



LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT

Barrington, RI

February 1, 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) Dr. Jack Smith and Dr. Henry Johnson in January of 2024 for the new superintendent of Barrington Public Schools. 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 Barrington School Committee 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.

Background

Barrington, Rhode Island is a suburban residential community with a population of 17,347. Located on the Narragansett Bay, the town boasts the largest share of the state's 400 miles of coast line. Rivers, coves, and estuaries crisscross the landscape, creating beaches, public access points, and marinas that support an abundance of outdoor activities and an active fishing and boating community. The 14-mile East Bay Bike Path, which runs from Providence to Bristol, along with many public parks and playing fields, offer additional recreational opportunities for town residents.

Barrington is located about 10 miles southeast of the capital city, Providence. This proximity not only offers easy access to the capital's amenities, but also to Boston and greater New England, as well as to the mid-Atlantic States.

The community within Barrington supports and values public education, and serves as a strong partner in supporting the learning and well-being of all students. There are four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school, with a total district population of 3,388 students. Barrington is recognized as one of the top school systems in Rhode Island, and all of the schools in its system consistently score at or near the top in categories measured by the Rhode Island Department of Education.

Barrington Public Schools' mission is to empower all students to excel in character, citizenship, collaboration, creativity, communication, and critical thinking, so that they may positively impact the future.

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
School Committee Members	Ongoing conversations with school committee members during the search. Engagement with search committee members will commence once the committee is formed.	
Building level administrators	Building and Central Office combined	7
Central office administrators	14	
Teachers Union	4	78
School Improvement Team Members	42	
Community	6	6
Support Staff Union	2	17
Parents	11	173
Students	3	2
Total	82	283

A summary of the survey results is presented as follows. A full report of the survey results will be provided to the Barrington School Committee under a separate cover.

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 in relation to the following areas:

- **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 Barrington Public Schools Survey for Superintendent Search was completed by 283 stakeholders. With almost two-thirds of respondents, the largest stakeholder group surveyed were parents. Parents represented 61.1 percent of all respondents. Over a quarter of respondents were teachers (neab). They made up the second most populous stakeholder group at 27.6 percent of all respondents. The third largest participant group were support staff (best & steelworkers) at six percent of all respondents.

Regarding the state of Barrington Public Schools, the following statements were perceived to be district strengths:

- Technology is integrated into the classroom. (TL)
- District schools are safe. (TL)
- The District employs effective teachers, administrators, and support staff. (M)
- The District has high performance standards for all students. (VV)
- Students are on track to be ready for the next grade and ultimately college and career ready. (TL)

According to the survey, the top-rated leadership profile characteristics for the new superintendent are the ability to:

- Foster a positive, professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators (CE)
- Provide transparent communication (CE)
- Recruit, employ, and retain effective personnel throughout the District and its schools (M)
- Establish a culture of high expectations for all students and personnel (VV)
- Be visible throughout the District and actively engaged in community life (CE)

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 Committee's attention.

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 you consider the greatest current strengths of Barrington Public Schools and what strengths do you wish to see maintained and/or expanded?

- What do you consider the greatest current challenges faced by Barrington Public Schools and what do you consider the greatest challenges in the coming years?
- What are the most desired characteristics or qualities that you believe the next Superintendent of Barrington Public Schools will need to possess in order to succeed and to take the state to the next level of success?

Focus groups were conducted with the School Improvement Teams from Hampden Meadows School, Nayatt School, Sowams School, Barrington Middle School, and Barrington High School, and with individuals at Primrose Hill School, as well as with students, parents, support staff, administrators, and the teachers' union. The results of the interviews and group meetings were compiled into the summary below.

STRENGTHS OF THE DISTRICT

Barrington has a strong public school system that is well-regarded by the community. The district is committed to excellence, evidenced by its high standards for achievement and dedication to best practices and evidence-informed strategies. The schools have highly trained and hardworking educators and administrators who are supported by an involved and dedicated community of parents and caregivers. The community places a strong emphasis on fostering a positive learning environment, and dedicated administrators, teachers, and support staff play a pivotal role in the success of the school system. The district's commitment to academic achievement is complemented by a focus on the development of well-rounded individuals, with opportunities for students to engage in arts, athletics, and community service. Students' learning and wellbeing are truly the priority across the system.

