

Winona Area Public Schools Superintendent Search

Stakeholder Engagement Superintendent Search Survey

Overview: On April 28, 2023, the “Winona Area Public Schools Superintendent Search Survey” was made available to the public both online and in hard copy. The survey remained open for respondents until May 7, 2023, and a total of 297 people completed the survey (296 English, 1 Spanish).

RESULTS: Survey takers were asked to identify the role that best reflected the basis for their responses. The categories selected by the survey takers are provided below.

- 42.37% of respondents selected “Parent/Guardian”
- 33.56% of respondents selected “Staff Member”
- 19.32% of respondents selected “Community Member”
- 2.03% of respondents selected “Other”
- 1.36% of respondents selected “Student”
- 1.36% of respondents selected “Business Owner/Agriculture”

Areas of Expertise: Those who responded to the survey were also asked to identify the top six desirable areas of expertise they believe the new superintendent must possess. The most frequently noted areas of expertise are listed below in order of preference.

- Budget and Finance
- Collaborative Leadership
- School Reform (i.e. Strategic Planning, etc.)
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Declining/Increasing Enrollment
- Curriculum Development/Evaluation

Specialized Skills: The top six specialized skills the new superintendent must possess were identified in the survey results as shown below.

- Acts with honesty and in an ethical manner in dealings with the School Board, staff, and community
- Develops trust and works collaboratively with diverse groups of stakeholders
- Develops and directs an effective leadership team
- Is a “people person” with proven abilities in human relations and communications
- Is visible and accessible to the School Board, staff, students, parents, and community
- Effectively mediates and accommodates different perspectives; values teamwork



Previous Experience: Respondents were asked if previous superintendent experience is important. Based on the results, 44.93% of the respondents selected “Yes,” while 55.07% of the respondents selected “No.”

Personal Characteristics: Survey takers were also asked to identify the top six personal characteristics they believe the new superintendent must possess. The most frequently noted personal characteristics are listed below in order of preference.

- Honest and ethical
- Effective communicator
- Problem solver
- Transparent
- Personable
- Consistent

The following tables summarize the stakeholder survey’s quantitative data by respondent category:

TOP SIX AREAS OF EXPERTISE

Parent/ Guardian (125)	Staff Member (99)	Community Member (57)	Other (6)	Business Owner /Agriculture (4)	Student (4)
Budget & Finance	Collaborative Leadership	Budget & Finance	Budget & Finance	Budget & Finance	Collaborative Leadership
Collaborative Leadership	Budget & Finance	Collaborative Leadership	Collaborative Leadership	Curriculum Development/ Evaluation	Curriculum Development/ Evaluation
Curriculum Development/ Evaluation	School Reform (i.e., strategic planning, etc.)	Curriculum Development/ Evaluation	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	Declining/ Increasing Enrollment	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
School Reform (i.e., strategic planning, etc.)	Declining/ Increasing Enrollment	School Reform (i.e., strategic planning, etc.)	School Reform (i.e., strategic planning, etc.)	School Reform (i.e., strategic planning, etc.)	Support Services
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	Public Relations	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	Personnel Management	Collaborative Leadership	Public Relations
Personnel Management	Personnel Management	Cultural Competence	Support Services	Personnel Management	School Reform (i.e., strategic planning, etc.)



TOP SIX PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Parent/ Guardian (125)	Staff Member (99)	Community Member (57)	Other (6)	Business Owner /Agriculture (4)	Student (4)
Honest and Ethical	Honest and Ethical	Honest and Ethical	Effective Communicator	Effective Communicator	Confident
Effective Communicator	Effective Communicator	Effective Communicator	Honest and Ethical	Honest and Ethical	Effective Communicator
Problem Solver	Transparent	Problem Solver	Problem Solver	Problem Solver	Intellectual
Transparent	Problem Solver	Inclusive	Resourceful	Confident	Problem Solver
Resourceful	Consistent	Transparent	Inclusive	Transparent	Resourceful
Personable	Personable	Resourceful	Empathetic	Consistent	Honest and Ethical

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

Parent/ Guardian (125)	Staff Member (99)	Community Member (57)	Other (6)	Business Owner /Agriculture (4)	Student (4)
Yes: 35.04%	Yes: 59.34%	Yes: 55.77%	Yes: 33.33%	Yes: 25.00%	Yes: 50.00%
No: 64.96%	No: 40.66%	No: 44.23%	No: 66.67%	No: 75.00%	No: 50.00%



