



## USD 497 News Release

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### School Board Reviews Community Input as Part of Superintendent Search

At a specially called school board meeting Monday, the board received a summary of community input as part of its search for a long-term superintendent. The board hired the Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB) to facilitate the search. KASB met last week with more than 130 staff, parents, and community members in focus groups and conducted a community survey completed by about 550 individuals.

Questions asked in the focus groups and survey included:

- Describe the most important leadership and personal qualities you would like to see in the superintendent.
- Describe the strengths and the good points of your school district the superintendent will need to understand and support.
- Describe the most critical needs of your school district the superintendent will need to understand and support.
- What single characteristic or quality will separate the best candidate from the other highly qualified candidates who will apply for the superintendent position?

KASB's summary of the input collected included these ideal candidate characteristics:

- Effective Communicator and Transparent Leader
- Equity and Student-Focused
- Experienced and Visionary Leader
- Empathetic and Relationship Builder
- Team Builder and Collaborator
- Commitment to Continuous Improvement and Equity

KASB asked the board for additional suggestions and will use the final criteria to share with applicants and to recommend finalist candidates to the board; however, the board will have access to all applications.

Board members provided feedback about adding to or refining the list to include the following:

- Conduct an Additional Focus Group:
  - Provide an opportunity for Native American students, staff, parents, and community members, including the Indigenous Curriculum Committee and Native American Student Services, to provide input.
- Leadership/Personal Qualities:
  - Accountability in meeting the outcomes of the strategic plan.
  - Humble acceptance of good and bad feedback.
  - Action-minded and instructionally focused.
  - Ability to improve communication with the community.

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- Strengths:
  - Progressive policies, such as equity, student dress code, cell phone-free classrooms, etc.
- Critical Needs:
  - Strengthening our district’s relationship with Haskell Indians Nations University.
  - Addressing safety concerns in the community that affect our schools, such as gun violence.

KASB also provided the board these themes from the input shared in the community survey:

- Teacher and Staff Support and Retention
- Budget Management and Financial Stability
- Class Sizes and Overcrowding
- Community Engagement and Trust Building
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Student-Focused Initiatives
- Transparency and Accountability
- Administrative Efficiency and Restructuring
- Curriculum Development and Standards
- Safety and Discipline

Board President Kelly Jones said that feedback and analysis from Interim Superintendent Dr. Jeanice Swift’s fall community engagement and survey will be layered into the input KASB collected.

KASB plans to recommend finalist candidates to the board during an executive session on February 12. The board will ultimately determine which candidates to interview. Finalist interviews are scheduled February 17-21. The board’s goal is to announce a long-term superintendent in March.

Jones invited board members to continue to reflect and share additional suggestions with KASB.

“I am hopeful we can build consensus around a candidate again,” said Jones, who also thanked all the members of the community who participated in the KASB focus groups and survey.

The board plans to name a superintendent in March. It has invited Dr. Swift to apply for the position.

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