

# Garfield School District RE-2 Superintendent Search Survey

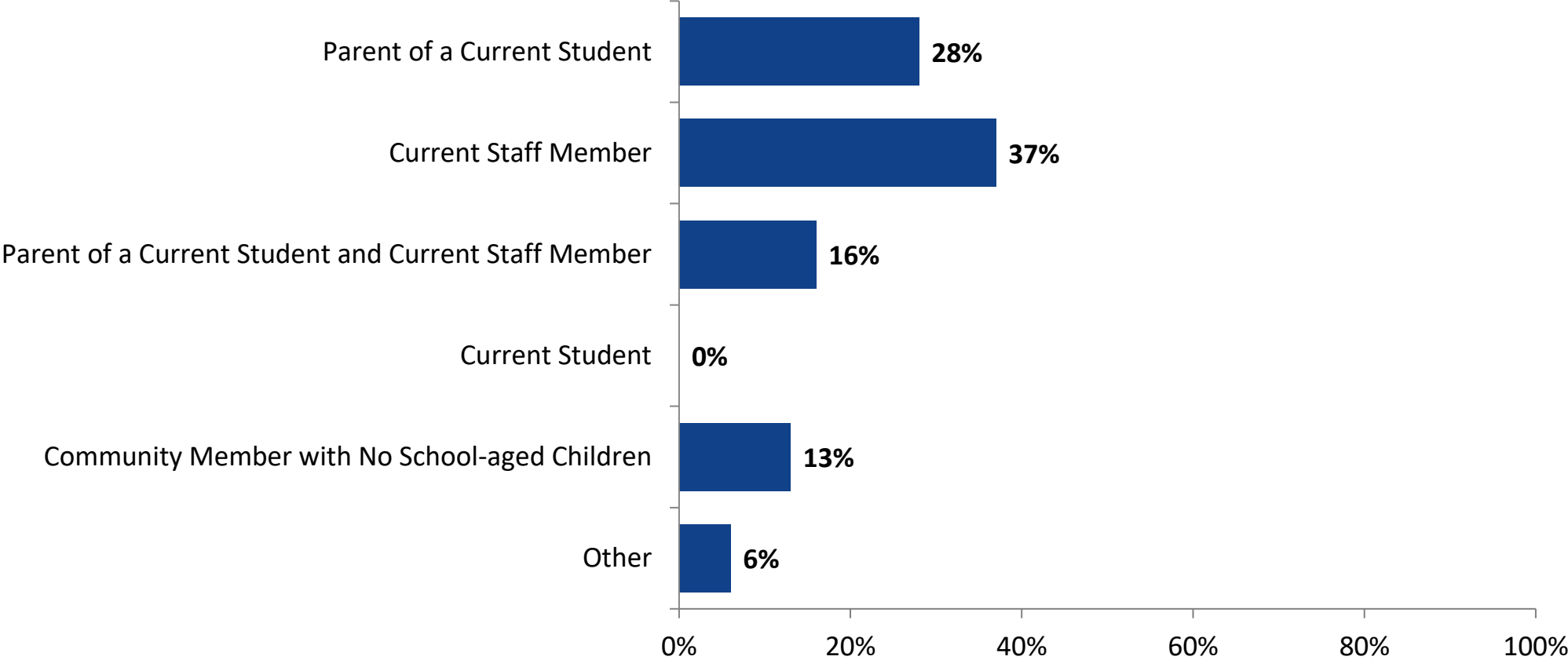
Results and Analysis

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# Relationship to District

Which of the following best describes your relationship to Garfield School District ? (N=134)





# Good Points About the Community



## Good Points About the Community

Please tell us great things about your community and the Garfield School District that potential candidates for superintendent should know.

