

Highline School District No. 401  
Burien, WA  
**LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT**  
October 24, 2011

**Introduction**

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment process conducted as part of the superintendent search for the Highline School District. Associates Janet Barry and Brian Benzel, along with President Hank Gmitro of Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) led this process in late September and early October, 2011.

HYA consultants obtained the data for this report from individual interviews and focus group meetings they conducted with various stakeholders and from results of an online survey of six categories of stakeholders. The surveys and meetings were structured to gather input to help the Board determine the primary characteristics desired in the new Highline superintendent. Additionally, the stakeholder meetings provided information about the strengths of the District and some of the challenges it will face in the coming years.

**Participation**

In the two methods of data collection we used, the numbers of participants are listed below by stakeholder group. Because the online survey results are reported by just six groups, board members and business leaders are included under "Community," and survey results from principals and central office administrators are reported in the single group, "Administrators." Focus group summaries report Board views independently and report as a single "Community" category the responses of parents and non-parents, but separate administrators into building-level and central office groups.

<b>ONLINE SURVEY PARTICIPATION</b>	
Administrators	73
Community (non-parent, business, local government)	30
Faculty	244
Parent	64
Support Staff	159
Students	433
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,003</b>

<b>INTERVIEW / FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPATION</b>	
Board	5
Building level administrators	20
Central office administrators	19
Community member (parent and non-parent)	22 (+ 30 staff)*
Faculty	22
Support staff	4
Students	(in school groups w/ teachers)**
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>122</b>

\* Some participants were both parents and employees of the district. Translators who attended to assist community members also offered input.

\*\* Students did not meet directly with HYA consultants; however, many met in advisory groups in their own schools in addition to taking the online survey.

The community stakeholder meetings included representatives of non-profit organizations and local and state government officials. School board members provided individual interviews and may have also completed the on-line survey as parents or community members.

The responses gleaned from focus groups and individual interviews are listed in two places: 1) "Consistent Themes," beginning on page 5 of the report, and 2) "Comments from Interviews and Focus Group Meetings," which begins on page 14. Comments are listed alphabetically with no attempt to establish a priority order. A separate appendix lists all comments made by online survey respondents, sorted by stakeholder group, but presented in no particular order. (Among hundreds of open-ended comments, a small number detracted from the serious intent of the survey. These comments were deleted with a placeholder indicating "N/A." )

Finally, based on the information gathered in this profiling process, we developed a proposed listing of desired superintendent characteristics, which is presented at the end of this report. That listing is intended to serve as a discussion draft with the hope that the Board will approve a final listing of characteristics at its next regular meeting, Wednesday, October 26. The Board's approved listing of desired characteristics will provide the basis for candidate recruitment and screening, including board interviews and community-based interaction with up to three finalists.

We want to emphasize that the data contained in this report are not a scientific sampling, nor should they necessarily be viewed as fully representing the majority opinion of the respective groups to which they are attributed. Items reflect the input received during our work with District-identified groups. The results and comments reflect a fair presentation of the input provided during these meetings.

### **Primary Strengths of the District**

Located just south of Seattle in the Puget Sound region, the Highline School District is a vibrant and creative school system serving a diverse population of more than 17,000 students from pre-K through grade 12. The District serves the communities of Burien, Des Moines, Normandy Park, SeaTac, Boulevard Park and White Center. The Port of Seattle operates SeaTac International Airport at the center of the District

**A mission for all.** The District Board and staff are deeply committed to caring for and educating every student and to welcoming Highline parents into the schools. The District relies upon and works diligently to ensure the participation of its diverse community as a core strength for building excellent educational programs to meet the needs of all. The District's mission, which is widely understood and embraced, aims at the preparation of each student for success in continuing study after high school. Secondary school options provide access to comprehensive schools, but also rely on various specialty and small school alternatives to personalize the high school experience and support student achievement. While still in high school, students enjoy considerable access to post-secondary programs at area community colleges.

**Strength and commitment of community and staff.** Despite significant community poverty, Highline levies and bonds pass with high voter approval rates. At the same time, staff members note that a high percentage of HSD employees (several estimated over 70%) reside within the District, and many are longtime residents with a deep understanding of the area. These indicators underscore a pervasive belief in the school community that the District's people -- both staff and residents -- are its essential strength. Bond passage has supported elementary school remodels that provide excellent learning environments and serve as tangible centers of community pride. Board and staff members share a deep passion for working to support students and their families in ways that enrich and multiply educational opportunities.

**Business and community partnerships.** The District has developed and seeks to enhance meaningful business and community partnerships, including the sustained support of Boeing and Alaska Airlines for the District's new Aviation High School facility, scheduled to open in 2013. Numerous strategies are in place to engage parents, work with community agencies and support students and their families as students work toward the knowledge and skills necessary for post-secondary success and effective citizenship.

**Culture of hard work.** The teachers, support staff and administrators dedicate their considerable talents and skills, just as they demonstrate deep commitment, to the mission of the Highline School District. Both employees and community members commented on the strength of staff and how passionately they serve and support students. (One support staff member humbly acknowledged a workload most would consider huge. "Huge?" she questioned. "We all do *huge!* That's just what we do here!") This commitment to service is demonstrated through tenacity, creativity, and an openness to one who will lead with purpose, commitment, integrity and intelligence.

### **Challenges/Concerns/Issues Facing the District**

**Financial limits.** As the District strives to achieve ambitious goals for student success, it acknowledges the challenges of the economy for its residents and the impact these challenges have upon students. The District is perceived as well managed financially, but must work through continued economic challenges that will require additional program revisions and may result in further choices about which programs can be sustained within the revenue limits of the District.

