

SANTA MARIA JOINT UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Executive Summary Report of Stakeholder Input Sessions and Online Survey, Leadership Associates

September 2, 2019

This report presents the findings from stakeholder input sessions and community forums facilitated by Leadership Associates consultants. Additionally, themes captured in the online surveys available in English and Spanish are included. The data collected is foundational to the development of the Santa Maria Joint Union High School District (SMJUHSD) Superintendent Position Description.

OUTREACH

The SMJUHSD Board of Trustees provided extensive outreach to stakeholders of the District. Outreach included email distribution lists including staff, postings on district and school websites, press releases, information at school sites as well as by word of mouth.

Three productive days for in-person sessions with district and community stakeholders were spent in the District on August 27, 28 and 29. In addition to each school site having dedicated time for parents, students and staff, one well attended community forum was held in the District Board Room. The initial meeting with the Board was May 4, 2019.

Tammy Rhine was a tremendous help with the organization of the days, preparing schedules, site logistics and ensuring the flow of meetings.

The results of the online surveys representing 371 respondents [351, English Survey, and 20, Spanish Survey. Overall, combining the input meetings and the community survey over 700 individuals provided input to the Board. Key themes from the online survey are reflected in this summary report.

INPUT SESSIONS FOCUS QUESTIONS

The forums, input sessions and online surveys asked for responses to the following key areas:

1. What leadership qualities, characteristics and experiential background are you seeking for in the next superintendent?
2. What do you believe are the strengths of SMJUHSD? Why would someone want to be the next leader?
3. What challenges do you see in the next few years for the SMJUHSD?

ONLINE SURVEY PARTICIPATION

SMJUHSD's Online Survey Superintendent Search ran from August 7- September 1, 2019. English and Spanish versions were available to the community. Community access was somewhat impacted by older website technology which made it a challenge to find the survey for all stakeholders. The last week of the survey, a direct link was placed on the District website home page which dramatically increased community

participation. The board desired greater participation, so access to the survey was expanded to September 1, 2019.

There were 371 total respondents. However, since survey respondents could choose more than one category, the total number of participants in each respondent category below exceeds this total. Survey respondents classified themselves as follows:

English

Teachers (123)
Community Members (122)
Parents/Guardians (104)
Students (74)
Classified Staff (54)
Non-Profit Staff/Board (28)
Other Certificated Staff (13)
Business Owner/Partner (11)
Administrators (12)
School Volunteers (11)
Public Official (5)

Spanish

Parents (11)
Students (11)
Community Members (5)
Teachers (3)
Classified Staff (2)
Administrator (2)
School Volunteers (1)
Public Official (2)

The top desired qualities and characteristics from the survey were as follows:

- The ability to build trust
- A proven track record of growing academic achievement for ALL students
- Experience working in a culturally diverse community
- A good listener who is also caring, and compassionate
- A “student-first” attitude
- Experience as an instructional leader
- Ability to understand the dynamics of the community
- A unifier
- Willingness to develop meaningful partnerships
- A visible and engaged community member/leader

Desired Characteristics:

Stakeholders had common themes regarding the following three areas: professional experiences, professional leadership characteristic and personal characteristics. The most commonly emphasized desired characteristic across all stakeholder groups was to find a proven leader who will commit to SMJUHSD for a number of years; is an experienced person who can lead a complex organization and value its diversity, its culture, its students and their needs, and its community.

The top survey responses are listed below in priority order:

Professional Experiences/Leadership

1. Experience in California public education, either teaching and/or site administration
2. A proven track record of growing academic achievement for all students, including special needs children, second language learners, and children of poverty
3. Experience in oversight of school district finances, budgets, and business management

Professional Leadership Characteristics

1. Will bring the entire community together toward a strong vision of student achievement

2. Is a strong instructional leader who will maintain and improve the student achievement gains made in the District
3. Has strong human relations skills and is a "people person"
4. Will be accessible to parents and staff

Personal Characteristics

1. Collaborative and inclusive, an active listener
2. Receptive to new ideas
3. Is approachable
4. Bilingual Spanish desired

COMMON THEMES

The following summarizes several of the main emerging themes regarding the qualities desired in a new superintendent. As you will note, much of the input we received mirrors what you provided on May 14, 2019.

