

For Immediate Release

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Ripon School Board Selects Superintendent Search Firm

Ripon, WI - On January 13, 2024, the Ripon Board of Education selected Hazard, Young, and Attea (HYA), a national consulting firm, to head the search for the next superintendent for the Ripon Area School District. In December 2024, Superintendent Dr. Mary Whitrock announced she would retire at the end of June 2025 following 12 years of service to the community. The Board plans to select the next superintendent by early April 2025.

HYA has posted the position and will hold a planning session with the School Board on February 3, 2025. In addition, HYA is attending the January 22-24 State Education Convention where visitors to their booth will see the Ripon position. In February, HYA will use surveys and focus sessions to connect with stakeholders and gather information from the community on what Ripon is looking for in the next superintendent.

The Board sent a request for proposals (RFP) to all 15 firms listed with the Wisconsin Association of School Board (WASB) that conduct superintendent searches for districts in Wisconsin. The Board received five proposals from HYA; McPherson & Jacobson, L.L.C.; Ray Associates, School Exec Connect; and WASB. The Board met on January 6 to review the proposals using a matrix that looked at criteria in the following five areas: cost; reputation and references; experience in placing good fit superintendents; completeness of proposal; and ability to identify new candidates.

Ray Associates, the firm with the lowest matrix score was eliminated. The remaining four firms with extensive experience in Wisconsin were selected to be interviewed on January 13, 2025. Following 30-minute interviews with each of the remaining four firms, the Board selected HYA due to their competitive bid and full range of services.

Since 2018, HYA has had 31 client districts in Wisconsin and 94% of the superintendents HYA places in positions have stayed for more than 3 years. HYA was established in 1987 and has over 1600 clients. HYA has over 135 associates partnering with districts in 42 states.

The actual search time frame will be set at the February 3, 2025, Board Work Session, which generally includes the following four elements:

- Engage: extensive community engagement through in-person and virtual focus groups, interviews, and surveys to understand the community's desires for their next leader;
- Recruit: outreach and advertising through HYA's networks to ensure the widest and most diverse candidate pool;
- Select: the creation of a slate of candidates for the Board's review that best matches the leadership profile and desired characteristics developed during the engagement phase; and
- Transition: work with the selected leader and board president to review information gained throughout the search process and offer services for transition support, governance and long-range planning.

HYA does everything it can to vet candidates and is transparent with the school boards, sharing everything they know about candidates under consideration. HYA engages in multiple reference checks beyond those in the candidate's list, and HYA clients can select a 3rd party investigative

background check to uncover as much information as is available which includes a social media review. The Board will interview the slate of candidates vetted by HYA. The Board's decision to hire or not hire a particular candidate is at the sole discretion of the Board.

School board President David Scott shared his confidence with HYA as the board's partner, the district will once again find a good fit for superintendent commenting "Dr. Whitrock has given us notice of her retirement in plenty of time for us to run a quality search, and Dr. Whitrock's work together with the partnership between Dr. Whitrock and the Board over the last twelve years put the district in a good position to attract quality applicants according to HYA."

The Board plans to select the new superintendent by early April 2025 with final approval expected at the regular April board meeting. This will allow the candidate time to learn more about the community of Ripon and Ripon Area School District before starting on July 1, 2025. During the transition time between being selected and starting in the position, the candidate will be able to meet with members of the Ripon Area School Board and staff and most importantly work with Dr. Whitrock to ensure a smooth transition.

Any comments or questions, please contact Board President David Scott at (920) 748-4600.

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