

2011 SBCSC Search Process Timeline / Account
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In this document, I assert that the public process to hire a permanent SBCSC superintendent was not flawed, though I acknowledge my disappointment that some trustees did not follow their roles with the integrity desired by the board and community. Nevertheless, here is my account of the steps leading to the hiring of Dr. Schmidt, who I trust will bring a strong focus on curriculum and instruction back to our district, with a commitment to effective management of personnel and assets for our children's benefit.

- I met with national search firm in National School Board Association conference in April, 2011, to get a feel for the process of hiring a superintendent.
- The Board interviewed search firms in South Bend; the firm, McPherson & Jacobson was hired in a special meeting scheduled by Mr. Parent while I was away in May, 2011.
- The firm sought input from the board on interim superintendent needs;
- 11 names put forward after a brief opening for applicants; 3 external candidates were interviewed by board, with Dr. Carole Schmidt chosen in June, 2011
- Board & Community input sought on permanent superintendent at a special session. This led to a search criteria and a set of interview questions developed by board with firm.
- Invitation to apply was advertised by firm in the summer, 2011; 17 deemed eligible, and their backgrounds and references were reviewed by McPherson & Jacobson, once again, a professional search firm in the business of helping districts successfully hire qualified superintendents.
- 5 applications recommended to board for review in early November.
- 3 of 5 recommended applications were accepted for interview based on paper application; one candidate from the non-recommended group was pulled by veteran members with prior knowledge of candidate and recommended for interview. Board agreed and 4 candidates were referred to firm for follow up and back-ground checks. One of the 4 withdrew immediately for personal reasons.
- 3 candidates names were disclosed to press; no other names should have been released publicly, since many are already employed in other districts, and only agreed to disclose their names if picked as a final candidate.
- 1 of the 3 disclosed candidates withdrew in background check process after local press and other citizens cursory reviews of headlines revealed controversial events in another district.
- Disagreement among board members leads to confidential information being disclosed to press / community regarding internal review of candidates. Inaccurate and incomplete information circulates regarding board actions in process. In my opinion, this was not an issue of a flawed process, but a lack of trust among board members to stay focused on identifying the best choice for children in our community. Or perhaps poor judgment in the face of concerns about public perception of board's motives and goals.

- Despite disappointment with this breach, 2 outstanding candidates were interviewed on Nov 16-17. The candidates that surfaced in this search were not involved in any of the press, and were not accountable for the board's actions. And as it happens, it is our good fortune as a community, that these two candidates did not withdraw, but instead presented themselves with such excellence that we had a difficult decision to make after dozens of community members met the candidates in seven focus groups over the two days, and the board met with the candidates in a formal interviews in the evenings.
- On Friday, November 18th, the board met in executive session, reviewed community criteria developed above and input from site visits, and weighed this against the board's own assessment of candidates.
- At a special board meeting on November 18th, the board voted to hire Dr. Schmidt.

The accountability for the actions of the board members to cause such doubt in the process has not been addressed fully. In part, this will be internal, as executive sessions are confidential, and the board has responsibility to police itself in this regard. However, as this became quite public, it cannot be ignored. In fact, it needs to be acknowledged as unprofessional and inappropriate, unbecoming public officials, and damaging to the tentative trust that had begun to build around this board. For this behavior that put our credibility in doubt, and caused any loss of confidence in our schools, we should accept responsibility and make necessary changes in how we will agree to act and govern ourselves. I hope to see this come together by the end of January, 2012.