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Superintendent Search LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT

Written and prepared by Hazard Young Attea Associates

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the Superintendent Search Engagement Phase conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) President Max McGee and Associates Connie Collins and Ken Arndt in September 2022. The data contained herein were obtained from input the HYA consultants (hereinafter “we”) received from almost 300 stakeholders during both Zoom and in-person forums, individual interviews, and focus group/listening sessions. In addition, nearly 1200 stakeholders responded to an online survey, and we tallied and analyzed these results. The forums, survey, interviews, and focus group meetings were all structured to gather information to assist the Board in determining the primary characteristics desired in the new superintendent. Additionally, the survey respondents and stakeholder interviews, focus group, and forum participants provided valuable feedback regarding the strengths of the District and some of the challenges that the next leader will be facing in the coming months and years.

Our goal was to understand the unique history of the school and community, learn their exceptional strengths and significant challenges, hear stakeholders’ diverse perspectives, and deepen our knowledge of the attributes, characteristics, qualifications, expertise, and experience necessary to lead the district. The information we received from students as young as sixth grade to residents who have lived in the district sixty years has enabled us to accomplish this goal and develop a comprehensive profile for the type of leader who will be the perfect fit for the district.

Topline findings from HYA’s Engage Phase include:

STRENGTHS

Common strengths across all stakeholder groups were:

- Schools are the heart and pride of the community and distinguished by historical and current strong academic performance, exceptional extra-curricular opportunities, and actively engaged parents.
- The district has an outstanding faculty and support staff who clearly care about the students from a whole child perspective
- There exists a close, positive, and productive relationship with the city, library, The Ohio State University (OSU), businesses, non-profits, and other services; “an extraordinary sense of community.”
- Despite limited diversity, the community strives to be welcoming, accepting, supportive, and encouraging of all students and families from an array of backgrounds, ethnicities, and identities.
- The district’s current and historical financial health and oversight; effective and wise use of financial resources.
- The district has beautiful, modern, welcoming school facilities
- Alums return to the district and reinvest their time and talent in the community and support the schools.
- “People come first;” the leadership support for staff families, personal wellness and professional growth is unique.

CHALLENGES

Among the many challenges noted, the most common ones were:

- Navigating internal and external perceptions of politics and favoritism given to those “with the loudest voices”
- Sustaining and improving special education services to ensure consistent delivery of IEP and 504 services and accommodations across the full PK-12 continuum.
- Dealing with the local, state, and national caustic political divisiveness.
- Strengthening academic excellence.
- Administrative accountability for any school and/or district leadership *inaction or neglect* regarding inappropriate student behaviors, student and staff wellness, or other matters requiring leadership intervention.
- Moving the DEI initiatives forward and communicating evidence of progress on inclusiveness and success of marginalized groups.
- Establishing specific metrics and communicating clear data regarding new and existing programs and services, interventions, student success, etc.
- Attending to students’ needs regarding access to internships, mentorships, career pathways, and “real world” experience, as well counseling, mental health, and wellness services.

DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Strong preference for current experience as a school superintendent in a similar high profile, high achieving, highly engaged district
- Preference for a leader from outside the Upper Arlington system

- Demonstrated ability and evidence of:
 - Recruiting and retaining an excellent teaching staff
 - Improving academic achievement for all students
 - Providing programs and services that effectively and measurably support student staff mental health and wellness
 - Advancing initiatives to support marginalized, disadvantaged, and historically underrepresented students, including increasing the number of highly qualified non-white teachers
 - Ensuring a full continuum of successful inclusive special education support services
 - Establishing a cultural climate of mutual trust and respect among all stakeholders
 - Successfully working with teacher and support staff unions to negotiate fair contracts, use successful practices for resolving labor and management disputes, and achieve labor peace

DESIRED ATTRIBUTES

- Politically astute relationship builder who excels at engaging all voices, listening carefully, mediating disagreements, and building trust.
- Authentically and deeply committed, energetic, and passionate about ensuring excellence for EVERY child.
- Role model of integrity, honesty, and transparency with an outstanding work ethic balanced with preserving family time for students and staff.
- Courageous, confident, thick-skinned, yet humble, empathetic, and patient.
- An extraordinary communicator with a variety of a media, and an accomplished public speaker and presenter
- Visible, approachable, and relatable through involvement and being an *active* presence in schools and *immersive* presence in the community.
- Cross cultural competence, i.e., the willingness to learn about local cultures; the awareness and open-minded acceptance of cultural differences when dealing with individuals from diverse backgrounds, and the ability to develop effective working understandings in cross-cultural situations.

HYA will use this Leadership Profile Report to recruit candidates who will be a sound fit for Upper Arlington Schools, as the basis for interview questions throughout the selection process, and as foundational information for the new leader and Board to develop a successful 100 day plan and the first set of annual goals for the Superintendent.

Participation

We are grateful for the significant participation in quantity and quality. ALL of the interviews, focus groups, and forums ran over time, and the survey completion rate was nearly 90%. The numbers of participants, by stakeholder group, in the data gathering methods are:

Group	Interviews, Focus, Forums	Surveys
Board (Current and Former)	10	n/a
Teachers	43	197
Community (Leaders and Residents)	38	124
Parents	81	782
Students	62	13
Support Staff	13	25
Administrators	22	20
Alums	14	30
Totals	283	1191

It should be noted 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.

Summary of Stakeholder Input from Interviews, Forums, and Focus Groups

Each interview session, forum, and focus group began with the why.” We shared how important it was for their voice to be heard as we use their feedback for:

- a) Recruiting excellent applicants;
- b) Developing interview questions for screening and for the Board members who interview the candidates; and
- c) Providing important information to the new superintendent and the Board for development of annual goals.

We then posed four prompts:

1. What are some current strengths of the district that will attract highly qualified candidates to apply for the job?
2. What are the one or two most significant challenges the new leader will need to face?
3. What is the most important, pressing issue for the new leader to tackle *immediately*?
4. What are the personal attributes, professional qualifications, and relevant experiences the next superintendent needs to have?

Here is what we were told:

Strengths of the District

While hundreds of comments were made regarding the strengths of the District, the following significant themes often surfaced across multiple stakeholder groups.

1. Schools are the heart and pride of the community and distinguished by historical and current strong academic performance, exceptional extra-curricular opportunities, and actively engaged parents.
2. The quality of teachers and teaching. The exceptional caliber of the teaching staff was mentioned across most focus groups. Teachers and paraprofessionals are caring, responsive, and skilled at their jobs, often going far beyond basic requirements. They are seen as active members of their communities – students value seeing them outside the classroom. Specifically, with regard to teachers, students and their families felt teachers were generous with their time and dedicated to student learning. Stakeholders specifically noted that the district has an outstanding faculty and support staff who clearly care about the students from a whole child perspective: academic growth and success; healthy mental, social, and physical development; opportunities and access to discover and explore an array of artistic, intellectual, athletic, and personal interests; critical and creative thinkers; supports for becoming responsible, productive adults.
3. Close, positive, and productive relationship with the city, library, The Ohio State University (OSU), businesses, non-profits, and other external services.

