HYA | EDUCATION EXPERTS



LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT

Hayden School District
October 27, 2026

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SELECTION PROCESS

The Hayden School District has retained the services of Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) to assist the Board with the hiring of the next superintendent/principal. 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:

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PURPOSE

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by HYA during the months of September and October 2026 for the new Superintendent of the Hayden 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 Hayden School District for the opportunity to find your next leader who fits the criteria of your stakeholders. HYA would like to thank all of the participants who completed the online survey, the school Board, and District 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
Dr. David Baugh, HYA Senior Associate

DESCRIPTION OF THE DISTRICT

The Hayden School District Board of Education is seeking an exceptional educational leader to serve as the District's next Superintendent of Schools, with a start date of July 1, 2027.

About Hayden

Nestled in the scenic Yampa Valley of Northwest Colorado, Hayden is a close-knit, welcoming community of approximately 2,000 residents located 25 miles west of Steamboat Springs. Surrounded by wide-open spaces, ranching heritage, and stunning mountain landscapes, Hayden offers an exceptional quality of life that combines small-town values with access to world-class recreation and amenities.

Conveniently located just minutes from Yampa Valley Regional Airport, Hayden enjoys direct commercial air service from major carriers including Alaska, American, Delta, Southwest, and United Airlines, providing easy access to destinations across the country.

Residents enjoy a year-round outdoor lifestyle including fishing, hunting, hiking, camping, boating, rafting, golfing, snowmobiling, and skiing. Nearby Steamboat Springs offers renowned alpine and cross-country skiing, mountain biking, hot springs, dining, cultural events, and recreational opportunities, making the region an ideal place to live, work, and raise a family.

About Hayden School District

Hayden School District serves approximately 400 students across 687 square miles and is supported by 100 dedicated employees, including 42 certified staff members. The District operates on a FY27 budget of approximately $9.9 million and maintains a strong fiscal position while actively planning for long-term sustainability and growth, including asking for an additional mill levy override in the November 2026 election.

HSD serves students from preschool through grade 12 in a single, state-of-the-art campus that functions as the educational and community hub of Hayden. The facility opened following a transformative partnership between the State of Colorado and local voters, supported by a $38.9 million Colorado BEST Grant and a $22.3 million voter-approved bond.

The Hayden community has consistently demonstrated its commitment to public education through local investment and support. Since 1994, voters have approved three mill levy overrides, including the most recent in 2018, generating approximately $905,000 annually to support student programs and district operations.

District Highlights

- Strong academic focus with student achievement and assessment performance trending upward
- Small class sizes with an average student-to-teacher ratio of 11.7:1
- Robust Career and Technical Education opportunities, including a highly regarded Future Farmers of America (FFA) program
- FY26 showed a 94.9% attendance rate for HSD with a 10.8% 2025-2026 Chronically Absent Rate

- A strong student focus, with emphasis on belonging, relationships, and community focus
- Stable and committed workforce with teacher turnover below 20%
- Strong community support for public education and student success
- Modern PK-12 facility that serves as the center of community life
- Financially stable district with a proactive approach to future sustainability and growth

