

Consultants' Report
 Ichabod Crane Central School District
 A Synthesis of Data Collected from the Online Survey and Focus Groups
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Introduction

This report serves as a synthesis of the data collected from the online survey posted to the District's website and meetings between the consultants and nine (including the Board of Education) focus groups. It covers three broad areas: 1) the experiences, skills and qualities the new Superintendent should possess, 2) opportunities for the new Superintendent and 3) challenges for the new Superintendent. The purpose in sharing this information is to inform the Board with regard to what the school community and community at-large see as important. The report can also be shared with the new Superintendent to assist him/her in developing an entry plan and setting priorities. The consultants have, for the most part, chosen not to interpret what the data "says"; the consultants do discuss how the results from the online survey and focus group discussions relate to and support one other. The consultants have also excluded responses that could be interpreted as disparaging toward specific school-related groups and individuals. Such responses will be shared with the Board in a separate, confidential document.

(Side note: On June 21st, a select group of stakeholders came together to express their opinions about candidate qualifications, District needs and District accomplishments. In terms of qualifications, while an "earned doctorate" was ranked 26 out of 29 desired qualifications from respondents, the stakeholders who met in June identified "earned doctorate" as a preferred qualification. Except for this anomaly, the qualifications suggested by the June group are similar to what is reflected in this report. Additionally, the June 21st group suggested interview questions for candidates and the consultants will consider this input as they help the Board prepare for candidate interviews.)

Survey

The survey, which was posted for approximately four weeks on the District's website, was completed by 296 respondents. The consultants analyzed the survey for salient information and present a summary, below.

A resident of the Ichabod Crane Central School District WITHOUT children currently in its schools	42
A resident of the Ichabod Crane Central School District WITH children currently in its schools	105
A member of community	24
A current member of the Ichabod Crane Central School District Board of Education	8

A member of the Ichabod Crane Central School District teaching staff	75
A member of the Ichabod Crane Central School District support staff	12
A member of the Ichabod Crane Central School District administrative staff	5
A student attending the Ichabod Crane Central School District	46
A business owner	6
Other (e.g., home “schooler”, parent of a child who will soon enter school, etc.)	24

Total number exceeds total responses due to some respondents selecting more than one member group

Preferred Experiences and Skills

Of the 29 experiences and skills listed in the survey as preferred for the next Superintendent, the following is a ranking of the top 10 in order of preference. Please note that the top five all received more than 120 votes while the bottom five received between 74 and 93 votes. *Ability to create a positive culture* was clearly the number one choice among all stakeholder groups.

1. Ability to create a positive school culture
2. Ability to clearly identify problems and develop effective solutions
3. Strong presence in the schools and community
4. Committed to involving others in decision-making
5. Strong commitment to improving student achievements/student success
6. Understanding of school finance and budgeting
7. Reflective thinker - not impulsive
8. Displays positive can-do attitude with a good sense of humor
9. Strong background in instruction and student achievement
10. Can successfully engage parents and partners in the education of their children

Areas of Focus

The top four areas of focus for the next Superintendent in the next three-five years, in order of preference, were:

1. Student performance (see # 5 and 9 above)
2. Staff relations (see # 1, 3, 4 and 10 above)
3. Community relations (see # 3 and 10 above)
4. Budget and finance (see #6 above)

As we would expect, the Preferred Experiences and Skills align with Areas of Focus; in other words, those completing the survey expressed a preference for candidates who possess the experiences and skills they are feel are necessary in order to address perceived needs (i.e., Areas of Focus).

Single Most Important Quality of the New Superintendent – Summarized

Respondents had the opportunity to add a comment that they felt identified the Single Most Important Quality of the New Superintendent. All such responses were reviewed by the consultants and are summarized below. Not surprisingly, most of the qualities are reflective of the top 10 Preferred Experiences and Skills.

1. Positive demeanor/attitude/outlook
2. Engaging and strong presence in schools/community
3. Commitment to school district and community vs stepping stone
4. Positive and purposeful interactions with internal and external stakeholders
5. Effective communicator and collaborator
6. A reflective practitioner of integrity and strong moral character
7. Forward thinking, proactive and visionary (21st century technology, STEAM, partnerships, responsive to changing student demographics)
8. Capital project oversight
9. Problem-solver and decision-maker
10. Proven track record of success
11. Role model and leader in community
12. Cognizant to develop the "whole child"

Comments from the Surveys – Summarized

Below is a summary of comments received from the respondents. The list is not exhaustive but rather representative of all comments. Comments generally align with the other areas of the survey.

- open communication...and willingness to listen
- willingness to commit to the District long-term/not a stepping stone
- effective listener/communicator with ALL stakeholders, internal and external
- the vision to improve academic and nonacademic programs, opportunities and results with a focus on students' diverse needs/interests
- create a positive work culture
- too much emphasis on testing
- check references of the candidates, do your homework
- strong presence in the community (residency preferred)
- integrity, high moral standards a must with contract clause to affirm this
- our children, our community
- someone like Mr. Bordick (honest, authentic, caring, open, kind, etc.)
- put students, not politics, first
- build on our strengths as a District and community
- not top-down
- collaborative but not afraid to make tough decisions
- effectively oversee the capital project
- hire from "outside" – not a current administrator in the District

Focus Group Comments

The meetings with the focus groups provided some robust data for consideration. The data are presented with regard to these three questions:

1. What traits, characteristics and behaviors should the next Superintendent possess?
2. What are the challenges facing the next Superintendent?
3. What are the opportunities available to the next Superintendent?

