

SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

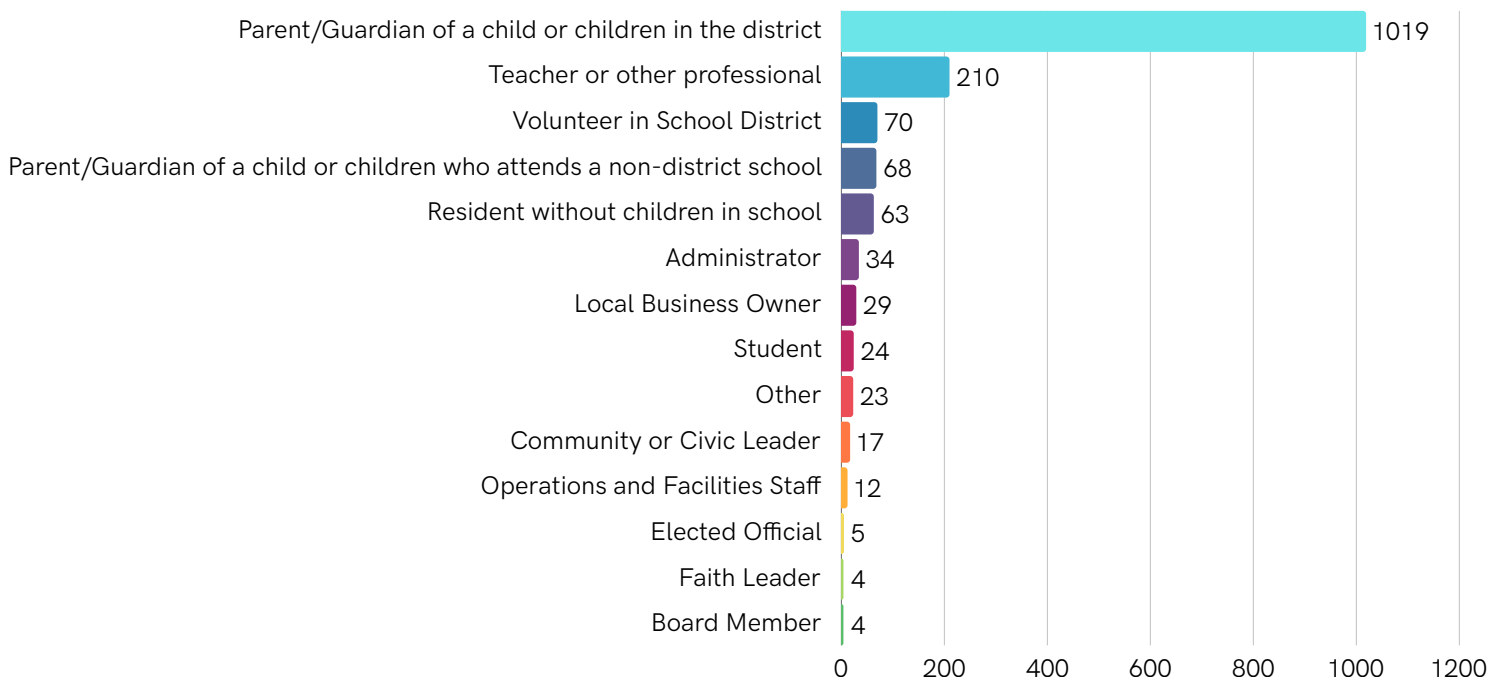
School District of Haverford Township



In preparation for the selection of a new Superintendent, input was gathered from over 1,300 community members, inviting parents, students, staff, board members, and residents to share their insight through a survey and a series of focus groups. This report captures the shared vision and values that participants identified as essential to maintain, preserving the strengths of The School District of Haverford Township, while embracing opportunities for growth.

Themes across the survey and focus groups were aligned, and this report is structured to reflect that alignment. The first section highlights the survey results, providing a quantitative overview of community priorities and perspectives. The second section delves into the focus group discussions, capturing greater context of the themes that emerged.

Survey Participant Demographics (1,367 responses)



