

New Milford School District Leadership Profile Report

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Presented by:

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HYA Executive Search
Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates



Profile Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in January of 2019, in support of the search for the new superintendent of the New Milford School District. The data contained herein were obtained from input HYA Senior Associate, Dwight R. Pfennig, and HYA Associate, Don Macrino, received when meeting with Focus Groups and individuals in either an interview setting or larger group settings on January 23 and 24, 2019, and from the results of the online survey completed by stakeholders between January 11, 2019, and January 30, 2019. Twenty-two (22) stakeholder interviews and focus group meetings were used to collect information regarding the strengths of the district, the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years, and desired characteristics for the new superintendent. The online survey was used to collect data relevant to ranking desired characteristics in the new superintendent as well as to gather open ended comments regarding those characteristics, the district/community in general, and suggestions for prospective superintendent candidates.

Focus Group/Individual Conversation and Online Survey Participants

Focus Group/Individual Conversation and Online Survey Participants	Personal Interviews and/or Focus Groups	Online Survey
Board	5	NA
Administrators	5	14
Teachers	7	67
Parent of Student Attending School	NA	182
Parent Support Group	3	NA
Bargaining Unit Leadership	7	NA
Community Members	11	24
Town/Elected Officials	5	NA
Central Office Support Staff	2	NA
Support Staff member	NA	18
Students	42	61
Total	87	366
Grand Total	453	



Consistently Reported Strengths

Focus Group participants were obviously proud of New Milford as a community supporting their schools. “New Milford has been a haven for caring, friendly residents, artists, musicians, and summering families seeking refuge from the city.”

Focus Group participants expressed appreciation for teachers and building level administrators who have remained dedicated to the students of the New Milford School District.

Students frequently spoke of bonding with teachers to assist them in times of academic need and in general acclimation to the school environment. Some teachers have provided reference to “real life” experience that was appreciated by students.

Focus Group participants spoke of the strength of New Milford’s Special Education program and Talented and Gifted Program.

It was generally agreed that the facilities were well maintained and adequate.

Parent and student Focus Groups spoke highly of the music and art programs offered by the district.

The presence of law enforcement and practical safety procedures has made students, staff, and community members feel more secure within the teaching and learning environment.



Consistently Reported Challenges

Considerable concern regarding the major leadership change in the New Milford School District was referenced by most Focus Groups. Focus Group participants frequently mentioned the desire for a long-term commitment from the next superintendent.

The word “inconsistency” was often used in describing multiple aspects of the district. The inconsistencies were attributed to lack of systems knowledge as it pertains to those policies and procedures as well as “turnover” in administrative positions.

Funding a school district is always a concern and was mentioned frequently by those attending Focus Group meetings. Many Focus Group participants referenced New Milford’s relatively low Per Pupil Expenditure which ranks 151 of 171 public school districts in Connecticut.

There was a strong sense among Focus Group participants that there was the need for greater support for “students in the middle.”

Focus Groups expressed concern about teacher attrition. Many talented teachers left the district for other districts after a few years to seek substantially higher pay for the same number of years of experience.



Consistently Reported Desired Characteristics

Most Focus Groups and survey participants want an experienced educator with deep passion for developing and supporting visionary operational and academic strategies that may be transformed to New Milford's strategic movement forward.

The new superintendent should provide evidence of successful engagement and transparency with all community constituents built upon trust, honesty and integrity, regardless of issues at hand and/or problems to be solved.

The new superintendent must demonstrate strength as an educational evaluator with the ability to recruit, employ and retain effective personnel throughout the district.

It is expected by most Focus Groups, that the new Superintendent will provide evidence of a clear understanding of student achievement through detailed analysis of data.

Key to all aspects of the new Superintendent's work will be the ability to communicate effectively with all constituents.



Survey Executive Summary

The New Milford Public Schools Superintendent Search Survey was completed by 366 stakeholders. The largest stakeholder group surveyed was parents of students attending school. Parents of students attending school represented 49.7 percent of all respondents. Teachers made up the second most populous stakeholder group at 18.3 percent of all respondents. The third largest participant group were students at 16.7 percent of all respondents.

