

Robbinsdale Area Schools Superintendent Search

Stakeholder Engagement Superintendent Search Survey

Overview: On January 17, 2024, the “Robbinsdale Area Schools Superintendent Search Survey” was made available to the public both online and in hard copy. The survey remained open for respondents until February 11, 2024, and a total of 928 people completed the survey (919 English, 9 Spanish).

In addition, listening sessions were held with:

- 47 students at Cooper High School, on January 23, 2024
- 34 students at Robbinsdale Academy-Highview on January 25, 2024
- 35 students at Armstrong High School on January 26, 2024

These groups bring the total of touchpoints regarding the superintendent search for Robbinsdale Area Schools to **1,044 stakeholders**, nearly twice the number typically expected for a district the size of RAS. This is a tremendous response and indicates high interest in the Robbinsdale Area Schools superintendent search process.

SURVEY 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.

- 50.98% of respondents selected “Parent/Guardian”
- 33.84% of respondents selected “Staff Member”
- 7.92% of respondents selected “Community Member”
- 3.04% of respondents selected “Student”
- 3.04% of respondents selected “Other”
- 1.19% of respondents selected “Business Owner/District Partner”

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.)
- Curriculum Development/Evaluation
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Declining/Increasing Enrollment



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 and directs an effective leadership team
- Develops trust and works collaboratively with diverse groups of stakeholders
- Is visible and accessible to the School Board, staff, students, parents, and community
- Experience in school finance
- Experience in implementing educational priorities

Previous Experience: Respondents were asked if previous superintendent experience is important. Based on the results, 52.04% of the respondents selected “Yes,” while 47.96% 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
- Consistent
- Resourceful

Tables on the following pages summarize the stakeholder survey’s quantitative data by respondent category.

- Parent/Guardian (470 responses)
- Staff Member (312)
- Community Member (73)
- Business Owner/District Partner (11)
- Other (28)
- Student (28)



TOP SIX AREAS OF EXPERTISE

Parent/ Guardian (470)	Staff Member (312)	Community Member (73)	Business Owner /District Partner (11)	Other (28)	Student (28)
Budget & Finance	Collaborative Leadership	Budget & Finance	Budget & Finance	Budget & Finance	Budget & Finance
Collaborative Leadership	Budget & Finance	Collaborative Leadership	Collaborative Leadership	Collaborative Leadership	Supportive Services
School Reform (strategic planning, etc.)	School Reform (strategic planning, etc.)	Personnel Management	Curriculum Development/Evaluation	School Reform (strategic planning, etc.)	Collaborative Leadership
Curriculum Development/Evaluation	Declining/Increasing Enrollment	School Reform (strategic planning, etc.)	Declining/Increasing Enrollment	Public Relations	School Reform (strategic planning, etc.)
Personnel Management	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	Declining/Increasing Enrollment	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	Declining/Increasing Enrollment	Curriculum Development/Evaluation
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	Cultural Competence	Student Testing Results & Achievement	School Reform (strategic planning, etc.)	Curriculum Development/Evaluation	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

TOP SIX PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Parent/ Guardian (470)	Staff Member (312)	Community Member (73)	Business Owner/ District Partner (11)	Other (28)	Student (28)
Honest and Ethical	Honest and Ethical	Honest and Ethical	Effective Communicator	Honest and Ethical	Honest and Ethical
Effective Communicator	Effective Communicator	Problem Solver	Transparent	Effective Communicator	Problem Solver
Problem Solver	Problem Solver	Effective Communicator	Consistent	Problem Solver	Effective Communicator
Transparent	Transparent	Transparent	Honest and Ethical	Transparent	Consistent
Resourceful	Consistent	Consistent	Problem Solver	Consistent	Confident
Consistent	Empathetic	Resourceful	Resourceful	Intellectual	Resourceful

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

Parent/ Guardian (470)	Staff Member (312)	Community Member (73)	Business Owner /District Partner (11)	Other (28)	Student (28)
Yes: 48.42%	Yes: 60.63%	Yes: 50.00%	Yes: 66.67%	Yes: 44.44%	Yes: 30.43%
No: 51.58%	No: 39.37%	No: 50.00%	No: 33.33%	No: 55.56%	No: 69.57%



TOP SIX SPECIALIZED SKILLS

Parent/ Guardian (470)	Staff Member (312)	Community Member (73)	Business Owner /District Partner (11)	Other (28)	Student (28)
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	Acts with honesty and in an ethical manner with the School Board, staff, and community
Develops and directs an effective leadership team	Visible and accessible to the School Board, staff, students, parents, and community	Experience in school finance	Delegates authority while maintaining accountability	Develops trust and works collaboratively with diverse groups of stakeholders	Delegates authority while maintaining accountability
Develops trust and works collaboratively with diverse groups of stakeholders	Develops trust and works collaboratively with diverse groups of stakeholders	Visible and accessible to the School Board, staff, students, parents, and community	Develops and directs an effective leadership team	Develops and directs an effective leadership team	Understands the effects of poverty on student learning and achievement
Experience in implementing educational priorities	Develops and directs an effective leadership team	Develops and directs an effective leadership team	A visionary, creative thinker	Experience in school finance	Develops trust and works collaboratively with diverse groups of stakeholders
Visible and accessible to the School Board, staff, students, parents, and community	Effectively mediates and accommodates different perspectives; values teamwork	Experience in implementing educational priorities	Develops trust and works collaboratively with diverse groups of stakeholders	Effectively mediates and accommodates different perspectives; values teamwork	A "people person" with proven abilities in human relations and communications
Experience in school finance	Experience in school district management practices	Possesses a strong academic background with experience in curriculum	Promotes business and community involvement in schools	A visionary, creative thinker	A visionary, creative thinker