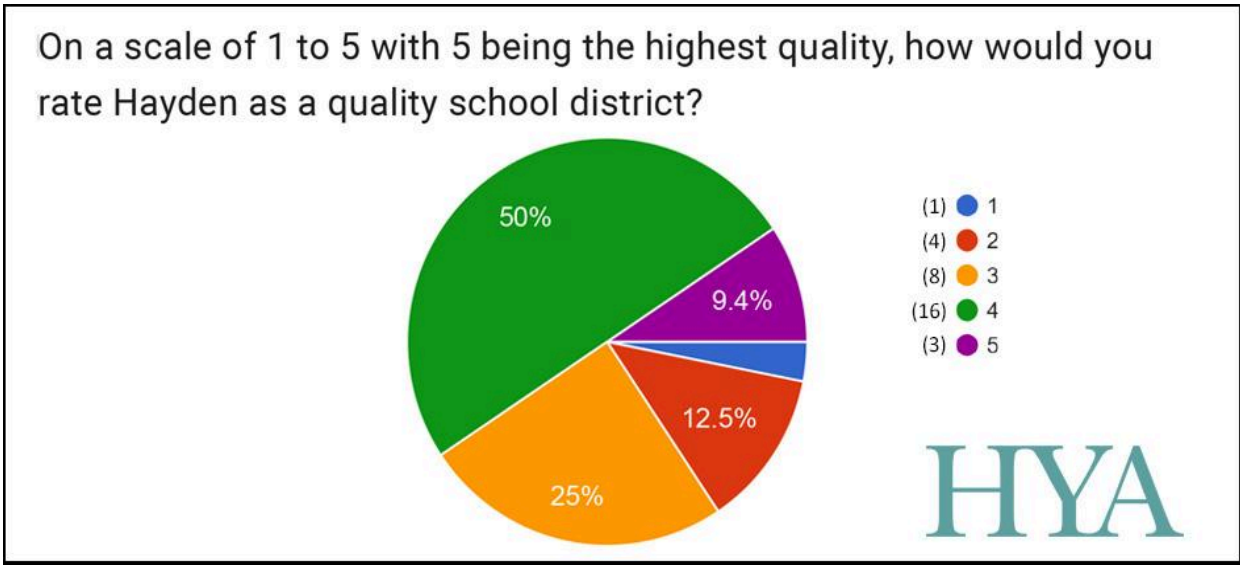
Leadership Opportunity

The next superintendent will join a district and community that value relationships, innovation, fiscal responsibility, and student-centered decision-making. The Board seeks a collaborative leader who will continue to strengthen academic excellence, support and develop staff, engage the community, and position the district for long-term success in a changing educational landscape. This is a unique opportunity to lead a high-performing rural district with strong community pride, exceptional facilities, dedicated educators, and a clear commitment to providing outstanding opportunities for every student.

For additional information about Hayden School District, visit www.haydenschools.org

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

From October 12 - 23, 2026, an online survey was conducted for all stakeholders. The Hayden School District received 32 responses; of those, a total of 19 respondents (59.4%) rated the district a 4 or 5 out of 5, reflecting a strong level of satisfaction.



To shape the search for a new superintendent/principal, the HYA Associates gathered valuable insights through surveys, and interviews. The HYA Associates conducted individual interviews with the School Board members, and the outgoing superintendent.

These efforts aimed to identify the key qualities desired in the next leader while also highlighting the District'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 following questions were developed using input and feedback collected through the online survey process and board interviews. These questions were designed to reflect the priorities, concerns, and expectations identified by students, staff, families, and community members, and to help guide meaningful discussion throughout the engagement process.

1. What are the strengths of the Hayden School District that the next superintendent can build upon?
2. What are the challenges facing the Hayden School District that the next superintendent should be aware of, or that you would like to see 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 Hayden School District?

ONLINE SURVEY SUMMARY

1. **What are the Hayden School District's strengths that the next Superintendent can build upon?**
    - **Community and Relationships:** Strong community support, small class sizes, close-knit environment, and positive relationships among staff, students, and families.
    - **Staff and Leadership:** Dedicated, caring, and highly qualified teachers and support staff who are invested in student success.
    - **Culture and Spirit:** Increasing school spirit, Tiger pride, and a positive, collaborative district culture focused on continuous improvement.
    - **Operations and Communication:** Recent improvements in communication platforms, foundational systems, strategic planning, and academic rigor.

2. **What are the challenges facing the Hayden School District that the next Superintendent should be aware of, or you would like to see addressed?**
    - **Communication and Transparency**: Improve the flow of information from the administration to staff, families, and the community. Establish clear communication policies, ensure timely responses, and foster a collaborative relationship with the Town of Hayden.
    - **Staff Recruitment and Retention**: Address challenges related to the rural location, cost of living, and housing availability that make it difficult to attract and retain qualified educators. Avoid lowering hiring expectations due to vacancies, and reduce excessive workloads caused by staff shortages and combined positions.
    - **Discipline and Policy Enforcement**: Ensure consistent enforcement of student conduct and school policies regarding behaviors, safety, attendance, and distractions. Hold both students and staff accountable through proper documentation and clear consequences.
    - **Academic Rigor and Alignment**: Raise academic standards and expectations, particularly at the secondary level, to better prepare students for college and the real world. Create

K-12 alignment in curriculum, instruction, and grading while supporting diverse learning needs and special education programs.

- **Administrative Structure and Accountability**: Hold administrators and principals accountable for their roles, and critically evaluate the effectiveness of current management models, such as the single Pre-K through 8th-grade principal structure and stretched secondary administration.

3. **What are the characteristics or traits that you think an effective Superintendent should possess in order to best lead the Hayden School District?**
   - **Communication and Transparency**: Strong, honest, and transparent communication with all stakeholders (students, staff, parents, and community members), coupled with accessibility and a willingness to listen and engage in difficult conversations.
   - **Leadership and Accountability**: Decisive leadership that sets high expectations, holds staff and administrators consistently accountable without favoritism, and has the courage to make difficult operational and systemic decisions.
   - **Community and Visibility**: Active involvement and visibility within the schools and the small-town community, including spending time in classrooms, attending events, and building trusting relationships.
   - **Financial and Operational Management**: Strong business acumen, including budget experience, resource management, and long-term planning focused on student success and district efficiency.
   - **Compassion and Student Focus**: A genuine love for children, support for teachers and staff, and a student-centered approach to fostering a safe and effective learning environment.

