



St. Francis Area Schools, St. Francis, MN

New Superintendent Profile October 8, 2018

Introduction

This report presents the findings of the New Superintendent Profile assessment conducted by *School Exec Connect (SEC)* on September 25, 2018. The St. Francis Area Schools School Board desired to have a better understanding of the school and community members' perceptions of the District as they begin their search for a new Superintendent. The Board requested that *School Exec Connect* consultants Dr. David Clough and Dr. David Vick gather information from constituents regarding the strengths and challenges of the District as well as the characteristics, skills and attributes desired in the new Superintendent. Please find included a brief summary of the comments of people who attended focus groups, were interviewed individually and people who responded to the District's On-line Survey.

Participants

Eight (8) focus groups were held with: Teachers, Support Staff, Building Administrators, District Office Administration, Middle School Students, High School Students, Parents, and Civic/Booster Supporters. A total of seventy (70) individuals were involved in the focus groups. In addition, an evening session was held for members of the community, which was attended by three (3) residents. All seven (7) Members of the School Board were interviewed individually as well as the Superintendent of Schools and the President of the Teachers' Union. A grand total of eighty (80) individuals participated in the focus groups or individual interviews.

On-line Survey

An on-line survey was posted on the District's website. The on-line survey asked for respondents to self select from the following categories: Certified Staff, Student, Administrator, Support Staff, Community/Business member, Parents/Guardian (past or present). This survey was completed by three hundred thirty-three (333) respondents.

Use of the Data

Due to the sampling methodology, this report should not be considered scientifically accurate. The on-line survey was intended to be completed only one time per email address. Respondents may have participated in both a Focus Group and the On-line Survey. The opinions set forth may not reflect the opinion of the majority of the staff or District residents. The judgments of what should be included in this report are those of the consultants based on the statements heard throughout the data-gathering process. The on-line survey results are rank-ordered and the Focus Group results are not rank-ordered.

Summary Report

The first summary presents the On-line Survey summary. The next area is the summary of each focus group's input and the individuals who met with the consultants. The last item is the Summary Profile for the new Superintendent derived from all of the data and comments.

Thank you to those who took the time to respond to the on-line Survey or to attend one of the focus groups or individual meetings. The results of this report will assist the Board as they enter the next phase in the search for a new Superintendent.

Use of this Report

This report may be used in several ways:

- After reviewing the input from stakeholders of the District, the Board may modify and approve the attributes that will serve as criteria to be considered as candidates are screened and interviewed.
- The Board should review this report to become informed about the thinking of different constituent groups regarding the perceptions of those associated with the District.
- The Consultants will use this report as the foundation for screening and interviewing candidates who are well matched for the Superintendent's position in this district.
- The Consultants recommend that this report be available to candidates for a better understanding of the District and its strengths and challenges.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. David Clough
Partner

Dr. David Vick
Associate

SCHOOL EXEC CONNECT Consultants

ST. FRANCIS, MINNESOTA
ON-LINE SURVEY SUMMARY INFORMATION - 333 Respondents

Demographics*	Percent	Number
• Parent of Current/Past Student (last 5 years)	52%	174
• Teacher/Licensed Staff	20%	65
• Student	18%	61
• Community/Business Member	12%	41
• Support Staff	11%	37
• Administrator	5%	17
• Other	4%	12

(*Does not total to 100% because respondents could check more than one box.)

Goals for the District to achieve in the next three years:

• Strengthen our academic program & curriculum	46%	153
• Maintain programs for all student achievement levels & needs	32%	108
• Manage financial resources prudently	30%	101
• Focus on 21 st century curriculum	24%	79
• Assuring student well being (emotionally safe)	22%	72
• Improving the image of our school district	21%	70

Greatest Educational Strengths of the School District:

• Teacher quality	41%	127
• Dedicated and highly competent staff	34%	106
• Strong community pride in the schools	23%	72
• Supportive and involved parents	22%	68
• Supportive community	20%	61
• Athletic/activity programs	16%	49

Greatest Educational Challenges of the School District:

• Class size	36%	116
• Sound fiscal management	32%	105
• High quality facilities	24%	78
• Effective Board governance	20%	65
• Strong community support of schools	18%	60
• Competition with other districts & schools	17%	55
• Strong administrators and principals	17%	54

Most Important Skills and Characteristics for the new Superintendent:

• Understands school finance & the business side of the district	38%	126
• Has a deep understanding of curriculum, instruction & how students learn	34%	113
• Builds a great team and brings out the best in others	31%	102
• Holds others accountable	23%	76
• Is a strong decision-maker who uses data & information	21%	68
• Is a collaborative consensus builder & able to work with all constituencies	18%	58
• Has excellent communication skills	16%	54

New Superintendent Profile Interviews/Focus Groups

Group: **School Board**

Number in Attendance: 7

List the three most important goals for your school district to achieve in the next three years.

Reduce declining enrollment; Plan for retaining enrollment (4)
Consider Presenting and passing an Operating Levy (4)
Maintain academic excellence
Add rigorous classes
Maintain a diversity of course offerings to meet a variety of students needs
Change how we talk with each other...and listen
Increase staff development for all employees
Implement plans that were approved by the bond issue (2)
Develop and implement a marketing plan
Improve MCA scores through better curriculum alignment (2)
Bring stability to the budget
Improve morale throughout the district (2)
Build trust within the community (2)
Improve alignment of all district services
Continue the PLC work
Retain our teachers
Raise student achievement

More collaboration to implement the strategic plan
Strengthen financial management

List your district's three greatest strengths/attributes for achieving these goals.

