

Stakeholder Survey Report



St. Joseph School District
October 2024

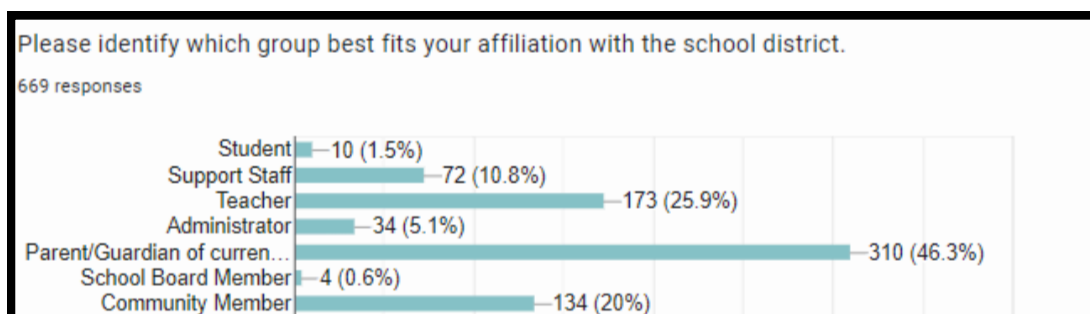


**MISSOURI SCHOOL
BOARDS' ASSOCIATION**
HELPING SCHOOL BOARDS ENSURE ALL STUDENTS SUCCEED

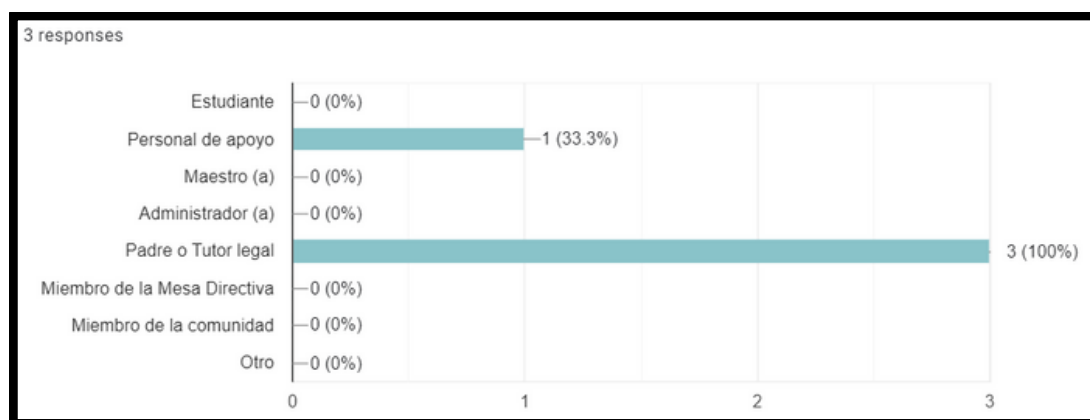
Purpose of the Report

This report is intended to inform the St. Joseph School District Board of Education about the qualifications that stakeholders hope to have in the next superintendent.

The Missouri School Boards' Association recently conducted a stakeholder survey from September 9 to 23, 2024. The survey resulted in 673 total responses from parents/guardians, teachers, community members, support staff, students, and others. The feedback from the survey report will be used to guide the hiring process and ensure that the next superintendent is a good fit for the district and community.



English Survey Feedback



Spanish Survey Feedback

SUPERINTENDENT HIRING TIMELINE:

September 9-23, 2024

October 16, 2024

December 1, 2024

December 4, 2024

December 12, 2024

December 17, 2024

Stakeholder survey open

Application period opens

Application period closes

Board reviews candidate pool

Semi-finalist screening interviews

Formal interviews with finalists

Strengths for the St. Joseph School District

- DEDICATED AND CARING TEACHERS AND STAFF
- STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND PRIDE
- STUDENT-CENTERED FOCUS
- HILLYARD TECHNICAL CENTER
- TENURE OF FACULTY AND STAFF

“We have teachers who unconditionally love our students, no matter where they come from. We have staff who care so much about kids whose needs are not being met and go above and beyond to do what's best for them.”

“The SJSD staff are our biggest strength. We have so many people who come every day, with the intention of improving life for our students.”

“The strength is in the staff who are committed to student success and learning while wrapping students with all available resources academically and emotionally.”

“The St. Joseph School District has wonderful staff who do what is best for students and their education. We have a very diverse group of students and work to meet varied needs.”

“The St. Joseph School District takes immense pride in its strong sense of staff unity, where teachers and staff work closely together to create an environment that fosters collaboration and support. One of the district's key strengths is the deep commitment to forming genuine relationships with students, where teachers are seen not only as educators but as trusted figures who guide and mentor students throughout their journey. This foundation of trust is essential for student growth, both academically and personally.”