4. **Is there anything else that you would like to share with us?**
   - **Leadership Approach and Experience:** The superintendent needs to be highly experienced in educational leadership, ready for an intensive workload, and dedicated to building systems and setting measurable goals rather than just maintaining the status quo. Opinions are divided on internal candidates, with some supporting strong consideration for local applicants who know the community, while others strongly advise against hiring current staff due to past accountability and professionalism issues.
   - **Staff and Community Engagement:** The new leader must prioritize listening to staff and the community when making decisions, ensure all staff enforce policies consistently, and avoid treating the district merely as a stepping stone or career end.
   - **School Culture and Safety:** The district requires a stronger focus on student safety, accountability, and addressing bullying, vaping, and truancy by keeping students in class and enforcing consistent rules.
   - **Community Integration:** Candidates should be deeply rooted in Hayden, stable, and committed to embracing the local community while understanding the dynamics of rural school systems in the region.

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 (interviewed individually)
- Parents and Community Members
- Staff
- Students

PROCESS

The structure of the individual interviews and the online survey allowed participants to share individual comments. All of those involved in providing input were asked to respond to the questions on page 5.

PROFILE DEVELOPMENT & QUALITIATIVE DATA

Perceived Strengths • Perceived Challenges • Desired Characteristics

Strengths of the Hayden School District as identified by BOARD OF EDUCATION

(Based on interviews and personal statements)

Preserve Cultural Progress While Elevating Accountability

Discussions with the Board consistently emphasize that Hayden School District has experienced a meaningful shift toward a healthier working climate. Input gathered from interviews provides vital context regarding this transformation, noting deliberate efforts to move away from a workplace formerly dominated by anxiety and administrative fear.

This institutional history carries clear implications for superintendent recruitment. Board members articulated a desire for heightened organizational discipline, unambiguous expectations, timely follow-through, and reliable responsiveness. The district requires a superintendent who instills rigor through clear communication, operational consistency, authentic relational trust, and exemplary personal leadership.

A central imperative for the incoming superintendent will be to **strengthen systemic accountability while safeguarding the positive organizational climate established in recent years**.

Expand Academic Achievement Systemwide

Upward learning trends at the elementary level stand out as a notable organizational strength. This upward trajectory offers compelling proof of recent growth and presents a timely opportunity for incoming leadership to analyze successful instructional practices and scale them across all grade levels.

The core strategic task extends beyond celebrating isolated achievements; the next leader must identify the root drivers of these instructional gains to foster rigorous academic continuity across every classroom.

Strengthen Special Education Capacity

Specialized instruction emerged as a vital focal point during interviews. Hayden serves learners with multi-layered, diverse requirements, where heavy caseloads place significant demands upon educators and support staff.

The incoming superintendent must ensure that special education teams receive adequate staffing, instructional resources, professional development, and administrative oversight. Given the district's scale, building internal backup capacity and proactive succession plans remains essential when personnel fulfill multiple roles. This mandate must be viewed not merely as a regulatory requirement, but as an essential element of Hayden's commitment to providing equitable, high-quality learning opportunities for every student.

Ensure Enrollment Stability and Fiscal Sustainability

Shifting student enrollment figures surfaced as a prominent theme across administrative discussions. Enrollment dynamics impact more than state funding; they directly shape staffing levels, academic offerings, course variety, co-curricular opportunities, and long-term institutional viability.

Challenges of the Hayden School District as identified by BOARD OF EDUCATION

(Based on interviews and personal statements)

Navigating Key Leadership Priorities

Initial research highlights an essential leadership dynamic that must guide the search process: *Hayden seeks elevated operational accountability while preserving a supportive, respectful workplace climate***.** Stakeholders expect a superintendent who establishes clear targets, addresses performance issues promptly, supervises staff effectively, and honors commitments. Community members deeply cherish recent cultural gains and expect personnel to feel valued, supported, and trusted. The successful superintendent must recognize that *rigorous standards and a positive culture are mutually reinforcing goals*. Fulfilling Hayden's vision requires an unwavering commitment to both.

Financial and Retention Challenges

When paired with broader economic shifts and changes in the local tax base, student retention underscores the need for robust, multi-year financial planning by the incoming leader.

Ultimately, the district requires a superintendent capable of moving beyond managing demographic shifts to answer a foundational strategic question: *What makes Hayden School District the premier choice for local families?* Crafting that answer will require leveraging academic quality, positive school culture, specialized pathways, athletic traditions, proactive family outreach, and the distinct advantages of a close-knit educational community.

Assess Administrative Alignment and Workload Demands

Stakeholder input highlights essential questions regarding the breadth of responsibilities assigned to campus administrators. Merging principal duties with athletic administration imposes substantial workload pressures. Similarly, overlapping duties across early childhood education and special

education programs can constrain organizational capacity for administrative coverage during absences.

In a small rural system, consolidating leadership roles is often fiscally necessary. However, operational efficiency becomes counterproductive if administrative workloads exceed what personnel can reasonably execute with high fidelity.

