HYA

LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT

Alexandria City Public Schools
May/June 2026

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in June 2026 for the successor superintendent of the Alexandria City Public Schools. The data contained herein were obtained from input the HYA consultants received when they met with individuals and groups in either individual interviews or focus group settings and from the results of the online survey completed by stakeholders. The surveys, interviews, and focus group meetings were structured to gather input to assist the Board in determining the primary characteristics desired in the new superintendent. Additionally the stakeholder interviews and focus groups collected information regarding the strengths of the District and some of the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years.

PARTICIPATION

The numbers of participants, by stakeholder group, in the two methods of data gathering are listed below: *Not all focus groups were a group that was disaggregated for the on-line survey.*

Group	Personal interviews or focus groups	Online Survey
Board	9	
Building level administrators	32	37
Senior Leaders & Central office administrators	39	
Faculty	7	134
Community & Parents	113	
Parents/Guardians		392
Community/Business Members		64
Support Staff	12	46
Students	32	86
City Governance	7	
Total	251	759

The community survey report and a draft of the desired characteristics are provided under separate cover and are meant to be stand-alone complementary pieces to the Leadership Profile Report.

It should be emphasized that the data are not a scientific sampling, nor should they necessarily be viewed as representing the majority opinion of the respective groups to which they are attributed. Items are included if, in the consultants' judgment, they warranted the Board's attention.

STRENGTHS OF THE DISTRICT

The Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) are characterized by a set of foundational strengths that support their diverse student body and community. A primary strength is the district's diversity, defined by a rich, international blend of students, families, and staff who bring over 127 languages and varied cultural experiences to the learning environment. This is bolstered by a dedicated and talented staff of educators and administrators described as resilient and highly committed, often going above and beyond to meet the academic and social-emotional needs of students.

The district further supports its students through comprehensive academic pathways, such as the High School Academies model, dual enrollment, and career-focused certifications, which provide substantial post-secondary preparation. These efforts are enhanced by strong community and non-profit partnerships, with over 140 formal collaborations that expand access to scholarships, internships, and vital resources. Additionally, the district's strategic geographic location near Washington, D.C. offers students and staff unique access to cultural institutions and professional experiences not readily available in more remote school districts.

A commitment to student-centered support is a division-wide priority, with a deep focus on social-emotional learning, inclusion, and tailored support systems like the International Academy. This is supported by a high level of community engagement, where passionate stakeholders remain deeply invested in the district's success. Furthermore, stakeholders frequently cite the agility of a mid-sized division as a key strength, allowing for personalized interactions, a

family-like atmosphere among staff, and the ability to implement innovative initiatives quickly.

Finally, ACPS offers robust arts and extracurricular activities, providing students with engaging opportunities in areas such as band, choir, theater, robotics, and JROTC. These are complemented by strong foundational and early childhood education, which stakeholders emphasize as critical for effectively preparing elementary students for the academic rigors of middle and high school.

CHALLENGES AND ISSUES FACING THE DISTRICT

Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) faces significant financial hurdles, including rising labor costs, the complexities of new collective bargaining implementation, and limited annual funding increases. Coupled with these budgetary constraints are pressing infrastructure concerns, such as aging facilities that are over 80 years old and chronic overcrowding, particularly at the middle school level. The district is also struggling to balance growth and changing demographics against the need for organizational stability and a coherent, long-term vision.

The district is prioritizing the closure of persistent academic achievement gaps, as stakeholders have noted that math and ELA performance scores have stagnated despite considerable resources. This task is compounded by the challenge of supporting a complex, diverse student body, where a high number of English Learner (EL) and immigrant students require trauma-informed care and specialized resources that are often under-supported by current staffing levels. Additionally, safety concerns—ranging from bullying and gang influence to campus security—are frequently cited as significant impediments to the learning environment, particularly at the high school level.

A critical issue for the district is the need to restore trust and rebuild relationships among the community, School Board, City Council, and City Manager, as some cite breakdowns in transparency and communication. These challenges are mirrored internally, where perceived communication silos between the central office and school-level teams have led to an organizational structure viewed by many as opaque and top-down. Furthermore, staff retention and morale are perceived to be low due to uncompetitive compensation, high costs of living, and a lack of leadership support, all while the division navigates complex and often challenging external political dynamics.

HYA and the Board intend to meet the challenge of finding an individual who possesses most of the skills and character traits required to meet the needs of the division. The search team will seek a new superintendent who can work with the ACPS Board to provide the leadership needed to continue to raise academic standards and student performance, while meeting the unique needs of each of its schools and communities.