4. Despite limited diversity, the community strives to be welcoming, accepting, supportive, and encouraging of all students and families from an array of backgrounds, ethnicities, and identities. For many – but not all – the emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives are an important strength. Students, staff, and local government leaders especially highlighted this area as a strength as well as the need to do more.
5. Financial health and oversight; effective and wise use of financial resources. Former Board members and members of the Foundation Board especially highlighted this area. While all groups noted some concern with the November levy passing, the culture of the district is one of fiscal responsibility, wise use of resources, and financial acumen. Both the work of the current financial team as well as the decisions school boards made as far back as the 80s and through the financial crisis of 2008 fostered, sustained, and strengthened Upper Arlington’s financial health.
6. Beautiful, modern, welcoming schools and middle school access to UAHS athletic facilities. While there is work to be done at the middle schools the elementary schools and high schools are truly state of the art. The high school facilities were “jaw dropping” to us and deeply appreciated by all stakeholders. Without question these new facilities enhance learning and contribute both to academic success and student and staff well-being.
7. The curriculum is robust, and students have exceptional opportunities for classes, clubs, athletics, the arts, and a host of extra-curricular opportunities including national and international travel.
8. The administrations and unions have solid, honest, trusting relationships. These relationships not only result in fair contracts, but they also have an important, positive impact on teaching and learning. Having labor peace eliminates unnecessary distractions for teachers and support staff. Moreover, management and unions can work together to improve (or remove) staff (teaching, support, or administrative) who are not up to district standards.
9. While there is room for improvement, the special education services and supports are unparalleled. Several parents mentioned that they moved to Upper Arlington because of the services and others lauded the district’s support for dyslexic students and for authentic inclusion. It was also noted more consistency with monitoring and implementing IEPs and 504s at the secondary grades was needed, but overall special education supports are a strength.
10. “People come first;” staff especially cited the leadership support for staff members’ personal wellness and professional growth. Dr. Imhoff is to be

commended for creating and sustaining a climate of compassion and care. Students and parents noted how teachers and principals sincerely and deeply care for the well-being of their students.

Significant Challenges for the New Superintendent

Similarly, to the strengths, there were several commonalities among stakeholder groups when it came to discussing challenges. These were:

1. Navigating the expectations and demands of highly engaged, highly educated parents and community members. While we heard that having a highly engaged parent and taxpayer community is a strength, which it is, stakeholders spoke much more about the challenges of meeting the needs, addressing the complaints, and reaching the expectations of what some termed, the “hyper engaged.” There is a perception among all groups that those who speak loudest are often not representative of the larger population but are much more likely to be heard and to have their issues addressed, even if it is not in the best interest of all students. Our perception is that thus far, discourse has been civil, and the leadership makes efforts to listen carefully to all voices but given the caustic political climate in the state and country, managing disparate voices and likely louder demands will present a significant challenge to leadership.
2. Sustaining and improving special education services to ensure consistent delivery of IEP and 504 services and accommodations across the full PK-12 continuum. As mentioned above, special education support services are a strength, but the challenge for the new leader will be to sustain them given the comparatively high percentage of students receiving them as well as ensuring that they are consistently delivered at the secondary classroom level as well as through post high school transition programming for those who qualify.
3. Sustaining and strengthening academic excellence. During the engagement phase, the Ohio State Report Card results were released, and Upper Arlington was one of twelve districts with a number one (the highest) ranking. Moreover, according to the data, overall academic achievement results had improved. The challenge for academic excellence is twofold. One is sustaining a high level of achievement and increasing it over time. Simple statistics on a normalized curve reflect that the closer one is to the 99th percentile, the more difficult it is to demonstrate progress. Second, a segment of the community is not satisfied with where achievement levels are and believe both that academic achievement results have dropped and that the district needs to return to a number one ranking. We do not have the data to either validate or refute this perception, but we do have the narrative to indicate that it will be a challenge for the new superintendent to address these perceptions and that it will need to be done with clear, understandable metrics.

4. Pandemic recovery – especially for students with disabilities or economic disadvantages. Related to student achievement, the pandemic adversely impacted some students more than others both academically and social emotionally. Our high school student stakeholder group spoke at length about the need for more immediate access to counselors, the desire for more mental health and wellness supports, and how the school district needs to provide greater joy more than ever given their sense that post pandemic there is significantly more pressure to “catch up” academically and build college ready resumes.
5. Administrative accountability for any school and/or district leadership *inaction or neglect* regarding inappropriate student behaviors, student and staff wellness, or other matters requiring leadership intervention. As with most districts across the country, as students have returned to school, staff have seen an increase in inappropriate behaviors ranging from bullying peers to flagrantly disrespecting rules. Parents and staff need and expect district and school leadership to support appropriate disciplinary procedures and provide internal and external supports for students whose behavior is a result of challenges they face outside the school day.
6. Moving the DEI initiatives forward and communicating evidence of progress on inclusiveness and success of marginalized groups. It was abundantly clear that while the district’s verbal and published commitments to DEI have been important measurable results are lacking. Both the city and school district have articulated the “why” behind these initiatives, and the city appears to have taken some significant action steps producing tangible outcomes. The challenge for the district and the new leader will be to show how the investment in DEI produces positive outcomes for students. For example, we heard from parents that students and families of color are inclined to leave the district after the elementary grades. We cannot speak to whether or not numbers bear out this perception but the fact that we heard it a few times indicate that simple retention counts would be one positive metric.
7. Establishing specific metrics and communicating clear data regarding new and existing programs and services, interventions, student success, etc. One of the many strengths the district has is a plethora of programs, services, activities, opportunities, and interventions for students. At some point funding these as well as innovative new initiatives will not be sustainable, so a challenge for the new leader will be to evaluate the return on investment for them.
8. Threat of complacency borne of historical success. Respondents from several focus groups mentioned that the district should not rest on its laurels. They noted that a challenge for the new leader will be to embrace tradition but continue to innovate – going slowly at first and engaging all stakeholders – in order to move the district forward.

9. Student support. Although we did not meet with many high school students, it is important to highlight the challenges they articulated: attending to students' needs regarding access to internships, mentorships, career pathways, and "real world" experience, as well counseling, mental health, and wellness services, and restoring joy to school.
10. Leadership and governance. Following a long term successful superintendent presents a challenge for even the most accomplished leader. All stakeholders are looking for a long term superintendent and not someone at the end of the career or someone who is a beginning superintendent or an aspiring superintendent without significant leadership experience in a similar district. To become a successful superintendent in Upper Arlington, the new leader will have to meet the challenges of working with a new Board, potential Board member turnover in the next election, and becoming/developing as a true team of six. Likewise, there will likely be turnover in key district and school leadership positions, and the new leader will be challenged to fill these with the highest quality of administrators in addition to developing those leaders who currently serve the district and are expected to do so for the long haul.

Immediate Priorities for the New Superintendent

1. Engaging and to the extent possible, unifying diverse voices and viewpoints around a collective vision. As expected, each stakeholder group had particular priorities some of which were competing. Even within groups, we heard some competing priorities. For example, some parents were very vocal about immediately focusing solely on academics and school rankings far over and above any initiatives related to DEI or social emotional learning (SEL).