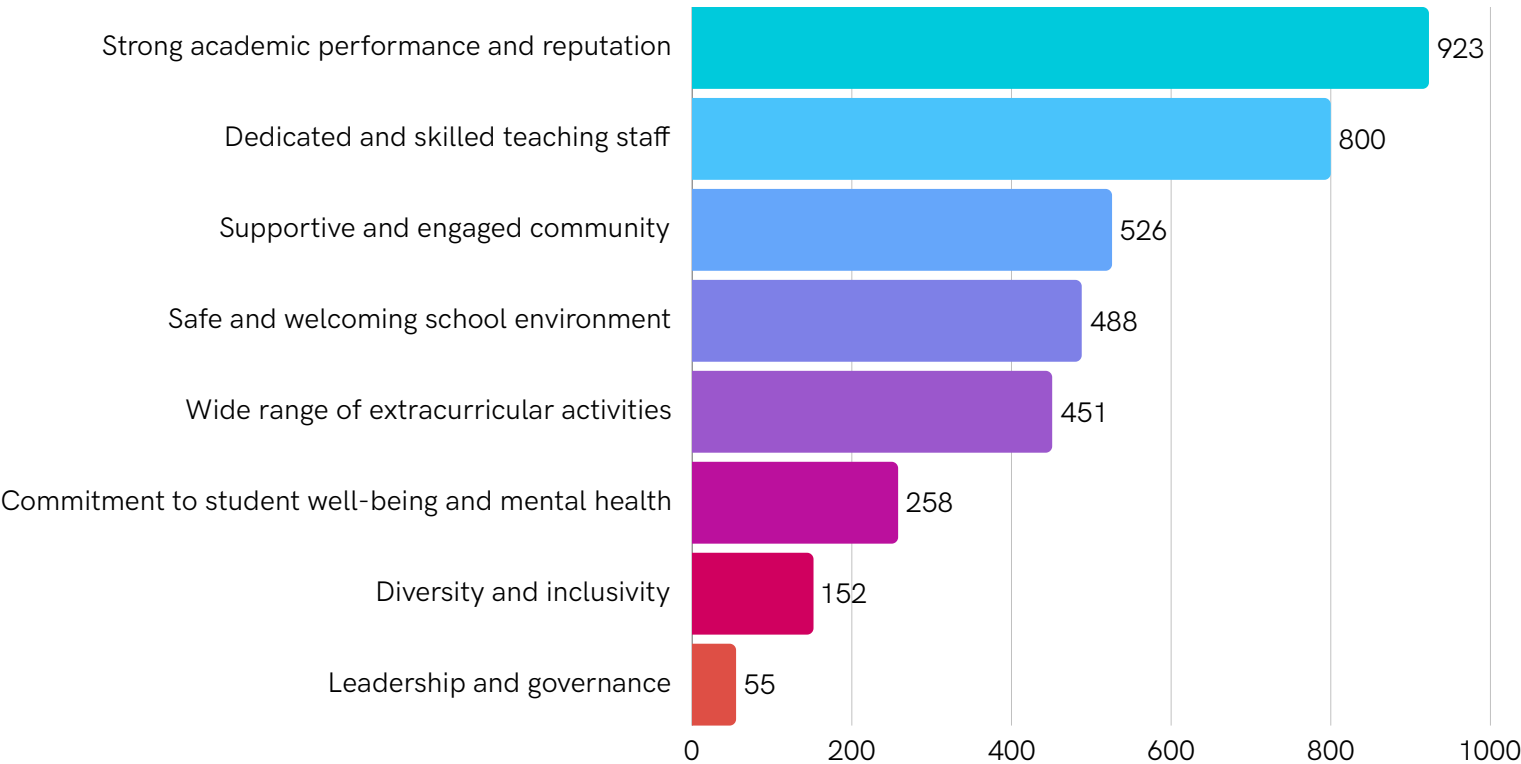
What do you consider the greatest strengths of the district?

**Academic Performance**

**Dedicated Teaching Staff**

**Supportive and Engaged Community**

Identified strengths by survey respondents reflect a foundation deeply routed in excellence, professional expertise, and community support. The strong academic performance and reputation was ranked the district’s most significant strength, closely followed by recognition of dedicated and skilled teaching staff. A supportive and engaged community ranked third, underscoring a value placed on the partnership between the district and the community for student success. Beyond these core strengths, attributes like safe and welcoming environments and extracurricular activities reveal a system striving to meet the comprehensive needs of students for learning and growth.



