
Superintendent of Schools

Oak Park ESD 97



MISSION:

The mission of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 is to guarantee that each student achieves optimal intellectual growth while developing socially, emotionally, and physically through a system distinguished by:

- Exemplary instruction focused on each student
- Commitment to the needs of a diverse population
- Meaningful partnerships with families and the community
 - Celebrations of the power of art, music, and language
- Confident students challenged to be educational risk-takers.

Oak Park, Illinois

November 2025

ANNOUNCEMENT OF VACANCY

The Board of Education of Oak Park ESD 97, Oak Park, Illinois is seeking qualified applicants for the position of Superintendent of Schools. The Board wishes to select a superintendent who will begin work on July 1, 2026.

The Board expects to offer a salary in the range of \$225,000-\$265,000 and a competitive benefits package including sick leave, vacation days personal days, health insurance, dental/vision insurance, life insurance, TRS/THIS contributions, tax-deferred annuity, professional membership dues. It is anticipated that the total compensation package will be based on successful experience and education. It is expected that the initial contract will be for a multi-year period, as authorized by Illinois statutes.

A PROJECTED TIMELINE

Application Deadline:
January 7, 2026 by Noon (CST)

Candidates Presented to Board:
January 2026

Board Interviews Candidates:
January 2026

New Superintendent Appointed:
January 2026

New Superintendent Begins:
July 1, 2026

THE SCREENING TEAM

A Screening Team from the Illinois Association of School Boards has been selected to assist the Board of Education in securing and screening applicants. The team will include:

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala, Consultant, Executive Searches, Illinois Association of School Boards, Lombard, Illinois.

Alan Molby, Consultant, Executive Searches, Illinois Association of School Boards, Lombard, Illinois.

This Professional Superintendent Search is being conducted by the
Illinois Association of School Boards, James (Jim) W. Helton
Associate Executive Director, Executive Searches, (217) 528-9688, ext. 1102.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

IASB has an online application process and does not accept mailed, emailed, hand-delivered or faxed application packets.

Please begin your application process at: <https://iasb.myrevelus.com>

Applicants will need to establish a username and password. Applicants will be asked to give consent to a limited background inquiry. Completed responses to statements identified in this announcement will be required.

All applicants must apply online by 12:00 p.m. (CST) January 7, 2026 and upload the following **PDF documents** to receive consideration:

1. **A formal letter of application** indicating your desire to be a candidate for this position.
2. **A formal resume** that includes a summary of achievements in all education positions, educational vision, and goals, personal leadership philosophy and reasons for your interest in this position.
3. At least **three recent letters of reference dated within the last three years**.
4. **Copies of transcripts** from each college/university attended. (**Please redact/remove your social security number and birthdate before uploading any of these items**).
5. **Proof of qualification and licensure to be a superintendent in the state of Illinois** (copy of the administrative licensure with all related endorsements*) or other evidence showing qualification to be a superintendent in another state. (**Please redact/remove your birthdate before you upload this document**).

ALL UPLOADS MUST BE IN PDF FORMAT.

*Information on certification and licensure can be obtained by contacting the Illinois State Board of Education, Division of Professional Preparation, 100 North First Street, Springfield, Illinois 62777 or by visiting the ISBE website at www.isbe.net.

This Professional Superintendent Search is being conducted by the Illinois Association of School Boards, Dr. Carmen I. Ayala, Consultant, Executive Searches, (630) 629-3776, ext. 1243.

EXECUTIVE
SEARCHES 

A service of the Illinois Association of School Boards

GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE DISTRICT

THE DISTRICT

LOCATION — Oak Park is a village in Cook County, Illinois, immediately west of the City of Chicago—approximately 8 to 10 miles from downtown Chicago. The village covers roughly 4.7 square miles. It is well-served by regional transit (two CTA “L” lines and a Metra line) and major road access. This proximity to Chicago gives Oak Park the benefits of urban amenities while retaining a strong neighborhood and suburban sense of place.

TYPE — PreK-8; 5,427 Students.

OFFICE — 260 Madison Street, Oak Park, IL 60302.

STAFF — 10 Principals, 9 Assistant Principals, 573 Certified Faculty, 412 Non-Certified Staff.

CENTRAL OFFICE PERSONNEL — Superintendent, CFO, Business Manager, Food Service Dir., Facility Dir., Special Ed. Dir., Payroll Clerk, Transportation Dir., Curriculum Dir., HR Dir., Technology Dir.