Regarding the State of the District, the following statements were perceived to be district strengths:

- Technology is integrated into the classroom (TL)**
- District schools are safe (TL)**
- Facilities are well-maintained (M)**
- The district employs effective teachers, administrators and support staff in its schools (M)**
- Teachers personalize instructional strategies to address individual learning needs, special education and gifted (TL)**

APPENDIX I: STATE OF THE DISTRICT ITEM ANALYSIS

Percentages of parents, students, administrators, teachers, community members, and other constituents selecting 5 (Strongly Agree) or 4 (Agree) for each item are presented below.

	All (366)	Administrator (14)	Community Member (24)	Parent Of Student Attending School (182)	Student (61)	Support Staff Member (18)	Teacher (67)
OVERALL							
Please rate the overall quality of education in the District.	51%	93%	50%	51%	36%	44%	58%
VISION AND VALUES							
The district provides a clear, compelling vision for the future.	39%	50%	21%	35%	23%	56%	61%
The district is heading in the right direction.	36%	86%	25%	35%	26%	50%	37%
The district has high standards for student performance.	52%	93%	42%	46%	48%	67%	67%
The district makes decisions based on information from data and research.	42%	79%	25%	37%	18%	72%	67%
The district is working to close the achievement gap.	42%	79%	38%	36%	25%	67%	60%
TEACHING AND LEARNING							
The district provides a well-rounded educational experience for all students.	45%	64%	29%	43%	48%	56%	49%
Teachers personalize instructional strategies to address individual learning needs, special education and gifted.	54%	43%	42%	45%	52%	56%	87%
District schools are safe.	65%	100%	71%	63%	48%	78%	75%
The social and emotional needs of students are being addressed.	41%	36%	42%	40%	25%	56%	55%
Students are on track to be college and career ready.	45%	64%	37%	42%	38%	61%	52%
Technology is integrated into the classroom.	73%	100%	54%	68%	80%	78%	84%
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT							
The district engages the community as a partner to improve the school system.	35%	57%	33%	31%	18%	56%	52%
There is transparent communication from the District.	40%	86%	29%	39%	33%	33%	43%
The district engages with diverse racial, cultural and socio-economic groups.	46%	36%	33%	43%	52%	56%	54%
MANAGEMENT							
Facilities are well maintained.	63%	93%	50%	65%	57%	67%	60%
The district is fiscally responsible.	42%	71%	38%	41%	26%	44%	54%
The district employs effective teachers, administrators and support staff in its schools.	61%	86%	50%	60%	44%	67%	79%
Employees are held accountable to high standards.	49%	86%	37%	39%	34%	72%	81%
District technology infrastructure is sufficient to support 21st century learning.	45%	93%	33%	37%	57%	50%	51%



APPENDIX II: LEADERSHIP PROFILE ITEM ANALYSIS

Respondents were asked to select 4 statements they deem most important in selecting a new superintendent. Results are presented below by constituent group.

	All (366)	Administrator (14)	Community Member (24)	Parent Of Student Attending School (182)	Student (61)	Support Staff Member (18)	Teacher (67)
Foster a positive, professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators	52%	71%	50%	46%	25%	56%	88%
Recruit, employ, and retain effective personnel throughout the District and its schools	50%	36%	46%	53%	43%	50%	52%
Establish a culture of high expectations for all students and personnel	40%	43%	29%	46%	36%	28%	36%
Demonstrate a deep understanding of educational research and emerging best practices and implement strategies	36%	21%	21%	43%	36%	39%	22%
Effectively plan and manage the long-term financial health of the District	33%	43%	42%	32%	26%	50%	31%
Provide transparent communication	29%	29%	29%	26%	20%	28%	45%
Be visible throughout the District and actively engaged in community life	29%	14%	25%	29%	21%	56%	33%
Provide a clear, compelling vision for the future	24%	50%	46%	25%	18%	22%	16%
Understand and be sensitive to the needs of a diverse student population	24%	36%	29%	20%	41%	33%	15%
Be an effective manager of the Districts' day-to-day operations	18%	29%	17%	16%	11%	50%	19%
Integrate personalized educational opportunities into the instructional program	18%	7%	0%	24%	25%	6%	7%
Provide guidance for district-wide curriculum and instruction	15%	7%	4%	19%	15%	6%	13%

