

Superintendent Search Proposal

April 21, 2023



Prepared by:

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April 21, 2023

Ami Gandhi, Board President
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Dear President Gandhi and Members of the PVPUSD Board of Trustees:

Thank you for your consideration of Education Support Services (ESS) Group to assist the Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District Governing Board in its search for your next superintendent. It would be a privilege to work with the Board, staff, and community in this important endeavor.

The ESS Consulting Group was established in 2006 as a subdivision of the law firm Atkinson, Andelson, Loya, Ruud & Romo. Our focus is to provide non-legal solutions for TK-14 school systems around human resource needs, labor relations, leadership development, fiscal management, and board governance. Based on client demand, ESS expanded its services in 2017 to include executive searches. Our consultants include former superintendents who have been involved in an array of undertakings within the field of education, including the facilitation of superintendent and cabinet-level searches.

In the following pages, you will find a description of services, proposed timelines, and related costs that underscore the four phases of an ESS search. What makes our firm unique is that any aspect of the activities described herein can be modified to align with Board priorities and preferences. ESS's ability to be nimble leads to an exceptional client experience that is streamlined, hands-on, and cost effective.

If ESS is invited to conduct the search for PVPUSD's next superintendent, our well-connected advisers Dr. Suzette Lovely and Dr. Gary Rutherford will facilitate the search. Collectively, these talented leaders have served in every position from instructional aide to classroom teacher to principal to director to assistant/deputy superintendent to superintendent in small, medium and large districts throughout California.

Over the past five years, ESS has facilitated several high-profile superintendent searches in districts of varying size and need. A list of these searches can be found on pg. 4 of our proposal. Of note, we have overseen successful placements in neighboring SoCal ROC, Manhattan Beach USD, Lawndale ESD, and Hermosa Beach SD. Adviser biographies, references, and letters of recommendation are provided to offer an in-depth perspective of ESS's track record of success.

If you have any questions about the Education Support Services (ESS) Group or our proposal, please feel free to contact me directly at 714-907-3634 or arasmussen@aalrr.com.

Sincerely,

Alan Rasmussen

Alan Rasmussen, Ed.D, Managing Consultant

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A Boutique Search Experience

THE ESS DIFFERENCE

- We are a small firm known for our personalized attention and service.
- We maintain a limited number of search clients at any given time to ensure greater accessibility and responsiveness to trustees and respective applicants.
- We collaborate directly with the Governing Board to solidify a search timeline that aligns with local circumstances and needs (e.g., Board meeting schedules, trustee availability, District calendar, community expectations, etc.).
- We have a track record of assembling applicant pools with diverse backgrounds and experiences that represent the face of California.
- We have ongoing access to legal advice from Atkinson Andelson Education Law Practice Group attorneys.
- We tap into existing District resources/staff (as appropriate) to expedite the process and reduce costs.
- We engage with an extensive network of talented leaders who are ‘superintendent ready,’ however we do not maintain a stable of candidates.
- We are nimble.

One Size Doesn’t Fit All

- Candidate qualifications, experience, and leadership attributes are linked to the Palos Verdes Board, staff, and community ideals.
- A professionally written *Leadership Profile Report* is presented to the Board highlighting key findings regarding the state of the district and essential characteristics stakeholders desire in the next Superintendent.
- Trustees receive weekly communiqués to keep apprised of search progress.
- The vacancy is posted on EDJOIN, EDCAL (print and on-line publications) and any other platforms determined by the Board.
- Board members have access to all applications and supporting materials.
- Fees are based on the desired level of consultant involvement, with the Board’s ability to modify tasks to reduce costs **(Total Fee: NTE \$28,750)**.

Section 1: Experience Recruiting and Retaining Superintendents

Below is a list of superintendent searches conducted by ESS in the last five years. Unless otherwise indicated, all candidates remain in their current position.