Additional comments: Finally, respondents were given the opportunity to answer open-ended questions in the survey, and on average, 680 of the 928 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 Robbinsdale Area 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 district and communities to be successful?
4. Additional comments.

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

<p>Survey respondents believe RAS benefits from dedicated, caring, and hard-working teachers, principals, and support staff who are committed to the academic, social, and emotional growth of students, ensuring a safe and engaging learning environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Teachers are committed, caring, valuable educators. Other staff members are just as caring and invested in students.</i> • <i>Many hard-working staff giving their all for our beautiful students!</i> • <i>Fantastic teachers. Our family is impressed with engaged, passionate principals.</i> • <i>We have a very talented and dedicated staff.</i> • <i>Staff who care about the kids and make them feel comfortable. Good staff is sooooo important for the learning experience.</i> • <i>We've appreciated our kids' teachers and how hard working and genuine they have been.</i> • <i>Excellent teachers, principals, and support staff at all levels.</i> • <i>We are very pleased with the teachers that educate our children.</i> • <i>They have fantastic teachers. The teachers care for the children and make them feel safe.</i> • <i>The staff (office workers, teachers, support staff and admin) are committed to their students.</i> • <i>The teaching staff, special ed teachers, and staff are incredible at what they do.</i> • <i>Robbinsdale Schools has many staff and teachers that are caring and trying hard to enrich the lives of students.</i> • <i>The schools are full of staff that cares about the students' growth academically, socially, and emotionally.</i> 	<p>284 related responses</p>
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- *I see teachers and educational assistants working as hard as they can to support special education students.*
- *There are teachers who remain in the district that care about students and advocate for a safe and stable environment so they can study and learn.*
- *There are great teachers doing wonderful work.*
- *Robbinsdale Area Schools have dedicated, quality staff that care about all of their students' success.*
- *I believe we have many staff members in the building I work at who are there for the betterment of our students' futures.*
- *Great teachers who work hard and care about students.*
- *Really loyal and dedicated staff.*
- *We have some very dedicated and knowledgeable teachers.*
- *Staff who care about the students and wants what is best for them.*
- *Teachers are passionate and work hard to meet student needs.*
- *Teachers and staff are dedicated, hard-working and up to the challenges of today.*
- *Fantastic staff who deserve good consistent leadership so that can get the message out about the amazing things going on in the district.*
- *Passionate staff that care about the students and have the desire to see them grow academically*
- *There are absolutely incredible teachers and staff employed within this district!*
- *The teachers and support staff are great!*
- *There are a lot of great teachers in our district!*
- *We have some very qualified and dedicated teachers and staff.*
- *Caring teachers and staff!*
- *The teachers are dedicated, hardworking and do a lot with very little.*
- *We have highly skilled staff who care about students.*
- *My kids have always had great teachers and great support from administrators in their schools.*
- *We have many talented and dedicated staff members.*
- *There are so many excellent teachers.*
- *I feel lucky that my kids go to school here with such great examples being set by our teacher and staff.*
- *Most of the staff is amazing. They do great things for students with what they are given.*
- *The staff in buildings are working collaboratively to best meet the needs of students with the resources we have.*
- *There are very awesome teachers and support staff in all schools.*
- *We have dedicated staff in all of the schools.*
- *We have a strong teaching staff who believes in our students and keeps them accountable.*
- *The teachers and the staff that deal with the students daily are amazing.*
- *There are some great teachers and educational assistants who truly care about the wellbeing of my child.*
- *Great teachers and support staff who genuinely care about students.*



Robbinsdale Area Schools offer a wide range of arts and academic programs, including notable music and theater offerings, diverse extracurricular activities, specialized magnet and STEAM options, along with a strong emphasis on inclusive education and science-based reading instruction.