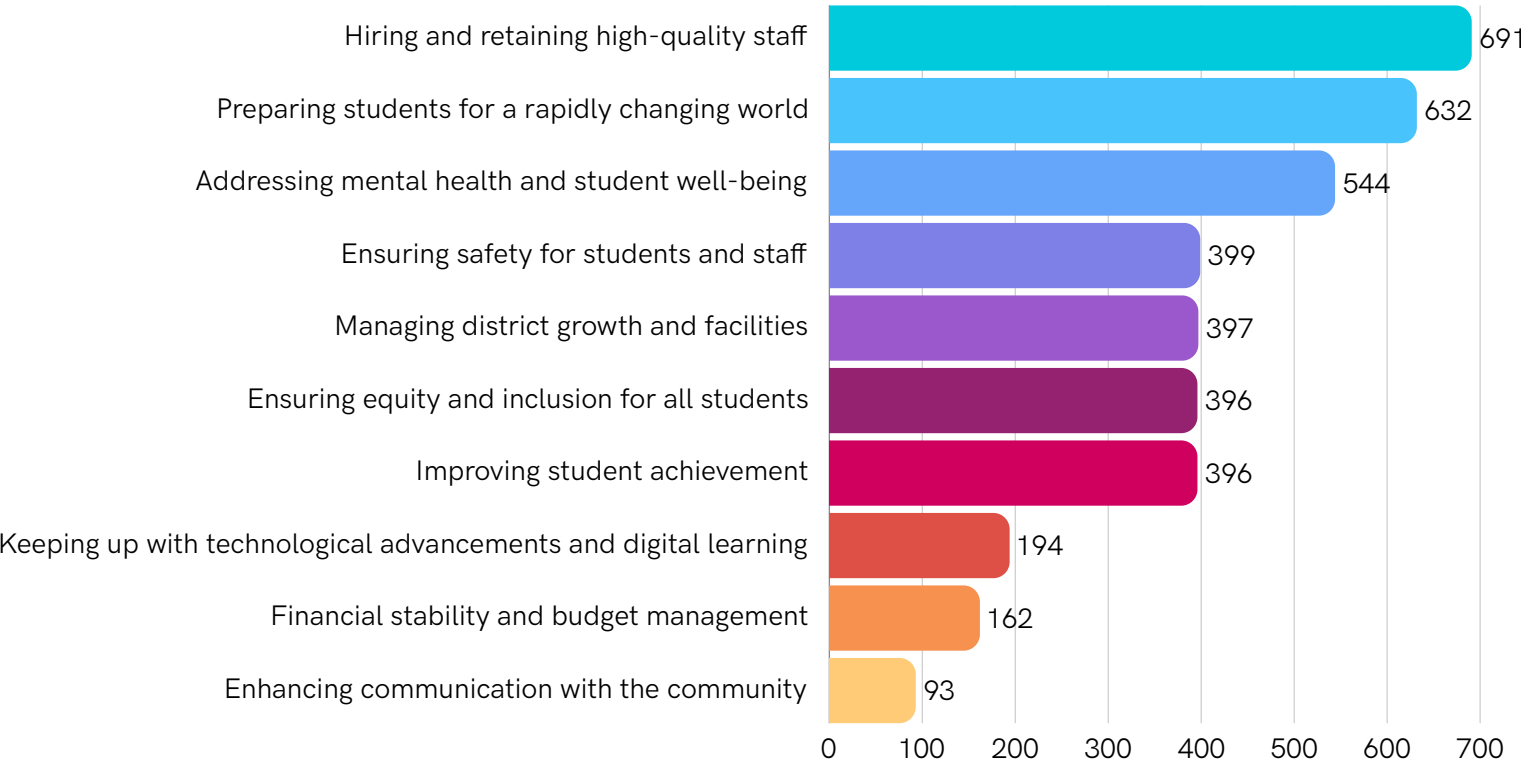
What do you consider the most pressing challenges of the district?

**Hiring and Retaining Quality Staff**

**Preparing Students for a Rapidly Changing World**

**Supporting Student Well-being**

The needs identified by survey respondents reflect both immediate and forward-looking priorities for the district. Hiring and retaining high-quality staff emerged as the most pressing concern, emphasizing the importance of building and maintaining a strong workforce to sustain educational excellence. Preparing students for a rapidly changing world was the second most frequently identified challenge. Supporting mental health and student well-being was ranked third, underscoring the growing awareness of the critical role emotional health plays in academic and personal success. Concerns such as ensuring safety, managing growth and facilities, and fostering inclusion further reflect the community’s desire for a supportive and inclusive environment that prioritizes the needs of all students.



What leadership qualities do you believe are most important?



