



FUSD

FONTANA UNIFIED
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Superintendent Leadership Profile Report

September 2, 2026

Introduction

This report represents findings from the Engagement Phase of the Superintendent Search facilitated by Education Support Services (ESS) Group from August 17-26, 2026. The data in this report were obtained from in-person and virtual focus group meetings, individual interviews, and both virtual and in-person community forums. Approximately **85** stakeholders participated in this portion of the engagement phase. Each session was designed to gather information in three key areas: a) strengths of the District; b) issues or opportunities the District is facing; and c) qualities/attributes desired in the next superintendent.

In addition to focus groups, an online survey was distributed to afford any staff, students, families, and/or community members the chance to share their thoughts about the overall conditions within the District along with the expertise, experience, and attributes the Board should consider in its selection. Input from **402** online survey respondents is summarized in **Exhibit A**.

Participation

A cross-section of employees, parents, students, and Fontana constituents provided input to inform the process. While the data in this report is not a scientific sampling, the information herein represents consistent themes and trends heard across groups or from members within a group.

Individual/Group/Online Engagement	Participants
Board Members (including student board member)	6
Parent/Community Advisory Councils	11
Executive Cabinet	8
School Site Administrators	17
Labor Partners (FTA, USW, POA)	10
Elected Officials	1
Community Forums (English/Spanish, virtual/in-person)	32
Online Survey Participants (English/Spanish)	402
Total	487

Engagement Phase: Themes and Trends

Across the organization, education partners were united in describing the strengths of Fontana USD. The elements that draw people to the District fell into three general categories:

A Universal Sense of Community, Belonging, and Family

A defining strength of the district is its deep sense of community and belonging. Education partners consistently described the district as having a “big city with a small-town” feel, where families, employees, schools, and the broader community are closely connected. The district benefits from a multigenerational culture, with many employees who attended schools returning to the community to work and raise their families. Stakeholders described people as caring, proud, and protective, with a commitment to “pull together to take care of each other.”

Robust Pathways Leading to Student Success

Education partners expressed considerable pride in the breadth and quality of opportunities available to students. The district offers “something for every student,” including strong Career Technical Education (CTE) pathways, honors programs, athletics, after-school programs, AVID, special education and SELPA services, and multiple pathways from TK through adulthood. CTE programs, business partnerships, and associations with higher education were repeatedly cited as signature strengths that provide students a direct pipeline to college and careers. Education partners also emphasized high graduation rates, strong school cultures, student voice, parent engagement, and a commitment to meeting individual student needs.

Strong Foundation, Leadership, and Positive Momentum for the Future

Participants consistently conveyed confidence that the district has a solid foundation from which to move forward. They cited a strong Cabinet and administrative team, effective systems and structures, capable employees, and “the right people in the right seats.” The district has demonstrated its ability to navigate challenges and maintain stability—including declining enrollment in some areas and difficult budget decisions—while avoiding layoffs. At the same time, stakeholders pointed to tangible signs of progress, including the passage of Measure I, the opening of a new school, growth and development in the community, and an improving public image. The prevailing sentiment was that “things are moving in the right direction” and that the district is “primed for the future.”

Challenges/Issues

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

Navigating Changing Enrollment, Demographics, and Facilities

The district is experiencing significant shifts in enrollment and demographics, including differing patterns of growth and decline across various areas of the community. Education partners identified the need to thoughtfully address the implications of these changes through long-range planning related to school facilities, attendance boundaries, modernization, maintenance, and, where necessary, school consolidation. There is also a strong desire that future decisions are guided by a comprehensive and current assessment of facilities and assets. These decisions should be made with attention to equitable access to high-quality learning environments and programs throughout the district.

Strengthening Relationships, Communication, and Cohesive Governance

Education partners pointed to the importance of strengthening relationships and communication within the organization and throughout the broader community. The need to find multiple modalities to reach typically underrepresented populations of the community was cited as an important consideration. Comments reflected challenges associated with differing perspectives among the governance team, evolving relationships between the District and the City of Fontana, labor relations, and a desire for greater consistency and follow-through in communication. Participants also noted a desire to continue to break down organizational silos and reinforce a shared commitment to students.

Ensuring Equity, Access, and Student Success Across the District

A recurring theme was the priority of ensuring that all students—regardless of school, neighborhood, background, or individual circumstances—have equitable access to high-quality programs, services, facilities, and opportunities. Participants noted that English learners, students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and other historically underserved populations do not consistently have the same opportunities and support as other learners. Concerns were also raised regarding perceived disparities in facilities, staffing, resource allocation, student discipline, transportation, mental health services, and access to academic and career pathways. These discrepancies were often described in terms of differences among the City Center, North, and South regions of the community.