158 related responses

- *Strong music and theater programs, a variety of extracurriculars and clubs.*
- *Variety of programs and extracurricular activities offered to students.*
- *Special programs like RSI, SEA, music, sports.*
- *Strong arts programs, strong Early Childhood Preschools.*
- *Variety in classes offered.*
- *Robbinsdale Area Schools offers a wide variety of arts allied classes for students.*
- *The magnet programs are wonderful.*
- *Our arts programs are nationally recognized.*
- *Implementation of curriculum related to the science of reading.*
- *Diversity, variety of programs and extracurricular activities offered to students.*
- *Promotion of the trades and phonics in reading instruction.*
- *Variety of activities. Community education.*
- *We have exceptional opportunities for our kids.*
- *Excellent work in science-based reading instruction.*
- *Arts and music programs. Partnerships with Henn Tech.*
- *Arts programs. Magnet programs.*
- *Classes that help neurodivergent children.*
- *Strong diversity & equity programs.*
- *Special programs in elementary schools like the steel drum experience.*
- *Team for curriculum, art in elementary, languages.*
- *Great music programs and academic opportunities across all schools.*
- *Arts programs. Magnet schools. CLC Programs.*
- *Science of Reading training, Bridge2Read, Career and Technical Pathways, and new reading and math strategies.*
- *A large variety of high school courses, sports, fine arts and clubs/activities.*
- *Great music programs and academic opportunities across all schools.*
- *Many staff trained in LETRS under the Science of Reading initiative.*
- *The quality and variety of academic options and pathways is incredible.*
- *IB and STEAM programming at Middle School. Arts programming and options for students across the district.*
- *Variety of educational opportunities.*
- *Lots of choices for kids to choose from.*
- *Curriculum based in objectively useful subjects like math, reading, science.*
- *Technology, variety of extracurricular activities.*



<p>Stakeholders appreciate that RAS is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, with focused efforts on creating safe, welcoming environments for all students, fostering cultural awareness, and actively working towards equity in education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Diversity and inclusion for all students, including racial education</i> • <i>The curriculum includes education differently abled students and students with learning difficulties.</i> • <i>Diversity seems to be a focus.</i> • <i>Robbinsdale has started walking down the path of equity and much of the work is paying off.</i> • <i>The teachers care for the children and make them feel safe.</i> • <i>Many of our educators are deeply committed to their students and families and work to create safe and brave spaces for students.</i> • <i>Strong diversity & equity programs.</i> • <i>Focus on diversity.</i> • <i>Equity in a diverse district, many opportunities for learning.</i> • <i>Teachers advocate for a safe and stable environment so students can study and learn.</i> • <i>A positive focus on diversity and inclusion.</i> • <i>I feel like the school district is very welcoming to everyone.</i> • <i>I think excellent work is being done in the area of equity and diversity.</i> • <i>Trying to address diversity and culture differences.</i> • <i>The district’s commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion is consistent and vocal.</i> • <i>The diversity in our schools continues to build, which I believe is wonderful for my children to be around other cultures.</i> • <i>Diversity is a huge strength.</i> • <i>Responding to the ever-changing climate of equity</i> • <i>Warm and welcoming environment.</i> • <i>Diversity and equity programs and cultural awareness celebrations.</i> 	<p>63 related responses</p>
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2. What challenges do you see for our district over the next five years?

<p>Stakeholders are concerned about the district’s ability to recruit and retain quality staff, as it is increasingly challenged by issues such as non-competitive wages, inadequate support, escalating discipline problems, and burnout.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Recruiting and retaining quality staff.</i> • <i>Paying support staff higher wages that are more competitive with surrounding areas so we don’t lose them.</i> 	<p>196 related responses</p>
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- *Retaining good teachers. The district needs to recruit experienced staff and pay them accordingly.*
- *Retaining teachers by making sure they have the support they need.*
- *Retaining good staff.*
- *Staff leaving because of discipline issues and out of control kids.*
- *Maintaining good teaching staff as student's needs intensify.*
- *Maintaining sufficient and qualified teaching staff.*
- *Retention of staff and contracts.*
- *Attracting and retaining top notch teachers.*
- *Retaining high functioning staff.*
- *Keeping staff and students in the district.*
- *Good teachers and staff leaving due to poor pay, extended duties, more violent students, high cost of health care.*
- *Retaining the good workers that can do the jobs, instead of losing them to the competition.*
- *Trying to fully staff our schools and increase the retention of our good staff members.*
- *Burn out. Staff that are still here and not getting fair compensation, so they are leaving. No subs in the district for teachers.*
- *Stability. Too much turnover in leadership roles.*
- *Retaining teachers in an increasingly difficult work environment with dwindling compensations and resources.*
- *Retaining quality employees.*
- *Staffing issues and keeping good teachers.*
- *Retaining hard working staff.*
- *Staff leaving due to poor contracts.*
- *Loss of good teachers because they can get better pay and benefits in other nearby districts.*
- *Retaining high quality and experienced teachers, we have already lost so many valuable people that I have admired and learned from.*
- *Staff are not given the support or policies to be able to hold students accountable for their actions.*
- *Staff burn-out due to demands and low pay.*
- *With student behaviors the way they have been and staff continuing to get little support, staff will quit.*
- *The District is hemorrhaging veteran teachers and support staff. Teachers are stretched too thin, have too much on their plates.*
- *Many of good teachers/staff leaving due to poor working conditions.*
- *Staff exodus due to lack of support, increased duties, no compensation for extra duties and not being able to settle fair contracts.*
- *A lower pay than other professions, unsafe work environments, and lack of adequate training are all contributing to burnout, especially in young educators.*
- *Pay for non-licensed positions has been rising in competing districts faster than ours, I see difficulties retaining great staff if this continues.*
- *Behavior issues and possibilities of more severe and violent behavior in schools, causing mass staff exodus.*
- *Losing teachers to other districts and non-licensed staff to other jobs because our pay is not competitive.*



