



LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT

Ridgewood School District, NJ

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in November 2022 for the new superintendent of the Ridgewood 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 collected information regarding the strengths of the District and some of the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years.

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 members	5	
Interim superintendent	1	
Administrators – Cabinet and/or district level	4	6
Principals/Assistant Principals	8	
Supervisors	2	
Teacher and Support Staff Association Leadership	4	
Support staff - open meeting for all interested members	6	17
Teachers - open meeting for any interested teacher grades PK-5	2	92
Teachers - open meeting for any interested teacher grades 6-12	0	
Students HS	18	6
PTA/PTO, parent organizations leadership (Federated)	16	

Parents grades K-5, 6-12	14	485
Governmental leadership	2	
Community, including Business leadership and Faith-based organizations	60	27
Total	142	633

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 focus group participants and during interviews, as well as reflected in the survey, is the strong academic performance and reputation of the school district. This includes the highly dedicated staff, supportive and involved parent community, and the strong sense of pride in the schools.

Ridgewood Public Schools (RPS) is a high achieving, dynamic school system with high expectations. Ridgewood is consistently rated as one of the top school districts in New Jersey. RPS offers numerous and varied programs to meet the many different interests and needs of all students. The district values the breadth of students' interests and offers an abundance of programs in athletics, arts, music, and extracurricular activities. RPS is also known for their special education programs and opportunities. In general, the schools are perceived to be safe and conducive to learning. There is a thorough integration of technology into classrooms.

RPS staff including administrators, supervisors, teachers, and support staff is made up of high quality, hardworking, and passionate professionals. RPS has phenomenal educators that are driven by students' needs. Staff and administrators consistently go above and beyond as they continually plan for the future, regularly partake in professional development, and most importantly they care deeply about the students. Ridgewood has always been able to recruit and retain high quality teachers.

The Ridgewood community as a whole is extremely supportive of the schools. It is a generous community with a strong level of participation. Parents and community members contribute significant amounts of time and financial resources to the schools to support the students and the staff.

As indicated in the survey results, although not featured in focus groups, is the perception that school facilities are well maintained. In contrast, some focus groups participants indicated that facilities could be improved. Specifically, there is the perception of a lack of space for current programs such as an auditorium and classrooms for the music program and adequate space for special education. Over time, and in order to meet the needs of 21st century learners, the need for space will become an increasing concern.

Ridgewood has a strong sense of pride in their schools and is very supportive of their students. Despite the challenges presented in the following section, the Ridgewood School District has significant foundational pillars on which to continually improve.

CHALLENGES AND ISSUES FACING THE DISTRICT

There exists considerable concern among students, staff, the board, parents, and community members for the static state of the district over the past few years. There is desire for stable leadership to address concerns with delays in decision making regarding academics, student and staff supports, facility upgrades, and financial allocations. Additionally, the new leader will need to balance competing interests between stakeholder groups.

A significant goal for the new superintendent will be balancing the traditions and excellence of Ridgewood with having the fortitude, savvy, and people skills to develop, plan and implement creative and futuristic ideas and programs to best support Ridgewood students. Additionally, addressing inconsistencies that exist among the schools both academically and in terms of support and equity will also need to be a critical focus for the new superintendent.

The new superintendent should possess the skills and experience using data to drive thoughtful decisions, district goals and initiatives as well as be fiscally responsible in planning for the future. The aging buildings and infrastructure will also need to be addressed especially given the current overcrowding in certain buildings as well as the new construction that is expected in town.

Improving the relationships between the district and stakeholder groups will need to be addressed by the successor superintendent. While the Ridgewood community offers an abundance of financial and volunteer resources, they are also a demanding, passionate, and involved community. A relationship builder working with the community stakeholders will be key to the success of the next superintendent.

Transparent communications, the ability to balance competing interests, building relationships with all stakeholders, evaluating curricular decisions and data, and supporting diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives are all areas in which the new superintendent will need to focus.

There is a collective desire for an experienced, engaged leader who is an innovative, transparent, collaborative, student-centered educator who is committed to creating the best possible learning environment for the students of the Ridgewood School District.

CONCLUSION

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 Ridgewood School Board to provide the leadership needed to continue to raise academic standards and student performance, while meeting the unique needs of each of its schools and communities.

The search team thanks all the participants who attended focus groups meetings or completed the online survey and the Ridgewood staff members who assisted with our meetings, particularly Jamie Murphy who organized the search team's time in the district.