**Equity through various lenses.** A passion for equity is a clear, strong, widely held value within the Highline School District, buttressed by a school board policy many stakeholders praise -- yet the lenses of various stakeholders show that equity is a complex and sometimes elusive goal. Often, one positive effort creates new challenges that are only compounded in times of scarce resources. For example, as some students in smaller settings receive more intensive programs in language and mathematics, their curriculum narrows to offer significantly less in science, social studies and electives -- a condition viewed by some as understandable, by others as requiring new solutions. Staff in some schools do not have access to professional development essential to their assignments, while those at other schools do. These and other challenges will call for ongoing collaborative analysis, systems planning and thoughtful changes as the District continues to translate vision and values into classroom practices that improve student achievement.

**Instructional systems, structures, tools, and alignment.** The Highline School District serves a complex demographic with high rates of poverty and second-language learners, and it offers a mixed system of choice and neighborhood schools with wide variance in secondary program focus, size and resources. Thus, the District faces more complex questions related to effective and equitable teaching and learning than many other similar-sized systems. Addressing these questions in the next few years will mean further development of instructional systems, structures and tools for classrooms teachers. In summary, a key challenge for the District is to further translate vision and values into aligned, well implemented systems that reach directly and effectively into all classrooms. Developing and using supportive new means of communication and collaboration with principals and teachers will be an important part of this ongoing effort.

To more effectively reach and impact students, many stakeholders also identify a need for greater diversity in District hiring, with the goal of more nearly reflecting in a quality staff the cultural and life experiences of Highline students and families.

**Facilities.** Another challenge will be the development of long-range plans to finance and upgrade school facilities that still need to be modernized. A strong renovation program has begun and its successes are

evident. A challenge will be to extend this work to schools and other facilities, especially at the secondary level, that have not yet been renovated or rebuilt.

### **Desired Characteristics**

The following characteristics were generally selected by stakeholders in the public survey and were also identified in interviews and focus groups. Respondents want their new superintendent to demonstrate the following characteristics:

1. Listen to and effectively represent the interests and concerns of the whole community, with a special focus on the needs of students.
  - a. Be able to effectively implement a vision for sound educational strategies focused on improved student performance.
  - b. Lead through ethical, open and engaged decision-making processes.
2. Possess a deep appreciation for diversity and equity strategies.
3. Value the importance of a safe, caring school environment for all students.
4. Foster a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff and administrators that focuses on engaging the community and closing the achievement gap.
5. Consistently demonstrate visibility in schools at all grade levels and participate in community events.
6. Act to implement a clear vision for exemplary educational services based on a deep understanding of teaching and learning processes, including the role of technology.
7. Demonstrate personal integrity, positive regard for students, staff, faculty and community members.
8. Possess an ability to work effectively with state and local officials and community-based partnerships; mobilize supports to help students succeed in post-secondary education, work and society.
9. Identify, confront and resolve issues and concerns in a timely manner.
10. Know how to manage financial, human resources and facility planning functions in order to sustain the long-term financial health of the District and attract and retain effective personnel.

HYA will use these strengths, challenges and the Board's final listing of desired characteristics to recruit a candidate pool for Board consideration. HYA and its associates cannot promise to find a candidate who possesses all of the characteristics desired by District respondents; however, with the School Board, we intend to meet the challenge of finding an individual with most of the skills and character traits needed to address the aspirations and concerns of Highline School District stakeholders.

We sincerely thank all the participants who attended focus groups meetings or completed the online survey. We found Highline staff and community to be exceptionally thoughtful and caring, and we extend special thanks to those who assisted with our meetings -- in particular, Carla Jackson, Jan May, Catherine Carbone Rogers and Bernadette Reed, all of whom helped us to see that "*Huge is just what you do!*" in the Highline School District.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Barry, Ed.D  
Brian Benzel, Ph.D

## Consistent Themes

Following are the District strengths, challenges and desired Superintendent characteristics most commonly cited in our interview and focus group experiences September 26, 27, 28, 30 and October 3, 2011. While other perceptions were important in certain stakeholder views, these are the perceptions that most often occurred across groups. To some extent, the items listed here further specify or provide examples of the major ideas presented on pages 2, 3 and 4. All items are listed in alphabetical order by key word -- not in priority order.

### *Commonly Cited Strengths*

- Accessible, approachable leadership
- Community engagement and communications
- Culture of innovation; willingness to think “outside the box”
- District does not give up on students; people care and go the extra mile
- Diverse portfolio of school types, especially secondary schools
- Environment of openness and honesty; people have a voice
- Equity and cultural competency are strong values
- Focus on preparing students for college, careers and citizenship
- Highline Schools Foundation provides excellent support
- Labor relations are good
- Partnerships with the community strengthen schools
- Stakeholders share passion for eliminating the achievement gap in student performance
- Strong teachers and teacher leadership
- Talented and dedicated faculty, staff and leadership, especially principals
- Voters support Highline schools; levies and bonds pass at high levels

### *Commonly Cited Challenges/Concerns/Issues*

- Align curriculum and curriculum support to provide greater clarity for all: district administrators, principals, teachers, parents and students
- Bridge gaps in understanding and collaboration between senior leadership team and building leaders
- Clarify focus; make the District's vision and values operational in sound, practical systems
- Develop a strategic plan that will guide the work of the district
- Examine equity of school choices and ensure that students have appropriate access
- Hire well-qualified faculty, staff and administrators to reflect diversity of student population
- In facilities: develop the case for and sell another bond issue to correct disparities
- In science and social studies: improve curricular support
- Parental involvement should be enriched and further developed
- Increase student success; reduce student dropout rates
- Resource limitations: More support is needed for current program offerings and staffing levels, facilities and support services

### ***Commonly Cited Characteristics Desired in Highline's New Superintendent***

- A clear vision and sense of purpose for educating all children to high standards
- Ability to innovate
- Accessibility; openness to ideas and input from stakeholders
- Decisiveness; respect for opinions of others without fearing to take action
- Educational background (classroom experience, building experience, a proven and relevant track record in educational leadership preferred)
- Excellent communication skills with all members of the District community, especially with diverse communities
- Intelligent risk-taker
- Listening skills
- Political know-how
- Proven financial management skills
- Student-centered leadership
- Systems thinking
- Team-building skills; ability to motivate diverse constituencies to support education; build trust within the District and community
- Transparency in decision-making
- Vision and ability to form and maintain effective partnerships; ability to work with patrons, agencies, local government and others to advocate for educational excellence
- Visionary leadership

# Highline School District

## Online Superintendent Profile Survey Results

The Superintendent Profile survey was completed by 1,003 stakeholders. More than 40 percent of the respondents were students, about 25 percent were teachers, another 16 percent were support staff, 7 percent were administrators, and the rest were parents and community members. Nineteen of the respondents completed the survey in Spanish and the rest completed the survey in English. Frequencies of response by stakeholder group are shown in the table below.