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Teacher burnout is going to become an even larger issue as the district increases demands without providing additional time for staff to complete the job.</i> • <i>Supporting staff and making them feel appreciated.</i> • <i>Being able to keep the necessary support staff due to budget cuts.</i> • <i>Rising caseloads in special education without staff to meet demand. I think the district is going to have difficulty retaining staff over the next five years as education continues to change and teachers continue to experience burnout with possibilities of making more money elsewhere.</i> • <i>Maintaining quality staff throughout all district programs.</i> • <i>New teachers are not supported appropriately which contributes to high levels of staff turnover.</i> 	
<p>Stakeholders perceive challenges in terms of reversing the district’s declining student enrollment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A big challenge the district is facing is declining enrollment - this could be helped by more community engagement highlighting the best the district has to offer.</i> • <i>Further decline of enrollment due to the mismanagement of funds and policies.</i> • <i>Maintaining enrollment of students and coming up with ways to attract more students.</i> • <i>Declining enrollment because of the school’s adoption of a more progressive ideology.</i> • <i>Figuring out declining enrollment.</i> • <i>Declining enrollment - families leave the district when they do not get in to the magnet programs.</i> • <i>Declining enrollment is concerning. The district needs to put more effort into selling their product.</i> • <i>Test scores and enrollment. The district needs to improve test scores, graduation rate and facilities to attract more families and build up the district’s reputation.</i> • <i>We need to increase enrollment.</i> • <i>Declining enrollment. Please focus your efforts into keeping our resident kids in our schools!</i> • <i>Declining enrollment. The percentage of in-district families enrolling outside of our district is staggering!</i> • <i>Impact of declining enrollment on district resources.</i> • <i>We need to maintain and increase student enrollment instead of losing more students.</i> • <i>Retaining students within the district attendance zone.</i> • <i>Declining enrollment continues especially when students are going into 6th grade.</i> • <i>Student enrollment is a tough problem as well with more charter schools and private schools taking students who want to learn out of the district while leaving more disruptive students in the district.</i> • <i>The schools need to be a safe environment where students are required to follow appropriate rules. If this does not happen enrollment will continue to decline as parents seek other alternatives.</i> 	<p>183 related responses</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to get in touch with the "leaving community" to find out why people are leaving and what can be done to get them to return. • Declining enrollment due to lack of focus on the basics of reading, writing and math skills. • Decreased enrollment from local families due to the open enrollment from other areas that bring in some students who cause issues and make the families leave. • Decline in student enrollment. • We need to reverse enrollment trends. • Neighborhood schools who are watching enrollment decline. • Our enrollment is down. Many families are choosing to enroll in neighboring districts because of behavior increases, teacher/staff leaving, and just the reputation of our schools. • To sum it up: declining enrollment. 	
<p>Robbinsdale Area Schools faces significant budgetary challenges, including addressing how enrollment decline will impact state funding – thereby leading to an increased need to effectively use resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective use of staff and resources to maintain programs and levels of student support despite enrollment and budget decreased. • It sounds like the budget is going to be a challenge. • Budget. We HAVE to find a way to avoid the proposed cut and impact on the quality of our district. • Balancing the budget and figuring out how to prioritize competing needs with shrinking revenues. • Really digging into the financials around marketing and making cost benefit decisions. • I think all schools will have the typical budget/limited resources challenges, but specifically in Robbinsdale. • The budget! Yikes. Very concerning how our students are supported moving forward with the deficit. • There should be a district wide, or statewide solution to find other resources than the school budget for these programs that are taking away from all of the students. • Finances will be a challenge. We are top heavy when it comes to upper management salaries. • Budget, they have created way too many top level positions • Budgetary concerns with declining enrollment and state funding that doesn't keep pace with costs. • Budget shortfalls. Making difficult decisions about closing buildings / decreasing staff. • Budget. The district needs to take a hard look at financials and put the money where it has the most impact on students. • Keeping track of its finances and doing effective financial planning, having a budget and working to it. • Prioritizing needs within the budget. 	<p>134 related responses</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The budget seems to be a constant issue.</i> • <i>Serious budget issues.</i> • <i>Overall district resources and finances.</i> • <i>Money and financial issues.</i> • <i>Budget, budget concerns, budget issues, budget challenges.</i> 	
