

Input Stakeholder Report for

Shepherd School

District #37

Shepherd, Montana

submitted by

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December, 2016



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Shepherd School District #37 Shepherd, Montana District Stakeholder Input

Executive Summary

On November 29th and 30th, consultant Mr. Don Hague meet with five stakeholder groups to gather input which will be used throughout the process of selecting the next Superintendent of School for Shepherd School District #37, in Shepherd, Montana. Over 90 people participated in this meeting and a summary of their comments follows. There was also some input received from the online survey which is included as well.

1. Tell us the good things about your community?

- Proximity to Billings allows for many advantages
- Bedroom community to Billings, rural but close to a large town
- Small town life, simple life is good, want to stay a small community
- Diverse students with many different backgrounds
- We have families that are committed to the school as they have kids in the system and many businesses that are committed to and supportive of the school
- Many community members attended Shepherd School themselves
- Close knit community
- Many teachers live in the area so the community gets to know them on a personal level
- Parents' expectations for their students at the school is very high with values of the school instilled in them
- A giving community
- Homes and land are more affordable
- There is a close-knit core group of people in our community
- *School is the focus or center of most community activities
- School just seems like a good fit to new staff.
- The school is not too little but not too big
- *Recreational opportunities all around – hunting, fishing, boating, hiking, National parks and close to two interstates for good travel as well as a busy airport in Billings

- Good medical community and services, economy has been very good, it is very diverse with ag included
- Small restaurants/deli immediately available in our area
- Good daycare centers
- Higher Educational opportunities including – MSU – B, Rocky and the Christian College as well as a Vocational center to MSU
- Major medical center for region is in Billings
- Strong Volunteer Fire Dept.
- Embedded law enforcement officers within the community
- Safe community, vandalism and crime rates are low
- Agricultural based, animal friendly
- Development programs are excelling
- Active student body
- Open ground for new development
- Supportive community

2. Tell us the good things about your schools?

- The school seems to be a lot further ahead than other schools around the area with PLC and curriculum. Other schools look at Shepherd to see how we are doing things
- Shepherd School is a leader in professional development
- K-12 is on one campus with one schedule which is great for parents
- Admin staff, from across all schools, are able to meet weekly and close enough that they can visit each day if needed
- The staff is fairly stable, better this past year than in the recent past
- We have a great mentoring program for new teachers
- *The students are great
- The Para's work together well, great teamwork, communicate well with each other
- The High School staff is very diverse with some members having many years of experience in this district and some being fairly new to the district
- Many of the staff live in the community and are very involved. Their students go to school here and many of them move back to the area when they start families of their own.
- Teaching staff is good and they reflect many of the same values and beliefs of the community
- Students feel welcome
- Course offerings are strong for the amount of staff employed. The weakest area is in the fine arts
- *Many of the older students are involved in a mentoring program with the students in the lower grades
- Great sports programs
- Personable
- Supportive
- Determined
- More individual relationships

- Excellent teaching staff
- Teachers challenge skills
- Wide variety of clubs
- High expectations
- AP courses
- NEU
- Life skills
- Friendly competitions
- Good special needs programs
- Supportive of each other's sport
- Teachers educate their own kids here
- Stability within the staff – especially 6-12
- Forward thinking staff
- Staff is willing to try new things and evaluate their effectiveness
- Dedicated and caring staff – worries about kids beyond the classroom
- As a staff member you know your kids and their families oftentimes
- All staff follows students' activities (elementary teachers often come watch former students play football, volleyball, basketball, etc.)
- Our kids accept new kids – possibly due to the mobility of our student population
- We have many successful kids who have graduated- chemists, pharmacists, doctors, lawyers, contractors, teachers, military personnel
- Former students are bringing their families back to raise and educate their kids in our district
- Title One School – currently working to make it school wide
- Nationally recognized students in the arts and other areas
- Career/Tech programs – we have both an Industrial tech and Agricultural Program System along with FCS and Business
- Many extracurricular activities for students – Beyond sports, there are BPA, FCCLA, FFA that all compete nationally on a yearly basis and do very well! This includes an upper level science trip to the coast of Oregon.
- Art and Music are still in the system
- AP and advanced classes provided for upper level students
- Long tenure for superintendents (4 in the past 38 years)
- School is not overcrowded; students are respectful
- School is unique, such as the Science trip to the Oregon coast every year. It is a great trip that students say they would like to do again
- Staff is willing to go above and beyond
- Bus drivers, coaches, volunteers, staff committed to the whole process. Moms and retired people come back to help volunteer or sub.