District	ADA	Superintendent	Hire Date
Huntington Beach Union High School District	15,534 (9-12)	Clint Harwick	January 1, 2017
Acton-Agua Dulce USD	12,532 (TK-12)	Larry King	September 18, 2017 (resigned March 2021)
Gustine USD	1,765 (TK-12)	Bryan Ballenger	March 1, 2018
Santa Ana USD	46,593 (TK-12)	Jerry Almendarez	November 21, 2019
Menifee Union School District	12,142 (TK-8)	Jennifer Root	October 19, 2020
Placentia-Yorba Linda Unified School District	24,296 (TK-12)	Jim Elsasser	January 4, 2021 (resigned 6/30/22)
		Mike Matthews (Interim)	July 1, 2022 (search/placement at no additional charge)
Huntington Beach City School District	5,588 (TK-8)	Leisa Winston	January 4, 2021
Pleasant Valley School District	6,802 (TK-8)	Danielle Cortes	June 14, 2021
San Marcos USD	19,894 (TK-12)	Andy Johnsen	July 1, 2021
Central School District	4,219 (TK-8)	Amy Nguyen-Hernandez*	July 1, 2021
West San Gabriel SELPA	9,150 (TK-12)	Tamara Schiern	July 1, 2021
Manhattan Beach USD	6,030 (TK-12)	John Bowes*	July 7, 2021
West Covina USD	14,000 (TK-12)	Emy Flores	January 3, 2022
Desert Sands USD	26,300 (TK-12)	Kelly May-Vollmar	July 1, 2022
Calexico USD	8,563 (TK-12)	Arturo Jimenez	July 1, 2022
Alta Loma School District	5,561 (TK-8)	Sherry Smith	July 1, 2022
Lawndale Elementary School District	5,189 (TK-8)	Virginia Castro	August 1, 2022
SoCal Regional Occupational Program	1,500 (9-12)	Pending	Begins July 1, 2023
Capistrano Unified School District	47,000 (TK-12)	Pending	Begins July 1, 2023
San Dieguito Union High School District	11,000 (7-12)	Pending	Begins July 1, 2023
Redlands Unified School District	21,000 (TK-12)	Pending	Begins July 1, 2023
Colton-Redlands-Yucaipa ROP	6,500 (9-12)	Pending	Begins July 1, 2023

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The following is a list of cabinet-level searches conducted by ESS in the last five years.

District	ADA	Position	Start Date
Alvord Unified School District	17,511 (TK-12)	Assistant Superintendent, Ed Services	November 2021
		Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources	July 2022
		Chief Business Officer	July 2022
Azusa Unified School District	7,187 (TK-12)	Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources	November 2018
Capistrano Unified School District	47,000 (TK-12)	Associate Superintendent, Human Resources	May 2018
		Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum, Instruction and Ed Support Services	June 2021
		Executive Director, College/Career Readiness	March 2022
		Associate Superintendent, Human Resources	May 2022
		Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources	May 2022
Escondido UHSD	9,458 (6-12)	Assistant Superintendent, Ed Services	June 2021
Fallbrook Union Elementary District	5,000 (TK-8)	Assistant Superintendent, Ed Services	May 2022
Laguna Beach Unified School District	2,800 (TK-12)	Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources	January 2021
		Assistant Superintendent, Instructional Services	January 2021
Menifee Union School District	12,142 (TK-8)	Assistant Superintendent, Ed Services	July 2022
Pleasant Valley School District	8,802 (TK-8)	Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources	July 2021
San Marcos USD	19,894 (TK-12)	Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources	January 2023
Santa Ana USD	46,593 (TK-12)	Deputy Superintendent, Administrative Services	January 2020
		Deputy Superintendent, Instructional Services	January 2020
		Associate Superintendent, Human Resources	January 2022
		Associate Superintendent Business Services	January 2022
Solana Beach School District	2,700 (TK-12)	Executive Director, Special Education	October 2021
		Assistant Superintendent, Administrative Services	December 2022
		Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources	In Progress

Section 2: Proposed Search Plan, Timelines and Activities

Two options are provided for the Board’s consideration. One would complete the search by the August 30 scheduled board meeting. A second option is provided that will move the process into fall of the new school year, when the recruitment “crunch” slows down and the obstacles of summer vacations are avoided.

