



VERNONIA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Vernonia Board of Education Names Four Finalists for Next Superintendent

April 21, 2026

Vernonia, OR — The Vernonia School District Board of Education has named four finalists in its search for the district's next superintendent. The finalists are Darla Waite-Larken, Mike Ingman, Jon Zwemke and Michael Gard.

Waite-Larken has served as a principal and in central office leadership roles in the Banks School District since 2014, including as an elementary and middle school principal and director of student services. She currently serves as director of student performance, a position she has held since 2023. Prior to that, she was an elementary principal in the South Umpqua School District and began her career as an elementary teacher. She holds a master's degree in educational leadership from Northwest Nazarene University and a bachelor's degree in multidisciplinary studies from Eastern Oregon University.

Ingman brings two decades of educational leadership experience. He has served as high school principal at Henry D. Sheldon High School, Eugene, since 2019, also spending a year as a human resource administrator in the district. Prior to that, he served as principal of Cottage Grove High School, Al Kennedy Alternative High School and Albany Options School, and as student services coordinator for the South Lane School District. Ingman holds administrative licensure, a master's degree in education, and a bachelor of arts from the University of Oregon.

Zwemke has served as superintendent of the Reedsport School District since 2018. Previously, he was a high school principal in the Central Linn School District and served as a district administrator and middle school principal in the Gervais School District. He also worked as a middle school principal and athletic director in the Ontario School District. He began his career as a junior high and high school teacher. He holds a bachelor's degree in biology and a master's degree in curriculum and instruction from Eastern Washington University.

Gard's experience spans both teaching and administration. In the Phoenix Union High School District in Phoenix, Arizona, he has served as dean of students, assistant principal of instruction, registration and talent director, and currently serves as transportation director. He also serves as an adjunct master's-level professor in curriculum and instruction at Grand Canyon University. He began his career as a science teacher. He earned a doctorate in educational administration and supervision from Arizona State University, a master's degree in educational administration and supervision from Arizona State University and a bachelor's degree in biology from Northern Arizona University.

There were 20 total applicants to consider and board members have been working with [Grundmeyer Leader Services](#) to conduct the search. As a next step, the board and interview teams will conduct final interviews with each of the finalists on May 1. The board will then discuss the candidates and reach a final decision soon after the formal interviews. The new superintendent will begin effective July 1, 2026.