



Independence School District

Survey & Focus Group Report



- Unions
- Principals
- Directors
- Students

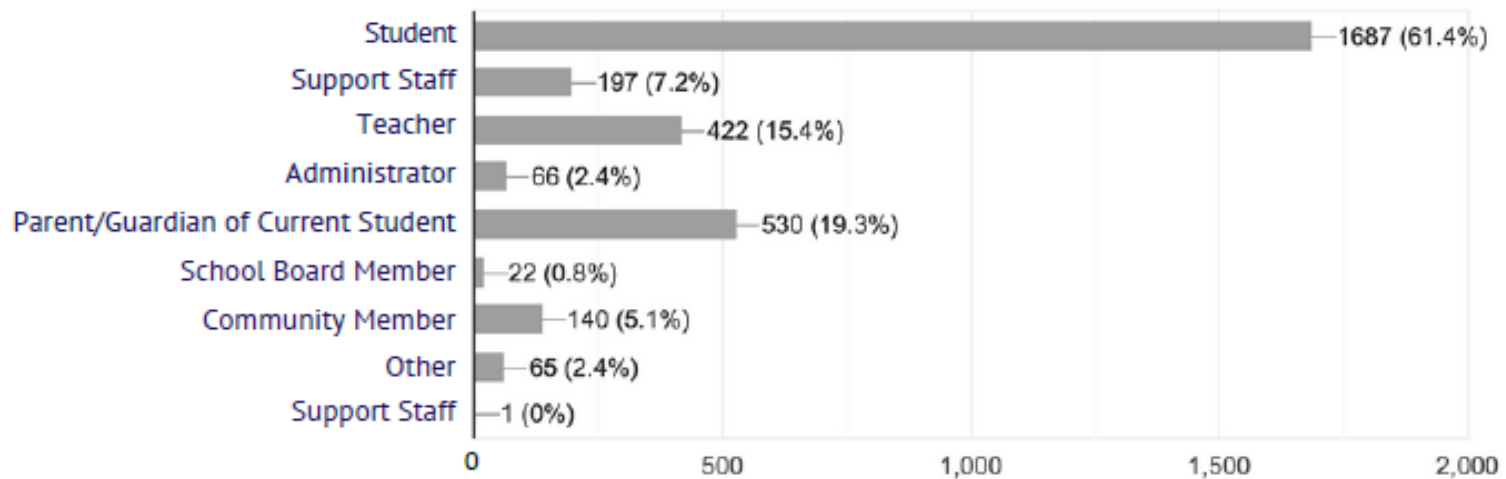
Objectives:

Share	Share key superintendent search information.
Gain	Gain a better understanding of feedback on the stakeholder surveys
Get	Get more diverse stakeholder feedback to confirm top desired qualifications for the next superintendent
Begin	Begin to focus on top priorities for the new superintendent

Survey Participation

Please identify which group best fits your affiliation with the school district. (Check all that apply.)

2,749 responses



- Survey offered in multiple languages
- 2479 total responses (students 1687)



Strength Areas (All)

- **FOUR-DAY SCHOOL WEEK**
- **CARING AND DEDICATED TEACHERS AND STAFF**
- **ACADEMIC GROWTH, INNOVATION, AND CAREER READINESS**
- **STUDENT SUPPORT AND INCLUSION**
- **OPERATIONS STABILITY (Finance & Facilities)**

Strength Areas (Students)

- **FOUR-DAY SCHOOL WEEK**
- **ACADEMIES AND PATHWAY PROGRAMS**
- **DEDICATED TEACHERS AND STAFF**
- **EXTRACURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES (SPORTS, MUSIC, CLUBS, ACTIVITIES)**
- **INCLUSIVITY and DIVERSITY**



Challenges for the district (All)

- **COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPARENCY**
- **STAFF SUPPORT, RETENTION, AND WORKING CONDITIONS**
- **ACADEMIC RIGOR and RESOURCES**
- **STUDENT BEHAVIOR, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND DISCIPLINE**
- **TRANSPORTATION and TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT**



Challenges (Students)

