



# LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT

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Gibraltar School District  
Fish Creek, Wisconsin



March 28, 2022

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in March – April 2022 for the new superintendent of the Gibraltar 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 new superintendent. Additionally, the stakeholder interviews and focus groups generated information regarding the strengths of the District and some of the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years. It should be noted that the interview responses and survey data were consistent.

### Participation

The total number of individuals interviewed or participating within an interview group was 29. Adding the 244 community members, parents, students, and staff who completed the online survey, the total of participants providing input into this report totaled 273.

The consultants interviewed 11 individuals and hosted 7 focus groups across the school community. Included within the profile interviews were the following: certified staff, personnel, support staff, site administrators, community members, parents of children attending school, the administrative assistant, each individual school board member, and the current superintendent. Participants were also invited to complete the HYA Online Survey, with a link provided on the District's Website from February 28 – March 11, 2022. The survey data was disaggregated by six groups: administrator, community member, parents of student attending school, support or classified staff, teachers or licensed staff, and students. The School District Superintendent Search Survey was completed by 244

stakeholders. The largest stakeholder group surveyed were parents of students attending school representing 48.4% of the responses. 19.3% of all respondents were community members. They made up the second most populous stakeholder group. The third largest participant group was support certified staff at 15.2% of all respondents.

The complete summary of the Online Survey results is presented in a stand-alone document titled Gibraltar School District 2022 Superintendent Search Survey.

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.*

## RESPONDENTS for GIBRALTAR ENGAGEMENT

Group	Personal Interviews or focus groups	Online Survey
Board	7	NA
Administrators	2	4
Administrative Assistant	1	NA
Teachers	12	37
Community	2	47
Support Staff	1	26
Parents of student attending school	4	118
Students	0	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>244</b>

### Method

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 do stakeholders value regarding the schools? What strengths do they desire to retain and build upon?

- What are the issues/challenges this District currently faces, and will face in the next three to five years?
- What personal and professional characteristics are expected in a new Superintendent?

The online survey was open to participants from February 28- March 11, 2022. The survey was available in English and Spanish languages and participants could identify themselves as administrators, certified staff, community members, support staff, parents of students attending school, and students. The survey report presents aggregate data as well as disaggregated by participant group.

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 summarized as themes across the data collection.

The community survey report is provided under separate cover and are meant to be stand-alone complementary pieces to the Leadership Profile Report.

## Description of the District

The Gibraltar School District, located in Door County, seeks a new Superintendent to lead the district. A highly regarded PreK-12 district, Gibraltar School District serves a 513 (\*3<sup>rd</sup> Friday count) student population with an operating budget of \$14 million and a per pupil expenditure of \$25,505. The District serves 21,000 residents in seven municipalities. Gibraltar School District is an exceptionally high performing district with many accolades and recognitions by National Blue-Ribbon Schools Program, U.S. News and World Report, and Wisconsin School Report Card School of Recognition

The Superintendent works with an active Board of Education, consisting of seven elected members, and serves a supportive and involved community that has high expectations

for its schools. In addition, the Superintendent leads a team of more than 183 outstanding educators and staff who are deeply dedicated to the academic success and well-being of students. The District motto is *Engaging Minds, Empowering Learning, Achieving Excellence*.

The Gibraltar School District is composed of one comprehensive K-12 school located in Fish Creek. Within the school building, 210 elementary students are served, and 303 secondary students are served. The District passed a \$4.2m referendum for recurring purposes of educational and operational expenses in 2019 and \$.5m remodeling expenses.

District Demographics: Total Student Third Friday Count – 513

- 0.2% American Indian
- 0% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- 0.4% Asian
- 0.4% Black or African American
- 14.5% Hispanic/Latina
- 80.1% White
- 4.4% Two or More
- 12.6% Students with Disabilities
- 41% Economically Disadvantaged
- 8.3% English Language Learners
- 41% Free and Reduced Lunch Participants

NOTE: Open Enrollment “IN” is 22 students.

Open Enrollment “OUT” is 18 students

The School District Mission is: “It is our mission to foster a learning environment that promotes student growth and achievement, instructional excellence, and academic rigor by offering our students enriched learning experiences in the ARTS, ACADEMICS, ATHLETICS, and ACTIVITIES.”