Strong Communicator

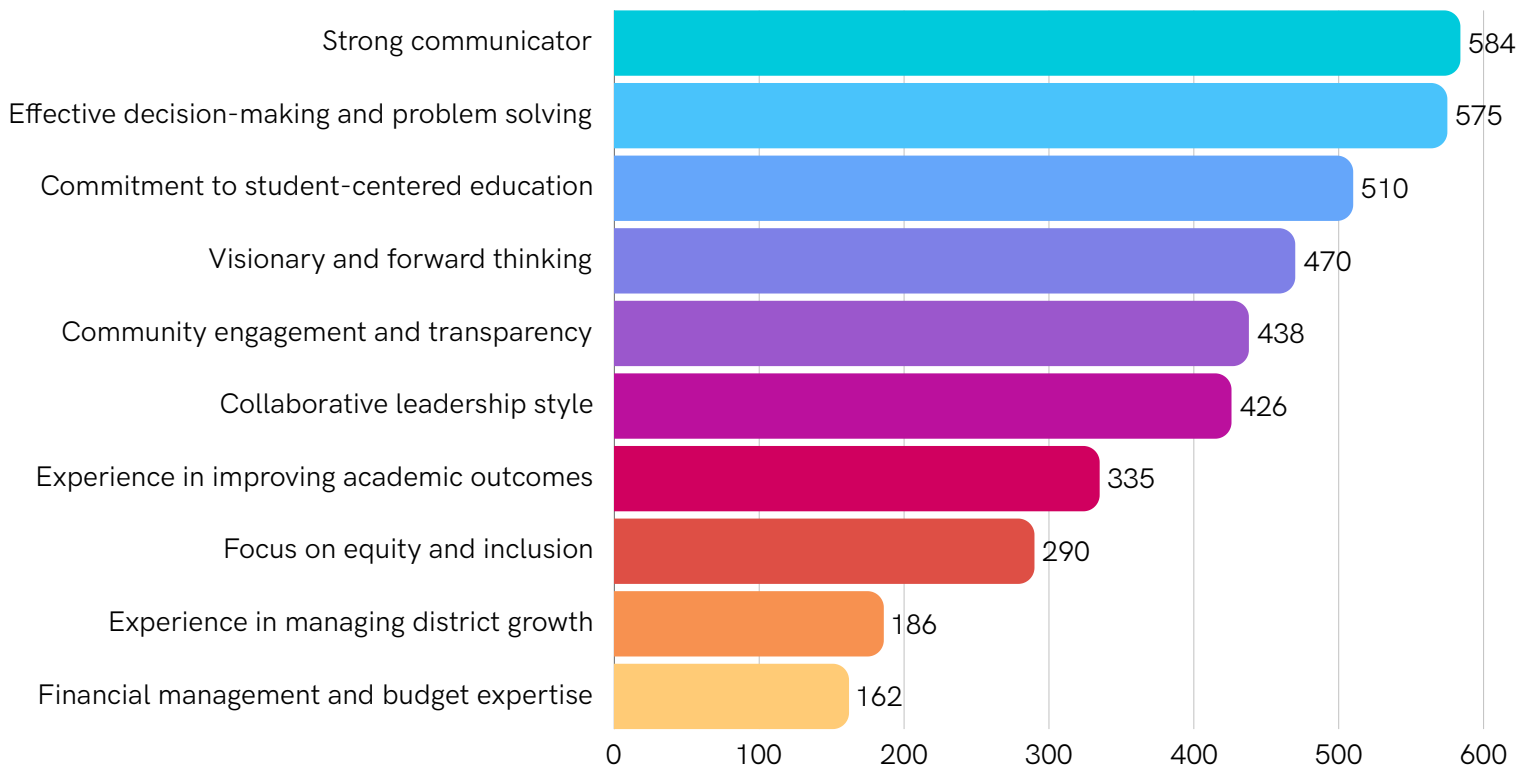


Effective Decision Maker

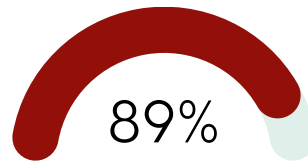


Commitment to Student Centered Education

Survey respondents emphasized leadership qualities that balance effective communication, problem solving, and a commitment to students. Being a strong communicator emerged as the most essential quality, reflecting the need for clear, open, and effective dialogue with all community members. Effective decision-making and problem solving were also seen as critical for navigating challenges and driving the district forward. A commitment to student-centered education was also cited as an important leadership quality in the next Superintendent. These qualities, alongside others such as visionary leadership, collaboration, and community engagement, reflect a collective desire for a Superintendent who combines expertise, foresight, and the ability to build strong, inclusive relationships across the district.



Experience



89% of respondents believe prior experience in a similar sized district is important (64% "important, but not essential," and 25% "essential").

The ideal candidate is an experienced leader with expertise in strategic planning, community engagement, and administrative capabilities to balance the district's operational and educational priorities. A significant majority (89%) indicated that prior experience as a Superintendent in a similar-sized district is important, with 25% rating it as essential. Strategic planning (95.5%), community relations (94.2%), and district administrator experience (94.6%) emerged as the top three areas of expertise desired, underscoring the need for a leader who can navigate complex planning processes, build strong community partnerships, and manage district-level operations effectively.

Strategic Planning

95.5%

43.4% "Extremely Important" and 52.1% "Important" that the next Superintendent have experience in strategic planning.

District Administrator

94.6%

46.9% "Extremely Important" and 47.7% "Important" that the next Superintendent have experience as a district-level administrator.

Community Relations

94.2%

38.8% "Extremely Important" and 55.4% "Important" that the next Superintendent have experience in community relations.

Instructional experience (94%), teaching experience (93.9%), and experience as a principal (91.8%) reflect the community's desire for a Superintendent with a deep understanding of educational practices and leadership at multiple levels within the system. Additionally, long-term commitments to school districts (92.1%) and possessing an advanced degree (90.9%) signal a preference for stability and professional qualifications that can support the district's long-term goals. Taken together, this feedback spotlights the importance of finding a leader with both practical and instructional experience, capable of strategic oversight while fostering trust and collaboration within the community.

Instruction Experience

94%

40.7% "Extremely Important" and 53.3% "Important" that the next Superintendent have a experience in instruction.

Teacher Experience

93.9%

60.7% "Extremely Important" and 33.2% "Important" that the next Superintendent have a experience as a teacher.

Long-term Commitments

92.1%

60.7% "Extremely Important" and 33.2% "Important" that the next Superintendent have experience with long-term commitments to school districts.

Principal Experience

91.8%

44.8% "Extremely Important" and 47% "Important" that the next Superintendent have a experience as a principal.

Advanced Degree

90.9%

50.8% "Extremely Important" and 40.1% "Important" that the next Superintendent have an advanced degree (minimum masters, prefer doctorate).

Experience

(continued)

In addition, respondents also identified other experiences they believe will support the district's next Superintendent in leading effectively. Financial expertise (83.9%) and labor relations (82.6%) were regarded as important for navigating operational and fiscal complexities of running a school district, especially as the district manages growth and resource allocation. Experience working in a diverse, multi-cultural environment (79.9%) reflects the community's recognition of the district's diversity and the need for a leader who can foster equity and inclusion across all levels.

Experience working with elected officials (76.3%) and managing facilities (75%) were also valued, reflecting the operational and political demands of the role, particularly in a district that requires strong coordination with external partners. While a doctorate degree was identified as important by 67.3% of respondents, it was seen as less critical compared to other areas of expertise.