Stakeholder		
	Frequency	Percent
Administrator	73	7.3
Community Member	30	3.0
Parent	64	6.4
Student	433	43.2
Support Staff	159	15.9
Teacher	244	24.3
Total	1003	100.0

Because the number of respondents varies widely from one stakeholder group to another -- from 433 students (or 43.2 percent of total participants) to 64 parents (6.4% of total) to 30 community members (3% of total respondents) -- we have presented the data in several ways in the tables that follow, offering three different lenses for interpretation:

1. Rank ordering of desired characteristics by all respondents
2. Rank ordering of desired characteristics by non-student respondents to correct for the masking effect that occurs with dramatic variance in group size.
3. Rank ordering by weighted groups to retain all data and correct in another way for the masking effects. By weighting each stakeholder group as equal, this method ensures that stakeholder views (and the similarities and differences among groups) can be noted despite significant differences in group size.

In an effort to make the data most useful to the Board, we have focused on the top 8 of 25 characteristics. While this choice is somewhat arbitrary, it represents the maximum number of characteristics an individual respondent could select.

The eight top-rated characteristics of the District's combined respondents are:

- 1. Listen to and effectively represent the interests and concerns of students, staff, parents, and community members. (CE)**
- 2. Hold a deep appreciation for diversity and the importance of providing safe and caring school environments. (VV)**
- 3. Foster a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators. (CC)**
- 4. Be visible throughout the District and actively engaged in community life. (CE)**
- 5. Hold a deep understanding of the teaching/learning process and of the importance of educational technology. (IL)**
- 6. Have a clear vision of what is required to provide exemplary educational services and implement effective change. (VV)**
- 7. Lead in an encouraging, participatory and team-focused manner. (CC)**
- 8. Identify, confront and resolve issues and concerns in a timely manner. (CE)**

Percentages of respondents overall who selected each item, as well as percentages by stakeholder group, are shown in the tables on pages 10 and 11.

When only adult respondents are considered (page 12), it is interesting to note that seven of the eight top-ranked characteristics remain the same, suggesting important congruence between adult and student views. Non-student respondents included the characteristic "Effectively plan and manage the long-term financial health of the District" in their top rankings, and they ranked slightly lower the characteristic "Identify, confront and resolve issues and concerns in a timely manner."

Two characteristics were cited among the top eight in both presentations, but moved up in rank order when considered by adult respondents only:

- "Foster a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff and administrators" moved from third to first position.
- "Have a clear vision of what is required to provide exemplary educational services and implement effective change" moved from sixth to fifth in rank order.

In the weighted presentation on page 13, in which all stakeholder groups are assigned equal weight regardless of size, the characteristic "Effectively plan and manage the long-term financial health of

the District" reappears among the top eight. "Identify, confront and resolve issues in a timely manner" drops to #12.

Several key points about staff priorities can be noted:

- Administrators, support staff and teachers share a strong view that their superintendent must foster a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect within the school community.
- All employee groups agree that their superintendent should possess a clear vision of exemplary educational services and how to implement effective change.

Overall, the distribution of percentages in the Highline survey is approximately the same as in four other school districts for which HYA teams are currently using the same instrument. That is to say, while priorities themselves will vary from district to district, we see in Highline's responses a fairly typical range of agreement and disagreement when respondents are asked to select 8 of 25 possible characteristics.

## Percentage of Respondents Who Selected Each Item (By Subgroups)

Number indicates rank order by overall results		<b>Total (1003)</b>	<b>Admin (73)</b>	<b>Comm (30)</b>	<b>Parent (64)</b>	<b>Studnt (433)</b>	<b>SS (159)</b>	<b>Tchr (244)</b>
<b>1</b>	Listen to and effectively represent the interests and concerns of students, staff, parents, and community members. (CE)	<b>46%</b>	27%	50%	55%	48%	45%	46%
<b>2</b>	Hold a deep appreciation for diversity and the importance of providing safe and caring school environments. (VV)	<b>37%</b>	41%	23%	42%	34%	29%	48%
<b>3</b>	Foster a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators. (CC)	<b>35%</b>	51%	23%	28%	18%	50%	53%
<b>4</b>	Be visible throughout the District and actively engaged in community life. (CE)	<b>34%</b>	30%	30%	34%	30%	42%	39%
<b>5</b>	Hold a deep understanding of the teaching/learning process and of the importance of educational technology. (IL)	<b>33%</b>	25%	23%	33%	32%	21%	46%
<b>6</b>	Have a clear vision of what is required to provide exemplary educational services and implement effective change. (VV)	<b>32%</b>	55%	27%	23%	26%	37%	34%
<b>7</b>	Lead in an encouraging, participatory, and team-focused manner. (CC)	<b>31%</b>	30%	27%	27%	31%	26%	34%
<b>8</b>	Identify, confront, and resolve issues and concerns in a timely manner. (CE)	<b>30%</b>	26%	10%	23%	33%	35%	27%
<b>9</b>	Effectively plan and manage the long-term financial health of the District. (M)	<b>29%</b>	29%	20%	25%	24%	39%	34%
<b>10</b>	Recruit, employ, evaluate, and retain effective personnel throughout the District and its schools. (M)	<b>26%</b>	25%	20%	23%	25%	32%	27%
<b>11</b>	Communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and in a variety of ways. (CC)	<b>26%</b>	21%	27%	25%	27%	27%	27%
<b>12</b>	Promote high expectations for all students and personnel. (VV)	<b>26%</b>	30%	27%	27%	26%	30%	23%
<b>13</b>	Develop strong relationships with constituents, local government, area businesses, media, and community partners. (CE)	<b>25%</b>	29%	47%	25%	31%	15%	18%

