



LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT

Whitewater Unified School District
May 5, 2025

SELECTION PROCESS

The Whitewater Unified School District (WUSD) has retained the services of Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) to assist the Board with the hiring of the next superintendent. 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, HYA Vice President, or Scott Winch, HYA Senior Associate. mikerichie@hyasearch.com / scottwinch@hyasearch.com

PURPOSE

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by HYA during the month of April 2025 for the new superintendent of Whitewater Unified School District. The data contained herein was obtained from the 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.

HYA and the Board intend to meet the challenge of finding an individual who possesses the skills and character traits required to meet the district's needs. The search team will focus its recruitment on candidates who possess leadership qualities congruent with the profile.

The search team would like to thank the Whitewater Unified School District for the opportunity to find your next leader that fits the criteria of your stakeholders. HYA would like to thank all of the participants who attended focus group meetings or completed the online survey and the WUSD staff who helped coordinate the schedules, invitations, dates and arrangements which supported the data collection for this report.

Respectfully submitted,
Dr. Mike Richie, HYA Vice President
Scott Winch, HYA Senior Associate

DESCRIPTION OF THE DISTRICT

Whitewater Unified School District (WUSD) is considered a fringe rural district, as it has elements of rural and suburban communities. The City of Whitewater has a population of approximately 14,500. Whitewater is located in southern Wisconsin, approximately 45 miles west of Milwaukee, 45 miles east of Madison, and 100 miles northwest of Chicago. WUSD spans over 200 square miles. The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, with an enrollment of over 10,500 students, offers residents a variety of cultural and educational opportunities. As well, the WUSD has an active intern program that supplies the district with cutting-edge intern opportunities. Whitewater is a vibrant, diverse community with a growing population of multilingual families. WUSD believes that all students can succeed. Every Student, Every Day, in a Unified Way.

The district serves 2000 (PK-12) students in three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Whitewater Unified School District is committed to a focus on educational excellence for its students, professional staff, and entire community. The District has 350 employees and a general fund budget of approximately \$32 million.

Mission - Whitewater Unified School District inspires and empowers students to achieve excellence in a safe, innovative educational environment.

Vision - Every Student, Every Day, in a Unified Way.

Inclusionary Statement - The Whitewater Unified School District celebrates and values community. We support and are inclusive of all students, staff, families, and community members. All are welcome and safe in our schools. We take seriously our responsibility to provide safe, nondiscriminatory, and inclusive environments for all people. We will continue to staunchly protect the rights of all people. All children will be safe and loved in our schools...Every Student, Every Day, in a Unified Way.

Core Values

- Students as our #1 priority
- High expectations for student achievement
- Respect for and appreciation of human diversity
- Excellence in teaching, leadership, and service
- School, community and family partnerships
- Responsible planning and management of resources
- Education as the foundation of a strong community

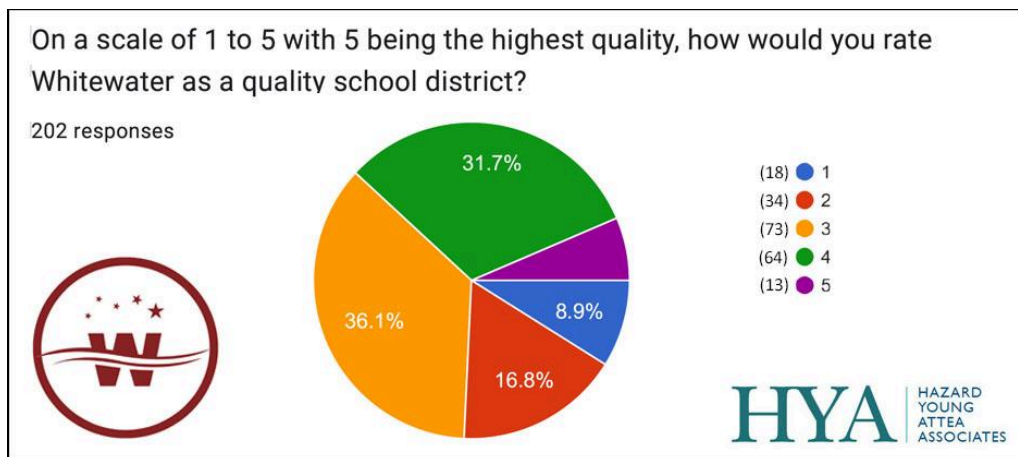
District Highlights

- 2024 Best Communities for Music Education
- 2024 Herb Kohl Teacher Fellowship Award
- 2025 WHS Robotics Team World Championship Qualifier
- Early Implementation of the Science of Reading/ Structured Literacy, making the district a model for site visits from across the state. The District improved overall rates of performing at or above proficiency from 26% to 53% in the Winter of 2025.
- Improving DPI State Report Cards
- WUSD has successfully passed both operational and capital referendums since 2015, showing an outpouring of community support

Visit the Whitewater Unified School District website for more information: <https://www.wwusd.org/>

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

From April 14 to 23, 2025, an online survey was conducted for all stakeholders. The Whitewater Unified School District received a notably high response rate for a district of its size, with 202 participants. Certified/Licensed Staff gave the highest average rating (3.7), while Community Members gave the lowest (2.7).



