



# LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT

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East Brunswick  
Public Schools  
July 2025

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in June 2025 for the new superintendent of the East Brunswick 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 Board in determining the primary characteristics desired in the new superintendent. Additionally, the stakeholder interviews and focus groups collected information regarding the strengths of the District and some of the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years. Finally, the results of the survey are presented in a separate report. The areas in which the survey results are consistent with the input from interviewees and focus group participants are noted throughout the report.

### Participation

The numbers of participants, by stakeholder group, in the two methods of data gathering are listed below: *Not all focus groups were a group that was disaggregated for the on-line survey.*

Group	Personal interviews/ Focus Groups	Online Survey
Board	7	
Building level administrators	4 (EBPSA Leaders)	
Central office administrators	12	
Administrators (general)		44
Government & Community Leaders	4	
Faith-Based Leaders	4	
Faculty	5 (EBEA Leaders)	296
Community	40 (Forums)	83
Support Staff		82

Parents Representatives and Parent Advisory Leaders	9	
PTA Presidents and Educational Foundation Leaders	5	
Athletic Boosters Leaders	2	
Parents (general)		586
Students	22	262
Sub Total	114	1353
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1467</b>	

The community survey report and a draft of the desired characteristics are provided under separate cover and are meant to be stand-alone complementary pieces to the Leadership Profile Report.

It should be emphasized that the data are not a scientific sampling, nor should they necessarily be viewed as representing the majority opinion of the respective groups to which they are attributed. Items are included if, in the consultants' judgment, they warranted the Board's attention. In addition, the consultants used ChatGPT to assist in determining the frequency of similar comments.

## STRENGTHS OF THE DISTRICT

The East Brunswick Public Schools are defined by the strength, passion, and professionalism of its staff. As heard in focus group sessions and reflected in the district-wide survey, teachers, support staff, and administrators are consistently described as phenomenal, student-centered, and deeply committed to the success of every child. Many have spent their careers in the district, contributing to a strong culture of mentorship, collaboration, and institutional knowledge. This dedicated workforce fosters a climate where student achievement flourishes and excellence is not only expected but supported at every level. Selective hiring practices and opportunities for internal growth further contribute to staff stability and morale, while professional

development opportunities — often driven by staff initiative — enhance teaching and learning across the district.

Academic excellence is another hallmark of the district, supported by a rigorous curriculum, robust AP and dual enrollment offerings, and a strong academic culture. A few students regularly graduate with associate degrees and many gain acceptance into top-tier universities, reflecting both the high expectations and high levels of support embedded in the district. Complementing this academic strength is a broad and dynamic range of programming in the arts, athletics, and electives. These programs are more than enrichment—they are essential to the student experience, widely celebrated by the community, and contribute meaningfully to student engagement, creativity, and growth.

Equally important is the district's inclusive and supportive environment, particularly in its approach to special education and diversity. The special education program is viewed as a model of inclusion and individualized care, ensuring that students with disabilities participate meaningfully in all aspects of school life—including the arts and athletics. The district also reflects and embraces the diversity of its community, celebrating cultural backgrounds through events, clubs, and programming. With over 60 languages spoken and a deeply multicultural population, East Brunswick values exposure to different perspectives and identities as an educational asset. This commitment to equity is embedded in both policy and practice, contributing to a culture of respect, belonging, and opportunity for all.

Finally, the district enjoys the strong support and engagement of its broader community. Parents are deeply invested—financially, emotionally, and through active participation—because they believe in the mission of the schools. Many families move to East Brunswick specifically for its public education system, and graduates often return, proud of the foundation they received. Transparent communication, visible leadership, and a willingness to incorporate stakeholder voice into decision-making further build trust between the district and its families. Even amid evolving demographics and challenges, the community remains united by a shared commitment to expected excellence, safety, and the well-being of every student.

## Summary of Major Themes Reported by Focus Group/Interview Participants in Order of Frequency:

1. **Exceptional Staff** – Teachers, administrators, and support staff are described as phenomenal, passionate, student-centered, and deeply invested in student success.
2. **Academic Excellence** – Strong academic rigor, AP and dual enrollment opportunities, Ivy League acceptances, and a college-ready culture are emphasized.
3. **Support for Arts, Athletics, and Electives** – Robust and celebrated arts and music programs, wide elective options, and extracurriculars seen as vital to student experience.
4. **Inclusive Special Education** – Strong, inclusive special education services with committed staff; programs emphasize integration and individualized support.
5. **Inclusive Environment for Learning** – Celebrated multiculturalism, support for multiple languages, inclusive culture, and community events that embrace differences.
6. **Community Pride and Engagement** – Parents, alumni, and residents are deeply invested in the district; many move to the area for the schools and remain connected.
7. **Safe and Supportive Environment** – Strong safety infrastructure and emotional support for students; positive relationships with security and mental health access.
8. **Reputation and Legacy** – The district is nationally recognized, historically strong, and known as a destination district.
9. **Internal Growth and Retention** – Staff longevity, institutional knowledge, promoting from within, and selective hiring support a sustainable workforce.

10. **Communication and Responsiveness** – Increased transparency from leadership, stakeholder voice in decision-making, and responsiveness to student and parent needs.

