



# LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT

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## Florida UFSD Superintendent Search February 16, 2023

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in February 2023 for the new superintendent of the Florida Union Free School District in Florida, NY. 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. The online survey data is consistent with the input of the focus groups.

## Summary of Survey Methodology and Results for Florida UFSD Superintendent Search

The survey results contained in this document are based on HYA's research related to superintendent leadership standards. The survey addresses both district performance and desired characteristics of the superintendent. The categories include:

- Vision and Values (VV) - The leader's ability to provide a clear and compelling vision for the future, align district programs to the broader vision of the district, and uphold high expectations for all stakeholders
- Teaching and Learning (TL) - The leader's ability to guide educational programs, make data-driven decisions, and implement effective instructional change
- Community Engagement (CE) - The leader's ability to be the voice of the district, engage with the community, and involve stakeholders in realizing the district's vision
- Management (M) - The leader's ability to guide operations, manage resources, recruit and retain highly effective personnel, and create an equitable accountability system for all employees

The Florida Union Free School District Survey for Superintendent Search was completed by 198 stakeholders. With almost two-thirds of respondents, the largest stakeholder group surveyed were parents with kids in the district. Parents with kids in the district represented 63.6 percent of all respondents. Teachers made up the second most populous stakeholder group at 15.7 percent of all respondents. The third largest participant group were students at eight percent of all respondents.

Regarding the State of the District, the following statements were perceived to be district strengths:

- District schools are safe. (TL)
- Technology is integrated into the classroom. (TL)
- Facilities are well maintained. (M)
- The District employs effective teachers, administrators and support staff in its schools. (M)
- Teachers personalize instructional strategies to address individual learning needs. (TL)

The top-rated leadership profile characteristics constituents desire in a new superintendent are:

- Foster a positive, professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators (CE)
- Provide transparent communication (CE)
- Establish a culture of high expectations for all students and personnel (VV)
- Recruit, employ, and retain effective personnel throughout the District and its schools (M)
- Understand and be sensitive to the needs of a diverse student population (TL)

## Participation

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

Group	Personal interviews or focus groups	Online Survey
Board	5	n/a
Administrators	7	3
Central office staff	4	n/a
Teachers	12	31
Support Staff	5	13
Students	11	15
Business and Community Leaders	3	n/a
Community/Parents	37	n/a
Community Member w/o kids	n/a	10
Parents with kids in district	n/a	126
Total	84	198

The complete community survey report is provided as a separate document. 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 is the close knit, small community with the advantage of being in close proximity to New York City. There are generations of families that have stayed in Florida giving

the community very deep village roots and history. Due to the town's low population the school community has a "family" feel. There has been growing diversity in the town and the schools which offers exposure to a population more representative of the country.

Florida's highly engaged and passionate residents provide for a strong sense of community in the district. The public schools are the center of the town and the community demonstrates strong advocacy for the public schools and support of the students and staff. The schools have small class sizes and a low adult to student ratio, which makes it seem more like a private school environment with more personal attention able to be provided to each individual student. It was clear through the interviews that Florida UFSD has highly dedicated administration, longtime hard-working staff, and great teachers.

Over the past few years the district has offered a wider variety of academic offerings and extracurricular programming for the students, however, because of the small size of the district the ability to continually offer additional programs does pose a challenge too.

Despite the challenges presented in the following section, the Florida UFSD has significant foundational pillars on which to continually improve. These include an intimate learning environment, dedicated and supportive teachers, and an engaged and supportive community. It was evident in the focus groups and the survey that the stakeholders have an overall desire to keep the reputation of Florida as a safe and inviting school district preparing students to be academically and socially prepared for the future.

### CHALLENGES AND ISSUES FACING THE DISTRICT

As expressed in focus group discussions and reported in the survey, there exists concern among students, staff, the Board of Education, and community members that repairing and improving the relationships between the district, Board and various stakeholder groups should be immediately addressed. Unifying the community and rebuilding a sense of trust in the district and its leaders will be an important goal for the new superintendent. It was noted during individual interviews and focus group sessions that over the last few years factions have developed between stakeholder groups, district leaders, and staff. Transparent communications, the ability to balance competing interests, mitigating the high level of frustration that currently exists, and demonstrating unwavering integrity in all interactions will be areas on which the new superintendent will need to focus.