The next superintendent should conduct a thoughtful evaluation of administrative assignments, reporting structures, daily workloads, and coverage mechanisms to ensure the organizational framework fully supports staff and students.

Key Board Insights

Hayden has made important progress in moving away from a fear-based workplace culture. The next superintendent needs to preserve that progress while establishing greater consistency, accountability, and follow-through.

The district needs an experienced leader who responds, follows through, leads by example, supports teachers, and makes sure employees have the resources and organizational structure necessary to do their jobs well.

Hayden's small size is one of its strengths. It creates a close-knit, family-like environment where people can communicate face-to-face, and the district has experienced both academic improvement and relatively low staff turnover.

The ideal next superintendent would combine the strengths of our last two superintendents, approachable and friendly while holding people accountable.

The next superintendent needs to be honest, reliable, accountable, and a strong communicator—someone who is approachable and personable while still maintaining appropriateness. The next superintendent needs to establish clear expectations, maintain order, hold people accountable, and consistently follow through.

In a community the size of Hayden, the superintendent must be visible, approachable, self-aware, and genuinely interested in being part of the community. Hayden's culture is moving in a positive direction, with traditions returning, stronger engagement, and academic achievement and student growth on an upward trajectory.

The next superintendent should be a humble, collaborative servant leader who communicates exceptionally well, works closely with principals, and has the instructional leadership experience to continue improving academic performance.

Top Five Desired Characteristics of the Hayden Superintendent as identified by **SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS**	
Instructional leadership and Student Success	**Collaborative Leadership and Staff Development**
The next superintendent should be an instructional leader who understands effective teaching, learning, assessment, and strategies for improving student achievement. This individual must also understand special education and the diverse needs of students, ensuring that appropriate resources, staffing, and support systems are in place to help every student succeed.	The next superintendent should be approachable, collaborative, and low-ego, building strong relationships while maintaining appropriate authority and professional expectations. This leader should support teachers and staff, mentor and hold administrators accountable, and combine the strengths of the previous two superintendents to provide effective, balanced leadership for the district.
Integrity, Accountability and Professionalism	**Strategic and Effective Organizational Leadership**
The next superintendent must demonstrate honesty, trustworthiness, consistency, and a strong work ethic while modeling the professionalism and accountability expected of others. This individual should establish clear expectations, follow through on commitments, communicate proactively, and respond to concerns in a timely and constructive manner.	The next superintendent should possess the organizational and financial leadership skills necessary to manage administrative responsibilities, delegate effectively, and ensure district operations run smoothly. This leader must also plan proactively for enrollment changes, uncertainty in the local tax base, staffing needs, and resource allocation while maintaining a focus on long-term district success.
Community Engagement and Commitment to Hayden	
The next superintendent should be personally committed to Hayden and demonstrate a visible, accessible presence in the schools and broader community, including beyond the regular school day. This individual must understand the relationships and perspectives within a small community, communicate effectively with the Board, staff, families, and residents, and build trust through responsiveness, sound judgment, and a genuine commitment to the district's future.	

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

Based on the feedback from community members, the Hayden School District is seen as a community hub with strong engagement, yet it faces significant financial hurdles and a desire for leadership that can bridge social and fiscal gaps.

Relationships

Families and community stakeholders consistently depict the Hayden School District as an exceptionally cohesive educational setting where interpersonal connections, dedicated educators, and cherished traditions yield meaningful opportunities for every student.

Opportunities

The district's intimate scale is viewed simultaneously as a distinctive advantage and an important responsibility. Stakeholders emphasized that staff and administrators are uniquely positioned to connect with learners and families personally, creating a supportive climate that fosters academic achievement, personal growth, and emotional well-being.

Respondents voiced strong appreciation for the wide range of academic and co-curricular programs offered within a small system. Concurrent enrollment, FFA, agricultural education, career and technical pathways, athletics, and student activities were highlighted as primary organizational strengths.

Community Commitment

Participants highlighted examples of Hayden graduates successfully entering higher education, professional careers, and skilled trades. They underlined the significance of instilling self-reliance, personal independence, practical skill sets, and creative problem-solving across the student body. The strong commitment of teachers, coaches, and support personnel stands out as another crucial asset. Focus group participants commended employees who display deep devotion to Hayden, despite the regional economic demands of residing in Northwest Colorado.

Challenges of the Hayden School District as identified by PARENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Accountability, Consistency, and Communication

A central focus centered on the need for heightened, uniform accountability throughout all operational levels. Stakeholders articulated the value of upholding high behavioral standards for student behavior, enforcing policies equitably, and ensuring that staff and leadership remain aligned with rigorous professional standards.