Engagement Phase		
<i>Week of May 15</i>	<i>Week of August 21-25</i>	<p>BOARD WORKSHOP: This two-hour workshop assists the Governing Board to become ‘search ready’. The workshop includes: review of search timelines and process; confidentiality commitments; compensation considerations/salary parameters; screening criteria; and experience requirements. The Board identifies district needs, leadership priorities, stakeholder groups to provide input, and prospective candidates they would like ESS to contact.</p> <p>A general position description, qualifications, and job posting are created based on the Board's input/direction.</p>
<i>Late May</i>	<i>Late August/ Early Sept</i>	<p>STAKEHOLDER INPUT: Search advisers meet with individuals and key groups to identify selection considerations, needs, and ideal qualities of PVPUSD’s next Superintendent.</p>
<i>June 6 Regular Mtg.</i>	<i>September 13 Regular Mtg.</i>	<p>LEADERSHIP PROFILE: Advisers present a <i>Leadership Profile Report</i> to the Board summarizing current and prior stakeholder input. Board affirms the criteria in the profile and adds any additional screening factors. Candidates are recruited, screened, and selected based on district needs and leadership qualities identified by the Board and community.</p>
Activation Phase		
<i>Opens May 1 Closes June 9</i>	<i>Late August Close Sept 29</i>	<p>JOB POSTING: Superintendent vacancy posted in a variety of sources and online platforms, including EDJOIN, EdCal, and other Board-determined publications.</p> <p>RECRUITMENT: ESS advisers utilize an array of local, state, and national networks to actively recruit, engage, and screen candidates who match the <i>Leadership Profile</i> characteristics.</p>
<i>Completed by June 16</i>	<i>Completed by Oct. 6</i>	<p>REFERENCE CHECKS: ESS advisers contact candidate references and conduct “blind” appraisals of each applicant, including review of social media accounts and digital footprint. Candidates are evaluated and ranked against the <i>Leadership Profile</i> criteria.</p>

Selection Phase		
<i>Week of June 19-23</i>	<i>Week of Oct 9-13</i>	REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS: Trustees review confidential application materials on their own prior to Closed Session, in which the candidate slate for interviews will be discussed and finalized.
<i>Week of June 26 Special Closed Session</i>	<i>Week of October 16 Special Closed Session</i>	DETERMINATION OF CANDIDATE SLATE: Board meets with ESS advisers to identify the best qualified candidates to invite for interviews. Candidates not selected to interview are notified. Board reviews/finalizes first-round interview questions. Trustees review employment contract parameters.
<i>Thursday July 6 All day</i>	<i>Saturday Oct. 28 All day</i>	ROUND 1 INTERVIEWS: First-level interviews are conducted by the Governing Board. At the conclusion of the daylong interviews, the search advisers guide the Board in narrowing the pool and determining which individuals to invite back for a second interview. Second-level interview questions are drafted.
<i>Friday July 7 Half day</i>	<i>Sunday Oct. 29 Half day</i>	ROUND 2 INTERVIEWS: Second-level interviews are conducted by the Governing Board. The Board selects its preferred candidate. ESS notifies candidates who are not moving forward in the process.
<i>Completed by July 11</i>	<i>Completed by Nov. 14</i>	BACKGROUND CHECKS: Search advisers utilize a third party to conduct an extensive pre-employment review of the finalist's criminal, civil, credit, education, employment, and social media history.
<i>Completed by July 14</i>	<i>Completed by Nov. 17</i>	CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS: Board identifies agency negotiators to draft an employment agreement for the Board's consideration. Typically, the Board President and legal counsel are assigned to this role.
<i>TBD</i>	<i>TBD</i>	ANNOUNCEMENT: Following a favorable due diligence review, ESS advisers collaborate with the Board President and finalist to develop a press release and announcement schedule contingent upon the finalist's pending selection and board approval.
<i>August 30 Regular Meeting (No July mtg)*</i>	<i>Nov. 28 Regular Meeting</i>	APPOINTMENT/APPROVAL OF NEW SUPERINTENDENT: Governing Board takes formal action to hire the new Superintendent in Closed Session and approve the employment contract in Open Session.
<i>TBD</i>	<i>TBD</i>	START DATE: The newly hired superintendent begins employment in the district.

