

Superintendent Leadership Profile Report

February 5, 2026

Introduction

This report presents the findings from the Engagement Phase of the Superintendent Search facilitated by Education Support Services (ESS) Group between January 8, 2026, and February 5, 2026. Data were gathered through in-person and virtual focus groups, individual interviews, and community forums, with approximately 120 stakeholders participating in this phase.

Each engagement session focused on three primary areas:

- a) Strengths of the District,
- b) Challenges or issues facing the District, and
- c) Qualities and characteristics desired in the next superintendent.

To broaden participation, an online survey was also conducted, allowing employees, students, parents, and community members to provide input on district conditions and the leadership qualities the Board should prioritize. This report reflects the input of the in-person meetings, the virtual meetings, and the responses to the survey. A summary of findings from the 663 online survey respondents is provided in Exhibit A.

Engagement Phase Report of Findings: Themes and Trends

Part A: Strengths of the District

Across the organization, education partners were consistent in describing the strengths of the Burbank Unified School District. The qualities that draw people to the District fell into five general areas:

Historically Strong Academic Performance

Burbank Unified School District provides a wide-ranging and inclusive menu of academic and enrichment opportunities that cater to the diverse interests, strengths, and future aspirations of its students. BUSD maintains strong test scores, graduation rates, and a positive academic reputation. Parents and employees tout the long history of solid performance, and the pride of being a district where parents move to provide excellent schools for their children. The District remains one that families want to send their children to, and schools continue to perform at levels that reflect a sound instructional base.

Deeply Committed, Long-Serving Workforce with Immense Professional Pride

With both classified and certificated employees, BUSD benefits from extraordinary employee longevity. Many staff members spend their entire careers in the district, and many employees are alumni whose children also attend BUSD schools. This continuity creates institutional knowledge, loyalty, and a strong sense of ownership in the District's success. Principals across all levels described a supportive, non-competitive leadership culture. Site administrators share practices, support one another, and value the autonomy they are given to run their programs.

Exceptional Visual and Creative Arts Programs

The arts are a signature strength of BUSD. Music, choir, band, theater, media arts, and CTE pathways tied to creative industries are widely respected and deeply valued by the community. The District's proximity to—and relationship with—the entertainment and media sectors enhances these offerings and sets BUSD apart from peer districts.

Broad and Diverse Program Offerings

For a District of its size, BUSD offers an impressive range of programs, including a highly popular Adult Education school, ESL, CTE pathways (including, among others, Business Management, Music Production, Patient Care, and Engineering Design), alternative education, and specialized services. These programs reflect a commitment to serving learners across the lifespan and meeting varied community needs. Special Education providers express pride in being able to support students with highly diverse learning needs.

City with a Small-Town Sensibility

There is a true sense of community in Burbank. So many people shared their appreciation for Burbank's small-town feel. A big part of that is because people move here and stay here. The connections make people feel that they belong and the schools of Burbank are an essential component of that small town feel. Families are highly invested. Parent involvement—especially at the elementary level—is strong, and community members consistently describe BUSD as a district they choose and stay in.

Part B: Challenges/Issues

When asked to describe challenges the district might face in the ensuing years, several themes emerged.

Rebuilding Trust and Credibility

The dominant theme across all engagement methods was the need to rebuild trust following a period of ethical, fiscal, and governance instability. This was validated by the survey, where 92.1% of respondents selected “honest and ethical” as the top personal attribute— by far the highest of any item. Trust has significantly eroded among staff, departments, unions, and the broader community. Rumors spread quickly and confidence in District leadership and Board governance is fragile. Many employees described prolonged instability, diminished pride, and feeling unheard as underlying contributors. Rebuilding trust will require sustained, transparent, and visible leadership, with consistent follow-through over time.

Board Governance and Role Clarity

Respondents cited Board over-involvement, inconsistent adherence to governance norms, and lack of onboarding or shared protocols as factors that have contributed to confusion, mixed messages, and staff workarounds. The superintendent will need to educate, support, and at times attempt to redirect the Board while maintaining a professional partnership. This was one of the most cited concerns across stakeholder groups.