These findings indicate that community members prioritize a well-rounded leader who balances instructional expertise with operational and community-focused skills, ensuring the next Superintendent is prepared to meet the multifaceted challenges of the role while driving the district's long-term success. This breadth of experience underscores the community's vision for a Superintendent who can lead with both academic rigor and strategic capability, all while fostering community trust.

Finance Experience

83.9%

15.5% "Extremely Important" and 68.4% "Important" that the next Superintendent have a experience in finance.

Labor Relations

82.6%

16.9% "Extremely Important" and 65.7% "Important" that the next Superintendent have experience in labor relations.

Diverse, Multi-cultural Environment

79.9%

32.5% "Extremely Important" and 47.4% "Important" that the next Superintendent have experience in a diverse, multi-cultural environment.

Work With Elected Officials

76.3%

16.5% "Extremely Important" and 59.8% "Important" that the next Superintendent have experience working with elected officials.

Facility Management

75%

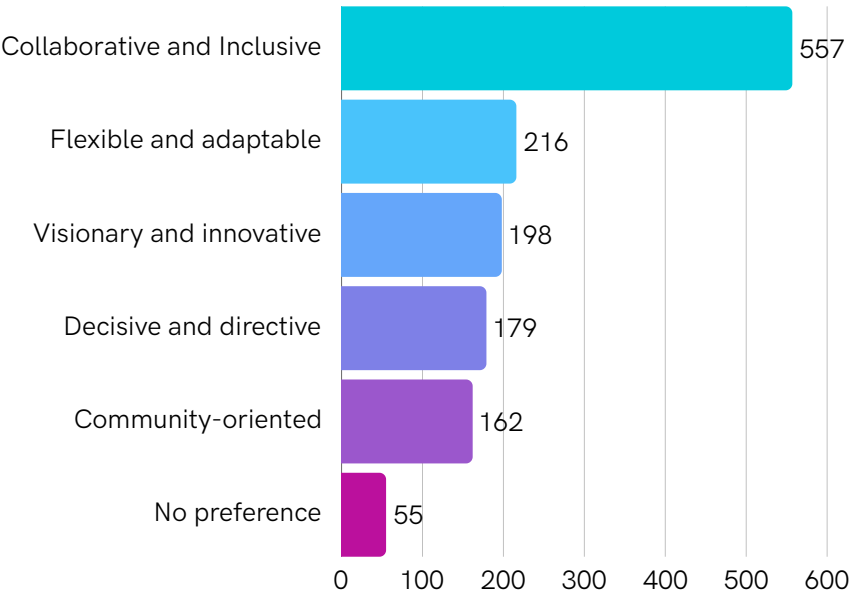
12.9% "Extremely Important" and 62.1% "Important" that the next Superintendent have experience in facility management.

Doctorate Degree

67.3%

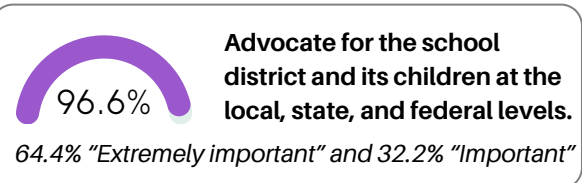
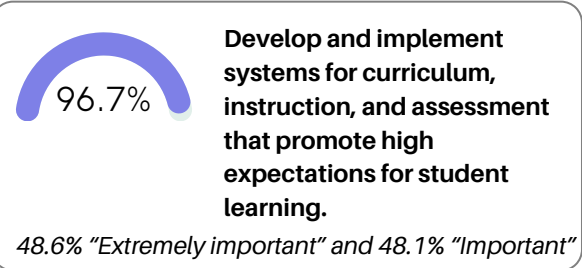
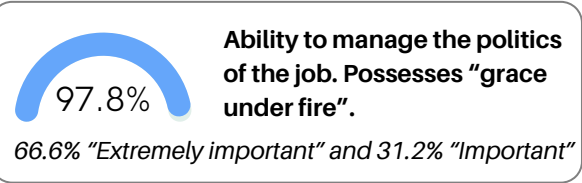
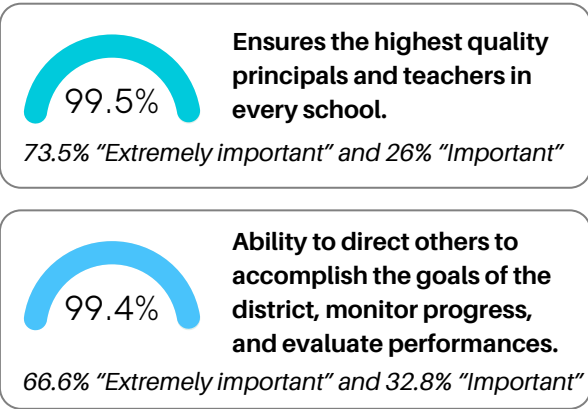
18.9% "Extremely Important" and 48.4% "Important" that the next Superintendent have a doctorate degree.