3. What skills, qualities or characteristics should the new superintendent possess to be successful here?

- Supporting staff
- Approachable
- People person
- Visible to all, and involved, in the community as well as the classroom, gets to know and be a part of the community right away, school events are the greatest avenue to meet and connect with the community.
- There are grants out there available to schools if someone could take the time to write for them. Maybe a grant writer would be needed, not really affordable for a single district but could maybe form a consortium with other schools and share the cost.
- One Phys Ed teacher wrote and received a grant for over 450,000.00 that has helped the school obtain much needed and updated equipment in the Phys Ed department.
- There is a lot of charitable giving in the community and maybe could find ways to approach them
- This is a conservative community, having a conservative leader would be beneficial
- Money is always tight in one budget or the other due to fluctuating enrollment as it flows through the schools, that is hard for the community to understand
- Has a tough job, have to run the show, (current one good on fiscal side but maybe not as approachable as would like to see), needs to get out in the community and lead.
- Homecoming parade being held during the day on a week day is a problem, it should be held on a Saturday so the community can be involved and not at work
- Everyone has to get out and sell the school and bond issue as everyone is not going to vote for it. Retired persons take more convincing since they don't generally have children in the system.
- Get to know the staff and be involved in the professional development
- Be in the classroom often, very important
- Be tough in some areas, such as negotiations, some things need to change. A new person would need to stand up for what's best for students not just what's best for staff
- Value professional development. Move forward with PLC and professional development that we have going now
- New eyes coming in may be more clear, and some experience in that area to keep moving forward would be good
- Someone that has a vision and communicates that to the admin team, support them when they are doing things right, and be available as a sounding board when they are struggling, but lets them try to do it on their own, to promote personal growth
- Make sure that they are driving toward his/her vision
- Someone that can make the tough decisions
- Good budget sense is a must to set priorities
- Communication is a big deal
- Supports staff and students
- Involved in the community and school
- Not micromanaging every aspect of the campus
- Empathy for students, staff and administration

- Background in technology
- Class B or small community experience
- Hands on – not hands off
- Understand rural and transient populations
- Montanan
- Truly likes people
- Talks with people not to or at them, everyone would like to be validated
- Classroom experience of 8 to 10 years, teaching and administration
- Understands many hats and time commitments staff members have
- Fiscally responsible so people understand where purchases can be made or not. Help community understand how the money is spent be open with the public
- Equity in purchasing of equipment – consistent/fair
- Important to maintain the infrastructure of our school
- Be proud to be from Shepherd Schools
- Good PR person – build relationships
- Good communication
- Equal support in activities
- Transparency
- Leader
- Bond experience
- Promote the School
- Trustworthy
- Help direct/lead and unify our team
- Less dictatorial
- Someone who works for the Board with the best interest of the students in mind
- Possibly continues and is knowledgeable about PLC & NEU and how they should work
- Have an open mind to current status
- Improve what is currently here and happening
- Evaluate programs and effectiveness of those programs in our setting
- Supportive of professional development for all – not just the young teachers

4. What information could you give the new superintendent in order to focus on moving forward immediately?

- The superintendent is like the mayor of the community, it is a huge responsibility
- Don't want someone that wants to try and push their wants on the school and community without finding out what works best for this area such as year round school. See what works before pushing through new changes
- Be aware of facility needs, such as bond issues
- Would maybe be a good thing to get out in front of the student body at the beginning of the year and introduce themselves as some students don't currently know who the superintendent is. Maybe having lunch at the school now and again would be a good idea.
- Social media is being used by younger superintendents