<b>Key</b>	<b>VV-Vision &amp; Values</b>	<b>IL-Instructional Leadership</b>	<b>CE- Community Engagement</b>	<b>CC- Communication &amp; Collaboration</b>	<b>M- Management</b>
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## Percentage of Respondents Who Selected Each Item (By Subgroups)

Number indicates rank order by overall results		Total (1003)	Admin (73)	Comm (30)	Parent (64)	Studnt (433)	SS (159)	Tchr (244)
14	Encourage a sense of shared responsibility among all stakeholders regarding success in student learning. (IL)	25%	30%	37%	20%	23%	21%	30%
15	Align budgets, long-range plans, and operational procedures with the District's vision, mission, and goals. (M)	25%	34%	10%	16%	30%	23%	20%
16	Seek a high level of engagement with principals and other school-site leaders. (CC)	24%	47%	10%	30%	26%	16%	19%
17	Increase academic performance and accountability at all levels and for all its students, including special needs populations. (IL)	24%	22%	23%	23%	31%	23%	14%
18	Strive for continuous improvement in all areas of the District. (VV)	24%	19%	10%	16%	29%	31%	16%
19	Maintain positive and collaborative working relationships with the school board and its members. (CE)	21%	16%	0%	13%	32%	18%	11%
20	Guide the operation and maintenance of school facilities to ensure secure, safe, and clean school environments that support learning. (M)	21%	14%	10%	20%	23%	26%	16%
21	Involve appropriate stakeholders in the decision-making process. (CC)	19%	33%	43%	19%	12%	23%	23%
22	Provide meaningful guidance for systematic and comprehensive district-wide curriculum, instructional services, assessment programs, and professional development. (IL)	19%	30%	13%	19%	15%	14%	25%
23	Be an effective manager of the District's day-to-day operations. (M)	19%	11%	10%	19%	23%	23%	12%
24	Act in accordance with the District's mission, vision, and core beliefs. (VV)	16%	18%	10%	13%	18%	23%	11%
25	Utilize student achievement data to drive the District's instructional decision-making. (IL)	14%	29%	3%	23%	13%	12%	12%

<b>Key</b>	<b>VV-Vision &amp; Values</b>	<b>IL-Instructional Leadership</b>	<b>CE- Community Engagement</b>	<b>CC- Communication &amp; Collaboration</b>	<b>M- Management</b>
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## Percentage of Non-Students Who Selected Each Item (N=570)

1	Foster a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators. (CC)	48%
2	Listen to and effectively represent the interests and concerns of students, staff, parents, and community members. (CE)	44%
3	Hold a deep appreciation for diversity and the importance of providing safe and caring school environments. (VV)	40%
4	Be visible throughout the District and actively engaged in community life. (CE)	38%
5	Have a clear vision of what is required to provide exemplary educational services and implement effective change. (VV)	36%
6	Hold a deep understanding of the teaching/learning process and of the importance of educational technology. (IL)	34%
7	Effectively plan and manage the long-term financial health of the District. (M)	33%
8	Lead in an encouraging, participatory, and team-focused manner. (CC)	30%
9	Identify, confront, and resolve issues and concerns in a timely manner. (CE)	28%
10	Recruit, employ, evaluate, and retain effective personnel throughout the District and its schools. (M)	27%
11	Encourage a sense of shared responsibility among all stakeholders regarding success in student learning. (IL)	27%
12	Communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and in a variety of ways. (CC)	26%
13	Promote high expectations for all students and personnel. (VV)	26%
14	Involve appropriate stakeholders in the decision-making process. (CC)	25%
15	Seek a high level of engagement with principals and other school-site leaders. (CC)	22%
16	Align budgets, long-range plans, and operational procedures with the District's vision, mission, and goals. (M)	22%
17	Provide meaningful guidance for systematic and comprehensive district-wide curriculum, instructional services, assessment programs, and professional development. (IL)	22%
18	Develop strong relationships with constituents, local government, area businesses, media, and community partners. (CE)	21%
19	Strive for continuous improvement in all areas of the District. (VV)	20%
20	Increase academic performance and accountability at all levels and for all its students, including special needs populations. (IL)	19%
21	Guide the operation and maintenance of school facilities to ensure secure, safe, and clean school environments that support learning. (M)	19%
22	Be an effective manager of the District's day-to-day operations. (M)	16%
23	Act in accordance with the District's mission, vision, and core beliefs. (VV)	15%
24	Utilize student achievement data to drive the District's instructional decision-making. (IL)	15%
25	Maintain positive and collaborative working relationships with the school board and its members. (CE)	13%

Key	VV-Vision & Values	IL-Instructional Leadership	CE- Community Engagement	CC- Communication & Collaboration	M- Management
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## Weighted Percentage of Respondents Who Selected Each Item (N=1003)

