



Superintendent Contract Development Guide

A Resource for Charter School Boards

Introduction

Creating an effective superintendent contract is a crucial responsibility for school boards. A well-crafted contract establishes clear expectations, promotes transparency, and builds a foundation for long-term district success. This guide is not intended as legal advice. Always consult your Board's attorney in contract matters.

Key Contract Components

1. Term and Renewal

Purpose: Establishes the duration of employment and conditions for contract renewal. The Board should strive to create a framework for long term success. Exemplary and steady leadership is in the best interests of students.

Sample Language:

"The term of this Contract shall be for three (3) years, commencing July 1, 20XX and ending June 30, 20XX. The Board shall notify the Superintendent in writing by January 1 of the final contract year regarding its intent to renew or not renew this Contract."

2. Compensation and Benefits

Purpose: Defines salary, benefits, and other forms of compensation. You are likely competing in local school and non-profit leadership markets. Your package of compensation and benefits should be structured to both attract and retain high quality leadership.

Key Elements:

- Base salary
- Health insurance
- Retirement contributions
- Professional dues
- Travel allowance



Sample Language:

"The Superintendent shall receive an annual base salary of \$XXX,XXX for the 20XX-XX school year. The Board shall review the Superintendent's salary annually and may increase it at its discretion."

3. Performance Evaluation

Purpose: Outlines the evaluation process and performance metrics. A significant portion of this should be directly linked to your Performance Contract with your Charter Sponsor. The elements of the Performance Contract are what the Board is accountable to deliver.

Components:

- Evaluation timeline
- Performance criteria
- Goal-setting process
- Review procedures

Sample Language:

"The Board shall evaluate the Superintendent's performance annually by May 1. The evaluation shall be based on goals mutually agreed upon by the Board and Superintendent at the beginning of each school year."

4. Professional Development

Purpose: Supports continuous improvement and growth. Whether it is deeper learning about the community, partners, and families or teaching, learning, and education systems, every Superintendent should model continuous improvement and growth.

Elements to Include:

- Conference attendance
- Continuing education
- Professional memberships
- Leadership development

Sample Language:

"The Board shall provide the Superintendent with an annual professional development allowance of \$X,XXX for conferences, workshops, and other professional growth activities."

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5. Duties and Responsibilities

Purpose: Clearly defines role expectations and authority. This section should clearly delineate the Superintendent's accountability for the entirety of operations at the school. The Superintendent is the Board's only hire and only direct report.

Key Areas:

- District leadership
- Policy implementation
- Staff management
- Budget oversight
- Board relations

Sample Language:

"The Superintendent shall serve as the chief executive officer of the District and shall have charge of the administration of the schools under the direction of the Board."

6. Termination Clauses

Purpose: Establishes conditions and procedures for contract termination.

Types to Address:

- For cause
- Without cause
- Mutual agreement
- Disability
- Death

Sample Language:

"This Contract may be terminated by mutual agreement of the parties, or by the Board for cause as defined in [State] Education Code Section XXX."

Best Practices for Contract Development

Clarity and Specificity

1. Use clear, unambiguous language
2. Define all key terms
3. Include specific dates and deadlines
4. Outline precise procedures

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Legal Compliance

5. Ensure alignment with state laws
6. Review with legal counsel
7. Include required statutory provisions
8. Address regulatory requirements

Fairness and Balance

9. Protect both parties' interests
10. Include reasonable compensation
11. Establish fair evaluation processes
12. Provide due process protections

Future-Focused Elements

13. Include professional growth opportunities
14. Build in regular review processes
15. Allow for goal adjustment
16. Support long-term planning

Implementation Tips

1. Begin contract development early
2. Involve key stakeholders appropriately
3. Review similar contracts from other districts
4. Seek legal review before finalization
5. Maintain confidentiality during negotiations

Conclusion

A well-structured superintendent contract serves as the foundation for effective district leadership. Focus on clarity, fairness, and alignment with district goals while ensuring all legal requirements are met.