“Our district connects with local businesses and makes our schools feel a part of the larger community.”

“Our community has a large population of people that were born and raised here choosing to invest in the community and raise their own families here.”

“The St. Joseph School District has many generational families that are proud to send their kids and grandkids to the schools they once attended. This lends to an overall ‘small school’ environment amongst many of our buildings.”

“I feel that the school district provides great resources for students who struggle, particularly kids who need special education.”

“Hillyard Tech - great opportunity for students that don't want a 4-year degree.”

“Hillyard Technical Center and the variety of programs they offer our students.”

Challenges for the St. Joseph School District

- **COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND PERCEPTION**
- **RECRUITING AND RETAINING HIGH-QUALITY TEACHERS AND STAFF**
- **FACILITY CONCERNS AND UPDATES**
- **ADDRESSING STUDENT BEHAVIOR AND ATTENDANCE**

“Lack of community support. Yes, we know that we are supported by many in the community but the negative comment makers are LOUD and really bring down morale.”

“The community, or at least the loudest members of the community, does not support our school district. No matter what is happening, whether it is good or bad, there are people tearing the district, teachers and staff down. It seems like no matter what the district does, we can never make gains in the eyes of the community.”

“Staff retention is still a challenge that will continue, and the district needs to stay on top of it.”

“Low pay (hourly and salary), dwindling benefits, lack of positive and beneficial recruitment and retainment procedures.”

“We are losing great staff to other areas because of pay, lack of support, etc.”

“Keeping up with maintenance on school buildings/repairs.”

“The buildings are old, I currently have asbestos in my room which is dangerous. Some rooms still do not have air conditioning. Buildings need maintenance.”

“The buildings are old and in disrepair compared to surrounding areas.”

“Trying to teach in the 21st Century with 20th Century facilities.”

“Discipline and attendance. We can’t teach if they are not in school. I have students who have missed almost half the school year because they don’t come to school. Then we get blamed because our scores are low. Same goes for behavior. When student are disrupting the classroom the teacher can’t teach.”

“Engaging all demographics of parents and convincing them that regular attendance is imperative for student success.”

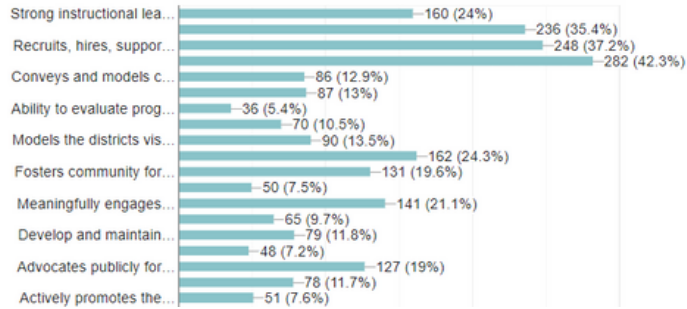
“Student Behavior - too much time has to be spent on student discipline that the rest of the class isn't getting instruction. I feel like the education is falling behind because teachers are spending class time managing the class and don't have the opportunity to teach.”

“Student behaviors are a problem and there is not enough support staff to help teachers and administrators with those, especially in the non title buildings where big behaviors still very much exist.”

Desired Skills & Qualifications

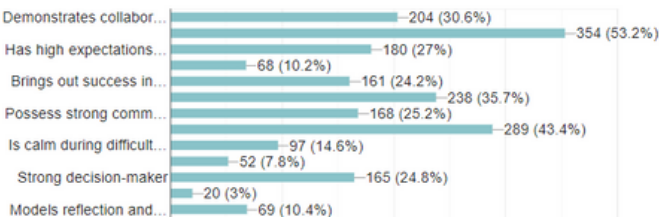
Please check the 3 most important **professional skills** and qualifications you hope to have in a new superintendent.

667 responses



Please check the 3 most important personal traits or qualities you hope to have in a new superintendent.

666 responses



Stakeholders provided input on the top professional skills and qualifications they hope to have in the next superintendent, including:

1. Is approachable, accessible, and welcoming (53.2%).
2. Demonstrates ethics and integrity (43.4%).
3. Builds community and school relations (42.3%).
4. Recruits, hires, supports, develops, and retains effective staff members (37.2%).
5. Follows through on tasks and responsibilities (35.7%).
6. Effectively manages district resources (35.4%).
7. Demonstrates collaborative leadership (30.6%).
8. Has high expectations for themselves and others (27.0%).
9. Possess strong communication skills (25.2%).
10. Strong decision-maker (24.8%).

ABOUT THE DISTRICT

The St. Joseph School District serves over 11,000 students in grades PK-12. The district includes an early learning center, 13 elementary schools, four middle schools, three high schools, a technical center, and a learning center. The district is located approximately 60 miles northwest of Kansas City.