They stressed that strong personal bonds must not prevent leadership from addressing complex operational issues. The incoming superintendent must balance intentional listening and genuine empathy with a firm capability to resolve conflicts and execute decisions that serve the broader good. Timely communication surfaced as another pivotal priority. Community members noted instances where families received important updates regarding schedules, early childhood programming, and operational changes with limited advance notice. While participants acknowledged these communication hurdles have spanned past administrative shifts, they emphasized an urgent expectation for more proactive, structured, and open communication channels with district families.

Facilities, Safety, Accessibility, and Long-Term Planning

Respondents conveyed notable pride in the district's modern PK-12 campus while raising key considerations regarding ongoing maintenance, physical accessibility, and prospective master planning. Traffic flow and parking capacity were frequently identified as operational bottlenecks, particularly during major school functions and athletic events. Additional concerns were raised regarding emergency response access, mobility accommodations at athletic venues, and campus capacity to support long-term growth.

Universal access across the preschool playground was explicitly highlighted. Stakeholders pointed out areas where current play surfaces and structures do not fully accommodate students facing physical disabilities. These findings signal that the new superintendent should partner with the Board and community to evaluate facility conditions, safety protocols, ADA accessibility, maintenance schedules, and future capital priorities. Dialogue further underscored the necessity for proactive strategic foresight rather than reacting solely when operational concerns surface.

Special Education and Support Personnel

Community members commended the dedication of special education teams while emphasizing the systems capacity constraints when managing multi-layered student requirements. Paraprofessional support, competitive compensation, workforce retention, and heavy workloads were identified as critical areas demanding strategic attention. Participants noted that support staff routinely deliver intensive instructional and behavioral assistance to high-needs learners. They expressed concern that non-competitive pay scales and staffing shortages could result in employee burnout and turnover. The incoming leader must recognize the direct connection between workplace stability, specialized student programming, staff development, and equitable educational access.

Financial Sustainability and Strategic Leadership

Stakeholders pointed to anticipated shifts in local property tax revenues linked to economic transitions in the energy sector as one of Hayden's most vital long-term strategic challenges.

They voiced a clear desire for a leader well-versed in Colorado school finance, who can translate complex fiscal realities transparently and guide the Board in planning multi-year financial strategies. Comprehensive long-range planning was identified as a core leadership responsibility. Community members called for a dynamic strategic framework featuring clear goals, actionable metrics, and grounded fiscal forecasting. The next superintendent must assist the Board in maintaining organizational continuity through transitions and changing local economic conditions.

Top Five Desired Characteristics of the next Hayden Superintendent as identified by PARENTS and COMMUNITY MEMBERS	
Approachable and Decisive Leadership	**Visible and Engaged Community Leadership**
The next leader should build trusting relationships through an approachable, personable style while maintaining high expectations, making difficult decisions, and holding others accountable	The ideal candidate will embrace Hayden's small-town culture, actively participate in community traditions, and build meaningful relationships with residents and organizations beyond the school district
Commitment to Long-Term Stability and Growth	**Resourcefulness and Adaptability**
Stakeholders seek a superintendent who views the position as a long-term commitment, providing consistent leadership, strengthening relationships, and advancing sustainable improvements for the district.	Leading a small rural district requires a flexible, practical leader who can manage competing responsibilities, maximize limited resources, and respond effectively to the evolving needs of students, staff, and the community.
Collaboration and Community Partnerships	
The next superintendent should cultivate strong partnerships with municipal officials, emergency services, local businesses, and civic organizations to expand opportunities, strengthen community support, and promote the district's long-term success.	

Strengths and Challenges of the Hayden School District as identified by SPECIAL EDUCATION FAMILIES AND STAFF

Inclusion

Special education families and professionals highlighted the system's evolving climate, dedication to inclusive practices, and supportive, family-centric atmosphere as crucial foundational elements. Focus group participants commended recent advancements across communication channels, mutual respect, and administrative trust, expressing a clear expectation that these organizational gains be preserved throughout the transition.

Relational Trust

The district's size provides substantial benefits, allowing for tailored instructional focus, close staff collaboration, and meaningful partnerships with families. Specialized teams strongly value these personal connections, which prove essential when coordinating multi-layered support for diverse learners.

Belonging

Respondents further underlined the critical necessity of experienced supervisory leadership, workforce retention, and robust support mechanisms for instructional aides. Elevating these priorities remains essential to maintaining consistency for students dependent on stable, specialized interventions.

These findings demonstrate that Hayden benefits from a deeply rooted culture of equity and community care. The incoming leader must build upon this framework, guaranteeing that special education operations receive the administrative guidance, staffing, and resources required for sustained excellence.

Challenges of the Hayden School District as identified by Special Education Families and Staff

Staffing Retention

Talent acquisition and workforce stability surfaced as primary operational hurdles among specialized service personnel. Participants noted pronounced turnover within specific programs, creating systemic friction around service continuity, team cohesion, and the fidelity of individual learning plans.

