



LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT

Faribault Public Schools

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in October of 2021 for the new superintendent of the Faribault Public School District. The data contained herein were obtained from input the HYA consultants received when they met with individuals and groups in either individual interviews or focus group settings and from the results of the online survey completed by stakeholders. The meetings held virtually or via telephone calls were held on October 5, 6, 9 and 11. The survey, interviews, and focus group meetings were structured to gather input to assist the Board in determining the primary characteristics desired in the new superintendent. Additionally the stakeholder interviews and focus groups collected information regarding the strengths of the District and some of the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years. It is noted that the online survey results are in agreement with the input received in the focus group interviews.

Participation

Administrators, community members, parents of students, students, support staff and teachers participated in the interviews and in the online survey. In addition, each school board member was individually interviewed. In total 484 individuals participated by providing input contributing to this report either via interviews or the online survey.

The community survey report and a draft of the desired characteristics are provided under separate cover and are meant to be stand-alone complementary pieces to the Leadership Profile Report.

It should be emphasized that the data are not a scientific sampling, nor should they necessarily be viewed as representing the majority opinion of the respective groups to which they are attributed. Items are included if, in the consultants' judgment, they warranted the Board's attention.

Responses provided by the individuals and focus groups during the interviews are found listed beginning on page 7 of this report. They are listed alphabetically with no attempt to prioritize them. Comments provided by survey respondents were also reviewed and considered by the consultants.

STRENGTHS OF THE DISTRICT

The community and staff members are aware of the many employees of the school district who care deeply about their responsibility. This is true of both the support staff and professional staff. Participants and survey respondents were quick to praise the many committed teachers and in particular the teachers who "go the extra mile" for students. This praise extended beyond teachers to all support staff. It was cited that the teaching staff included a number of outstanding educators in the ranks of both veteran and new teachers. Principals and other

administrators were also cited as a strength of the school district. Internal audiences in particular noted the spirit of collaboration within administrative ranks and between the district and teachers. A healthy working relationship between the administration and union leadership exists and has been cultivated in part as a result of a strong flow of communication and a culture of transparency in decision making. District leadership was often noted as a strength with many leaders being in their positions for many years providing stability and solid management to the district particularly in times of crisis such as the pandemic over the past two years.

Another strength frequently mentioned was the quality of life and many advantages to living, working and raising a family in the area. The Faribault area has many individuals, businesses and organizations that are committed to assisting the school district move up to an unparalleled level of excellence. This commitment is apparent in the outstanding level of private financial support given to the district for a variety of projects over the past few years.

Falcon Pride is evident to all particularly to staff who noted this branding effort has been very effective over the past few years. The seven period day was often noted as an advantage and more specifically the implementation of the pathways to learning programs. These programs reflect the spirit of cooperation between the Faribault Schools, community businesses and South Central College.

Diversity was frequently noted as both a strength and a challenge. Students in the Faribault schools have an opportunity to grow and learn alongside classmates who are from different racial, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds provide a “real life” experience. This was contrasted to other schools and school districts that tend to have a monolithic student and community population. It is important to note that survey respondents indicated that technology was a strength of the school district and they noted the presence of programs/ partnerships to provide clothing, food, etc. for students.

CHALLENGES AND ISSUES FACING THE DISTRICT

The out-migration of students to surrounding school districts and private schools was frequently noted. White flight from the school district continues to be an issue as perception of the school district has changed as the student population become more diverse over the past several years.

Diversity was noted as a problem but more frequently noted as a wonderful strength of the District. The associated issues of poverty were most often noted when discussing diversity as a challenge. The reality is there are an increasing number of individuals and families who are in the district who reflect different races, languages, cultures, customs and socio-economic status. Many interview participants shared their beliefs that there are important conversations to be

held within the community and school district on the issue of race. Identifying, recruiting and retaining a staff of the highest quality that more closely reflects the racial composition of the student body is seen as a challenge. It should also be noted that the turnover of key central office positions is of concern and inadequate or competitive compensation levels was often cited as a likely reason for individuals leaving for more attractive positions in other school districts.

Funding challenges in part as a result of enrollment declined will continue to confront the school district. The renewal and expansion of an operating levy will be of paramount importance to the fiscal health of the school district. Many interview participants lamented the low perception of the school district by community members contrasted with the quality of programs and services offered by the district. It is feared that this disconnect of community perception will lead to a lack of support for referendums in the future.