Stakeholders told us they want someone who:

- ❖ Puts Santa Maria Joint Union High School District students and student issues as the top priority—the focus of all actions and decisions
- ❖ Embraces the District's values and culture of our community, will consider living in the vicinity of the District and will make a long-term commitment to the District
- ❖ Has a collaborative, inclusive leadership style and assesses what is working in the District with a fresh set of eyes
- ❖ Is skilled in working with a Board, fosters cohesiveness within the Governance Team and builds a strong, shared District vision that is clearly articulated with stakeholders
- ❖ Embraces the rich diversity that is found in Santa Maria JUHSD
- ❖ Is visible, approachable and authentically involved in the schools and in the community
- ❖ Has a vision; can articulate the vision to stakeholder groups; can bring clarity and continuity to district goals, procedures and practices
- ❖ Can make the tough decisions and engage in courageous conversations and actions
- ❖ Is strategic and innovative in actions, visioning and planning
- ❖ Has experience in a district with similar demographics and size
- ❖ Knows the District and has done his/her homework
- ❖ Provides equitable distribution as well as the rationale for why resources and opportunities are allocated
- ❖ Is accountable and holds accountability as a value throughout the organization
- ❖ Has effective communication skills, understands the importance of communication at all levels of the organization, with community partners, and with the general public
- ❖ Is an effective communicator and active listener with all stakeholders
- ❖ Works with the Board to build trust and support throughout the school community
- ❖ Being bilingual would be value added

COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

The stakeholders in SMJUHSD want an individual who values two-way communication and has a collaborative leadership style, which includes Board, staff, students, parents, and community-based organizations and other stakeholders. The new leader must be relational in seeking to build relationships and partnerships throughout the District. Community groups want their voices to be heard and their opinions to

be reflected in the direction of the District initiatives and programs.

Stakeholders seek a superintendent who will rebuild trust and credibility in the District and throughout the community while also honoring and maintaining the hard work that has been and is being done. Embracing the opportunities available with community resources is important. Enhancing and creating new possibilities in partnerships with Hancock Community College, governmental and nonprofit entities was discussed. Formalized articulation with the feeder elementary school districts was also frequently mentioned. Being culturally competent and valuing the diversity of the community was an important quality as well.

Acknowledging that many fine programs exist within the District such as the CTE Center throughout the District was often paired with the desire to bring into focus the vision, direction and priorities of the District. Clarity of vision, District goals and accomplishments is desired to be a shared process.

DISTRICT STRENGTHS

Diversity as District Strength

Stakeholders overwhelmingly indicated that the diversity of the District is the single greatest strength of the District. The new superintendent must embrace diversity and continue to work to engage the voices of the various diverse populations within the District. Community-based organizations stand ready to assist the District to engage the various voices within the District. In particular, there is a desire to be inclusive of the various ethnic groups, varied levels of socio-economic groups, second language learners, foster youth, special education students, gifted students, college bound students, and those aspiring to follow a career pathway.

Budget, District Finances and Facilities

The District was continually commended for its financial stability and facilities. The new CTE facility and work in career pathways as well as the well-maintained district facilities were continual themes in each community meeting.

Many mentioned staff being the highest paid in the vicinity and voiced appreciation for the District's compensation efforts including both salary and health and welfare benefits.

With concern a potential recession might be forthcoming, many stakeholders were comforted by the fiscal management of District resources.

Dedicated Staff District Strength

Stakeholders held high regard for the dedication and compassion of the District staff. Teachers were frequently mentioned as hard-working, passionate and dedicated.

DISTRICT CHALLENGES

Transparency, Trust and Respect

Many respondents reported a desire to rebuild trust and ensure transparency while offering accountability to the public. Reportedly, decisions are made without the rationale behind those decision, therefore eroding the trust and respect between the Superintendent, Board, District Office staff and Community.

Diverse and Growing Student Populations

Expectations for high quality programs and offerings for high performing students need be considered as equally important as the needs of students requiring supplemental and support services. Enrollment in on

the rise and stakeholders see the increasing needs of their student population as well.

It was noted that diversity exists in so many key areas: geographic, socio-economic, ethnic, cultural, interests and ability. Also noted by many was the increase in student crisis behavioral issues, trauma-exposure, poverty, cyber bullying and general socio-emotional needs. Although efforts have been initiated to assist these needy students, much more will be required.

Consistency in Schools

Respondents want consistency in their schools. Many groups described each school as an island, that creates inconsistent policies, procedures and expectations for students and parents. The fine line of decentralized vs. centralized management was supported allowing schools to meet the specific needs of their individual school community. However, some practices should be implemented across the District in the same consistent manner.

Schools should also be encouraged to share practices that are working for students.

SUBMISSION OF SUMMARY REPORT

There is a wealth of information from the community input forums, input sessions, and online survey. Leadership Associates Consultants appreciate the opportunity to have gathered this important information to develop the SMJUHSD Superintendent Position Description. We look forward to this next critical phase of the search process, which we anticipate to publish within the following week. Once finalized, it will be distributed to all applicants and posted on both, the District and Leadership Associates websites.

Respectfully Submitted,


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