

Introduction

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) on December 7-10, 2011 to assist in identifying the new superintendent for the Omaha Public Schools. The data contained herein were obtained from input the HYA consultants received when they met with individuals and groups in either individual interviews or focus group settings, and from the results of the online survey completed by stakeholders. The surveys, interviews, and focus group meetings were structured to gather input to assist the Board in determining the primary characteristics desired in the new superintendent. Additionally the stakeholder interviews and focus groups collected information regarding the strengths of the District and some of the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years. The input from the various focus groups regarding key characteristics desired in a new superintendent closely aligns with the data from the online survey.

Participation

The numbers of participants, by stakeholder group, in the two methods of data gathering are listed below:

Group	Personal interviews or focus groups	Online Survey
Board	12	N/A
Administrative Staff	14	95
Certified Staff	18	366
Non-Certificated Staff	12	45
Community Members	107	199
Parents	16	191
Students	1	14
Total	180	910

It should be noted that the “community members” group as represented above was composed of citizen advisory councils, community agencies, business representatives, governmental representatives, cultural organizations, media, clergy, philanthropic/foundations organizations, healthcare groups, educational institutions and social and professional fraternities/sororities. Board members were interviewed as individuals for the purpose of gathering their comments and did not convene as a group during this process.

The responses provided by the individuals and focus groups during the interviews are listed in two places – 1) “Consistent Themes,” which are listed beginning on page 6 of the report and – 2) All responses from individual and group meetings, which begin on page 11. They are listed alphabetically with no attempt to prioritize them. Negative comments made about a single individual will not appear in the report. Finally, a presentation of superintendent characteristics to be shared with the board can be found on page 20.

It should be emphasized that the data are not a scientific sampling, nor should they necessarily be viewed as representing the majority opinion of the respective groups to which they are attributed. Items are included if, in the consultants' judgment, they warranted the Board's attention.

Strengths of the District

When asked about the strengths of the Omaha Public Schools (OPS), individuals within groups noted diversity as a strength. While all members of individual groups did not chime in with agreement, it is interesting that diversity as a strength managed to be highlighted in every single group.

Most groups reported pride in the up-graded facilities resulting from a recent bond program that gave the district a significant face lift. The district was lauded for its well-maintained facilities.

There was positive discussion about the high quality and dedication of the staff at all levels. Of particular note was the discussion of loyalty to the school district among staff. There seems to be a great deal of pride by staff with where they work, and some expressed that they would not consider working anywhere else.

Many expressed that the OPS has a variety of programs to serve a diverse population, however, there appears to be universal pride in the magnet programs. Most seem to believe that the OPS magnet programs are some of the best in the country.

Much was discussed about how the OPS are blessed with generous philanthropic supporters. The public is keenly aware that this level of generosity is uncommon in most school districts and is most appreciative.

There are many school and community partnerships that add value to the school system for their involvement and generosity. The community and faculty appreciate the volunteer support provided by citizens and parents.

Most believe that the school district has made a great effort to provide a variety of programs for students based on need. It was acknowledged that the district is a caring environment that focuses on programs to serve its diverse population.

Challenges/Concerns/Issues Facing the District

While there is much to be proud of in the OPS, the focus groups and individuals focused on a few areas of major concern.

A universally expressed concern was related to the achievement gap between affluent students who are often White, and low income students who are often African American or Hispanic. It was acknowledged that there are economically challenged White students and families, as well as affluent African American and Hispanic students and families.

While such identifiers by race and affluence are not absolutes, there is an achievement gap pattern between these populations in the OPS that causes concern. All who brought up this problem discussed it as a challenge that requires fixing rather than a burden that needs to go away.

Another challenge, nearly universally expressed, was around school finances. The system, like other systems in Nebraska, is dependent upon funding from the state to supplement the tax base in the district. Some headway has been made recently with the Learning Community funding formula; however, the current economy makes it difficult for the existing revenue stream to keep pace with the expenditures the school district needs to continue to provide necessary student programming.

While the district received high marks for the excellent condition of the facilities across the district, there was some criticism that certain buildings seemed to be neglected with regard to care, furnishing and technology.