While broader stakeholder feedback characterizes overall district turnover as low, specialized staff emphasized that localized instability creates unique vulnerabilities. Recognizing this distinction is vital, as overall retention figures can overshadow persistent recruitment gaps in specialized disciplines.

Regional housing costs and limited real estate inventory were identified as severe obstacles to attracting and retaining qualified personnel. High living expenses in the Yampa Valley frequently hinder prospective educators and clinicians from settling permanently within the community.

Operational Continuity and Efficiency

Additionally, stakeholders pointed to inefficiencies within human resources workflows, specifically urging more prompt candidate follow-up. In a competitive labor market, delayed communication routinely leads top candidates to seek employment elsewhere.

Communication

Internal messaging remained another prominent concern. Personnel called for proactive, transparent, and structured communication from central administration, particularly regarding decisions that impact staffing structures, caseload assignments, and instructional resources.

Supporting Complex and Diverse Learner Populations

Special education families and personnel emphasized the need for a superintendent who understands the multi-faceted needs of the student body, including multilingual students and learners requiring intensive behavioral or developmental interventions.

Meeting these expectations demands more than broad statements of support; it requires skilled oversight, adequate staffing, targeted professional development, structured collaboration, and unwavering support for frontline educators and paraprofessionals.

Participants highlighted the critical importance of maintaining stability across special education programs. Recurring turnover disrupts trusted student relationships, overburdens remaining personnel, and impairs the execution of comprehensive support plans.

The next superintendent should view specialized programming as a central pillar of instructional leadership rather than an isolated administrative requirement. This necessitates a deep comprehension of the daily duties fulfilled by case managers, specialists, aides, and campus administrators.

An effective superintendent will also ensure that special education strategies are seamlessly integrated across preschool, elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Desired Superintendent Characteristics

Families and staff envisioned a superintendent who balances accessibility, deep expertise, empathy, and warmth with the courage to make difficult operational decisions.

Stakeholders desire a leader with a comprehensive grasp of the PK-12 continuum who thoroughly understands the instructional complexities and statutory obligations associated with special education services.

The ideal candidate will listen intentionally to school personnel, grasp their daily operational realities, and offer timely, constructive support. Concurrently, the new leader must establish transparent expectations, execute well-reasoned choices, and demonstrate firm accountability.

Ultimately, these preferences highlight the demand for a superintendent who successfully unites compassion with professional competence and genuine accessibility with decisive leadership.

Community Integration and Relational Trust

Special education families and staff underscored the importance of a measured leadership transition. They expect the incoming superintendent to honor Hayden's history, community partnerships, and traditions prior to driving major structural shifts. As one said, “you only get one chance to make a first impression.”

Preserving the district's close-knit environment remains a high priority. Stakeholders seek a superintendent who respects local culture while maintaining a commitment to professional growth and continuous organizational progress.

The successful leader will approach the district with humility, actively engage families and staff, and build credibility through authentic, reliable actions. Rather than avoiding necessary improvements, the superintendent will ensure that strategic improvements are directly informed by the insights of educators serving students every day.

Two key insights from the special education community:
Hayden has made important gains in culture, communication, inclusion, and trust. The next superintendent needs to preserve that progress while strengthening staffing, continuity, and support for the educators who serve students with complex needs.

We need a superintendent who understands special education from preschool through high school, is accessible and compassionate, listens to staff, and has the knowledge and resolve to make difficult decisions and follow through.

Top Five Desired Characteristics of the next Superintendent as identified by Special Education Families and Staff	
Genuinely Authentic	**Knowledgeable**
Families and staff report the desire for an authentic and compassionate leader that is genuinely interested in meeting the needs of students and staff.	The next superintendent should be at least knowledgeable about the needs of special students and ELL students, many of whom are one and the same. Expertise in all aspects is unlikely but willing to learn and advocate was considered important.
Accessable	**Builder**
The next leader will need to be part of the community and willing to be a part of the conversation for students with special needs. Recognizing that the next leader cannot be everywhere, they can make their influence a part of conversations moving forward.	Stakeholders cite many advances under the current leadership and that they are desirous of continuing to build on current successes and trend lines. The forward progress is notable and the hope for continuing in this direction profound.
Real Engagement with the Community	
Family and staff cite growing populations of special needs students and English Language Learners. Someone who is willing to engage with these communities and co-create numerous opportunities for students and families is the preferred candidate.	

Strengths and Challenges of the Hayden School District as identified by Staff and Administration

Based on the feedback from staff, teachers, and administrators, here is a summary of the strengths, challenges, and desired characteristics for the next superintendent of the Hayden School District.

Relationships, Opportunities, and Staff Commitment

Staff members and district leadership consistently characterize the Hayden School District as an exceptionally tight-knit, family-focused educational environment. Those interviewed stressed that interpersonal connections among students, families, educators, and staff constitute one of the system's most significant core strengths.

