

SAA Executive Director Search Process Update for Annual General Meeting: August 2021

Hello. I'm Mary Halverson Waldo, and I'm speaking to you with an update from the SAA Board's Search Committee, on the Executive Director Search process.

The Committee is co-chaired by my colleague Michelle Diggs and myself.

Other members include:

- Daniel de Lima
- Trina Carey Hodgson
- Bruce Walker
- Ellen Kogut, *Ex-officio*

The work of the Committee is supported by professional executive recruiter Carolyn McCormick of Peak HR Consulting, LLC, a Colorado-based firm that specializes in finding and vetting nonprofit leaders. Ms. McCormick comes to us highly recommended by trusted governance consultants who have had a long-standing relationship with the SAA Board.

The Search committee is deeply grateful for the knowledgeable and reassuring guidance that Ms. McCormick's expertise brings to our collaborative effort. Over the many weeks we have already worked together, our trust has grown ever greater as she proves to be a perceptive listener to the voices of the SAA.

The task of this ad-hoc Committee is to describe and market the Executive Director position effectively in order to build a pool of talented, qualified candidates to be fully vetted and assessed. The Committee will conduct those initial assessments, and will present final candidate(s) to the full board for consideration. Finally, the board will vote to hire a new leader for the SAA.

Ms. McCormick has been interviewing staff members, our retiring Executive Director Pam Brasch, Board members, and other SAA stakeholders. This is to ensure that the Search Committee members will have a full understanding of the needs of the SAA and the qualities needed in a new leader.

Among the many qualifications the Board has identified for the job of Executive Director are these:

- A demonstrated commitment to the SAA's mission and ends statements.
- An understanding of the SAA's educational goals.

- An ability to ensure balanced programming with a range of perspectives presented,
- A deep interest in the Suzuki philosophy and in expanding knowledge and support for this unique pedagogical approach, and ...
- Proven ability to build long-term relationships with a variety of constituents, stakeholders, and supporters.

The proposed timeline looks like this:

The Search Committee began work in June and opened the position for applications on August 9th. Qualified candidates will be identified and vetted now through early October, leading to first round interviews by mid-October. The Committee hopes to present final candidates for consideration to the full Board in early November, leading to a hiring decision. The start date for the new Executive Director could take place by early December.

The Committee has agreed they will continue to work to find the best next leader for the SAA. If the process does not yield such a candidate by early November, the process will continue.

During the search process, the Board will name a professional Interim Executive Director to provide operational oversight beginning in late August, overlapping with our current executive, and continuing until the new executive is in place. The Interim Executive Director is by definition a temporary position. Many organizations attest to the benefits of using purposeful interim leadership, especially following a long-term, founding executive.

Key steps in the Search process include the following:

1. Documentation of the Job description, including the essential responsibilities and qualifications for the Executive Director.
2. Produce a colorful Leadership Profile for marketing the position.
3. Develop an energetic communication plan for getting the word out to the most desirable candidates.
4. Plan the interview process and train the interviewers.
5. Screen candidate resumes.
6. Assess qualified candidates who meet detailed criteria.
7. Complete the background checks.
8. Recommend finalists to the Board.
9. The Board chooses a new Executive Director for the SAA.

10. A separate committee of the Board initiates transition support for the new Executive Director, as his or her work begins.

In conclusion, we fully acknowledge what we consider to be a healthy tension between continuity and change at this important moment in the life of the SAA. As an organization, together we have made and continue to make a transformational difference in the lives of thousands of children, parents and supporting adults, teachers, teacher trainers, audiences, and communities. Today we are striving to ensure the kind of vision, support and inspiration for the entire Suzuki Association of the Americas which would please our founder himself, Dr. Shinichi Suzuki: to mentor human beings with noble hearts and beautiful spirits.

Thank you on behalf of the entire Search Committee.