To shape the search for a new superintendent, the HYA Associates gathered valuable insights through surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions. These efforts aimed to identify the key qualities desired in the next leader while also highlighting WUSD's strengths and challenges ahead. Common themes voiced by multiple groups were used to build a well-rounded leadership profile, ensuring the selected candidate aligns with the district's needs and vision. It should be emphasized that the data is not a scientific sampling, nor does it necessarily represent the majority opinion of each respective group.

The HYA Associates conducted individual interviews with all seven (7) current School Board members, along with eleven (11) focus groups (both in-district and virtual), ensuring that a broad range of perspectives are considered in the superintendent search.

The following questions were asked during each interview and focus group:

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

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

- School Board
- Community/Parents
- Staff
- Students

PROCESS

The structure of the individual meetings and focus groups was open, allowing for participants to build upon each other's comments. All of those involved in providing input were asked to respond to the questions on page 4.

PARTICIPATION

Responses were gathered from individual interviews and focus groups. The HYA consultants conducted 7 individual interviews and hosted 11 focus groups.

Whitewater Unified School District Focus Groups/Interviews
School Board (7 individual interviews)
Focus Group 1: All District Staff (virtual)
Focus Group 2: Administrative Team
Focus Group 3: District Office Staff
Focus Group 4: High School Students (Grades 9 - 12)
Focus Group 5: Outgoing Superintendent
Focus Group 6: All District Staff
Focus Group 7: Parents and Community Members
Focus Group 8: Business, Civic Groups, Parents and Community Members (virtual)
Focus Group 9: All District Staff (virtual)
Focus Group 10: Business, Civic Groups, Parents and Community Members (virtual)
Focus Group 11: Business, Civic Groups, Parents and Community Members

Strengths of the Whitewater Unified School District as identified by BOARD OF DIRECTORS

(Based on interviews and personal statements)

Academic Opportunities

- The district serves as a model for others in the implementation of the Science of Reading.
- The robotics team competes at the national level.
- Dual credit programs and youth apprenticeship opportunities are key strengths of the district.
- Overall, students are recognized as one of the district's greatest strengths.

Community Support

- The “Whitewater Yes” group was specifically highlighted as a major supporter of the school district.
- A passionate group of community members consistently advocates for and supports the schools.
- The district benefits from an organized and engaged alumni network.
- There is a record of success in passing referendums.

Dedicated Staff & Leadership

- The district has a strong and effective leadership team in place.
- Teachers are exceptional, consistently going above and beyond to support their students.
- The diversity among staff members is recognized as a significant strength of the district.

Location

- The University in town is a major asset, providing interns and volunteers to support the district.
- The district benefits from strong professional development opportunities offered by both the University and CESA 2, which is also located within the community.
- The small town atmosphere enhances the district’s sense of community and connection.
- Proximity to Milwaukee, Madison and Chicago.

Challenges of the Whitewater Unified School District as identified by BOARD OF DIRECTORS

(Based on interviews and personal statements)

Demographics of the District

- Diversity is recognized as both a strength and a challenge, particularly in ensuring equitable allocation of resources to all students.
- The district is experiencing an increase in the number of students receiving special education services, as well as in the low income and English Language Learner (ELL) populations.
- Political polarization, influenced by national trends, is evident within the community.

In-School Environment

- There is a perception of favoritism within the district, with some individuals receiving opportunities that others do not.
- Participation in athletics and extracurricular activities could be strengthened across the district.

Communication

- Communication with all stakeholders needs to be more consistent and transparent.
- Tension exists between the district and the village, with the School Resource Officer (SRO) agreement cited as a particular point of concern.
- The district may pursue an operational referendum as early as 2026.

Enrollment

- Declining enrollment remains a concern, especially with the number of students choosing to open enroll out of the district.
- The transient nature of the migrant population makes it challenging for the district to plan effectively.
- An increasing number of students experiencing poverty is also a growing concern for the district.