In a smaller rural system like Hayden, school personnel routinely know not only individual students, but also their siblings, parents, and extended family. These deep-rooted connections cultivate a strong sense of belonging, accountability, and collective investment in educational outcomes.

Opportunities

Employees described their colleagues as extraordinarily industrious, passionate, and incredibly devoted to the children in their care. A culture of collaborative teamwork stands out as a defining trait, with staff regularly assisting one another and coordinating efforts to meet student needs.

Staff Commitment

Stakeholders conveyed immense pride in Hayden's student body and teaching staff, emphasizing that those within the school community represents the district's single greatest asset. These findings indicate that the incoming superintendent will inherit an exceptional culture of personal connection. Nurturing this environment of mutual trust, support, and dedication to students must remain a top leadership focus.

Challenges of the Hayden School District as identified by Staff and Administration

Finances

Staff and administrators noted that fiscal limitations remain an ongoing hurdle for the Hayden School District. Operating as a small rural entity requires balancing high academic standards against finite fiscal resources and the practicalities of offering comprehensive educational offerings.

Duties

A prominent theme centered on the extensive amount of duties assigned to individual staff members. Participants highlighted that employees routinely fulfill multiple roles, managing tasks that would typically be divided among several staff members in larger districts.

While such adaptability underscores the remarkable dedication of Hayden's staff, also introduces persistent strain around workplace balance, operational efficiency, system capacity, and long-term retention.

The new superintendent must understand these operational realities and demonstrate strategic acumen when evaluating staffing structures, organizational priorities, budget allocations, and employee support systems.

Rather than expecting personnel to continually absorb new responsibilities, effective leadership will necessitate assessing current workflows to determine what is functioning well and identifying where assistance, streamlined coordination, or structural realignment are required.

Meeting Increasingly Complex Student Needs

Educators and administrators voiced concern regarding the heightened complexity of student demographics and requirements, particularly for learners enrolled in special education and non-native English speakers.

Participants highlighted instances where students require multi-layered academic, linguistic, behavioral, or specialized interventions. Delivering these comprehensive supports places substantial demands on classroom teachers, special education teams, support aides, and administrative personnel.

These operational pressures underline the necessity for a superintendent who possesses deep expertise in special education, instructional differentiation, and multi-program administrative alignment.

Staff seek a superintendent who acknowledges the day-to-day realities of serving a diverse student population and who will prioritize equipping staff with meaningful training, adequate materials, and expert guidance. The incoming leader should view these support systems as fundamental pillars of the district's overall academic mission.

Desired Superintendent Characteristics: Visible, Accessible, and Consistent

District employees placed high value on securing a superintendent who is genuinely accessible, approachable, and highly visible across the school community. Stakeholders repeatedly articulated the desire for an administrator who actively frequents school facilities, maintains an open-door policy, and listens intentionally prior to establishing organizational direction.

True visibility was characterized as going far beyond formal event appearances. Employees want a superintendent who understands day-to-day classroom dynamics, builds personal rapport with staff and students, and interacts regularly with instructional personnel. Respondents highlighted a profound need for operational consistency, equity, and firm accountability across all operations.

The ideal superintendent will embody empathy, respect, and encouragement, while also demonstrating the resolve to enforce standards, navigate complex choices, and address systemic issues decisively.

Staff summarized this balanced leadership style as being firm, fair, and consistent—a leader who considers input thoroughly but acts decisively and stands firm under pressure.

Comprehensive familiarity with special education mandates was cited as a critical asset, directly tied to the day-to-day instructional challenges staff encounter.

Building on Success Rather Than Starting Over

A vital consensus emerged regarding the strategic orientation the new superintendent should adopt upon taking office. Staff and leadership emphasized that Hayden School District possesses a strong foundation that deserves preservation. Their feedback underscores that the incoming leader should refrain from initiating sweeping, unnecessary organizational overhauls.

Instead, stakeholders advocate for a measured transition focused first on listening, gathering insight, cultivating relationships, and honoring the district’s existing successes. This perspective reflects a desire for intentional, collaborative progress that honors the dedicated efforts and proven practices currently benefiting students.

The next superintendent should value the commitment of the current workforce, build upon established progress, and work collaboratively to address areas requiring enhancement.

Top Five Desired Characteristics of the next Hayden Superintendent as identified by HAYDEN SCHOOL DISTRICT STAFF AND ADMINISTRATION	
Firm but Fair	**Accessible**
The next leader should be firm and fair. Policy should be equitably enforced, developed and implemented. There should be a sense of trust and responsiveness.	As a superintendent the next person will need to be available and known in the community. While there will need to be an "open" door policy their should be an active aspect to accessibility.
Visible	**Consistent**
The next superintendent will need to be visible and available to the community and the many stakeholders. Attendance at sports events and extra curriculars is the baseline not the ceiling.	There should be a sense of fairness about the next leader. Stakeholders should understand and see the superintendent working to ensure the equitable implementation of policies, procedures and guidance.
Special Education and ELL Knowledge	
The next educational leader will need a working knowledge of special education and ELL, oftentimes the students are both special education and English Language Learners. Gains have been made in these departments and the hope is that gains will continue to occur.	