The top-rated leadership profile characteristics constituents desire in a superintendent are:

- **Foster a positive, professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators (CE)**
- **Recruit, employ, and retain effective personnel throughout the District and its schools (M)**
- **Establish a culture of high expectations for all students and personnel (VV)**
- **Demonstrate a deep understanding of educational research and emerging best practices and implement strategies (VV)**



Leadership Characteristics

After seeking input from its Board members, parents, staff, students, and community via focus groups, individual conversations, and an online survey, the Board of Education of the New Milford School District seeks a strong educational leader who possesses the following characteristics:

- **Administrative and teaching experience that spans a significant number of grade levels within a successful educational environment.**
- **Expertise in establishing a culture of high expectations for all students and personnel.**
- **Political and educational savvy in dealing with difficult decisions and varying opinionated personalities (State; Federal; Local).**
- **Excellent understanding of systems theory and its relationship to strategic planning.**
- **Knowledge of technology integration in curriculum that serves students and staff.**
- **Strong sense of financial acumen that leads to responsible long and short-term budget planning and implementation.**
- **Polished and varied communication methods employed with a sense of humility and accessibility that signals a professional presence.**
- **Ability to recruit employ and retain effective personnel throughout the district.**
- **Experience in maintaining and building upon a “safe school” environment.**

Executive Summary

There are a number of historical narratives concerning the area now known as New Milford dating back to the 1700's. As published by the Lakes Group, LLC: "It was one of the earliest settlements in what is now Litchfield County. European settlement of New Milford began in 1707, when one John Noble and his 8-year old daughter Sarah arrived from Westfield, MA, to settle. Subsequently, many settlers made their way up the Housatonic River from Milford (and from other places as well) to settle in this new town. More recently, due to its proximity to Danbury and Interstate 84, as well as the Fairfield County 'Gold Coast,' New Milford has acquired two distinctly different characters. The still rural areas around the urban/suburban central area of New Milford has attracted weekenders, many from New York City, who have built elaborate estates. Meanwhile the central area has grown in terms of population, including those who are employed here and those who commute elsewhere."¹
(¹Between the Lakes Group, LLC website: www.betweenthelakes.com/Litchfield)

New Milford is a racially, economically, and culturally diverse town. It is recognized as a family friendly community offering a variety of local and regional cultural venues for art, theatre, music, and dance, as well as historical properties and gardens. Likewise, New Milford's 27,000 residents have easy access via public and private transportation to New York City, linking them with additional amenities.

The New Milford School District serves 3947 students in five buildings: two primary schools grades PK-2; one intermediate school grades 3-5; one middle school grades 6-8; and New Milford High School grades 9-12. New Milford's annual budget is approximately \$62 million. The district teacher ratio is approximately 14:1. The New Milford School District consists of a student population of approximately 76% White/Caucasian students; 11% Hispanic/Latino students; 14% Asian students; 4% African American/Black students; and 4% multi-racial students. Approximately 23% of students receive free and/or reduced lunch.²
(²Based on available 2017-2018 *EDSIGHT* Data)

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Participation

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

Group	Personal Interviews and/or Focus Groups	Online Survey
Board	5	NA
Administrators	5	14
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It should be emphasized that the following narrative represents the most frequently generated information based on meetings with individuals and focus groups as well as information gathered from the online survey. While data gathered are not a scientific sampling, items are included if, in the consultants' judgment, they warranted the Board's attention.

Strengths of the District

Focus Group participants were obviously proud of New Milford as a community supporting their schools. They often spoke of the "small town" feel and closeness of the community. Their comments also supported what so aptly is referenced on the town website, "New Milford has been a haven for caring, friendly residents, artists, musicians, and summering families seeking refuge from the city."