Top Five Desired Characteristics of the next Whitewater Superintendent as identified by SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS	
Leadership	Clear and Concise Communicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The superintendent should be data driven, be innovative yet respect the traditions of the district.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The superintendent must collaborate and communicate with all of the district's stakeholders, including all board members.
Experience - Instruction & Finance	Community Minded
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The superintendent should have a collaborative mindset and be efficient in handling the budget.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The superintendent should be integrated in the community and provide consistent opportunities for all stakeholders to provide input.
Interpersonal Skills	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The superintendent should be relationship oriented, that is a people person that respects the diversity in the district and is open and honest with all stakeholders.	

Strengths of the Whitewater Unified School District as identified by PARENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

(Based on interviews and personal statements)

Dedicated and Passionate Staff

- WUSD benefits from a team of passionate and dedicated educators and staff.
- Numerous staff roles and titles were recognized for their high quality and commitment to student success.

Community Focus & Support

- There is strong community support for education, as demonstrated by the recent successful referendum.
- Community members and volunteers generously contribute their time and energy to support the district's mission.

Whitewater: A Great Town

- The district has a valuable partnership with UW-Whitewater, providing opportunities for collaboration, including student teachers and interns in classrooms.
- The town offers many opportunities and its proximity to urban areas enhance accessibility and regional engagement.

Strong Curriculum & Programming

- Whitewater was recognized as being “ahead of the game” in key instructional areas, including its proactive approach to Act 20.
- The district also emphasizes academic-based extracurricular programs such as robotics and Forensics, which enrich student learning.

Welcoming Campus

- The district has a welcoming, inclusive, and diverse school culture - noted was the high school.
- Creative and efficient use of space demonstrates the district’s commitment to providing a high quality learning environment for all students.

Challenges of the Whitewater Unified School District as identified by

PARENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

(Based on interviews and personal statements)

Communication & Community Engagement

- Improved communication and greater transparency with parents and the community are needed.
- Both internal and external communication processes need attention.
- The school district’s website is not user friendly, limiting sharing and updating information

Need for Vision & Follow Through

- The district needs to reengage and bring the school and community together, needs vision and a clear direction.
- Follow through on decisions needs to be more consistent, supported by clear plans.
- A collaborative approach to problem solving is essential.

Relationship Building

- Parents and community members fear repercussions and retaliation if they speak out, limiting open dialogue.
- Establishing a unifying group, such as a superintendent advisory group, could strengthen trust and communication.
- Rebuilding relationships is critical for both district and student success.

Student Needs & Behaviors

- Some students have behavioral challenges and a lack of respect, bringing a need for consistent discipline practices.
- The district is seeing a number of students choosing to open enroll to neighboring districts.

- Special education needs are not being fully met in all classrooms, indicating stronger support and resources.

Financial Concerns

- Communication regarding financial information needs to be clearer, and shared with the public.
- Uncertainty around a potential operational referendum has raised questions about how district funds are being allocated and managed.

Top Five Desired Characteristics of the next Whitewater Superintendent as identified by PARENTS and COMMUNITY MEMBERS	
Leader - Relationship Builder	Community Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The superintendent must be a relationship driven leader, someone who not only speaks about building bridges but takes meaningful action and follows through. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The superintendent should be present in the schools and visibly active in the community, making it a priority to understand and connect with the town and people of Whitewater.
Instructional - Leadership Experience	Effective Communicator & Listener
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The superintendent should have knowledge in all areas of education, preferably with classroom experience. They must be passionate about education and deeply committed to doing what is best for students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The superintendent must not only be a strong communicator, but a good listener. Someone who is willing to take in new ideas and learn. This person will be able to talk with students, parents and the community.
Strong Interpersonal Skills	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The superintendent must be empathetic and genuinely care about both students and staff. They should demonstrate respect, professionalism, open mindedness, and a willingness to think creatively and innovatively. 	

Strengths of the Whitewater Unified School District as identified by STAFF

(Based on interviews and personal statements)

Dedicated & High-Quality Staff

- Staff members feel that their colleagues are committed, caring, and hardworking.
- The dedication and nurturing nature of the teaching staff, going above and beyond for students.
- The district leadership team is top notch.
- Teachers are passionate about getting data and having data drive decisions and best practices.

Focus on Students & Inclusivity

- The district values and supports its diverse student body.
- There is a strong focus on equity and inclusion, with efforts to support multilingual learners.
- Many appreciate the wide variety of educational programs offered to meet individual student needs.

Community Support

- The strong sense of community within the district.
- Community involvement and support for the schools (Lions Club, Rotary).
- Support of referendums.

Academic Progress & Opportunities

- The district has a focus of improving academic outcomes and providing diverse opportunities for students.
- Progress in literacy and academic achievement through PLC and professional development.
- A variety of academic and extra-curricular offerings are a strength.