The successor superintendent will need to plan for and address the decreasing enrollment in the community. Due to the declining enrollment, financial support could be a concern due to a possible reduction in state aid and lower class sizes could lead to a reduction in staff or programs. Additionally, the increase in diversity, especially Spanish speaking students, could require more ESL teachers and support for these students.

The successor superintendent will need to focus on continuing emphasis on improving student achievement, specifically math, and adding more rigor to the academic program while also providing the appropriate help for struggling students. This will help improve the district's reputation and the perception of erosion of educational quality. An additional challenge will be to need to facilitate constructive dialogue around curricular issues.

Addressing increased student discipline problems with more productive solutions and in a more consistent manner will need to be explored by the new superintendent. Additionally, it will be important for the new superintendent to be able to deliver creative solutions for mental and health issues and understand social emotional learning as a way to support students, address student behavior issues, and provide students with the coping tools they will need for the future.

## 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 Florida UFSD Board to provide the leadership needed to continue to raise academic standards and student performance, while meeting the unique needs of its schools and community.

The search team would like to thank all the participants who attended focus groups meetings or completed the online survey and the Florida UFSD staff members who assisted with our meetings, particularly Helen Arena who organized the search team's time in the district.

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

## FOCUS GROUP NOTES

**Group Name : Board of Education**

**Date: 1/19/23 & 1/20/23**

**Participants: 5**

Strengths:

- Quaint community with small town wholesome values
- Welcoming and safe community
- Great place for family, good people
- Schools are the heart of the community
- Community Support
- Good quality of life
- Focus on family, hard work, and dedication to families and community
- Stable community and environment
- People care and support the district
- Strong Union relationship
- Proximity to New York City, outdoor living, mountains
- Surrounded by a farming community
- Diverse student body

Challenges/Concerns/Issues:

- Continuing emphasis on improving student achievement, specifically math

- Add more rigor to academic program
- Address declining enrollment
- Attract new families
- Aging population support of district
- Due to changing demographics parents might not be available as often as in the past
- Discipline management
- Managing the transition to 6th grade from 5th
- Curriculum development
- Working with the Unions
- Superintendent/Board relationship
- Continue to improve teaching and learning
- More open communication with the community
- Securing adequate financial resources
- Address disciplinary issues
- After school transportation/Busing
- Improve image, maintain small town values
- Improve safety and health
- Engagement of parents
- Address staffing concerns
- Overcome leadership issues

#### Desired Characteristics:

- Makes decision based on the best interest of the kids
- Make sure kids aren't left behind academically and socially
- Ability to develop curriculum and evaluation
- Experienced superintendent/At least Central Office Experience with Curriculum and Instruction focus
- Years of experience in the classroom
- Curriculum focused
- Place student achievement as primary goal
- Experience working with Unions
- Focus on professional development
- Strong supporter of school safety
- Able to build positive relationships with current staff
- Proven track record of focusing on teaching and learning
- Must be personable, collaborator, and engaging
- Honest/Trustworthy/Reliable



- Open door policy/Visible/Approachable
- Able to earn trust and respect of the community through communication and listening
- Demonstrate visibility in the buildings and community
- Strong personality, unifying voice, people person
- Solid/clean background
- Makes changes slowly - ability to balance traditions of Florida with new ideas
- Think outside the box, especially with new funding streams
- Proven track record of student achievement
- Ability to communicate effectively, both orally, and written as well an active listener
- Open relationship with teachers
- Leave ego at the door
- Cool under pressure
- Compassionate/Humble/Genuine
- Good judgment
- Will to roll up sleeves
- Accountable and Transparent
- Strategic thinker, management experience
- Willing to work with senior groups in the community
- Makes sound decisions based on data

**Group Name: Administration**

**Date: 1/25/23**

**Participants: 7**

Strengths:

- Strength as a team everyone takes on a tremendous amount or responsibility
- Small schools
- Personalized attention
- Great school community
- “It’s like a family”
- Great relationships
- Able to know all the kids and build deep relationships
- Admin team is “small but mighty”
- Able to have a work/life balance because it’s a smaller district
- Not as much bureaucracy as you would have in a larger district, which enables them to be more innovative and move ideas forward quicker

- “Let’s Go” attitude
- District is like a private school

#### Challenges/Concerns/Issues:

- Room for growth in student performance
- Often stuck in traditional mindset
- Community is polarized/Politics shouldn’t play a role in the schools
- Dropping enrollment/Not sustainable
- Need to create additional programs/opportunities to entice students/families to stay in district
- Once was considered a “hidden gem,” want to get get to that place
- Been at a standstill, need to move forward again

#### Desired Characteristics:

- Strong instructional leader
- Willing to learn about the history of the town
- Need someone with experience as a sitting superintendent since a very thin administrative team and a number of new administrators
- Ability to deal with the political divide in the community
- Good listener/Able to listen to all sides of an issue and find common ground
- Respectful
- Well spoken and written
- Believes in shared decision making
- Respects, values and trusts the current admin team
- Someone where this is not his/her last stop before retirement
- Not a micromanager

**Group Name: Support Staff**

**Date: 1/ /23**

**Participants: 5**

#### Strengths:

- Small community, small town feel

- Growing Diversity
- Close knit/family community, nice people
- Great teachers
- Adult coverage/availability for kids
- Small class sizes, private school feeling
- Strong teachers and principals

#### Challenges/Concerns/Issues:

- Declining enrollment
- State Aid, economic diversity
- Staffing levels/turnover
- Need for more Spanish speaking staff
- Improve community communication
- Lack of technology
- Kids participation in extracurricular activities
- Focus more on Equity
- Celebrate Individual heritage
- Develop a single-minded Board
- Address diversity in the community
- Improve District image/reputation
- Alter perception of erosion of educational quality
- Unify the community

#### Desired Characteristics:

- Experienced Superintendent
- Approachable, good communicator
- Utilize an Open Door policy
- Trustworthy
- Treat all the same
- Straight forward and appreciate efforts of staff
- Financial and Budget acumen
- Understands capital projects management
- Not a micromanager, willing to listen
- Experience with District finances
- High level administration experience

- Strong personality but will to include staff in decision-making
- Proactive in the community
- Experience providing teacher resources

## Group Name: Teachers

Date: 1/23

Participants: 12

### Strengths:

- Teachers are incredible
- Small community feel
- Ability to visit all classrooms
- Supportive safe and climate environment
- Proximity to NYC
- Small but mighty

### Challenges/Concerns/Issues:

- Overcome district and community politics
- Deal with social media
- Work with a changing community
- Resolve post-covid issues
- Embrace SEL moving forward
- Staffing for a declining student enrollment
- Managing change thru a reasonable timeline
- Constant changing of Board members
- Gaining the trust of staff/teachers
- Pursuing the vision of the District
- Develop District trust
- Expand professional development

### Desired Characteristics:

- Superintendent should be visible in the District
- Greater Teacher support
- Willing to solicit teacher's opinion

- Support SEL
- Promote and improve District trust
- Empower teachers
- Include staff in 90 day planning
- Very personable, good communicator

**Group Name: Students**

**Date: 1/31/23**

**Participants: 11**

Strengths:

- Close knit community/Easy to make friends
- Special opportunities at BOCES
- Small class size
- Teachers know the Kids
- Great Teachers
- District Learning
- Able to bring in new opportunities/electives through distance learning

Challenges/Concerns/Issues:

- Open Bathrooms
- Student punishment does not fit the violation
- Deal with an increasing number of troublemakers
- Substance abuse/vaping
- Special Ed- discipline management
- Develop the Drama program/additional fields
- Not a lot of sports or other extracurricular opportunities due to small size
- Change focus of schools from money to Kids
- Homophobia is rampant/hateful
- Rework suspension policies (does not help kids change)
- Want more diverse academic and career oriented opportunities
- Poor school spirit