TOP SIX SPECIALIZED SKILLS

Parent/ Guardian (125)	Staff Member (99)	Community Member (57)	Other (6)	Business Owner /Agriculture (4)	Student (4)
Acts with honesty and in an ethical manner with the School Board, staff, and community	Acts with honesty and in an ethical manner with the School Board, staff, and community	Acts with honesty and in an ethical manner with the School Board, staff, and community	Acts with honesty and in an ethical manner with the School Board, staff, and community	Acts with honesty and in an ethical manner with the School Board, staff, and community	A "people person" with proven abilities in human relations and communications
Develops and directs an effective leadership team	Develops trust and works collaboratively with diverse groups of stakeholders	Develops trust and works collaboratively with diverse groups of stakeholders	Develops and directs an effective leadership team	Develops and directs an effective leadership team	Acts with honesty and in an ethical manner with the School Board, staff, and community
A "people person" with proven abilities in human relations and communications	A "people person" with proven abilities in human relations and communications	Effectively mediates and accommodates different perspectives; values teamwork	Knowledge of and experience with special education needs and/or a diverse student body	Develops trust and works collaboratively with diverse groups of stakeholders	Develops and directs an effective leadership team
Develops trust and works collaboratively with diverse groups of stakeholders	Develops and directs an effective leadership team	Experience in implementing educational priorities	Delegates authority while maintaining accountability	Experience in implementing educational priorities	Knowledge of and experience with equity leadership challenges and opportunities
Visible and accessible to the School Board, staff, students, parents, and community	Visible and accessible to the School Board, staff, students, parents, and community	Knowledge of and experience with special education needs and/or a diverse student body	A "people person" with proven abilities in human relations and communications	Experience in school finance	Possesses a strong academic background with experience in curriculum
Effectively mediates and accommodates different perspectives; values teamwork	Delegates authority while maintaining accountability	Knowledge of and experience with equity leadership challenges and opportunities	Experience in implementing educational priorities	Possesses a strong academic background with experience in curriculum	A visionary, creative thinker <i>tie with:</i> Delegates authority while maintaining accountability



Additional comments: Finally, respondents were given the opportunity to answer open-ended questions in the survey, and on average, 220 of the 297 respondents provided additional commentary. These results were then reviewed by MSBA representatives, with reappearing ideas identified and grouped into themes. These themes are highlighted below for each of the questions.

The stakeholder survey asked the following four questions:

1. What are some of the good things taking place in Winona Area Public Schools today?
2. What challenges do you see for our district over the next five years?
3. What does the new superintendent need to know about the history of the school district and community to be successful?
4. Additional comments.

1. What are some of the good things taking place in Winona Area Public Schools today?

<p>Winona Area Public Schools has a capable, collaborative staff that goes above and beyond for each student in the school district.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Dedicated staff, students love to come to school.</i> • <i>We have really great staff that care about our students, families and each other.</i> • <i>There are great teachers in the District - wanting to make a difference.</i> • <i>Great teachers and dedicated staff working to create a positive image.</i> • <i>WAPS has some great teachers and support staff who really care about children and communicating with families.</i> • <i>There are many, many excellent teachers in the District. They are trying their best, and weathered extraordinary difficulty through the pandemic.</i> • <i>Staff that want the best for students.</i> • <i>Staff that is willing to change and be flexible.</i> • <i>Amazing and dedicated staff.</i> • <i>The teachers are making a great impact on the students.</i> • <i>We have highly qualified staff (licensed & non-licensed), we are willing to work hard to make sure our students can be successful.</i> • <i>We have some really good teachers.</i> • <i>Dedicated and hard-working staff.</i> • <i>The staff that I know love to help kids and are trying very hard to balance work and family.</i> • <i>Committed staff that work with the resources provided.</i> • <i>Hard working and caring teachers and staff.</i> 	<p>138 related responses</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>There are a lot of great teachers and support staff throughout the district.</i> • <i>There are some excellent teacher and coaches that are excellent role models for students and keep students enthusiastic about learning.</i> • <i>We have some really amazing people doing everything in their power to create a safe, welcoming and inspirational learning environment.</i> 	
<p>The Winona Area community appreciates the variety of curricular and extracurricular programs offered to its students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Challenging courses offered.</i> • <i>Changes in reading curriculum.</i> • <i>Wide range of student opportunities.</i> • <i>The growth of the Rios program. (Rios program mentioned 26 times.)</i> • <i>AVID, ECFE, teen parent program at ALC, Rios, social emotional learning.</i> • <i>Continued art education opportunities. (AVID program mentioned 12 times.)</i> • <i>The SLIPA program is great.</i> • <i>Implementation of MTSS- AVID- strong early childhood programming.</i> • <i>A wide variety of extracurricular activities that allow many students to be involved.</i> • <i>The amount of AP classes offered at the high school are one of the best things the district is doing for students currently.</i> • <i>The Spanish-Immersion program is an impressive part of the school.</i> • <i>AVID and understanding that skills in areas of todays workforce are important for the students and families we serve.</i> • <i>A variety of quality programs.</i> • <i>A variety of activities for students and community members.</i> • <i>Willingness to try new approaches to learning -- AVID, Rios.</i> • <i>AVID, RIOS, MTSS, PBIS, Student Success Teams.</i> 	98 related responses
<p>Stakeholders appreciate the academic progress students in the district are making.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Graduation rates appear to be on the rise.</i> • <i>Graduation rates are up.</i> • <i>Recent gains in reading at the elementary level, increased graduation rates.</i> • <i>Implementation of elementary reading curriculum is reaping results. Strong Foundation support.</i> • <i>Many students showing good success.</i> • <i>Rising graduation rates.</i> 	32 related responses