**It may be possible to add a regular board meeting in July by adopting a new organizational calendar for the 2022-23 school year. The Board is advised to seek a legal opinion if you decide to explore this option.*

Transition Phase	
<i>Setting the Foundation for a Successful Transition</i>	ESS advisers provide a facilitated transition meeting with the new Superintendent and Board to review information gleaned during the search process and assist the governance team in identifying priorities and 'next steps' to move forward.
<i>Optional Support Services</i>	Depending on District needs and the experience of the new Superintendent, ESS advisers are available to provide board governance workshops, superintendent goal setting support, facilitation of the superintendent's performance evaluation, and/or executive coaching.

Section 3: Gathering/Using Community Input

Stakeholder Focus Group Meetings

ESS advisers will schedule conversations with stakeholders based on Board direction. Meetings will be held virtually, telephonically, and/or in-person depending on participant availability and District preferences.

Once specific groups are identified by trustees at the initial planning workshop, the following email will be sent by the Board's secretary/designee to participants:

The Board of Trustees has retained Dr. Suzette Lovely and Dr. Gary Rutherford from Education Support Services (ESS) to facilitate the search for our next superintendent. Your voice is vitally important as we engage in a process to recruit and vet high quality candidates to lead PVPUSD into the future.

*With this in mind, the search advisers would like to meet with you on **(date/time)** to seek your input surrounding three key questions:*

- 1. What are the strengths of PVPUSD? What draws people here?*
- 2. What district challenges/needs do you consider most pressing at this time?*
- 3. What unique skills or attributes are vital for the next superintendent to successfully lead Palos Verdes Peninsula USD?*

Please respond to this email to confirm your participation. If however, you are unable to attend this meeting but wish to speak with the Board's advisers, please include your phone number in your response so they may contact you.

Online Community Engagement Survey

In the event trustees would like to enlist additional input from the community, a copy of our on-line survey is included on pg. 10-12 of our proposal. Survey questions can be modified or revised by the Board to ensure any additional desired information is collected.

How is Community and Staff Input Used?

Data from the Focus Group meetings along with on-line survey results is synthesized into a *Leadership Profile* report. This report is organized around universal themes and trends that serve as a blueprint for candidate recruitment, screening, and in-depth vetting. Input from the PVPUSD staff and community is also used to:

- Understand current district needs/challenges from a variety of perspectives.
- Align/integrate trustees' priorities with staff and community desires.
- Build Board capacity to practice high-impact governance.
- Gain valuable insight to inform the Board's selection of its next superintendent.
- Provide a roadmap of essential actions for the newly hired superintendent.
- Hold up a mirror to district culture and climate as a tool to organize for the future.



Superintendent Search Community Engagement Survey

Introduction: The Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District Board of Trustees is seeking staff and community input in its search for a new superintendent. This survey is designed to gather your perceptions about the current state of the district along with the experiences and characteristics you believe are most important for the incoming superintendent to possess.

The survey is being conducted by outside search advisers who are assisting the Board in this important endeavor. All individual responses will remain anonymous.

Section I: Participant's Role

Please indicate your current role in the district (drop down menu).

1. Administrator
2. Certificated staff
3. Classified staff
4. Parent/Guardian
5. Student
6. Community member
7. Other

Section II: State of the District

Please rate the overall quality of teaching and learning in PVPUSD.

Excellent	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Poor

In the next series of questions, please select the response that best describes your agreement with each statement.