Focus Group Feedback

Approachable, accessible, and welcoming

- Open to new ideas and listens to others
- Responsive to calls and emails promptly
- Kind and approachable demeanor
- Maintains open communication with all stakeholders
- Engages in regular dialogue with union leadership
- Willing to hold town hall meetings
- Accessible to staff and students
- Actively involved in the larger community
- Visible in schools and the community
- Builds relationships with diverse groups
- Authentic connections and international relationships
- Open door policy
- Good listener who seeks to understand
- Handles criticism with thick skin
- Authentic and relational
- Committed to serving the broader community

Demonstrates Ethics and Integrity

- Builds trust through consistent and transparent communication
- Owns mistakes and takes action to fix them
- Honest and transparent in decision-making
- Acts as a role model for staff, students, and the community
- Stays positive, even in difficult situations
- Makes decisions with integrity, not swayed by local politics
- Seeks feedback on important decisions and values inclusivity
- Upholds strong values and beliefs aligned with the district
- Follows through on commitments and policies
- Prioritizes equity and fairness in addressing issues



Focus Group Feedback

Builds School and Community Relations

- Live in the community and actively participate in civic groups and activities
- Be visible and approachable throughout the community and at school events
- Actively support and engage with diverse families
- Promote and communicate bond votes clearly to the public
- Model leadership by attending school events and encouraging principals to do the same
- Create, follow, and communicate a clear school improvement plan
- Focus on community needs while being transparent about district challenges and successes
- Build meaningful relationships across different parts of the community
- Listen to feedback from various groups, including underrepresented voices
- Prioritize the district's mission and vision

Recruits, Hires and Retains Effective Staff

- Celebrate successes with staff and the community to boost morale and engagement
- Be creative with solutions for recruitment and retention
- Share the district's story and positive news to boost morale
- Implement programs like “You Matter” initiatives to make staff feel valued
- Hold administrators accountable for climate and culture in schools
- Offer competitive salaries and benefits to retain talent
- Model a supportive, caring, and compassionate school culture
- Address discipline and behavior issues with effective interventions
- Promote self-care for staff and provide positive feedback regularly
- Highlight district successes and create programs that recognize staff efforts
- Work with colleges to build teacher pipelines and explore creative hiring practices
- Focus on facilities improvements and smaller class sizes to support staff
- Communicate expectations clearly and hold staff accountable while mentoring and advocating for them



Additional Focus Group Feedback

- Follow through on decisions and initiatives to ensure they come to fruition.
- Stay committed to the current Vision Forward path.
- Prioritize hiring a superintendent with considerable experience, ideally in a similar-sized district.
- Reconnect district leadership with the community to rebuild trust.
- Address school boundaries and demographics (free/reduced population, space, staff) using expert recommendations.
- Focus on improving underperforming schools, especially Title I and low socioeconomic schools.
- Improve student performance, particularly in algebra and English, with earlier interventions at the secondary levels.
- Address low attendance and graduation rates by engaging parents and promoting the importance of attending school.
- Ensure the superintendent has large school experience, strong leadership, and accountability, and can "sell" the district effectively.
- Seek a long-term leader with a commitment to reducing turnover, improving instruction, and driving positive change despite challenges.



Advice for the Next Superintendent of the St. Joseph School District

“To come in with a positive attitude and willingness to promote change. This district is doing amazing things, regardless of the noise that others are making. The superintendent needs to continue to lead that change and support the staff and schools.”

“Stick with us. The SJSD has amazing students and staff, and we want what's best for our kids, even though we don't all agree on what that is.”

“Build as many relationships as you can across the community.”

“Stick to your word, advocate for a safe environment for children and staff.”

“Bring warmth and genuine care with you to work every day. When others see how much you care, and how earnestly you approach every situation, they will want to echo that in their own approach.”

“Be patient but act with conviction on decisions that have to be made.”

“Show up at community events and support students/staff. St. Joseph is pretty big but this community has a small town mentality. They want someone who really wants to be part of the community.”

“Help students prepare for a life they are excited about and give the taxpayers a clear plan for that to happen so we can fund it.”

“Do not get lost in the weeds of negativity. We can move forward with good leadership. Listen to your cabinet members and put the right people in charge.”

“We need someone who can think outside the box and make significant improvements - quick wins will help the community see that action is being taken and will promote confidence. Someone who can show they are in it for the long haul.”

“In the current climate of public education, my hope is that you would fight the good fight for public education because it is so important in a community like ours.”

“Be someone that people feel comfortable reaching out to and who is understanding and compassionate.”

“It's important to understand the community and be able to make the hard decisions to move the district forward.”

“Respect the people and their opinions while discussing a forward path to improve education in the area.”

“This is a difficult position in any community. St Joseph is a worthwhile district and if led well this could be one of our finest moments.”