

LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT



School District of Marathon City
February 12, 2025

SELECTION PROCESS

The School District of Marathon City School Board has retained the services of HYA to assist the board with the hiring of the next District Administrator. The consultants will screen applications and recommend candidates to the Board for interviews and further consideration. Any questions regarding the application process, selection process, and/or this Leadership Profile Report should be directed to: Mike Richie at mikerichie@hyasearch.com or Scott Winch at scottwinch@hyasearch.com.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) during the months of January through February 2025 for the District Administrator of the School District of Marathon City. The data contained herein was obtained from input the HYA consultants received when they met with individuals and groups in either interviews or focus group settings. The interviews and focus groups were structured to gather input to assist the board in determining the primary characteristics desired in the new district administrator. Additionally, the stakeholder interviews and focus groups collected information regarding the strengths of the organization and some of the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years. It should be emphasized that the data is not a scientific sampling, nor does it necessarily represent the majority opinion of each respective group.

HYA conducted six (6) focus groups. A total of 67 individuals participated in either focus groups, individual interviews or email responses. The same questions were asked during each interview, focus group, and email response, and were as follows:

1. What are the strengths of the School District of Marathon City that the next district administrator can build upon?
2. What are the challenges facing the School District of Marathon City that the next district administrator should be aware of, or which you would like to see addressed?
3. What characteristics or traits are you looking for in your new district administrator?
4. Is there anything else you would like to share with us or that we should know about the School District of Marathon City.

Through the information gathered, common themes were generated by the respondents. In this summary report, we will highlight what those common themes were as identified by the following four groups:

1. Board
2. Staff
3. Students
4. Community (*Please note: due to the low attendance at the community forums, district survey responses were used to provide the community feedback.*)

Process

The structure of the individual meetings, forums, and focus groups was open, allowing for participants to build upon each other's comments. All of those involved in providing input in the selection of the next School District of Marathon City District Administrator were asked to respond to the questions above.

Participation

The total number of individuals interviewed or participating within an interview/focus group/email responses was 67. The HYA consultant held nine (9) interviews and hosted six (6) focus groups. In addition there were 83 responses to the online survey.

Description of the District

The Village of Marathon is located in central Wisconsin, in Marathon County, with a population of approximately 1560. It is a small town located less than 15 minutes from Wausau, (population of 40,000). The Wausau metro area (Marathon County) has a population of approximately 135,000.

The School District of Marathon City serves students in grades 4K through 12 and the district consists of 104 square miles, and has a student enrollment of approximately 775 with an overall student-teacher ratio of about 12 to 1. The District has about 95 employees, with an operational budget of \$14.3M. Education is provided in two buildings: Marathon High School, and Marathon Area Elementary School/Marathon Venture Academy.

The School District of Marathon City is a top-performing district both academically and athletically. At the high school level, we offer college & technical school classes, and consistently perform well on assessments like the ACT and State Report card. Overall, we provide a rigorous and supportive educational experience that prepares our students for success in college, the workplace, and beyond.

The district is proud of our public support with the passage of operational referendums in 2005, 2018 and 2024, and building facility referendums in 2005 and 2018. The district also has a net positive ratio of about 2:1 for open enrollment.

The University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point (UW–Stevens Point or UWSP), located 30 to 35 minutes from Marathon, is a public university in Stevens Point, Wisconsin. Established in 1894, it is part of the University of Wisconsin System. UW-Stevens Point grants associate, baccalaureate, and master's degrees, as well as doctoral degrees in audiology, educational sustainability, and physical therapy. In 2018, UW-Stevens Point merged with UW-Stevens Point at Wausau and UW-Stevens Point at Marshfield. The 406-acre main campus includes the 280-acre Schmeckle Reserve on the north side of the campus. There are 15 academic buildings, and 13 Residence Halls. UW-Stevens Point is organized into four colleges with more than 120 undergraduate programs in 48 majors and 78 minors and 17 graduate programs.

The Central Wisconsin Airport (CWA) is a regional non-hub airport located in Mosinee, WI roughly 15 minutes from Marathon. The airport is owned by Marathon and Portage Counties and is governed by the Central Wisconsin Joint Airport Board. It is currently served by two airlines, Delta and American.

