



LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT - Executive Summary

Hazelwood School District

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in February of 2026 for the new superintendent of the Hazelwood School District. 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. Both community and student online survey data are consistent with the input of the focus groups.

Leadership Standards Key:

- Vision and Values (VV) - The leader's ability to provide a clear and compelling vision for the future, align district

programs to the broader vision of the district, and uphold high expectations for all stakeholders

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

Participation

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

Group	Personal interviews or focus groups	Online Survey (Community)	Online Survey (Students)
Board	7	3	
Building level administrators	10	83	
Central office administrators	12		
Community Members/Faculty/Union Leaders	17		
Community		160	
Teachers		539	
Support Staff		245	
Parents		561	
Students			132
Total	46	1591	132

The community survey reports 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.

OVERALL STRENGTHS OF THE DISTRICT

The significant strengths of the Hazelwood School District, as reported by various stakeholders, center around its *diverse and inclusive community*, its strong *academic and program offerings*, the *quality of its staff and facilities*, and a *commitment to community engagement and resources*. Stakeholders collectively value the district's positive trajectory, strong parent involvement, and competitive programming and diversity when compared to other local districts.

Key Strengths and Values:

- ***Diversity and Inclusion:*** The district is highly valued for its engagement and support to diverse racial, cultural, and socio-economic students and families, with a strong commitment to DEI, including support for all students, and resources for faculty and staff.

Community and Student Survey report findings:

The District engages with diverse racial, cultural and socio-economic groups. (CE)

- ***Academics and Programming:*** Strong programming is offered, including universal pre-school, an ELL Program, language immersion offering, an assistant principal and instructional coach in every elementary school, and social-emotional learning (SEL) support (social worker, behavior interventionist). Music offerings also begin at the elementary level. Early childhood and Montessori programming are a particular focus and were noted as award-winning. Summer programming for middle school students was noted, and at the high school level, there are advanced coursework, strong Career and Technical Education (CTE) offerings, and many options for school choice and career paths, as well as opportunities for earning college credit. The district is making academic gains, with multiple schools in the state's top 10%, and high ARA scores were shared. Teachers are noted for personalizing instructional strategies, and instructional practices are sharpened through "common look fors" in classrooms.

Community and Student Survey report findings:

Teachers personalize instructional strategies to address individual learning needs. (TL)

The District is working to close achievement and opportunity gaps. (TL)

The District has high performance standards for all students. (VV)

- **Staffing and Leadership:** The district employs effective, responsive, and accessible administrators, faculty and support staff who are held accountable to high standards. Strong partnerships amongst key stakeholder groups.

Community and Student Survey report findings:

The District employs effective teachers, administrators and support staff in its schools. (M)

Employees are held accountable to high standards. (M)

- **Resources and Facilities:** Hazelwood is considered a resource-rich district, financially positioned, with great, well-maintained, and updated facilities (including classrooms, athletic fields, new HVAC, and solid technology) following the passage of PROP H. Various community programs and services offered for students, parents, and the community at large.

Community and Student Survey report findings:

Facilities are well maintained. (M)

- **Community Engagement:** There is a high level of engagement with the PTA (both school and district level). The district is a very important part of the overall community as it serves different municipalities. Stakeholders value the potential for "regaining lost greatness" and the district's positive direction. Communication is clear (whether positive or negative), and the staff is responsive to community needs.

OVERALL CHALLENGES AND ISSUES FACING THE DISTRICT

The challenges and issues facing the Hazelwood School District, as reported by various stakeholders, center around its *Enrollment and Operations*, *Student and Academic Support*, *Teacher Retention and Staff Morale*, and *External Community Relationships*.

Areas of Concern:

- **Enrollment and Operations:** The Hazelwood School District is facing concerns, as reported by various stakeholders, with enrollment decline/loss of students (opting for private schools, better athletic opportunities, aging populations were noted) necessitating a plan for restructuring/redistricting. This factor coupled with uncertainty of the state's funding model (i.e. income tax, voucher program, increased cost of district operations) may impact district finances.

Operationally, the district is struggling with ongoing issues related to transportation and staff shortages. Furthermore, there are concerns regarding equity, specifically the fair distribution of resources across all school sites due to disparities in building sizes.