The Gibraltar School District seeks an energetic and collaborative team leader, excellent communicator, visionary thinker, and knowledgeable in school business finance and strategic planning. The Superintendent leads the development of authentic relationships with staff, students, families, and community members across seven municipalities in small towns, rural areas, and resort areas, and is the face of the district. Being engaged in the school community and being highly visible are critical and frequently articulated expectations.

## **STRENGTHS OF THE DISTRICT**

When asked about the strengths of the Gibraltar School District, groups noted that the community is a wonderful area in which to live and that the District highly contributes to the quality of life because of excellent programs, staff, resources, and facilities. The Gibraltar School District is justifiably proud of the extensive support provided to the school district from parents, community partners, and voters. In particular the community and parents demonstrate a strong commitment to public education and children and hold high academic expectations for all students by devoting time, resources, and money to the District. The school community has high expectations for its school system, as evidenced by the long list of desirable traits for the next superintendent highlighted later in this report.

Families in the Gibraltar School District value their schools. The Board of Education greatly appreciates their trust and support as evidenced by the 2019 referendum passage for \$4.2m for recurring purposes of educational and operational expenses and \$.5 for capital improvements.

An appreciation for staff was mentioned in almost all groups. Staff are described as highly qualified and motivated, caring, willing to go “above and beyond” to help students, and dedicated. Focus groups also mentioned the supportive, close-knit community as an asset. Many participants mentioned the private school opportunities in a public-school setting. The District is viewed as being attentive to the needs of students and noted in several focus groups that serving families in need is very important to the staff and community. The participants noted the importance of continued community collaboration and consensus building.

The school district contributes positively to the overall quality of life. A close-knit small town safe feel combined with a great environmental area make Door County a desirable place to live. Many participants commented that people move to the area because of the schools and lifestyle. The school is the hub of the community and while small in size, Gibraltar was described as an important coalescing force for the community.

## CHALLENGES AND ISSUES FACING THE DISTRICT

The Gibraltar School District is a small K-12 district with 513 students as of September 2021. The Gibraltar School District is changing. An increasing number of families in need are living in the community. Finding affordable housing or starter homes is a challenge. With 41% Economically Disadvantaged, some participants noted the hidden poverty in Door County. The staff may need more training and support to serve the needs of disadvantaged students. These participants also noted the need for increased professional learning of staff in the areas of social and emotional learning as well as building a viable SEL (Social and Emotional Learning) curriculum for all students. Attention to mental health needs was frequently mentioned in focus groups. In addition, participants mentioned the recent high turnover of Board members and administrative staff as a challenge.

The Gibraltar School District is a critical component of the community. The District will need to facilitate community conversations that highlight factual information and build

consensus with a variety of topics that impact both the school district and the community. These topics include clarifying Board roles in policy/governance and administrator roles in implementation, embracing diversity, embracing change, and welcoming innovation and best practices. The District has enjoyed tremendous success in so many areas that this very success may impede its own progress for future growth and improvement.

While the small-town atmosphere was noted as a strength, it was also noted as a concern. The caution is to be alert for insular thinking, cliques, and for the attitude of “we’ve always done it this way.” It is important to fully engage with robust conversation and in-depth research on the topics facing the school and community, and best practices in curriculum and instruction.

Effective communication and transparency, inside and outside the District was mentioned as a challenge by every focus group. Consistent clearly reasoned and articulated messaging to the school community was viewed as a critical need. Many mentioned the need for increased listening to staff. The frequency indicates a need for a greater level of understanding of the process of decision making in the District. Several indicated the need for clearly defined roles for the School Board and the Superintendent – that a governance model where the board determines policy and the superintendent implements and administers is preferred. Current blurred lines need to be more clearly delineated and articulated, internally and externally. The School Community needs to know what to expect from the School Board and what to expect from the Superintendent in a consistent manner.

While numerous opportunities exist for students within Gibraltar School District, it was suggested that the district expand their efforts in helping students explore careers and post high school options. Helping students explore and connect to the life beyond Door County is desired. Additionally, because of the lack of diversity in the area, the district and community need to support all students and their understanding of a more diverse

world they will be living and working in. This challenge is not unique to Door County, but is essential for student success in the future.

It appears that the Gibraltar School District is at a crossroads with some in the community wanting things to stay the same and some in the community wanting to embrace changes. These different perspectives will require some bridge building and consensus building in order to move forward productively. Engagement of all stakeholders is critical.

