

Superintendent Leadership Profile Report

Eastside Union School District

December 13, 2023

Introduction

This report represents the findings of the *Superintendent Leadership Profile* compiled by Education Support Services from November 17-December 4, 2023. The information herein was gathered via focus group meetings, one-on-one interviews, virtual sessions, individual email correspondence, and an online survey. Data from this engagement process has been synthesized around common themes to assist the Board of Trustees in its screening, interview and selection of EUSD's next superintendent.

Participation

The Governing Board invited a cross-section of EUSD stakeholders to participate in this process. Approximately 90 employees, parents, community members, and public officials attended individual or group sessions to provide input surrounding the district's strengths, potential challenges/needs, and desired characteristics of the incoming superintendent. In every instance, participants expressed a deep sense of pride toward the district and described Eastside Union as an exceptional and unique place to live, work, learn, and raise a family.

On-Line Survey

An on-line survey was conducted to enlist input about the overall quality of education in EUSD along with the desired leadership skills, personal attributes, and expertise of the next superintendent. 130 individuals completed this survey. Results from the survey are summarized on pages 3-5 of this report.

Strengths of the District

During interviews and focus group sessions, participants were asked to share the 'best things' about EUSD. The major elements that draw people to the district fell into four general categories:

The District is the "Right Size"

An overwhelming theme emerged regarding the high level of relationship, connection and interdependence that characterizes the district's culture. Many attributed this dynamic to the ideal size of the district. "It's big enough to include a diverse array of backgrounds, talents, and opinions - but small enough for us to know each other, care about each other, and take care of each other." Stakeholders described the District as a family-oriented community where employees and parents alike possess a sense of pride, belonging, and connection. Eastside's ideal size provides a setting where staff members, employee associations, parents, and community partners can combine resources and talents to better serve all students.

A Collaborative Student-Centered Culture

Accessibility, genuine collaboration, and mutual respect were described by employees as being woven into the fabric of the district's culture. In recent years, great strides have been made establishing a trusting, transparent, accepting workplace built upon a commitment to meet the needs of all students.

Positive Forward Momentum

While it was noted that a collaborative, student-centered culture is present, there was also agreement that an opportunity exists to grow this mindset to include all employee and parent subgroups. "We know what needs to be done. Do we have the will to do it?" For a forward-looking leader, there is an exciting opportunity to build on a foundation to engage all stakeholders to maximize student learning and healthy development.

The Power of Diversity

Many participants identified the diverse array of cultural, language, racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds found in Eastside's classrooms as a strength. It was noted that students who interact with a wide range of backgrounds during their education are better prepared to deal with these differences later in life. Creating an ideal setting to capitalize on this strength can present challenges, as addressed in the next section.

Challenges/Issues

When asked to describe some of the challenges/issues a new superintendent might face in the ensuing years, three themes emerged.

Chronic Absenteeism

Research shows that students who are chronically absent are at the greatest risk of falling behind and dropping out of school. Attendance in Eastside has been a nagging problem since the pandemic, with too many students identified as chronically absent, which is defined as missing 10% or more of the school year. While there has been some progress in improving student attendance, there is an urgent need to better understand and reverse this trend. Addressing student attendance is only part of a comprehensive solution. It was additionally noted that employee absenteeism has increased during this same period of time.

Campus Safety and Security

Another shared perception emerged during focus groups and individual interviews. There is a concern that safety and security in the district's schools has eroded since students returned following the pandemic. While the District has invested significant resources to support emotional and physical safety initiatives, these have not been fully successful in reassuring students, employees, and families. Proactive planning, stakeholder engagement, transparent communication, and accurate data reporting were offered as possible solutions to close the gap.

The Challenge of Diversity

Public schools across the nation are struggling with how to address race, equity, social justice, cultural competence and other issues that impact students and employees. Underscoring these divisions are curriculum

issues, hiring practices, ideological divisions, and a lack of trust between groups with opposing views. It will take a skilled leader to navigate these conversations to remain grounded in the work of teaching and learning.