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	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
1. The district provides a compelling vision for the future.					
2. The district maintains high expectations for student performance.					
3. The district is working to close achievement gaps.					
4. The district provides adequate resources to support student learning.					
5. Schools in our district are safe.					
6. District facilities are clean and well-maintained.					
7. The district engages the community as a partner to improve the system.					
8. Communication from the district is transparent and effective.					
9. The district embraces diverse racial, cultural, and socio-economic groups.					
10. The district is heading in the right direction.					

Section III: Expertise and Experience

Below are specific areas of expertise that different superintendent candidates may possess. From your perspective, how much weight should the Board place on each area? Rate each area using the scale of importance.

	Critically Important	Mildly Important	Unimportant
Teaching & Learning			
Experience as a Site Principal			
Understanding School/Community Culture			
Negotiations/Labor Relations			
Fiscal Management			
Facilities Management			
Public Relations			
Board Governance			

Section IV: Leadership Skills

This next section asks you to consider the leadership skills of an effective superintendent. While all the skills are important, please select the five skills you feel are **MOST IMPORTANT**.

- Is present/visible throughout the district and community
- Is sensitive to and understands the needs of diverse learners
- Is a forward thinker and open to new ideas
- Is knowledgeable about best practices surrounding teaching and learning
- Is able to build capacity and teamwork
- Is able to work effectively with the Board of Education
- Develops a compelling vision for the future
- Ensures the District remains fiscally solvent
- Maintains a culture of high expectations for students and employees
- Fosters a climate of trust and mutual respect
- Recognizes/celebrates staff contributions

Section V: Personal Attributes

From your perspective which personal attributes should be given the most attention by the Board when assessing applicants? While each quality may be important, please select the four that are **MOST IMPORTANT** to you.

- Approachable and personable
- Strong communicator
- Good listener
- Humble
- Honest and ethical
- Inclusive (seeks broad input in making decisions)
- Problem solver
- Resourceful
- Risk taker
- Sense of humor
- Tenacious (doesn't give up)

Section VI: Additional Considerations

In choosing PVPUSD's next superintendent, which path or strategy do you feel the Board of Trustees should take (Select only **ONE** answer):

- Find a candidate who will stay the course and continue the work of the previous administration.
- Find a candidate with the same general leadership style and educational philosophy as the previous administration, but who is able to make some necessary changes.
- Find a different kind of candidate—someone who is ready to take the district in a significantly different direction.

Section 4: Primary Contact/Team Member Bios

If ESS is selected to conduct the Palos Verdes search, Dr. Suzette Lovely will serve as the Lead Adviser and primary contact for the Board.

Suzette Lovely, Ed.D.

ESS Consultant

Education Support Services Group

slvely@aalrr.com

949-283-7862



Dr. Lovely is a consultant with Education Support Services Group (ESS). ESS provides a comprehensive menu of services for governing boards, superintendents, senior management teams, school districts, and community colleges. ESS offers direct support in: leadership development, governance, executive searches, labor relations, human resource management, fiscal services, and facility planning.

Dr. Lovely's career spanned 35 years working in TK-12 public schools. Her love of teaching first materialized while serving as an instructional aide in San Bernardino. Following her undergraduate work at UC, Irvine, Dr. Lovely spent 27 years as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, director, deputy superintendent, and acting superintendent in Capistrano Unified School District. In 2009, she became Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources in Placentia-Yorba Linda. Dr. Lovely finished her public education journey as Superintendent in Carlsbad Unified before retiring.

Dr. Lovely earned a Master's Degree in Educational Administration from National University and a Doctorate from Cal State University, Fullerton. She has trained and mentored hundreds of teachers and aspiring school leaders with affiliations at: CSU, Fullerton; Chapman University, Brandman University; the School Superintendents Association (AASA), the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), and Orange County Department of Education (OCDE).

