



# LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT

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San Francisco  
Unified School District  
January 25, 2022

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in January 2022 for the new superintendent of the San Francisco Unified School District. The data contained herein were obtained from input the HYA consultants received when they met during individual interviews, focus group settings, or open forums; from the results of the online survey completed by stakeholders, or from email feedback to the following three probe questions:

- What is working well in SFUSD that you want to see continue under this transition of leadership?
- What are the challenges/issues that the new superintendent needs to address?
- What are the leadership skills, personal characteristics, and/or background experiences that the new superintendent must possess to be successful in SFUSD?

The surveys, interviews, focus group meetings, and forums were structured to gather input to assist the Board in determining the primary characteristics desired in the new superintendent. Additionally, input was collected regarding the strengths of the District and some of the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years. Due to the Covid surge over the winter break, all meetings were conducted via Zoom.

## Participation

The numbers of participants, by stakeholder group, in the two methods of data gathering are listed below:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Zoom Meetings/Emails</b>	<b>Online Survey</b>
<b>Community</b>	81	154
<b>Parents</b>	93	824
<b>Certified Staff</b>	19	399
<b>Classified Staff</b>	11	95
<b>Administrators</b>	49	85
<b>Students</b>	NA	407
<b>Total</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>1964</b>

The community survey report is provided under separate cover and is meant to be a complementary piece 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. Major themes are included if, in the consultants' judgment, they warranted the Board's attention. Appendix A is a listing of the consultants' notes from all of the meetings conducted. They are not a verbatim transcript, but rather capture the ideas shared during the meetings.

## **STRENGTHS OF THE DISTRICT**

The following ideas represent the major themes regarding the strengths of the school district that the consultants heard from SFUSD constituents, generally across all or most stakeholder groups.

### **Commitment to Social Justice**

All stakeholder groups reported a tremendous level of pride in SFUSD's commitment to social justice and equity along with the progressive nature of the City of San Francisco. They value the diversity of the San Francisco community and within the school district. They look at issues and problems through an equity lens and they are willing to name institutional racism when they see it in their policies and practices.

### **Quality and Commitment of the Administrative, Teaching, and Support Staff at the Building Level**

One of the most frequently cited strengths of SFUSD was the quality and commitment of the staff members at the school level. Parents and community members expressed the view that it was the staff that made SFUSD successful. The work being done by administrators, teachers, and a wide variety of classified staff was acknowledged as the main factor for success in student learning, graduation rates, and a culture of caring and support at many SFUSD schools. Staff groups also recognized the commitment of their colleagues in meeting the ever-increasing demanding needs in schools during the Covid pandemic.

### **Wealth of Resources in San Francisco**

"San Francisco is resource rich" was a frequent comment made at many of the meetings. While wealth in the community was certainly one aspect of this statement, most constituents were more often referring to the programs, services, and cultural resources that are available in San Francisco. The plethora of Community Based Organizations (CBOs) serving a wide variety of needs, the charitable organizations and programs supporting a diverse range of interests, and

the city departments providing both direct services and deep support to the youth in San Francisco were often described in detail regarding the differences those resources were making.

The profile created by knowledgeable leaders in these departments and organizations means that SFUSD has a real opportunity to partner with these groups in significant ways. Many of these organizations recognized that SFUSD has made significant strides in working in partnership with them. They are hoping that these partnerships continue to thrive, expand and deepen so that their work and that of the school district will all be improved through their collaborative efforts.

### **Community Schools and Wellness Centers**

CBOs, parents, staff members, and administrators all commented on the Community Schools and Wellness Centers that have been created in SFUSD. There was wide-spread appreciation for the Community Schools approach. The ability to work on mental health issues, nutritional and physical health needs, and aspects related to the quality of community life appears to be making a major difference for many underserved or struggling communities. Across all stakeholder groups, there was a deep desire to see Community Schools supported and expanded.

### **Many Excellent Programs and Options**

Parents, in particular, expressed that there were many examples of excellence across SFUSD schools and they attributed these successes to the staffs at the school level. They appreciated avenues and options for second language acquisition and the availability of dual language program so that students could be biliterate. Community members and staff members expressed appreciation for Ethnic Studies Programs, for which SFUSD is recognized as a national leader. Others expressed the view that the Math program has seen significant improvement in the past few years, and some commented on improved graduation rates. There was also an appreciation for building autonomy to meet the needs of local schools.

