



Hinsdale Township High School District 86

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT AND SUPERINTENDENT PROFILE

October 12, 2023

In preparation for the search for a new Superintendent of Hinsdale High School District 86, the School Board requested that School Exec Connect consultants conduct a community engagement process that would document reflections and insights from District students, staff, and community stakeholders. Representative focus groups and an online survey allowed any stakeholder in the District to contribute on a voluntary basis.

Participation in the community engagement process was excellent. Information from the focus groups, open forums, and survey was used to create a New Superintendent Profile that will guide the recruitment, screening, interviews, and selection of a new Superintendent.

Focus group participants included the School Board, District administrators, teachers and staff from across the District, parents, students, elected officials, and community members. One hundred fifty seven (157) stakeholders participated in one of twenty (20) focus groups/open forums. All participants were asked to express their views regarding the strengths of the District, challenges facing the District, first-year priorities for the new Superintendent, and the specific characteristics, skills, and attributes to be sought in the next Superintendent.

The District also sought input from stakeholders via an online survey, open through October 3, 2023. Six hundred fifty-seven (657) people answered questions about perceived educational and managerial strengths and challenges the new Superintendent will face. Respondents also identified priorities for the new Superintendent to address and characteristics they associate with a successful Superintendent in Hinsdale High School District 86. A summary of the survey results can be found after the focus group report. Note-the survey was translated and posted into Spanish. One person responded to the Spanish language survey.

Due to the sampling methodology, this report should not be construed as being scientifically accurate. The opinions set forth in the report may not reflect the opinion of all staff, students, and residents but do reflect the opinions of those who participated. Judgments regarding what is included in this report are those of the consultants, based upon the frequency of statements received throughout the data-gathering process.

The consultants used the information gathered in this report to develop the **New Superintendent Profile**, found on the final pages of this document.

This report may be used in several ways. The profile will be helpful to the consultants as they screen and interview candidates. The Board of Education will gain an understanding of the community's view of the District and the superintendency and can use the profile to prepare questions for the Board interviews with the candidates. The consultants also recommend the report be given to the newly appointed Superintendent for a better understanding of the issues and opportunities facing Hinsdale High School District 86. The District may also choose to post the report on the Superintendent Search portion of the website to be viewed by stakeholders.

Focus Group Response Overview

Focus Groups/Open Forums were held with all constituencies, including Board members, parents, administrators, teachers, students, support staff, and community leaders. One hundred fifty-seven (157) participants in twenty (20) focus groups/open forums provided insights into the strengths and challenges facing the District, the priorities the new Superintendent should establish, and the qualities and skills the next Superintendent should possess. Below is a summary of the responses to each of the four questions asked in each Focus group.

The first question asked participants to identify the major strengths of District 86 and the community that supports the district.

Personnel

- Dedicated, supportive, passionate
- Exceptionally competent
- Longevity within the District
- Know the students, form positive relationships
- Teachers are compensated well - helps with recruitment and retention

Student Achievement

- National Merit Scholars
- Long history of achievement - academically, athletically & competitively
- Readiness for college has been a long-standing strength
- Students who are committed to their education

Opportunities and Supports for Students

- Academic opportunities for a wide-array of student interests and abilities
- Numerous clubs, organizations, athletics, fine arts, etc.
- Supports throughout the system and across both main campuses
- Wide continuum of services

Community Support

- Strong community engagement, pride and care about our schools
- People move here to send their children to D86 high schools
- Strong financial support of the school system
- Pride in all three campuses: Transition Center, South & Central
- Involved parents and community members

Challenging Curriculum

- Students are prepared for their move into college
- Students of varying ability and performance levels are challenged to learn and grow
- Dual credit, Advanced Placement, career and technical programs

Facilities

- Our schools and the physical environment are exceptional
- Safety is a priority for our students and school community
- Our physical plants support the diversity of programmatic opportunities for students

Diversity

- The diversity within our schools reflects that of our community
- Diversity is embraced by many and supported by most

The second prompt for the Focus Groups asked participants to identify the biggest challenges facing the District next year and beyond.