- **DISCIPLINE AND STRICT RULES**
- **STUDENT CONDUCT AND SCHOOL CULTURE**
- **ACADEMIC AND MENTAL HEALTH PRESSURES**
- **COMMUNICATION and STUDENT VOICE**
- **SCHOOL MEALS**

Desired Traits (All)

- Is approachable, accessible, and welcoming (54%)
- Brings out success in others (37%)
- Strong instructional leadership (36%)
- Recruits, hires, supports, develops, and retains effective staff members (34%)
- Builds community and school relations (30%)
- Promotes a community of care and support for students (29%)
- Open to staff and community input (29%)
- Demonstrates collaborate leadership (25%)
- Effectively manages district resources (24%)

Desired Traits

With Students

- Is approachable, accessible, and welcoming
- Brings out success in others
- Strong instructional leadership
- Recruits, hires, supports, develops, and retains effective staff members
- Builds community and school relations
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- Effectively manages district resources

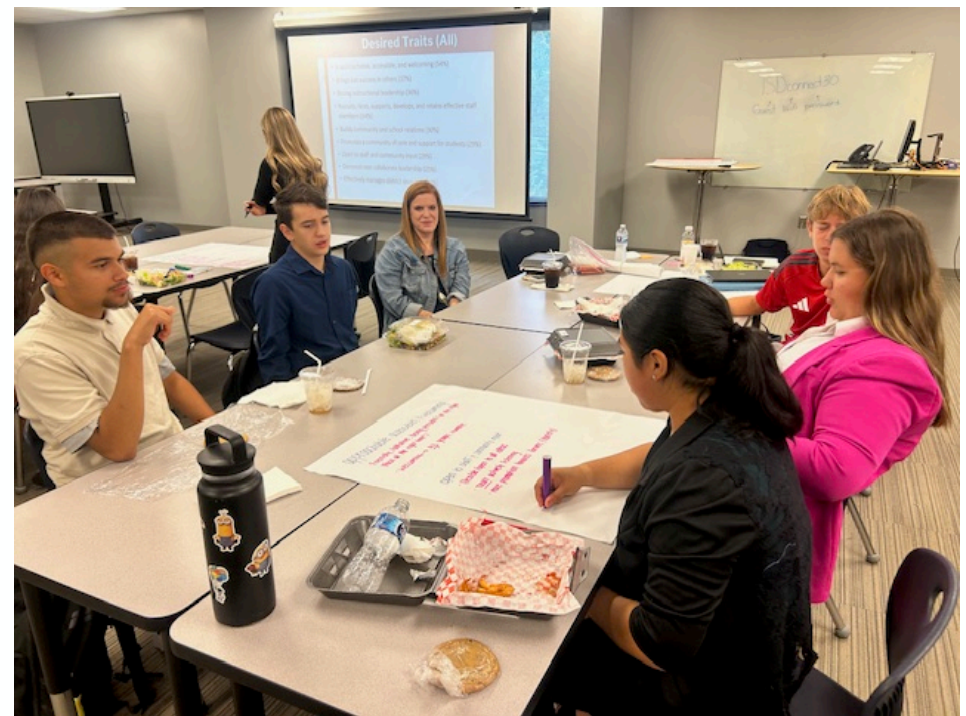
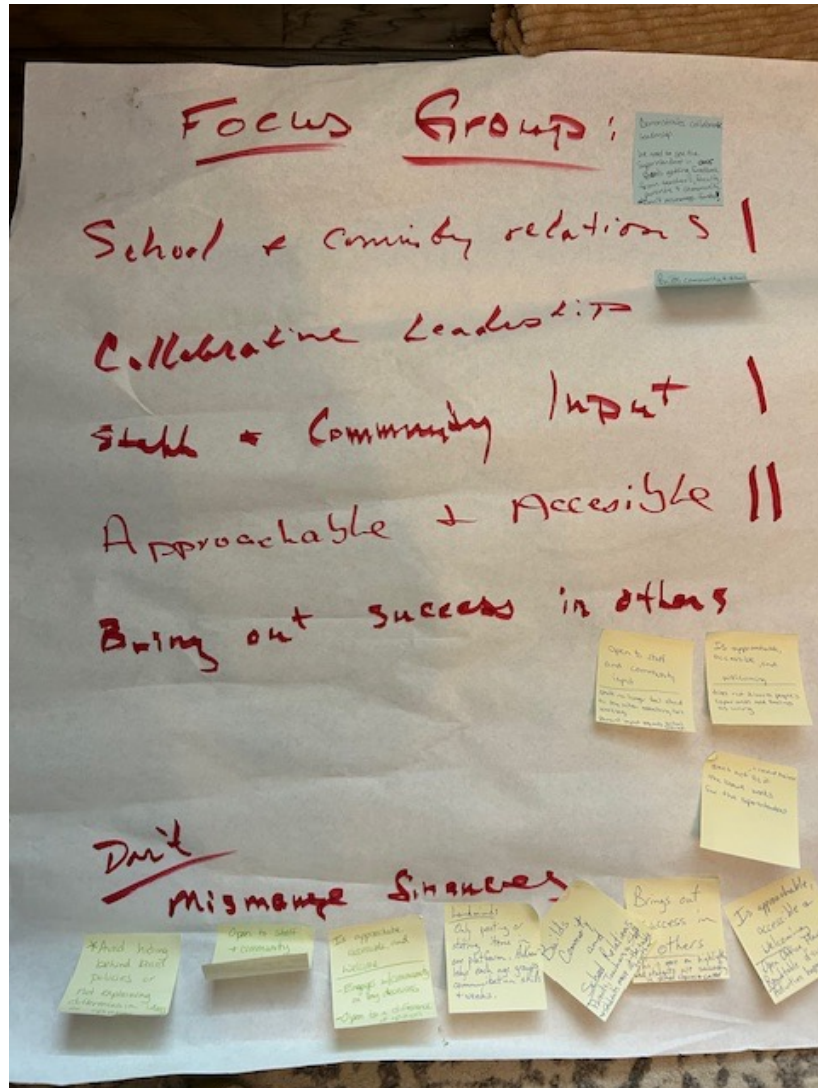
Without