Maintaining Fiscal Sustainability and Organizational Effectiveness

Although somewhat intertwined with the three themes above, fiscal stewardship emerged frequently enough to warrant particular attention. Stakeholders cited concerns about declining enrollment, budget pressures, staffing costs, maintenance needs, and the need to ensure that available resources are being deployed fairly, strategically and effectively. There was also a desire to build accountability and confidence around staffing, promotions, and resource decisions, which should be guided by merit, clear standards, and organizational priorities.

Desired Characteristics of the Incoming Superintendent

Stakeholders are seeking a superintendent who brings experience, credibility, a collaborative leadership style, and service orientation to the role. The ideal candidate must have a track record of working across organizations to advance innovation, navigate complex systems, and build an ongoing culture of care. Specifically, this individual should:

- Be present, approachable, responsive, and regularly out in schools and community settings.
- Take time to understand the district's history and culture before making important decisions.
- Build trust with all education partners to create unity around a shared purpose.
- Possess courage and conviction to stand behind important decisions, even when unpopular.
- Put students at the center of decisions and maintain a clear focus on measurable outcomes.
- Be a clear, authentic communicator who speaks effectively on behalf of FUSD.

- Work cooperatively with the Board to navigate politics and strengthen cohesive governance.
- Be honest, ethical, transparent, credible, authentic; someone who “walks the talk.”
- Hold themselves and others accountable and follow through on commitments.
- Value labor partners, develop collaborative partnerships, and bring people together.
- See the big picture, articulate a compelling vision, and think strategically.
- Make a long-term commitment to stay and grow with FUSD.
- Possess a strong instructional background and focus attention on student achievement.
- Understand budgets, declining enrollment, resource allocation, and fiscal sustainability.

Concluding Remarks

The search advisers would like to thank the hundreds of participants who attended engagement sessions and completed the online survey. We would also like to express our gratitude to Executive Assistants, Corrina Choske and Eulina Davis, and Chief of Staff, Michael Garcia, who went above and beyond the call of duty to schedule multiple meetings, handle logistics, and communicate with anyone and everyone.

ESS is committed to supporting the Governing Board in finding the next superintendent who possesses the leadership skills, personal attributes, experience, and determination to successfully lead Fontana Unified School District into its next chapter.

Respectfully submitted,

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Exhibit A

Online Survey Participation:

Role	Frequency	Percentage
Administrator	43	10.7%
Certificated Staff	105	26.1%
Classified Staff	87	21.6%
Parent/Guardian	123	30.6%
Student	9	2.2%
Community Member	11	2.7%
Other	24	6.1%
Total Respondents	402	100%

Table 1: Expertise and Experience

Respondents rated areas of *Expertise and Experience* by scale of critical importance:

Area of Expertise/Experience	Critically Important
Teaching and Learning	348 (87%)
Understands School/Community Culture	337 (84%)
Community Relations	299 (74%)
Fiscal Management	282 (70%)
Experience as a Site Principal	279 (69%)
Negotiations/Labor Relations	235 (58%)
Board Governance	223 (55%)
Facilities Management	213 (53%)

Table 2: Most Important Leadership Qualities (Top 5)

Respondents identified the following *Leadership Qualities* as most important for FUSD's incoming superintendent to possess:

Leadership Qualities	Frequency	Percentage
1. Creates an atmosphere of trust	298	74%
2. Knowledgeable about current practices surrounding teaching and learning	268	67%
3. Present/visible throughout District and community	240	60%
4. Forward thinking and open to new ideas	196	49%
5. Develops shared understanding of District goals and priorities	194	48%

Table 3: Personal Attributes (Top 5)

Respondents ranked these *Personal Attributes* as most essential in assessing candidates:

Personal Attributes	Frequency	Percentage
1. Honest and Ethical	344	86%
2. Approachable and Personable	290	72%
3. Problem Solver	223	56%
4. Exceptional Communicator	200	50%
5. Good Listener	179	45%

Table 4: District Conditions

<i>In assessing the district's general conditions, respondents selected their level of agreement with each statement. The top (5) highest tally of agree/strongly agree are italicized in bold.</i>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
1. Students receive a high-quality education that prepares them for college, career, and life. (83%)	163	171	50	7	6
2. Academic goals are aligned across the District. (76%)	129	177	62	10	17
3. Adequate resources are provided to support student learning. (71%)	152	132	23	75	25