Strengths and Challenges of the Hayden School District as identified by HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Based on the responses from students in the Hayden School District, here is a summary of the strengths, challenges, and desired characteristics for the next superintendent.

Perspectives from the student body were gathered across two focus groups representing 29 high schoolers, comprising 15 upperclassmen (juniors and seniors) alongside 14 underclassmen (freshmen and sophomores).

Positive Community

Participating youth consistently highlighted interpersonal ties, active teamwork, and an encouraging climate as central assets of the Hayden School District. They expressed deep appreciation for peer connections, broader family and community participation, and opportunities to partner productively with fellow classmates.

Efficient Instruction Time

Students also commended the efficient utilization of daily instructional hours as a distinct benefit in their learning experience.

Taken together, these observations affirm that Hayden's tight-knit rural setting serves as a vital educational driver, with students deeply valuing the authentic relationships that define their daily academic life.

Challenges of the Hayden School District as identified by
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Communication
Proactive communication and operational planning surfaced as primary priorities, with students calling for enhanced transparency and smoother alignment around district initiatives and building schedules.

Policy Enforcement
Participants underlined the imperative for **equitable and uniform enforcement of policies**. Feedback indicates that objective fairness, administrative predictability, and consistent standards are essential to maintaining student confidence in leadership.

Opportunities and Co-Curricular Expansion
High school students expressed a strong desire for expanded extracurricular offerings and broader student activities that cultivate personal growth and community involvement. Students seek a superintendent who maintains a visible, accessible presence across district facilities, while being present in an authentic manner.

Top Five Desired Characteristics of the next Superintendent as identified by HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

High Visibility	Authentic Connection
Students reported appreciating seeing their superintendent at many events. They are hoping to see the next superintendent as well.	The next leader should have the interest and desire to connect with the students in authentic and meaningful ways.
Student Centered	**Support Traditions**
The next superintendent will need to keep the students at the center of the decision making process. Authentic student voice and engagement were identified by numerous students.	Students express a genuine appreciation of the tradition of the schools being a cornerstone of the community. They are hopeful the next leader will continue to support the tradition of close connections between home and school. Other traditions in the school were also identified.
Genuinely Engage with Students	
Hayden students deeply treasure their cohesive educational environment, yet they expect a dynamic superintendent that is visible, communicative, consistent, and deeply aligned with their aspirations.	

FINDINGS / THEMES

Many of the discussions pertaining to strengths and challenges for the Hayden 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 board interviews and the online survey were combined, themes emerged. It should be noted that there was more similarity across groups than there were differences. In general, strengths and challenging issues were almost unanimous across groups. The characteristics desired in the next superintendent were also closely aligned across groups. This congruence is viewed as a positive characteristic of this search and will bring clarity in focus for the Board and the new superintendent.

THE HAYDEN SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT DESIRED CANDIDATE PROFILE

The Hayden 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 interviews and an online survey, the Hayden School District seeks an engaged, visionary superintendent who possesses the following characteristics

The Hayden School District seeks a superintendent who is:

- **Accountable and consistent** — defines clear expectations and demonstrates dependable follow-through.
- **Honest and trustworthy** — operates with uncompromised integrity in all interactions and decisions.
- **A transparent communicator** — engages proactively with the Board, staff, families, and broader community.
- **Responsive and action-oriented** — resolves emerging operational issues directly and constructively.
- **Visible and accessible** — maintains an active, welcoming presence in schools and civic life.
- **Approachable yet firm** — cultivates warm connections while maintaining high professional standards.
- **An instructional leader** — deeply understands strong teaching practices, curriculum design, assessment, and the strategies that truly move student learning forward.
- **A developer of talent** — supports, mentors, and holds administrative personnel accountable.
- **Supportive of personnel** — equips teachers and support staff with resources to succeed.
- **Collaborative and student-centered** — values shared leadership, intentional listening, and teamwork.
- **A role model** — leads by example, demonstrating strong work ethic, professionalism, and dedication.

- **Fiscally astute** — guides the district thoughtfully through budget constraints and economic shifts and is well-versed in Colorado school finance.
- **An experienced administrator** — possesses deep insight into organizational structure, delegation, and systems management.
- **Knowledgeable in special education** — advocates for diverse learners and ensures robust program support.
- **A community-minded partner** — navigates local relationships thoughtfully without being swayed by politics.
- **Deeply invested in Hayden** — embraces small-town life and actively integrates into the community.