



South Hardin School Board Names Finalists for Next District Superintendent

January 22, 2025

HUBBARD, IA — The South Hardin Community School District has announced three finalists in its search for the district's next superintendent following a comprehensive review process with staff at [Grundmeyer Leader Services](#).

The finalists are Joe Erickson, Chris Fenster, and Michelle Havenstrite.

Erickson currently serves as superintendent of the North Iowa Community School District, where he developed and implemented a strategic plan to provide curriculum materials, technology, a transportation fleet, and facilities for the district. He facilitated district discussions and planning to move to a four-day school week, taking into account academics, activities, afterschool programs, and childcare. In his previous role as elementary principal in Eagle Grove CSD, Erickson conducted a facilities needs assessment, developed and implemented safety plans, and led a professional learning community to analyze and improve instruction.

Erickson holds a master's degree from Iowa State University and a specialist endorsement from Drake University. He has more than six years of experience serving as superintendent and nearly 20 years of experience in K-12 instruction and leadership.

Currently serving as superintendent of Southwest Valley Schools, Fenster leads curriculum and programming efforts to research and adopt a curriculum that aligns K-5 and 6-12 instruction district-wide, while also increasing dual credit, Advanced Placement, career and technical education, and apprenticeships. He led two successful capital bond referendums to improve facilities to meet the 21st-century learning needs of the district. He also increased operational sharing positions to both provide system infrastructure support and increase revenue for the budget.

Fenster holds a specialist in educational leadership degree and a master of education degree from Drake University. Previously, he served as superintendent of North Linn Community Schools. He has nearly 20 years of experience in K-12 leadership and instruction.

Havenstrite most recently served as superintendent and director of special education at the PCM Community School District. She partnered with the community to create and execute a five-year strategic plan aligned with the district's vision and values, while overseeing a comprehensive data collection process through surveys, focus groups, and interviews to foster a culture of excellence and innovation. She successfully led two bond referendums during her four-year tenure.

Havenstrite holds a doctorate of education degree from South Dakota State University and a master's degree in special education from Morningside University. She has more than 30 years of experience in K-12 and postsecondary leadership and instruction.

As a next step, the board and stakeholder interview teams will conduct final interviews with each of the three finalists on Monday, January 27. The board then plans to discuss the candidates and reach a final decision soon after the formal interviews.

The next superintendent will begin leading the South Hardin Community School District effective July 1, 2025.

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