It was shared that messaging from district to school sites often were not always consistent.

- **Student and Academic Support:** It was expressed there is an increased concern about student behavior and discipline since COVID-19. Additional concerns were expressed regarding the continued need for support of shifting/increased student population (language learner, low SES). It was also noted that there are concerns with inconsistent support for special needs students, and balancing the need of addressing the most challenging students with the learning environment of others.

It was also mentioned the district has seen an increase in the McKinney-Vento/InterDistrict subgroups, prompting a need to review the entry process.

- **Teacher Retention and Staff Morale:** There are reported concerns with teacher retention and low staff morale. Concerns noted the need for improved school climate and culture in some buildings, hiring/dismissal practices; and policies, procedures and best practices on recruitment and retention.
- **External Community Relationships:** Enhancing public relations efforts was mentioned as necessary and the challenge of managing diverse community dynamics still exists. It was noted that concerns be addressed directly and that communication strategies be more proactive. Additionally, it was indicated there is a recognized necessity to repair relationships with external partners, specifically the Special School District (SSD) and North County Tech. In terms of Parent Engagement, it was noted that some parents/community members feel the current policy restricts parental volunteerism and participation within the district.

HYA and the Board intend to meet the challenge of finding an individual who possesses 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 Hazelwood District 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 Hazelwood School District staff members who assisted with our meetings and staff who helped organize the search team's time in the district.

OVERALL DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEW SUPERINTENDENT

1. Fosters a positive, professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, administrators, & community
2. Ability to recruit, employ, and retain effective personnel throughout the District and its schools
3. Transparent, genuine, approachable and visible throughout the District and actively engaged in community life; ability to build trust and bring people together

4. Understands and is sensitive to the needs of a diverse student and community population
5. Demonstrated ability to provide effective leadership; holds high expectations for all staff and students

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS FROM FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

The structure of the focus groups was open, allowing for participants to share their honest thoughts and opinions. Participants were asked to respond to the following main questions.

- What do you consider as the significant strengths of the Hazelwood School District? What do you feel stakeholders value about the district?
- What do you feel are the most pressing challenges facing the district, and how do you envision the new superintendent addressing those challenges?
- What personal qualities and leadership skills would you like to see in the new superintendent?
- What are the immediate and future priorities and initiatives that the new superintendent should be aware of as they begin their new position?

BUILDING PRINCIPALS

February 9, 2026 - 10 Participants

Strengths:

The district demonstrates a high level of engagement with both the PTA (school and district levels) and the broader community. Hazelwood is a resource-rich district, indicated by increasing home values that correlate with improved test scores. Personnel support is robust, with Principals, Assistant Principals, Behaviorists, and Instructional Coaches assigned to buildings.

The district offers a strong programming, including universal pre-school, an English Language Learner (ELL) Program, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, instructional coaches in every elementary school, and comprehensive social-emotional learning (SEL) support (social workers, Behavior Interventionists). There is a clear commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), exemplified by support for all students. The district also maintains an established Safety and Security Team.

Challenges/Concerns/Issues:

- **Operational Issues:** There were concerns expressed with the transportation department in terms of routes, response time/ or lack of for expressed concerns and staffing shortages.
- **Student Support:** Challenges expressed include a rise in the McKinney-Vento subgroup i.e. a need to review the entry process, difficulty balancing support for highly challenging students with protecting the education of others (e.g., discipline), and inconsistent support for special needs students (inconsistent special education district support on some campuses).
- **Organizational Structure:** Concerns about the disparity in resources and classroom space due to differing building sizes, and a need to intentionally align the management layer between the District and Site Administration, as some systems need to be reviewed.
- **Enrollment Concerns:** The district is losing students for various reasons (ex. private schools, and the need to strengthen our own athletic programs)

Desired Characteristics:

- **Interpersonal & Management:** Accessible, visible, personable, fosters two-way communication, recognizes staff work, manages issues at the source, and is a systems thinker.
- **Visionary & Change-Oriented:** Futuristic, fearless, willing to implement change, breaks the "Hazelwood way" mold, moves beyond an "industrial workers" mindset, and creates programs to foster creative thinkers.
- **Leadership Style:** Values mental health, shifts from managing to leading, and is willing to work alongside building principals.
- **Community Focus:** Creative in finding solutions, such as holding community forums.