1	Listen to and effectively represent the interests and concerns of students, staff, parents, and community members. (CE)	45%
2	Foster a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators. (CC)	37%
3	Hold a deep appreciation for diversity and the importance of providing safe and caring school environments. (VV)	36%
4	Be visible throughout the District and actively engaged in community life. (CE)	34%
5	Have a clear vision of what is required to provide exemplary educational services and implement effective change. (VV)	34%
6	Hold a deep understanding of the teaching/learning process and of the importance of educational technology. (IL)	30%
7	Lead in an encouraging, participatory, and team-focused manner. (CC)	29%
8	Effectively plan and manage the long-term financial health of the District. (M)	28%
9	Develop strong relationships with constituents, local government, area businesses, media, and community partners. (CE)	28%
10	Encourage a sense of shared responsibility among all stakeholders regarding success in student learning. (IL)	27%
11	Promote high expectations for all students and personnel. (VV)	27%
12	Identify, confront, and resolve issues and concerns in a timely manner. (CE)	26%
13	Communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and in a variety of ways. (CC)	26%
14	Recruit, employ, evaluate, and retain effective personnel throughout the District and its schools. (M)	26%
15	Involve appropriate stakeholders in the decision-making process. (CC)	26%
16	Seek a high level of engagement with principals and other school-site leaders. (CC)	24%
17	Increase academic performance and accountability at all levels and for all its students, including special needs populations. (IL)	23%
18	Align budgets, long-range plans, and operational procedures with the District's vision, mission, and goals. (M)	22%
19	Strive for continuous improvement in all areas of the District. (VV)	20%
20	Provide meaningful guidance for systematic and comprehensive district-wide curriculum, instructional services, assessment programs, and professional development. (IL)	19%
21	Guide the operation and maintenance of school facilities to ensure secure, safe, and clean school environments that support learning. (M)	18%
22	Be an effective manager of the District's day-to-day operations. (M)	16%
23	Utilize student achievement data to drive the District's instructional decision-making. (IL)	16%
24	Act in accordance with the District's mission, vision, and core beliefs. (VV)	15%
25	Maintain positive and collaborative working relationships with the school board and its members. (CE)	15%

Key	VV-Vision & Values	IL-Instructional Leadership	CE- Community Engagement	CC- Communication & Collaboration	M- Management
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# Comments from Interviews and Focus Group Meetings

September 26, 27, 30 and October 3, 2011

Listed in alphabetical order

Multiple comments noted with “/”

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS (5)

### *District Strengths*

- Aviation High School
- Capable board with a collective vision focused on all students ///
- Capable management during financial stress
- Communication with the community
- Community partnerships
- Comprehensive high schools
- District values community engagement
- Elementary math curriculum adoption
- Environment where people can be open and honest
- Great staff /
- International Baccalaureate program
- People are supportive of each other //
- Positive Behavior Intervention System
- Positive working relationship with employee organizations /
- Puget Sound Skills Center
- Slow but steady academic success to close achievement gap and reduce dropouts /
- Small schools to focus on students in a variety of ways
- Strong commitment to equity policy //
- Talented leadership
- Transparency in decision making

### *Challenges/Concerns/Issues*

- Academic achievement and instructional needs require attention /
- Building the partnership with the entire school district population //
- Community's rate of accepting change
- Courageous conversations are needed to face brutal facts /
- Create and sustain a clear course of action through a workable strategic plan/
- Curriculum review and update to align with student expectations
- Facility equity needs action
- Hiring diverse faculty and staff
- How do we sustain improved academic achievement on multiple fronts?//
- Increase risk taking and innovation
- Institutional racism still exists
- Low graduation rates for special education students
- Low math and science performance /
- Parental involvement and engagement //
- Refine work with small high schools

- Security within the schools needs attention
- Use the best ways to solve problems

### ***Desired Characteristics***

- Ability to make tough decisions
- Ability to say “no” when needed /
- Accessibility to stakeholders /
- Be “the leader” and make decisions that are necessary//
- Build on current strengths
- Caring and compassionate
- Commit to Highline for a reasonable length of time
- Communicator with integrity about strengths and weaknesses
- Diplomatic
- Educational background and experience/
- Financial management knowledge
- Follow-through on commitments
- Good negotiator
- High energy person
- Honesty
- Humble
- Innovator
- Listener
- Motivator of people
- One who has lived the experience of our minority populations; possibly one with second language and/or second culture experience
- Respectful in all relationships /
- Respectful of the district’s history
- Team builder
- Understand the equity agenda and committed to social justice//
- Visionary person related to the whole K-12 scene/
- Willing to take calculated risks

## **BUILDING ADMINISTRATORS (20 principals)**

### ***Strengths***

- Autonomy at the school level
- Challenge program for gifted students at the elementary level
- Coherence of elementary curriculum
- Community partnerships //
- Cultural competency and more – purposeful approach to diversity
- Desire for greater consistency in approach throughout the district
- Dynamic people who are strong leaders in buildings; some at ERAC //
- Good support for Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- Great respect and regard for the population of the district ///
- Highline Citizens for Schools ///

- Highline Schools Foundation ////
- Mission focused on teaching and learning: college, career and citizenship
- Positive labor relations //
- Significant effort and energy devoted to community-building and engagement /
- Teacher involvement in the development of curriculum
- Unified around the Five Values: Math K-12, Literacy K-12, PBIS, RTI, and Instructional Frameworks
- Voter support of bonds and levies ///
- We “do whatever it takes” because “all means all” ////
- Willingness to support innovation and risk-taking (e.g. small schools initiative) //

### ***Challenges/Concerns/Issues***

- Accountability scorecard is given to principals without input from them or their teaching staff – it often is not understood and little support is provided to implement what is needed to reach the goals
- Central administration lacks a vision of the whole which leads to confusing variance in senior leadership ////
- Curriculum lacks the rigor needed for students to really succeed
- Differing expectations among District level leaders about what should be covered by school-level budgets
- Disparity in facilities ///
- District office does not understand needs at the school level regarding the implementation of the program and services they create; principals not consulted ////
- Equity lens needs clarity; focus on real learning, not just a test score ///
- Human Resources department lax in communication and explanation of practices with principals ////
- Inconsistency of gifted program options at the Middle School and High School levels
- Information is not shared in a meaningful way to help the organization move forward ////
- Insufficient and inequitable deployment of technology //
- Lack of common set of expectations and operating procedures by Executive Directors who supervise principals ///
- Lack of consistency with instructional goals //
- Lack of broad-based professional development in critical areas /
- Concern for all, but too little actual focus on improving academic achievement throughout the District ///
- Lines of authority are often unclear ///
- Literacy curriculum includes no direct instruction component ///
- Need deliberate decisions, transparent process and follow-through to build trust ///
- Need for outside subject area experts to assist HSD teachers in curriculum development /
- Oversight of the budget needs to be improved; uncertainty about expenditure choices and rationale
- Poor maintenance of school grounds
- Power and territory issues among departments at the District Office result in mixed signals, conflicting directions and loss of trust ////
- Principals are not involved in curriculum development, instructional improvement efforts, and professional development because the Teaching and Learning Department bypasses them and works directly with teachers ////

