

## EDUCATION

# Hays superintendent finalist ready to go

## Educator with degrees from A&M, Texas currently in Oregon.

By [Molly Bloom](#)

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School Superintendent Jeremy Lyon is itching to move out of his current digs in Oregon and into the Hays school district boss's office in Kyle.

"I can't wait to put my diploma from Texas A&M and my doctoral degree from UT-Austin up on the wall," Lyon said. "Frankly, they look a little out of place in my office here in Oregon, but they are going to look right in place in Hays."

Lyon, current superintendent of the Hillsboro School District, was named the lone Hays superintendent finalist last week and is expected to complete contract negotiations with the school board by Feb. 16. Current Hays Superintendent Kirk London plans to retire at the end of the school year after five years at Hays.

Among the challenges Lyon will face in his new job are overseeing new school construction, planning for growth and helping persuade voters to approve school bonds to address enrollment growth. Since the 2004-05 school year, Hays' enrollment has grown about 42 percent to 13,808 students. Hays has built about a dozen schools in the past decade, and last May, voters approved \$86.7 million for three new schools and other items.

Lyon said his first actions after hanging up his diplomas in Hays will be to "listen and learn."

"I need to form relationships and ... learn from staff, the board and the community at large," he said. "I need to begin building a network of understanding that leads to trust."

It's a strategy that observers say served Lyon well when he started in the 20,000-student Hillsboro district, about 15 miles west of Portland in 2004, soon after the district made budget cuts that trimmed 17 teaching days.

Kathy Newman, president of the Hillsboro Education Association, a union representing about 1,200 employees, said the previous superintendent handled the cuts and other difficult issues, including teacher labor negotiations, in a dictatorial, "top-down" style. The nationally syndicated comic strip Doonesbury made fun of the district's woes.

To smooth things over, Lyon held open forums for residents to get their complaints heard and their questions answered, enlisted local business support and lunched monthly with union leaders, Newman said.

During recent talks about changes to Hillsboro's grading policy, Lyon asked teachers and administrators to make recommendations, Newman said.

"He knows that if you just dictate that there will be a change, it won't happen."

About 70 people applied for the Hays superintendent's job, and trustees interviewed six, school board President Chip DuPont said.

Lyon stood out from the other candidates because of Hillsboro's history of academic success and his ability to muster community support, DuPont said.

That Lyon taught some Hays teachers and principals when he was an adjunct professor at Texas State University and worked with some in the Eanes school district helped, too, DuPont said. "The only negative that I got from anybody was that he works so hard."

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