Leadership Vacancies, Turnover, and Loss of Talent

The District has lost experienced staff and leaders, with many positions left vacant or filled on an interim basis. High turnover at the District Office has weakened continuity, morale, and institutional knowledge. Stabilizing leadership, rebuilding teams, and retaining employees is an urgent priority.

Outdated Systems, Processes, and Internal Controls

It was noted that departments frequently operate in isolation, with inconsistent communication and limited cross-department collaboration. Longstanding habits, traditions, and informal processes are deeply embedded across the organization. This has contributed to inefficiencies and resistance to change. Examples include: onboarding practices; employee evaluations; professional growth opportunities; and outdated Board policies and administrative regulations. Modernization is essential— but must be implemented thoughtfully to avoid resistance and confusion.

Fiscal Pressure and Declining Enrollment

Like many school districts across California, declining enrollment, budget constraints, rising operating costs, and increased scrutiny of expenditures will require difficult financial decisions, which could include program reductions or even highly unpopular school consolidations. These conversations call for transparency, broad community engagement, and political skill. Stakeholders desire a superintendent who will engage in transparency and discipline to restore public confidence and demonstrate a decisive break from past fiscal practices.

Instructional Coherence and Academic Growth

While student achievement outcomes are generally solid, stakeholders acknowledged the need for stronger instructional leadership, coherent pedagogical strategies, assessment practices, and data use across schools. The District lacks a clear, unified instructional vision and consistent implementation structures.

Finally, in spite of all of these challenges . . .

One of the themes constantly reiterated during staff and community engagement sessions was a belief that BUSD is ready to rally again. There is strong acknowledgment of what has gone wrong—but also a widespread desire to rebuild trust, modernize systems, and move forward together under credible, ethical, and steady leadership. The right superintendent can make a huge difference, and many are looking forward to a new direction.

Working Draft

Part C: Desired Characteristics of the Incoming Superintendent

Unquestioned Integrity and Ethics

Above all else, the community wants a superintendent whose integrity is beyond reproach. Stakeholders repeatedly emphasized honesty, transparency, fairness, and moral courage. The next superintendent must tell the truth—even when it is uncomfortable—and consistently model ethical decision-making.

Strong, Skilled Board Leadership

The superintendent must be exceptionally adept at governance development, including educating the Board, setting boundaries, and reinforcing roles without escalating conflict. This leader must be confident enough to stand up to inappropriate pressure, while maintaining a productive partnership that restores credibility and stability.

Visible, Listening, and Accessible Leadership

The community expects a superintendent who is highly and frequently visible at school sites, department meetings, union conversations, parent meetings, and community events—someone people know, recognize, and can approach. Stakeholders are looking for a superintendent who listens before acting to make every employee feel seen and heard. In the survey, over 54% of respondents selected “present/visible throughout the District.”

Trust Builder

BUSD needs a leader who understands that repairing trust is the work, not a side task. The superintendent must listen deeply, follow through on commitments, and rebuild confidence over time with patience, integrity, empathy, and consistency.

Experienced Change Leader

Stakeholders want someone who has been through complex organizational challenges before. While actual superintendent experience is not required, it was something desired by many. Stakeholders are looking for an educator who has significant experience working with a school board, parents, and employees on a district wide scale. Experience managing crises, rebuilding systems, navigating politics, and leading cultural change was repeatedly cited as essential.

Instructional Leader First

The superintendent must be a strong educational leader, not a technocrat. This includes understanding curriculum, assessment, data, and pedagogy across TK–12, supporting principals as learning leaders, and building coherence without micromanaging. Many are hoping for Burbank to stand for agreed-upon instructional practices, which in turn will have a positive impact on student achievement.

Strong Team Builder with the Courage to Act

The community wants a leader who can build teams, mentor leaders, and also have hard conversations. Accountability matters—but it must be fair, consistent, and kind. “Nice” without follow-through is not enough.

