



**SPECIFICATION DEVELOPMENT REPORT  
SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH  
Princeton Public Schools**

On September 30, October 1, October 2, and October 9, School Leadership consultants held 24 forums and focus group meetings, 18 in person and 6 virtually. The purpose of the meetings was to encourage direct, broad-based participation in the development of the specifications that will guide the superintendent search process. Participants were encouraged to share views and perceptions about the community and its schools, its leadership challenges, and about the qualifications, experiences and characteristics to be sought in candidates for the superintendent's position. The meetings, attended by a total of 225 persons, were also meant to provide the consultants with an opportunity to learn, first-hand, about the District through the eyes of those who serve and are served by it, and to gain a sense of the culture, traditions, and qualities that make the schools and community of Princeton unique and special.

Dr. Kathleen Foster, Susan McGreevy, and the Board of Education Ad-Hoc Search Committee provided invaluable assistance in arranging for the identification, scheduling and extending of invitations to these focus groups, and extending warm hospitality to us, for which we are most appreciative. We also wish to thank Giovanna Byzewski and Laurie Oneto for their warm greetings as they buzzed us in to Valley Road each morning.

It is important to state that the process used was not intended to represent an in-depth analysis of Princeton Public Schools, nor was it meant to seek solutions to ongoing issues or challenges. Rather, it was designed to gather general information regarding how the educational and broader community view the current condition of the District and attempt to identify some of the District's challenges, expectations and strengths as they relate to and affect the superintendent search process.

**MEETING FORMATS:**

School Leadership conducted a planning meeting with the Board of Education Ad Hoc Search committee on September 18 and 23 to begin the process of identifying the groups and individuals with whom the consultants should meet, resulting in the following scheduled focus groups or individual meetings (number of participants in parentheses):

September 30

Princeton Parents for Black Children (4)  
PTO Council (13)  
Special Education Parent Advisory Group (5)  
Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction (1)  
Elementary School Teachers (1)  
Board of Education (10)  
Parents (11)

October 1

Middle School Teachers (1)  
Superintendent's Cabinet (4)  
Officers and members of the Princeton Administrators' Association and the Princeton Regional Education Association (7)  
Officers of the Princeton Regional Education Support Staff Association and Tech Union staff members (6)  
District Administrative Team (9)  
Interim Superintendent (1)  
Non-incumbent Candidates for Board of Education seats (5)  
PHS teachers (8)  
Representatives from Princeton University (2)  
Parents and Community (8)  
Virtual Staff Forum (19)

October 2

Virtual Parent/Community Forum (21)  
Valley Road Staff (13)  
High School Students (22)

### October 9 (Virtual meetings only)

Parents of Students Receiving Special Education Services (10)

Native Spanish-speaking parents (with translation) [(14): 3 were not in need of translation but were unable to join other forums]

Native Chinese-speaking parents (with translation) [(30): translation not needed]

### **ONLINE SURVEY**

In addition, the Board approved an online survey which was made available through a link on the District's website. A total of 512 persons responded to the survey; the tabulated data from the survey are appended to this report as Appendix II.

### **QUESTIONS ASKED**

In general, the meetings, focus groups and online survey sought to elicit responses to three broad questions or prompts:

- What qualities, skills, characteristics, and experiences do you feel are most important for the next superintendent?
- What are the key strengths of the District? What would draw excellent candidates to apply?
- What are the major challenges for a new superintendent? What issues will he/she need to address?

An unduplicated presentation of the responses to these questions will be found in Appendix I, noting whether the responses were "mentioned frequently" or "mentioned". Together with the online survey results, all of the data collected suggest that Princeton's stakeholders share similar views of the District and its schools, its challenges, and the qualities it seeks in its new superintendent. (This is not to say, however, that this unanimity exists with respect to every specific issue currently facing the District where, in some instances, there are some differing perspectives.)

