

# Akron Beacon Journal

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## EDUCATION

# Akron Public Schools picks a superintendent search firm but has 'challenging' time frame

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Published 6:05 a.m. ET April 20, 2023

The Akron Public Schools board will choose its next superintendent with the help of a search firm based in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

The board on Monday voted to select Ray & Associates, an educational executive search firm, after interviewing that firm and two others in a public meeting.

The firm's president, Michael Collins, is from Westerville, Ohio, and said they have associates throughout the state, including Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby, who will aid in Akron's search.

The cost is estimated to be about \$30,200, according to a presentation the firm made to the school board this week. The board also considered pitches from Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates for an estimated \$40,870 and the Educational Service Center of Northeast Ohio, for \$16,900. Former Akron CFO and Treasurer Ryan Pendleton now works for the educational service center, although it doesn't appear he would have been involved in the search.

For its last superintendent search, which brought former superintendent Christine Fowler Mack to Akron, the board used the Ohio School Boards Association.

The vote to choose Ray & Associates was 4-0 with two board members absent. The board is also down a member right now, but four members was enough for a quorum for a special meeting to pick a search firm.

Fowler Mack left the district mid-February, but the board had not yet moved on hiring a search firm until this week. The intention, board leadership has said, is to have someone in the job this summer before the new school year.

Ray & Associates' president said the board's timeframe is "challenging" but "it can be done."

Collins said the process would involve community engagement on the front end, with about a dozen or more focus groups to assess what stakeholders are looking for in the district's next leader. The community would then have a chance to submit feedback about the finalists before the board makes a decision.

"It's a structured process that gives a sense of transparency and authenticity to the community," Collins said.

Board President Derrick Hall said he liked Ray & Associates' high level of experience.

"They were a nice mix of Ohio and national," he said. "I like that they have a superintendent that's just right up the road."

Hall said he also liked that the firm is conducting the Columbus City Schools superintendent search.

"I feel a little bit more confident knowing that another large, respected district chose them," Hall said.

Board Vice President Diana Autry said she liked that the firm has a wide pool of applicants.

"I like that piece," she said. "I like their team and the experience of their team."

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