The City of Omaha has a collection of school districts in and around the OPS. Many who discussed this aspect of the city indicated that there is a fracture in the community centered around education. There appears to be an attempt on the part of some sectors of the community, state and neighboring school districts to isolate the OPS. There are proposals being negotiated politically to change how the OPS relate to the state, neighboring school district as well as internal realignments in the OPS. In spite of it all, the OPS continues with its mission to provide a high quality education for all of its students.

All groups expressed their deep regret that the news media seems to be focused on negative reporting regarding the OPS. While it was expressed uniquely from group to group, it was generally believed that the OPS have been targeted by the media, which has contributed to tarnishing the image of the district. The result has been a perception among some that the OPS is a low quality school system.

There was some acknowledgement from most groups that the OPS is a very ethnically diverse school system and the staff make-up does not come close to reflecting the make-up of the student body.

Desired Characteristics

The groups and individuals would like a superintendent who is “everything to everybody,” thus there was a wide range of suggestions about what the new superintendent should bring to the position. Many commented on the successful run that the current superintendent has had over the past 15 years, leading to a strong desire for a new superintendent to come to the OPS for the long haul rather than using the District as a stepping stone. Although the lists of desirable characteristics from all groups were long, there were some agreements that are noteworthy.

The most often cited skills desired in a new superintendent centered on approachability and collaborative skills, coupled with being a strong communicator. Stakeholders want someone

with varied public relations skills who could inspire confidence in parents, business leaders, and community members. Such a person could highlight the strengths of the school system along with the decisive action he or she would be taking to make it even stronger.

Several participants, across multiple groups, felt that a bold change agent was needed, but this did not seem to be the universal sentiment. Others, especially the internal groups, talked about the importance of maintaining continuity. Everyone, however, expected a new superintendent to be fully engaged in school and community life and fully immersed in the city of Omaha while remaining truly student centered.

Participants from all groups reiterated the need for a superintendent who has the highest ethical and moral standards. Skills desired also include the ability to understand and oversee school finances. Given the recent history of the school district, it is desired that the new superintendent be politically savvy, and prepared to lead the district through challenging political issues that may emerge in the future.

Public relations and negative perception have been attributed to the media's treatment of the OPS. True or not, it is believed that the new superintendent must be media savvy and prepared to do whatever is necessary to change the climate that has produced a tarnished image of the school system.

With regard to background and past experiences, there was some consensus that successful experience in an urban setting similar to Omaha is absolutely essential. Past experiences working with a diverse student population lead most discussions. Many believe that the person who is ready for the challenges of the OPS will come with experience as a superintendent. Others believe that the requisite background will suffice if the person has performed at a very high level in a district similar to the OPS.

The top characteristics that emerged from the strong online survey response reinforced many of the themes expressed in the focus group interviews, and, in order of importance, included the following:

- Promote high expectations for all students and personnel.
- Listen to and effectively represent the interests and concerns of students, staff, parents, and community members.
- Have a clear vision of what is required to provide exemplary educational services and implement effective change.
- Increase academic performance and accountability at all levels and for all its students, including special needs populations.
- Foster a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators.

The high level of survey responses, along with the participation in the focus groups and community meetings, are strong indicators of the value the community and staff place on

finding a talented leader who can build on the past, while energetically moving the district boldly forward toward greater student achievement and success.

HYA cannot promise to find a candidate who possesses all of the characteristics desired by all respondents. However, HYA and the Board intend to meet the challenge of finding an individual who possesses most of the skills and character traits required to address the concerns expressed by the constituent groups. We will seek a new superintendent who can work with the Omaha Public Schools Board to provide the leadership needed to continue to raise academic standards and student performance in spite of major financial challenges, while meeting the unique needs of each of its schools and communities.

The consultants would like to thank all the participants who attended focus groups meetings or completed the online survey. Also, we would like to thank all of the OPS staff members who assisted with our meetings, and particularly thank Jolene Pace for her work in making all of the contacts and her efforts in facilitating our time in the District.