Other parents noted that it was critically important post-pandemic to attend to the mental health and wellness of both students and staff. Parents of special education students clearly supported sustaining and strengthening inclusion initiatives and ensuring supports were in place. Finally, we heard from numerous parents about the immediate, essential need to make equity a priority, that is to support students of color, LGBTQ students and staff, students from low-income families, and those youth who are not college bound or not interested in pursuing college upon graduation.

Here are some verbatim comments illustrating competing priorities:

"Diversity discussions should take place at home."

"We need to refocus to academics which is why we send our children to school."

"We were top 25 in the country, but we are now under 1,000!"

“Kids and staff are living a mental health nightmare from the Pandemic!”

“DEI needs a lot of work and laser focus.”

“The goal should not be pressure but to promote a love of learning.”

From our outsider’s perspective, we do not see these priorities as mutually exclusive or “either-ors.” It appears to us that an immediate priority needs to be engaging these diverse viewpoints and striving to both communicate and take actions that demonstrate how they are interrelated and mutually supportive.

2. Community relationships. Community stakeholder groups were concerned about the levy, noting that if it did not pass, the immediate priority would be significant budget reduction. As with parents, some were highly supportive of and placed a high, immediate priority on matters related to equity, diversity, and inclusion. Others were vociferous to the point of attempting to dominate conversations about focusing just on academics and improving the academic excellence and standing of the district. Again, from our perspective these viewpoints are not mutually exclusive, and a priority needs to be meaningfully engaging all stakeholders to ensure trust for the new leader and continuing support of the District.
3. Staff relationships. Overall, staff emphasized the importance on supporting student and staff health and wellness and maintaining positive, productive relationships with the union leadership. Teachers, administrators, and support staff also noted the critical, immediate importance of retaining and recruiting high quality support staff. We heard stories of losing excellent paraprofessionals to other districts and the need to keep talented personnel who support the education and operations of the district.
4. Student relationships. Our student groups highlighted priorities of establishing educational partnerships and pathways for learning opportunities outside of school such as internships and independent research projects with mentors as well as more opportunities for students to explore pathways in addition to college prep. The high school students were also advocates for placing a high priority on just talk but real action about supporting equity and diversity.

Going into this process we had assumed that developing a new strategic plan would be a priority for a new leader. We were wrong! Stakeholder focus groups (and survey respondents) think the current plan has served and is serving the district well and see no reason to make this a priority for the next few years.

Desired Attributes, Qualifications, Experiences

As with the strengths and challenges there were far more commonalities among the stakeholder groups than differences. Below are the most frequently noted remarks from the groups. These remarks, along with comments from the survey have been compiled into the “Top Ten Desired Characteristics” of this Leadership Profile beginning on page 25.

Community and Local Government

- Confident, but authentically humble
- Demonstrated courage to say NO sometimes, to make tough decisions, and to advocate for public schooling
- Experience in identifying and connecting students and families to city government and services
- Experience in handling large scale conflict
- Consensus builder
- Collaborative and cooperative with local governmental entities (municipalities, park districts, library districts, police, etc.)

Parents

- The proven ability to sustain a focus for governance and leadership team on making measurable progress on the main priorities (“the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing”)
- Need a sense of tolerance, acceptance, and community
- Need to value diversity and have demonstrated experience in advancing equity initiatives
- “Freaking Fearless” to make tough decisions and stay the course; courageous accountability
- Cultural competence and cultural acuity
- Level-headed, patient
- Trustworthy, respectful, and positive

Students

- Have integrity, courage, and a moral compass
- Be happy and have fun
- Do not be dismissive of us; we need to be heard and included

Certified Staff

- Confident, humble, adaptable, courageous, credible, approachable
- Be “all in all the time”
- Demonstrated skill and success in developing leaders
- A current superintendent or successful leadership experience in a high achieving, highly engaged district
- Mid-career professional who “has to be at the top of their game”

- Adept at working with school boards
- Knowledgeable about special education

Support Staff

- Someone who is invested in all of us
- Respect, appreciate and supportive of both union and non-union support staff
- Sincere and highly visible
- Has shown they are willing to admit their mistakes and learn from them

Former Board Members

- Common sense
- Focus on continuous improvement and show how you have improved the district in your present position
- Political savvy and experienced to deal with Upper Arlington community dynamics and those who may be outspoken and litigious
- The ability to model and teach the big C - Civility
- Understand and support the importance of mental health needs and deal with it
- Empathetic – show how every child is valued

Alumni

- Helps us understand schools and their needs
- Approachable and accessible
- Above all, be “KID” focused and engage with students
- Charismatic and inspirational; likable and highly energetic
- Unify rather than divide; authenticity must “ooze” from the new superintendent
- Display a level of earnest and urgency but be patient and bring stakeholders along

Survey Results

Quantitative Results

The District provided all stakeholders with ample notifications regarding the opportunity to participate in the online survey and staff are to be commended for their concerted outreach. As a result, 1191 stakeholders responded to the survey. This number exceeded our initial target of 1000 participants and is in line with the responses from districts of similar size, achievement, and demographics. On one hand, we were pleasantly surprised to see more community members without children currently in Upper Arlington schools participate. On the other hand, we were disappointed in the low participation rate from students and support staff as these voices are important to the process and are directly impacted by the new leader's decisions. What impressed us most, however, was the extent of the commentary. We received 2134 comments, which far exceeded the 1500 we expected and speaks well to the community engagement.

By group, the final tally was:

- 782 parents/guardians of current students
- 25 parents/guardians of future students
- 197 teachers and certificated staff members
- 25 support staff members
- 20 administrators
- 13 students
- 90 residents without children currently in school
- 9 residents with children in other schools
- 30 alumni

In the discussion of the results that follow, we have not included groups with fewer than 25 respondents. Moreover, all No Opinion responses were dropped from the particular question and not used in any of the percentage calculations.

Quantitative Results

Part 3 of the online survey asked respondents to select up to the three top priorities for the next superintendent from a list of these thirteen choices. The choices were in randomized order for every survey.

PART 3. PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT SUPERINTENDENT

* 30. Please select what you see as the top THREE priorities for the new superintendent to address in the next two or three years (please mark up to three):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Addressing financial matters
<input type="checkbox"/> Increasing attention to students' and staff members' social emotional and mental health issues
<input type="checkbox"/> Improving academic performance
<input type="checkbox"/> Retaining and recruiting top quality teachers
<input type="checkbox"/> Improving INTERNAL communication to staff and students
<input type="checkbox"/> Fostering a culture and climate of mutual trust and respect
<input type="checkbox"/> Ensuring student and staff safety | <input type="checkbox"/> Continuing to upgrade infrastructure and facilities
<input type="checkbox"/> Unifying diverse voices within the school community
<input type="checkbox"/> Closing opportunity and achievement gaps
<input type="checkbox"/> Fostering a sense of student and staff connectedness and belonging to our schools
<input type="checkbox"/> Improving EXTERNAL communication to parents and the community
<input type="checkbox"/> Creating a new strategic plan |
|--|---|

Table 1 shows the percentage of respondents who selected a listed priority in their top three choices and rank (1, 2, or 3) of that priority among the thirteen. For example, 52% of the 782 parents responding had “Retaining and recruiting teachers” in their top three. Parents ranked this as the top priority followed by “Improving academic performance” as second with 47% selecting it as one of the top three. The table contains rankings and percentages with other groups with 25 or more survey respondents.