Participants expressed a strong preference for a collaborative and inclusive leadership approach. This reflects a clear desire for a leader who values community input, fosters a culture of teamwork, and actively engages with diverse voices in the decision-making process. Flexibility and adaptability and a visionary leader with an innovative mindset were the next most highly regarded leadership approaches, signaling the importance of a leader who can navigate evolving challenges with creativity and remain responsive to emerging needs.



Survey Results: Important Leadership Skills for Next Superintendent

Participants’ responses reflect a clear consensus on the critical leadership qualities desired in the next Superintendent. With nearly unanimous support, respondents prioritize a leader who ensures excellence at every level and who excels at the ability to direct others, monitor progress, and evaluate performance to achieve district goals.



Survey responses also showed a strong preference for leaders who are able to navigate challenges with composure and skill, as 97.8% identify "grace under fire" as essential for managing the politics of the role. A strategic vision for education is also vital, with 96.7% supporting a leader who can develop and implement systems that promote high expectations for student learning.

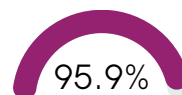
Advocacy at all levels is key, with 96.6% calling for a champion for the district and its students in local, state, and federal arenas.

Visionary leadership was also valued by respondents, with 95.9% seeking a creative and innovative Superintendent to lead the district into the future.

A Superintendent who can lead with fairness, understanding, and excellent interpersonal and emotional intelligence was also highly supported by survey respondents. 95.9% agreed that it is important for the next Superintendent to be able to treat students fairly, respectfully, and with an understanding of students' cultures. Additionally, 94.3% valued interpersonal communication skills, with social-emotional insight and an understanding of all students' and staff members' diverse backgrounds and cultures.

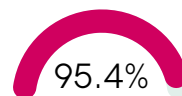
Strategic planning, parent/guardian involvement, and a leader willing to take risks, ranked lower overall compared to other qualities, but are still seen as important. Respondents emphasize the need for a leader capable of implementing and overseeing an effective strategic planning process (93.6%) and named the ability to foster active parent and guardian involvement as important (93.1%). Lastly, 91.2% agree that a willingness to take calculated risks is a necessary quality for the next Superintendent.

These results paint a clear picture of the community's expectations for the next Superintendent: a leader who combines vision, advocacy, and innovation with a steadfast commitment to fairness and understanding, collaboration, and excellence. There is a strong consensus for these qualities, as well as a desire for a Superintendent who engages meaningfully with the community and ensures that the district remain focused on empowering students, supporting staff, and fostering a thriving educational environment.



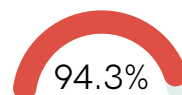
Visionary, creative, and innovative leader.

44% "Extremely important" and 51.9% "Important"



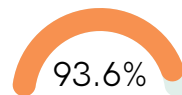
Ensures each student is treated fairly, respectfully, and with an understanding of each students' culture.

66.3% "Extremely important" and 29.1% "Important"



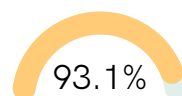
Leads with interpersonal communication skills, social-emotional insight, and understanding of all students' and staff members' diverse backgrounds and cultures.

66.1% "Extremely important" and 28.2% "Important"



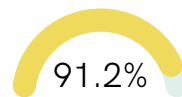
Implement and oversee an effective strategic planning process to ensure a focus on what matters most to community members.

35.7% "Extremely important" and 57.9% "Important"



Facilitate processes and programs to encourage active parent/guardian involvement.

30% "Extremely important" and 63.1% "Important"



Not afraid to take risks.

26.8% "Extremely important" and 64.4% "Important"

Survey respondents shared a range of traditions, programs, and characteristics they believe are integral to the identity of The School District of Haverford Township and should remain under the new Superintendent's leadership. This question was designed to identify the elements of the district that community members feel define its culture and success, providing guidance on what should be preserved and valued during future transitions and changes.

Community (239 mentions)

Respondents value a sense of community in the district and believe the district should be community-oriented. Many referred to the importance of strong connections among students, staff, families, and the wider community.

Academic Excellence (165 mentions)

Respondents place significant importance on academic rigor and offerings like AP, Honors, and other academic-focused programs. Concerns about maintaining high academic standards also emerged. There is pride around the district's statewide ranking.

Extracurricular Programs (137 mentions)

Many responses highlighted the value of extracurricular programs, such as sports, arts, music, and STEM. These are seen as essential to the district's identity and student development.

Traditions (84 mentions)

Respondents value traditions that foster community spirit, including events like the Turkey Day Game, Potter Cup, spirit dates, traditions around grade-level milestones, and music and arts performances. These traditions are seen as integral to building a sense of belonging.



Overarching Considerations

Balancing preservation and progress:

Respondents seek for key strengths and cherished traditions to be preserved, while also innovating and adapting to challenges.

Fostering Transparency and Engagement:

Feedback indicates a desire to ensure members of the community are engaged and included in decision-making.

Survey respondents also shared strategies and priorities to help the district navigate future challenges and embrace opportunities in a rapidly changing educational environment.

Focus on Academic Excellence (684 mentions)

Many respondents emphasize prioritizing academic fundamentals such as math, English, and science and express concerns over the amount of time and effort spent on non-traditional academic matters.

Improving Teacher and Staff Support (281 mentions)

There are concerns about teacher retention. Responses emphasize a supportive environment for educators to ensure high-quality teaching and long-term commitment to the district.