- Some ERAC are not viewed as supportive to the schools ///
- Some senior leadership have little or no building management experience; they are disconnected from building level leadership //
- Standards for literacy program need to be aligned with practical approaches – current Literacy curriculum too difficult for new teachers to implement //
- Union leadership exercises authority in areas outside of their responsibility

### ***Desired Characteristics***

- A really smart person /
- Ability to work with union without giving up authority /
- Authentic
- Collaborative, inclusive leader
- Decisive leader who can move the district forward /
- Experienced K-12 educator and administrator ///
- Innovative
- Inspirational
- Knows instruction
- Listener///
- Possesses a sense of urgency
- Service orientation to the work of schools
- Student-centered courage
- Systems thinker ///
- Team builder – at the district office and between the district office and the building administrators //
- Values and engages principals //
- Visible in the schools and community
- Vision for the District and where it can go
- Visionary with knowledge of school-based impacts //
- Willing and able to make staff changes where needed
- Works shoulder-to-shoulder with us; values staff

## **CENTRAL ADMINISTRATORS (9)**

### ***District Strengths***

- Accountability measures (literacy, math, RTI)
- Community has vested interest in schools. Schools unify the community. This is part of culture.
- Coordinated school health and social services
- Culture of innovation (small high schools, technology, etc.)
- Employee accountability re: leaves of absence, evaluations, etc.
- Equity planning through new Board policy, adopted 2010-11 /
- Good leadership and real challenges
- Our leader has been approachable, accessible. Not a figurehead //
- Principals are superb
- Respect for diversity

- Social workers on staff are real assets
- Unique programs and services work well for students

### ***Challenges/Concerns/Issues***

- "Have" and "have not" schools. Some have strong structures in place to achieve equity; some don't /
- Enhance supervisory skills of managers and evaluation systems
- Facilities are not equitable /
- Lack of clarity about who speaks for the district leads to uncertainty about how problems will be addressed /
- Lack of real cohesiveness between instructional staff and support staff (certificated and classified) /
- Leadership needed from superintendent in order to bridge gap between certificated and classified; support staff often left out of "team"
- Need leadership to increase equity -- both belief and practice
- Need to understand cultural diversity in a deep way. Not mere "cultural competency." We need authentic leadership on this.
- Need well-qualified diverse staffing; students need to see this
- Pay attention to support systems, e.g. payroll issues
- Resources are a challenge; financial crisis //
- Senior leadership is reluctant to confront issues. Problems linger and retard progress. /
- Someone who can lead and teach for confronting and addressing problems. Develop metrics.
- Staff needs to become more confident in District "system" to develop the ability to put shared values into operation
- Staff wants genuineness; direct interaction with staff is needed

### ***Desired Characteristics***

- Ability to respond to the shifting landscape of external accountability without being reactive
- Able to negotiate processes
- Able to take vision deeper by being aware of details and their impacts; practical, aware of needs "on the ground" /
- Articulate (to a wide variety of audiences) /
- Attentive to the issue of reluctant community members and limited input
- Authentic leader with a real track record that will add value for Highline
- Build trust to get below surface conversations
- Charisma and people skills (must inspire and engender trust) /
- Comfortable with conflict and talented at conflict resolution /
- Connected to the content work //
- Educational background /
- Effective change agent
- Financial know-how
- Integrity; what the person says and does must be aligned /
- Interested in and knowledgeable about the technological needs of district
- Know how to dig and find things out
- Make hard decisions, even if they sometimes hurt /
- Recognize and address underlying problems (even at the highest levels)
- Someone really smart! Not threatened by other really smart people /

- Vision beyond where we are now /
- Well vetted
- Work effectively on union issues, contracts

## **COMMUNITY (5 business and community organization leaders)**

### ***District Strengths***

- A culturally rich and diverse school system. We have developed many ways to embrace this. We have so many success stories!
- A strength is the community itself, working with the district; also, its willingness to partner
- A creative district that knows how to use the community to support education
- Alignment of services with needs of community is excellent; focus on "cradle to career"
- Creative, out of the box thinking; the district has created many different paths to success
- Excellent communications with cities and the broader community; groups and agencies are very involved
- The District is doing a good job with labor issues

### ***Challenges/Concerns/Issues***

- Communication to the community must make clear the high expectations we hold for all kids
- District must be more culturally competent and responsive. Too many Somali children are placed in Special Education because of their cultural behaviors.
- Dropout prevention and recovery
- Elementary STEM needs attention; focusing only on high school STEM is too late
- Future bond issues will require thoughtful guidance because taxpayers are getting saturated; Port is tax exempt .
- Labor issues: the District needs to work with unions in new ways, especially in these difficult economic times.
- Not just college entrance as a goal -- but *true college readiness*. Our children should enter college without having to take remedial courses.
- Perception of uneven quality of HSD schools. Not all schools are great. The lower income areas don't get the same quality. We need someone brave enough to do something about it!
- The issue of poverty vs. affluent populations. We serve the whole gamut. The district needs to ensure that enriched programs show diversity -- that minorities have access to those programs.
- What does success look like for all kids -- i.e., the importance of attendance. Families need a clear understanding of what it takes to succeed in school.

### ***Desired Characteristics***

- Inclusiveness
- Someone smart! Able to manage complexity
- Effective communications with all stakeholders
- Ability to help others lead. This is a talented staff that should be truly empowered and developed
- Holistic vision. Educating the whole child. John had this. It means recognizing that children need dental care, meals, access to technology in addition to basic instruction

- We want to see a strong record of developing, attracting and keeping quality principals
- The ability to understand and preserve a positive culture.
- Entrepreneurial strengths. Someone unafraid to take risks
- Kids before politics. We do not want a "politician" who takes eyes off the needs of kids
- An authentic leader; someone who really cares
- Someone who relates to and encourages the next generation of leaders among staff
- A leader's instructional strengths may vary depending upon the District's current strengths, but Highline would not be well served if the Superintendent did not have reform in mind
- Priority on drawing people of color and young people into the school system to work
- Diversity in leadership and on front lines is needed beyond the white middle class experience.