Table 1: Ranking and Percentage of Respondents Selecting Priority in Their Top Three (disaggregated by role)

PRIORITIES	COMPOSITE n=1191	CURRENT PARENT/ GUARDIANS n=782	CERTIFICATED/ TEACHERS n=197	CLASSIFIED/ EXEMPT SUPPORT n=25	RESIDENT W/O SCHOOL CHILDREN n=90	ALUMS n=30
Retaining and recruiting top quality teachers	1 (48%)	1 (52)			3 (42)	1 (54)
Improving academic performance	2 (40%)	2 (47)			2 (44)	3 (38)
Fostering a culture and climate of mutual trust and respect	3 (39%)		1 (63)	2 (48)	1 (45)	
Increasing attention to students' & staff social emotional & mental health issues	4 (37%)	3 (36)	2 (50)	1 (57)		
Fostering a sense of student and staff connectedness and belonging to our schools	5 (28%)		3 (43)	2 (48)		2 (42)
Unifying diverse voices within the school community	6 (25%)					
Ensuring student and staff safety	7 (19%)					

The composite results indicated that the top priorities for the new superintendent will be to sustain and strengthen efforts to recruit and retain excellent teachers followed by improving academic performance, fostering a culture of trust and respect, and attending to the social emotional health and wellness needs of students and staff. Given the prevalence of parent respondents, the results could be considered skewed, but we found it significant that all groups included the top five priorities in the table as their first, second, or third choice.

It is important to note that of the thirteen priorities, the two that ranked lowest among every group were upgrading and improving facilities (4.2%) and developing a new strategic plan (5.2%).

These results indicate that applicants should be able to both articulate and show how they have successfully retained teachers, succeeded in hiring excellent staff in these times of increasing teacher shortages, and produce both numbers and narratives as evidence of improving academic performance, strengthening mental health supports, and sustaining or strengthening a climate that is trusting, trustworthy, and respectful.

The Board of Education requested that respondents have the option to identify by racial ethnic groups, gender and sexual identify, and ability status. We have disaggregated data by these groups, and it should be noted each group contains a combination of parents, staff, students, and residents without children in school. As with Table 1, Table 2 indicates that the rankings for priorities are clustered among these four:

- Retaining and recruiting top quality teachers
- Improving academic performance
- Fostering a culture and climate of mutual trust and respect
- Increasing attention to students’ and staff social emotional and mental health issues

While differences between groups within the paired categories of white/non-white and identified disability/no disability are clearly similar, the LGBTQIA+ respondents rankings stood out to us. We noted that for all three of the top priorities of this group, more than 50% of respondents indicated they were extremely important. Moreover, the extremely important percentage points were significantly higher than the group identifying as Straight for “Fostering a culture and climate of mutual trust and respect” (20 percentage points) and for “Increasing attention to students’ and staff social emotional and mental health issues” (14 percentage points). Moreover, 52% of the respondents identifying as LGTBQ selected “Unifying diverse voices within the school community” as a top priority compared to just 20% of the Straight group.

These data indicate to us the need for a leader who has successfully supported inclusion of the LGTBQIA+ students, staff, parents, and greater community and helped different groups understand, value, respect, and collaborate with each other.

Table 2: Ranking and Percentage of Respondents Selecting Priority in Their Top Three (disaggregated by identity)

PRIORITIES	COMPOSITE	WHITE n=674	NON-WHITE n=121	"STRAIGHT" n=695	LGBTQIA+ n=44	NO DISABILITY n=708	IDENTIFIED DISABILITY n=38
Retaining and recruiting top quality teachers	1 (48%)	1 (49)	1 (41)	1 (51)		1 (49)	1 (53)
Improving academic performance	2 (40%)		1 (41)	3 (40)			3 (37)
Fostering a culture and climate of mutual trust and respect	3 (39%)	2 (42)			1 (59)	2 (41)	
Increasing attention to students' & staff social emotional & mental health issues	4 (37%)	2 (42)	3 (37)	2 (41)	2 (55)	3 (40)	2 (39)
Fostering a sense of student and staff connectedness and belonging to our schools	5 (28%)						
Unifying diverse voices within the school community	6 (25%)				3 (52)		
Ensuring student and staff safety	7 (19%)						

Turning to leadership qualities (Tables 3 and 4), it was not surprising that they were closely aligned with the priorities. Two-thirds or more of the composite of all stakeholders indicated it was extremely important that the next superintendent:

- Foster a positive, professional climate of mutual trust and respect
- Recruit and retain highly qualified, effective, and diverse personnel
- Ensure students are college and career ready upon graduation.
-

Disaggregating the data by role (Table 3), we found some important differences among stakeholder groups. For example, teachers and certificated staff noted it was extremely important engage staff voice in district decision making and ensure that a culture of belonging and connection for all students and staff whereas a significantly lower percentage of parent/guardian respondents thought these were extremely important. Likewise, teachers were far less inclined than parents to mark college and career readiness as extremely important. The new superintendent will need to understand why these differences exist and a qualification for the next leader needs to be the ability to manage the multiple priorities and needs of different stakeholder groups while moving the district forward with a common, shared aspirational and achievable vision.

We also found it noteworthy that more than 60% of the respondents in all stakeholder groups thought it extremely important for the new superintendent to provide regular and transparent communication to students, staff, parents, and community. Clearly, one of the primary qualifications for applicants will be demonstrated effectiveness as a masterful communicator in the full array of communication: clear and concise writing; inspiring, engaging, and articulate public speaking; establishing an authentic credible social media presence; active listening and responding; etc.

Two other findings struck us. One was the low level of importance for expanding digital engagement. We expected the opportunities for engagement to be higher, but from our direct work in the district, we learned through our counts of attendance and participation that stakeholders much preferred in person focus groups and forums than virtual ones. The second was the lower level of support for the superintendent to partner w/ non-profits & businesses to provide internships, apprenticeships, mentorships. In our focus group with high school students, they made it very clear of their desire for more out of school “real world” learning experiences. While 48% of alumni thought it was extremely important for the superintendent to pursue these, the overall composite was just 22%.