Desired Characteristics:

- Bond with Kids/visibility
- Appreciates and seeks ut student voice
- Able to develop trust
- Personable, good communicator
- Trustworthy/Transparent
- Don't make changes too quick
- Responsible, accountable
- Improve transportation
- Expand communications to students

**Group Name: Community Forums (In person & virtual)**

**Date: 1/31/23 & 2/1/23**

**Participants: 37**

Strengths:

- Small district
- Small town feel
- Teachers know the students
- Diversity
- Very sound financially
- Location/Best of both worlds - farmland/dirt roads to NYC
- Enough opportunities for families
- Kids are real, not numbers
- Parks/history of the town
- Wonderful principals
- Florida parade

Challenges/Concerns/Issues:

- Focus on Bullying
- Programs for the Gifted
- Divisiveness and anger in community
- Small town is both a blessing and a curse
- More professional development
- Greater emphasis on reading

- Changes in demographics
- Size vs affordability
- Split community - differing opinions on what should and shouldn't be taught in school
- Curriculum diversity/Need additional academic opportunities
- Unify Board, staff and community

#### Desired Characteristics:

- Focus on Kids/Makes good decisions for all students
- Able to move the district forward
- Willing to listen to everyone
- Mediator with the ability to find common ground
- Sincere/thoughtful
- Proactive in meeting with all stakeholders
- Visible and approachable
- Aware of new trends/tools
- Emphasize professional development
- Trustworthy, collaborator, unifier
- Unify and heal community
- Good communicator - provide clear and effective communication to all stakeholder groups
- Transparency with the community
- Appreciate the small community
- Willing to calendar coordinate with community, i.e. churches
- Holds teachers accountable
- Work with schools to address student discipline issues
- Able to take advantage of differential opportunities
- Strong financial acumen
- Sound judgment
- Ability to come up with creative ways to address financial and staffing challenges brought on by decreasing enrollment
- Proven track record of success in other districts
- Able to communicate decisions best on best practices and data
- Working with evolving diversity
- Able to leverage size into creative thinking
- Open, honest and kind
- Grounded in data research

**Group Name: Central Office Staff**

**Date: 1/26/23**

**Participants: 4**

Strengths:

- Small, tight knit community
- Parents are very involved
- Community revolves around the schools
- Newspaper reports on school events

Challenges/Concerns/Issues:

- Enrollment decreasing
- Concerns about keeping current staff due to decrease in enrollment
- State aid
- People are leaving Florida
- Lots of people that don't have kids in the schools anymore
- There's been a lot of turnover in administration, Principal and AP at HS, new Business Official, new head of Buildings and Grounds
- Small admin team
- Instructional knowledge has been lost due to retirements

Desired Characteristics:

- Connects with staff, complementary towards staff
- Approachable
- Creates a comforting environment, not one of fear or retribution
- Cares about kids' needs and the community
- Direct, doesn't "beat around the bush"
- Addresses problems
- Able to help close the gap between the community and the district
- Experienced superintendent
- Good communicator
- Accepts all views
- Honest
- Strong financial acumen



- Knowledgeable about capital projects
- Not a micromanager
- Leads by example
- Able to bring the community together
- Proven track record of bringing a community together/being a unifier

## **Group Name: Business and Community Leaders**

**Date: 1/25/23, 1/31/23**

### **Participants: 3**

#### **Strengths:**

- Sense of community and family
- Schools are the centerpoint of the community
- Hard working community
- Small town

#### **Challenges/Concerns/Issues:**

- Experiencing tough times
- Community needs to be unified
- Sometimes the town's small size is a hindrance
- Great divide in the community

#### **Desired Characteristics:**

- Skilled at bringing divided communities together
- Transparent/Open
- Involved in the community, attends events and interacts with business leaders and community members
- Forward thinking/Innovative
- Strong financial acumen
- Holds students accountable
- Able to solve conflicts
- Understands the strengths and weaknesses of Florida
- Respects diversity
- Embraces the Spanish speaking community
- Inspirational to the kids