Respectfully submitted,

Marvin Edwards
Pamela Robinson

Summary of Consistent Themes

Strengths

- Diversity
- Facilities are well maintained
- High quality staff at all levels of the district
- Magnet schools
- Philanthropic involvement

- School and community partnerships
- Student focused caring environment
- Variety of educational opportunities

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

- Achievement gap
- Communication at all levels
- Finance/funding
- Inequities of facilities and technology at some buildings
- Lack of cohesive community
- Meeting the needs of our social/economic diverse student population
- Negative media relationship
- Perception that creates image of low quality education
- Staff and administration does not reflect the diversity of the students

Desired Characteristics

- Collaborative
- Committed to long term stay with OPS
- Ethical
- Excellent communicator
- Experience in similar urban system
- Instructional leader
- Media savvy
- Politically savvy
- Proven track record of success
- Strategic
- Visionary

Omaha School District

Online Superintendent Profile Survey Results

The Superintendent Profile survey was completed by 910 stakeholders. Approximately 40 percent of respondents were certified staff members, about 22 percent were community members, another 21 percent were parents, 10 percent were administrative staff, and the rest were non-certified staff and students.

	Frequency	Percent
Administrative Staff	95	10.4
Certified Staff	366	40.2
Non-Certified Staff	45	4.9
Community Member	199	21.9
Parent	191	21.0
Student	14	1.5
Total	910	100.0

The top-rated characteristics that respondents selected are:

- Promote high expectations for all students and personnel. (VV)
- Listen to and effectively represent the interests and concerns of students, staff, parents, and community members. (CE)
- Have a clear vision of what is required to provide exemplary educational services and implement effective change. (VV)
- Increase academic performance and accountability at all levels and for all its students, including special needs populations. (IL)
- Foster a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators. (CC)

Percentages of respondents overall who selected each item, as well as percentages by stakeholder group, are given in the tables on the following pages.

In addition, differences were examined for statistical and practical significance to determine whether the mean scores by stakeholder group differed. Results indicate that, for many items, the various stakeholders were in agreement. On the other hand, there were several items that certain stakeholders valued more than others.

- Parents were significantly more likely than certified staff members to select the Vision and Values item “Promote high expectations for all students and personnel”.
- Certified staff members were significantly more likely than community members to select the Instructional Leadership item “Hold a deep understanding of the teaching/learning process and of the importance of educational technology.”
- Administrative staff members, parents and community members were significantly more likely than certified and non-certified staff members to select the Instructional Leadership item “Increase academic performance and accountability at all levels and for all its students including special needs populations”.
- Administrative staff were significantly more likely than other respondents to select the Instructional Leadership item “utilize student achievement data to drive the District’s instructional decision-making”.
- Administrative staff were significantly less likely than certified staff or parents to select the Community Engagement item “Identify, confront, and resolve issues and concerns in a timely manner.
- Community members were significantly more likely than certified staff and parents to select the Community Engagement item “Develop strong relationships with constituents, local government, area businesses, media and community partners.”
- Certified staff members were significantly more likely than parents and community members to select the Communication and Collaboration item “Foster a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators”.
- Non-certified staff members were significantly more likely than the other respondents to pick the Management item “Be an effective manager of the District’s day-to-day operations.”
- Administrative staff members were significantly less likely than the other respondent groups to select the Management item “Effectively plan and manage the long-term financial health of the District.”
- Parents were significantly more likely than administrative and certified staff members to select the Management item “Recruit, employ, evaluate, and retain effective personnel throughout the District and its schools.”
- Parents were significantly more likely than administrative staff to select the Management item “Guide the operation and maintenance of school facilities to ensure secure, safe, and clean school environments that support learning.”

Percentage of Respondents Who Selected Each Item (By

Subgroups)