Table 3: Percentage Ranking a Characteristic, Qualification, or Experience as Extremely Important (disaggregated by role)

QUESTION	PERCENTAGE RESPONDING EXTREMELY IMPORTANT					
	COMPOSITE	CURRENT	CERTIFICATED/	CLASSIFIED/	RESIDENT	ALUMS
		PARENT/ GUARDIANS	TEACHERS	EXEMPT SUPPORT	W/O SCHOOL CHILDREN	
<i>How important is it for the next superintendent to:</i>	n=1191	n=782	n=197	n=25	n=90	n=30
Q4. Elevate student voice?	28	27	29	41	29	29
Q5. Engage staff voice in district decision making?	48	41	87	52	46	38
Q6. Strengthen personalized learning supports?	39	41	33	33	46	38
Q7. Provide student opportunities in science, technology, engineering and mathematics?	53	58	32	41	65	63
Q8. Increase community understanding of the district's financial operations?	28	26	23	35	46	38
Q9. Offer new opportunities for digital community engagement?	8	7	9	14	12	17
Q10. Hold Listen, Learn, Lead roundtables and community academies?	13	12	8	9	22	17
Q11. Recruit and retain highly qualified, effective, and diverse personnel?	66	66	66	61	74	71
Q12. Lead improvements in the curriculum?	53	57	39	24	60	63
Q13. Provide regular and transparent communication to students, staff, parents, & community?	65	63	69	78	73	71
Q14. Understand and address the needs of our increasingly diverse population?	48	45	53	50	59	58
Q15. Be an effective operational manager?	48	48	47	39	51	46
Q16. Demonstrate a deep understanding of emerging educational research & best practices?	47	47	41	52	52	57
Q17. Ensure a culture of belonging and connection for all students and staff?	62	58	77	73	65	71
Q18. Provide a clear compelling vision for the future?	43	42	48	22	41	48
Q19. Be an innovative, "out of the box" thinker?	26	24	28	23	33	46
Q20. Engage parents as partners in their children's education?	44	48	28	27	46	50
Q21. Inspire, motivate, and engage all stakeholders?	35	32	39	45	44	39
Q22. Partner w/ non-profits & businesses to provide internships, apprenticeships, mentorships?	22	22	19	23	33	48
Q23. Close opportunity and achievement gaps?	34	32	34	32	45	58
Q24. Foster a positive, professional climate of mutual trust and respect?	69	62	93	78	73	67
Q25. Be highly visible in the schools and the community?	37	33	51	52	30	46
Q26. Have experience as a superintendent?	35	30	50	52	36	21
Q27. Ensure students are college and career ready upon graduation?	66	72	46	52	65	58
Q28. Enhance schools' focus on collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, & problem solving?	48	49	41	41	60	58

KEY: GREEN shading indicates at least 2/3 of respondents ranked prompt extremely important

As requested by the Board, we also disaggregated this data by identity groups. Table 4 shows the results and also highlights areas of differences of 15 percentage points or more among paired groups. We found it concerning that there were large gaps in identifying what was extremely important for the next superintendent between those who identified as Straight and those who identified as LGBTQIA+. The new leader will need to seek to understand why these differences exist and the extent to which they are due to local, state, or national pressures or some combination thereof. We would advise the individual to attend to the LGBTQIA+ priorities of elevating student voice to understand their needs and challenges and to ensure they are connected to caring adults and feel welcomed and that they belong at their schools.

Table 4: Percentage Ranking a Characteristic, Qualification, or Experience as Extremely Important (disaggregated by identity)

QUESTION	COMPOSITE n=1191	WHITE n=677	NON-WHITE n=121	STRAIGHT n=697	LGBTQIA+ n=44	NO DISABILITY n=710	IDENTIFIED DISABILITY n=39
How important is it for the next superintendent to:							
Q4. Elevate student voices?	28	29	36	28	59	28	33
Q5. Engage staff voice in district decision making?	48	52	38	51	48	50	46
Q6. Strengthen personalized learning supports?	39	41	40	42	41	41	47
Q7. Provide student opportunities in science, technology, engineering and mathematics?	53	51	60	54	36	54	46
Q8. Increase community understanding of the district's financial operations?	28	24	30	25	19	25	33
Q9. Offer new opportunities for digital community engagement?	8	7	10	9	7	7	24
Q10. Hold Listen, Learn, Lead roundtables and community academies?	13	11	22	11	14	11	21
Q11. Recruit and retain highly qualified, effective, and diverse personnel?	66	72	69	71	77	70	66
Q12. Lead improvements in the curriculum?	53	53	55	55	36	54	54
Q13. Provide regular and transparent communication to students, staff, parents, & community?	65	65	64	65	50	65	62
Q14. Understand and address the needs of our increasingly diverse population?	48	53	62	53	73	53	59
Q15. Be an effective operational manager?	48	47	47	49	30	48	51
Q16. Demonstrate a deep understanding of emerging educational research & best practices?	47	52	41	51	43	51	46
Q17. Ensure a culture of belonging and connection for all students and staff?	62	68	64	68	82	67	72
Q18. Provide a clear compelling vision for the future?	43	44	44	44	41	44	33
Q19. Be an innovative, "out of the box" thinker?	26	26	27	26	32	25	32
Q20. Engage parents as partners in their children's education?	44	40	45	40	32	39	54
Q21. Inspire, motivate, and engage all stakeholders?	35	35	33	35	16	34	38
Q22. Partner w/ non-profits & businesses to provide internships, apprenticeships, mentorships?	22	23	24	23	14	22	38
Q23. Close opportunity and achievement gaps?	34	39	38	39	40	38	44
Q24. Foster a positive, professional climate of mutual trust and respect?	69	74	60	71	70	71	64
Q25. Be highly visible in the schools and the community?	37	37	36	37	32	37	32
Q26. Have experience as a superintendent?	35	35	29	34	21	33	26
Q27. Ensure students are college and career ready upon graduation?	66	68	62	69	45	68	68
Q28. Enhance schools' focus on collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, & problem solving?	48	51	49	50	55	49	62

KEY: GREEN shading indicates at least 2/3 of respondents ranked prompt extremely important
YELLOW shading indicates differences of 15+ percentage points between identity groups

Qualitative Results

The vast majority of the comments regarding priorities were aligned with the numerical results. In response to the prompt asking respondents to list what they believe should be the district's top two or three priorities, they frequently mentioned focusing on academic excellence and improving academic performance; social emotional/mental health and wellness; inclusiveness and equity; and establishing and growing a culture of trust and respect through transparent, open, and honest communication. However, from reading the comments, we noted another important priority quickly emerged, though it was seldom articulated. It appears to us that Upper Arlington is not immune from the growing polarization we are seeing in local, state, regional, and national politics, and for the benefit of the students, the new superintendent will need to listen, learn, and manage adult perceptions.

A few examples of the polarization are worth noting. These two comments came in literally one minute apart:

9/15/2022 10:56 AM Increasing attention to students' and staff members' social emotional and mental health issues

9/15/2022 10:57 AM Focus on academics rather than social emotional learning

Some other examples:

STOP focusing on Diversity, Inclusion and Equity

Stop the race and gender discussions.

Get our test scores up and get the focus back to academics! Stop with SIL [sic], DEI nonsense

Continue to support students from marginalized groups (special needs, disadvantaged and minority backgrounds) to make them feel a welcome part of the school community and ensuring they have needed resources to excel.

Improving diversity and inclusion initiatives for students and staff (such as closing gaps in accessibility) that are created by and for diverse groups of people with an emphasis on BIPOC, people in the LGBT+ communities, and people with disabilities. When the most marginalized in a community benefit, the entire community benefits.