<p>Survey respondents are concerned about the lack of school board unity and effectiveness, which they feel will be essential in order for the district to move forward in a positive direction and re-gain the trust of community stakeholders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The school board's lack of respect and cohesiveness. It's ok to have diversity of thoughts and ideas, but the defensive behaviors observed do nothing but drag on discussion.</i> • <i>A school board that is at odds with one another and at times attempts to micromanage.</i> • <i>It seems the school board has a lot of conflicting values, which is a barrier to moving the district forward in doing what's best for kids.</i> • <i>Many on the school board seem completely out of touch with the realities of running a district with the complexities of 281.</i> • <i>Dysfunctional school board is ruining the district.</i> • <i>The School Board is the Achilles heel of the District.</i> • <i>As a parent, I'm unhappy with our current school board and the way they treat each other and the way they treat school staff.</i> • <i>Turbulence on our school board and how it affects our school community and what messages it sends to the rest of the area!</i> • <i>Respect between school board and administration/staff. Some school board members need to stop putting misinformation on social media.</i> • <i>A school board that needs mediators and can't control its behavior in the interest of the job it's supposed to do.</i> • <i>The school board is a mess and not focused on the kids - they are focused on their infighting.</i> • <i>School board is not functioning.</i> • <i>Lack of a functioning school board. The infighting has got to stop.</i> • <i>Division in the community and on the school board.</i> • <i>The school board is not functioning properly and makes the district appear that they don't know how to function either.</i> • <i>The school board can't work together.</i> • <i>The school board drama that is playing out publicly is embarrassing and is further impacting negative opinions of our district.</i> • <i>Gaining a functional school board.</i> • <i>School Board that is ineffective, which models disrespectful behavior and is out of step with the vision and beliefs of district parents, staff and students.</i> • <i>The School Board is currently very hard to watch try to do their work.</i> • <i>Dealing with a challenging school board.</i> • <i>Stabilize the school board.</i> 	<p>85 related responses</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>There is a huge distrust of leadership in the district administration and school board.</i> • <i>The school board's ability to have trust in the leadership at the district level and in the schools.</i> • <i>Our school board is not able to work together to accomplish their basic responsibilities.</i> 	
<p>Robbinsdale Area Schools must address growing concerns regarding student and staff safety, including managing changing student behaviors and enhancing safety measures across all school settings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Kids and staff safety.</i> • <i>Safety of students. Hitting isn't taken seriously even in elementary.</i> • <i>They need to maintain safety with crossings and playground equipment that is degrading or nonfunctional.</i> • <i>Student behaviors changing.</i> • <i>Safety and security.</i> • <i>School safety for students and faculty - i.e. providing hallway monitors that can actually enforce discipline as well as the teachers in their classes.</i> • <i>Out of control students and school safety.</i> • <i>School safety must be returned to school. Children should not be afraid to go to school because of the potential of violence.</i> • <i>Many teachers do not feel safe in school. No one should work in an environment where they don't feel supported by their superiors and are not allowed to stop fights and encourage peace.</i> • <i>Support SRO's and start honoring the work of law enforcement if the district wants to cultivate an environment of safety and stability for students and staff.</i> • <i>School safety and behavioral issues with students.</i> • <i>Safety. An excessive number of fights.</i> • <i>Increased safety concerns.</i> • <i>Behavior management and students' safety and the feeling of being safe.</i> • <i>Resident families don't want to send their kids to schools with safety and discipline issues.</i> • <i>Safety in the schools need to be addressed and plans to develop addressed these issues.</i> • <i>Managing safety at all school buildings.</i> • <i>Continued issues with safety and communication.</i> • <i>Aging buildings are definitely an issue and things need to be improved for safety and appearance.</i> • <i>Student behavior is becoming unruly and there are little to no consequences.</i> • <i>Safety - There have been some incidents that make the staff and students feel not safe in their building.</i> 	<p>84 related responses</p>