The search team thanks all the participants who attended focus groups meetings or completed the online survey and the ACPS staff members who assisted with our meetings, particularly Dr. James Deaton and Taneika Taylor Tukan who organized the focus group schedules and the search team's time in the district.

HYA | EDUCATION EXPERTS

Desired Successor Superintendent Characteristics
Alexandria City Public Schools

To assist with the identification of the skills and characteristics required for the district's next educational leader the Alexandria City School Board sought input from students, parents, staff, and community members via focus groups, interviews, community forums and a digital input process. Based on this input, the desired characteristics for the new superintendent, as expressed by the various stakeholder groups, center around a **unifying student-first vision, commitment to diversity, community engagement, and sound operational and financial expertise.**

Core Professional & Leadership Qualities

- **Visionary & Strategic:** A leader with a clear, long-term vision who can provide organizational stability, set high academic standards, and "think out-of-the-box" to solve complex problems.
- **Decisive & Accountable:** A leader who is willing to make tough, data-informed decisions, take ownership of results, and hold both themselves and the staff accountable for student outcomes.
- **Experience & Track Record:** Preference for an experienced superintendent with a proven track record of improving student achievement, managing large, complex, and diverse school divisions, and implementing successful change management.
- **Operational & Financial Acumen:** Someone who possesses strong management skills, understands budget forecasting, can drive operational excellence, and can identify efficiencies without negatively impacting classroom instruction.

Leadership Style & Vision

- **Visible and Engaged:** A leader who is physically present in schools, accessible to staff and students, and fosters a climate of mutual trust and respect.
- **Transformational and Decisive:** An executive who is not afraid to make difficult decisions, acts as a change-maker, and is willing to take calculated risks to improve the division.
- **Committed and Long-term:** Someone who views the role as a long-term commitment rather than a career steppingstone, and who intends to become an integral part of the community.
- **Resilient and Thick-skinned:** A leader capable of navigating the district's complex politics and vocal special interest groups without losing focus on the district's mission.

Relationship & Trust Building

- **Bridge Builder:** A critical requirement to build a collaborative relationship with the School Board, City Council, City Manager, and the community.
- **Empathetic Communicator:** A leader who practices active listening, is transparent, and communicates effectively with diverse groups, including those where English is not the primary language.
- **Collaborative:** A leader who values and seeks out the input of teachers, support staff, and parents, ensuring that decisions are informed by those serving on the front lines.

Academic Focus & Accountability

- **Student-Centered:** A laser-like focus on the educational needs of all students, prioritizing student outcomes and their learning experience over internal politics or optics.
- **Results-Oriented:** A laser focus on improving academic outcomes (math/ELA scores), closing achievement gaps, and strengthening the high school academies model for all students at Alexandria's multi-campus high school.
- **Data-Driven:** An instructional leader who uses data to make informed decisions, holds the division accountable for performance, and sets high expectations for all employees.
- **Experienced:** A proven leader with a successful track record in comparable, diverse, and complex urban school divisions.

Operational, Financial & Talent Acumen

- **Fiscally Responsible:** A leader capable of creative budgeting, managing limited resources effectively, and advocating for funding at local, state, federal levels.
- **Operationally Competent:** Someone who understands the importance of operational excellence—such as facility maintenance, transportation, and safety—recognizing that these are foundational to successful learning environments.
- **Talent Acquisition and Retention:** Demonstrated capability to recruit and retain diverse talent that reflects the student body and community. Ability to implement creative recruitment strategies and build capacity of faculty and staff to support long term goals with limited resources.

Cultural Competence & Inclusivity

- **Equity-Focused:** A leader who authentically values the district's diversity, understands the unique needs of immigrant families and English Learners, and promotes equitable resource distribution.
- **Culturally Competent:** A leader who is respectful of the district's international community (127+ languages) and is committed to fostering an inclusive environment.

In regard to leadership experiences and accomplishments, the ACPS successor superintendent candidate will:

- Have demonstrated highly successful educational and instructional leadership experience in a community with similar strengths, complexities, demographics, and challenges.
- Have or be immediately eligible for Virginia DOE 8 VAC 20 Division Superintendent license.

Compensation:

A multi-year contract with salary in the range of $305,000 subject to actual qualifications, experience, credentials and negotiations. Benefits similar to other district employees, applicable VA statues and subject to negotiation.

Interested and qualified individuals can learn more about the position and apply at:
https://hyasearch.com/job/superintendent-alexandria-va/