Positive Culture & Collaboration

- A supportive and collaborative environment is valued.
- Relationships within certain buildings are strong, and staff value community.
- The staff works well as a team across the district and within schools.
- Joint collaboration between the elementary schools and 6-12.

Challenges of the Whitewater Unified School District as identified by STAFF

(Based on interviews and personal statements)

Communication & Transparency

- A lack of clear and consistent communication from administration to staff and among different school buildings.
- The need for clarity as to who does what job, who to contact for certain needs, and the feeling of disconnect.
- Concerns about principals making decisions without adequate input from staff.
- A need for greater transparency in district decisions and policies.

Community & School District Relationship

- Divisions within the community and a lack of trust between the community and school administration.
- Negative perceptions of the district within the community and high staff turnover.
- Aquatic center has caused some tension between the community/city/school with an expired agreement, but should be completed prior to the new superintendent starting.
- The district's relationship with UW-Whitewater can be improved.

Support for Student Needs

- A lack of sufficient support for the growing number of non-English speakers.
- The need for more resources to address student mental health issues.
- Improving academic performance and ensuring high quality instruction for all students.
- Increasing academic rigor and the need to support all learners, including advanced students.

Declining Enrollment

- Enrollment in 4K is decreasing.
- The district has a higher number of students open enrolling out (258) than enrolling in (56).
- Elementary school attendance boundaries need to be reviewed and updated; current maps are outdated.
- Lacking resources to meet basic family needs (housing, transportation, language barrier, poverty, diversity).
- The high cost of housing in Whitewater is a barrier for many families.

Staff Related Concerns

- Discrepancies with wages and the absence of a clear salary schedule may be causes for staff leaving.
- Low staff morale and feelings of a lack of autonomy.

Top Five Desired Characteristics of the next Whitewater Superintendent as identified by SCHOOL DISTRICT STAFF	
Visible & Engaged	Visionary & Collaborative Leadership
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The superintendent should be visible and actively engaged in the schools and the community, demonstrating a genuine interest in the students and staff and understanding the needs of the district.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The next leader should have a clear, inclusive vision for the future of the schools, who is student centered, prioritizes academic excellence and the well being of all students, making decisions in their best interest.
Supportive & Collaborative	Trust Builder
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The superintendent should be a leader who is supportive of teachers and staff, values their input, fosters a collaborative work environment, and is willing to hold people accountable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The superintendent must have characteristics such as honesty, integrity, transparency, and fairness, and the ability to build trust and make ethical decisions.
Strong Communication & Interpersonal Skills	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Whitewater Superintendent must be an effective communicator, transparent, approachable, and a good listener, capable of building trust and positive relationships with staff, students, families, and the community.	

Strengths of the Whitewater Unified School District as identified by HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

(Based on interviews and personal statements)

Opportunities for Growth

- Access to high quality Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs.
- Strong dual credit and college credit course offering.
- Involvement in service projects.
- Successful robotics team.
- Many volunteer opportunities.

Supportive & Dedicated Staff

- Students feel encouraged by school staff.
- Teachers are committed and go above and beyond to support student success.

Community Involvement & Welcoming Environment

- Strong support from the local community.
- Schools are welcoming and foster a positive environment.
- Students experience a great sense of belonging and community.

Recognition & Student Relationships

- Student achievements in sports and academics are celebrated.
- High school students serve as mentors to elementary students.
- There are many talented and accomplished students in the high school.

Culture & Diversity

- Cultural awareness is promoted.
- Diversity is recognized and celebrated throughout the district.

Challenges of the Whitewater Unified School District as identified by HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

(Based on interviews and personal statements)

Academic Pressure

- Students feel that there is too much emphasis on testing, with instruction geared toward test prep rather than learning.
- Need for transparency on what the test scores indicate about student learning.
- The focus on test scores comes at the expense of focusing on the whole child.
- The amount and emphasis on homework contributes to student stress.

Student Input & Resources

- Students would benefit from clearer communication about the resources available to them.
- There is a need for more support and resources for students with disabilities.
- Students need to seek out the opportunities in the schools, they could use better guidance.
- Students want a stronger voice in decision making and be more actively involved in the conversation.

Improving Post-High School Preparedness

- More college readiness and college prep programs are needed.
- There is a need for support to ensure that students are prepared to succeed in college.
- Offer more specialized classes, such as business classes to support FBLA, and classes to support extracurriculars like Forensics.

Additional Student Concerns

- The need for greater awareness, appreciation and support for sports, including efforts to increase competitiveness.
- Equal funding and resources for both sports and other extracurricular activities.
- The district could improve in recognizing diversity through more inclusive student experiences.

