Policy 2121: Superintendent's Contract **Status:** ADOPTED

Original Adopted Date: 12/01/2015 | **Last Revised Date:** 06/01/2024 | **Last Reviewed Date:** 06/01/2024

CSBA NOTE: The following optional policy should be modified to reflect district practice.

The Governing Board believes that the Superintendent's employment contract should outline the framework through which the Board and Superintendent will work together as a governance team to achieve district goals and objectives. When approving the Superintendent's employment contract, the Board shall consider the value of stability in district administration, the best use of district resources, and the Board's duty to ensure accountability to the public for the performance of the district's schools.

CSBA NOTE: The following list of contract components is consistent with a template for superintendent contracts developed by CSBA. The annotated template contract with additional context and suggestions is available through CSBA's website. Districts are advised to consult CSBA's District and County Office of Education Legal Services or district legal counsel when reviewing and/or approving the Superintendent's employment contract.

The contract shall be reviewed by district legal counsel and may include the following:

1. Term of the contract, which shall be for no more than four years pursuant to Education Code 35031

2. Length of the work year and hours of work

3. Salary, health and welfare benefits, and other compensation for the position, including a statement that any subsequent increase in the Superintendent's salary shall be at the sole discretion of the Board

4. Reimbursement of work-related expenses, including mileage reimbursement, consistent with Board policies, regulations, and guidelines applicable to other professional administrative staff

   The contract may also address payment for professional dues and activities, the district's provision of cell phones or other technological devices, and the use of a personal vehicle.

5. Vacation, illness and injury leave, and personal leaves

6. Professional development

7. General duties and responsibilities of the position

8. Criteria, process, and procedure for annual evaluation of the Superintendent

9. A statement that there shall be no automatic renewal or extension of the contract, although the Board may enter into a new contract with the Superintendent prior to the expiration of the existing contract

CSBA NOTE: Pursuant to Education Code 35031, if the Governing Board decides not to

reemploy the Superintendent, it must provide notification at least 45 days before the contract expires. If the Board fails to provide the required prior written notice, the Superintendent shall be deemed reemployed for a term of the same length as the one completed, under the same terms and conditions, and with the same compensation.

10. Timeline for providing written notice to the Superintendent if the Board does not wish to enter into a new contract, which shall be at least 45 calendar days in advance of the expiration of the term of the contract pursuant to Education Code 35031, and the responsibility of the Superintendent to remind the Board in writing and in a timely manner of the requirement to give notice

CSBA NOTE: See section on "Termination of Contract" below for limitations to maximum cash settlements.

11. Conditions and process for termination of the contract, including the maximum cash settlement that the Superintendent may receive if the contract is terminated prior to its expiration date

12. Matters related to liability and indemnification against demands, claims, suits, actions, and legal proceedings brought against the Superintendent in the Superintendent's official capacity in the performance of employment-related duties

CSBA NOTE: Pursuant to Government Code 54957, personnel matters related to the appointment or employment of an employee may be discussed in closed session under the "personnel exception." However, Government Code 54957 prohibits the use of closed session for discussion or action on any proposed change in compensation other than a reduction of compensation that results from the imposition of discipline. In San Diego Union v. City Council, a California Court of Appeal held that the "personnel exception" provided in Government Code 54957 does not extend to discussions of salary and compensation.

Notwithstanding Government Code 54957, the Board is authorized pursuant to Government Code 54957.6, the "labor exception," to hold closed sessions with the district's designated representatives regarding the salaries, salary schedules, or compensation paid in the form of fringe benefits to its represented and unrepresented employees, including the Superintendent. The Attorney General has opined in 57 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 209 (1974) that a board may only meet in closed session for such purposes with a designated representative who is involved with the "bona fide" negotiations with represented and/or unrepresented employees. The Attorney General's publication, "The Brown Act: Open Meetings for Local Legislative Bodies" also states that the "labor exception" applies to meeting in closed session to instruct its representatives concerning negotiations with prospective employees. Boards wishing to discuss the Superintendent's salary in closed session under the "labor exception" are encouraged to consult CSBA's District and County Office of Education Legal Services or district counsel before doing so.