Visit the School District of Marathon City Website for more information: [Marathon School District Website](#)

School District Marathon City District Administrator Desired Candidate Profile

The School District of Marathon City seeks a district administrator who in collaboration with the board, staff, students, parents and community will focus the district on shared goals and vision. After seeking input from board members, staff, students, parents and community members via individual and group interviews and focus groups, the School District of Marathon City seeks a strong, visionary district administrator who possesses the following characteristics:

A visionary, inspirational leader who:

- Promotes a vision of excellence and innovation to the students, staff, board, parents and community.
- Builds strong relationships with all stakeholders and understands the Marathon Schools and community.
- Upholds the core community beliefs, values and principles.
- Ensure that the staff and student voices are heard.

An exceptional communicator and consensus builder who:

Is visible throughout the school building and community and is actively engaged in building and sustaining positive relationships with all students, staff and stakeholders.

- Is open and honest, dedicated, visible and energetic.
- Communicates regularly, clearly and concisely in a way that engages and values stakeholders.

An experienced educational leader who:

- Is a talented facilitator who can motivate, engage and bring all stakeholders together.
- Has the ability to work with and develop relationships with all school district employees and the board, targeted to student success.
- Is laser focused on student success.
- Effectively plans and manages the long-term financial situation and the demographics of the school district.
- Has the ability to to make difficult decisions and holds all staff and himself/herself accountable.

A successful candidate will:

- Have a track record of authentic leadership and continue to build on the good things happening in the school district.

- Have an awareness and understanding of Federal, State and local policy.
- Be committed to the students, staff and communities of the School District of Marathon City.

IDENTIFIED BY SCHOOL BOARD:

Strengths of the School District Marathon City Based on the Data Analysis Collected

1. Board members continually mentioned the strong academic programming that is offered in the district. The board also believes that the district has a strong academic focus with a good balance between academics and athletics.
2. Board members also feel that the culture of the district is strong from top to bottom. The feeling is that the administrative team is strong and experienced at the secondary level, and the entire staff is strong overall. There is very low turnover in certified staff, which is also a sign that the district's culture is very good.
3. The district is in excellent shape fiscally, now and for the foreseeable future. The business manager was also mentioned as a reason for the district's strong financial position.
4. The school board believes that they are a unified board that is supported by the community which has a direct effect on the support of the district from the community. Things are going very well in the district and they feel there is a great deal of pride in the school district.
5. The district has high standards in what they do and they believe that everyone in the school and community are in support of doing what is best for the students.

IDENTIFIED BY SCHOOL BOARD:

Challenges of the School District Marathon City Based on the Data Analysis Collected

1. Growth can be a challenge and being close to Wausau. (Wausau seems to be growing west towards the District).
2. The board feels that the district needs to stay competitive with area school districts. They would like to continue to attract people to come to the district and build on the good things the district has going for them.
3. The crowding at the elementary school is a challenge for the district along with the relatively new administration in that building. The administrators will need to continue to be supported and mentored for their own growth.
4. The board also feels that the district needs to continue to drive the culture of the school both internally and externally. It was said that the new district administrator will have big shoes to fill and sometimes change can be hard on a district.
5. The board feels the district needs to continue to update its curriculum in all areas; but in particular, the middle school.

**Desired Characteristics of the next Marathon District Administrator
as identified by the SCHOOL BOARD**

Delegating	Creative	Strong leader that can move the district forward
Respected	Analyze situations	Keep administrators together as a cohesive group
Open minded	Good listener	Great communication skills, keep all stakeholders informed
Strong communicator	Strong school finance	People person, represent the district
Humble yet confident	Dependable	Strong financial background or the ability to learn school finance
Enthusiastic	Motivator	Positive school and community relations
Integrity	Emotional intelligence	Strong school law knowledge
Responsible	Fair	Willing to learn but not a pushover
Respectful	State and federal law	Relatable to families and community
Coachable	Exudes leadership	Listen rather than react
Ethical	Experienced	Make informed decisions
Transparent	Problem solver	Quiet leadership

IDENTIFIED BY STAFF:

STRENGTHS of the School District Marathon City Based on the Data Analysis Collected

1. The school district is well positioned financially now and for the future. The district also has had stability in leadership; the school board has had little turnover and the business office is also strong. The ability to pass referendums is a credit to the district having a strong connection with the community and has developed a trust with the community due to the continuity.
2. The school district has a dedicated school board, dedicated staff and dedicated students. With this dedication comes high expectations for the staff and students, both in academics and behavior. The staff feels that there is a commitment to and passion for the students in the district.
3. The community supports and trusts the school, as evidenced by the district passing four referendums. Mention was made of the large employers in town (Marathon Cheese, County Materials and Menzner), but also the small local businesses, Marathon Booster Club and other parent groups that continually support the schools.
4. Success in academics and athletics was also a common theme in discussions with staff

members. Staff feels there is a great variety of course offerings and also appreciative of the professional development opportunities the district provides, which leads to the staff trying new things to help the students in their academic achievements. There is also a great deal of pride in the success that Marathon has had while competing athletically year in and year out.