- Strong instructional leader
- Recruits, hires, supports, develops, and retains effective staff members
- Builds community and school relations
- Promotes a community of care and support for students
- Fosters a positive culture and climate for teachers and staff
- Effectively manages district resources
- Advocates publicly for school needs
- Meaningfully engages with families and the community
- Understands equity and cultural responsiveness



Focus Groups in Action

Focus Groups in Action



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A video feed showing a woman with dark hair wearing a light blue shirt. The name "Jeanette Cowherd" is displayed in a black box at the bottom of the frame.

A video feed showing a man with short brown hair and a beard wearing a dark jacket. The MSBA logo is visible in the top right corner. The name "Trent Grundmeyer" is displayed in a black box at the bottom of the frame.

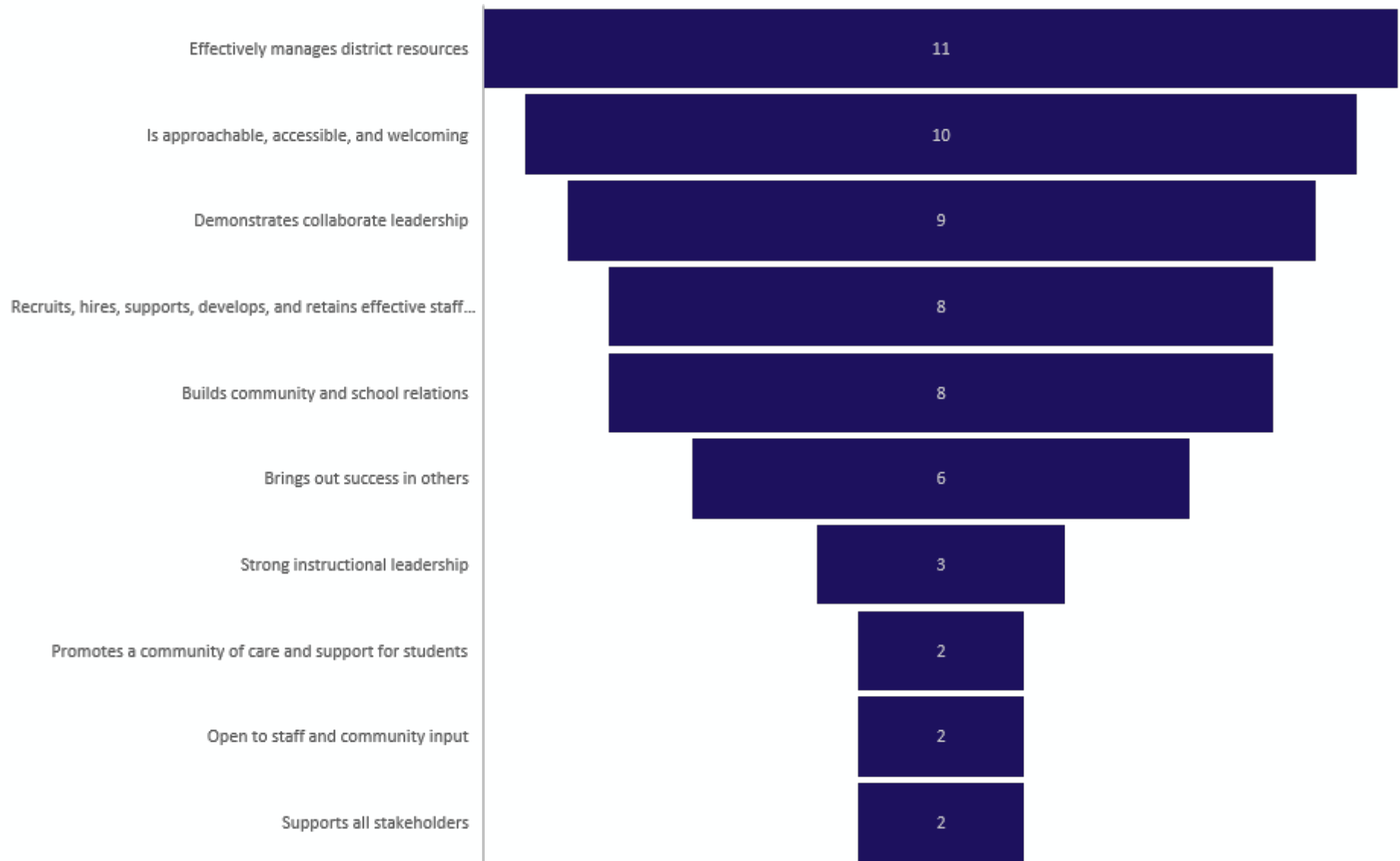
A video feed showing a woman with blonde hair and glasses wearing a pink shirt. The name "Sandy Hinckley" is displayed in a black box at the bottom of the frame.

A video feed showing a woman with blonde hair and glasses wearing a purple shirt. The name "Angy Hill" is displayed in a black box at the bottom of the frame.

A video feed showing a woman with blonde hair and glasses wearing a blue shirt. The name "Kimberly Bielinski" is displayed in a black box at the bottom of the frame.

A video feed showing a man with short brown hair wearing a dark shirt. The name "Kay Douglas" is displayed in a black box at the bottom of the frame.

Top Priorities From Focus Groups



Managing District Resources

Evidence:

- Passing audits and keeping strong reserves
- Financial forecasting and strategic planning