Continuing to drive resource, focus, and attention on improving the experience of diverse students and families in the district and ingraining in our schools the social/emotional learning programs that have been introduced in the last couple of years.

And within the priorities remarks some respondents offered conflicting advice for the Board:

I want to see someone that truly sees and validates our kids. We need someone that knows that the best way to learn and succeed is to feel safe, respected, and valued. We cannot ignore the mental health of our kids or their emotional needs. These two things need to be a focus so that they can focus their education

Please hire a superintendent who will focus SOLELY on academics and completely stop all social-emotional-wellness-mental health support.

In our experience as educators and parents, academic success and social emotional health are inexorably intertwined as is academic success with inclusion and equity for disadvantaged youth. The new superintendent should prioritize communicating how academic excellence and “soft traits” such as self-confidence, perseverance, collaboration, etc. mutually strengthen one another.

A few respondents articulated this priority well:

Bring the temperature down, depoliticize the schools. The kids, left to their own devices, likely will get along better across their differences than the parents, who are driven by fear. Creating a deep sense of belonging for all students at UA is paramount, and should not be undermined by distractions ... I think it is called teaching and awakening within them a curiosity and ability to think critically and compassionately about the world they will inherit.

Bring the school community together and focusing on mutual respect-any other improvements won't happen without cooperation.

Having the courage to do the right thing even in the face of opposition and supporting teachers and students to foster an environment of respect for one another despite our differences.

I also wanted to select "unifying diverse voices" [as a top three priority] but perhaps instead it should be "highlight diverse voices and perspectives within the school community". Maybe before there can be unification there must be opportunity to share diverse perspectives and

opinions (with proper context, audience & circumstances) to demonstrate - authentically - that our schools and community can think and feel differently, but work toward understanding and compromise

While the comments seldom mentioned the priority of retaining and recruiting excellent teachers, the key priorities of improving academic success (and rankings), supporting students mental health and wellness, and incorporating the best inclusive practices are directly related to the quality and well-being of the teaching and support staff. One comment clearly tied the quantitative numbers to the qualitative narrative:

If we recruit and retain great teachers and insist that they constantly enhance their skills through workshops and adopting current best practices, higher academic performance will follow suit. It is imperative that our school [teachers] embrace the increased cultural diversity of our student body, and promote inclusivity at all levels

Likewise, the comments regarding the desired characteristics and qualifications were similar to the quantitative results. These reflected a strong desire for the new superintendent to possess “soft skills” such as approachability, empathy, honesty, character, and as one respondent noted, employing these from day one will be important:

The new superintendent should connect with students, staff, parents, and the community. How she starts will be critical. Nobody really cares how much you know until they know who you are and what you stand for. If this step is skipped, I don't think the new superintendent has a chance to make any substantial progress.

Respondents want someone who will take time to learn about the community, immerse herself or himself in it, and have the passion to listen, lead, and act. It was very clear that the district does not need “fixing” or a “turn around” superintendent. It is an excellent district, but stakeholders agree that improvements can be made and will need to be made given the challenges of teacher shortages, changing demographics and a perceived decline in external rankings.

The comments in this section further indicated that Upper Arlington Schools are not immune from the national and statewide “culture wars.” On one hand, several respondents noted they did not want a “woke” superintendent and that the new leader should focus solely on academics – notably reading, writing, mathematics, and science. On the other hand, numerous respondents noted the importance of a leader who was attentive to, supportive of, and advocated for equity initiatives, diversity – including expanding hiring of teachers of color, and inclusion of LGBTQIA+ community as well as understood how critically important it was to ensure mental health and social emotional supports for students and staff.

Below are two sets of comments reflecting the polarization and two that seek a leader who sees academic excellence and improvement and DEI and social emotional health not either/ors

but as both/ands. These are followed by four advocating for a leader who can bring opposing viewpoints together by focusing on student needs.

1A. 1) a genuine personal rejection of woke-ism 2) a commitment to ensuring superior academic performance and preparedness of students

1B. A commitment to equity and diversity ... ability to hold strong in the face of a community that thinks the way things have always been done is the way things should always be done.

2A. Enough of the SEL/Diversity. These schools need to focus on academics, you need a Superintendent who will focus on academics that is it. Stop with the other stuff you are not preparing these kids for their future. Test scores are terrible go back to the basics.

2B. Fostering diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging in our school community (staff and students) A kind, patient and positive person who listens to concerns from all sources and creatively and compassionately problem solves. Someone who will continue forward progress in supporting students of all abilities.

3A. I think the next superintendent needs to have knowledge and experience. I would like this person to realize that the community is divided on many topics and issues and to listen to ALL opinions and ideas not just those who are the loudest!

3B. Resilience. Leadership. Able to dynamically and diplomatically handle the often very conflicting views ... while always making decisions in the best interests of the students.

3C. I am not interested in a politician. I would prefer a leader who engages directly with students to learn about their needs / wants / ideas.

3D. Being student focused, fixing our falling ranking in schools, create an open culture both from a DE&I perspective but also truthful and open sharing with families.

Commonalities between both groups of respondents was that they want a leader who will listen to them, who will be apolitical but also politically savvy, and who puts the success and well-being of ALL students at the center of their decisions. Below are representative verbatim comments regarding the desired characteristics and qualifications of the next leader.

We found the following **verbatim** comments to be both representative and illuminating of what stakeholder groups desire their next superintendent to embody:

Parents

- 1. Deep understanding of instructional leadership, commitment to equitable access for all learners, and willingness to think creatively about the role of education and its continued benefits to the community*
- 2. Responsive, engaged, energetic*

3. *Efficient, high level of communication and integrity*
4. *Stable, pragmatic and a motivator*
5. *Moral compass, pragmatic, integrity, transparent*
6. *Dynamic leader who has positively led another district as Superintendent.*
7. *Someone who cares about relationships and trust; who listens; who values their staff; who is willing to hear families; who will explain their reasoning; who stays calm; who values the students and what they bring to the school.*
8. *Strong educational background (exp as classroom teacher and/or administrator for a large district) Commitment to DEI - not just surface level - initiatives as a part of the 'uniquely accomplished' tagline. This includes acceptance of/advocacy for non-traditional (i.e., not college) post-secondary paths Continued transparent communication with community, particularly parents & staff, about goals and implications for the district (Paul Imhoff and Andy G. are great at this)*
9. *Excellent leadership including the ability to effectively work with teachers on common goals to advance student learning. I am not interested in a politician but a leader - it's not the words that matter most; it's the actions*
10. *Highly qualified, able to skillfully navigate balancing the competing priorities and constituencies of this district, all while providing leadership and doing what is best for students' learning and well-being above all.*
11. *Someone who understands the importance of program evaluations - that all projects should, in the planning phase, have a budget, objectives, and a plan to evaluate whether objectives are being met; someone who understands there is great urgency in supporting marginalized students*
12. *Focus 2. Enthusiasm 3. Someone who has an already established Love of the Community and understands the legacy and traditions of Upper Arlington and who is also willing to challenge the way things have always been done in order Evolve and Elevate the district without ever settling for mediocrity!*
13. *A strategic thinker who KNOWS HOW TO LEAD! ... somebody who ... knows how to structure programming that supports improvement. Someone who will hold each building admin accountable to their students. Someone who understands that when students are heard, they work harder and in turn, achieve more. Someone who operates on the proactive side, not reactive side when it comes to community. We need a leadership expert.*
14. *Make UA a best in class place to learn and work for the next generation of leaders*
15. *Innovative, transparent, leader who values every student's well-being/belonging and success; academically, creatively, and holistically.*

