, call that person while in closed session to see if he/she will take the job. <input type="checkbox"/> <i>(If the candidate is willing to take the job.)</i> Go into open session and read the prepared statement/motion to select that person as the principal. <input type="checkbox"/> <i>(If the candidate is NOT willing to take the job.)</i> Discuss whether another candidate meets your criteria and whether the council would want to select him/her as your new principal. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If the council would like to select another candidate, repeat the process above. ○ If the council is not satisfied with any other candidate, go into open session and announce something like: "The council will not be selecting a principal from the current candidate pool. We request that the superintendent repost the position and seek additional candidates for the position." If the superintendent chooses to reopen the search, the council should discuss the option of having an interim principal appointed by the superintendent until a suitable applicant is found. <input type="checkbox"/> Give the superintendent written notice of any action taken by the council.		
20. Follow-Up After the Principal Selection Meeting	Council	
<p>If a principal is selected, proceed with the steps below. (If no candidate is selected, go to the steps indicated in the section on <i>Interim Principal Selection</i>.)</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Inform the superintendent who was selected. <input type="checkbox"/> Notify the applicants who were interviewed but not selected. <input type="checkbox"/> Notify the school staff of the candidate selected. <input type="checkbox"/> Post the new principal information on the school website. <input type="checkbox"/> Call a press conference to announce the selection. <input type="checkbox"/> Communicate to full school community.		
21. Complete the Hiring Process (legally required)	Supt	
Have the new principal sign the contract and proceed with the usual steps for new administrators.		

INTERIM PRINCIPAL SELECTION

Action	Person Responsible	Date
Discuss Appointing an Interim Principal with the Council	Supt	
<p>While not specified in law, it is a general practice, in the event of an unfilled vacancy, that an interim principal is selected by the superintendent to serve until the council selects a new principal. The principal position remains vacant, and the hiring process proceeds according to the method established by the council. When the council selects a principal and the superintendent completes the hiring process, the interim principal is relieved of his/her duties.</p> <p>If the council has a suggestion for an interim principal, it can make the recommendation to the superintendent, who may consider the request.</p> <p>While not specified in law, it is best practice that a candidate for the permanent principal position not serve as interim principal.</p>		
Notify the Council of the Interim Principal	Supt	
Communicate the Selection of the Interim Principal	Council	
<input type="checkbox"/> Notify the school staff of the interim principal. <input type="checkbox"/> Communicate information about the interim principal to full school community.		