Exceptional Communicator

Clear, timely, consistent communication—internally and externally—was one of the most repeated desires. The superintendent must communicate, perhaps even over-communicate, early, often, and in multiple directions, reducing rumors and confusion. Again, this was verified in the survey, where 56.9% of respondents indicated that the new superintendent must be an “exceptional communicator.”

Balanced Respect for Tradition and Innovation

Burbank values its history and culture, but recognizes that some systems are outdated. The next superintendent must honor what works, challenge what doesn’t, and carefully pace change so it is understood, trained, and supported—not imposed.

Service-Oriented and Student-Centered Leader

Ultimately, the community wants a superintendent who sees the role as service—to students, schools, staff, and families. This leader must advocate fiercely for students, protect school sites from unnecessary distractions, and ensure decisions are grounded in what is best for BUSD learners.

In Gratitude, and Moving Forward

The search advisors would like to thank the 120 participants who attended meetings along with the 633 individuals who completed the online survey. We would also like to express our gratitude to the BUSD staff members who orchestrated a seamless process to gather the thoughts/interests of multiple constituents and for their assistance in engaging education partners in the online survey and community forums.

The ESS search advisors and Governing Board intend to meet the challenge of finding an individual who possesses the leadership skills, personal attributes, expertise, experiences, and drive to successfully lead the Burbank Unified School District into the future.

Respectfully submitted,

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Superintendent Leadership Profile Report

Exhibit A: Online Survey Report of Findings

Burbank Unified School District

January 31, 2026

Introduction

This report represents the findings of the Superintendent Leadership Profile conducted by Education Support Services Group (ESS) from January 12, 2026 through January 30, 2026. The information herein was obtained from an online survey. Data gleaned from this engagement process is intended to assist the Burbank Unified School District with the selection of its next superintendent.

Online Survey

An online survey was distributed to enlist stakeholder perceptions about the overall quality of education in Burbank Unified School District, along with the desired expertise and personal attributes of the next superintendent. 662 respondents completed the online survey (650 in English, 4 in Spanish, and 8 in Armenian). Respondents included members of the certificated and classified staff, parents, and community members (see below). Respondent feedback is summarized below.

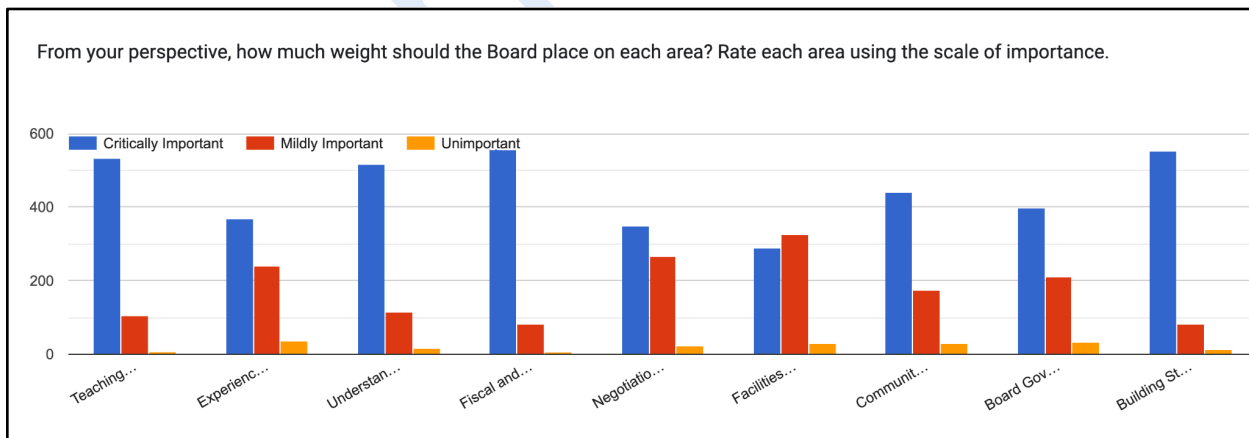
Survey Respondents

Role	Frequency	Percentage
Administrator	16	2.4%
Certificated Staff	109	16.5%
Classified Staff	80	12.1%
Parent/Guardian	403	60.9%
Student	11	1.7%
Community Member	25	3.8%
Other	18	2.7%

Expertise and Experience

From your perspective, how much weight should the Board place on each area based on the scale of importance?