Desired Characteristics of the Incoming Superintendent

Stakeholders stated they would like the new superintendent to unify people through listening, understanding, and relationship building. They seek an individual who is a strategic and visionary thinker who can make decisions when needed, but without a top-down style. Specifically, this individual should:

- Possess a track record of success in a diverse district similar to Eastside
- Be accessible, approachable and friendly
- Take time to know and value our work before making changes
- Welcome all voices, fostering an inclusive and open district culture
- Be present and visible at school sites and in the community
- Be a champion for all students' personal and academic growth
- Serve as a convener for community agencies that serve families
- Promote an inspiring shared purpose, vision and a strategic plan
- Work effectively with the governing board
- Build shared and distributed leadership capacity at all levels of the organization
- Employ innovative/effective methods to engage all families, especially those under-represented

Report of Findings: On-Line Survey

In addition to Stakeholder Group input, respondents to ESS's supplemental on-line survey identified the top *Leadership Skills* and *Personal Attributes* they believe to be most important for Eastside's incoming superintendent to possess:

Top Five Leadership Skills

From your perspective, which leadership skills are most important for the new superintendent to be effective? (Select five you believe are most important.)

- | | |
|---|--------------|
| 1. Sets high expectations for students and employees | 56.2% |
| 2. Fosters a climate of trust and mutual respect | 53.1% |
| 3. Sensitive to, and understands, the needs of diverse learners | 52.3% |
| 4. Present and visible through the District and community | 50.8% |
| 5. Builds internal capacity and teamwork | 50.8% |

Top Four Personal Attributes

From your perspective, which attributes should be given the most attention by the Board when assessing applicants? (Select four that are most important to you.)

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Honest and Ethical | 83% |
| 2. Approachable and Personable | 72% |
| 3. Strong Communicator | 65% |
| 4. Problem Solver | 58% |

Respondents to the Board’s on-line survey identified the following *Areas of Expertise and Experience* as most essential for the Board to consider when hiring the new superintendent:

Top Three Areas of Experience and Expertise Needed to Implement Board Goals

1. Teaching and Learning
2. Understands School and Community Culture
3. Experience as a Site Principal

The search advisors would like to thank the 90 participants who attended meetings along with the 130 individuals who completed the online survey. We would also like to express our gratitude to Renee Wilson who orchestrated a seamless process to gather the thoughts/interests of multiple constituents, and to Luis Herrera Marquez for his assistance in engaging stakeholders in the online survey and 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 Eastside Union School District into the future.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Gary Rutherford grutherford@aalrr.com

Dr. Roger Rice roger.rice@aalrr.com

Search Advisors
Education Support Services (ESS)

Exhibit A

Respondents from On-Line Survey (Collected Nov. 17-Dec. 1)

	Frequency	Percentage
Administrator	6	4.6%
Certificated staff	23	17.7%
Classified staff	28	21.5%
Parents/Guardians	62	47.7%
Community member	5	3.8%
Other	4	3.1%
Total Number Completing Survey	128	100%

Select the response that best describes your agreement with each statement:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
1. The district provides a compelling vision for the future.	21	56	32	12	8
2. The district maintains high expectations for student achievement.	18	59	29	21	1
3. The district is working to close achievement gaps.	22	65	23	12	6
4. The district provides adequate resources to support student learning.	21	61	28	13	7
5. Schools in our district are safe.	12	48	36	31	2
6. District facilities are clean and well-maintained	20	66	27	13	2
7. The district engages the community as a partner to improve the system	27	55	29	11	5
8. Communication from the district is transparent, effective, and timely	15	50	32	26	6
9. The district embraces diverse racial, cultural, and socio-economic groups	28	63	21	10	6
10. The district is heading in the right direction.	22	41	31	25	10

OVERALL QUALITY OF TEACHING

EXCELLENT	10.8%
ABOVE AVERAGE	22.3%
AVERAGE	46.9%
BELOW AVERAGE	16.9%
POOR	3.1%

OVERALL QUALITY OF LEARNING

EXCELLENT	5.6%
ABOVE AVERAGE	11.1%
AVERAGE	42.9%
BELOW AVERAGE	34.1%
POOR	6.3%