## **FACULTY (22 certificated staff, including specialists, all grade levels)**

### ***District Strengths***

- Ability to work through natural tensions; dedicated and resilient staff
- Broad portfolio of schools (4 large comprehensive high schools, 2 include smaller campuses, 5 schools of choice, 2 inter-local agreements, skills center)
- Community partnerships are strong
- Elementary facilities updated
- Finances are well managed
- For the most part, teachers have good relationships with central administration /
- Highline Interim Placement (HIP) for suspended students
- Language arts and math -- strong curriculum., but science or social studies are weak /
- People have a voice here. Culture is open. District not too big. /
- Perceptual data from parents and kids
- Resources; smaller schools don't always have resources like larger ones /
- School board is open
- Shared philosophy
- Strong staff. Teachers seem very dedicated at every elementary level
- Student data available (Healthy Youth Survey)

### ***Challenges/Concerns/Issues***

- Collaboration is not yet a natural part of teacher culture; it is "hit or miss" //
- Development of new teacher evaluation process as required by law
- Facilities and Security Services should be more responsive; now seem inconsistent
- Family engagement is good, but we can do more/
- High school facility needs are significant
- IT people exercise rigid controls; dialog and flexibility would help
- Library programs have been drastically reduced; needs are only marginally met
- Maintenance and repair issues are a problem
- Post-secondary education goal should not mean "college" for all
- Some in leadership do not seem to value teacher voice
- Some see the union as "the problem"
- Special education access at all schools is an issue

### ***Desired Characteristics***

- A trust builder who assumes positive intention
- Able to make decisions; be decisive /
- Approachable demeanor /
- Availability
- Business experience is a plus (if it complements a foundation in education)
- Engaged in community
- Experience in education essential, including classroom experience/
- Honesty, integrity and a strong hand on the helm
- Lead by example
- Model and develop systems for collaboration /
- Must be visible in schools /
- One who actively seeks feedback
- Openness to new ideas
- Possess critical thinking skills
- Solid listener
- Strong vision for the schools; more focus and clarity

## **SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM (11)**

### ***Strengths***

- Accessible people
- Balance big picture and vision with accountability
- Collaboration with others in the community (e.g. White Center Promise, Community Schools Collaboration)
- Commitment to equity /
- Community engagement
- Diversity is our strength
- Family Center support for newcomers
- Focus on instructional leadership
- High percentage of staff who live in the district (70%+)
- Incorporation of technology into instructional strategies
- Innovative programs for secondary students
- Levy passage rate in tough financial times /
- Multiple pathways to success for students
- Preparation of students for post-secondary learning
- Quality school renovation experience (need more because equity is an issue)
- Quality teachers and principals
- Results in math performance by students, especially elementary schools
- Secondary school completion options
- Small high schools implementation work
- Strong relationship with HEA
- We never give up on our students!

### ***Challenges/Concerns/Issues***

- Achievement gap is more than test scores; struggle to reduce performance variance; progress is slow
- Bring people together around the schools to avoid resource wars; equity versus equality; help people see the system
- Deferred maintenance on school facilities (approaching \$150 million)
- How to sustain small school and enriched certificated staffing in the face of serious state level funding shortage
- Internal collaboration should be stronger
- Resources are scarce and declining
- Small school facilities are sometimes limiting; equity in facilities will be difficult to achieve
- Small schools model carries 50-70 more staff than regular model. How to sustain this with shrinking resources? What are "other" costs?
- Neighborhood school policy: small margin of choice for students
- Staff diversity does not reflect the community or the student demographics
- The national anti-union mood and how it will affect labor and community relations
- The next bond issue to address another round of school facility improvements in a challenging financial environment; need to focus on secondary schools and some elementary schools
- Working to address teacher evaluation system changes

### ***Desired Characteristics***

- Approachable leader
- Cheerleader; able to sell bonds and talk instructional strategies as needed
- Collaborative with all staff
- Communicates well; connects with people, especially in a diverse environment
- Connects people to the vision
- Decisive
- Demonstrated ability to lead learning
- Educator desirable
- Equity at the forefront of her/his awareness //
- Evidence based orientation
- Global view towards the educational program; educate all aspects of the person
- Hold people accountable for results; don't just give us "Northwest Nice"!
- Inspires others to follow; "gets it"
- Knowledge of diversity issues
- Politically astute
- Proper level of impatience in leading change
- Risk-taker to improve student outcomes
- Students at the center
- Transparent decision-maker

## **PARENTS (17 parents and 30 staff)**

### ***Strengths***

- After School programming //
- AYP requirements are being addressed
- Challenge Program /
- Communication approaches and community engagement
- Counselors
- Dual language program /
- Excellent job focusing resources for college-bound students
- Focus on ELL needs //
- Focus on college and careers
- Good curriculum planning
- Great teachers and staff ///
- Integrating families into community
- Looking ahead and staying ahead of the curve
- Measures of student progress
- Parental support services
- Partnerships with community organizations //
- Philosophy is to “lift everyone up”
- Principals
- Specialists are employed in key subject areas
- Student recognition efforts
- Schools are great
- Summer school program
- Support services for student
- Teachers really help students with special needs
- Valuing diversity ////
- Variety of high school programs ///

### ***Challenges/Concerns/Issues***

- Academic focus needs to be enhanced
- Access to superintendent by all stakeholders
- Addressing underperforming staff members
- Assistance with parents learning English
- Avenues for parental voice to be heard
- Bullying issues and behaviors ////
- CBO funding
- Challenging gifted and talented students
- Children are promoted without the needed skills to be successful in the next grade level
- Class sizes are too big /