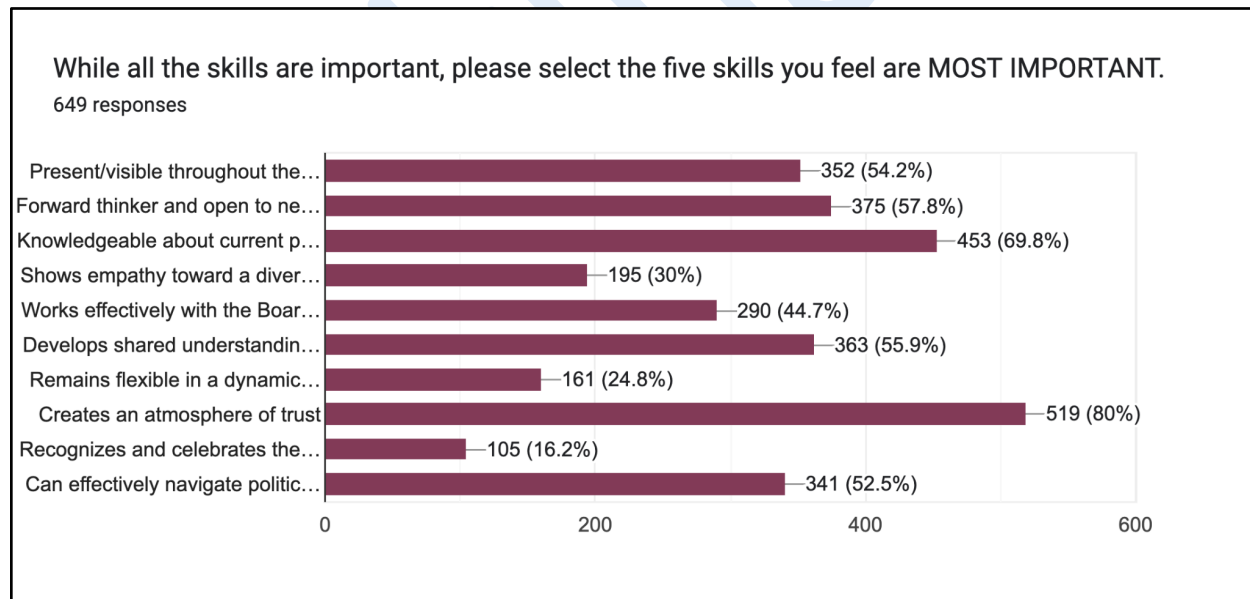
	Critically Important	Mildly Important	Unimportant
Fiscal and Budgeting Experience	564	85	5
Building Strong Leadership Teams	560	82	15
Teaching and Learning	544	105	7
Understanding School and Community Culture	524	117	18
Community Relations	449	178	29
Board Governance	404	215	34
Experience as a Site Principal	377	241	36
Negotiations/Labor Relations	357	270	23
Facilities Management	294	331	31



Leadership Qualities

While all the skills are important, please select the five skills you feel are MOST IMPORTANT.