- **Educational Excellence and Student Success:** Participating parent/guardians value the strong academics at the district and its impact on student success. Participants highlighted the high academic standards, emphasizing core subjects such as literacy, math, science, and history.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Parents/Guardians expressed pride in the diversity of their district. Comments mentioned how the community includes people from various racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Participants highlight the community's desire to advocate for respect and inclusion of all members of the community.
- **Sense of Community:** Respondents expressed strong feelings of belonging and support within their community. Parents/Guardians described the community as “tight-knit,” “small town values,” “great place to grow up,” and “neighbors helping neighbors.” This highlights the cohesion and mutual care that exist among residents. Parents/Guardians also noted the strong participation from parents in children’s education.
- **Small-Town Atmosphere with Growing Population:** Participants view Garfield as a tight-knit, rural, small-town community where people care about each other and take pride in their schools. The growing population is seen as a positive development, bringing new opportunities and diversity to the area. However, there is also a desire to balance this growth while preserving the community’s traditional, small-town values and connectedness.
- **Strategic Plan** Participating parents/guardians expressed satisfaction with the district's ongoing strategic plan and recommended that the new superintendent continue working toward its goals.
- **Values and Ideology:** Community values were mentioned as a central focus, with mixed opinions expressed about educational and societal values. Participants noted the diversity in ideology among community members and that the district must remain neutral and inclusive and avoid extreme changes, particularly in curriculum and political influence. This ideological diversity suggests the need for a superintendent who can balance diverse viewpoints and maintain community harmony.

## Good Points About the Community

Please tell us great things about your community and the Garfield School District that potential candidates for superintendent should know.

- **Community Diversity:** Participating staff noted that the district is characterized and strengthened by diversity, both in terms of demographics and geography. Each community within the district has its own unique identity, and this diversity is embraced as an asset. Diversity in demographics is seen through both long-time residents and newer immigrant families.
- **Dedicated and Passionate Staff:** Staff praised the dedication of the district's teachers and staff, who are committed to the students' success and constantly strive to improve educational opportunities. Leadership at various levels, especially within individual schools, is recognized as a strength, highlighting academic, sports, music, and drama efforts.
- **Positive Geographic and Recreational Opportunities:** Participants highlighted the natural beauty of the area, including access to outdoor activities such as fishing, hunting, and rock climbing. The location is considered ideal, with proximity to Colorado's major attractions but without the overwhelming tourist traffic. Community members value the quality of life the region offers, emphasizing the blend of small-town atmosphere and access to outdoor recreation.
- **Strong Sense of Community:** Participating staff described the district as having a tight-knit, supportive, and diverse community. There is a strong sense of unity and collaboration among staff, parents, and community members. Despite differences, the community comes together to support one another, especially in times of need.
- **Strategic Planning and Leadership:** The outgoing superintendent is praised for servant-hearted leadership, fostering positive community relationships, and supporting staff and students. The desire for similar qualities in the new superintendent is expressed. Participants highlighted the strategic plan put in place and the desire for the new superintendent to continue working toward its goals.
- **Student-centeredness:** Participants highlighted the district's efforts toward student-centered goals and plans, which are vital to continuing progress. There is a strong focus on meeting the diverse needs of students to ensure they have the opportunities to thrive academically and socially, particularly those facing difficult life circumstances.

## Good Points About the Community

Please tell us great things about your community and the Garfield School District that potential candidates for superintendent should know.

- **Community Passion and Dedication:** The community takes immense pride in being actively involved in the lives of students and schools. They care deeply about their children and work to create a supportive environment. There is a high level of engagement in education through attending school events, fundraisers, and school board meetings. The community places a high value on being connected and working together for the benefit of the children.
- **Dedication to Education and Student Well-being:** There is a strong focus on maintaining high educational standards for all students. The community values a well-rounded education and encourages student input in their learning and extracurricular activities. Teachers are trusted and respected, with the expectation that they will be empowered to do their jobs effectively. Respondents emphasized the need for supporting not just students' academic success but also their emotional and social well-being. This holistic approach to student development is a priority for the community.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** The community acknowledged its evolving demographic diversity, including a high population of families where English is not the primary language. They see this diversity as enriching the shared experiences of the community. There is a clear desire for inclusivity, ensuring that every student, regardless of their background, receives the support they need to succeed. The community wants the school system to embrace diversity in race, culture, gender, and affiliations.
- **Rural Identity and Connection to Nature:** The community takes pride in its rural, agricultural roots. Respondents valued preserving the community's unique, rural way of life. They expressed concern over maintaining their small-town values and identity, especially in a rapidly changing demographic and social landscape.
- **Teacher and Administrative Support:** The staff, including teachers and administrators, were described as enthusiastic, dedicated, and putting in considerable effort to make the school district successful. Their work is valued and appreciated by the community.