Likewise, constituents of the New Milford School District are a proud educational community. Several Focus Group participants cited the rich diversity of the program offered by the district and the multiple opportunities provided for students by the district as contributors to that pride. Among the most frequent strengths discussed by Focus Group participants was the appreciation for teachers and building level administrators who have remained dedicated to the students of the New Milford School District. Teachers were generally viewed as being well prepared and committed to their students and teaching assignments. Most participants in the Focus Groups viewed teachers and building level administrators as caring and

responsive in providing individual and group assistance for students as well as parents/care providers. Students frequently spoke of bonding with teachers to assist them in times of academic need and in general acclimation to the school environment. Some teachers have provided reference to “real life” experience that was appreciated by students. Teachers were viewed positively as supporters of students in activities inside and outside of school. Building level administrators were also viewed as supportive in meeting needs of students. Most students participating in Focus Groups knew their building administrators well.

Many Focus Group participants spoke of the strength of New Milford’s Special Education program. In fact, it was thought that families moved to New Milford, in some cases, because of the quality of the special education program. The Gifted and Talented Program was also given high grades and seen as a specific strength. It was generally agreed that the facilities were well maintained and adequate. Parent and student Focus Groups spoke highly of the music and art programs offered by the district.

Strong support for the implementation of “safe schools” practices is also notable. The presence of law enforcement and practical safety procedures has made students, staff, and community members feel more secure within the teaching and learning environment.

Challenges and Issues Facing the District

Considerable concern regarding the major leadership change in the New Milford School District was referenced by most Focus Groups. The concern centered on issues varying from the forming of a positive relationship between the new superintendent and the Town Council to the need to cautiously review all aspects of district operation for the purpose of continued growth and improvement. Focus Group participants frequently mentioned the desire for a long-term commitment from the next superintendent.

The word “inconsistency” was often used in describing multiple aspects of the district. First and foremost was the feeling of Board Policy and procedures being applied inconsistently in each school building. The inconsistency in resources for each building was also noted. Finally, there is a perception that some programs are conducted inconsistently among different buildings. In many cases, the inconsistencies were attributed to lack of systems knowledge as it pertains to those policies and procedures as well as “turnover” in administrative positions.

Funding a school district is always a concern and was mentioned frequently by those attending Focus Group meetings. While the New Milford School District School Board is considered by most constituents to be very good stewards of the budget, there are concerns about a growing number of students requiring special education services and the need for additional staff to support English Language Learners. Many Focus Group participants referenced New Milford’s relatively low Per Pupil Expenditure which ranks 151 of 171 public school districts in Connecticut.

There was a strong sense among Focus Group participants that there was the need for greater support for “students in the middle.” It was stated the students requiring special education and those students in the top levels such as Advanced Placement or Gifted and Talented, received strong support, but that was not so much the case for the average student and particularly the non-college bound students.

Focus Groups expressed concern about teacher attrition. Many talented teachers left the district for other districts after a few years to seek substantially higher pay for the same

number of years of experience.

Desired Characteristics

Most Focus Groups and survey participants want an experienced educator with deep passion for the continued achievement of all students. Likewise, the new superintendent should have demonstrated successful experience in developing and supporting visionary operational and academic strategies that may be transformed to New Milford's strategic movement forward.

The new superintendent should provide evidence of successful engagement and transparency with all community constituents built upon trust, honesty and integrity, regardless of issues at hand and/or problems to be solved. The new superintendent should be adaptable in developing a professional presence that is demonstrated through balanced visibility within the district, with professional colleagues and with key decision makers involved with creating and supporting educational policy.

The new superintendent must demonstrate strength as an educational evaluator with the ability to recruit, employ and retain effective personnel throughout the district. Key to that strength is the ability to assess the talents of all current staff and make firm/fair decisions about staff placements based on experience, performance, and ability to support district initiatives.

It is expected by most Focus Groups, that the new Superintendent will provide evidence of a clear understanding of student achievement through detailed analysis of data. Such analytical experience should be conjoined with making sound programmatic and instructional judgements and/or decisions that enhance the teaching and learning process and the professional development program. It is expected that research and best practices will support those judgements and/or decisions.

Key to all aspects of the new Superintendent's work will be the ability to communicate effectively with all constituents. As noted by Focus Groups, clearly communicated policies and procedures throughout the district are essential to consistency in the operation of the school district.