Teachers and Certified Staff

1. *The next Superintendent needs to be able to balance the needs of the community (students and parents) with the needs of the staff. This person should be experienced and come from outside UA. Finally, this person should recognize the excellence that exists here, while also encouraging improvement where it is needed.*
2. *A superintendent should have the following: 1) Put the interests of students first. Decisions, goals, and intention should be focused on what is aligned to supporting the education of our children. Along with that vision, staff and community members are automatically included in the conversation and decision making. 2) Excellent verbal and written communication skills. This*

includes being attentive and articulate, along with being transparent when it comes to communicating information to staff, students, families, and the community. We all like to be informed as to why decisions were made, and this doesn't always happen. 3) Be visible - visit buildings and classrooms often. Superintendents should get to know the staff and students so they can better understand how to support their needs. Along with this, trust your staff to do the right things, have their backs, especially given the strong parental voice in our community, and know their strengths and shortcomings so you can develop an understanding of where and how to help or provide support.

3. *I think it's important for someone to have been a teacher and understand education from both the administrator and the teacher sides. I believe in having positive communication between staff and the superintendent. I think it's important to be visible and see the work being done. The person should be positive, an active listener and a good communicator.*
4. *Someone who inspires staff to do their best with a focus on the whole child (not just test scores and rankings). Someone who values diversity and is inclusive of all. Someone who values staff expertise and asks staff for input when making decisions about all students and curriculum and understands that parent voice is necessary for decisions about their own child.*
5. *The superintendent needs to recognize the importance of ensuring that all students grow and thrive in our schools. UA is a unique place with involved families. The superintendent should recognize this and work with the community to maintain the trust and involvement that Paul Imhoff has built.*
6. *A superintendent that values teachers as experts and professionals and as EQUAL partners in the future success of our schools*
7. *The ability to bring the focus of UA Schools back to being an organization that thinks about how changes (technology, staffing, etc.) will impact students. This should be first and foremost in decision making. 2. The desire to make staff feel supported, respected, and valued*
8. *Effectively build a positive CULTURE with staff, students, parents, and community members. 2) Regularly CONNECT with all stakeholders. 3) Embrace INNOVATIVE ideas and practices to maximize teaching and learning.*
9. *Experience; understanding of the community and its needs; engaging, open personality, strong communicator, level headed, connected to each school*
10. *Experienced, Clear + Effective Communicator, Honors Tradition While Intentionally Innovating Based on Needs*

Support Staff

1. *The ability to reach and interact with all staff members regardless of position - UAEA, OAPSE, non-union aides and paras, etc. Understanding the importance and necessity of hiring - and keeping - qualified paraprofessionals.*
2. *Fair, kind, approachable, Authentic, passionate, and innovative*
3. *He/she should have an extensive knowledge of the community and its current expectations in order to determine what is needed opposed to what is expected. He/She should be able to fearlessly make changes based on what is necessary despite the backlash that may come from those who want things to stay the same. He/she should not be ignorant to cultural, social, and economic differences current that separation in district whether intentional or unintentional. He/She should be passionate about their job and how it affects the district as a whole.*

Administrators

1. *A visionary leader who will build systems that lead to success. A leader focuses on improving student outcomes through exceptional organizational management.*
2. *The superintendent must genuinely care about teachers, students, staff and possess the ability to convey that care and love for people. The superintendent must be charismatic and warm. This person must have a vision for academic excellence and be willing to do the curricular work/changes to make Upper Arlington the best district in Ohio.*
3. *Being an excellent communicator with all stakeholders, building trust within the staff and with the community, and ensuring that they have a strong team around them to do the work - both the daily operations of the district and ensuring the success of each and every student*

Alumni

1. *Good judgment, thick skin (so as not to be bullied by extremists who are becoming increasingly focused upon K-12 education to ban books, restrict learning based ..., undermine belonging by marginalized groups, etc.) Finally, optimism that the future for these schools and kids is almost unlimited.*
2. *Conservative values, practical, and not woke.*
3. *1. Diverse experiences personally and professionally 2. Open to listening to others not necessarily part of the current circle 3. Looking to the future skill needs of both students and staff*
4. *Integrity has to be the first, we cannot have someone in a position of power that doesn't have proper integrity.*
5. *Support and respect teachers. Support a curriculum that fosters thinking and problem solving.*

Students

1. *Someone who has worked in schools before and has a deep love for all students, leadership, and who wants to change the world!*
2. *Knowledge of what is objectively best for the school district, sensitivity to issues in marginalized communities, and sympathy to all students and staff members*
3. *Give kids better education like my older brother had. Bring kids together. Too much talk about race and gender and other things kids can't change divides people and makes us sad.*
4. *Good listener*

Arguably, comment #194 sums it all up best. Upper Arlington Schools next leader should be:

“ Highly qualified, able to skillfully navigate balancing the competing priorities and constituencies of this district, all while providing leadership and doing what is best for students’ learning and well-being above all.”

Top 10 Desired Characteristics of Next Superintendent

The following summary of personal characteristics and attributes, skills, and experiences includes analysis of input gathered during listening sessions, student and stakeholder survey results, and responses to open-ended items on the stakeholder survey.

1. *Politically astute relationship builder who excels at engaging all voices, listening carefully, mediating disagreements, and building trust.*

One of the top priorities is establishing a climate of mutual trust and respect. This needs to be the first order of business for the new leader and the successful applicant must be able to show how they achieved this in former positions. Upper Arlington Schools need a leader willing and able to engage with ALL families and residents and manage strongly held *perceptions* of competing priorities; e.g., academic excellence v. social emotional learning; equity and inclusion v. raising rankings. The new superintendent's open door policy should be based on getting out the open door and into the schools and community to learn the why behind the disparate voices and assist various advocacy groups in identifying commonalities that will support current and future students. It is essential for the new superintendent to immediately and authentically engage this community to develop trusting relationships. As such, the individual cannot be perceived as a politician, but has to be politically savvy to navigate local issues and work productively with city council and the state legislature. Also, Upper Arlington is proud of its unique and rich traditions but is determined not to become complacent. Likewise, stakeholders expressed a desire for their next superintendent to have experience working in similar communities and in developing, implementing, and evaluating innovative programs and services that meet the varied academic, social-emotional, and mental health needs of students.