- Would like to see someone that wants to stay awhile and make this his/her school, not just biding time until retirement, who is energetic, a good communicator, and can get things done. Need to express to the community that their opinions matter.
- Establish trust with the community and staff, they will give back to you what you give to them
- Build a good rapport with the teachers and all staff
- Try to get everyone back in support as we don't currently have buy in from everyone
- The staff is closer together now than in the past but still need some work, some teachers don't want the other building staff involved with them. Work to make them become more unified not separate.
- We have a fair amount of excited tenured teachers that have been pushing back on current changes, and they think someone new will let them go back to where they can just shut their door and do what they want. Some teachers want to move forward with the changes that have been implemented.
- Help the community understand the importance of accepting students from out of the district without over populating our own school facilities. Don't want to see Shepherd pushed to a Class A school
- Keep an open mind
- Help us to become better in a reasonable fashion
- Upfront with the community
- Be prepared to clearly explain and overcome negative PR from the past
- Unify staff on various issues
- Remember what works in elementary may not be the best approach in middle school and high school
- Continued support of current programs like art, music, sports, library
- Cost of classes
- Offer opportunities for all needs in students
- Equal professional development
- Hire subs for janitors and parras
- Intercom system needs to be improved, multi building intercom would be great

Survey Monkey Results for Shepherd School District #37

December, 2016

*(NOTE—these responses have not been edited,
they are printed as entered by the stakeholders)*

15 Responses

Classified Staff

Tell us the good things about your community. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)

- It isn't overly populated and good country living.
- rural community that loves school sports
- friendly, conservative, most employees live locally
- hard working, farmers, ranchers, low income/poverty, high income

Tell us the good things about your schools. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)

- Classes are small. Good teachers.
- Small school where you know most students and staff
- our students excel academically,
- most of the teachers seem to be good and invested in the students. The support staff is a lot more invested in the school and the students - as more of them live out here.

What issues should the superintendent be aware of as he/she comes into the district? (This information is shared with the final candidates.)

- Students aren't made to follow dress code and neither are the teachers. Also I feel that the children should not use cell phones during school hours. The principal favoritism to certain teachers is very apparent and should be a major concern to the superintendent. The number of teachers going on trips is excessive as are the trips especially when we have other needs. No discipline really done because of NEU by principals. Some teachers have power that they should not have and need to concentrate on the job they were hired for. Lunch needs to be in lunch room.
- At times, the classified staff is looked down upon. Several of the staff formal education or advanced degrees.
- lack of communication between depts and all employees should be given the same degree of respect no matter what their position
- That the staff (support staff anyways) are afraid to say what they really think about how things work because they are afraid of getting fired. That the teachers, principals do not discipline or give hard enough consequences because they are afraid of the parents. And they seem to give in to whatever the parents want even if it is clearly written in the handbook as to what is supposed to happen. The communication is horrible here, from

the top to the bottom. The administration seems to not care about the regular students who have to put up with kids who are extremely disruptive.

What skills, qualities or characteristics should the new superintendent possess to be successful here? (This information is used as we screen potential candidates.)

- He needs to be younger but have some experience in the field. Be more visible to staff, students, and public and spend less time in his little White House. He needs to make sure all staff are included. Needs to have an open door policy and everyone welcome. Get the community support behind him.
- Someone who is accessible and knows who you are.
- open, personable, not someone who pacifies people
- Decisive, Stick to what is right or the handbook, Good communicator with all the people who work here, Involved, Support all staff in the discipline and consequences a student receives.

Community Members

Tell us the good things about your community. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)

- It isn't overly populated and good country living.
- N/A

Tell us the good things about your schools. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)

- Classes are small. Good teachers.
- In Okay condition. Students generally get along with each other. Teachers are very interactive with students

What issues should the superintendent be aware of as he/she comes into the district? (This information is shared with the final candidates.)

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- Some teachers are rude and over privileged. They speak without political correctness.