Governance

- Political agendas are prevalent and impede any sense of consensus on big issues
- Board and superintendent roles/responsibilities are blurred
- Strategic plan must be updated and addressed with fidelity

Trust

- Lack of trust and confidentiality across multiple groups within the school community

Communication

- Breakdown in internal communication
- Miscommunication is prevalent on a number of key issues
- Perceived lack of transparency
- Perceived lack of confidentiality
- Finger-pointing, blame-shifting

Achievement Gap

- A lack of clarity exists on what that gap is and which direction it is headed
- Achievement vs Growth is not clearly understood, measured or valued in the current environment

Diversity

- The diversity within our schools reflects that of our community
- Agreement on how to address diversity, diverse needs and above-mentioned achievement gap is lacking
- The diversity issue has created distinct camps that make consensus on improvement nearly impossible
- Equity and Equality are not the same, and these two concepts must be clarified in our improvement work

Curriculum

- Alignment means different things to different groups and different individuals
- Perceptions exist that the current efforts in curriculum are leaving holes in meeting student needs

Systems and Structures for Change & Improvement

- Lack of clearly defined and consistent systems, processes and procedures
- No clear system for gathering, using and sharing key data
- Blurred lines of responsibility between Strategic, Tactical & Operational - the roles and responsibilities for the Board, Superintendent, Central Administration, Building Administration and Teachers are not distinct
- Goals and measures clearly tied to change initiatives are misunderstood or unclear
- Chain of command is not followed or enforced

Image

- Misconceptions, negative perceptions - not supported by facts
- Targeted by the media
- Deterioration in this area over the past several year is owned by a number of District and Community entities
- Diverse campuses, schools and communities - all must get along under one governance structure
- The media and social-media have been used negatively by a number of constituencies

The third question asked participants to identify those skills, personal qualities, and experiences that are important for the next Superintendent to possess.

- Strong leadership - an active listener who values input but is willing to make - and stand by - tough decisions
- Excellent communication skills rooted in transparency
- Visible in school and community
- Active and involved in the community - committed to our community for the long haul
- Holds self and others accountable
- Education background must be strong
- Experience in high-performing school districts and communities
- Relationship builder
- Strong curriculum focus and background
- Team builder who brings out the best in others
- Follows through
- Cares about and engages well with students
- Collaborative - a consensus builder
- Approachable and unflappable

The next prompt for the Focus Groups asked participants to identify the priorities facing the District next year and beyond.

- Must address the Trust issue in tangible ways
- Address the achievement gap with a curriculum plan that provides challenge to all students
- Establish good relationship with Board
- Evaluate organizational systems, processes and procedures
- Evaluate district level personnel
- Data - informed, focus, system and driven
- Assure that the district is focused on students' well-being - academically and emotionally
- Strong fiscal management and oversight
- Build strong relationships with the broader community

Q1 Please select the choice(s) that best describes your relationship to the school district. Please select all that apply.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Parent/Guardian of a Current Student	46.80%	307
Community Member	28.81%	189
Teacher/Licensed Staff	20.73%	136
Student	5.79%	38
Support Staff	3.81%	25
Administrator	3.51%	23

Q2 Please select up to FIVE (5) items that you believe represent the greatest strengths of the school district.

Answered: 657 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Dedicated and highly competent staff	51.60%	339
Teacher quality	47.49%	312
High level of student achievement	46.58%	306
Challenging curriculum	37.44%	246
Students ready for college	35.77%	235
Athletic/activity programs	24.66%	162
Community pride in the schools	23.59%	155
Supportive and involved parents/guardians	23.29%	153
Quality facilities	20.40%	134
Students who are committed to education	19.48%	128
School safety	17.35%	114
Student-centered schools	14.92%	98
Supportive community	13.55%	89
Class size	11.72%	77
Strong administrators and principals	11.11%	73
Supporting social-emotional learning	10.96%	72
Effective use of technology	10.05%	66
Communication with families and the community	9.44%	62
Fine arts programs	8.07%	53
Sound fiscal management	7.76%	51
Understanding and supporting diversity in the district	7.61%	50
Other (please specify)	3.50%	23
Effective board governance	2.89%	19
Use of data for instruction	2.89%	19
Closing achievement gaps among student groups	2.59%	17
Implementing the district's vision and strategic plan	1.83%	12
Good working relationship with other units of local government	1.37%	9

Q3 Please select up to FIVE (5) items that you believe represent the greatest challenges for the school district.

Answered: 657 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Effective board governance	61.64%	405
Closing achievement gaps among student groups	32.72%	215
Understanding and supporting diversity in the district	30.90%	203
Strong administrators and principals	25.72%	169
Sound fiscal management	23.74%	156
Community support of schools	17.50%	115
Other (please specify)	16.89%	111
Communication with parents and the community	16.44%	108
Supportive community	15.53%	102
Teacher quality	15.07%	99
Challenging curriculum	13.09%	86
Supporting social-emotional learning	12.94%	85
Class size	12.63%	83
Quality facilities	11.42%	75
Students who are committed to education	11.42%	75
Implementing the district's vision and strategic plan	11.26%	74
Supportive and involved parents/guardians	10.35%	68
School safety	10.05%	66
Students ready for college	10.05%	66
Use of data for instruction	9.28%	61
Effective use of technology	8.22%	54
Student-centered schools	7.91%	52

Dedicated and highly competent staff	7.61%	50
Good working relationships with other units of local government	6.09%	40
Athletic/activity programs	4.87%	32
Fine arts programs	3.04%	20

Q4 Please select up to FIVE (5) goals that you believe the school district should strive to accomplish in the next three years.