# Characteristics, Attributes, Skills



# Characteristics, Attributes, Skills

**What qualities, skills, and characteristics do you feel the next superintendent needs to have in order to be successful?**

- **Commitment to Inclusivity and Cultural Awareness:** Participating parents highlighted the importance of cultural literacy, respect for diversity, and bilingual capabilities, particularly in districts with diverse student populations. They stressed the need for a superintendent who can build bridges between different cultural and ideological groups within the community.
- **Community Engagement and Connection:** The ideal superintendent will actively engage with the community and work to build strong relationships. This involves understanding local culture, investing time in the area, and having a long-term commitment to the district's success.
- **Experienced Leader:** Respondents want someone with strong leadership skills, relevant educational experience, and a proven track record of success in public schools. The next superintendent should be visionary, strategic, and capable of navigating internal and external challenges.
- **Independence from Political Agendas:** Respondents noted that the superintendent should not allow politics to interfere with their decisions or pursue personal or partisan agendas. The focus should be solely on the well-being of the students and the community, with integrity and transparency as core values.
- **Listening and Communication:** Respondents emphasized the need for the next superintendent to be an exceptional communicator. They should be open to feedback, able to hear the community's concerns and provide clear, honest communication. This includes engaging with diverse perspectives and making public input opportunities accessible.
- **Student-Centered Leadership:** Participants expressed the importance of putting students' needs first, ensuring their success and safety, and providing a well-rounded education that goes beyond standardized test scores.
- **Support for Teachers and Staff:** Respondents noted the importance of teacher/staff retention, emphasizing the need for a superintendent who values, supports, and empowers school employees.
- **Technological Adaptability:** Given the ongoing technological transformation in education, the next superintendent needs to be adaptable to the rapid changes technology brings. Participants want leadership that can handle modern challenges like cyberbullying and AI.



# Characteristics, Attributes, Skills

**What qualities, skills, and characteristics do you feel the next superintendent needs to have in order to be successful?**

- **Bilingual Skills and Cultural Awareness:** Stakeholders highlighted the need for a superintendent who is bilingual (preferably in English and Spanish) and understands the specific cultural and socioeconomic challenges faced by families in the area.
- **Commitment to Community and Longevity:** Respondents stressed the importance of choosing a leader who understands the district and is willing to stay long-term. A superintendent who has deep ties to the area or a commitment to invest in the community over time would be highly valued.
- **Experience in Teaching and Administration:** Respondents desire a superintendent with experience in teaching and administrative roles, someone who understands the intricacies of school operations from multiple perspectives, with experience working in secondary and elementary settings.
- **Fiscal Responsibility:** Respondents noted that the superintendent should be financially responsible, with a clear understanding of district finances and budgeting processes.
- **Leadership and Decision-Making:** Stakeholders are looking for a decisive leader who can balance long-term vision with the unique challenges of different schools in the district. The ability to handle difficult decisions while remaining unbiased and politically neutral is crucial.
- **Non-Polarizing and Politically Neutral Leadership:** Respondents highlighted the need for a superintendent who is not driven by a political agenda but focuses on student welfare and educational outcomes. They need to navigate the district's varied political landscape, balancing diverse viewpoints without alienating any particular group.
- **Transparent Communication:** Transparency and clear, consistent communication are critical traits desired in a superintendent. Respondents want a leader who communicates openly with both staff and the public, ensuring that everyone feels informed and included in district decisions.
- **Trust and Relationship Building:** Building trust through strong relationships with students, parents, staff, and the broader community was mentioned as a key factor in the superintendent's success. The ability to connect with individuals on a personal level while maintaining professionalism is highly valued.