In addition, pursuant to Government Code 54956, the Board is prohibited from deliberating on the salary or other compensation of the Superintendent at a special meeting. See BB 9320 - Meetings and Notices, BB 9321 - Closed Session, and BB 9323.2 - Actions By The Board.

The following paragraph should be revised to reflect district practice.

The Board may deliberate about terms of the contract in closed session at a regular meeting. However, discussions regarding the salary, salary schedule, or other compensation may occur in the closed session of a regular meeting only between the Board and its designated representative(s), as permitted under Government Code 54957.6. Such deliberations shall not be held during a special

meeting. (Government Code 54956, 54957, 54957.6)

Terms of the contract shall remain confidential until the approval process commences.

CSBA NOTE: Pursuant to Government Code 54953, the Board is required to, in open session, orally report a summary of the recommendation for final action on the Superintendent's salary or benefits and must make related records available to the public in accordance with the California Public Records Act. Thus, Government Code 54953 limits the Board's ability to approve changes to salary or benefits as part of a consent calendar and instead requires such approval to be a separate agenda item. For identical requirements regarding final action on the salary or benefits of other district executives, see BP 4312.1 - Contracts.

The Board shall take final action on the Superintendent's contract during an open session of a regularly scheduled Board meeting, and that action shall be reflected in the Board's minutes. At that meeting, prior to taking action, the Board shall orally report a summary of the recommendation for the final action on the Superintendent's salary or compensation in the form of fringe benefits. (Government Code 3511.1, 53262, 54953)

Copies of the contract and other public records created or received in the process of developing the recommendation related to the Superintendent's salary, benefits, and other compensation shall be available to the public upon request. (Government Code 53262, 54953)

Termination of Contract

CSBA NOTE: Pursuant to Government Code 53260, every employee contract must include a provision limiting the maximum cash settlement the employee may receive upon termination of the contract to an amount equal to the monthly salary multiplied by the number of months left on the contract. For a Superintendent contract, Government Code 53260 provides that the maximum cash settlement is the monthly salary multiplied by 12. Cash settlements may be less than these maximums. The district must make contracts of employment, which include the termination agreements, available to the public upon request. See AR 4117.5/4217.5/4317.5 - Termination Agreements.

Prior to the expiration of the contract, the Board may terminate the Superintendent's employment contract in accordance with law and applicable contract provisions.

In such an event, the maximum cash settlement that the Superintendent may receive upon termination of the contract shall not exceed the Superintendent's monthly salary multiplied by the number of months left on the contract or the Superintendent's monthly salary multiplied by 12, whichever is less. (Government Code 53260)

The cash settlement shall not include any noncash items other than health benefits, which may be continued for the same duration of time as covered in the settlement or until the Superintendent finds other employment, whichever occurs first. (Government Code 53260, 53261)

However, when the termination of the Superintendent's contract is based upon the Board's belief and subsequent confirmation through an independent audit that the Superintendent has engaged in fraud, misappropriation of funds, or other illegal fiscal practices, no cash or noncash settlement of any amount shall be provided. (Government Code 53260)

In addition, if the Superintendent is convicted of a crime involving an abuse of office or position, the Superintendent shall reimburse the district for payments received as paid leave salary pending investigation or as cash settlement upon termination, and for any funds expended by the district in

defending the Superintendent against a crime involving the Superintendent's office or position. (Government Code 53243-53243.4, 53260)

CSBA NOTE: Pursuant to Education 35150, as added by SB 494 (Ch. 875, Statutes of 2023), the Board is prohibited from taking action to terminate the Superintendent as specified in the following paragraphs. For more information regarding restrictions and prohibitions on when the Board may take certain actions, see E(1) 9323.2 - Actions by the Board.

The Board shall not take action to terminate the Superintendent without cause at a special or emergency meeting of the Board. (Education Code 35150)

Additionally, the Board shall not take action to terminate the Superintendent without cause or within 30 days after the first convening of the Board after an election at which one or more Board members are elected or recalled. (Education Code 35150)

However, the Board may take action to terminate the Superintendent without cause at a regular meeting during any month in which a regular meeting of the Board is not scheduled. (Education Code 35150)