## SUMMARY

By way of summary by School Leadership, LLC, the following are the major characteristics that the input would suggest the Board should be seeking and screening for in candidates for the position, and that might be used in any advertising of the vacancy:

*The successful candidate will be:*

- *An experienced, knowledgeable and inclusive educational leader with a strong background in enhancing curriculum, instruction, and student achievement and wellbeing and a commitment to addressing the diverse needs of all learners;*
- *A compassionate, thoughtful, and active promoter of Princeton Public Schools' mission to prepare students in a culturally diverse district to lead lives of joy and purpose as knowledgeable, creative, and compassionate citizens of a global society;*
- *A collaborative, energetic, team builder who emphasizes fostering strong relationships, and who engages with parents, faculty, staff, students, and the broader community to unite around a common vision that supports the District's mission;*
- *A clear, proactive and transparent communicator who effectively utilizes multiple platforms to listen to, learn from, inform, and share ideas with others;*
- *A skilled and adaptive financial manager with expertise in budget development who understands how to maximize resources, deploy staff, and engage the community in long range planning to address enrollment and the use of facilities;*
- *A courageous, ethical, visible, and accessible leader who is excited about becoming a member of the Princeton community and who relishes the challenge of leading a diverse, nationally recognized school district to an even more impressive level of excellence.*

The Board, at its October 16th meeting, received and reviewed this report and authorized the use of the results for advertising of the vacancy.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dr. Martin Brooks  
Rina Beder  
*For School Leadership, LLC*

## APPENDIX I

### REPORT ON FORUMS: PRINCETON PUBLIC SCHOOLS SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH

#### 1. What qualities, skills and experiences do you feel are most important for the next superintendent?

##### **Mentioned Frequently**

- Unicorn
- Deep knowledge of curriculum/instruction and a stellar educator
- Experienced as a District leader
- Visionary educational leader who is able to establish trust and respect and get “buy-in” prior to making changes
- Transparent, acknowledges challenges and clearly explains the rationale for proposed solutions.
- Ability to set high expectations and consistently uphold them throughout the system
- Ability to implement initiatives; translating theory into practice
- Commitment to inclusion and views diversity as a strength
- Visible and accessible
- Cares about students – puts students first, connects with students
- Understands the needs of a diverse student population
- Excellent communicator and listener
- Collaborative
- Open to new ideas, and flexible
- Hard worker, passionate and highly Invested in the job and the community
- Kind, empathetic, caring, nurturing with excellent people skills
- Positive attitude
- Balanced
- Inclusive
- Cultivates and sustains strong relationships with the educational and broader community
- Patient
- Respects and values staff
- Wants to be a long-term member of the community
- Excited by challenges

- Principled, centered in values
- Team builder
- Strong backbone with the ability to stand firm and navigate challenging situations with parents, staff and the Board of Education

### **Mentioned**

- High EQ
- Ability to connect with and inspire faculty and support staff
- Leads by example
- Ability to work well with the Board of Education
- Desire to be a team member with the cabinet
- Centered on service, not hierarchy or data
- Knowledgeable about working with students with IEP's
- Skilled in the politics of leadership
- Willing to learn and understand the District and "the Princeton Way"
- Willing to accept feedback – thick skin
- Skilled negotiator
- Proactive
- Creative problem solver who takes responsibility even when things don't work
- Experience with a growing population, referendums and facility usage
- "You have to be all in."
- A history of success in improving academic outcomes and the overall experience for Black and Hispanic students
- Experience in a K-12 district with a diverse population
- Long-range and systems thinker
- History of strong relationships with unions

## **2. What are the key strengths of the District? What would draw excellent candidates to apply?**

### **Mentioned Frequently**

- The "Princeton" brand
- A community of learners
- Strong team of committed administrators

- Excellent teachers and staff
- Outstanding students – unique in many ways, and high performing
- Well regarded in inclusion models and strong special education program
- Excellent resources
- A caring and supportive and diverse community – engaged parents
- Strong PTOs
- The community cares about children and values public education
- Proximity to Princeton University
- Students receive a stellar education