## Characteristics, Attributes, Skills

What qualities, skills, and characteristics do you feel the next superintendent needs to have in order to be successful?

- **Community Engagement:** Active involvement and listening to all stakeholders, including a commitment to equity and inclusion. The superintendent is expected to be visible and actively engaged within the community. Respondents expressed a desire for a leader who listens to and respects the voices of students, teachers, parents, and community members alike. There is also a clear call for the superintendent to engage with the Latino population and foster strong community relationships.
- **Desire for Experienced Leadership:** The community seeks a superintendent with strong ties to the area and a deep understanding of the needs of the district's staff and students. They want someone who has already been involved in the community and can align with the values established by previous leadership. The new superintendent should embrace the district's strategic plan, understand the local community's diverse needs, and foster collaboration among staff, families, and the broader community.
- **Empathy Toward Teachers and Marginalized Students:** Participants repeatedly emphasized the need for a leader who is empathetic toward teachers' and students' needs, including marginalized communities. The ideal candidate must demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity and understand the importance of student recognition and validation.
- **Expertise in Community Needs:** Participating community members desire a superintendent who understands and honors the needs of its diverse community. They noted a superintendent must be fluent in both Spanish and English to effectively communicate with a diverse school community. Cultural competency, especially understanding the unique cultural backgrounds of the students, families, and staff, is critical. However, they must also understand and respect the rural lifestyle of the community. The ability to bridge cultural gaps is seen as a key trait.
- **Strong, Independent Leadership:** A leader who can balance tradition with innovation and stand up to political pressures or external influences. Respondents want a strong leader who is not influenced by external political pressures or vocal minorities.
- **Transparency and Integrity:** Honest, open communication and decision-making based on facts and best practices, not politics.



# Significant Opportunities



# Significant Opportunities

## What do you see as significant opportunities for improvement for the next superintendent of the Garfield School District?

- **Community Engagement and Political Neutrality:** There was a strong call for the superintendent to avoid political agendas and focus on uniting the community, including addressing the needs of vulnerable student populations, such as homeless, immigrant, and LGBTQ+ students.
- **Curriculum and Educational Focus:** Participants want to refocus on fundamental subjects such as math, reading, literacy, history, and science. Additionally, respondents expressed the need for education that prepares students for real-world challenges, suggesting courses in budgeting, basic life skills, and vocational education pathways.
- **Diverse Learning Opportunities:** Respondents stressed that a "one-size-fits-all" curriculum is not effective and that the district should provide more personalized learning opportunities to cater to different student needs and learning styles.
- **Facilities and Infrastructure:** Improving playground equipment and outdoor spaces was mentioned as a pressing issue.
- **Student Safety and Discipline:** With rising concerns about school safety in light of swatting threats and other security incidents, some respondents prioritize strengthening security measures to ensure students and staff's safety. Another concern raised was the overuse of mobile devices and social media in schools.
- **Support for English Language Learners:** Respondents noted that the district needs to focus on how to best support and integrate the growing Spanish-speaking population.
- **Teacher Retention and Support:** Teacher pay and retention are critical issues. Respondents said improving teacher salaries and working conditions is necessary to retain qualified educators and attract new talent. The disparity between teacher salaries in RE-2 and neighboring districts is a particular concern. Additionally, participants feel that teachers should be provided with adequate resources for their classrooms and should not have to rely on their personal funds to meet basic needs. Teacher appreciation and recognition for their hard work is also emphasized.

# Significant Opportunities

## What do you see as significant opportunities for improvement for the next superintendent of the Garfield School District?

**Communication:** Respondents expressed frustration with a lack of communication from district leadership during critical incidents, such as school threats. There is a desire for more transparent and timely information-sharing between the district office, staff, parents, and the broader community.

**Educational Equity:** Respondents expressed concern over the disparity between wealthier and poorer schools, stating that resources and opportunities are unevenly distributed.