HYA and the Board of Education intend to meet the challenge of finding an individual who possesses most of the skills and character traits required to meet the challenging needs of the New Milford School District. HYA will seek a new superintendent who can work with all Board of Education members, all community stakeholder groups, and all groups employed by the district to build upon district successes and plan effectively for the future.

We would like to thank all the participants who attended focus group meetings and interviews or completed the online survey. More specifically, we would like to thank Patricia Silverman, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent. Without her input and coordination, our meetings with sixteen Focus Groups within school district, within the community would not have been possible.

Respectfully submitted,

Dwight Pfennig, Ed. D.
Don Macrino, MA

Summary of All Comments From Focus Group Meetings

The structure of the focus groups was open, allowing for participants to build upon each other's comments. Participants were asked to respond to the following questions.

- **What do stakeholders value regarding the schools? What strengths do they desire to retain and build upon?**
- **What are the issues this District currently faces, and, will face in the next three to five years?**
- **What personal and professional characteristics are expected in a new Superintendent?**

Community Focus Groups (11 Participants)

January 23-24, 2019

Strengths

- District is run well
- Diversity of the schools and the town
- Many extracurricular activities
- Present superintendent gives personal touch
- Students are reached who are smart in different ways

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

- Addressing skepticism about the budget
- Balance a vision with who we are
- Budget being transparent through open forums
- Continue working closely with Mayor and Town Council
- Dealing with different learning styles
- Making sure staff is not overworked and underappreciated
- Underfunded

Desired Characteristics

- Able to communicate with the people of New Milford with clarity
- Able to form good relationship with mayor and town council
- Able to stand up for students and staff
- Advocates for students and staff
- Background in educational research
- Competent teacher evaluator
- Diplomatic
- Emotional intelligence
- Fiscally wise
- Gets the community out through sound communication
- Must have a teaching background
- Politically savvy
- Responsive
- Social intelligence
- Teaching background – what its like from being in the trenches

- Tenacity – stands up for what’s right for students and staff
- Transparent when explaining budget
- Understand how human learn
- Uses money wisely
- Visionary
- Well-rounded educationally, socially, and emotionally

Administrators/Directors and Central Office Administrators (5 Participants)

January 24, 2019

Strengths

- Can take professional development to the staff
- Dedicated teachers
- Permitted to take on projects
- Programs for the arts
- Strong PTO involvement
- TAG program is improving

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

- A broader look at Special Education autism services
- A lot of administrative turnovers cause staff to do anything they’d like to do
- Accurate website for better communication
- Aligning previous programs with initiatives
- Central Office needs to know what’s going on in the trenches
- CERBE Model
- Collective efficacy of teachers – we work better together
- How to continue what’s being done with less
- Recruiting and retaining talented staff
- Reviewing students’ needs on a consistent basis
- Special Education issues
- Students enrolling with issues we may not see
- Supporting administrators to grow in professional practice

Desired Characteristics

- Doesn’t sit in the ivory tower
- Gets to know all administrators
- Looks to be a stabilizing force
- Loves children

Teachers (7 Participants)

January 23-24, 2019

Strengths

- Administrative Team is made up of good listeners
- Cultural diversity
- Economically diverse
- Extremely talented staff/dedicated/caring
- Good administrative team

- Good facilities
- Hardworking, dedicated teachers
- Historic town
- Income diversity of the community
- Living within the community
- Many community events
- People (employees) go above and beyond
- Physical beauty of the community
- Quality Special Education program
- Safe place to live
- Strong appreciation for arts in the community
- Strong music program
- Strong special education program
- Teachers caring for students

Challenges/Concerns/Issues:

- Avoid a culture of we have reached all the goals we can
- Budget decisions need to make collaboratively, not just top down
- Challenge of dealing with budgetary constraints
- Coaches diversify instruction for all students
- Consistent services for Special Needs students
- Continuing teacher led workshops
- Inconsistency in RTI
- Lack of continuity among schools
- Lack of professional development
- Lack of system structures
- Mentorship opportunities are needed (other than Project Lead the Way)
- Need for differentiation training
- Not all employees treated equally
- Over use of standardized testing-too many tests
- Overuse of testing limits teacher planning time
- Professional development is non-existent (needs to improve)
- Some assessments not needed for students
- Some weak administrators
- Special education looks different at each school
- SPED program different in each school (lacks consistency)
- Teacher attrition because of low pay
- Too many new initiatives
- Vertical alignment of curriculum