- **Experience & Values:** Should love teaching and be able to speak from experience. Values arts (visual and performing) and athletics, and supports the organization's work in "growing our own" talent.

Immediate and future priorities and initiatives

A focus on innovation; reviewing the timing of elementary school music programs, which currently conflict with content instruction; addressing the cost and repair of Chromebooks; continuing school safety plans and expanding high school pathways starting in middle school; developing diverse Alternative Educational Programs; and being careful when coding student absences.

Comments:

- "Need to look at equity (e.g., enrollment at building sites, Title I benefits)"
- "Need to review Elementary Programming options, especially how Pre-K needs impact the school schedule"
- "Increase opportunities for building-level PD work; Review "Back to school" PD weeks"
- "The ideal candidate should be excited, have a commitment to stay, see promise and potential, and do the job for the right reasons"
- "Must understand changing demographics (race, SES, etc)"
- "Although candidates may have credentials, consider "Wildcard" if it is a good fit"

CABINET

February 9, 2026 - 12 Participants

Strengths:

There are abundant resources and a high level of diversity, with a strong commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). The district offers numerous programs and free services to students, parents, and the community. Facilities are noted as excellent, including updated classrooms, athletic fields, new HVAC systems, and solid technology infrastructure, supported by a robust tech team.

The district provides many options for students, including school choices and different career paths, and is committed to offering programs across the district. Noteworthy early programs include music (band/strings) starting in the 4th grade, and award-winning early childhood programs and great pre-K at every site.

There is a focus on expanding the early childhood/Montessori approach to primary grades. Other cool programs mentioned are Sunny Star (kindergarten) and summer programming for middle school.

Academically, the district is strong, with multiple schools ranked in the top 10% in the state and high ARA scores, indicating success at all levels. Strong Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs are also a key feature. The implementation of "common look fors" in classrooms has significantly sharpened instructional practices. Finally, communication is clear, whether sharing good or bad news, and staff is responsive and accessible, actively meeting with parents. Overall, the sentiment is that the district is moving in the right direction.

Challenges/Concerns/Issues:

- ***Sustaining Academic Growth:*** The district must maintain and build upon recent academic achievements, particularly in light of evolving state and federal standards.
- ***DEI Initiative Vulnerability:*** Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) may face complications due to changes at the federal level. The district will need to rely on internal resources and strategies rather than external state or federal support to sustain these efforts.
- ***Enrollment concerns:*** Anticipating a shift with school choice, vouchers, etc.. Need a review of managing the process for families trying to transfer into the district and attention to shift in population/demographics of student groups, in terms of need for support
- ***Staffing:*** Concerns with staff turnover, high numbers of new faculty/staff each year. There is a teacher shortage; need innovative ways to staff classrooms and support new teachers.
- ***Student Concerns:*** Shifting student population and the need for support and concerns with attendance noted (ADA is okay, but daily attendance needs work).

Desired Characteristics:

The ideal leader should be a visible and strong advocate for the district, deeply committed to the team and students, with a strong focus on instruction and the district's specific needs.

- ***Vision and Adaptability:*** Possesses and can clearly articulate a visionary outlook, seeing both strengths and opportunities.

Thinks creatively and "outside the box." Is highly adaptable and can manage various situations effectively.

- **Character and Approachability:** Demonstrates integrity and is humble. Is approachable and easy to communicate with.
- **Team Building and Management:** Builds trust and promotes an inclusive environment. Motivates and recognizes the contributions of faculty and staff. Maintains organization and sets clear expectations.

Immediate and future priorities and initiatives

- **Academic:** Focusing on expanding CTE and AP courses, strengthening the Thematic School Approach, continuing to push the new K-12 math curriculum (focusing on growth), and raising APR points. Understanding and support of being in the SRS network.
- **Leadership:** Understanding and building upon successes, addressing areas for real progress, and preparing the district academically to attract more families.
- **Staffing Commitment:** Addressing adult staffing needs through initiatives like a "pathway to citizenship" and "international teachers," expanding licensure routes, continuing small initiatives (e.g., mentoring), and addressing "Climate" issues to reduce staff turnover.
- **Communication:** Making clear, consistent communication on a single platform a priority, especially for English Learner families.
- **Context:** Acknowledging and understanding the historical context of the different corridors/geographical locations as the district continues to make gains despite these factors.