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

<p>The next superintendent needs to understand the communities' diversity across racial, economic, and cultural dimensions, and help implement inclusive strategies that address the unique needs of the school district as its demographics now stand.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>The district is very diverse.</i>• <i>We come from a place of diversity, community and respect.</i>• <i>This community is diverse in all senses of the word.</i>• <i>First rate suburban school district with a very diverse makeup both racially and financially.</i>• <i>We seem to be a community divided east and west - we need leadership that can bring us together.</i>• <i>Economically and culturally diverse.</i>• <i>We are an involved community that want the best for their students.</i>• <i>That there's a mix of different cultures, backgrounds and values in the student's families.</i>• <i>The historical and ever-changing diversity of the district and community (racial, economic, etc.).</i>• <i>We are a diverse community with a high poverty rate, and the district is highly segregated.</i>• <i>How diverse of a community that we are. They need to understand that cookie cutter approaches do not work and that new strategies that are implemented will have to take into account our vast diversity.</i>• <i>Demographics of the school district have been rapidly changing.</i>• <i>Students are those that are traditionally underserved and face many social and financial hardships.</i>• <i>The district is full of untapped potential and a community ready to commit to continued success.</i>• <i>Deep rooted history that many in community are proud of.</i>• <i>Blue collar community.</i>• <i>Robbinsdale has an incredibly fabulous diverse background of families.</i>• <i>Robbinsdale demographics have changed over time and continue to change.</i>• <i>The demographic/cultural shift that has taken place in the last generation and the impacts it has on students across the district and the long-standing members of the community.</i>• <i>The district spans an area with diverse communities, there's a tremendous wealth of knowledge in the community that can support students and staff.</i>• <i>Widely diverse student population, most being from low income and high stress environments.</i>• <i>We love this district for its diversity. It's unique in this state.</i>• <i>I believe that there is a lot of support for our schools within the community, and that everyone cares deeply about the success of our students and schools.</i>	124 related responses
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It is an amazing diverse and big district with a proud heritage in the fine arts as well as other areas.</i> • <i>The East-West economic split is a defining characteristic of the community. Navigating that split skillfully is a necessity.</i> • <i>We are a renowned arts community.</i> • <i>They need to understand and fully embrace the depth and breadth of the diverse students and families this school district serves. There are people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. There are people of all economic backgrounds.</i> 	
<p>Stakeholders want the next superintendent to prioritize rebuilding trust with the school community by fostering transparency and demonstrating a commitment to long-term leadership and financial responsibility.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>There is a history of division, skepticism, and disappointment from our communities.</i> • <i>Our staff and community need a superintendent who will stay for a while.</i> • <i>Many parents are jaded and distrustful of the district.</i> • <i>Understand that a culture of distrust exists between the community and the school board/Superintendent.</i> • <i>They need to have experience working with distrusting staff and community. We are frustrated with where we are at and need someone to come in and help clean it up.</i> • <i>The candidate will need to work hard to rebuild relationships in the community and do something to stem the negativity that seems prevalent in our district.</i> • <i>We need leadership that can bring us together.</i> • <i>We are lacking trust in the superintendent and in the district. Let's head in the right direction together!!!</i> • <i>Many people don't trust the decisions made in the past. Transparency and personable accountability are important.</i> • <i>There has been a lot of distrust and turnover in the position.</i> • <i>Mistrust with the district from community members.</i> • <i>There isn't much trust or confidence in this district currently. It's going to be a tough job!</i> • <i>We need a longer-term superintendent to establish a respectable and trustworthy school district.</i> • <i>The district has lost trust with its parents and community.</i> • <i>We are coming from a place of insecurity and mistrust due to a lack of strong leadership and low accountability.</i> • <i>There's a pretty strong history of distrust between staff and the district.</i> • <i>There's a lack of trust because superintendents come and go so frequently. It would be great if the new superintendent planned to stay for more than 3 years.</i> • <i>History of problematic leadership and subsequent distrust from community members.</i> • <i>Rebuilding trust and maintaining consistency and accountability needs to be a priority.</i> 	<p>87 related responses</p>



<p>Survey respondents believe the next superintendent should be prepared to work collaboratively with the school board to rebuild trust through transparency, unity, and effective decision-making. Hard skills along with soft skills and emotional intelligence are desired.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The current iteration of the school board is contentious and combative.</i> • <i>As a parent, I would like to see fair teacher contracts.</i> • <i>Lack of past transparency and nonworking school board.</i> • <i>School board needs to get it together, be transparent and be open to public comments.</i> • <i>The candidate will need to work hard to rebuild relationships in the community and do something to stem the negativity that seems prevalent in our school district.</i> • <i>Ineffective school board making bad and time-wasting decisions, school board with lack of experience in board making decisions and processes.</i> • <i>Transparency about the difficulties within the school board.</i> • <i>There seems to be a long history of ineffective communication between school board, admin, and staff.</i> • <i>Members of the school board are a bit conspiratorial.</i> • <i>I think they would need to know about the current state of contention within the school board, and a good overview of the history of our school board and its management in recent years.</i> • <i>The school board's recent history of disfunction.</i> • <i>That the School Board is out of sync with the community and its priorities.</i> • <i>It seems like the school board is a bit of a mess after everything that's happened and it will take some time to get it back into a healthy place.</i> • <i>That administration and school board members lack clarity in the realistic struggles of education and discipline.</i> • <i>Our school board is a mess and at a stalemate.</i> • <i>That there seems to be a lot of problems within the school boards, past and present.</i> 	<p>82 related responses</p>
<p>The next superintendent needs to address staff concerns by improving morale, support, and working conditions to ensure retention and to enhance the educational environment for each and every student.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Staff desire to be treated and valued as professionals.</i> • <i>Lack of support for teachers that try to have corrective action. Kids get away with too much.</i> • <i>Teachers and staff leaving and finding more pay and better working conditions that include more support in different school districts.</i> • <i>Staff turnover.</i> • <i>We have exceptional teachers that we want to keep.</i> 	<p>75 related responses</p>