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have made gains in reading and our graduation rates have increased. • Students are learning and wanting challenges - pushing the district to be better. 	
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2. What challenges do you see for our district over the next five years?

<p>The Winona Area community is concerned about the district’s decreasing enrollment and financial future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrollment is declining. Some of this is due to demographics, but some of the decline is due to families choosing non-public school options available within the community. • Decreasing enrollment, competition with other schools in the area. • Declining enrollment as more people move kids to the private schools. • Declining student population and consequent declines in enrollment. • The declining enrollment...losing students to area schools (charter, private, area schools). • Need to stabilize/grow enrollment. • Declining enrollment and families choosing to pay for education to private schools. • Enrollment, and therefore declines in other areas will follow. • Maintaining and increasing enrollment. • Decline in enrollment because people are literally exhausted with dealing with the same issues that are constantly being discussed over and over for years. • Lack of enrollment. • Declining enrollment (demographics and additional educational choices). • Continued decline in enrollment. • Due to Winona having so many educational options for families to send their children to, I have concerns about enrollment declining more. 	<p>148 related responses</p>
<p>Stakeholders want the district to address the condition of its aging facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting community on board with facilities. • Learning spaces and quality of buildings. • Facilities must be improved. We need to provide a more flexible learning environment for our students and teachers. 	<p>106 related responses</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We cannot continue delaying improving our facilities with necessary updates. • Facilities need to be maintained and improved. • Building maintenance will be an issue. • Aging facilities that are too expensive to update. • The conditions of the school buildings and lack of community support. • Functional learning spaces at all three elementary students. Classrooms are not large enough for grades. • Trying to balance building and ground maintenance and competitive teacher pay. • Our buildings need improvements to bring them up to current standards in accessibility and excellence in education. • Facility maintenance. • The building situation with failed referendums and deferred maintenance needs to be solved ASAP. • Maintaining facilities is an issue. • Dealing with aging facilities. 	
<p>Winona Area stakeholders understand the district is having trouble recruiting and retaining qualified staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Frequent leadership transitions; staff leaving the district due to budget cuts.</i> • <i>Keeping good teachers and or replacing the poor ones.</i> • <i>Retaining teachers and staff.</i> • <i>Retaining your supportive and caring staff through the difficulties they face.</i> • <i>Staff and program cuts that increase seat numbers of classes and decrease the number of class opportunities that students can take.</i> • <i>Retirements of teachers and wondering how we will fill those positions.</i> • <i>Attracting and keeping good teachers.</i> • <i>Staff and administrative turnover.</i> • <i>Consistent administration; teacher turnover.</i> • <i>Funding and retaining teaching talent. It seems like teachers are expected to do more every year with less funding.</i> • <i>Keeping staff.</i> • <i>Staffing continues to be a concern as there are not enough staff (both teacher and support staff) in the special education areas.</i> 	<p>69 related responses</p>



3. What does the new superintendent need to know about the history of the school district and community to be successful?