Number indicates rank order by overall results		ALL (910)	Admin (95)	Cert Staff (366)	Non-Cert (45)	Comm (199)	Parent (191)	Stdnt (14)
1	Promote high expectations for all students and personnel. (VV)	49%	56%	42%	36%	53%	58%	50%
2	Listen to and effectively represent the interests and concerns of students, staff, parents, and community members. (CE)	45%	33%	46%	51%	41%	53%	57%
3	Have a clear vision of what is required to provide exemplary educational services and implement effective change.(VV)	43%	43%	45%	31%	41%	44%	36%
4	Increase academic performance and accountability at all levels and for all its students, including special needs populations. (IL)	43%	49%	30%	27%	56%	52%	50%
5	Foster a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators. (CC)	41%	47%	51%	49%	30%	30%	21%
6	Hold a deep appreciation for diversity and the importance of providing safe and caring school environments. (VV)	38%	46%	33%	31%	45%	37%	14%
7	Recruit, employ, evaluate, and retain effective personnel throughout the District and its schools. (M)	37%	28%	32%	44%	37%	50%	29%
8	Hold a deep understanding of the teaching/learning process and of the importance of educational technology. (IL)	35%	28%	43%	29%	25%	33%	50%
9	Be visible throughout the District and actively engaged in community life. (CE)	34%	25%	38%	40%	36%	25%	36%
10	Encourage a sense of shared responsibility among all stakeholders regarding success in student learning. (IL)	33%	43%	35%	29%	31%	29%	29%
11	Identify, confront, and resolve issues and concerns in a timely manner. (CE)	32%	16%	37%	38%	26%	37%	36%
12	Effectively plan and manage the long-term financial health of the District. (M)	30%	12%	32%	38%	29%	34%	36%

13	Strive for continuous improvement in all areas of the District. (VV)	28%	26%	26%	44%	24%	32%	50%
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Key	VV-Vision & Values	IL-Instructional Leadership	CE- Community Engagement	CC- Communication & Collaboration	M- Management
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Percentage of Respondents Who Selected Each Item (By Subgroups)

Number indicates rank order by overall results	ALL (910)	Admin (95)	Cert Staff (366)	Non-Cert (45)	Comm (199)	Parent (191)	Studnt (14)
14 Lead in an encouraging, participatory, and team-focused manner. (CC)	28%	36%	31%	31%	24%	22%	21%
15 Provide meaningful guidance for systematic and comprehensive district-wide curriculum, instructional services, assessment programs, and professional development. (IL)	27%	36%	29%	18%	25%	27%	0%
16 Develop strong relationships with constituents, local government, area businesses, media, and community partners. (CE)	25%	29%	17%	29%	42%	21%	14%
17 Communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and in a variety of ways. (CC)	25%	33%	21%	36%	30%	20%	29%
18 Seek a high level of engagement with principals and other school-site leaders. (CC)	25%	34%	23%	11%	21%	29%	29%
19 Align budgets, long-range plans, and operational procedures with the District's vision, mission, and goals. (M)	24%	16%	22%	33%	23%	27%	43%
20 Involve appropriate stakeholders in the decision-making process. (CC)	23%	21%	27%	29%	21%	20%	0%
21 Utilize student achievement data to drive the District's instructional decision-making. (IL)	22%	49%	19%	9%	23%	15%	14%
22 Guide the operation and maintenance of school facilities to ensure secure, safe, and clean school environments that support learning. (M)	19%	8%	18%	20%	21%	26%	14%
23 Be an effective manager of the District's day-to-day operations. (M)	18%	11%	18%	40%	13%	18%	36%
24 Maintain positive and collaborative working relationships with the school	14%	17%	10%	27%	18%	11%	14%

board and its members. (CE)							
25 Act in accordance with the District's mission, vision, and core beliefs. (VV)	11%	18%	10%	16%	15%	7%	0%

Comments from Interviews and Focus Group Meetings

December 7, 8, 9 and 10, 2011

Listed in alphabetical order

“/” indicates multiple similar responses from group

BOARD

Strengths

- Academic commitment //
- Business savvy
- Committed to excellence and equity /
- Committed to raising student achievement for all /
- Considering the real world OPS is a great place
- Diversity ////
- Facilities that are well maintained and managed ///
- Focus schools
- Graduation rate is on the rise
- Growth /
- Many outstanding programs //
- Magnets includes one of the top engineering programs in the state
- Partnerships
- Philanthropic support
- Principals/administrators //
- Size allows greater offerings
- Student focused ///
- Superintendent with great integrity and good leader //
- Support staff //
- Teachers ///
- Tremendous resources //
- Vocational programs

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

- Finances/revenue need to improve ////
- Finding a new superintendent ///
- Matching the organization to the needs of all students
- Need to ramp up the Public Relations program //
- Negative perception of OPS is misleading and unfair/////
- Political issues such as movement to divide the district ///
- Remaining a cohesive group
- Student achievement improvement /////
- Combating economically challenging environment