### **Strengths from the Online Survey**

Based on the results of 1964 stakeholders who took the survey, the following five items emerged as the most significant strengths in SFUSD:

- Technology is integrated into the classroom. (Teaching and Learning)
- The District engages with diverse racial, cultural and socio-economic groups. (Community Engagement)
- The District employs effective teachers, administrators and support staff in its schools. (Management)
- Teachers personalize instructional strategies to address individual learning needs. (Teaching and Learning)
- District technology infrastructure is sufficient to support use of technology in the classroom. (Management)

The items identified on the survey align with some of the ideas shared during the engagement meetings. Certainly, the view that the District engages diverse, racial, cultural, and socio-economics groups matches the commitment to social justice. Three items – technology integrated in the classroom, effective staff members in the schools, and personalized instructional strategies align well with the strengths often expressed in the meetings when stakeholders described the actual work of high quality, committed staff members at the school level. Additionally, there were numerous comments about District support for technology made by staff members and parents.

## CHALLENGES AND ISSUES FACING THE DISTRICT

While constituents were able to cite some specific strengths and examples of success, the general view across all groups is that SFUSD is a district in need of significant improvement. The examples of success were generally attributed to the people working in that school or program. A frequent comment was that success in SFUSD was more often related to “being by chance” as opposed to “by design.” Constituents expressed a deep desire to see SFUSD right itself and become the District they all hope for and know that it can be.

One specific reflection noted by the HYA consultants was the lack of comments, discussion, and examples related to student learning in regards to clearly defined learning outcomes and high-quality instructional practices for all groups of learners. Many, if not most, of the “challenges and issues” comments made by all stakeholder groups focused on working conditions, political interactions, and interpersonal aspects of the adult interactions, rather than on meeting the needs of students. The health of adult relationships appears to consume an extraordinary amount of the working energy within the system.

Some of the specific challenges and issues noted by constituents as major drivers in the current state of disarray in SFUSD include the following.

### **A Well-Articulated Set of Expectations for Student Learning for All Students, a Clearly-Defined Plan for Achieving Results, and the Need for a Systems Approach**

As mentioned previously, there is an appreciation for building level autonomy to meet local needs, but all educational groups expressed the need for clearly defined learning expectations across the District in all grades and a comprehensive “Systems Approach” to improvement. While Vision 2025 was cited as defining the right vision, almost everyone who referenced that strength followed it up with the viewpoint that the District does not have a strategic, operational plan for implementing that vision and deploying the needed organizational and instructional changes to achieve goals in Vision 2025. Many wanted to see the District define tight alignment around the science of teaching and learning, while permitting options, choice, and flexibility around the art of teaching at the classroom and school level. Stakeholders also commented that they want to

see the District making data-driven decisions around systematically-collected, disaggregated student performance data. Until SFUSD tackles this issue with a sense of urgency and dedication, it is unlikely it will realize significant improvement in academic performance of all learners, and particularly for the student groups with the greatest needs.

A related concern to the need for a systematic approach to instructional improvement was described by internal stakeholder groups, particularly building level administrators, as an oversized, siloed central office that is not efficiently or effectively deploying resources to support schools. Some building principals, CBO leaders, and parents reported that they do not know who does what in the central office or who to contact to solve problems and resolve issues. They also reported that when they did contact central office staff, they received different answers to their questions based on with whom they spoke. However, principals' greatest frustration was that they felt they were often asked for the same information, reports, or data from different central office departments, which caused unnecessary duplication of work for them.

One question that appears to be unanswered is the system's readiness for greater alignment of expectations, programming, and accountability. While there were wide-spread expressions of the need for more consistency across schools and programs, there are deep roots within the system for building level autonomy. While tighter alignment of desired outcomes, instructional practices, and implementation policies, does not require the elimination of flexibility at the school level, it will require some significant changes in current practices at the school and central office levels.

### **Communication and Involvement in Decision Making**

Communication was a common frustration among internal stakeholders and parents. While some CBOs reported that they felt communication had improved recently, most stakeholders reported significant dissatisfaction with the communication they receive and a deep frustration with how their input is ignored or not sought out at all. Many staff members shared examples of poor communication around how Covid, school re-openings, and safety needs were handled both in sharing information, but more importantly whether or not their concerns were being sincerely considered. Timely and thorough communication was also a deep concern for parents. Many constituents shared that they often do not understand how or why administrative and Board decisions are made and implemented.

