

# BEST PRACTICES FOR PRINCIPAL SELECTION

This document guides councils through legal requirements and suggested best practices of the principal selection process. These steps are written with the expectation that everyone involved will follow the spirit and letter of the law and will act 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 Parent Teacher Association
- Kentucky School Boards Association
- Jefferson County Teachers Association

## 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:

2.a.i. If the vacancy to be filled is the position of principal, the outgoing principal shall not serve on the council during the principal selection process. The superintendent or the superintendent's designee shall serve as the chair of the council for the purpose of the hiring process and shall have voting rights during the selection process.

ii. Except as provided in subdivision b. of this subparagraph, the council shall have access to the applications of all persons certified for the position. The principal shall be elected on a majority vote of the membership of the council. No principal who has been previously removed from a position in the district for cause may be considered for appointment as principal. 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.b. An alternative principal selection process may be used by the school council as follows:

i. Prior to a meeting called to select a principal, all school council members shall receive informational materials regarding Kentucky open records and open meetings laws and sign a nondisclosure agreement forbidding the sharing of information shared and discussions held in the closed session;

ii. The superintendent shall convene the school council and move into closed session as provided in KRS 61.810(1)(f) to confidentially recommend a candidate;

iii. The council shall have the option to interview the recommended candidate while in closed session; and

iv. After any discussion, at the conclusion of the closed session, the council shall decide, in a public meeting by majority vote of the membership of the council, whether to accept or reject the recommended principal candidate.

2.c. If the recommended candidate is selected, and the recommended candidate accepts the offer, the name of the candidate shall be made public during the next meeting in open session.

2.d.i. If the recommended candidate is not accepted by the school council under subdivision b. of this subparagraph, then the process set forth in subdivision a. of this subparagraph shall apply;

ii. The confidentially recommended candidate's name and the discussions of the closed session shall remain confidential under KRS 61.810(1)(f), and any documents used or generated during the closed meeting shall not be subject to an open records request as provided in KRS 61.878(1)(i) and (j).

iii. A recommended candidate who believes a violation of this subdivision has occurred may file a written complaint with the Kentucky Board of Education.

iv. A school council member who is found to have disclosed confidential information regarding the proceeding of the closed session shall be subject to removal from the school council by the Kentucky Board of Education under subsection (9)(e) of this section.

3. Personnel decisions made at the school level under the authority of subparagraphs 1. and 2. of this paragraph shall be binding on the superintendent who completes the hiring process.

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.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR THIS DOCUMENT

*Open Meetings Law* — The council needs to understand the open meetings law and be sure to follow the letter and spirit of the law in all its meetings.

*Superintendent or Designee* — The superintendent or designee should serve through one complete principal selection process and should not alternate attending meetings. For example, if the superintendent will serve on the council for the principal selection process for Smith County Middle School, he or she will attend the meetings and not send a designee for some of the process and attend him or herself for the other parts of the process.

*Definition for 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.***

<b>Action</b>	<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>1. Declare Principal Vacancy</b>	Supt	
The superintendent declares a principal vacancy at a school as a result of a principal retirement, resignation, termination, or other reason.		
<b>2. Post the Vacancy</b>	Supt	
Post vacancy according to <b>KRS 160.380(2)(b) and (c)</b> . 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).		
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.		

<b>3. Hold initial meeting (open meeting)</b>	Council (including Supt)	
<p>The council meets in an <b>open meeting</b> to discuss the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A review of the SBDM law related to principal selection.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The desire to work collaboratively and cooperatively to select a principal who meets the unique needs of the school, based on council criteria.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> District recruiting strategies/activities.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The possible need for an interim administrator being appointed until such time that the council selects a principal.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Required training of the council in the principal selection process according to <b>KRS 160.345(2)(h) (Legally required — Council selects the trainer.)</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The selection of a high-quality, experienced 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.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The training should be specific to this principal opening. The superintendent or designee needs to attend the training as part of the council because this training is actually a working meeting where important decisions for the process will be made.</li> </ul>		
<b>4. Set Up Principal Selection Training for the Council and Advertise It as an Open Meeting</b>	Council (including Supt)	
<p><b>Principal selection training is required by KRS 160.345(2)(h).</b> 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.</p> <p>The following are suggested topics to request the trainer to address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How to review applications and resumes.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How to use electronic search to gather information about the candidates.</li> <li><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.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How to conduct reference and work experience checks.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How to prepare, conduct, and evaluate open response or written interviews.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How to review the candidates' portfolios and resumes.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How to prepare, conduct, and review a performance event.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> When and how to discuss employment issues in open or closed session and the need for confidentiality. <b>Be sure your council follows open meetings laws for open and closed sessions. KRS 61.810-61.815</b></li> </ul>		