CURRICULUM — At Oak Park Elementary School District 97, our core curriculum for English language arts, mathematics, science, and social science is fully aligned with the Illinois Learning Standards, which define what all students should know and be able to do at each grade level. These standards emphasize depth over breadth, encouraging students to build upon key concepts and apply their knowledge to real-world situations. The Core Instruction Department leads this vital work by promoting academic excellence, enhancing educational opportunities, and improving the quality of teaching and learning across the district. Through thoughtful curriculum design, comprehensive resource reviews, high-quality professional learning, and ongoing instructional support, the team ensures that every student benefits from a cohesive and rigorous educational experience. District 97 educators are committed to meeting students where they are and providing the necessary support and challenge to help every learner grow and thrive. Through targeted interventions, enrichment experiences, and acceleration opportunities, District 97 ensures that all students receive the support they need to achieve their full potential. Our instructional practices are responsive to individual learning needs and designed to foster continuous academic progress for every student.

District 97 adopts a holistic approach to educating the whole child, nurturing academic, social, emotional, and creative growth. All students in grades K-8 have access to a broad range of fine arts, visual design, music, instrumental music, physical education, world language, and technology courses. These programs cultivate creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking skills essential for success in the 21st century.

Guided by the District 97 Equity Policy, the Core Instruction Department is committed to ensuring that every student receives equitable access to high-quality, standards-aligned instruction and a culturally relevant curriculum. Educators engage in continuous professional learning to strengthen their practice and enhance student engagement. Instruction across the district is grounded in Universal Design for Learning and the Danielson Framework for Teaching (2022), both of which support inclusive, responsive, and reflective instructional practices. Our curricula and instructional practices embody District 97's commitment to providing rigorous, engaging, and equitable learning experiences for all students, empowering every learner to reach their fullest potential.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS – The following initiatives form the foundation of District 97’s work—reflecting our community’s shared commitment to equity, sustainability, and preparing every student to thrive in a changing world.

Equity Policy:

District 97’s Board of Education adopted a comprehensive Equity Policy in 2019, affirming the district’s commitment to racial equity, inclusion, and belonging. Developed with extensive community input, the policy serves as a roadmap for eliminating systemic disparities and ensuring equitable access, inclusive learning environments, and culturally responsive practices for all students.

Portrait of an Oak Park 8th Grade Graduate:

The Portrait of an Oak Park 8th Grade Graduate defines success beyond grades and test scores. Designed by and for the community, the Portrait outlines eight key dimensions of knowledge, skills, and mindsets that guide learning from Pre-K through eighth grade. It reflects Oak Park’s shared values and connects instruction, programs, and partnerships to meaningful, real-world experiences that prepare every student to thrive.

Sustainability, Climate, and Environmental Justice Policy:

Adopted in 2023, this policy commits District 97 to environmental stewardship and climate action. It establishes measurable goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, integrate sustainability education, and ensure environmental justice. A Sustainability Task Force is guiding a five-year plan that aligns with the district’s equity commitments and Oak Park’s Climate Ready goals to create a healthier, more sustainable future for all.

SPECIAL SERVICES — The following initiatives form the foundation of District 97’s work—reflecting our community’s shared commitment to equity, sustainability, and preparing every student to thrive in a changing world.

FACILITIES — District 97 comprises 10 schools, including eight elementary schools and two middle schools, serving approximately 5,600 students from Pre-Kindergarten through eighth grade. There is just over 1 million square feet of interior space in our facilities and about 1.6 million total square feet including our exterior grounds.

TRANSPORTATION — District 97 partners with Sunrise/Lakeview Bus Company to provide reliable general and special education transportation services for our students. In addition, the district works with First Alt to meet the needs of individual and small group transportation, primarily for students supported under McKinney-Vento. These partnerships help ensure that every student has safe, consistent, and equitable access to school each day.

FOOD SERVICE — Oak Park School District 97 proudly participates in the National School Lunch Program, providing nutritious breakfast and lunch to students at all ten schools every day. Through a close and collaborative partnership with Oak Park and River Forest High School District 200, we strive to provide high-quality, healthy, and meals for all students that meet the national school lunch guidelines. The district continues to explore cost-effective and sustainable food options that support student well-being and reflect our commitment to environmental responsibility and equity.

MEMBER OF — West40: We are one of 38 school districts served by West40, which also serves three co-ops in West Cook County. They seek to change lives in one of the most populated areas in Illinois by creating ripple effects throughout the state through various student-centric programs and services.

DISTRICT WEB SITE — <http://www.op97.org>

COLLEGES — Dominican University (River Forest) – Liberal arts and graduate programs. - Concordia University Chicago (River Forest) – Undergraduate and graduate degrees. - Triton College (River Grove) – Comprehensive community college. Oak Park is also within commuting distance of numerous Chicago-area universities, including DePaul, Loyola, Northwestern, and the University of Illinois Chicago, and the University of Chicago.