Fostering Community Engagement (107 mentions)

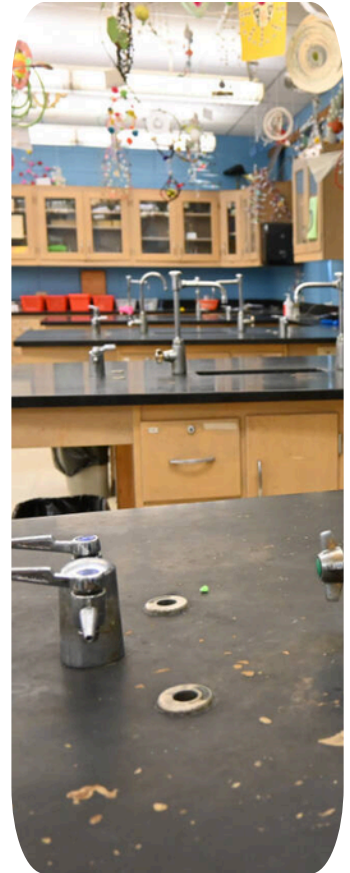
Respondents stress the importance of involving the community through transparency and consistent communication.

Technology & Digital Literacy (102 mentions)

Respondents highlight the importance of managing technology use (e.g., cell phones) while also integrating digital and medial literacy to prepare students for a tech-driven world.

Improving Resources and Facilities (84 mentions)

There is concern about outdated infrastructure based both on numbers of students enrolled and a desire for modernized science labs, classrooms, and learning spaces.



Survey Results: Other Feedback



Community Engagement by Leadership (145 mentions)

Many expressed appreciation for current communication, transparency, and community involvement, hoping for similar qualities in the new leader.

Concerns about Education and Curriculum (70 mentions)

There are some perceptions about declining academics in the district and a desire to ensure the district continues to support high academic standards.

Diversity and Equity Concerns (24 mentions)

Some respondents criticized their perception of equity and diversity efforts, linking them to concerns about qualifications and leadership priorities.

Belonging and Connection (17 mentions)

Comments call for enhanced efforts to foster belonging within the district.

Technology Use Post-Pandemic (13 mentions)

Feedback on the need to reassess technology adopted during the pandemic and its impact on student outcomes.

Bullying and Student Safety (11 mentions)

Comments raise issues related to bullying, student safety, and inclusive environments.

Focus Group Process

Focus groups were conducted across a diverse cross section of community members, including the Board of Directors, administrators, parents, guardians, professional and support staff, and students to gather critical insights for The School District of Haverford Township Superintendent search. A total of 125 community members participated in these sessions, which aimed to capture a comprehensive understanding of community needs and expectations. The same five questions were posed to all participants:

1. What is important for a new Superintendent to know and understand about The School District of Haverford Township and community to be successful as the next Superintendent?
2. What do you see as the greatest challenges the district faces over the next three years?
3. What are the skills, qualities, or characteristics that the new Superintendent should possess to be successful at The School District of Haverford Township?
4. What do you see as the first step that a new Superintendent needs to take to lead the school district?
5. What additional information would you like to communicate to the next Superintendent to best prepare him/her for this critical role?



From the perspectives collected, a series of themes were developed to summarize the collective insights and priorities of community members. These themes encapsulate the values, expectations, and challenges identified, offering a framework for understanding the qualities and vision required for the next Superintendent to lead the district effectively.

Themes

Community Pride and Support for Educational Excellence

The School District of Haverford Township community exhibits a deep-seated pride in its schools, marked by generational trust and a strong commitment to quality education. Both adults and students expressed pride in the district, valuing its tradition of academic excellence and close-knit, small-town atmosphere. Students stressed maintaining the district's high educational standards while also fostering a positive community atmosphere and the abundance of school spirit traditions and extracurricular activities that contribute to district pride.

Transparent and Proactive Communication

The Superintendent must prioritize transparency and timely communication to maintain trust and engagement with the community. Stakeholders emphasize the need for accurate, proactive updates, particularly during times of change. This approach is crucial in managing public narratives and fostering confidence in district leadership.



Visibility and Connection

Adults and students stressed the need for a Superintendent to be visible, accessible, and actively engaged in the schools and community. Students, in particular, emphasized the need for the Superintendent to be not only present, but involved in schools and to connect authentically with students of all ages. Both middle school and high school students felt strongly that connecting and getting to know students, staff, and the community would be critically important for the next Superintendent before making any major changes.

Commitment to Equity and Belonging

Equity and inclusivity are paramount as the district becomes increasingly diverse. The Superintendent must respect long-standing traditions while embracing diverse cultural perspectives. Adults prioritized fostering equity and inclusivity by addressing systemic disparities and ensuring diverse representation. Adults also emphasized instructional equity, including addressing the needs of students with IEPs and 504s. Students echoed sentiments around belonging, specifically calling out challenges relating to identity-based bullying and the need for meaningful inclusivity beyond surface-level gestures. Middle school students noted that inclusivity should be actively enforced to prevent micro-aggressions and teasing, while high school students advocated for greater cultural inclusivity represented in their curriculum.

