



LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT

Hunterdon Central Regional High School District May 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in April and May 2024 for the new superintendent of the Hunterdon Central Regional High School District. 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 successor superintendent. Additionally, the stakeholder interviews and focus groups collected information regarding the strengths of the District and some of the challenges that it currently faces and will be facing in the coming years.

It is noted that the top four leadership profile traits selected on the survey, are for the most part consistent with interview and focus group responses. Students, however, who were the largest respondent group with 577 responses or 59% of the total survey respondents, selected the statement, “Be visible throughout the District and actively engaged in community life,” as their fourth highest ranked trait. This trait was also viewed as fourth highest by administrators and supervisors.

Students and community members shared their perception of the overall quality of the district with 64% selecting a “5” strongly agreeing or “4” strongly disagreeing. This is slightly lower than compared to the other stakeholders including parents/guardians.

Technology integration was perceived as strong as is the district’s ability to provide a well rounded educational experience for all students. In addition to transparent communication, and its ability to engage the community as a partner is perceived as an area needing attention and improvement.

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	
Superintendent’s Cabinet, Building level administrators & supervisors (Admin 1 & 2)	23	12

Community	30	104
Gov't Leaders & Representatives	0	
Certificated Staff (Teachers)	106	78
Collective Bargaining Leaderships	10	
Support Staff	11	21
Parents (all groups)	1	186
Students	78	577
Business Groups	3	
Faith Based Groups	0	
Sending District Administration	0	
Total	271	978

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

Among the most frequent strengths perceived and discussed by interviewees, focus groups, and survey participants are the plethora of district resources. These resources include well maintained facilities, the scope and number of courses and programs, and the range of clubs, extracurricular and athletic opportunities that are available to students on a comprehensive, college-like, 72-acre campus. The highly dedicated staff, the active and invested student body, and the community commitment to education are viewed as significant assets to the communities served.

Hunterdon Central Regional High School District has a reputation for its high expectations and ability to deliver outcomes that directly impact student success. HCRHS offers numerous and varied programs and courses to meet the different needs and interests of its students. Although there is room for improvement as demographics change, most stakeholders including students, comment on how student interests and passions are identified and pursued through district

opportunities. Of significant note is the pride in the project-based, diverse, and expansive curriculum.

HCRHS staff, including administrators, teachers, and support staff, are experts in their field, hard-working, and passionate professionals. HCRHS has phenomenal educators who are committed, collaborative, and caring. Historically, HCRHS has been a sought-after place to work.

As indicated by the business community focus group members, HCRHS has working, professional relationships with local and county wide organizations. These relationships are evident through business support for articulated pathways to employment, exposure to career opportunities and through the use and application of expertise that is available with business partners. Collaboration across internal and external groups provide a model for the student body. This view, however, was not supported by survey respondents who desire a higher level of community partnerships. This may be related to the level of communication regarding partnerships.

Additionally, the HCRHS communities are extremely supportive of their schools and place a high value on education. It is a multigenerational, active, and vocal community with a high level of participation. Parents and community members contribute both time and resources to support students. The district is financially sound enabling it to provide a college-like climate and culture for both growth and innovation.

The geographical locale of Hunterdon Central is considered highly desirable due to its bucolic, bedroom communities. It is considered a safe environment. Changing demographics have increased the diversity of the community and student population. The district is working hard toward a high level of inclusion. Despite some setbacks and challenges, the district takes pride in its desire to meet the needs of all students.

CHALLENGES AND ISSUES FACING THE DISTRICT

Concern was expressed during focus groups and individual interviews around the divisiveness within the communities served and within the Board of Education. The need to unify, build trust, and incorporate transparency was echoed throughout focus groups. Continued use of the word “trust” as a factor to rebuild the sense of school and district-wide spirit that appears to have waned since the pandemic was voiced in focus groups and supported by the survey. The highest-ranking character trait from all stakeholder groups on the survey was “Foster a positive, professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators.” The ability of the communities served and the district to come together and address polarization was considered paramount. Further challenges were noted as demographics change for both

inclusivity and voice. The ongoing divisiveness, at the national, state, and local levels has contributed to the overall morale challenges for the staff, students, and the district climate.

While the district provides opportunities for students and community members to give their opinions and feedback, there is the perception that vocal minority position voices may be given a disproportionate level of attention. The result of which is perceived by some as creating distractions that have caused increased polarization. There is a growing frustration to find a common ground on polarizing issues. Refocusing on the students and preparation for their next steps is a desired outcome voiced by most stakeholders. Additionally, survey fatigue or the like, without feedback may have created a level of apathy in stakeholders. This is reflected in the community responses from stakeholders other than students.

Concerns about communication and transparency were voiced as challenges and potential threats to the district's ability to move forward with innovation and staff retention. In light of the ongoing pandemic recovery, there is a need for continued SEL and mental health resources. Perceived inconsistencies of use or availability of resources, including transportation to student events and competitions, contribute to this frustration; especially for students.

Maintaining the sound financial practices and the need to build a unified school spirit and climate are long-term challenges as are addressing forecasted continuing demographic changes.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS FROM FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

The structure of the focus groups was open, allowing for participants to build upon each other's comments. Participants were asked to respond to the following questions.

- What are the strengths of the district and what strengths do they desire to retain and build upon?
- What are the challenges the District currently faces, and will face in the next three to five years?
- What personal and professional characteristics and skills are expected in a new Superintendent?