The themes are summarized by focus group, below, with the number attending each focus group session in parentheses.

Students (11)

Traits/Characteristics/Behaviors

- Able to make a connection with students
- Positive attitude
- Invested in the community
- Well-rounded experience
- Proactive

Challenges

- Capital project
- Financial management including “economic divisions” within the District and limited resources
- Vaping/drugs

Opportunities

- Rider Pride
- Teacher investment
- Positive community
- Benefits of the capital project
- Good students

CSEA (4)

Traits/Characteristics/Behaviors

- Positive personality
- Effective communicator
- Fairly enforce rules

Challenges

- School safety
- Community does not accept change easily
- Drugs
- Finances

- Work-place cliques

Opportunities

- Good students
- Capital project
- Budget
- Quality education with room to grow

Administrators – Union (6)

Traits/Characteristics/Behaviors

- Student focused
- Know K-12 work including building leadership and classroom experience
- Consistent yet flexible
- Visible
- Demonstrates leadership and advocates Rider Pride

Challenges

- Test prep culture
- Capital project

Opportunities

- Dedicated Staff
- Unified admin team
- Great kids
- Capital project
- Small-town feel
- Increasing student success (academics and other)

Administrators – Nonunion (3)

Traits/Characteristics/Behaviors

- Methodical and measured in leading and making decisions
- Demonstrated experience as a proven leader
- Collaborative/communicative
- Civic-minded
- Empathetic and sympathetic
- Proactive

Challenges

- Mental health issues within the school and community
- Increased State regulations
- Retirement incentive
- Scheduling of employees
- Starting midyear and inheriting the (potentially challenging) capital project

- Community scrutiny
- Lack of trust and skepticism

Opportunities

- Strong workforce at all levels
- Relationships with neighboring schools
- Good fiscal shape
- Good place for a family
- Good extracurricular opportunities
- Increased graduation rate
- Capital project plans
- Great community with good parent support

Parents, Boosters and TEMPO (14)

Traits/Characteristics/Behaviors

- Visionary
- Integrity
- People person
- Interested in the community as-is
- Lives in the community (presence)
- Works with others
- Child-centered
- Experienced
- Understands and brings diversity

Challenges

- Budget, limited resources and capital project
- Hold staff and coaches accountable
- How to build credibility for the position
- Student mental well-being
- Increase community involvement
- Increase programs

Opportunities

- Great team (faculty, staff, coaches, administrators, etc.)
- Great kids
- Community pride and loyalty
- Great area (macro and micro tightknit)
- Strong and positive parent/community support (time and money)

Managerial/Confidential (5)

Traits/Characteristics/Behaviors

- Sense of humor
- Thoughtful and deliberate

- Be a “Rider”
- Transparent and genuine

Challenges

- Financial management

Opportunities

- Supportive team
- Great kids
- One campus
- Community history and pride

Teachers (14)

Traits/Characteristics/Behaviors

- Actively promotes two-way communication with honesty and integrity
- Long-term commitment
- Collaborative, adaptive leadership
- Leads with purpose
- Empowers teachers to implement best-practice

Challenges

- Eliminating or changing ineffective practices (e.g., test prep and teacher evaluation)
- Staff morale
- Societal and community challenges

Opportunities

- Capital project (also a challenge)
- Resourceful, supportive and dedicated staff
- Supportive community

Open Forum (47)

Traits/Characteristics/Behaviors

- Accessible and engaging
- Strong community presence and interaction
- Effective communicator
- Collaborative
- Integrity
- Experienced educational leader (in NYS)
- Visionary and action-oriented
- Uses resources wisely
- Student-centered

Challenges

- Improve college and career guidance
- Student safety/shooter safety
- Technology including infrastructure
- Maintain and grow programs
- Lack of mental health services
- Aging infrastructure
- Growing ESL population
- Meeting the needs of all students
- Changes in community composition
- Funding issues
- Capital project
- Trust
- Lack of clear and consistent direction
- Large class sizes
- After-school and out-of-school connections

Opportunities

- Proximity to Albany and NYC
- Opportunity to be part of a smaller community
- Great teachers and staff
- Great students and student-teacher relationships
- Good community relations and support
- Opportunities to expand community partnerships
- Existing programs
- The arts and sports programs are strong
- Boosters and TEMPO supportive

Board of Education (8)

Traits/Characteristics/Behaviors

- Ethical
- Open-minded and flexible
- Child-centered
- Personable
- Dedicated
- Advocate
- Positive outlook
- Collaborative
- Big-picture thinker/forward thinking
- Good communicator

Challenges

- Academic challenges
- Managing competing groups and interests
- Morale
- Lack of parental involvement
- Opt-outs
- Capital project
- Drugs

Opportunities

- Driving District achievement
- Positive community
- Take the District to the next level
- Finishing the capital project

Not surprisingly, the data from the nine focus groups align with what stakeholders shared in the survey.

1. Traits/Characteristics/Behaviors (focus groups) = Preferred Experiences and Skills (survey)
2. Challenges (focus groups) = Areas of Focus (survey)

Conclusion

The consultants will use the results of the survey and meetings with focus groups (particularly #1 above) in the development of the recruitment letter and brochure. We suggest that the Board utilize this report to understand what the school community and community at-large see as important. The Board can also share the report with the new Superintendent as a means of helping him/her develop an entry plan and establish priorities.