## **DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS OF NEXT SUPERINTENDENT**

The groups and individuals would like a superintendent who is “all things to all people,” thus there was a wide range of suggestions about what the new superintendent should bring to the position. Although the lists of desirable characteristics from all groups were long, there were similarities that are noteworthy.

Those interviewed mentioned that they desire a visionary leader who has strong communication skills, is collaborative, shows dedication toward the school and community, and leads the school community to a strong strategic plan for the future. He/she should be a highly visible leader who is willing to invest the time and energy necessary to develop relationships within and outside of the district. The future leader of the District should be interested in continuous improvement and closing emerging achievement gaps. Furthermore, all groups indicated that the next superintendent should take time to learn and understand the culture and history of the District to build trust and a positive school culture. It is expected that a new leader will act with integrity in all aspects of the position and strive to bring people together for the good of the District.

The next superintendent needs to have a sound understanding of school finance and instruction. The next superintendent will need to be able and willing to wear many hats – tactically nimble – as is typical for leaders in small school districts. A leader who is a

systems thinker is desired. The superintendent needs to possess the desire to differentiate and distinguish the District as desirable to families, students, and staff in order to maintain the viability and vitality of the district.

Additionally, the next superintendent will need to be skilled in board relations and policy governance. While this is essential in any board/superintendent relations, it is important for the Gibraltar's future due to recent board turn over.

The survey responses, along with the participation in the interviews and the focus groups, are strong indicators of the value the community and staff place on finding a talented leader who can value the work and success of the Gibraltar School District, yet motivate all stakeholders to ensure success for all students. HYA Search Consultants will seek a new superintendent who can work needed for the benefit of all students.

This is an exciting time for the future of the Gibraltar School District. The hiring of a new superintendent is critical for future success, and it is the most important work the Board of Education will do. This time is also one of great transition for the district and the exiting superintendent, and that transition can be bittersweet. The impact of leadership over time is evident in the School District and the District is known as a high-quality system because of the dedication of many. It is also an invigorating time as the Board of Education now selects the next Superintendent for the current needs and ensures a strong future. We extend our appreciation to the Superintendent and current and past board members for their dedication to the community and families.

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 district. The search team will seek a new superintendent who can work with the School Board and staff to provide the leadership needed to continue to raise academic standards and student performance, while meeting the unique needs of each student.

The consultants would like to thank all the participants who engaged in interviews, attended focus groups and/or completed the online survey. The consultants are especially grateful to Evelyn Eckhardt, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent, for arranging the meetings and coordinating the many contacts needed to facilitate the completion of this report.

Respectfully submitted,

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## DATA SUMMARY

The individual and group interviews of stakeholders generated the following responses. Comments have been summarized, and careful attention has been made to accurately convey the message. They are listed with no attempt to prioritize them. The top-rated categories from the on-line survey are also shown. Topics in the stakeholder interviews and the survey results appear to be congruent and that is a positive finding. The variety of data collection methods as well as the presentation of disaggregated data across stakeholder groups produced similar results with very little variance on issues.

### Strengths and Points of Pride: School District Stakeholder Comments

- Community support for schools
- Variety of program choices for kids and families
- Community input and engagement
- Dedicated strong staff
- Commitment to success for all
- Balance in academics, athletics, arts, and activities
- Strong curricular and extracurricular offerings
- Teachers willing to help and support each other
- Small town atmosphere and close-knit community
- High standards for student performance
- Comprehensive offerings and opportunities for a small district

### Top Rated District Strengths: School District Online Survey

- Technology is integrated into the classroom. (TL) 85% support
- District schools are safe (TL) 80% support
- Facilities are well maintained. (M) 79% support

- District technology infrastructure is sufficient to support use of technology in the classroom. (M) 71% support
- District has high standards for student performance (VV) 56% support

64% of all respondents rated the overall quality of education as a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale with 5 being the highest.

