

## McKanna to retire in 2008

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Elementary School District 15 Superintendent Robert McKanna announced Tuesday his intention to retire at the end of the 2008 school year.

"It's not a step anyone takes lightly," School Board President Nancy Lee Carlson said. "He's done a very admirable job with the district, and he's been an extremely effective leader."

McKanna was hired in 2003 at age 60 to succeed John Conyers who served as District 15 superintendent for 18 years, the longest of any superintendent in the district's history.

McKanna has weathered some of the most tempestuous events in the district's history including a potential teacher strike, staff and financial troubles, and a failed referendum.

"You don't want to leave when things are unresolved. Some of the major issues in the school district have been concluded," McKanna said. "We now have an excellent financial rating, a good staff, the teacher contract has been settled, a balanced budget, test scores are up; it's a good time for a transition."

Jim Garwood, the district's executive director of administrative services, said he will be sad to see McKanna leave.

"He's a good man to work for, but if he thinks this is the best thing for him, I support his decision," Garwood said.

McKanna said he wanted to give the district as much lead time as possible to search for a replacement.

"This gives the district time to get whoever they hire up to speed so they can hit the trail running," he said.

School officials described the last search for a superintendent as exhausting.

"In the past we've hired search firms to find candidates. You typically get 20 candidates, and you perhaps whittle that down to the top five," Carlson said. "You need a lot of input from the senior staff, principals, teachers, parents, because you're selecting a person to run a very large corporation. But, ultimately, the superintendent is the board's employee."

District 15 is the third largest elementary district in the state with a budget this year of more than \$143 million.

"I'm happy he was gracious enough to give us a year and a half to find someone. You can't find qualified candidates in a hurry," Carlson said. "We were fortunate with (McKanna), and we hope we'll be as lucky with a new group of candidates."

McKanna was formerly the superintendent of High School District 121 in Gurnee and was a certified examiner for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. McKanna was superintendent when the district won the award in 2003.

McKanna said he was initially attracted to District 15 because of the district's quality philosophy.

"I plan to keep pursuing Baldrige and quality whether with the private sector or other school systems," McKanna said.