Desired Characteristics

- Able to hold building level administrators accountable
- Able to identify district needs
- Able to recruit and retain staff
- Accessible and approachable
- Active listener - listens to all stakeholders
- Collaborative
- Committed to community

- Communicates the plan well
- Empowers administrators to do their work
- Evaluates what's been done and continues with the positive
- Expert evaluator of the “art of teaching”
- Flexible in program implementation and curtailment
- Forward thinking
- Grow technology and have it be useful
- Has and is able to articulate vision and Philosophy
- Holds people accountable
- Instructional leader
- Knowledge of mental health
- Literacy/reading knowledge
- Not dictatorial
- Recognizes and appreciates administrators work
- Reviews and equitably allocates staff responsibilities
- Someone who can fix systems
- Strong advocate for literacy and instruction
- Supports building level administrators
- Systems oriented
- Understanding equity on all levels (program; budget; staffing etc.)
- Understanding of the scope of teachers' work
- Understands assessment K-12
- Understands job ready and college ready – not just college ready
- Understands the art of teaching as well as the skill
- Understands vertical articulation
- Visibility and accessibility
- Visionary with a strong educational philosophy
- Willing to engage teachers in discussion about teaching and best practices

Bargaining Unit Leadership (7 Participants)

January 24, 2019

Strengths

- Professional learning communities
- Staff that is eager to grow
- Strength of staff
- Truly professional learning community

Challenges/Concerns/Issues:

- Challenge of dealing with declining enrollment
- Discipline issue continue to be a challenge
- District needs to message better
- Efficient use of technology
- Having Central Office remain supportive
- Increase in English Language Learners
- Increase in Special Education students
- More courses should be available for 2nd and 3rd quarter kids
- Tech needs to be connected and useful
- Technology is lagging

- Too many initiatives started
- Training in the use of technology is not sufficient

Desired Characteristics

- Ability to analyze what systems are working
- Able to handle media in a crisis
- Awareness of opioid and vaping problems
- Awareness of the work that is going on in the buildings
- Can deal with substance abuse (vaping and drugs)
- Connects with school and town officials
- Courage to stand up to unreasonable parent demands
- Open door policy where one can be comfortable solving problems
- Relationship builder with all constituents
- Responsive to individual schools as well as district
- Strong communicator
- Strong in messaging
- Sympathetic and responsible
- Sympathetic to the needs of students
- Understands New Milford
- Understands programs
- Visibility

Central Office Support Staff (2 Participants)

January 24, 2019

Strengths

- Caring and supportive staff throughout district
- Many services offered to students
- Strong cabinet of administrators
- Strong Curriculum
- Teachers who have remained are very dedicated and skilled
- Work hard to “stretch the dollar.”

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

- Cannot pay competitive wages
- Low per pupil expenditure
- Meeting the needs of English language learners
- Meeting the needs of Special Education students
- Political strife
- Teacher attrition related to pay scale
- Tight budget

Desired Characteristics

- A lead learner and collaborative
- Able to build strong relationship with town council, mayor, and those outside of education community
- Committed to the community
- Ethical
- Knowledgeable of Special Education

- Measured in response to crisis or problem
- Respectful of all
- Sense of humor.
- Strong communicator
- Strong leader with courage to say no when necessary
- Supportive of work that is being done
- Teacher, building level admin., and central office admin. experience
- Technology savvy
- Understanding of social/emotional needs of children

Parent Support Group(s) (3 Participants)

January 23, 2019

Strengths

- Dedicated staff
- Strong art and music program
- Strong focus on AP courses
- Strong special education program

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

- Greater need for student social/emotional support
- Lack of language and technology teachers
- More focus on non-college bound students
- More focus on students in the middle
- Special education is understaffed and underfunded
- Teacher attrition because of poor pay scale
- Town does not amply support education (151/171 CT per pupil expenditure)

