

LOCALNEWS

ISD No. 361 superintendent candidate profiles

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

The International Falls School Board next week is expected to interview three candidates for the soon-to-be vacant ISD 361 district superintendent position. Nordy Nelson, superintendent, will not renew his contract which expires June 30.

Prior to Monday's interviews, which are open to the public, The Journal surveyed candidates Gwen Carman, Kevin Grover and Beth Shermoen on their background

and qualifications for the job.

The answers are published as they were presented to The Journal. Responses were limited to 500 words or less.

Candidates answered the following questions:

1. Please provide a short bio of yourself – including background, education, experience, etc.
2. Why do you want to be the superintendent of Independent School District No. 361?
3. Why do you believe you are the best person for the job?

Interview times

Superintendent interviews are set to begin at 3:45 p.m. Monday in the Falls High School library. The candidates will be interviewed at the following times:

- 3:45-4:30 p.m. — Gwen Carman
- 4:30-5:15 p.m. — Kevin Grover
- 5:15- 6 p.m. — Beth Shermoen



Gwen Carman

1. I have had a diverse teaching and administrative career which has built my leadership skills and a broad understanding of the challenges public schools are facing. I received my bachelors and master degrees at Iowa State University, and my principal and superintendent licensure certificates from St. Mary's University. I moved to Minnesota in 1991. I have been an early childhood special education teacher (home visiting and classroom settings), kindergarten teacher and elementary special education teacher. I have over 15 years of school administration experience in the Cook County School District as PK-5 principal, K-12 principal and Community Education director.

I have extensive experience with special education, PK-12 curriculum planning, early childhood education, Q-Comp, data interpretation and use, PK-12 staff development, personnel hiring and evaluations, alternative learning programs and college/career readiness planning. I am a strong advocate for the use of technology in schools and training teachers on how to effectively integrate technology into their instruction and curriculum as a tool for improving student achievement.

I am very knowledgeable about fiscal management procedures for school districts and have worked directly with setting and maintaining budgets, processing expenditures, grant writing and state reporting.

2. I am confident that I will be an effective and successful superintendent for ISD #361. I want to provide the leadership that the staff, school board and community need to assure that we work together to keep ISD #361 strong. Every student deserves a quality education with effective instruction, and schools must have parent and community support. I will provide leadership and coordination for all of the school administration team members to manage the needs of the district including the principals, transportation, facility, technology, human resources, special education and the business office staff.

I am ready to work with the staff, school board and community of ISD #361 to face the immediate and long term challenges of stabilizing or increasing student enrollment, maintaining the district's financial stability, planning for the integration of technology and building a common focus on the work we need to do to support the success of every student.

3. I am the best person for this job because of my skills, experience and my commitment to student success. I am familiar with the challenges of rural, remote school districts. I am an exceptionally positive and have strong oral and written communication skills. I am passionate about public education's responsibility to provide educational excellence with rigor and relevance at all levels for all students. Throughout my career, I have successfully built trust and maintained positive relationships with students of all ages, licensed and non-licensed staff, parents and community organizations. I am very comfortable responding to problems and conflict directly and respectfully. I look forward to becoming part of the International Falls community.



Kevin Grover

1. I graduated from high school in Park Rapids, MN, then went to Bemidji State University where I graduated with a bachelor of science in mathematics along with a teaching license in 1997. I began working for International Falls School District in January of 1998 as a math/computer teacher. I earned a master's degree in education from BSU in 2005. Administration peaked my interest so I began taking classes through Saint Mary's University earning my K-12 principal license in 2007 then my superintendent license in 2009. While employed by ISD 361 I have taught a variety of math classes, a couple computer classes, worked as a dean of students, assistant superintendent, and interim superintendent. I am currently dean of students/activities director. I have been active in the teachers' union and treasurer for eight years which includes being part of the negotiation team. My 16-month old daughter and family reside in International Falls.

2. I have worked and lived in this community for over 16 years. The time is right in my career to move into a new capacity to help continue the strong education that this district provides. The district needs a person that is vested in the community and willing to give 110 percent to make the educational opportunities, extra-curricular opportunities, and the community a better place. I can be the person that works with the school board, administration, teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians, secretaries, cooks, bus drivers, parents, and students to build a working relationship in which we all are focused on the end product of creating the best educational opportunity possible with the resources we have. The community and school district are facing some challenging times and with leadership that works collaboratively with the stakeholders, both will persevere and be competitive entities for years to come.

3. I am committed to this district and want to be part of the administrative team that continues the great educational and extracurricular traditions. I have experience in negotiations, arbitration, levies, bonding, legal issues, lobbying, school finance, special education, and the list goes on. I will admit I have lots to learn, but that has been true of every position that I have held. I feel I have earned the trust and backing of the staff at ISD 361 through years of hard work, listening, and being a person that is true to my word. Yes, we will never all see every issue exactly the same, but I refuse to think that we can't work as professionals for the good of the organization to come up with solutions that are in the best interest of all involved. I can be the leader that continues the great things that take place every day in this district and be the person that can foster change as we meet the needs of this ever changing world. It is my passion to work with the students, parents, staff, and community to make ISD 361 a stronger educational institution and a place we are all proud of.



Beth Shermoen

1. My name is Beth Shermoen. I was born and raised in International Falls and returned to live in this beautiful area following college endeavors. I am married to Jerrod Shermoen, and we have two children, Jeffrey and Maria.

I am a former business manager of Borderland Jewelry and business owner of The Finery. I spent nearly 20 years in small business where I learned first-hand the ups and downs of retail business in a small rural market.

I am a Falls High School and Rainy River Community College graduate. I returned to school to pursue my education dreams, graduating summa cum laude from Bemidji State University. I currently teach sixth grade at West End Elementary. In 2011, I started an education consulting business, called JJEM Education to work with schools, educators, administrators and students on a variety of topics which house our schools today.

My passion for education and student success fueled my return to graduate school in order to have a greater impact at a district wide level. I graduate next month from Bethel University with a master's degree in K-12 education and licensure as a K-12 principal and superintendent. I was also granted early enrollment to the doctor of education, Educational Leadership program, and have just completed my second year.

2. I want to be the superintendent of ISD 361 because of my personal connections and love of this area, its people, and my commitment to education excellence and the school experiences of our students and their families. I believe ISD 361 is at a critical crossroad as we move forward in the education of the 21st century student. I am determined, if given the opportunity, to bring transformational leadership to the district where everyone is working together towards initiatives for one common vision and goal, our students. As superintendent I will work hard to ensure our teachers are afforded the support, professional development, and resources needed to be successful leaders and educators in best practices, instructional design, services and student relationships.

3. I was born and raised here; I have worked here my whole life. I know the people of International Falls. The people of International Falls know me. Given our current struggles, we need to come together as a community. This is true for our city, but it is just as true for our school district. My business background is an essential part of the new framework of administrative licensure today. That background gave me some of my strongest attributes: integrity, relationship building, communication, and good old fashion hard work. Building and solidifying the connections we have both inside and outside of our school are instrumental in the current and future success of our district. We have great things happening in the district. But I believe we can always do better. Just good enough is not good enough. Our children deserve the best educational experience we can provide given our resources, and as superintendent I will strive to deliver on that every day.

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