### **Mentioned**

- A committed Board of Education
- The District Strategic Plan
- Portrait of a Graduate
- Culture of achievement
- Multi-cultural and international community
- Innovative community
- The Princeton High School Profile
- History of supporting referenda
- Labor peace
- Success in Princeton can make someone's legacy
- Strong focus on students' social-emotional needs: e.g., homework-free weekends
- The community eager for long-term leadership and will welcome the new leader

### **3. What are the major challenges for a new superintendent? What issues will he/she need to address?**

### **Mentioned Frequently**

- Educating a diverse student body
- Taking on the achievement gap in the District
- Meeting the needs of all learners
- Strengthening the DLI program, and programs for ESL students
- Working in a racially diverse community
- Potentially overseeing a referendum



- Space issues in schools: Potential for redistricting
- Dealing with a challenging parent community
- Productively engaging the community
- Effectively engaging the non-native English-speaking community
- Need for systems and processes
- Establishing a culture of accountability
- Skilled at building strong relationships with the school principals
- Bringing consistency to the schools
- Improving school security
- Willing to take on significant challenges
- Restoring trust: “Lots of scar tissue in this community.”
- Unifying the community
- Enhancement of facilities

### **Mentioned**

- Potential growth of student population
- Staffing needs and staff retention
- Many students with academic and social-emotional needs
- Partnering with other organizations in the community
- Establishing a stronger partnership with Princeton University
- Holding the administrative staff to high standards
- Energizing the community around the educational program
- Educating the Board of Education about its proper role
- Establishing a strong relationship with union leaders
- Improving communication and building a partnership with the town
- Better coordination among the public, private, and charter schools
- Tackling disproportionality
- Westminster College property
- Rise in antisemitism
- The racial composition of the leadership team
- Make Princeton School a learning organization, not a political one
- “We need creative solutions to novel problems.”

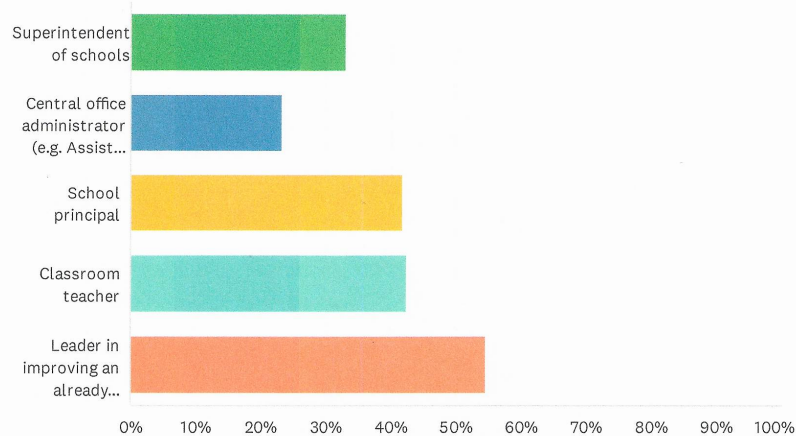
## **APPENDIX II**

### **TABULATED SURVEY RESULTS**

# Princeton Public Schools Superintendent Search

Q1 In the following list of prior experiences for a Superintendent, please click the boxes beside the TWO prior experiences that you feel are MOST CRITICAL (realizing ALL are important) for an individual to be successful as Superintendent of Princeton Public Schools:

Answered: 512 Skipped: 0

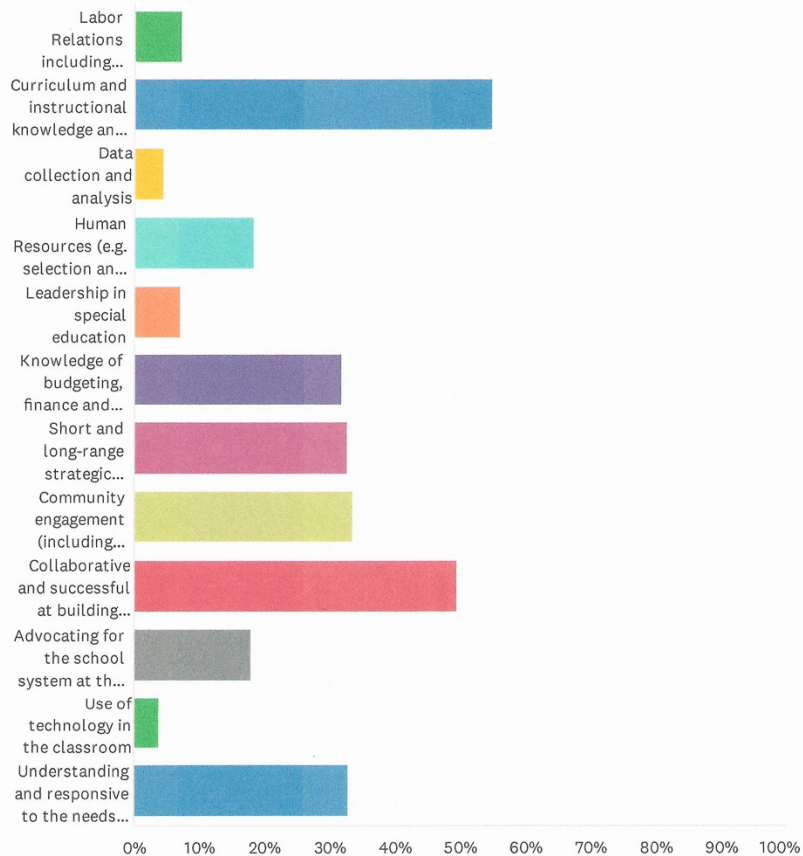


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Superintendent of schools	33.01%	169
Central office administrator (e.g. Assistant Superintendent)	23.24%	119
School principal	41.80%	214
Classroom teacher	42.38%	217
Leader in improving an already high-performing school district	54.69%	280
Total Respondents: 512		

Princeton Public Schools Superintendent Search

Q2 In the following list of skills, please check the boxes beside THREE that you believe are most critical for an individual to be successful as Superintendent of Princeton Public Schools:

Answered: 512 Skipped: 0



### Princeton Public Schools Superintendent Search

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Labor Relations including collective bargaining	7.23%	37
Curriculum and instructional knowledge and leadership (including current research and best practices)	54.88%	281
Data collection and analysis	4.49%	23
Human Resources (e.g. selection and support of personnel)	18.36%	94
Leadership in special education	7.03%	36
Knowledge of budgeting, finance and facility planning	31.84%	163
Short and long-range strategic planning	32.62%	167
Community engagement (including public speaking and written communication)	33.40%	171
Collaborative and successful at building highly productive teams	49.41%	253
Advocating for the school system at the local and state levels	17.97%	92
Use of technology in the classroom	3.91%	20
Understanding and responsive to the needs of a diverse student population	32.81%	168
Total Respondents: 512		

Princeton Public Schools Superintendent Search

**Q6 Tell us about yourself. Please check ALL of the following that apply to you:**

Answered: 512 Skipped: 0

	YES	TOTAL
A resident of the district WITHOUT children currently in the school	100.00% 39	39
A resident of the district WITH children currently in the school	100.00% 381	381
A resident of the district WITH children currently in a private or charter school	100.00% 62	62
A member of the district teaching staff	100.00% 54	54
A member of the district support staff	100.00% 15	15
A member of the district administrative staff	100.00% 8	8
An officer of the district PTO	100.00% 19	19
A student attending a district school	100.00% 27	27
A former member of the Board of Education	100.00% 6	6