Themes



Navigating Political and Funding Uncertainties

Post election, facing the potential of challenges from uncertain funding and shifting political dynamics at the federal and state levels was a concern of some participants. Adult focus group participants emphasized the need for a Superintendent with strong political acumen to address potential changes in funding, Title IX protections, and curriculum policies. This leader must guide the district through regulatory shifts, protect its inclusive values, and ensure stability amidst cultural and political pressures, all while fostering transparency and collaboration.

Inclusivity in Special Education

A Superintendent must support inclusive practices, particularly for students with special needs. This includes a keen understanding of IEPs, 504 plans, and the increasing demand for tailored support systems. Ensuring that in-district resources are robust and fully utilized before exploring external placements is key. Advocacy for adequate funding and resources further underscores the district's commitment to special education.

Effective Leadership Qualities

Participants stressed that leadership must reflect a balance of strategic vision and active collaboration with the School Board and the community. Both adults and students feel transparency in decision-making and communication is critical to building trust and aligning with the district's collaborative culture. Adults valued professionalism, approachability, and the ability to foster collaboration. They also expect a leader who prioritizes professional growth for staff and administrators, and who is able to scaffold support where needed to enhance performance across the board. Students emphasized the importance of humility, an open mind, and great interpersonal skills to build connection. Students also felt it was important for the next Superintendent to be able to relate to students easily.

Collaborative Workforce

The district values its workforce and seeks leadership that can foster a collaborative and supportive environment. Thoughtful leadership that prioritizes both staff well-being and student outcomes is important. Enhancing morale through collaborative approaches and recognition of staff efforts is essential.



Themes

Student-Centered Decision-Making

While adults discussed collaborative approaches to leadership, students called for more involvement in decision-making. They highlighted the importance of listening to student voices and providing opportunities to influence school policies and initiatives.

Enhancing Opportunities and Programs

Adults mentioned the importance of equitable access to resources and programs. Community members, including high school students, added that clubs and activities are points of pride and need to be more visible and accessible, and they emphasized the importance of promoting less traditional programs along side sports. They also expressed a desire for curricular expansion, such as more diverse history lessons or substance abuse awareness programs.

Strategic Vision for Diversity and Inclusion

Stakeholders highlight the importance of diversity in staffing and student engagement. Research supporting the positive impact of diverse role models on student outcomes was specifically noted, particularly for students of color. A strategic vision that integrates diversity goals with educational excellence is communicated as important for the district.

Initial Steps and Community Integration

The first steps for a new Superintendent include engaging directly with stakeholders, touring the district, and continuing community meetings. Building authentic connections with staff, students, and families is viewed as foundational to success. Transparency and collaboration are critical for establishing trust early in the tenure.



Unique Student Perspectives

In addition to aligning with many themes from the focus groups for adult community members, students highlighted several unique priorities that reflect their direct experiences with the district. These themes emphasize the importance of mental health and wellness, safety and discipline, and engaging, relevant learning experiences. By addressing these concerns, The School District of Haverford Township creates a supportive environment that supports the needs of all learners.

Mental Health and Wellness: Students placed strong emphasis on mental health, advocating for maintaining wellness days and expanding initiatives that support student well-being.

Safety and Discipline: Students expressed concerns about bullying, emotional safety in schools, and the need for policies that effectively address these issues.

Engaging Learning Experiences: Students noted the importance of making learning engaging and relevant. Middle school students suggested offering more diverse reading choices, while high school students wanted new programs or class options to prepare them for life beyond school.

Focus Groups: Conclusion

The feedback gathered from the focus groups provides a comprehensive picture of the qualities, priorities, and challenges that the next Superintendent must address to effectively lead the district. Across all community groups, there is a shared desire for a leader who values transparency, inclusivity, and meaningful engagement with the community. The insights from both adults and students underscore the need for a Superintendent who is not only visionary but also approachable, proactive, and responsive to the diverse needs of the district. By prioritizing these themes and fostering authentic connections, the next Superintendent can build trust, strengthen community pride, and ensure a brighter future for all students and staff.

Conclusion

This report captures the collective voice of The School District of Haverford Township community, highlighting the shared values, aspirations, and concerns that will guide the selection of the next Superintendent. Through extensive input from parents, students, staff, and other community members, clear priorities have emerged: preserving the district's tradition of academic excellence, fostering an inclusive and supportive environment, and addressing challenges with visionary and collaborative leadership.

Survey and focus group responses revealed strong agreement on key strengths and opportunities for growth. The district's academic performance, dedicated teaching staff, and supportive community were consistently identified as pillars of success. At the same time, the community expressed a desire for leadership that addresses challenges such as hiring and retaining quality staff, supporting student well-being, and preparing students for an increasingly complex and rapidly changing world. Transparency, proactive communication, and a commitment to equity and inclusion also emerged as critical leadership attributes, alongside the ability to foster belonging, innovation, and engagement with diverse perspectives.

The next Superintendent will inherit a district defined by its strong community bonds, commitment to student success, and willingness to innovate. As the search process progresses, these collective insights provide a guide for identifying a leader who will build upon the district's traditions while embracing innovation to meet the evolving needs of its students, staff, and community.