Participants also spoke of what they perceived as political and ideological divisions within the community that are now spilling over into the school board but are hopeful that this process of seeking a new superintendent will help to bring the board closer together as a “corporate” type board focused on policy and not day to day operations of the district.

DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS

The Desired Characteristics will be used by the consultants in identifying outstanding potential candidates for the position of Superintendent of Schools. It is also a document which the Board will use in its deliberations in the select phase of the search. These characteristics emanate from feedback from the focus groups and individual interviews and from the results of the superintendent search survey. Within our Interviews, our first two questions asked about strengths and challenges of District; and the third question asked specifically about desired characteristics of a new leader. The responses to all three of those questions as well as the results from the survey helped inform and shape the establishment of these characteristics. The Desired Characteristics reflect a composite voice from the community and stakeholders.

The groups and individuals would like a superintendent who is “everything to all people” thus there was a wide range of suggestions about what the new superintendent should bring to the position. Although the lists of desirable characteristics from all groups were long, there were many agreements that are noteworthy.

It should be noted, many individuals and focus groups voiced their recognition of retiring Superintendent, Todd Sesker. It is obvious the School District has benefitted from his

professional guidance and enjoyed his engaging and approachable personal style. Visibility as evidenced by Todd in the schools and community is strongly desired in the next superintendent.

There is a strong desire that the new superintendent be able to continue to nurture relationships with community constituents, organizations, parents and staff. The new superintendent needs to be a good listener and possess strong communication skills in all of the various areas of communication with all parties, both internal and external. Personal characteristics high on everyone's list are outstanding interpersonal skills, with the hope that this individual will be able to build upon the many connections between the District and community. This person will need to become thoroughly familiar with the history, culture, and needs of the Faribault Public Schools and the city of Faribault. It is expected that the new superintendent will be fully engaged in school and community life, highly visible and immersed in the schools and communities. It is hoped that this individual will enjoy the many benefits of working **and living** in Faribault.

They would like a collaborative educational leader who understands the importance of gaining the trust and respect of staff, parents and the community. Establishing a strong and productive working relationship with the School Board members is vitally important. A leader that empowers and holds staff accountable is desired. An inclusive management style that can inspire disparate groups to define common goals and work together to achieve them is also desired. Maintaining the healthy working relationship between the District and teachers union is also viewed as a priority.

Nearly all groups noted that the new superintendent will need to manage the anticipated enrollment decline and meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. The ability to create a vivid and bold vision of a preferred future with the implementation of innovative programs was frequently noted and stressed by contributors to this report as a desired characteristic for the next superintendent. A person who is knowledgeable of educational trends, research and innovative practices, and is able to lead a vibrant and innovative school district is desired.

Fiscal acumen is also desired as the anticipated enrollment decline and the vulnerability of future levy referendums have the potential to create fiscal havoc. The individual should be intelligent, courageous in defending recommendations that benefit students, self-confident, fair, accessible, approachable, open to new ideas, supportive of proven innovation and be of unquestioned integrity.

The top priorities for the future that emerged from the strong online survey responses reinforced many of the themes expressed in the focus group interviews, and, in order of importance, included the following:

- Preparing students to be ready for the next grade and ultimately college and career ready.
- Hiring and retaining quality teachers and administrators.
- Providing a safe environment for students and employees.
- Ensuring a well-rounded experience for all students.

The high level of survey responses, along with the participation in the focus groups and community meetings, are strong indicators of the value the community and staff place on finding a talented leader who can build on the past, while energetically moving the District boldly forward toward greater student achievement and success.

HYA and the Board intend to meet the challenge of finding an individual who possesses most of the skills and character traits required to meet the needs of the district. The search team will seek a new superintendent who can work with the Faribault School Board to provide the leadership needed to continue to raise academic standards and student performance, while meeting the unique needs of each of its schools and students.

The search team would like to thank all the participants who attended focus groups meetings or completed the online survey and the Faribault Public Schools staff members who assisted with our meetings, particularly Kathy Zavoral and Nicole Yochum who organized the search team's virtual interviews with school board members, staff and district constituents.

Respectfully submitted,
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