### **Future Challenges: School District Stakeholder Comments**

- Lack of accountability and follow through
- Communication needs attention, lacks transparency
- Need mental health training and services
- Understand and improve pathways for underserved students
- Create opportunities for success for all
- Building trust with all constituencies
- Make strategic plan
- Work in harmony with the School Board to clarify appropriate governance roles for Board and clarify articulated roles for superintendent
- Recognize and address changing needs of socioeconomics of community
- Need job descriptions for all positions

### **Desired Superintendent Characteristics: School District Stakeholder Comments**

- Continue culture of high expectations for students and personnel
- Unwavering and courageous
- Build leadership teams
- A relationship builder
- Be available, approachable, and visible
- Get everyone on the same page/train
- Hold people accountable

- Treat all people with the same respect regardless of position or status
- Authentic
- Be visible, be involved, build trusting relationships
- Collaborative
- Holds people accountable
- Honest
- Listens
- Organized
- Problem solver
- Strategic, systems thinking
- Strong communication skills are important
- Foster positive, professional climate of mutual trust and respect
- Strong leader, courageous, proactive, delegator
- Transparent communicator
- Trustworthy – able to build trust with staff, Board, and community
- Visible and engaged
- Work with and provide leadership for Board
- Recruit, employ and retain effective personnel
- Supportive of staff
- Develop Boardsmanship skills amongst all Board members
- Thinks outside of the box, cutting edge thinking, visionary, positive and energetic

### **Top-rated Characteristics of the Superintendent: School District Online Survey**

- Foster a positive, professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators (CE) 72 % support
- Be visible throughout District and actively engaged in community life. (CE) 50% support
- Provide transparent communication (CE) 47% support

- Recruit, employ, and retain effective personnel throughout the District and its schools (M) 44% support
- Establish a culture of high expectations for all students and personnel (VV) 29% support

#### \*School District Online Survey

Vision and Values (VV)

Teaching and Learning (TL)

Community Engagement (CE)

Management (M)

The data from the district survey is provided in a separate copy included with this report. The district performance data and desired characteristics of a superintendent data are tabulated in four categories as referenced above.

Additionally, it should be noted that there was strong congruence between survey groups in their responses to the desired characteristics of the next superintendent and strengths of the district. It should be noted, however, that the responses to defining the state of the district did vary considerably by participant groups. There is greater variance by respondents. The line graph on page 4 of the survey report demonstrates the congruence of responses to the leadership needs and the variance of responses to the state of the district. The variance should not necessarily be seen as a negative issue, rather an issue requiring future study by the board and the new superintendent as many factors may be contributing to the rating.

## **Gibraltar School District**

### **Superintendent of Schools**

### **Desired Candidate Profile**

The Board of Education seeks an educational leader who in collaboration with the Board, staff, community, and students will focus the district on shared goals. After seeking input from Board members, staff, students, and community via individual and group interviews and from the results of the Superintendent Profile Survey, the Board of Education seeks a strong, visionary educational leader who is certified, or is eligible to be certified, as a superintendent in Wisconsin and who possesses the following characteristics:

A visionary, inspirational leader who:

- Builds strong relationships with all stakeholders
- Develops and implements a collaborative vision and strategic plan with the Board, community, faculty, staff, students, and administrators
- Holds a deep appreciation for diversity, inclusion, and the importance of providing safe and caring school environments
- Listens to and effectively represents the interests and concerns of students, staff, parents, and administrators
- Builds strong school board and superintendent relationships with a clear understanding of governance and the development of governance skills

An effective communicator who:

- Fosters trust and respect among the Board, staff, and community by listening, being decisive and courageous
- Has the ability to resolve conflict effectively
- Is open and honest, has a sense of humor, and is energetic
- Possesses public relations skills, is technologically literate and collaborative
- Strives to work with local media

An instructional leader who:

- Empowers others and motivates
- Fosters a positive climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators
- Has a clear vision of what is required to provide an excellent educational program for all students and uses data to influence decisions
- Holds a deep understanding of the teaching/learning process and of the importance of educational best practices and pedagogy
- Increases academic performance and accountability at all levels and for all its students, especially improving achievement gaps
- Is visible, involved and part of the community

An efficient manager who:

- Aligns budgets, long-range plans, and operational procedures with the District's vision, mission, and goals
- Attracts, leads, evaluates, and retains an effective team of administrators and staff
- Effectively plans and manages the long-term financial health of the district
- Identifies, confronts, and resolves issues and concerns in a timely manner
- Is accountable and holds others accountable
- Organizes people and resources to accomplish goals
- Possesses strong organizational and change management skills, demonstrating creativity and risk-taking where appropriate
- Understands systems thinking and implements system strategies and strategic plan
- Is a systems thinker

**REPORT END- 17 Pages**

