

HYA



LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT

Vineland
Public Schools
February 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in February 2026 for the successor Superintendent of the Vineland 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 next 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. The focus group findings and survey data are highly aligned and reinforce one another. Both data sources point to trust, communication, staffing stability, and student engagement as the district's most pressing priorities.

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 or focus groups	Online Survey
Board	7	
Central and Building level administrators	17	10
Past Superintendents	3	
Teachers	9	99
Support Staff Leaders	8	
Community Forums	36	30
Community Leadership	10	
City Leadership	3	
Business Leaders	3	

Parents		222
Students	7	57
Multiple Roles Indicated		40
Total	103	458

The community virtual focus 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.

STRENGTHS OF THE DISTRICT

The district is deeply rooted in a close-knit, multi-generational community that demonstrates strong pride, shared values, and a commitment to supporting its schools. Vineland is widely viewed as an active and engaged community that comes together in times of need and values education as a cornerstone of its identity. Strong partnerships with nonprofits, faith-based organizations, higher education institutions, local businesses, and municipal agencies further enhance student opportunities and community trust.

Diversity is one of the district's most consistently cited strengths. The student population, staff, and broader community reflect a wide range of cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Stakeholders value the district's culturally responsive practices, multilingual supports, and ongoing efforts to ensure that the workforce increasingly mirrors the students it serves. Celebrations of culture, inclusion, and collaboration are evident across schools and contribute to a welcoming and affirming environment for students and families.

The district benefits from a dedicated, caring, and experienced workforce. Many teachers, administrators, and staff members have long tenures in the district or are former students themselves, creating deep personal investment in student success. Staff are widely described as hardworking, student-centered, and

committed to going above and beyond despite challenges. Collaboration among administrators and teachers is strong in many areas, and there is a solid foundation of seasoned educators who can support mentoring, onboarding, and leadership development.

Vineland offers a broad range of academic programs, extracurricular activities, and student support. These include strong PreK programming, special education services, AP and dual enrollment opportunities, athletics, arts, ROTC, and partnerships such as the Rowan College pathway and the Ninth Grade Academy. Students benefit from numerous opportunities to explore interests, build skills, and remain engaged in school, while robust athletics and extracurricular programs contribute positively to school climate and community pride.

The district is also recognized for being student-centered and open to innovation. Stakeholders note a willingness to try new approaches and adapt practices in the best interest of students. Initiatives such as the Portrait of a Graduate, Science of Reading, attendance improvement efforts, and increased attention to student voice demonstrate a forward-looking mindset. While challenges remain, there is recognition of improving graduation rates, growth trends, and a collective desire to continue moving the district in a positive direction.

CHALLENGES AND ISSUES FACING THE DISTRICT

The most significant and persistent challenge facing the district is financial sustainability. Flat or reduced state aid, rising operational costs, and limited local tax revenue place ongoing pressure on the budget. Stakeholders consistently cite difficulties maintaining competitive salaries, managing healthcare and transportation costs, and addressing aging facilities while protecting classroom resources. Budget shortfalls limit the district's ability to launch new initiatives, expand programs, and fully staff essential services.

Staff recruitment, retention, and continuity are closely tied to these fiscal challenges. The district struggles to attract and retain teachers, support staff, and substitutes, particularly in special education, math, and support roles. Compensation is often not competitive with neighboring districts, contributing to burnout, turnover, and staffing gaps. Many employees are doing more work with fewer resources, and the loss of experienced or promising staff impacts student services and overall morale. There is a strong need for improved onboarding, mentoring, and long-term succession planning.

Student achievement, particularly in foundational literacy and math, remains a critical concern. Stakeholders across all groups expressed worry about students not meeting grade-level standards, inconsistent academic rigor, and gaps in learning that compound over time. Low or uneven performance on state assessments, concerns about students being advanced without mastery, and the need for stronger interventions and tiered supports were frequently cited. Ensuring fidelity of implementation and alignment across grade levels is a continuing challenge.

Chronic absenteeism and student engagement significantly affect instructional time and academic outcomes. Attendance challenges are influenced by poverty, transportation barriers, family responsibilities, and disengagement. Stakeholders also noted concerns about student motivation, school pride, and the effective use of instructional time, particularly at the secondary level. Addressing attendance is viewed as essential to improving achievement, graduation rates, and overall student success.

Special education capacity presents another complex challenge. The district serves a large and diverse population of students with disabilities but faces staffing shortages, limited resources, and high classification rates. Services for students with IEPs are sometimes hindered by the inability to fully staff positions, while behavioral and discipline challenges place additional strain on teachers and support staff. There is a clear need for expanded programs, professional development, behavioral supports, and consistency in special education practices.

Finally, stakeholders identified the need for greater consistency, alignment, and trust across the system. Frequent curriculum changes, lack of vertical articulation, and uneven communication have contributed to confusion and frustration. Leadership turnover has impacted continuity, morale, and confidence, while navigating local politics requires careful balance to remain focused on students. Rebuilding trust, strengthening communication, improving alignment, and ensuring stable, transparent leadership are seen as essential to moving the district forward.

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 Vineland Board of Education and District staff 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 virtual focus group survey and the Vineland Public Schools staff members who assisted with our meetings, particularly Kara Irvine and Scott Musterel who organized the search team's time in the district.