2. *An extraordinary communicator who will communicate with, listen to, authentically engage, and inspire the full array of stakeholders.*

Organizational trust is essential to accomplish meaningful progress in any and all areas – academic excellence, social and emotional health, DEI, special education supports, etc. - and the new superintendent will need to establish and nurture mutually respectful relationships with internal stakeholder groups and external partners. Consistent, clear, and transparent two-way communication will play a critical role in establishing these relationships. Sincere collaboration and stakeholder engagement will be necessary to sustain and expand the many partnerships established in Upper Arlington Schools. Most importantly, the superintendent will need to listen with a desire to understand; make decisions after gathering and considering input as well as solid research and data; and communicate effectively and with transparency regarding their rationale for their decisions. Participants in focus groups value a leader who is easily accessible and approachable, available to meet and interact with students and families, has a strong community presence and is down to earth. The bottom line is that the new leader must be public-facing and skilled at developing relationships with diverse constituents.

3. *Highly visible, approachable, and relatable being an active and involved presence in schools, and an immersive, outgoing presence in the community.*

All stakeholders asked that the next superintendent be a highly accessible and approachable leader to people and students throughout the District. Staff desire a leader who interacts with all employee groups by seeking broad-based input, engaging in two-way dialogue, and making decisions that balance the interests of all stakeholders impacted by those decisions. Successful superintendents are visible at schools and among students. Respondents want and expect their next superintendent to know the names of many employees and students and to be genuinely interested in them as people. They are comfortable being out and about and enjoy engaging in conversations. They are seen regularly in the community participating in activities and events and perceived as a contributing member to the greater community. They expertly use appropriate media to communicate regularly and transparently with their staff, parents, students, alumni, and the larger community to understand their perspectives and foster support for a high-quality school system.

4. *Adept at working with the Board as a team member and being proactive in maintaining members' focus on district goals and governance roles and parameters.*

The Governance team works collaboratively to address policies and regulations that ensure the District is well run. Respondents want to see the Board work as a team with Upper Arlington employees. An effective superintendent will facilitate the team, keeping the Board well-informed, providing access to training and professional development for the Board to strengthen their roles and relationships, be a high functioning team, and guide the District forward. The new superintendent should be adept at onboarding and supporting newly elected members as well as ensuring every member is equally valued, respected, and informed.

5. *A role model of transparency, integrity, and honesty who is kind, curious, trustworthy, approachable, and relatable.*

These characteristics are common to leaders whom people follow. They develop trust by being trustworthy. They do what they say they will do and “walk the talk.” The next Upper Arlington superintendent must be a servant leader and life-long learner with the humility to consider different ideas and own mistakes. They do what they say they will do. Focus group participants desire a superintendent who remains curious, open, and innovative but does NOT chase “the latest fad” or “newest shiny object.” A superintendent that genuinely cares about students’ academic success and mental health was a high priority for all stakeholder groups. The superintendent should be an eager learner as well. She or he will need to learn about the community, the individual school cultures, the array of opportunities, and the needs of the full continuum of students.

6. *Excels at keeping the district moving forward academically and competitive with the top districts in the state and country.*

The Upper Arlington School District has a powerful foundation of academic excellence coupled with a drive for ongoing improvement. The new superintendent needs to have a deep understanding of internal organizational operations that will continue to increase academic excellence and also attract and retain the very best teaching and support staff. They will need to ensure the District's support functions and personnel align with school level needs, equitably distribute available resources (personnel, dollars, and time) consistent with the District's priorities, and create accountability measures and a timeline to evaluate school and system effectiveness. As a thoughtful systems thinker, the next superintendent is a leader who holds staff within the organization accountable for mutually agreed-upon measures of success, one of which is continuous academic achievement growth and another which is opportunities for students who may not be immediately college bound to pursue productive career pathways and exploratory opportunities. The new leader will also need to hold herself/himself accountable and openly admit and own mistakes, identify what was learned, and move forward.

7. *A visionary, trustworthy leader who is authentically and deeply committed, energetic, and passionate about ensuring excellence for EVERY child*

The next Upper Arlington superintendent must be clear and consistent about who and what matters most. They are passionate about students and center their work based on student needs and what is best for the children and youth of the District. They are unapologetic about putting students' social emotional health, academic achievement, and overall well-being first and will ensure that marginalized groups have access and opportunities necessary to succeed. As noted in the Listen, Learn, and Lead reports, student voice needs to be elevated, and the next leader should make that a priority.

8. *An accomplished educator with public school teaching and leadership experience; ideally with superintendent experience in a similar school community of high achievement, high expectations, and high parent and alumni engagement.*

Upper Arlington Schools are comprised of skilled, compassionate educators. The next superintendent should be a knowledgeable instructional leader with experience in similar districts and/or with high profile communities. They prioritize academic excellence, equity, and mental health and well-being. The leader shall understand the importance of differentiating instruction and support programs to meet the unique and diverse needs of varying groups of learners. With lived experience as a teacher, they identify and bring all stakeholder groups together around instructional priorities, best practices, performance measures, and the social-emotional needs of students, student families, and staff, particularly in a post-Covid environment.

9. *Has demonstrated recent and relevant experience in successfully advancing initiatives to support inclusion, equity, and student and staff mental health and wellness.*

Words are one thing; actions are another. Upper Arlington stakeholders know that successfully advancing these initiatives means providing specific growth metrics and they expect to have numerical and narrative evidence of positive outcomes. High school students made it clear that access to counselors and mental health support services is critically important, but we know adding more staff is not always – and not often – the answer. The new superintendent will need to be adept at understanding the organizational systems, structures, and resources necessary to sustain and strengthen consistent PK-12+ (the plus meaning transitional supports) for IEP and 504 students and to ensure the safety, health, and academic supports for marginalized students and for those students who are still struggling from pandemic related trauma.

10. *"Freaking fearless," courageous, confident, thick-skinned, yet humble, empathetic, and patient.*

Nearly every stakeholder group told us how challenging the job will be given the current political climate and the demands of various groups. The new leader cannot be just a "people pleaser;" he or she will need to make difficult decisions, conduct tough private and public conversations, and take a stance on particular issues. The superintendent must be able to tell people "no" and provide a clear, understandable reason for doing so after patiently, sincerely, and deeply listening to all sides surrounding any controversial decision. In this era of social media, she or he will likely face criticism and personal attacks but should have the courage and self-confidence not to take them personally and to move forward with the best interest of students first. Sincere humility – not just saying "I am honored and humbled" – is needed to succeed in this job as is the ability to tap internal and external expertise and resources to develop, support, and even "sell" a particular plan or decision.

The search team would like to thank all the participants who attended focus groups, forums, and/or completed the online survey. **A special thanks to Karin Muetting, Andy Geistfeld, and Karen Truett** for their expert support and assistance in scheduling the focus groups and interviews, setting up the Superintendent Search web page, and persevering with communications in order to ensure we heard from so many stakeholders. We are most appreciative of working with such dedicated professionals.

We would also like to recognize **Superintendent Paul Imhoff**. Numerous stakeholders shared how much they respected him, how effective he was as a leader, and how approachable, personable, and caring he was as a person. We know that by and large he will be missed.

Respectfully submitted,

Max McGee, Ken Arndt, and Connie Collins
HYA Associates