<p>Respondents to the survey want the next superintendent to understand that trust between the district and community has been broken and needs to be restored.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The community as a whole does not have the best outlook on the district.</i> • <i>The district and the School Board do not have a good record/history of building positive relationships with the community. As a result, there is understandably a lack of trust and engagement.</i> • <i>Our community's historical, underwhelming support of our public schools adds additional challenges.</i> • <i>Mistrust runs deep. Long history of poor decision-making with facility management and budget issues.</i> • <i>The community does not trust the district. It is going to take big changes to fix the communities opinion on the district.</i> • <i>Public perception and the portrayal of the district in the media.</i> • <i>Poor track record of community support on referendums. Most do not believe the public schools have managed money well and that money is being allocated in ways that don't make the most sense.</i> • <i>It is essential to build trust within the community and it has been difficult to pass referendums in order to improve facilities.</i> • <i>The staff has historic distrust with the district office.</i> • <i>Trust needs to be rebuilt within the community.</i> • <i>Need to restore public trust.</i> • <i>They would need to understand that there is a lack of trust between the community and the district, fueled by a lack of transparency in the past.</i> • <i>That there is a deep loss of trust between the community and the school district.</i> • <i>Poor relationship between the public schools and the community. We need to build trust but be firm about what is in the best interest of our students.</i> 	<p>68 related responses</p>
<p>The Winona Area community wants the next superintendent to have strong communication and leadership skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hiring someone who has a sense of what the community was and should be would be a huge asset to the district. Someone who truly cares about the community's wellbeing and is more likely to stay in the position longer.</i> 	<p>42 related responses</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I think it is helpful if the new superintendent to has experienced many parts of the district and further understand what each roles in the district does.</i> • <i>Let's get someone dedicated to Winona. We need someone who understands this unique community and really wants the best for it.</i> • <i>The next superintendent should have the opportunity for a humble and transparent reflection on the feedback from the last referendum. They should hear perspectives of those in the community who fully support and advocate for WAPS.</i> • <i>The next superintendent needs to establish a sense of evenhandedness and clear communication while also not caving to every complaint.</i> • <i>The new superintendent needs to ignore what allegedly "everybody knows" about the Winona community so WAPS can actually address the issues WAPS faces.</i> • <i>A superintendent who stands behind its teachers with a clear focus on students will lead the school district down the right path.</i> • <i>Superintendent should be able to get community members to understand the importance of investing in the district.</i> • <i>We need a leader that is prepared to mentor our building principals.</i> • <i>School administrators should engage with students, parents, families, and community members.</i> • <i>Communication is key for the success of the next superintendent.</i> • <i>That they need to be a strong communicator and decision maker that follows the goals of the district.</i> • <i>To include all staff in communications, do not leave out anyone.</i> • <i>We need a compassionate, strong leader who is willing to collaborate with educators for the best interest of our students.</i> 	
<p>Stakeholders want the next superintendent to understand the demographics of the area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We are diverse in many ways and that is an asset to celebrate and work with.</i> • <i>Winona is a great community to live, work, and play -- the new superintendent should embrace our community.</i> • <i>The demographics and culture within the school district has changed dramatically.</i> • <i>Winona is a vibrant community that thrives on education, arts and, creative entrepreneurs. The public will support reasonable asks from the School Board if they are presented clearly and with facts.</i> • <i>This community is older and very conservative regarding spending.</i> 	<p>40 related responses</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>There are "two Winonas" (blue collar and white collar). They need to be able to work with both.</i> • <i>Winona is a small town where people talk. It is very hard to convince the community we need change.</i> • <i>Winona is a great place to live! There is nature, history, and community abound. Its a small town feel that is close to the "big" cities.</i> • <i>There is an the aging population in Winona. It's difficult to get them behind a referendum.</i> • <i>Winona is a community where multiple generations of one family have settled, worked, and attended school. There is a transient population in parts of the district as well, but many community members have a history with the community and the District which goes back decades.</i> • <i>They need to KNOW this community.</i> 	
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4. Additional Comments:

<p>Winona Area stakeholders want the next superintendent to have well-developed ‘soft skills’ in order to successfully lead the district.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The next superintendent needs to be someone who is dynamic and believes they can take WAPS to the next level while still moving in a positive direction.</i> • <i>Winona wants a superintendent that will provide consistency and stability to the district.</i> • <i>My hope is that the new superintendent is visible and involved. We need someone who is ready to help our district heal.</i> • <i>We need a unifying leader.</i> • <i>I’m hopeful that we can find a superintendent with experience in equity and inclusion and one who is committed to developing a safe and highly structured learning environment.</i> • <i>The new superintendent must be approachable and personable.</i> • <i>It is very important for our superintendent to be visible in the community at WAPS and build relationships with stakeholders in the community.</i> • <i>I would highly encourage WAPS to be brave and hire a superintendent, who is progressive, innovative, and smart, and who places all students and their well-being and success first.</i> 	<p>38 related responses</p>
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