Desired Characteristics

- An appreciation for the arts
- Approachable
- Classroom experience
- Great communicator not only at budget time
- Reaches out to students and teachers
- Strong background in Special Education
- Strong knowledge of school budgeting
- Understand equitable districting
- Understands needs brought about by diversity, cultures, and ethnicities
- Visible

Town and Elected Officials (5 Participants)

January 23, 2019

Strengths

- Creative town looking to create solutions to problems
- Diverse population
- For the money appropriate the district does a good job
- High School facilities meet student needs
- Hundreds of volunteers for gov't supported functions
- New Milford works together as a town

- People take ownership through commitment
- Rural suburban mix of town
- School district employees are enthusiastic
- Small town feel, but with diversity
- Small town feel/caring
- Top notch programs in the district

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

- Budget and teacher reduction problem
- Children who need more attention
- Continuing joint purchasing
- Facilities need attention
- Finances
- Getting the best product for all kids
- Improving the infrastructure
- Keeping schools maintained
- Lack of functional literacy instruction
- Large substance abuse issue
- Loss of population in town and county
- Not all parents are concerned
- Perception of frequent substance abuse at the high school
- Salary guide doesn't match surrounding communities (lower)
- State funding that is continuously taken away
- State reimbursements have declined
- Sustaining staff to attract mixed population
- Teacher pay at mid-career too low
- Visibility of superintendent lacking

Desired Characteristics

- A leader the workforce can rally behind
- Ability to operate with limited finances
- Able to bring political opponents together
- Able to reach out to citizens who do not have school children
- Advocate for teachers
- Advocates for all students
- Bridges the communication gap
- Culturally fits the community
- Drives the mission throughout the organization
- Energetic and Charismatic
- Expertise in capital projects
- Familiarity with school infrastructure
- Financial acumen
- Good communicator to all constituents
- Has passion for the work
- In tune with town culture
- Navigates political and school system well
- Needs of physical plants

- Special education knowledge
- Suburban experience
- Supports teachers' needs
- Thinks outside the box
- Visible in community
- Visible in the community

Students (42 Participants)

January 23-24, 2019

Strengths

- After school activities/late buses
- Different levels in math
- Diverse clubs and activities
- Electives provide choices for major college consideration
- Free time
- Freedom that stresses responsibility
- Good education
- Good faculty Good technology
- Good lunches
- Good resources like books and computers
- Good teachers
- Great art program
- Many opportunities and extracurricular activities
- Most teachers care about the students
- Options for after school programs
- Safe school
- School spirit and pride
- Science labs provide practical experience
- Spending time with different friends
- Staff care about students
- Staff very committed
- Students are kind to each other
- Supportive teachers
- Supportive teachers
- Teacher support for students
- Teachers are nice
- Teachers help you
- Teachers who don't go too fast
- Teachers with "real world" experience
- There is something for everyone in the high school
- Tutoring
- Varied course selection
- Volunteering programs
- Work id given at a good pace

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

- Ambitious
- Aware of what is going on
- Better discipline for troubled kids
- Better technology is needed
- Better Wi-Fi
- Challenge of homework
- Cyberbullying is somewhat annoying
- Dealing with bullying
- Dealing with drama (some students take things too far)
- Discipline code enforcement
- Drugs/Vapes
- Empathetic
- Fighting and bad language (swearing)
- Genuine
- Good leadership skills
- Harder courses of study
- Helpful
- Improve teacher evaluation
- Issues with bathrooms being locked
- Lives near New Milford
- Not enough passing time
- Providing for kids who learn in different ways
- School safety. Still too much vandalism
- Science is complex
- Should be more career support
- Smart
- Some weak teachers
- Strong and firm but friendly
- Teachers lecture too much
- Teachers lost in budget cuts were some of our favorites
- Those who misbehave are favored by security guards
- Truthful
- Understanding
- Vaping needs to be monitored/stopped
- Visible
- Visit the school more often

Desired Characteristics

- Caring and understanding
- Connects with school students/understand them
- Demonstrates common sense
- Experience in the classroom
- Friendly, nice, understanding
- Good communicator
- Not just someone who walks around
- Present at school activities
- Rational decision when it comes to snow
- Threats to schools/district should be handled at the top