- Dual language program causes divisions (Spanish v. others)
- Early intervention programs
- Increasing parental engagement through parent education //
- Increasing sport options
- Involve parents with students when they are being recognized
- LGBT bullying
- Loss of Home Economics and Shop programs
- Math curriculum
- More rigor needed for all students
- Need for dual language programs in more languages
- Need for greater consistency among the schools //
- Need to create more programs and choices for non-college bound students
- Need to explain Title I and II to parents
- Parental engagement ///
- Respect needs to be improved
- Screening process for parental volunteers takes too long and is too difficult //
- Services for students who are having difficulty
- Staff needs to be sensitive to cultural differences //
- Students should wear uniforms
- Summer school and after school programs should be expanded

### ***Desired Characteristics***

- Acceptance of differences
- Accessible to everyone
- Awareness that he/she is responsible for producing the future
- Balances support for students, staff, parents, and community
- Belief in equity /
- Believes in a bottom-up approach
- Builds relationships with each community
- Capable of passing a citizenship test
- Celebrates good teachers
- Critical thinker
- Culturally sensitive //
- Emotional intelligence
- Engaged in the community ///
- Gets to know staff
- Good listener //
- Helps teachers who need to improve
- Holds leaders and staff accountable
- Instructional leader
- Lives in community
- Moral clarity
- Open door policy

- Passion for Highline
- Sense of humor
- Strategic thinker
- Understanding of and experience in a multi-cultural community
- Visible in the schools//

## **STUDENTS (5 + 8 staff members)**

### ***Strengths***

- Everyone gives it their all!
- Football games
- Good teachers who provide explanations and extra help
- High School Running Start program
- School spirit and activities
- Wide range of experiences offered

### ***Challenges/Concerns/Issues***

- Budget
- Choice program is a good idea but does not work because most requests are denied
- Class sizes are too big
- Expense of buying books for Running Start Program
- Illogical consequences for some problems – having to wait in line at the office when you are tardy for class – this makes you miss more class time
- Inequity between the schools regarding facilities, programs, and rules
- Kindergarten should be full day at all schools
- Some schools lack school spirit
- Supply list of items needed for class is expensive and out of the reach of many families
- Teachers need to pay more attention to the needs of students

### ***Desired Characteristics***

- Able to get parents involved
- Able to take control and make decisions
- Caring
- Comfortable interacting with all stakeholders
- Does not waste resources
- Excited; like what they are doing
- Fair
- Firm
- Knowledgeable about the community
- Respectful
- Seeks out funding
- Supportive; nice

## **SUPPORT STAFF (4)**

### ***Strengths***

- Aviation High School
- Communication within the District is improving
- People really care and are willing to go the extra mile
- Quality of staff
- Skill Center programs /
- Special services; high quality program for deaf and hard of hearing
- Working to build a sense of team
- Hard working, dedicated staff who care about kids, learning and families
- Bonds and e-rate to support acquisition of technology /

### ***Challenges/Concerns/Issues***

- Budget and finances
- Clear lines of authority and responsibility are needed; the organization chart is a moving target
- Communication still needs to be improved greatly
- Competition among departments at district office for power and authority
- Diversity in the District
- Dysfunctional communication between buildings and district administrators
- Greater staff involvement in decision-making
- How to promote the levy and bond to the diverse community
- Need for long-range technology plan
- Political correctness sometimes gets in the way
- Professional development needed for instructional technology
- Seeking funding outside of state and local sources
- Staff diversity does not match the student population
- Workload for everyone is huge

### ***Desired Characteristics***

- Action-oriented
- Approachable and available
- Business savvy
- Clear vision and the know-how to get us there
- Communication skills; must move beyond the “don’t offend anyone” approach to tackle hard issues
- Compassion
- Consensus builder, but one who does not let the process bog down the decision
- Courageous, clear-minded and focused with staff
- Decisive; willing to take responsibility

- Experience with and support of “Small School Approach”
- Inclusive
- Interest in and commitment to technology
- Political skills
- Supportive of career/college/citizenship Focus
- Value the work and effort that has already been invested before change is implemented

## **Highline School District 401 Superintendent of Schools Desired Characteristics**

*The Highline School Board has received and interpreted input from Board members, staff, parents, community and students through focus groups, interviews, and an online survey offered to the full District community. Based on this input, the Highline School District Board of Directors seeks a strong educational leader as its next Superintendent of Schools, able to assume the superintendency July 1, 2012. The Board seeks a leader who:*

- Listens carefully and effectively represents the interests and concerns of the whole community with a special focus on student needs. Comes to this challenge with a deep appreciation for diversity and strategies to achieve equity for all students.
- Implements a clear vision for exemplary educational services based on a deep understanding of teaching and learning processes, including the role of technology.
- Acts collaboratively to lead the continued development of aligned systems, structures and educational strategies to achieve clear, positive impacts on teaching, learning and student success.
- Fosters a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff and administrators. Leads ethical, open, and inclusive decision-making processes toward this end.
- Values the importance of a safe, caring school environment for all students.
- Is consistently visible in schools at all grade levels and actively participates in community life.
- Works effectively with state and local officials and develops community and business partnerships to support student success in post-secondary education, work and society.
- Demonstrates personal integrity and positive regard for students, staff, faculty and community members.
- Is decisive, clear and action-oriented while respecting diverse views and perspectives; identifies, confronts and resolves issues and concerns in a timely manner.
- Takes intelligent risks that include innovative strategies to enhance student learning.

- Manages financial, human and physical resources to sustain the long-term financial health of the District and attract and retain effective personnel.

With regard to leadership experience and accomplishments, the successful candidate will:

- Demonstrate progressively responsible leadership roles in public schools. Experience as a classroom teacher and principal is highly desirable.
- Possess at least a Masters degree in one or more areas of relevant study. A Ph.D. or Ed.D. is desirable.
- Possess a valid Superintendent credential in the State of Washington or be eligible to obtain appropriate state certification.
- Bilingual skills, while not required, will be a valuable working asset.