- More diverse staff at all levels

Desired Characteristics

- Bold advocate for children and schools //
- Compassionate
- Creative/visionary /////
- Current in best practices
- Data driven
- Ethical/Integrity/moral/principled/honest //////////
- Excellent communication skills internal and external /////
- Experience in racially and ethnically diverse district ///
- Focus on academic improvement for all students ///
- Great public presence and visibility ///
- Media savvy //
- Open to change /
- Politically savvy ///
- Sense of humor
- Strong leadership //
- Successful leader outside of OPS ///
- Transparent and open with the board ///
- Well read

ADMINISTRATORS

Strengths

- Achievement in math
- Community support
- Continuity in Leadership/Legacy of Loyalty
- Diverse student population ///
- Employees
- Fiscal stewardship
- High quality teachers //
- Leadership from the board down to the schools
- Meeting the needs of all students /
- Magnets and other options for students ///
- Partnership with community organizations
- Perseverance in spite of obstacles
- Philanthropic community
- Professional development //
- Facilities that are well maintained //
- Specialty schools and magnets
- Communication

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

- Academic improvement
- General fund has been reduced
- Public perception is fueled by misinformation
- Racism and Elitism
- Staff does not match the diversity of the student body
- Unions are often counterproductive
- Economically challenged families

Desired Characteristics

- Ability to select good people and to delegate
- Academic achievement focus ///
- Connected to communities and benefactors
- Desire to work with a diverse student population//
- Ethical ///
- Excellent communication skills ///
- Fiscally responsible //
- High visibility ///
- Knowledge of research with best practices //
- Openness and transparency //
- Politically savvy //
- Proven track record of success in a similar environment//
- Relationship builder //
- Media relations skills //
- Understand the dynamics of OPS//
- Visionary ///

CERTIFICATED

Strengths

- Decisions made for best interest of kids //
- Diversity/
- Facilities //
- Family atmosphere
- Magnet schools ///
- Passionate professionals ///
- Philanthropic partners //
- Pride for system
- Resources for SPED, ELL
- Staff
- Student focused
- Variety of programs
- Welcoming schools

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

- Achievement gap ///
- Diverse needs of students and families in need
- Finance ///
- Gangs
- Image ///
- Inequity across district with facilities and support
- Listen to people //
- Out-dated technology
- Perception//
- Racism
- Safety /
- Transportation for parents to attend and be involved
- Communication
- Media targets the district unfairly
- Struggling families economically

Desired Characteristics

- Accountable
- Allow some autonomy at the building level
- Approachable ///
- Clear mission/vision //
- Collaborative ///
- Committed to OPS //
- Communicate/listen////
- Connect to people
- Ethical ///
- Good with Media ///
- Look at growth model for assessment
- Open door /
- Politically in touch //
- Proven track record in similar urban environment ///
- Recognize achievement beyond test scores ///
- Visible and in touch with schools/
- Visionary ///
- Welcome staff input //

NON-CERTIFIED STAFF

Strengths

- Business support
- Clean facilities //
- Dedicated staff //
- Diversity ///

- Educational program variety //
- Established district
- Facilities
- Innovative //
- Magnet schools
- Neighborhood schools
- Partnerships //
- Philanthropic support ///
- Professional development //
- Quality teachers
- Focused on students
- Tradition of good education

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

- Achievement gap ///
- Building sense of community ///
- Changing demographics //
- Communication /
- Finances/tax base erosion ///
- Lack of community support //
- Lack of cooperation between OPS and county districts //
- Losing students to other districts //
- Media is very negative toward OPS ///
- Mobility rate //
- Political challenges //
- Social promotion
- Student achievement ///
- Understanding and meeting diverse needs//
- Lack of understanding of OPS complexity
- Poverty with some of the students

Desired Characteristics

- Ability to streamline the system
- Align mission and vision to move forward
- Approachable ///
- Collaborative ///
- Committed to OPS long term //
- Communicator ///
- Courageous decision maker //
- Educational background ///
- Embrace change /
- Ethical ///
- Experience as a classroom teacher //
- Fight battles for urban districts
- Good public speaker /

- Listener ///
- Open to bottom up structure //
- Personable //
- Politically aware //
- Positive motivator
- Promoter of professional development
- Thick skin
- Unifier
- Urban experience /////
- Visible //
- Visionary/creative/ think outside the box ///