- *Students have learned that there's not going to be a consequence for their actions. This makes it difficult to teach and for children to learn.*
- *We have strong/ loyal teachers who care about our students- let's work to keep them.*
- *When our teachers are at their best and set up for success, our students have the best chance at being and doing their best. This has been lacking and it is now showing.*
- *Teachers and staff leaving and finding more pay and better working conditions that include more support in different school districts.*
- *The new superintendent needs to be aware of the low morale across teachers and staff.*
- *We have excellent staff who care about each and every student, who go above and beyond every day every year despite working conditions due to factors out of the teacher's control.*
- *Support the teachers in order to keep them.*
- *We have a long history of initiative fatigue. There are so many competing priorities that our teachers are resources are sapped.*
- *Teachers have not been treated very well, and I don't think the principals have been treated very well either.*
- *Many teachers don't feel supported.*
- *Teachers are expected to do more and more by people who don't work with students or experience day-to-day classroom life.*
- *We need to increase special education staff members in order to provide these services, as well as work with general education teachers on ways to effectively work with these students without sending them out of the classroom.*
- *Teachers need to feel supported.*
- *High turnover of teachers at my school.*
- *School staff is dedicated to our students, and we deserve significant improvements in working conditions, salary, and benefits!!!*
- *They need to listen to the teachers. Most teachers have been in the district longer than anyone else and understand the issues firsthand.*
- *I have heard of teachers getting burn out, not getting along with administration and the school board.*
- *Teachers are becoming burnt out due to these pressures and leaving the district in droves.*
- *They need to listen to the needs of the staff and the community to make RAS a destination place to work.*



Leadership skills matter, as constituents want the next superintendent to be a strong, empathetic leader who prioritizes transparency, communication, community engagement, and creative problem-solving.

76 related responses

- *We have been through a very painful process over the last six years and we need healing leadership.*
- *RAS needs a strong leader who will bring back a disciplined approach that focuses on academics and keeping kids safe.*
- *Understand that we need a strong leader and voice in the community.*
- *Be transparent, creative, and win the trust of your teachers and the community. Work WITH us, rather than micromanage us.*
- *We need a super that understands that all kids want to feel safe in their schools.*
- *Honesty, clear communication, and a strong vision combined with great listening are a must.*
- *We need to start thinking outside the box, along with using independent and critical thinking skills, to improve the future of the education system as a whole.*
- *This community desperately needs a strong leader who is courageous, articulate, and visible.*
- *We need a leader who can be creative with funding, grants, donations to compete with those higher tax communities that surround us.*
- *They need to be consistent and open and transparent.*
- *Be involved, communicate, and listen to the concerns. Most importantly bring fun to learning.*
- *That it is very important to be honest and transparent.*
- *We need someone who was a teacher, understands what being in a school and classroom is like.*
- *The last several years have been tough for our district but someone with very strong leadership skills and thick skin can make positive changes.*
- *Strong, wise and empathetic leadership is necessary.*
- *We need to be responsive to the individual needs of buildings and provide them with adequate support and resources.*
- *Listen to parents, When problems come up find out the whole story really look at both sides of a situation. Try to understand our students and where they are coming from in our community.*
- *We need a strong leader who is able to think creatively.*
- *We need someone who can close the gap, and ensure we provide equal access and equity to all of our students.*
- *We have had a lot of change in leadership. We need a solid person to stay the course with a vision for our district.*
- *We need some fresh eyes, consistency and longevity from our new superintendent.*
- *We need a superintendent who respects the staff members and engages in conversations with staff.*
- *We need a strong leader who can guide and lead us while connecting with our entire school community.*



4. Additional Comments:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Our next superintendent should have experience in dealing with complex challenges and have a proven track record.</i> • <i>The staff need a solid leadership team and incentive and trust to stay and do great things.</i> • <i>We need a superintendent who understands how important good staff are. And someone who can find ways to cut budget but make sure kids have the staff and technology that's needed in today's world.</i> • <i>I would love someone who thinks outside of the box, listens well to others, and isn't afraid to try new and creative ideas.</i> • <i>We are falling apart as a district. We need someone to help build it back up. We need solid leadership and together we can do great things!</i> • <i>Would love to see a superintendent who is creative in how they define "success" within the district - someone who looks beyond test scores, graduation rates, enrollment numbers, etc.</i> • <i>We need to find a dynamic, empathetic leader who can move this culture into a healthy dynamic.</i> • <i>We need someone with experience and passion.</i> • <i>District finance needs to be addressed so that things are paid for in a timely and appropriate manner.</i> • <i>The new superintendent must be able to be strategic and work effectively with the School Board.</i> • <i>We need an educational leader.</i> • <i>Experience is of course important and necessary for this kind of leadership role, but I believe there may be candidates who have not served specific role of superintendent who might be highly capable in such a role.</i> • <i>We need a superintendent who is going to stick around for more than 3-5 years.</i> • <i>We need a strong communicator, enforcer of integrity, collaboration and data driven outcomes.</i> • <i>Superintendent needs to be held accountable, have good communication skills, and prior experience.</i> • <i>We need someone who is hones, trustworthy, transparent and a team player! Someone who puts the students first!</i> 	<p>42 related responses</p>
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Student Listening Sessions

On January 23, January 25, and January 26, 2024, MSBA staff met with 116 students (47 at Cooper, 34 at Highview, and 35 at Armstrong) and asked them four open-ended questions. The results of the listening sessions were reviewed by MSBA representatives, and below is a summary of the student groups' discussion in response to each question.