During her superintendency, Dr. Lovely spearheaded several efforts to engage stakeholders in the work of public education including: opening the district's second high school; implementation of a \$13 million county-wide Career Pathways Grant; facilitation of the Legislative Action Network (LAN) to engage state/local legislators in public policy discussions; and collective impact work with industry giants Qualcomm, Viasat, NRG, and Thermo Fisher. Dr. Lovely was among a select group of San Diego superintendents invited to meet with the Governor to discuss LCAP implementation, ESEA reauthorization, and state education priorities.

Since retiring, Dr. Lovely has remained active in strategic planning work, leadership coaching, and executive searches. She is the author of four books and co-founder of the Women in Education Leadership (WEL) Network. Dr. Lovely has been recognized for her influential leadership by Senator Patricia Bates, the California PTA, the Hi-Noon Rotary, the Carlsbad Chamber of Commerce, the San Diego County Art Education Association, the Master Teacher organization, and Chapman University.

Gary Rutherford, Ed.D.
ESS Consultant
Education Support Services Group
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760-578-2096



Dr. Rutherford is a consultant with Education Support Services Group (ESS). ESS provides a comprehensive menu of services for governing boards, superintendents, senior management teams, school districts and community colleges. The divisions of service include: leadership and governance; executive search services; curriculum and instruction; human resource management; and business and fiscal services.

Gary Rutherford retired as superintendent of the Desert Sands Unified School District in 2017, culminating a career in public education spanning 40 years. His 16 years as a superintendent also included service as Superintendent of the Upland Unified School District and the Huntington Beach City School District. A native Californian, Gary began his career in public education in 1976, enjoying successful teaching and site administrator assignments at the elementary, middle grades, and high school levels, before moving on to the central office as a specialist in curriculum and instruction.

Since retirement, Dr. Rutherford applies his decades of experience in K-12 public education as an executive search advisor, interim superintendent of schools, executive leadership coach, and consultant for governance team training and workshops. Districts engaging his services include Corona Norco USD, Live Oak SD, Colton USD, Lawndale SD, Fontana USD, Westminster SD, Romoland SD, Menifee USD, Central SD, Palm Springs USD, Claremont USD, Redlands USD, Manhattan Beach USD, Millbrae SD, and West Covina USD.

Dr. Rutherford supports the work of California administrators as an Advocate with ACSA's Member Assistance and Legal Services Team. As an active and involved member of ACSA for decades, he has led a number of committees and institutes that support professional growth and build the capacity of school leaders. In addition, Dr. Rutherford demonstrates his commitment to develop the next generation of school leaders as an adjunct professor in programs for school administrators and doctoral candidates.

Dr. Rutherford earned his Bachelor of Arts degree at Pepperdine University, a Master of Arts at California State University at Los Angeles, and a doctoral degree in Organizational Management from the University of La Verne. In 2012, Dr. Rutherford was named Superintendent of the Year for ACSA's Region 12. The following year, he was selected to represent ACSA in the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) National Superintendent of the Year recognition program. More recently, Dr. Rutherford was honored with the Visionary Leader Award by the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership in recognition of his work to develop, refine, and sustain career pathways for more than 71,000 in the region's TK-12 schools.

Section 5: Scope of Work/Search Fee

Below is a summary of activities that will occur within each phase of the search along with the total fee for all services rendered.

Summary of Activities	Proposed Fee
Engagement Phase	
Conduct superintendent salary study	
Prepare/facilitate Board planning workshop to: review salary data/comps; establish salary parameters; identify stakeholder groups; discuss prospective candidates; confirm timelines and corresponding activities; etc.	
Conduct Stakeholder Group meetings (virtual, in-person, and/or telephonic)	
Collaborate with PIO to create superintendent search webpage and update information throughout process	
Activation Phase	
Candidate outreach and communication	
Prepare/distribute on-line survey; disaggregate/analyze results; develop <i>Leadership Profile Report</i>	
Prepare/Present <i>Leadership Profile</i> findings to Board, community, and prospective candidates	
Selection Phase	
Candidate correspondence; applicant screening; reference checks; blind appraisals; preparation of application packets for Board review	
Meet with Board to determine candidate slate; finalize first-level interview questions	
Candidate Interviews (first and second level); Board deliberation; selection of finalist	
Support employment contract negotiations with Board President & legal counsel	
Correspondence with all candidates, develop announcement schedule, draft press release	
Transition Phase	
Plan/facilitate Transition Meeting with Board and newly appointed Superintendent	
Other/Misc.	
Weekly updates and outreach w/Trustees	
Third-Party Due Diligence Report	
Comprehensive Social Media Review (Third party)	
Travel and expenses	
Total Cost NTE	\$28,750