COMMUNITY

Strengths

- Access of facilities for outside groups
- Accessibility of the Superintendent, Board members and teachers
- Basic curriculum
- Breakfast program //
- Broad curriculum
- Buffett Middle School as a high ranking magnet
- Collaboration with building level staff
- Courage
- District size
- Diversity /////
- Dual enrollment programs
- Effective communicator
- Excellent educational opportunities //
- Facilities well maintained ///
- Focus schools ///
- Graduation rate improving
- Health clinic
- Health curriculum
- Inclusive of all students including those with special needs //
- Leadership in the Arts
- Listens and responds to needs
- Magnet programs ///
- Meets the needs of a diverse population /
- Neighborhood schools
- Northwest High School
- Parents
- Partnerships and philanthropic foundations /////
- Pride in community
- Professional development opportunities //
- Professional integrity

- High quality and dedicated teachers and administrators /////
- Quality of staff at all levels ///
- Reputation
- Small city with big city amenities
- Social workers
- Stability in leadership
- Still growing/Size //
- Strong ESOL program
- Student focused //
- Support for homeless students
- Support of the Arts program
- Use of the Teacher Administrative Center
- Universal quality of schools
- Vocational and technical programs /

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

- Achievement and learning gap /////
- Balance of time for all curriculum versus test taking
- Better communication ///
- Bullying needs effective response
- Bureaucracy is too big
- Bus transportation for ELL parents to attend student events
- Challenges that come with diversity /
- Challenges with poverty //
- Child abuse needs strong policies and rules
- Communications
- Community divided by school districts /
- Coordinating community efforts
- Cultural competency
- Distrust between OPS and the community
- Dropout rate/graduation rate /
- Equity for students, buildings and activities
- Fairness in hiring staff
- Family breakdown within student population
- Finance/Funding/Budget /////
- Focused too much on test scores ///
- Funding for ELL population
- Graduation rate of minority students
- Improve message
- Increased support of refugee population
- Inconsistent policy enforcement
- Incorporation of neighboring schools into OPS
- Inexperienced staff in some of the most difficult schools
- Integrity in communicating with public about TIF funding
- Lack of 21st Century skills
- Lack of balance in enrollment in buildings

- Lack of cohesive community
- Lack of diversity in teaching staff and administration //
- Lack of foreign language at all levels
- Lack of message of success
- Lack of sense of community /
- Lack of support for public education /
- Leadership magnet is too liberal
- Low expectations for minority students //
- Meeting the needs of a diverse population //
- Morale issues for teachers
- More professional development
- More reading teachers
- Moving too slow on basic curriculum
- Need a culture with more value on education
- Need more character education
- Need neighborhood schools
- Need pride in district and schools
- Need to be more politically savvy //
- Negative media relations ///
- Negative public perception of schools ///
- Parent involvement and engagement ////
- Perception of low quality education //
- Resolve issues of Learning Community
- School size/organization
- Social promotion
- Stressed households such as single parents
- Superintendent is not held accountable by board
- Tax- paying community is not heard
- Transparency/availability
- Truancy
- Twenty-first century curriculum
- Union-administration relationship
- Valuing community partnerships

Desired Characteristics

- Ability to address the achievement gap ////
- Accountable and hold others accountable ///
- Advocate for character education
- Advocate for students ///
- Advocate for the Arts
- Approachable ///
- Bring national perspective
- Build school community partnerships
- Build sense of community /
- Business background/finance skills
- Can make tough decisions //

- Careful respect for legal system
- Celebrate accomplishments
- Celebrate diversity //
- Challenge all students //
- Challenge complacency and status quo
- Change agent /
- Collaborative style of leadership ////
- Commitment to students and community for the long haul ///
- Common mission and vision
- Courageous in the midst of adversity //
- Create home-school partnerships
- Creative /
- Cultural proficiency //
- Data driven ////
- Delegator
- Effective Communicator with all publics internal and external //////////
- Embrace early childhood
- Engaged in schools and community ////
- Ethical ///
- Face of the system
- Fiscal conservative
- Focus on delivery of curriculum
- Friendly
- Good management skills
- Hands on/engaged
- Honest /
- Implement excellent curriculum for all students and not just honor students
- Increase parent and community engagement ////
- Innovative
- Instructional leader////
- Integrity ///
- Interactive
- Listener ///
- Maintain and increase partnerships ///
- Media savvy ////
- Mend relationship with neighboring districts
- No excuses
- Not too far right or too far left
- Organize and administer school by best practice
- Outsider with fresh eyes
- Own person
- Person of stature
- Student focused //
- Politically savvy ////
- Promote trust
- Put together a great team
- Relate to public