Top Desired Characteristics of the next Whitewater Superintendent as identified by WHITEWATER HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS	
Involved in the School & Community	Effective Communicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The superintendent must have a strong presence in the schools and at events, being actively visible, and being a member of the community. Strengthening the partnership with UW-Whitewater.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The superintendent should be open to new ideas, hearing student voices - finding the whispered voices. They should value student perspectives and include them in decision making processes.
Interpersonal Qualities	Education & School Focused
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The superintendent should be a relationship builder, someone who is unifying and has integrity. It's important that they are politically unbiased and focus on the best interests of students, staff, and the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The superintendent should have a strong background in teaching and education, with a clear focus on supporting schools and student learning.

FINDINGS / THEMES

Many of the discussions pertaining to strengths and challenges for the Whitewater Unified School District flow into the expectations for the next superintendent. Several of the characteristics that are present in the profile for the next superintendent 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.

When the data from interviews and focus groups were combined, common themes emerged. Notably, there was more agreement across groups than differences. Strengths were almost universally shared, while challenges varied more across groups. The desired characteristics for the next superintendent were also aligned. This consistency is seen as a positive aspect of the search and will provide clarity and focus for both the board and the new superintendent.

The following themes are supported by the combined data.

STRENGTHS

High Student Success

Groups consistently emphasized supporting the success of the student body. Progress in improving literacy and academic achievement is a priority. A wide variety of curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular offerings were seen as strengths.

Dedicated Staff

All groups highlighted the dedication and compassion of the Whitewater staff. Respondents expressed that staff genuinely care for their students, fostering a welcoming, nurturing and supportive environment. It is important to retain and recruit high quality educators as they are a key asset to the district. Another key strength was having strong principals and administrators.

Supportive Community

Along with caring teachers, the theme of a supportive community was identified as a strength. The community of Whitewater supports students, educators and their resources. This is evident with the recent successful referendum.

Commitment to Nurturing School Culture

Whitewater is a diverse community, several groups highlighted the district's focus on inclusion as a strength. The strong focus on equity and inclusion from district leadership was mentioned as a priority.

Strong parent-teacher groups were acknowledged which contributes to the success of all students. Balanced priorities were mentioned, including social emotional growth and academic growth. Also noted were strengths in organizational cohesion, efficiency, professional development of staff, and referendum campaigning, all of which contribute to a successful school culture.

CHALLENGES

Communication & Division

Multiple groups highlighted a divide and lack of trust within the community, potentially stemming from past situations and communication issues. There is a desire for greater transparency and accountability from leadership, including fair and consistent decision making. Some groups expressed concerns about the influence of political agendas and a desire to the district to remain apolitical

Staffing

Limited state funding impacts staffing throughout the state. The staff focus groups in particular mentioned low staff morale, lack of teacher autonomy, and difficulties with retaining and recruiting staff. Stagnant wages and the lack of a clear salary schedule contribute to these challenges.

Student Needs & Achievement

Consistently, concerns were raised about meeting the diverse needs of all students, including those with disabilities, English language learners, and those performing at or above grade level. There were also concerns about academic achievement and the need to improve test scores.

Financial & Infrastructure

Community engagement revealed financial concerns and issues surrounding the budget and the wise use of funds are a challenge. There is also the need to ensure safety in all schools and address issues with building maintenance, such as heating and air conditioning.

DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEXT SUPERINTENDENT

Honesty & Integrity

The superintendent must be honest, have high integrity, and act with moral principles. The Whitewater community wants a superintendent who is supportive of staff, approachable, and willing to listen to their concerns and recommendations. Other desired traits include kindness, empathy, compassion, energy, being innovative, and being apolitical.

Transparency & Openness

All groups highlighted that the superintendent must have openness and transparency in communication and decision making. People want a superintendent who is accessible, communicative, and willing to share information.

Community Minded, Visible & Collaborative Leadership

There's a strong desire for a superintendent who is community focused, understands the local context, and actively engages with community members. Characteristics like strong, assertive, and visionary leadership were mentioned, with a desire for someone who can bring positive change and provide clear direction. Many want a collaborative leader who respects the expertise of others and works well with staff, administrators, and the board.

Student & Educator Focused

A key requirement is that the superintendent must have a focus on education, academic achievement, and student well-being. Some group members mentioned the importance of fiscal responsibility and using funds wisely, contributing to the success of all students.

