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**Medford School District
Medford, Oregon**

Stakeholder Input Report submitted January 6, 2026

The following is a synthesis of the Medford School District (SD) stakeholder meetings (Dec 9–10, 2025) conducted by McPherson & Jacobson Western Regional Consultant, Dr. Steven Lowder. It is followed by an analytical commentary connecting themes across groups.

Summary of Stakeholder Feedback

Community Strengths

Across nearly all groups, participants praised the Rogue Valley’s natural beauty, four seasons, and strong sense of community collaboration—especially during crises. The area’s family-friendly, arts-rich, and outdoor-oriented lifestyle adds to its appeal. Many also pointed to the region’s mild climate, medical facilities, and manageable size, balancing small-town familiarity with urban amenities.

District Strengths

Stakeholders consistently noted dedicated, caring staff and teachers, diverse learning options (charters, dual immersion, CTE programs, after-school offerings), and strong community partnerships (TRIO, Chamber, SRO programs, ESD collaboration). Several groups acknowledged the district’s inclusivity, student support systems, and infrastructure.

Major Challenges for the Incoming Superintendent

Common concerns included:

- Declining enrollment and budget constraints.
- Low student achievement, especially in math and reading.
- Behavioral issues and limited accountability for students.
- Erosion of trust—between staff, administration, and the board.
- High staff turnover and classified worker dissatisfaction over pay, support, and recognition.
- Administrative bloat and perceived inequity in promotions and pay.
- Fractures from prior leadership, including poor charter relations and board-level conflict.
- Curriculum implementation problems and a need for engagement by staff.

Other specific issues: student tardiness, absenteeism, vaping, negative publicity, and weak transitions between middle and high school.

Desired Superintendent Qualities

A clear consensus emerged around the following attributes:

- Visibility and approachability: being present in schools, at events, and within the community.
- Transparency and strong communication skills.
- Integrity, honesty, humility, and courage under criticism.
- Proven leadership experience, ideally in a diverse or comparable district.
- Commitment to long-term service in Medford.
- Collaborative, inclusive leadership that empowers staff and respects all roles.
- Strong fiscal and labor-relations skills, able to navigate union negotiations and budget cuts.
- Ability to unite the board and heal divisions.

- Deep instructional understanding and data-driven decision-making aimed at student achievement.
 - Cultural competence, particularly with racial diversity and marginalized groups.
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Commentary and Analysis

The stakeholder input paints a portrait of a district at a crossroads of recovery and renewal. Medford SD's external image remains positive—supported by its location and civic stability—but internally, trust between staff and leadership appears severely strained. The recurring themes of communication breakdown, morale decline, and perceived organizational inequity suggest a system hungry for authentic, servant-style leadership instead of transactional management.

There is a striking convergence across groups—classified staff, teachers, parents, and business leaders alike—on the need for a superintendent who is visible, human-centered, and collaborative rather than bureaucratic. The community wants someone who can balance financial realism with moral clarity, navigating tough choices without alienating people.

Additionally, stakeholders' repeated references to declining enrollment, administrative bloat, and weak student discipline indicate a cultural imbalance between system maintenance and academic purpose. A successful leader will likely need to rebuild symbolic and operational trust simultaneously demonstrating fiscal prudence while honoring the emotional labor of district employees.

Finally, the mention of racial equity, cultural understanding, and inclusion throughout the comments underscores a broader community aspiration. Medford is positioning itself as a modern, welcoming hub, and stakeholders want a superintendent who not only understands diversity rhetorically but also models it in leadership teams, hiring, and partnerships.