Answered: 657 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Offer programs for all student achievement levels and needs	38.96%	256
Pursue practices that promote high levels of achievement for all students	38.20%	251
Focus on 21st century curriculum (communication, collaboration, creativity, innovation, critical thinking, problem solving, and media and technology literacy)	37.90%	249
Improve staff morale	35.77%	235
Strengthen the academic program and curriculum	35.31%	232
Assure student well-being (emotionally safe and confident)	30.75%	202
Manage financial resources prudently	30.29%	199
Ensure that all students are ready for post-secondary education	28.92%	190
Build stronger connections within the district and with the community	26.64%	175
Improve the district's image	25.11%	165
Engage students through best instructional practices	22.22%	146
Other (please specify)	18.11%	119
Improve communications	13.85%	91
Improve the quality of staff in the district	12.63%	83
Improve facilities	8.83%	58
Engage the business community in support of the schools	8.07%	53
Engage community members who do not have children in school	7.61%	50
Maximize the use of technology in instruction	6.39%	42
Work with the legislature on school/district-related issues	3.04%	20

Q5 Please select up to FIVE (5) qualities and attributes that you believe a person must possess if they are going to succeed in the role of superintendent for Hinsdale Township High School District 86.

Answered: 657 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Deep understanding of curriculum, instruction and learning	52.97%	348
Team builder who brings out the best in others	43.53%	286
Strong decision-maker who uses data and information in an effective manner	41.25%	271
Accountable (self and others)	40.79%	268
Student-centered	38.81%	255
Excellent communicator; speaks, writes, and listens well	38.36%	252
Collaborative consensus builder	33.03%	217
Knowledgeable about school finance and the business side of the district	24.51%	161
Approachable and friendly	23.29%	153
Open-minded and flexible	21.31%	140
Ability to establish and maintain community partnerships	20.24%	133
Visible in the schools and community	18.42%	121
Proponent of continuous learning and professional growth	15.68%	103
Visionary	12.33%	81
Other (please specify)	11.72%	77
Conveys warmth and a sense of humor	10.50%	69
Innovative	8.52%	56
Advocate for global learning	5.94%	39
Systems thinker	5.48%	36
Creative	4.87%	32
Effective recruiter	4.57%	30



Superintendent Profile: Hinsdale Township High School District 86

- Understands and reinforces **Board/Superintendent tasks/roles**
- **Rebuilds trust throughout the district**
- **Holds self and others accountable**
- **Student-centered**; makes all decisions on what is best for student learning/growth
- **Delves into the issue of the growing achievement gap** on both main campuses; makes a data-driven plan to remedy these issues
- Apolitical; makes decisions on **best practices** and is **data-driven**
- **Recognition that the two main campuses are not identical** and need differing layers of interventions to ensure that all students succeed
- **Transparent**; decisions are made in the best interest of student achievement and well-being and these decisions are communicated quickly and throughout the district
- Displays skills in fiscal responsibility, financial management, and **future-focused facilities planning**.
- **Communicates decisions** with clarity, reason, and empathy after considering input from all stakeholders.
- Is a **visionary leader who is future-focused, a strategic thinker, and a relationship builder** with staff, community, and the Board of Education.
- **Communicates a clear vision for the future of the District** and motivates and inspires others to act under that vision; establishes and maintains high expectations for all students and staff.
- A **visible, hands-on leader** who becomes immersed in the district schools and community, maintaining a solid presence in classrooms, activities, and community events.
- **Possesses a genuine, warm, personable, and approachable personality** while being an active listener.
- Builds good teams and **empowers others while ensuring accountability**.
- Highly skilled at **building trust, mutual respect, and consistency** systematically while strengthening a unified district-wide positive culture and climate.
- **Exhibits excellent communication and public relations skills** to engage all stakeholders, celebrate successes, and bolster the brand that enhances a positive image of the District.
- Demonstrates understanding of and commitment to issues of **equity, diversity, and inclusion**, focusing on the academic and social-emotional development of all students and inclusion of all families in school life.