### **Racial Groups Have Growing Levels of Dissatisfaction**

All racial groups within the system expressed varying levels of concern regarding the needs of their communities, namely improving the group's student performance levels, understanding the needs of their community, and providing critical services to their community. Black parents and many educators are extremely frustrated that very limited, if any, progress has been made in

improving academic performance for Black students, particularly Black boys. The Latinx community expressed similar frustrations. The Asian American community expressed a growing level of concern that the needs of their communities have long been neglected, especially those of struggling Asian American students, and that their community is significantly underrepresented in the leadership of SFUSD. The Jewish community also expressed concern over anti-Semitism within the system.

Stakeholders expressed the view that SFUSD's current efforts in passing resolutions and creating isolated, targeted improvement efforts, one racial group at a time, is actually contributing to greater division among communities of color. The approach may be unintentionally reinforcing a view that improvement efforts are a zero-sum game, where providing increased services and resources to one group is taking away from other groups. The District and the Board needs to take a careful look at their current practices and approaches to ensure they are addressing the needs of all student groups in an equitable manner and are not creating greater divisions among subgroups in the school district.

### **Staff Morale**

All employee groups reported a significant level of frustration with the current state of the District and a significant decline in staff morale. Once again, pockets of excellence and appreciation were expressed, along with recognition for the contributions and work of some individuals within the system. However, the general themes of lack of appreciation of the staff, disregard for the input from employees, an atmosphere of retaliation, and dysfunction in district operations pervaded the discussions with staff groups. Some described the level of exhaustion from Covid, the disjointed focus of the District, and anxiety over the level of uncertainty within the system as major contributors to an extremely low level of morale among the staff.

### **Budget**

All internal and external stakeholder groups recognized the need to address the long-term financial health of SFUSD. While many appreciated the work and contributions from many sources to address the budget issue for the coming year, they recognized this is a short-term fix and a long-term solution is needed. Declining enrollment, inadequate state funding, the expensive costs of maintaining very small schools, and questions regarding central office costs were significant issues that varying stakeholders felt needed to be evaluated and addressed in order to put SFUSD on track to improve its long-term financial health.

### **Board Behavior and Climate**

One very deep concern on the part of many stakeholders is the behavior and focus of the current Board. A fundamental concern was expressed that the Board is taking a scattered approach to improvement efforts. By passing numerous isolated resolutions and creating very narrow

improvement efforts, the Board is creating disjointed and unfocused work for the staff, which may have some limited value, but is not creating a widespread culture of continuous improvement. By getting down in the weeds on issues that some view as politically motivated, the Board is functioning more in an “advocacy role”, rather than in its “governance role” for the entirety of the student population in San Francisco. Some stakeholders reported that the public shaming and criticism by Commissioners of employees was highly demoralizing and counterproductive. Many constituents also acknowledged that a very strained relationship between the city and school district is not in the best interest of students.

## **DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS IN THE SUPERINTENDENT**

While the Superintendent will need to be responsible for all components of the job description for the Superintendent of Schools in SFUSD, four major areas emerged as being critical for stakeholders in SFUSD. These four areas, not listed in order of importance, are:

### **A Systems Thinker with a Laser Focus on Instructional Quality and Results**

One of the greatest needs in SFUSD is a renewed focus on student learning as the primary driver of the school district. A critical aspect of this focus will need to be an emphasis on organizational alignment and excellence. SFUSD has a highly knowledgeable and dedicated workforce that is committed to serving students. The superintendent will need to support the workforce by carefully assessing the current structures and practices within the system and realigning them to ensure they are focusing the core work of the system, namely high-quality instruction, data-driven decision-making, and organizational practices and services all designed to ensure strong student outcomes.

### **A Passionate Champion for Social Justice**

A commitment to social justice and equity is fundamental to the culture of SFUSD. This commitment needs to be supported and enhanced. Much of the work to date has been at the policy level of this discussion. The new Superintendent will need to drive the efforts to move from philosophical commitment to embedded lasting practices that make a real difference for students.