1. What are some good things happening in Robbinsdale Area Schools?

In attending RAS, students highlighted numerous positive aspects that contribute to a supportive and enriching educational environment. A standout feature is the commendation of their teaching staff, who are noted for positive attitudes, approachability, and proactive support. Students praise teachers in this district for going beyond the call of duty to assist students, even without being asked, and for fostering a caring and inclusive atmosphere. This level of care is perceived as improving over previous years, with staff showing genuine concern for students' wellbeing and academic success and it is appreciated. Robbinsdale Academy, specifically mentioned, exemplifies a learning institution within the district where innovative teaching methods and closer teacher-student collaboration enhance the learning experience.

Moreover, students feel the school district offers a broad spectrum of opportunities that serve diverse interests and academic needs. From open lunch policies to self-paced lessons, they see the district as being attentive to student preferences and learning styles. Extracurricular activities, including sports, arts, and clubs, alongside unique offerings like EMS and Ojibwe language courses, enrich students' school life. Advanced placement and college-level courses provide students with the challenge and preparation for future academic endeavors, and the emphasis on diversity, inclusion, and student voice, along with a wide variety of clubs and activities, ensures that every student can find a niche where they feel valued and included. Overall, Robbinsdale Area Schools' commitment to student engagement, strong academic programming, and a supportive community reflects its dedication to providing a high-quality education that meets the needs and aspirations of its students.

2. What are some challenges you see or that you see other students facing?

Students in Robbinsdale Area Schools face a variety of challenges that impact their educational experience and overall wellbeing. Mental health issues are a significant concern, with students reporting difficulties in maintaining focus in class, struggling with academic pressures, and facing barriers to connecting with teachers and peers. These challenges are exacerbated by a



perceived lack of compassion and understanding from some educators in their day-to-day experiences, coupled with the Modern Classroom program that results in limited student-teacher interaction. Additionally, language barriers and adaptability issues present learning obstacles for students from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Safety concerns, including bullying and the fear of weapons in schools, also contribute to an environment where some students feel unsafe. Particularly, there is discomfort associated with using school bathrooms due to incidents of vaping, violence, and insufficient cleanliness which contribute to a sense of insecurity among students. Students also report experiencing racial bias and a lack of diverse representation among staff, which affects their sense of belonging and inclusivity. The heavy workload and stress experienced by teachers, who are stretched thin across numerous responsibilities, have a trickle-down effect, impacting the quality of education and the timeliness of feedback needed by students. Moreover, the communication gaps regarding essential safety procedures and the overall engagement of students and educators highlight systemic issues that require attention to ensure a supportive, safe, and equitable educational experience for all students in RAS.

3. What personal characteristics, skills, or areas of expertise are important for the new superintendent to have?

The qualities deemed essential by students for the new superintendent of Robbinsdale Area Schools highlight a blend of personal integrity, professional experience, and a commitment to active engagement with the community. Honesty, empathy, and understanding emerged as foundational characteristics, underscoring the importance of a leader who can navigate the complexities of educational leadership with both compassion and transparency. The ability to relate to and understand the diverse needs of students, teachers, and parents alike is seen as crucial. This includes a history of being a former teacher, which could provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by educators and students, reinforcing the superintendent's empathy for teachers and dedication to trust-building across the district.

Effective communication skills, open-mindedness, and a strong work ethic were also highlighted by students, with an emphasis on the superintendent's role as a proactive problem solver who can implement change efficiently and thoughtfully. Students would like to see a leader who is accessible and involved, willing to listen to feedback and act on it, thereby ensuring that actions speak louder than words. The ability to engage with students directly, maintaining consistent contact and demonstrating a genuine interest in their well-being and academic success, is seen as vital. Furthermore, flexibility, relatability, and a commitment to improving educational resources, such as tutoring services and real-life work training, reflect a broader understanding that student needs are varied and require a nuanced approach. The call for more visible leadership, one that fosters a sense of trust and safety across all schools within the district, indicates a desire for a superintendent who not only leads with confidence and competence but also with a heartfelt commitment to students' diverse needs and aspirations.



4. What does the new superintendent need to understand about Robbinsdale students to be successful?

The overarching theme among students seems to be that the new superintendent in RAS must grasp the complex and diverse nature of its student body. Recognizing that students have varied learning styles, speeds, and needs is crucial. Some students may grasp concepts quickly, while others require more time or different methods of instruction, underscoring the importance of flexibility in educational strategies. The superintendent should be aware that motivational factors, such as engaging learning environments, access to quality resources, and opportunities for one-on-one interactions, can significantly impact students' willingness to attend and participate in school. Understanding each student's unique background and challenges, and making accommodations for those who need extra support, is essential in fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Furthermore, students feel the superintendent should recognize the district's diversity not just in demographics but in the ways students engage with their education. For example, the value of extracurricular activities in building social networks and integrating students into the school community cannot be overstated. These activities often play a critical role in students' overall success and satisfaction with their school experience. Communication with students and families should be clear, transparent, and varied to effectively reach and engage them. Innovation, flexibility, and a willingness to listen and adapt are key qualities needed to move the district forward. RAS students would like the superintendent to be visible, accessible, and genuinely interested in connecting with students, staff, and families to build trust and ensure that the district not only meets the current needs of its students but is also prepared to evolve with them into the future.