- Maintain competitive salaries
- Financial freedom to innovate
- Strong political skills/legislative knowledge
- Good faith effort to work with unions

Approachable and Accessible

Evidence:

- Greeting staff and students in buildings
- Make it a routine to be visible in schools
- Recognizing employee efforts
- Finding methods to get voice from under-represented parents/families
- Asking for feedback in multiple methods/languages
- Engage in the community
 - Local businesses
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - Community activities

Hiring and Retaining Effective Staff

Evidence:

- Maintain competitive salary/benefits
- Hire early to get the best candidates
- Hire and build a strong, talented leadership team
- Provide strategic training for developing new leaders
- Consider training for classified staff
- Create positive school culture people do not want to leave

Collaborative Leadership Style

Evidence:

- Welcomes and encourage feedback
- Open to staff and community input
 - Multiple channels for feedback
 - Reach out to get diverse perspectives
- Foster trust:
 - Transparency in decision-making
 - Share only facts
 - Don't micromanage
- No fear of retaliation from staff
- Promote and model teamwork
- Strive to develop new leaders
- Manage the change process
 - Provide adequate resources
 - Allow reasonable time
 - Monitor progress

Profile of the Ideal Candidate

The ideal superintendent for ISD will be a strategic, compassionate, and visionary leader who:

- Combines strong fiscal management with innovative thinking,
- Develops and empowers staff to reach their full potential,
- Leads with transparency, collaboration, and approachability, and
- Builds a safe, inclusive, and future-focused school system that reflects community values and aspirations.

