



**THE NATIONAL
SUPERINTENDENT OF THE YEAR PROGRAM**
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS
801 NORTH QUINCY STREET * SUITE 700 * ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22203
(703) 528-0700 FAX (703) 528-2146

**Tips on Enhancing Your State Superintendent of the Year Application at the
National Level**

*As presented at the AASA State Leadership Meeting
May 5, 2006*

As each state prepares its application for the AASA National Superintendent of the Year Program, the following ideas were presented as values that the Blue Ribbon Panel of judges consider important as they review the applications.

1. Communication Skills

The applicant should fully answer each question. Do not be verbose but there are few questions that can be answered in a paragraph. On the other hand, smaller school districts should not undervalue their work because they feel they do not possess the support systems of larger school districts. Answer each question directly. Each question should be considered to “tell a story.” Concentrate on using “we” and not “I” in your answers.

2. Philosophy

Can the Panel see and understand the underlying “philosophical base” from which the applicant draws his/her leadership skills? How is the philosophical base put into practice by the applicant? Cite research or models that have had an impact on the applicant’s leadership and life. The Panel seeks evidence that the applicant takes the personal time to reflect.

3. Community Involvement

Professional breadth and innovative community involvement are important to the judges. While raising student academic achievement is important, the judges often want their candidate to see achievement in the broader perspective of leadership, and the strategies the applicant employs in advancing the democratic purposes of public education through community engagement, parental involvement, community problem solving, and advocacy building in support for public education.

4. Evidence and Examples

Philosophy and opinions should be backed up by examples. Saying “that the district achievement scores improved as a result of a specific program the applicant instituted” needs to be followed up by data and evidence. Since the only information the Panel has is what the applicant submits on the application, leave nothing to presumption.

5. Tell a Story.

Questions are coordinated so that the applicant's responses can "flow" from one question to the next, and should tell the story about the special and unique leadership characteristics of the applicant. Neatly packaging the application appeals to many of the judges—using the same type fonts, consistent margins, well-edited answers, correct grammar and spelling are all critical in telling the story. A well coordinated presentation representing forethought and continuity is very appealing.

6. Letters of nomination and Supporting Documents

The applicant should not overlook the importance of the letter of nomination and the additional supporting documents. Form letters from the governor don't carry as much weight as a well articulated letter from the school board president or community leader—unless the governor took the time to write a personal letter providing evidence of performance and insight into the applicant. Supporting documents are not necessarily letters but may include newspaper articles or other materials which speak to the leadership of the superintendent.

7. National Representative of the Superintendency

The judges frequently ask the question: how will the person we select represent the profession of the superintendency nationally? Will they be able to speak articulately about the issues of the superintendency and about the importance of public education? Do we have sufficient information about issues they believe important? Will they be able to address such complex issues as reform? Equity? High stakes testing? Professional development? The changing role of the superintendent?

8. Every State Applicant Can Be a National Finalist

And lastly, every state applicant has an opportunity to become a national finalist. The judges come in with an open mind, and recognize and respect the tremendous variation and diversity among the school districts and the states. Their determination is based on the quality of the application and applicant submitted by the state.