What skills, qualities or characteristics should the new superintendent possess to be successful here? (This information is used as we screen potential candidates.)

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Students

Tell us the good things about your community. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)

- We had a great school and community because of how great the people are here.

Tell us the good things about your schools. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)

- Our school is amazing because there isn't drama

What issues should the superintendent be aware of as he/she comes into the district? (This information is shared with the final candidates.)

- What kids do behind the adults backs

What skills, qualities or characteristics should the new superintendent possess to be successful here? (This information is used as we screen potential candidates.)

- I think he should be social and good with kids and solving problems.

Teachers

Tell us the good things about your community. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)

- Small family like, supportive,
- We are a very close community that takes care of our neighbors. We find strength in each other.
- Small but diverse
- Small, caring, committed.
- I feel that Shepherd is a very close and supportive community. The community is very supportive of the school system.
- Shepherd is a small town with the luxury of a big town next door. Most people know each other, respect each other. There is a passion for the school in most cases.
- We can come together to help each other. We have a very active volunteer fire department and a couple of strong churches. We also have active 4-H clubs, girl scouts and boy scouts.

Tell us the good things about your schools. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)

- Minor problems compared to larger districts regarding discipline. Elem staff one of the best they put kids first and work hard.
- Within each school, the staff works as a cohesive group for the betterment of each student.
- The schools have a strong focus on the value of education
- Many processes in place to support in academic and behavioral issues.
- Our school is fantastic. Our education intensive and strong. The three separate parts work together well.
- Our school has been very innovative in bringing in new ideas (PLC, NEU). We have a solid base of quality teachers who care about their students.
- Our school is all about the kids. We have very involved kids. They participate in everything from music to sports. The older kids have opportunities for activities that bigger school can't offer, ie the biology coast trip. We have a very caring staff.
- Great staff

What issues should the superintendent be aware of as he/she comes into the district? (This information is shared with the final candidates.)

- The three schools lack collaboration and work load. Expectations of administration seem different.
- The staff needs to find a way to work cohesively together (k-12) for the benefit of each student with their future in mind at all times.
- That the three building work independently and have a had time working as a district. The students here are lacking foundational skills that are overlooked due to such focus on

the core subjects- i.e. science, social studies, geography, art, typing and writing. In the elementary these are the most ignored.

- Including all staff in meetings that could pertain to them, not just the teachers.
- There is massive division among staff. Groups have been played off of one another, and favoritism rules the day. We also have several teachers who are ready to embrace the 21st century, but are being held back by a lack of understanding among other staff and administrators.
- We have a problem with community support. They don't always trust what the school is asking. Communication seems to be a problem.
- Staff moral is the lowest in 15 years, We have programs that have merit, meaning, but are dying because we have no unification, direction, and-or proper guidance. The staff has been given directives with no clue on how to use them to causing dissension and busy work.

What skills, qualities or characteristics should the new superintendent possess to be successful here? (This information is used as we screen potential candidates.)

- Need to figure out a way to get a levy passed. Our school buildings are falling apart and it is no longer economical to continue to fix them.
- We need the superintendent to take an active role in our community. We also need him/her to lead the charge in getting a bond passed so that we can finally get our much needed expansion.
- Strong leadership to bring all the buildings together. A sense of the unique community that we have. A way to connect with the administration and the staff.
- Friendly, open and easy to approach.
- The new superintendent needs to be supportive of the staff members. They need be to encouraging and offer support to the staff. They need to have the best interest of the kids in mind. Their goal should be to provide our children with the academics and tools that will help them be successful in their lives.
- Financial transparency An understanding of Class B schools in Montana a Montanan Previous experience running a district Technologically capable/open minded
- Openness and willingness to listen to staff and community. Be involved and visible.
- People person, Communicator, Someone that supports sports programs, Someone that supports coaches, Someone that brings unity to a divided staff, Someone that will guide our Principals and staff in a positive way but HOLD STAFF ACCOUNTABLE for improper actions.

Administrators

No Responses

Parents

No Responses