WHITEWATER SUPERINTENDENT DESIRED CANDIDATE PROFILE

The Whitewater Unified School District seeks a superintendent who in collaboration with the board, staff, students, parents and community, will focus the district on shared goals and vision. After seeking input from stakeholders through individual and group interviews, focus groups, and an online survey, the Whitewater Unified School District seeks an engaged, visionary superintendent who possesses the following characteristics:

Approachable, Personable & Compassionate

- Actively promotes an environment where everyone feels valued and involved, ensuring all voices are heard.
- Engaging as a member of the community and in the schools, an approachable listener with an open door policy.
- Consider the perspectives of all Whitewater Unified School District members, encouraging friendly, open communication making others feel heard and valued.

Involved Community Member

- Actively participates in school, activities, and community events to strengthen relationships.
- Partners with local businesses, civic groups and UW-Whitewater to strengthen community ties and support mutual goals.
- Actively promotes an environment where everyone feels valued and involved, ensuring all voices are heard.

Cultivator of Growth & Continuous Improvement

- Welcomes innovation, is a good listener and is open to new ideas, willing to explore different approaches for growth.
- Open to learning, adapting, and improving continually.
- Ability to focus on clear objectives and set measurable goals.

Trust Builder

- Takes direction while partnering with the entire school board to move the district forward in a collaborative effort.
- Earns confidence through integrity, consistency, and reliability while being empathetic toward others.
- Empowers staff by delegating responsibility and showing confidence in their abilities.
- Leads by example, inspires others, and fosters a collaborative environment.
- Builds relationships with community members with transparent, concise communication.

BULLETED NOTES FROM ALL GROUPS

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 Whitewater Unified School District.

Board Members

What are the strengths of the Whitewater Unified School District?

- Good leadership team in place right now
- Dual credit opportunities
- Diversity in the district
- Good teaching staff
- Connection with the university (still room for growth)
- Resilient school district
- Smaller community school
- Parent/community involvement
- Robotics team - national competition
- Growth potential based on youth demographics
- Good success rate on referendums
- Upcoming creation of childcare facility
- Housing expansion
- University students, interns, volunteers
- Role model for Science of Reading implementation
- Staff
- District leadership team is strong
- Students
- Whitewater Yes group, strong supporters
- Youth Apprenticeship programs
- Diversity in students and staff
- Amazing teachers, go above and beyond
- Core group of very supportive parents
- Majority of community support the school
- University in the district is a positive
- Location near Milwaukee, Madison, Chicago
- Whitewater Yes group
- Great staff
- Passionate group of people that support the school
- Alumni group is strong
- University in the district is a positive
- CESA 2 is close
- Small town feel

What are the challenges of the Whitewater Unified School District?

- Diversity of the district can be a challenge
- SPED population is increasing
- Purple district (politically)
- Demographics of student population - SPED, low income, ELL
- Communication with community needs to be better
- Communication with staff needs to be better
- Favoritism in the district, some people get opportunities that others don't
- Political polarization, especially with national politics
- Anti-immigrant rhetoric from a minor group in the community
- Potential operational referendum, dependent on state funding
- Small group that could be anti-school
- Hispanic population, challenge for staff
- High poverty rate
- Operational referendum, November 2026
- Lack of transparency
- Lack of trust
- Culture problem
- Population increase causes added strain in the district
- Poverty
- Group of parents that are not supportive
- Migrant population
- SRO agreement with the village
- Lack of transparency
- Lack of trust
- Declining enrollment, open enrollment out
- Tension between school and city
- Academic performance
- Athletics, extracurriculars could be better
- Hard to plan with students moving in and out
- School funding
- Polarized community
- Communication consistent to all constituents
- District has hit the national news

What characteristics are you looking for in your next superintendent?

- Good people skills
- Able to identify and recruit teachers
- Dedicated to diversity
- Open minded
- Knowledge of latest educational trends
- Collaborator
- Communicator
- Open
- Honest
- Treat everyone equally

- Integrated in the community
- Organized
- Driven
- Approachable
- Speak or at least understand some Spanish
- Prefer someone that will live in the district
- Relationship orientated
- Good listener
- Strong communication skills
- Strong leader, don't micromanage
- Integrity
- Truthful
- Stewardship
- Respectful
- People person
- Diverse thinking
- Bilingual
- Collaborative mindset
- Innovative but respect traditions
- Efficiency in handling the budget
- Communicate with the entire board
- Active listener
- Live in the district or near by
- Data driven
- Listen to all constituents

Parents and Community Members

What are the strengths of the Whitewater Unified School District?

- UW-Whitewater interns and student teachers
- Lots of activities
- Passionate teachers
- Dedicated staff
- High school is welcoming
- Pupil services director is fantastic
- Teachers are fantastic in the elementary school
- Community support
- Students
- Quality support staff
- Huge community support for education
- Volunteers give a lot of time
- Connection with the university
- A lot of interns and student teachers from UW-Whitewater, really helps in the classroom
- Ahead of the game for Act 20 and other areas
- Robotics and Forensics are strong
- Doing a lot with the district's current space
- Many opportunities in Whitewater

What are the challenges of the Whitewater Unified School District?