**English Language Development (ELD):** Participants highlighted the need for improved ELD support, with some advocating for separate immersive programs for non-English-speaking students to prevent disruption in mainstream classrooms. Better handling of language barriers between students and staff is essential for academic success.

**Funding Shortages:** Respondents recognized that many of the district's challenges stem from inadequate funding. They want the next superintendent to find new funding streams, whether through grants or state advocacy, to ensure competitive salaries, improved facilities, and overall educational quality.

**Increase Support for Special Education:** Responses suggested that special education, particularly severe needs programs, are inadequately managed. Efforts to integrate special needs students into general education classrooms have negatively impacted both groups. Respondents call for dedicated staffing, resources, and possibly separate facilities for these programs.

**School Safety:** Respondents prioritize improved school security, including better cameras, safety protocols, and dedicated personnel to oversee these measures. Given recent incidents and safety concerns, they see security as a critical issue that needs immediate attention.

**Teacher Pay, Retention, and Work Conditions:** Participants highlighted the need to increase teacher and staff pay to match inflation and competitive rates offered by nearby districts. There was a strong emphasis on the fact that current wages are insufficient, leading to difficulty retaining staff and teachers, many of whom cannot afford to live in the area due to the high cost of living. There was a perceived shortage of substitutes and paraprofessionals.

# Significant Opportunities

## What do you see as significant opportunities for improvement for the next superintendent of the Garfield School District ?

- **Building Trust and Collaboration:** There was a call for the superintendent to focus on building trust and fostering collaboration between the district, families, local businesses, and other community institutions. Ensuring that every decision is centered on students' well-being and success is key to the district's future.
- **Educational Supports:** The need to address special education gaps and ensure that the district has a clear language access plan for its large Latino population was highlighted. The district's need for a plan is seen as a critical issue, which may lead to the exclusion of families from full participation in school activities and programs. Participants highlighted the importance of recognizing Spanish-speaking students by offering assessments in their native language and expanding bilingual programs.
- **Fiscal Responsibility:** Respondents expressed concern about overspending and the need for more efficient use of resources. There is a desire for the district to allocate resources more effectively and ensure that spending is aligned with student needs.
- **Safe and Supportive Environment:** The next superintendent is expected to prioritize ensuring a safe and inclusive school environment for all students, where they feel supported emotionally and socially, including focusing on bullying occurring on and off campus. The prevalence of bullying, especially through smartphones, is seen as a pervasive issue that impacts student well-being.
- **Staffing and Workload:** There was a strong sentiment that teachers and staff are overburdened with too many responsibilities and insufficient support. The importance of staffing schools adequately—especially with qualified specialists for diverse learners—was emphasized to ensure that all students, including special education, gifted, and multilingual learners, receive equitable instruction and support.
- **Teacher Pay and Retention:** A recurring concern was the low and uncompetitive pay for teachers and staff, leading to difficulty in retaining quality educators. Respondents expressed the need for increased teacher salaries to compete with surrounding districts and prevent the loss of talent.



# Significant Challenges



# Significant Challenges

## What do you believe will be the most significant challenges the next superintendent will have to confront?

- **Community Division:** Parent/Guardian feedback points to the challenge of managing and creating unity despite growing ideological and demographic divides within the community.
- **Funding and Resource Allocation:** Underfunding of the district is a recurring theme, with concerns over inadequate resources to pay teachers, support students, and maintain facilities. The new superintendent will likely have to navigate challenges in budgeting and securing additional funding.
- **Student Diversity and Inclusion:** Respondent feedback touches on challenges related to student diversity. Some express concern that marginalized students may be negatively impacted by school policies. Others stress the importance of ensuring that all students, regardless of background, feel welcome and safe in school.
- **Student Well-being and Mental Health:** Many highlight the challenges related to students' mental and physical health. Issues like social media, bullying, drug use, burnout, staying in school, and housing are mentioned. There is a call for more physical education, better access to nutritious meals, and overall attention to students' holistic well-being and student belonging.
- **Teacher Retention and Compensation:** Respondents emphasize the difficulties in retaining and attracting quality teachers due to low pay, high housing costs, and the overall cost of living. Staff retention is a major concern, with specific references to teachers leaving for better-paying districts or states. Compensation is seen as a critical factor in maintaining instructional quality.
- **Technology and Modernization:** Issues related to technology, such as the use of AI by students and teachers and cellphone use were mentioned. Managing the appropriate integration of technology in education is an anticipated challenge for the superintendent.