### **An Effective Communicator and Sincere Relationship Builder**

Given the tremendous assets within SFUSD and the breadth and depth of resources in the City of San Francisco, the new Superintendent needs to be a talented communicator with a sincere commitment to enhance, expand and rebuild, where necessary, the relationships between the school district and its internal and external stakeholders. Communication and meaningful relationships will be essential to creating deep levels of trust within and for SFUSD, which will be critical to the success of improvement efforts for students.

## **An Engaged Manager of District Operations**

While an external focus will be required to rebuild relationships with the city, an internal focus on operations will be required to change the culture, organizational practices, and working relationships within SFUSD. If SFUSD wants to change the outcomes it achieves, the Superintendent will need to carefully evaluate current assumptions, practices and procedures. Once completed, the Superintendent will need to lead the effort to address financial issues, to eliminate ineffective practices and programs, and to create an organizational culture and structure that can achieve the desired results and can attract and retain the high-quality staff that makes SFUSD successful.

## **Desired Characteristics Priorities Identified from the Survey**

The following five priorities from the survey are very closely aligned the priority ideas heard during engagement meetings. The survey priorities are:

- Effectively plan and manage the long-term financial health of the District (Management)
- Recruit, employ, and retain effective personnel throughout the District and its schools (Management)
- Foster a positive, professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators (Community Engagement)
- Establish a culture of high expectations for all students and personnel (Vision and Values)
- Provide transparent communication (Community Engagement)

## **CLOSING**

The last page of this report further delineates the skills and abilities needed in the next Superintendent. This draft will be discussed, edited and finalized by the Commissioners and, once approved, will serve as the criteria for evaluating candidates as the search proceeds.

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 SFUSD. The HYA search team will seek candidates who can work with the Commissioners in the San Francisco Unified School District to provide the leadership needed to raise student performance, along with meeting the unique needs of each of its schools and communities. The Commissioners will assess the potential match of candidates and select the next leader of SFUSD.

The HYA consultants would like to thank all the participants who attended focus group meetings, submitted input via email, or completed the online survey and thank the SFUSD staff members who assisted with our meetings. Of particular note, the consultants would like to thank Alecia Barillas and Judson Steele for organizing the Zoom meetings and HongMei Pang and Gentle Blythe for assisting with communication efforts.

# San Francisco Unified School District

## 2022 Superintendent Search

### Draft - Desired Characteristics - Draft

Through the thoughtful engagement with staff, parents, governmental leaders, and community members, the SFUSD Commissioners have defined the following set of “Desired Characteristics” for the next superintendent in San Francisco Unified School District.

#### **A Systems Thinker with a Laser Focus on Instructional Quality and Results who:**

- Possesses instructional leadership and organizational excellence knowledge and skills, along with the ability to change organizational culture, policies, and practices in order to achieve results.
- Has a proven track record of closing achievement gaps for students by ethnicity, socio-economic status, English Language status, and/or Special Education services.
- Balances district direction and building level autonomy by defining district level parameters around instructional and learning while supporting flexibility in the art and craft of teaching at classroom and building levels.
- Has the knowledge and capability of developing a strategic, results-focused deployment plan for Vision 2025.

#### **A Passionate Champion for Social Justice who:**

- Deeply understands issues related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and has a track record of making significant progress in creating and implementing an equitable and inclusive approaches for a highly diverse student population in an urban environment.
- Possesses the awareness of and the ability to address elements of institutional racism in organizational policies and practices.
- Proactively engages with all communities within San Francisco to fully understand the needs and issues in each community.

#### **An Effective Communicator and Relationship Builder who:**

- Develops meaningful and deep working relationships with governmental leadership at the city and county levels in order to make collective progress and tap the tremendous potential of having the District, City, and County all serving the same student populations and communities.
- Creates trusting and collaborative working relationships with union partners through honest and meaningful communication, along with sincere involvement in shared decision-making.
- Enhances and expands the partnerships between SFUSD and the wealth of Community Based Organizations that serve San Francisco.
- Deploys a comprehensive communication strategy for all stakeholders focused on transparency, engagement, and honesty.

#### **An Engaged Manager who:**

- Understands California’s educational finance laws, develops a clearly-defined, comprehensive financial health plan for SFUSD, and advocates for SFUSD’s needs at the state and federal levels.
- Carefully assesses and redesigns the district leadership structure to support the work required of a strategic, results-focused deployment plan for Vision 2025
- Works to attract, support, retain, and inspire a highly-effective workforce at all levels of the organization