Staffing is also a priority for Barrington Public Schools, which results in responsive staffing models to meet the needs of students. Leadership sets high standards and clear expectations and provides ample support, mentorship, and consistent feedback to help teachers and staff meet these standards. Leaders and administrators are known for listening to, respecting, and supporting teachers and across the district there is a strong commitment to inclusivity and meeting the needs of all students. The district works hard to facilitate good communication, collaboration, and teamwork among all staff across all schools. There is consistency from one school to the next, yet the district also encourages flexibility and autonomy for building-level administration.

The outgoing superintendent is well-respected and appreciated for his leadership. The community values the fact that he is accessible and has an open-door policy and that he encourages transparent communication. Barrington Public Schools' current strategic plan and mission across the pre-K 12 continuum is viewed favorably and stakeholders would like to see this work continued to ensure ongoing success. The community believes that Barrington's commitment to excellence should be maintained, and that the district should continue to strive to be more than just the best school system in Rhode Island.

Stakeholders believe that the district's middle school culture is also a strength, with its strong focus on building positive relationships between students, teachers, and staff. As the district has strengthened its commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), students have had the opportunity to participate in more diverse clubs and activities.

Finally, the Barrington Public Schools community values its small-town feel and the opportunities available across the system for all students. There is a strong sense of pride in the school system. Students feel very connected to and proud of their schools and staff members are passionate and dedicated to their work.

CHALLENGES AND ISSUES FACING THE DISTRICT

Barrington Public Schools face a number of challenges as it seeks to adapt to evolving educational needs while maintaining its unique identity and sense of community. Many stakeholders voiced concern about the simultaneous appointment of a new superintendent and assistant superintendent, citing potential disruptions to the system's stability and decision-making processes. This apprehension is compounded by uncertainties surrounding school times, necessitating the development of a structured process to study and accurately report the impact on staff and the community. Moreover, there is widespread and genuine fear of losing the personalized nature of the school system, particularly in the face of potential redefinitions of school buildings and neighborhood schools.

Like many districts across the country, Barrington Public Schools must determine how to adopt best practices in instruction and embrace emerging technology, such as Artificial Intelligence, in a way that best serves the needs of students, yet doesn't overwhelm or burden teachers with the pace of change. Barrington must continue recruiting highly skilled teachers and staff and offer the support, professional development opportunities, and pay required to retain them. Teachers want to ensure their voices are heard and their views are integrated into decision-making processes.

Barrington Public Schools must continue to adapt to meet the evolving educational and social-emotional needs of its students. Stakeholders want to ensure that the district is meeting the needs of early learners, economically disadvantaged students, and students in special education programs. Parents express concerns about balancing academic pressure with support for students and the importance of considering the needs of working parents when making decisions.

Stakeholders believe that to continue meeting the needs of students, Barrington Public Schools must find a balanced approach between arts and STEM programs, provide more flexibility for students as they get older, such as allowing them to leave campus or pursue alternative learning pathways, and address issues related to student anxiety and sense of belonging. Additionally, there is strong emphasis on understanding and addressing the diverse needs of students, including bolstering special education programs and expanding career education opportunities.

Beyond the classroom, the district must also contend with broader societal issues, such as polarized political climates and a decrease in civility among residents and a divide within the School Committee, which can further complicate decision-making processes and community engagement. Moreover, Barrington Public Schools face practical challenges, such as the need for fiscal responsibility, strategic planning, and the management of construction and maintenance projects. Additionally, balancing

budgetary constraints with community expectations and streamlining administrative and finance processes in the central office are areas of concern.

Many stakeholders cite communication as a critical component for navigating these challenges, emphasizing the need for skillful and transparent engagement between district leadership and staff. The District must also engage with families to build greater understanding of the roles within the District's schools, staff, and systems.

Amidst these complexities, there is consensus around the need for strong, strategic leadership that is deeply committed to the district's long-term success. This entails not only a keen understanding of educational practices and operations, but also a genuine appreciation for the history and values of the Barrington community. By fostering collaboration, building trust among stakeholders, and maintaining a focus on student well-being and academic excellence, Barrington Public Schools can navigate these challenges and emerge stronger and more resilient in the face of change.

CONCLUSION

HYA and the Barrington School Committee 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 Barrington School Committee to provide the leadership needed to continue to raise academic standards and student performance, while meeting the unique needs of each student and school, and the community.

The search team would like to thank all the participants who attended focus groups meetings or completed the online survey and the Barrington Public Schools staff members who assisted with our meetings, particularly Brian Lalley and the Human Resources staff who organized the search team's time in the district.