ADVICE

“

Show great leadership by your actions.
Build strong relationships based on
trust and open communication.

”

“Be visible and approachable. Attend school events, visit classrooms, and take time to listen directly to teachers, parents, and students. Building trust through presence makes a big difference.”

“Focus on building a culture of respect that balances structure with compassion. Lead by example so that professionalism and fairness are the norm across the district.”

“Focus on making decisions that prioritize the best interests of students. Ensure financial decisions are responsible and sustainable to prevent budgetary challenges.”

“Listen, collect and review data, talk to those who receive less attention and representation, be collaborative, keep your word, and work do be a positive.”

What is next?



PLANNING

December 31
Application deadline



RECRUITING

January 8
Review full candidate pool



SCREENING

January 15
Board screens 5-8 candidates



HIRING

January 21
Finalist interviews

POST-SEARCH

SUPPORT

Beginning July 1st



Interview Schedule (Jan. 21)

	Candidate 1	Candidate 2	Candidate 3
12:30 PM	District Tour		
1:45 PM	Board Interview	District Tour	
3:00 PM		Board Interview	District Tour
4:15 PM			Board Interview
5:30 PM	School Board Meeting (Closed Session)		



Thank
You

Other Advice?



PRIORITIZING Desired Qualifications

- Use your dots to vote
- Can use all on 1 or split votes
- Other could be an option (list it)
- 5 mins. timeframe
- Top priorities will drive next steps

Is approachable, accessible,
and welcoming

Brings out success in others

Strong instructional
leadership

Recruits, hires, supports, develops,
and retains effective staff members

Builds community and school
relations

Promotes a community of care
and support for students

Open to staff and community
input

Demonstrates collaborative
leadership

Effectively manages district
resources

Prioritize the Opportunities



Spokesperson – Person
who has lived in the
community the
longest?

PRIORITIZING Desired Qualifications

Please check the 3 most important qualifications you hope to have in a new superintendent.

- ☐ Is approachable, accessible, and welcoming
- ☐ Brings out success in others
- ☐ Strong instructional leader (curriculum development, assessment, instruction)
- ☐ Recruits, hires, supports, develops, and retains effective staff members
- ☐ Builds community and school relations
- ☐ Promotes a community of care and support for students
- ☐ Open to staff and community input
- ☐ Demonstrates collaborative leadership
- ☐ Effectively manages district resources
- ☐ Fosters a positive culture and climate for teachers and staff
- ☐ Meaningfully engages with families and the community
- ☐ Advocates publicly for school needs



tinyurl.com/IndependenceSuptPriorities

Purpose of the Meeting

- **Purpose** - further understand why these are top desired qualifications for the new superintendent
 - ✓ Recruiting quality candidates that meet your needs
 - ✓ Screening candidates based on skills
 - ✓ Draft the most important interview questions
 - ✓ Supporting the new superintendent post-hire

Reflections

- **Strength areas?**
- **Challenges?**

Anything missing?

What is confirmed?

What should candidates know?



YOUR FEEDBACK

- **You PICK – top 2 priorities**
- 3-5 mins. per topic
- Groups identify and list:
 - Success indicators
 - Evidence
 - Land mines to avoid
- Circle "parking lot" comments

Recruits and Hires Effective Staff

- Hires qualified, high-caliber candidates
- Understands thing they need for success
- Focuses on staff learning and development
- Has training and mentorship programs
- Values working relationships with staff

We need to do stay interviews with our veteran staff to improve retention efforts



- common themes

Focus Group Feedback

Understands equity and cultural responsiveness

Evidence:

- Understands and addresses language barriers to improve family engagement.
- Values diversity and hires staff who can connect with a multicultural community.
- Seeks ways to improve transportation access and equity of opportunity.

Desired Traits (Students)

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