4. <i>Students feel valued and connected to their schools. (79%)</i>	139	179	53	11	11
5. Staff members feel valued and connected to their workplace. (65%)	134	128	83	26	23
6. <i>School safety is a high priority. (80%)</i>	207	115	54	10	7
7. District facilities are clean and well-kept. (65%)	134	128	83	26	23
8. Communication from the District is clear and timely. (66%)	131	126	95	35	9
9. <i>The District is responsive to the diverse interests and needs of its families. (75%)</i>	125	175	56	17	20
10. The District is constantly improving. (68%)	138	137	83	17	18

Summary of Open-Ended Responses

Respondents were invited to answer the following open-ended question: *“What is the single most important issue you believe the new superintendent will need to address upon taking the job in FUSD?”*

291 stakeholders took advantage of this opportunity to share their perspectives. When analyzed and grouped by frequency, the following represent the ten most frequently cited issues:

1. Fiscal Responsibility, Budget & Financial Stability — 66 responses

- Balancing the budget while protecting student services, particularly during a period of declining enrollment and constrained resources.
- Making difficult staffing and organizational decisions, including evaluating management positions and directing more resources toward classrooms and school sites.
- Ensuring long-term fiscal solvency while maintaining educational quality, avoiding unnecessary layoffs, and allocating resources where they have the greatest impact.

2. Trust, Communication & Transparency — 60 responses

- Trust across the District through open communication, transparency, listening, and visible leadership.
- Strengthening Rebuilding communication among district leadership, schools, staff, students, and families, particularly during a period of change and financial challenges.
- Creating stronger two-way communication with families, ensuring that concerns are heard, addressed, and followed by clear answers.

3. Student Achievement & Academic Outcomes — 56 responses

- Improving academic achievement and closing achievement gaps, with clear goals, measurable outcomes, and accountability for results.
- Ensuring students are actually mastering essential skills, particularly in reading and mathematics, rather than relying primarily on graduation rates as an indicator of success.
- Developing and implementing a long-range plan for improved academic outcomes, with consistent execution across the District.

4. Leadership, Governance, Board Relations & Politics — 54 responses

- Building a productive relationship with the Board while maintaining appropriate leadership authority and keeping student interests at the center of decisions.
- Navigating local political dynamics while maintaining the District's independence and focusing decisions on students, staff, and the broader school community.
- Creating greater alignment and unity among the Board and District leadership, with a shared focus on student learning and achievement.

5. Facilities, Maintenance & Modernization — 49 responses

- Addressing aging and outdated school facilities, including concerns about water damage, mold, asbestos, and other environmental issues.
- Ensuring equitable facilities across the District, so students at older campuses have learning environments comparable to those at newer schools.
- Completing and prioritizing needed construction, renovation, and modernization projects, particularly at schools requiring significant attention.

6. Student Safety, Behavior & School Climate — 48 responses

- Improving school safety and addressing student behavior, including bullying, defiance, and disruptions that interfere with teaching and learning.
- Creating safe, welcoming school environments in which students and staff can learn and work effectively.
- Strengthening behavioral supports and accountability, while balancing student needs with the safety and well-being of students and staff.

7. Teaching, Curriculum & Student Opportunities — 48 responses

- Strengthening the quality and consistency of teaching and learning, with greater attention to curriculum, instructional resources, and classroom practice.
- Expanding college, career, CTE, arts, and other hands-on learning opportunities that prepare students for life beyond graduation.
- Ensuring teachers have the resources and support needed to teach effectively, rather than shifting responsibility for instructional materials and resources to individual schools or teachers.

8. Staff Morale, Retention, Compensation & Support — 38 responses

- Improving teacher and staff morale, with respondents describing concerns about workload, recognition, compensation, and support.
- Retaining high-quality educators through competitive compensation, respect for employees, and meaningful attention to staff needs.
- Valuing classified and certificated employees equitably, including recognizing the contributions and professional growth of classified staff.

9. Equity & Equitable Resources/Opportunities — 32 responses

- Ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities across schools, regardless of location or student demographics.
- Addressing disparities among student groups, including students with disabilities, foster youth, and English Learners.
- Recognizing that individual schools have different needs and allocating staffing, resources, and support accordingly rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach.

10. Enrollment, Growth & School Capacity — 31 responses

- Responding strategically to declining enrollment, including its implications for staffing, school sites, and resource allocation.
- Managing the different enrollment patterns across Fontana, including growth in the north and declining enrollment in other areas of the District.
- Addressing overcrowding and capacity needs in growing areas, including the need for additional schools and appropriate facilities.