IDENTIFIED BY STAFF:

Challenges of the School District Marathon City Based on the Data Analysis Collected

1. One of the main challenges as identified by the staff is the calendar and schedule. The staff feels there has been little consistency in the schedule and it seems to change on a yearly basis. Another perception is that the high schools’ needs are prioritized over the elementary and middle school. The changes in schedule can also make sharing staff more difficult between the buildings.
2. Staffing is another challenge; turnover is a concern in the K-8 building and in the near future, replacing several veteran staff members that may be retiring in the high school building. There is also a concern with retaining new staff and keeping staff turnover as minimal as possible. The staff also thought the turnover in administration at the K-8 school presented challenges to the district.
3. The growth of the district in combination with the Wausau area growing towards the west brings a big unknown. Classroom sizes are increasing and space issues in the buildings are on the rise. Staff appreciates the feel of, and would like to keep the small school environment.

Desired Characteristics of the next Marathon District Administrator as identified by the STAFF		
Open, honest	Mentor the principals	Concerned with all aspects of education
Good listener	Keep people informed	Conversations with students and staff
Be involved in events	Accessible to staff	Open Communication
Communication skills	Financial literacy	Collaborate on decisions
Not a micromanager	Willingness to listen	Keep connection with the community
Sense of humor	Empathy	Be involved in the community
Have a plan	Connect to the community	Track record - to learn and adapt
Easy to talk to	Visible	Visible throughout the buildings
Technology strong	Compel sense of trust	Maintain chain of command in the flow of communication and order

IDENTIFIED BY STUDENTS:

Strengths of the School District Marathon City Based on the Data Analysis Collected

1. The students feel the schools are safe and peaceful, there is very little fighting or bullying. School culture, unity and togetherness is awesome, down to earth and chilled, a great school.
2. The students feel there are many opportunities for students including college and trades. They also feel the resources they have are very good and the staff is supportive of the students.
3. The students appreciate the number of academic, club and sport opportunities the district provides for the school size. The students also appreciate being able to leave school and go to work.
4. The students feel that the community, staff and fellow students support them and feel a great deal of school and community pride.

IDENTIFIED BY STUDENTS:

Challenges of the School District Marathon City Based on the Data Analysis Collected

1. The students have concerns about the increased enrollment and the buildings being crowded and class sizes are increasing.
2. The students would like to see increased course offerings particularly in adding an additional foreign language and adding a FACE program to the curriculum.
3. The students also recognize some facility issues, such as parking, bathroom sinks and the gym floor can be very slippery.
4. The students appreciate having an open campus but would like the privilege of being able to drive during lunch as it is hard to get anywhere for lunch without the ability to drive.

Desired Characteristics of the next Marathon District Administrator as identified by the STUDENTS		
Be visible	Be at more school events	Build relationships with the students
Be open to change	Be at more community events	Be willing to listen and follow through on what was said

DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS OF NEXT SUPERINTENDENT

Many of the discussions pertaining to strengths and challenges of the School District of Marathon City flow into the expectations/characteristics for the next district administrator. Several of the characteristics that are present in the profile for the next district administrator build on the current strengths of the organization in addition to addressing the challenges ahead. The search team will seek a new superintendent who will understand issues facing the district. It will be important for the new district administrator to constantly foster positive

energy, and he/she must know or be willing to get to know the School District of Marathon City community. The new district administrator must be a good listener, be genuine, be trusted, have integrity, and build relationships that will be the driving force to all of the work in the School District of Marathon City. It is vital that the new leader communicate effectively with all stakeholders, be a good listener and a team player. It is an expectation of all stakeholders that the new district administrator will be visible in the schools and in the community, be engaged and be present.

The next district administrator will also need to be a strong board facilitator, have board governance skills, make difficult decisions and must be able to put things in simple terms when explaining them. The ideal candidate will have educational administrative leadership experience, be a strong instructional leader, and have the knowledge and understanding of school finance (how school funding works in Wisconsin). A critical characteristic of the new superintendent is that he or she **MUST** be approachable, be a people person and continue to uphold the core community beliefs, values and principles.