- Risk taker /
- Salary less than the president of the United States
- Seek continuous improvement
- Set a positive tone
- Someone with fresh eyes /
- Strategic ///
- Successful record ///
- Task master
- Thick skin
- Track record of success in similar system //////////////
- Transparent ///
- Understand board governance/politics
- Understand complex history of this district /
- Understand culture of the Midwest
- Understand the challenge of poverty
- Urban experience ///
- Visible in the schools and the community ///
- Visionary leadership ///
- Will embrace character education
- Willing to do performance audit
- Woman of color

PARENTS

Strengths

- Advocate for students
- Appreciation of parent involvement
- Business support/partnerships //
- Challenging engineering program at North High
- College partnerships
- Magnet program//
- Meet student needs at all points of spectrum
- Principals that care
- Quality teachers/passionate/caring ///
- Responsive culture/good customer service
- Schools have unique personalities
- Some building autonomy for PTO/PTA
- Special education advisory committee
- Student focused
- Technology
- Transportation
- Wide variety of opportunities for students to be leaders

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

- Achievement gap ///
- Budget/Finance ///

- Communication to parents about the variety of choices
- Diversity in teaching ranks needs improvement
- Follow through for students with special needs for one level to another
- Inequities in buildings, facilities and technology /
- Kids “in the middle” get lost
- Lack of quality after school programs at middle school level
- More concentration on students with intellectual disabilities
- Need better communication from buildings to parents
- Need to focus on quality over quantity of programs
- Perception is not reality which creates a false image of the schools
- Students are labeled by the media as gang members which sends a negative message
- The media paints the board in a negative light which influences its reputation

Desired Characteristics

- Address high school dropout rate
- Analytical
- Approachable ///
- Face brutal facts – make changes
- Listener //
- Local person
- Politically savvy ///
- Promote the positive
- Promotes customer service
- Promotes high expectations for all
- Reject the “good old boy network”.
- Someone with fresh eyes
- Someone with urban background ///
- Strategic //
- Strength based leadership
- Surround themselves with quality cabinet level staff
- Transparent /
- Visible
- Visionary ///

STUDENTS

- No student focus groups were assembled. A few students attended community forums with their parents and in one case a student offered an opinion. The opinion was noted as coming from a student as follows:

“Kids are not given incentives to stay in school. Some kids get free busing, free food but they do not stay the entire day.”

Fourteen students participated through the online survey and are represented in that section of the report.

OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Superintendent of Schools
Desired Characteristics

After seeking input from its Board members, parents, staff, students, and community via focus groups, interviews, and an online survey, the Board of Education of the Omaha Public Schools seeks a strong educational leader who possesses the following characteristics:

- Courage when it comes to having to make difficult decisions
- Demonstrate the traits of fairness, honesty, integrity and openness
- Develop and implement programs and processes that keep the community informed and involved in the school system
- Establish priorities that focus on the needs of all students
- Experience in leading a diverse urban school system similar to the OPS
- Improve the quality of education within the framework of available financial resources
- Is both collaborative and decisive
- Operate with integrity and deal directly and fairly with faculty, staff, students and parents
- Possess a track record of solid partnerships and involvement with philanthropic and community organizations
- Possess effective communication skills, both written and verbal
- Possess the ability to work collaboratively with the school board, elected officials and the media
- Set high standards and effectively lead the executions of improvement in the performance of a diverse student body with particular emphasis on raising achievement for all, and closing the achievement gap for others.
- Strong interpersonal and public relations skills
- Understand and effectively use data to drive decisions that will lead to the improvement of curriculum and instruction as well as the entire school system
- Work collaboratively with constituent groups to develop, articulate and implement a vision for the district
- Work with the School Board to maintain good relationships and assist them in the execution of their respective governance and oversight roles