## CHALLENGES AND ISSUES FACING THE DISTRICT

As reported in the focus group/interview sessions, as well as reflected in the survey data, there is common agreement that the East Brunswick Public Schools are currently facing significant financial challenges due to a \$7.1 million reduction in state aid for FY24 and an additional 3% cut in state equalization aid for FY25. These funding issues are putting a strain on the district's ability to maintain programs, staffing, and essential services. As a result, budget cuts have affected arts, music, electives, and special education services, which have long been central to the district's reputation. Additionally, the aging infrastructure, particularly at the secondary level, is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain, with students learning in outdated facilities and trailers. This concern about aging facilities was frequently reported during focus group/interview sessions, as well as reflected in the survey data. Class sizes are growing, and enrollment is increasing due to local development, but there is no proportional increase in revenue due to PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) agreements. Without a comprehensive and transparent financial and facilities plan, stakeholders are concerned about the sustainability of programs and long-term stability.

These financial pressures are closely linked to the perception of declining staff morale and retention, driven by ongoing budget uncertainty and limited input in decision-making. Over the past few years, several teachers have left the district for better-paying or more supportive environments, while others are anxious about potential future reductions in force (RIFs). Some stakeholders feel that top-down leadership, inconsistent communication, and reactionary decision-making, often influenced by social media or small vocal groups, have eroded trust among educators. The perceived lack of a clear district-wide vision and meaningful stakeholder engagement has contributed to a sense of uncertainty. Staff, particularly those in special education and student support roles, express frustration with what they see as a lack of resources, professional development, and administrative support.

The relationship between the district, Board of Education, and community is another area of concern. Longstanding trust issues, the need for transparency,

inconsistent communication, and stakeholder divisiveness have led to some disengagement and polarization. Stakeholders report that misinformation spreads quickly online and that decision-making often appears reactive rather than strategic. Some parents feel either excluded or unheard unless they escalate their concerns directly, which undermines systems and morale. At the same time, administrators and Board members cite aggressive public discourse, politicized debates, and a lack of mutual respect as obstacles to progress. There is a pressing need for improved community relations, active listening, and inclusive, proactive communication.

Finally, changing demographics and equity challenges are reshaping the district's identity and needs. Increases in transient, homeless, and ESL populations require a broader definition of excellence and deeper investments in culturally responsive teaching, mental health supports, and differentiated instruction. The district needs to expand its understanding of student success beyond test scores and college admissions to meet the needs of all learners, including those "in the middle" and those with special needs. This cultural shift necessitates ongoing professional development, community partnerships, and sustained leadership that embraces innovation, inclusion, and whole-child development. Without a unified vision for equity, growth, and community engagement, the East Brunswick Public Schools risk losing their competitive edge and the trust of those they serve.

#### **Summary of Major Themes Reported by Focus Group/Interview Participants in Order of Frequency:**

1. **Ongoing Budget Challenges** - The district is facing \$7.1M loss in state aid for FY24, with an additional 3% loss in FY25. There is a widespread lack of understanding and acceptance of this crisis within the community. Cuts have already impacted programming, staffing, and morale, and a sustainable financial plan is urgently needed.
2. **Aging and Inadequate Facilities, Especially the Secondary Level** - The current high school is outdated, overcapacity, and relies on temporary trailers. There appears to be no clear plan for replacement.

3. **Staff Morale, Retention, and Climate** - Staff members have shared that they sometimes feel unsupported, as well as a sense of being closely managed, and occasionally overwhelmed.
4. **Leadership, Vision, and Communication Gaps** - There is a perceived lack of cohesive, transparent district-wide vision. Communication at times appears to be inconsistent, reactionary, or unclear. A breakdown seems to exist between the central office and buildings. The absence of a Communications Director exacerbates the challenge.
5. **Community Trust, Misinformation, and Board Governance** - The community is struggling with competing factions and misinformation spreading via social media. The Board has had divisions. Rebuilding trust and ensuring decisions are data-driven and student-centered is critical.
6. **Impact of Redistricting and Enrollment Growth Without Revenue** - New housing developments have led to increased enrollment, but little new revenue is coming in. Redistricting and possible school closures are looming and generating anxiety. The absence of a proactive, community-informed plan is concerning.
7. **Special Education Capacity and Equity** - With increasing special education enrollment, the district is struggling to meet student needs.
8. **Demographic Shifts and Cultural Competency** - The community is increasingly diverse, including growth in ESL, homeless/transient populations, and varied religious and cultural groups.
9. **Academic Integrity and Program Preservation** - Maintaining rankings and consistencies in instructional quality and assessment have been raised as concerns. Cuts to arts, electives, and enrichment programs threaten the district's reputation.



**10. Student Wellbeing, Safety, and Belonging** - Mental health concerns, discipline challenges, and social-emotional gaps post-COVID are concerns expressed by some stakeholders. While the overall security of the schools is reported to be a strength, some students report feeling uncomfortable (vaping, classroom discipline), unwelcome (cliques, cultural exclusion), or unsupported (especially those “in the middle” academically).

HYA and the Board intend to meet the challenge of finding an individual who possesses most of the skills and character traits required to meet the needs of the district. The search team will seek a new superintendent who can work with the East Brunswick’s Board to provide the leadership needed to continue to raise academic standards and student performance, while meeting the unique needs of each of its schools and communities.

The search team would like to thank all the participants who attended focus groups meetings or completed the online survey and the East Brunswick Public School staff members who assisted with our meetings, particularly Bernardo Giuliana who organized the search team’s time in the district.

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