<b>5. Establish Council Timeline and Plan for Principal Selection Process (open meeting); Decide the Screening Process</b>	Council (including Supt)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Start with the target date for selecting a principal and work backwards to decide a timeline and plan for your work. <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss the type of screening process that will be used. These decisions can also be made during the training session.		
<b>6. Recruit Principal Candidates</b>	Supt	
Beyond posting the position with KDE and at the school and district level, then: <input type="checkbox"/> Advertise broadly using multiple media sources. <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Recruit minority applicants according to KRS 160.380(2)(d).</b> Recruit minority applicants according to KRS 160.380(2)(d), which states, "When a vacancy occurs in a local district, the superintendent shall conduct a search to locate minority candidates to be considered for the position. The superintendent shall, pursuant to administrative regulations of the Kentucky Board of Education, report annually the district's recruitment process and the activities used to increase the percentage of minority candidates in the district." <i>Source: KDE's SBDM School Personnel Selection Guide, 2014</i>		
<b>7. Draft Principal Candidate Criteria (open meeting)</b>	Council (including Supt)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Review attributes and needs of the school. <input type="checkbox"/> Gather input from stakeholders (parents, staff, students, and community).		
<b>8. Establish Final Principal Candidate Criteria (open meeting)</b>	Council (including Supt)	
Based on stakeholder input and needs of the school, decide final written criteria for the position.		

<b>9. Decide Information-Gathering Process (open meeting)</b>	Council (including Supt)	
<p>The council should meet and <u>establish the procedures</u> they will follow for the principal selection process and create required documents.</p> <p>How the council will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Review applications, resumes, portfolios, and other relevant materials.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use electronic search to gather additional information about the candidates.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Develop interview questions based on criteria.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Call listed references and others who have worked with the candidates — decide standard and follow-up questions to ask.</li> <li><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></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Prepare performance events. 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.</li> </ul>		
<b>10. Review the Applicants and Decide Whom to Interview (closed session)</b>	Council (including Supt)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Review the applicants to decide who best meets established criteria and select the applicants to interview.</li> <li><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.</li> </ul>		
<b>11. Interview the Candidates (closed session)</b>	Council (including Supt)	
<p>At the end of the interview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Share employee salary / benefits, job description, etc., with applicants.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ask candidate if he/she has any questions.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Let the candidate know the date and time of selection meeting.</li> <li><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.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ask each candidate to be ready to let you know if they will take the job, if offered.</li> </ul>		

<b>12. Evaluate the Candidates Using the Agreed-Upon Selection Process (closed session)</b>	Council (including Supt)	
<b>13. Prepare for the Principal Selection Meeting (open meeting)</b>	Council (including Supt)	
<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"> <li>○ Remind the candidates of the upcoming principal selection meeting and the approximate time you will be contacting them of the council's selection.</li> <li>○ Explain to the candidates that if offered the job, the council will want an answer that evening. Each of the candidates needs to be prepared to provide a yes/no answer.</li> <li>○ Tell candidates that you will want a biographical sketch and a photo sent by email from the candidate selected.</li> </ul> <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. 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>		

<b>14. Select the Principal (It is legally required that the council select the principal.)</b> Best-practice advice also included (includes both open and closed session)	Council (including Supt)	
<input type="checkbox"/> After the council interviews all selected 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, read the prepared statement/motion, and vote to select that person as the principal. <input type="checkbox"/> <i>(If the candidate is NOT willing to take the job)</i> Stay in closed session and 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"> <li>○ If the council would like to select another candidate, repeat the process above.</li> <li>○ 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." The council should discuss the option of having an interim principal appointed by the superintendent until a suitable applicant is found.</li> </ul>		
<b>15. Follow-Up After the Principal Selection Meeting</b>	Assigned Council Members or Supt	
If a principal is selected, proceed with the steps below. (If no candidate is selected, request that the superintendent repost the position and seek additional candidates; or for an interim, go to the steps in the section on <i>Interim Principal Selection</i> .) <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.		
<b>16. Complete the Hiring Process (legally required)</b>	Supt	
Have the new principal sign the contract and proceed with the usual steps for new administrators.		

# INTERIM PRINCIPAL SELECTION

Action	Person Responsible	Date
<b>Discuss Appointing an Interim Principal with the Council</b>	<b>Supt</b>	
<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.		