# Significant Challenges

What do you believe will be the most significant challenges the next superintendent will have to confront?

- **Board Relations and Governance Challenges:** Participating staff members expressed concerns about the school board, citing strong opinions and political divisions that could make it difficult for the new superintendent to navigate decision-making processes. Building trust with the board and finding ways to balance competing perspectives will be crucial.
- **Budget and Funding Issues:** Participants noted budgetary constraints, with concerns about the financial limitations of the district and the need to address salary disparities. Respondents highlighted the challenge of offering competitive wages to staff while ensuring financial stability. There are calls for the superintendent to lead efforts to secure additional funding, such as through mill levy or bond initiatives, to support staff wages and other district needs.
- **Community Engagement and Trust:** Respondents emphasized the need for open communication, transparency, and collaboration. Fostering unity within a politically divided community will be a significant challenge.
- **Educational Priorities and Consistency Across Schools:** Respondents highlighted the need for consistency in educational practices across the district. Ensuring that schools align on curriculum, policies, and educational goals will be important.
- **Leadership Transition and Gradual Change:** Respondents note that the next superintendent will face difficulties in following a long-serving leader and will need to approach change cautiously. Many emphasize the importance of a gradual transition to ensure continuity and maintain respect for both teachers and students. There is concern that attempting to change too much too quickly could lead to pushback, particularly from staff and community members accustomed to the current system.
- **Political and Social Divides:** Respondents noted significant political and social divisions within the community. The superintendent will need to balance these tensions while focusing on education. Respondents expressed concern that political agendas could detract from student needs, and the superintendent will need to manage these pressures while fostering inclusivity and resisting outside interference.
- **Teacher Shortages and Staff Retention:** Respondents highlighted staffing challenges, including teacher shortages and employee retention. The feedback underscores concerns about low salaries, the high cost of living, and limited affordable housing, all of which contribute to difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified teachers. Succession planning is highlighted as important, given the upcoming wave of retirements among long-term staff.

## Significant Challenges

**What do you believe will be the most significant challenges the next superintendent will have to confront?**

- **Community Division and Distrust:** Participants noted the division within the community, fueled by political tensions and differing ideologies. This division has led to a breakdown in trust between the school board, families, and staff. The next superintendent will need to work toward rebuilding trust and bridging the divide to create a more unified community.
- **Inclusivity and Addressing Inequities:** Respondents highlighted the next superintendent will need to prioritize inclusivity, and creating an environment where all students feel represented and supported.
- **Overcoming External Pressures and Agendas:** Respondents expressed frustration with outside influences, including book bans, curriculum battles, and individuals seeking to push controversial agendas into the district. Participants urge that the superintendent will need to navigate these pressures while keeping the focus on education and student success. By engaging the community in meaningful dialogue and resisting divisive agendas, the superintendent can help refocus attention on the district's core goals
- **Safety Concerns and School Environment:** There is a growing concern about safety in schools, with references to fights and behavioral issues among students. Participants noted that the superintendent will need to address these safety concerns head-on, promoting transparency and parental involvement to ensure that the school environment is conducive to learning and safety for all students.
- **School Funding and Resource Allocation:** The issue of school funding is raised as a significant challenge, with concerns about state and federal funding cuts. Respondents highlight the need to allocate resources effectively. The superintendent will need to manage these challenges carefully to ensure that the district remains financially stable while continuing to provide quality education
- **Teacher Retention and Support:** Teacher retention was identified as a critical challenge, with respondents emphasizing the need to attract and retain high-quality educators. Respondents also stressed the importance of fostering a positive and respectful work environment where educators feel valued and empowered. Retaining teachers will help ensure consistency in education and strengthen relationships within the learning community.

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