

FALL 2007

# School Talk



## Facing the future

with Mounds View's <sup>not-so</sup> new superintendent  
Dan Hoverman

# A Day in the Life of a school superintendent

A large, red “easy” button sits near the front of Dan Hoverman’s desk. When it’s pressed, the gag gift he received from a District resident announces, “That was easy!”

For a superintendent of a large metro school district, few decisions will come as easily as a push of a button. But after 32 years in Mounds View Public Schools, with 18 years on administrative teams, Hoverman has a solid base of experience he can tap in order to inform his decision-making.

A superintendent’s position is a complex job that requires collaboration, communication, diplomacy and sometimes making decisions that won’t please everyone. Most superintendents are charged with supervision of school principals and central office administrators who oversee all operations of the district, from financial management to technology services to human resources to communications. In today’s “accountability environment” with increasing demands and limited resources, it’s little wonder that fewer and fewer candidates are drawn to the position.

“There are a limited number of people who have the necessary skill set and experience to lead a school district in today’s environment,” says Sandy Gundlach, director of management services for the Minnesota School Boards Association. Gundlach teaches



workshops on superintendent searches and has conducted a number of superintendent searches for school boards. “The shortage is compounded by the fact that there are fewer qualified people who are willing to tackle the job because of the demands and political pressure. It’s a very tough market right now.”

Barb Bollum agrees.

“We’re fortunate to have Dan in this critical role,” says Bollum, the School Board vice chair. “Dan was the candidate with the most significant experience matching the characteristics and criteria we established, and he brings an extensive knowledge of the intricacies of our schools and our communities.”

How important is the superintendent’s position? Many experts agree a superintendent’s leadership plays a critical role in school success. In fact, new national research finds a strong connection between the work of the district CEO and student achievement.

## So what exactly does a superintendent do?

As is true for most of us, no superintendent’s day is typical. But for Hoverman, it might look something like this.

Each day, Hoverman is among the first to arrive to the District office and among the last to leave. An occasional Diet Coke fuels the man who rarely eats lunch, but is known for sneaking a brownie or two if available. As the day unfolds, it’s not uncommon to see a line form outside his office as people with varying needs vie for some of his time. Most days include any combination of the following events:

- A school visit
- A parent meeting to resolve a complaint
- School improvement planning with principals, giving them autonomy to run their schools, but expecting goal alignment and collaboration
- Special education, curriculum and instruction planning
- Evaluating testing and assessment data, while setting targets for achievement with school leadership teams
- Financial health evaluations and budget development
- Conversations with community leaders
- Policy development, management and District vision discussions with School Board members

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# Chalkboard Chat

What do you think are the most pressing issues for the superintendent of Mounds View Public Schools? Share your thoughts and read what others think by visiting the online forum, "Chalkboard Chat." Visitors can join the digital discussion by posting comments on the online forum at [www.moundsvIEWSchools.org](http://www.moundsvIEWSchools.org) – coming later in November.

- Goal-setting with principals, Board members and teacher leaders
- District operations or facility management support
- Accountability reporting to the School Board, community and coordination with the state
- An offsite meeting with a state or local education committee or task force

- Any variety of conflict resolution meetings or issues management

There aren't many days when Hoverman can legitimately hit the "easy" button after making a decision. But even the toughest calls bring him some level of satisfaction.

"I've always wanted to be where the action is," he explains. "And for me,

that's in education. I really believe this kind of work is important to our society. I can't imagine working for any other endeavor."

*For a complete list of superintendent responsibilities or to view Hoverman's District Operational Plan goals for the 2007-08 year, visit [www.moundsvIEWSchools.org](http://www.moundsvIEWSchools.org).*

## The Hoverman File

### Name

Dan Hoverman (pronounced "Hoover-man").

### Background

Holds a specialist degree in education leadership from University of St. Thomas. Has 32 years of school administration experience with positions as a school psychologist in Wausau, Wisconsin, and various positions with Mounds View Public Schools including school psychologist, teacher on special assignment – special education coordination, special education director, executive director of curriculum and instruction and deputy superintendent.

### Personal

Age 58. Married 24 years to Jean, a retired paraprofessional from Bel Air Elementary School. Has two stepchildren and one grandchild – a high school junior in St. Francis. Interests include golf, running, biking and reading. Once played in a semi-professional football game inside the Stillwater prison (not as an inmate).



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