Appendix A

References and Client Letters of Endorsement

Below are board members who can speak to ESS's personalized care/attention.

Client Reference	Email	Phone
Carrie Buck, Trustee Placentia-Yorba Linda USD	cbuck@pylusd.org	714-348-5951
Stacy Carlson, Trustee San Marcos Unified SD	stacy.carlson@smusd.org	714-833-6701
Duane Dishno, Trustee Huntington Beach Union HSD	ddishno@hbuhd.edu	714-292-0632
Jennifer Fenton, Trustee Manhattan Beach Unified SD	JFenton@mbusd.org	310-993-2926
Vicki King, Trustee, Solana Beach School District	vking@sbsd.net	858-344-5726

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John A. Bowes, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Board of Trustees
Jason Boxer
Jennifer Cochran

District

Jen Fenton
Cathy Graves
Sally Peel



Manhattan Beach Unified School

325 South Peck Avenue Manhattan Beach, California 90266

To Whom It May Concern:

August 16, 2021

Last spring, while managing school reopenings, in-person and distance learning platforms, curriculum changes, and second interim budget reports, the Board of Trustees for the Manhattan Beach Unified School District (MBUSD) was given an additional task. Our incredible Superintendent for over eleven years decided he would not be renewing his contract in June, and thus we needed to find a new leader. What felt impossible, given our own self-imposed deadline of hiring someone by July 1, was met with ease and professional integrity from the moment ESS submitted their RFP.

After reading eight applications from search firms across the nation, ESS stood out as the frontrunner. In addition to their experience with similar districts, they researched our community, watched previous board meetings, and had an expansive network of potential candidates to recruit from. During the public interview, ESS continued to shine. The firm presented a comprehensive timeline that corresponded to our district's calendar, explained the level of engagement and listening that would be conducted with various stakeholder groups, and most importantly talked about utilizing this search process as a road for healing.

And as soon as ESS was hired, they prioritized MBUSD and finding our new Superintendent. In addition to analyzing previously compiled survey data about desired characteristics or experience from students, parents and staff, ESS drafted a supplemental constituent questionnaire to develop a leadership profile and job description. ESS simultaneously conducted a compensation study and immediately began scheduling meetings with focus groups consisting of over 220 people. At every step of the way, our consultants provided in-depth updates, communicated regularly with the board, and made presentations at meetings to inform the public about the search.

As July 1 drew near, ESS remained calm, focused, and continued to demonstrate a level of expertise that aligned with our district's goals. They brought several highly-qualified candidates to the board for consideration and did extensive background research on each applicant. Not only did ESS coordinate two back-to-back days of interviews, they helped guide our conversation as we deliberated, for several hours, on which individual would best serve our district.

When our new Superintendent was finally selected, by the deadline we set, the consultants prepared a press-release, created a multi-tiered action plan to disseminate the news, and checked in daily to ensure a smooth transition. ESS constantly supported the board with resources that went beyond the scope of our search, and developed long-term relationships with those in our district. In fact, if we could hire ESS for every task or issue that falls within the scope of the board's purview, we would!

Our experience with the firm was truly exceptional from start to finish. And while it was sad to say goodbye to the former Superintendent, the board is confident that we found the best person to lead MBUSD into the future.