- Need a better partnership with UW-Whitewater
- Fear of retaliation
- Demographics
- Communication needs to be improved
- Lose kids to surrounding school districts
- Struggling kids need more help
- Must form more relationships
- Need better discipline
- Need more transparency
- Some students are disrespectful and on phones
- Behavioral problems
- Need to problem solve to find solutions
- Administration lacks follow through
- Students feel the stress put on teachers
- People are worried about repercussions if they speak out
- Wasteful spending
- Number of students open enrolled out
- SPED student needs not being met in all cases
- Potential operational referendum
- Transparency
- Relationships need to be improved, some have been severed or damaged
- Internal and external communication
- Calendar is not updated so can't look up activities, this is frustrating as a grandparent that wants to see what activities are happening
- Need to reach residents who do not have kids in school
- Website needs to be updated, not user friendly
- Some schools do a better job than others with keeping things updated and people informed
- Need some kind of superintendent advisory group
- Community needs to re-engage and bring the community and school back together
- Transparency
- Financial information needs to be shared and available to the public
- As far as communication goes, the staff needs to be on the same page
- Need to have a vision and pull on the same rope
- Want to get this right, not a good fit a great fit, we need a team to move forward
- Show up at the towns and municipalities, and not just during referendum time but quarterly
- There are wounds and scars in the district that people need to let go of
- Need clarity
- Voices not being heard
- Leader that adheres to Robert's Rules of Order

What characteristics are you looking for in your next superintendent?

- Knowledgeable in curriculum
- Need a leader who wants to lead and form relationships
- Visible
- Approachable

- Someone that has good rapport in their district
- Strong leader
- Cares about students and staff
- Good communicator
- Be present in the schools
- Personable, be willing to talk to parents and community
- Be a good listener
- Prefer someone that has classroom experience
- Build trust
- Deliver hard messages
- Respectful
- Awareness of what has happened
- Bridgebuilder, not just words but action
- Classroom experience
- Someone who loves kids and teaching
- Worked in more than one level
- Respect and professionalism
- Open minded
- Someone who does not know everything
- Lack of alignment with any particular group
- Energy
- Relentless storyteller
- Think outside of the box
- Take the time to understand the town and community
- See the lay of the land before making changes
- No hidden agenda
- Good listener

School District Staff

What are the strengths of the Whitewater Unified School District?

- Collaboration between the elementary schools
- Focus on DEI
- 6-12 collaboration
- Foundations of PLC
- Decisions are made with students in mind
- Leadership outreach to the community, Rotary and Lions Clubs
- Data and literacy improvements
- Community support for referendums
- Collaboration of administrative team
- Staff satisfaction is high (based on survey)
- Dedicated staff
- Staff - low turnover
- Shared vision for growth across district
- Consistent with strategic plan
- Built a strong leadership team
- Staff is a strength

- Inclusivity, diversity and cultural relevance
- Great bilingual services
- All Means All
- District leadership team is top notch
- Focus on achievement is clear
- Go to the source, create a good culture
- UW-Whitewater helps in filling some positions
- Staff goes above and beyond
- Support for tech ed
- Diversity as a strength
- Meeting kids where they are at
- Arts in general are a positive
- Arts are very visible in the community
- Community is very interested in what the school is doing
- City of a great population and people
- Staff is a strong asset
- Have made great curriculum choices, got ahead of ACT 20
- Passionate about getting data and having data drive the decisions and best practices
- Course offerings for students

What are the challenges of the Whitewater Unified School District?

- Declining numbers in 4K
- More open enrolled out than in
- A lot of rental houses in Whitewater
- Housing is very expensive in Whitewater
- Board can be challenging, micromanaging, the board needs to stay in their lane
- Board members need to understand their role
- Lack of town/city development
- Relationship with UW-Whitewater can be improved
- Some divisiveness, some mistrust
- Would like to see more school spirit and support, lack of homecoming community support as an example
- School board can be divided
- Need to send out accurate information, this can lead to the mistrust
- Communication - internal and external can break down
- Staff retention
- A little understaffed as a whole
- A lot of people wear many hats, this can also lead to the people leaving
- Reward people for their worth both non-monetary and monetary recognition
- More transparency, communication can be closed down
- Build better relationships with city/town
- Aquatic center has caused some struggles and tension between the community/city/school with expired agreement, but should be completed prior to the new superintendent starting
- Need to use human resources wisely
- Policies need to be updated
- Elementary attendance area needs to be looked at, maps to be updated