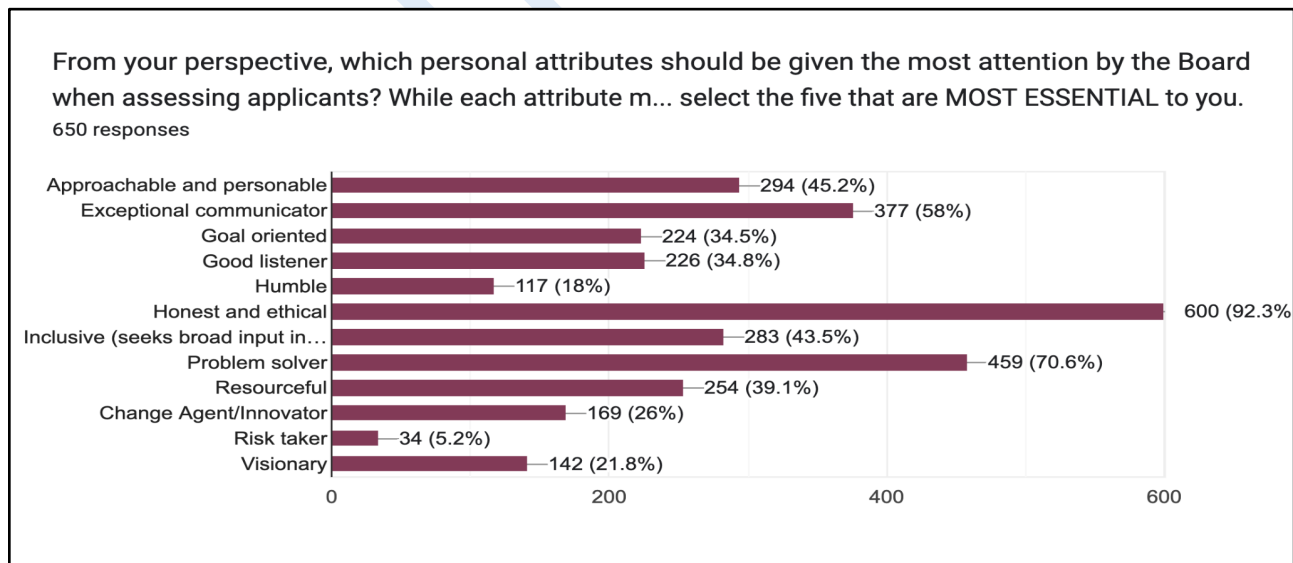
	Frequency	Percentage
Creates an atmosphere of trust	526	79.5%
Knowledgeable about current practices surrounding teaching and learning	462	69.8%
Forward thinker and open to new ideas	382	57.7%
Develops shared understanding of District goals and priorities	367	55.4%
Present/visible throughout the District and community	359	54.2%
Can effectively navigate political and/or controversial issues	346	52.3%
Works effectively with the Board of Education	295	44.6%
Shows empathy toward a diverse group of education partners	199	30.1%
Remains flexible in a dynamic environment	163	24.6%
Recognizes and celebrates the contributions of others	107	16.2%



Personal Attributes

From your perspective, which personal attributes should be given the most attention by the Board of Education when assessing applicants? While each attribute may be important, select the five that are MOST IMPORTANT to you.

Personal Attribute	Frequency	Percentage
Honest and ethical	610	92.1%
Problem solver	470	71%
Exceptional communicator	377	56.9%
Approachable and personable	301	45.5%
Inclusive (seeks broad input in making decisions)	286	43.2%
Resourceful	258	39%
Good listener	237	35.8%
Goal oriented	230	34.7%
Change Agent/Innovator	170	25.7%
Visionary	145	21.9%
Humble	117	17.7%
Risk taker	34	5.1%



District Conditions

As you think about the general conditions across the District, select the response that best describes your agreement with each statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
School safety is a high priority.	245	273	96	26	12
Students receive a high-quality education that prepares them for college, career, and life.	209	324	84	17	23
Students feel valued and connected to their schools.	187	302	101	25	41
Communication from the District is clear and timely.	167	268	149	59	7
District facilities are clean and well-kept.	166	292	131	36	25
Adequate resources are provided to support student learning.	159	196	221	58	23
Staff members feel valued and connected to their workplace.	145	206	122	60	120
The District is responsive to the diverse interests and needs of its families.	132	281	136	48	57
The District is constantly improving.	132	136	192	138	53
Academic goals are aligned across the District.	119	271	148	33	82