Best,

Jen Fenton
Manhattan Beach Unified School District, Board President



Board of Trustees

Kathy A. Thompson

President

Joan R. Weiss

Board Clerk

Stacy C. Henry

Trustee

Hugh M. Jackson

Trustee

Vacant

Trustee

Administrators

Amy Nguyen-Hernandez

Superintendent

Lizette Diaz

Assistant Superintendent,
Student Achievement /
Educational Services

Michelle Dynes

Assistant Superintendent,
Human Resources /
Safety Preparedness

Lori L. Isom

Assistant Superintendent,
Business Services

There is no more important undertaking for a board of trustees than the search and hiring of a new superintendent. The Central School District has been fortunate to have had many years of stability, and our most recent superintendents have all come from within the organization. This made the task even more daunting for us. It was critical that we found a search firm that could help us find the perfect match for our district and its needs.

The Education Support Services Group became that firm for us. Having known Dr. Gary Rutherford for many years in mutual groups within the county, there was a fantastic basis of trust. Dr. Suzette Lovely was the perfect partner and the two were able to work together to determine the interests and needs of our district and reach out to those that could meet those needs.

The multi-step approach to the search was thorough in every detail. A clear overview of the services that would be provided allowed us to know every step of the process. The four phases, Engagement, Activation, Selection and Transition helped us as a district to determine our focus, refine our priorities and hear from all stakeholders. The board was involved in each phase and had input on everything from questions to be asked, whom to reach out to and timelines that would be most effective. Drs. Rutherford and Lovely provided frequent updates and were available anytime the need for clarification or concerns arose.

As president, what I most appreciated was the personal care that was taken to make sure that every trustee was involved, and their concerns and priorities were heard. No issue was too small or deemed inconsequential. There was a mutual goal to find just the right person to take us into the future. Every effort was taken to ensure that we got to that result. Having ESS do the candidate screening, background checks and their knowledge of local professionals was a great reassurance to us as trustees, as there is no more valuable asset than the reputation of the district.

Our district is excited as we anticipate the future with our new superintendent. We look forward to forming a new governance team and know that we can reach out to ESS should the need arise. Drs. Rutherford and Lovely took an overwhelming task and made it a very positive experience for us as a leadership team. We are unified and ready to move into the future with great confidence for success for all stakeholders.

Kathy Thompson
President, Board of Trustees



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To whom it may concern,

It is my absolute pleasure to recommend Education Support Services Group's (ESS) Beverly Hempstead and Suzette Lovely as extremely competent and capable experts for any district engaged in a superintendent search. The San Marcos Unified School District Governing Board was fortunate to employ ESS through the 2020-21 school year as we searched for our next superintendent, and I cannot recommend them highly enough.

With three newly elected Board members, there was a lot of learning for us. Beverly and Suzette provided clear direction on the importance of finding the perfect superintendent during a difficult time when the district was absent of leadership. These incredibly professional women took us step-by-step through the process of defining what we were looking for in a candidate, collecting information from all stakeholders, and compiling this information to create a job posting that would cast a wide net.

Suzette and Beverly directed the Board through a painstaking process of vetting dozens of highly qualified applicants to narrow down the search. They took their time to help us understand the process, see things from multiple angles, and helped us create an interview process that landed the perfect candidate for our district.

ESS was consistent with their messaging, very professional in every interaction, and demonstrated a deep understanding of this process which made every step a learning experience for all our board members. I believe the extensive experience both Beverly and Suzette have as former superintendents provides them with a unique perspective from which both new and existing board members will greatly benefit.

As a board member I was always fully informed as the process unfolded, with open lines of communication from beginning to end. I don't know how we would have completed the task of hiring a new superintendent without their assistance and guidance. I would highly recommend ESS and I look forward to working with them again.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Jaime Chamberlin

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Governing
Board:

Sarah Ahmad

Stacy Carlson

Jaime
Chamberlin

Sydney Kerr

Carlos Ulloa,
Ed.D.

Andrew S. Johnsen, Ed.D., Superintendent