Thank you for the opportunity to work with the School District of Marathon City, we look forward to finding your next leader that fits the criteria of your stakeholders. The HYA Associates would like to thank the School District of Marathon City staff who helped coordinate the schedules, invitations, dates and arrangements which supported the data collection for this report. Additionally, we thank all participants who shared their thoughts, opinions and suggestions throughout this search process.

The HYA team would also like to commend the high school students who participated in the focus groups. Not only did they have a meaningful conversation with us, they were very respectful to us and each other. This did not go unnoticed and the School District of Marathon City and community should be proud of their students and how they represent the school and community in such a positive manner. This speaks volumes about the climate and culture created in your schools. We value the opportunity to work with your school district and we look forward to finding your next leader that fits the criteria of your stakeholders.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Richie, HYA Vice President

Scott Winch, HYA Senior Associate

DATA SUMMARY

The interviews and focus groups of stakeholders generated the following responses. Careful attention has been made to accurately convey the message. The comments listed below emerged from statements made by stakeholders and they are to be considered personal opinions of the individual making the comments regarding the School District of Marathon City.

Strengths as Identified by Board Members:

- Financially stable
- Quality of education - proof is in the pudding, always looking to get better
- Community believes the district is doing a good job
- Committed staff
- Options for kids - curricular, co-curricular, trades are improving
- Growing community
- Growing businesses
- New families
- Great community support
- Quality staff, seem to be able to keep them
- Good facilities
- Strong financially
- Strong academically
- Growth of tech ed program
- Strong co-curricular programs
- Good communication throughout the district
- Fiscally sound
- Stable administration
- Community support and trust
- Strong core group of staff
- Good benefits
- Co-curricular offerings
- Facilities are in good shape
- Good working relationship with the Village
- Open enrollment in
- Administration is a strength
- Unified school board
- Good Staff
- Everyone is in it for what is best for kids
- Fiscally sound
- Community trust is strong
- Academic achievement
- High standards and strive to keep it up
- Pride in the district
- Destination district

Strengths as Identified by Staff:

- Solid staff
- Secondary staff is veteran
- Board stability
- Business office is strong
- Fiscally strong
- 100% of premium is paid
- Fund 73 is fully funded
- Community support
- Marathon Cheese, County Materials, Menzner
- CWIMA Project
- Student Scholarship funds are strong
- People are happy
- Great education
- Great educational offerings
- Dedicated staff
- Dedicated students
- Dedicated school board
- Good community support
- Good support from business partners
- Small business support
- Athletic booster support
- Community support, four referendums have passed
- Community trusts the school
- Test scores, academics
- Success in athletics
- Strong academics and athletics
- Continuity in leadership
- Referendum has passed
- Enrollment stable or increasing
- Strong school board, cohesive
- Staff is respectful to each other
- Respect from administration for staff
- Work time for their own areas
- Strong experienced staff
- Trust in the staff
- Retention in staff
- Incorporation of art classes
- Community support, trust
- Respectful students
- Community involvement
- High expectations for staff and students, both behavior and academics
- Staff encouraged to take risks, encouraged to try things
- Not a lot of top-down pressure, allows for more time to teach

- Unique of the 4K-8 program, Expeditionary Education
- Offerings are very interesting and great opportunities for students
- Board and district administrator, respond to the needs of the schools and district
- High level of support
- Community has trust in the district
- (PD) Professional Development is strong
- Not micromanaged
- Supported by district administrator
- Strong academics
- Doing what's best for kids
- Innovative
- Strong academics, Expeditionary Learning 4K-8, reading interventionists, counseling
- Dedicated staff
- Sense of community
- Positive school culture
- The community supports our expeditions
- Commitment to and passion for kids
- Allowed us to keep lower classroom sizes in elementary school
- Financially kept us in a great place in order to add staffing positions
- Innovative and dedicated staff that puts in the time and effort to try new things

Strengths as Identified by Students:

- Positive community and people helping each other
- Size of the district, more opportunities for students
- Good partnership with the community
- Letting the students have a voice
- Students support each other
- Good teachers, easy to talk to
- Classes are manageable
- Community and school want to see students succeed
- School environment is safe
- Support staff is good and helps the students
- Class sizes are effective
- Good course offerings, college level offerings are good
- Business program is good
- Wellness Center is good
- Weight room coordinator is good
- Work study/Youth Apprenticeship
- Good business partnerships
- Good clubs and advisors
- Good student character - known for sportsmanship

Challenges as Identified by Board Members:

- The unknown - close to Wausau (Wausau is growing to the west)
- Growth can be good but also challenging
- Young administrators and allowing them time to grow
- Relationship between administration and staff (elementary school)
- Attracting and retaining qualified staff
- Growing, buildings are crowded (elementary)
- High school is landlocked
- Salaries, competing with larger area districts
- Improve the middle school
- Keep curriculum up to date
- State funding
- Middle school curriculum issues
- Space issues in middle school
- Interpersonal communication issues
- Open enrollment
- Relationship with St. Mary's
- Growth, need to pump the brakes
- Growth makes class sizes too big
- Managing the growth of the district
- Teacher shortages
- Small district competing with bigger neighbors salary-wise
- Student behavior, needs are changing

Challenges as Identified by Staff:

- Turnover in K-8 staff
- Replacing veteran staff
- Projects that need to be done - scoreboards, facilities
- Staffing certain positions
- Future facility upgrades
- Replacing veteran staff within five years
- Open enrollment, caps
- Sharing staff between buildings, specials for MVA
- 5-6 year plan for capital projects
- Uncertain budget future, state and federal
- Changing student landscape
- Open enrollment caps, space and staffing issues
- Staff turnover in the next 5-6 years, secondary
- Unknown growth and challenges with it
- Fiscally, referendum in five years or so
- Redo job descriptions
- Inconsistency from middle school to high school, academic and behavior
- Wausau growing, coming to Marathon, enrollment caps
- Additional staff to reduce overloads, not enough space

- Look at facilities
- Gaining trust of the community
- Middle school staff for specials in the morning
- Competitive wages and benefits
- K-8 and high school building feels like two different districts
- Cell phone use by students
- Need to improve high school band and choir, 7-8 band is bigger than 9-12 band
- 4k program is in danger of being left behind, need to keep up to surrounding districts/private schools
- Need support in curriculum and instruction
- Community and district struggle with prioritizing sports, too much focus on sports over academics
- Minutes of instruction, because the district administrator is stationed in the high school, does not always see what going on at the elementary school
- That's the way we always do it
- More inservice time
- Calendar and schedules must be addressed
- High school needs are always prioritized over elementary needs
- Facility study
- Big classes at the middle school
- Administrative turnover
- Teacher recruitment
- Teacher retention
- Retention of principals, stress related in the elementary and middle school
- Shortage of subs
- After Act 10, decrease in communication between staff and board/district administrator, "Townhall Meetings"
- Due to where the district administrator is located at high school, we aren't always heard here at elementary school
- How can we make Marathon School District inviting for teachers to want to stay?
- How can we make Marathon School District inviting for families to want to stay?
- School calendar, look at neighboring districts that have spring break and finish the school year by June
- High school needs more minutes, but this affects the current schedule and effects elementary scheduling
- Inservice, work time as a staff
- How to support our kids and actually have time to work at school instead of outside work time at home
- Scheduling, no consistency, schedule has changed every year for 10+ years
- High school needs are prioritized over elementary and middle school needs
- Shared staff between middle school and elementary staff
- Facilities study
- Referendum (2018)
- Not a lot of space for the amount of kids we have at elementary

- Fresh ideas for how we can make our buildings work for our kids
- Class size is good for elementary but middle school class size is a BIG PROBLEM (30+ kids), and leads to big behavior issues
- Parents' lack of support with consequences in academics and sports; not an enforced chain of command, sports takes a priority over academics, parents have a big pull over principal policies, policies aren't being followed, sport highlights have more "pull" more important over character development
- Insurance (cost and inability to find in-network providers)
- Implement and follow through on the chain of command and communication between students/athletes, parents, staff/coaches, and administration
- Lack of presence of the district administrator in the elementary school building
- Strong presence and able to be a leader and mentor for principals and staff
- Open enrollment exceptions for staff retention
- Being "too connected" and too invested in the school, simply because of your last name and who you know in the community
- Pretty traumatic having different principals every three years, and knowing we might be a stepping stone for a district administrator to get to a bigger district, it is scary to think what that trauma might be after three years
- Mentorship for principals and principal retention
- It is important for the district administrator to have experience of being a principal specifically in a small school.

Challenges as Identified by Students:

- Enrollment going up
- No FACE Program
- Scheduling conflicts, might not get all the classes you want
- Bathroom sinks could be updated
- Gym floor is slippery
- Parking issues, could use more parking
- Open campus during the lunch, be able to drive
- Offer another foreign language