Comments:

Incorporated into above summaries

COMMUNITY MEMBERS/FACULTY/UNION LEADERS

February 9, 2026 - 17 Participants

Strengths:

The district encompasses a strong PTA presence and wonderful, updated facilities following the passage of PROP 8. The community is valued for its great people and diverse staff representation across various backgrounds. Academically, the district offers a high-quality curricular program with numerous offerings, such as AP and Advanced courses, supported by professional development for teachers, and a state-recognized, innovative Pre-K program. Stakeholders appreciate the potential for "regaining lost greatness" and celebrate the academic successes of "amazing students," evidenced by increased scores and Ivy League acceptances. Additional strengths include a great and diverse staff, comprehensive programming outside of school, like college credits, and the quality of teachers post-COVID recovery.

Challenges/Concerns/Issues:

- **Restructuring:** Student enrollment decline necessitates a plan for restructuring or school closures, despite a consistent population.
- **Teacher Retention/Concerns:** Low teacher retention (61%) and general low morale among teaching staff are reported. Possible contributing factors include dual programming, class closures, a teacher shortage, and a need for increased positive partnership with administration. Concerns exist regarding the new health/medical plan, emphasizing the need for teacher representation in health plan negotiations. It's been reported that non-credential teachers are staffing certain classrooms.
- **Staff Morale/Culture and Climate Concerns:** Need for improved school climate. Need to review policy on parent volunteerism and participation; as the current is restrictive.
- **Student Discipline:** Need for consistent discipline response; requiring/increasing partnership with parents. Concerns regarding student behaviors have increased since COVID-19.
- **External Relationships:** Relationships with the Special School District (SSD) and North County Tech should be visited. Enhancing public relations efforts is necessary. It is recommended that concerns be addressed directly and that communication strategies be more proactive.

- **Equity:** Concerns exist regarding the equitable distribution of resources across sites. A review of resource ratio design is needed.

Desired Characteristics:

- **Communication & Presence:** The ideal candidate is a listener, approachable, personable, communicative, and visible in the community and schools.
- **Integrity & Trust:** Must lead with integrity and accountability, building trust through transparency and partnership.
- **Style:** Should be firm and fair, consistent, practice servant leadership, and avoid leading with an "IRON fist." The superintendent must tackle problems directly and be personable, proactively addressing both positive and negative news.
- **Innovation & Investment:** The candidate should be innovative, supporting thematic programs and willing to invest in and show appreciation for all faculty and staff (including teachers, bus drivers, and support staff).
- **Background:** The focus group desires someone with fresh ideas, preferably from St. Louis or Missouri to ensure understanding of local laws and the community. An individual with an outside perspective, experience with like-district and an understanding of its complexity.
- **Partnership:** The new leader should be open to increased parent participation in policy and must consistently uphold adopted policies and boundaries.
- **Additional Traits:** Must be visible, spending time *with* the staff beyond just observations. Other desired traits include patience, strong communication skills, and toughness.

Immediate and future priorities and initiatives

- **Transportation:** Logistics, staffing, hiring protocols, and training programs related to transportation require review.
- **Possible Restructuring:** Due to past school closures and/or low enrollment, the need to consider re-districting was suggested.
- **Programs:** All school programs should be evaluated in all schools across the district.
- **Staffing & Resources:** Equity in staffing, a review of staffing ratios should be reviewed at each site. Consideration for how materials and supplies are provided for faculty and staff (i.e. copy paper)

Comments:

Participants expressed a strong desire for a Superintendent from St. Louis or Missouri, emphasizing the need for an understanding of local laws and the community. Concerns were raised about low parent participation at high school meetings and the need for better strategies to support struggling students. Participants also indicated a strong need for improved district-level communication and a strong communicator. Overall, the vision expressed was a desire to revitalize the greatness of Hazelwood.