RETAIL — Oak Park features a strong local economy anchored by small businesses and creative entrepreneurs. - Major retail areas include Downtown Oak Park, the Harrison Street Arts District, and South Oak Park Avenue. - The community hosts an array of independent shops, restaurants, coffeehouses, and professional services. - Farmers markets and seasonal events support local artisans and strengthen Oak Park's reputation as a vibrant, walkable destination.

MEDICAL SERVICES — Oak Park is supported by robust medical infrastructure: - Rush Oak Park Hospital provides a full-service hospital campus including emergency care, cancer care and specialty services. - West Suburban Medical Center is another major care provider in the village. - Additional health-care sites and clinics ensure ready access to medical, behavioral health, and specialty services.

CULTURAL — Oak Park is nationally recognized for its rich architectural, artistic, and literary heritage. - Home to the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio and many of his signature Prairie-style designs. - Birthplace of author Ernest Hemingway, whose boyhood home and museum are local landmarks. - A thriving arts community includes the Oak Park Art League, Oak Park Festival Theatre, and numerous galleries, music, and dance organizations. - The village embraces diversity and inclusion through community events, public art, and cultural celebrations that reflect Oak Park's multicultural identity.

RECREATION — The Park District of Oak Park maintains 13 parks, two outdoor pools, an ice arena, a gymnastics center, a conservatory, and a historic golf course. Scoville Park, located near downtown, serves as a central gathering space for concerts and festivals. The West Cook YMCA, the Oak Park Public Library, and numerous youth and sports programs offer year-round recreation and enrichment for residents of all ages.

PLACES OF WORSHIP — Oak Park is home to a wide variety of faith communities, including Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Unitarian Universalist, and Buddhist congregations. The Community of Congregations unites local houses of worship in interfaith service and advocacy initiatives.

FRATERNAL AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS — Oak Park residents are known for civic engagement and volunteerism. - Oak Park and River Forest Chamber of Commerce supports local businesses and professionals. - Oak Park Township provides social services for youth, families, and seniors. - Service and civic groups such as Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, and the League of Women Voters are active in the community.

IDEAL CANDIDATE

Candidates will be evaluated on their professional merits and successful experience that demonstrates a good match for the district, with emphasis on the following, specified by the Board of Education. The Superintendent of our district should be an educational leader who:

- Excellent Written & Verbal Communication / Collaboration
- Fosters a Professional Culture for Educators
- Ensures an Inclusive, Safe, Supportive Learning Environment
- Promotes Equity and Cultural Responsiveness
- Develops & Supports Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Stakeholders want a superintendent who will be deeply connected to Oak Park, communicates openly, and collaborates effectively with teachers, staff, families, and students. They emphasize the importance of **community knowledge, trust-building, academic excellence, stability, equity-focused leadership, and strong support for educators** – especially in improving instruction and addressing middle school challenges. There is a clear preference for candidates with **teaching and principal experience**, with teaching experience viewed as essential. Stakeholders prioritize leadership qualities, communication skills, school culture, equity, and safety over previous superintendent tenure.

Applicants will be required to provide responses to the following online application statements:

1. Describe your experience in curriculum development and instructional implementation.
2. Describe your experience in school finance and budgeting.
3. Describe your experience in developing and monitoring goals for school improvement.
4. Describe your experience in building and sustaining productive relationships with stakeholders (board, staff, students, parents and community members).
5. Describe your experiences in working with a diverse population (socio-economic, cultural, ethnic, etc.).
6. Having read the ideal candidate section of the announcement of vacancy, why do you feel you are a match for this district?

FINANCIAL DATA

EAV	\$ 2,353,827,289
Bonds Outstanding	\$ 52,235,199
Total Budget Revenue	\$ 129,240,660

TAX RATE —

Education	3.218923
Operations & Maintenance	0.404601
Transportation.....	0.170359
I.M.R.F	0.034072
Debt Service	0.184378
Social Security.....	0.127769
Special Education	0.212948
TOTAL	4.376650

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Oak Park ESD 97 Board of Education is comprised of citizens dedicated to providing the best education possible for every student it serves. Board members establish sound written policies and expect the superintendent to function as the chief executive officer in implementing those policies.

Name.....Years

Cheree Moore, President	6.5
Jung Kim, Vice President.....	6.6
Becky Perez, Board Member5
Venus Hurd Johnson, Board Member.....	4.5
Nancy Ross Dribin, Board Member.....	4.5
Gavin Kearney, Board Member	6.5
Holly Spurlock, Board Member.....	10.5

APPLICANTS ARE REQUESTED NOT TO CONTACT BOARD MEMBERS.

Oak Park ESD 97 is an equal opportunity employer, and the Illinois Association of School Boards is an equal opportunity employment search agency.

This Professional Superintendent Search is conducted by the