- Visible in schools
- Visits the schools and addresses challenges

Central Office Support Staff (2 Participants)

January 24, 2019

Strengths

- Great music program
- Strong community connection with the arts
- Strong special education program
- Student centered
- Teachers and administrators want the best for all students

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

- Lack of training for differentiated instruction
- Lack of transition support for non-college bound students

Desired Characteristics

- Able to build partnerships
- Able to build system that demands good communication among schools
- Able to grow tech. ed. Program
- Forward thinking; progressive
- Support training for job readiness
- Supports teacher lead professional development
- Vertical alignment awareness

Board Members (5 Participants)

January 23-24, 2019

Strengths

- All staff are committed to students
- Commitment to excellence
- Dedication of staff
- District does a remarkable job with the resources they have
- Diversity of courses
- Diversity of the community with many languages
- Facilities well maintained
- Focus on curriculum-review of how and why
- Good communication
- Good relationship with stakeholders
- Great kids
- New Milford is a cultural hub
- Phenomenal Special Education Department
- Rural setting
- School class sizes are small
- Social emotional services/program is excellent
- Staff is combination of new and veteran
- TAG program has improved
- Teachers are amazing and dedicated to kids

- Varied curriculum
- We're a "little bit country"

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

- Able to carry out board directives based upon policy
- Addressing that district has too many administrators
- All people should know more about the budget
- Attention to the kids in the middle
- Attracting and retaining staff (low salaries an issue)
- Autonomous
- Being more comprehensive in taking budget on the road
- Better communication with parents
- Committed to the community
- Courage to stand up for what is right
- Course selection for non-college bound students insufficient
- Creating internships for kids
- Diversity of courses
- Funding for technology
- Great ideas need to be heard to solve problems
- Great role model
- High level of student anxiety
- High school must offer more individualized instruction
- High school schedule
- Improving communication with non-school public
- Instructional technology is behind
- Lack of financial commitment of the town
- Making anonymous complaint procedure more proactive (it should go directly to the Superintendent)
- Meet and/or be visible with the AARP community
- Meeting with Real Estate people to have them understand the schools better
- Not sufficient financial support by town
- Retaining class size during formative years
- Student discipline needs tightening
- Students "in the middle" not given enough support
- Teacher attrition because of low pay scale (151 out of 171 Ct per pupil expenditure)
- The district remaining conservative is essential

Desired Characteristics

- A person who can invoke the "Serenity Prayer"
- Approachable
- Can deal with contract administration
- Compassionate
- Consistent
- Dynamic presence among kids and community

- Excellent communication skills
- Excellent time management skills
- Experience in the classroom
- Healthy work/life balance
- Knowing when to make immediate decisions and when to mull things over
- Knows when to be collaborative and when not to
- Media savvy
- Needs to observe before taking over
- Open and articulate communicator with all stake holders
- Sense of humor
- Skill set to engage the community (go to the community – don't wait for them to come to you)
- Stays up to date
- Strong core values
- Strong leadership skills
- Strong negotiator
- Strong technology background
- Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent experience Open door demeanor
- Thick skinned
- Understand educational law inside out
- Understands politics but is not political Let's C.A.B.E handle the political matters
- Visible in all of the schools

New Milford School District Superintendent of Schools Desired Characteristics

After seeking input from its Board members, parents, staff, students, and community via focus groups, individual conversations, and an online survey, the Board of Education of the New Milford School District seeks a strong educational leader who possesses the following characteristics:

- Administrative and teaching experience that spans a significant number of grade levels within a successful educational environment.
- Expertise in establishing a culture of high expectations for all students and personnel.
- Political and educational savvy in dealing with difficult decisions and varying opinionated personalities (State; Federal; Local).
- Excellent understanding of systems theory and its relationship to strategic planning.
- Knowledge of technology integration in curriculum that serves students and staff.
- Strong sense of financial acumen that leads to responsible long and short-term budget planning and implementation.
- Polished and varied communication methods employed with a sense of humility and accessibility that signals a professional presence.
- Ability to recruit employ and retain effective personnel throughout the district.
- Experience in maintaining and building upon a “safe school” environment.