- Review transportation policies, some hazardous areas within the two-mile bussing limit
- City versus school, who pays for the crossing guards, students need to be a priority
- Employee evaluations need to happen on an annual basis
- Whitewater is performing at a good level of achievement but needs to get the word out as this is a culture shift from the past
- Small minority of negative group of people
- Worried about an operational referendum next year
- Stay true to referendum specs and promises, what is was meant for
- Administration is top heavy
- Staff would like a voice
- Pay scale discrepancies
- Communication needs to be improved
- Not everyone knows what's going on
- Five buildings need to work together
- High Special Ed numbers
- High number of Spanish speaking students can be a challenge
- Newcomers don't get the support they need
- Lack of resources
- Big city (urban) issues and few resources to meet those needs (housing, transportation, language barrier, poverty, diversity)
- People need to realize it's not the same school district as it was years ago, demographics have changed a lot
- Need to know who does what, who do staff contact for certain needs, feeling of disconnect
- Feels like a disconnect between staff and district office
- Small group of people are in the 'in-crowd' good old boys club needs to go away

What characteristics are you looking for in your next superintendent?

- Equity mindset
- Collaborative
- Long term vision
- Not afraid to stand up for what's right and or stand up to the board
- Reliability and consistency
- Not a mico-manager, have a strong leadership team in place
- Support staff and administrators
- Know the right time to make changes
- Innovative
- Servant leader and operate with a high level of integrity
- Be visible
- Relationship building
- Open minded
- Leave political views at the door
- Professional
- Fairness
- Sense of humor
- Kind

- Willing to make connections with staff and community
- Advocate for the district
- Approachable
- Consistency when it comes to policies and procedures
- Must be able to receive feedback well
- Big picture vision, but understand they're in a small district
- Available
- Arts friendly
- Supportive of CTE
- Superintendent that wants to be here
- Value staff
- Interpersonal relationships with all stakeholders
- Good listener
- Not vindictive
- Hands on approach
- Know the students
- Read to students
- Visible in the schools and community
- Being forthright - share the WHY
- Good communicator
- Transparency
- Authentic engagement with students
- Respect all of the positions, everybody matters
- Consistency
- Assessable to all stakeholders
- Know the staff by name
- Validation of work
- Unified, in it for the right reasons
- Someone that wants to be in Whitewater
- Strong instructional leader
- Value rigor

High School Students

What are the strengths of the Whitewater Unified School District?

- Diversity is strong
- Great music opportunities
- Good recognition and achievements in school sports and academics
- Community support and involvement
- Many options
- Great transition from 8th to 9th grade
- Good traditions
- Dedicated staff
- A lot of encouragement from staff
- Good dual credit courses and college credit options

- Welcoming schools
- Service projects
- Interactions with high school students to elementary students as mentors
- Many volunteer opportunities
- Foster a positive environment
- Great cultural show
- Sense of community
- Access to CTE programming
- Great robotics team
- Many talented students in high school
- Like the late start days, every Tuesday 8:45 am (7:45 am is the regular start time)

What are the challenges of the Whitewater Unified School District?

- Need more resources for students with disabilities
- Students need to know what resources are available
- More college readiness and college prep programs
- Have to seek out to find the opportunities in the schools
- How to prepare for college
- Can be better at recognizing diversity, more merging of students
- More immersion
- Need to be more competitive with other schools
- Better prepared for college so students succeed
- A lot of emphasis placed on homework
- Teaching to the test, pressure to do well on the test, too much testing
- Want to know what test scores really mean to students
- Equal funding for all sports and activities
- More awareness and appreciation for sports
- Offer classes that help with activities - business, FBLA, Forensics
- A lot of homework
- Possibly look at a schedule change at the high school
- Focus on what they know not test scores
- AI is a big issue
- Students must absorb a lot with the schedule
- Too much focus on the numbers and test scores versus looking at the whole child
- Students want to know the WHY
- Students want more of a voice
- Find the root of the problem
- Pressure with testing is a lot on students
- Student mental health issues
- Some teachers stereotype students
- Students should be able to decide on some classes and not denied because of who the student is or what they have done in the past

What characteristics are you looking for in your next superintendent?

- Openness to ideas
- Teaching background
- Inclusivity
- Involved in the schools, attend activities and events
- Visible
- Be involved
- A member of the community
- Politically unbiased
- School focused
- Hear and find all of the voices, find the whispered voices
- Open about policies, get feedback from students
- Value what people say
- Integrity
- Unified
- Involved in the community
- Connect with UW-Whitewater
- Keep paying for the dual credit classes