Supportive close-knit community including families and businesses (5)
Just passed a bond issue; new and improved learning facilities forthcoming (4)
Near the Twin Cities but not in; rural feel (2)
Safe place to live
Dedicated, excellent and hardworking employees (3)
Committed to Saints Manufacturing at the High School
District is a challenge; come in and make a difference
Teachers are very vested in the community
Good relationships between Board/Administration and the Teachers Union

List your district's greatest challenges/barriers for achieving these goals.

Declining enrollment (2)
Staff retention
Board dynamics – board is divided (2)
Need to pass an Operating Levy for technology and more teachers
Low commercial tax base (2)
High class sizes
Recent trend of the MCA test scores
Special education mandates
Culture of the teachers' union and the resistance of some to work collaboratively
Multiple cities/townships in the district
District is large geographically; spread out
Community is very close-knit
Finances (2)
Some staff speak against things in the district if they don't like what is going on
Some resistance to change
Communication is a challenge with multiple constituencies
District leaders need more training in crisis and communications management
Some difficult history in the district that is hard for some to forget
Open Enrollment
Staff Morale

Describe the three most important characteristics/skills the next superintendent needs to possess to be successful.

Experienced with overcoming budgetary obstacles; financially astute (5)
Involved in and visible in the community (5)
Makes the tough decisions in a timely way; be decisive – can't always be about compromise (3)
Promote a culture where diversity is accepted (2)

Capacity to make decisions based on the facts
Leadership
Organize and streamline lines of communication
Detail oriented
Experienced in the political world
Create expectations and hold people accountable
Excellent communicator who can listen, speak and write effectively (2)
Can make difficult decisions when required
A strong and trustworthy relationship and team builder (2)
Capable of managing strong personalities
Skills in crisis management
Can lead efforts to improve achievement
Retain excellent staff
Believes in and experience with college and work force preparation
Has a positive and bold vision for the district
Possesses honesty and integrity
A problem solver
Can delegate effectively
Has a history of successful leadership

What questions/areas would you like the Board to ask the candidates as they select the superintendent?

How have your experiences impacted your philosophy of education?
What does a strong vibrant school district look like and how do you get there?
What significant obstacles were you able to overcome in order to move your district forward and how did you do it?
What specifically makes you the right person for this job?
Are you connected in any way to this community, and if so, how?
As the new superintendent in St. Francis, how do you become known in the community and acclimate yourself?
Set up a scenario question: List a couple of top issues in St. Francis. How have you addressed them in your past? Who did you engage to be successful?
What is your experience in working with local legislators

Group: Teachers

Number in Attendance: 14

List the three most important goals for your school district to achieve in the next three years.

Proactive rather than reactive leadership
Building a community of trusting and supportive stakeholders
Reduce class sizes

Teach 21st Century Skills
Improve our fiscal situation
Retaining students
Build relationships and alignment between the buildings – especially the elementary schools
Clear communication on the bond issue projects

List your district's three greatest strengths/attributes for achieving these goals.

Supportive community in times of specific and attainable needs
A great staff of committed and dedicated employees who care for kids
A right sized district. Small enough to be personal but large enough to be effective
This district has great potential
Collaborative work between the staff and administration

List your district's greatest challenges/barriers for achieving these goals.

Declining enrollment due to students leaving via open enrollment is limiting an enhanced program
Curriculum development needs to be improved and aligned
Some in the community feel the district has not been trustworthy
Leadership needs to articulate a positive vision
The District lacks a strong business tax base
The community does not hold high enough expectations for quality education
Trying to do too many things at one time resulting in a lack of effectiveness
Building morale within the staff and community

Describe the three most important characteristics/skills the next superintendent needs to possess to be successful.

Transparent and effective leader
Fiscally competent with a long-term plan
An innovator
Ability to implement a positive and long-term vision and plan
A stable leader who will be here awhile
Someone who truly loves and appreciates the specialness of St. Francis
A consensus builder who can bridge differences and bring people together
Goal oriented leader with a plan to get there
An excellent and transparent communicator
Listens to all sides but than can make the difficult decision
A clear and concise communicator

What questions/areas would you like the Board to ask the candidates as they select the superintendent?

Why St. Francis?
What are your one, two and three-year goals?

Group: **Support Staff**

Number in Attendance: 11

List the three most important goals for your school district to achieve in the next three years.

Implement bond
Review all administrative positions – who does what, etc.
Build trust with the community
Retain students and staff
Keep financial stable
Be visible in all schools
Continue our strategic plan

List your district's three greatest strengths/attributes for achieving these goals.

Good people work in the district
Care for students
Small town; close-knit
Pride in district
Manageable-sized district
Staying power in community
Love a good challenge!
Commitment to small town values
Passionate about St. Francis

List your district's greatest challenges/barriers for achieving these goals.

Finances
Reputation of the district
Tax base – low commercial tax base
No main downtown
Schools are divided; need to work more cooperatively.
Internal support needed
Student discipline issues; noisy cafeteria

Describe the three most important characteristics/skills the next superintendent needs to possess to be successful.

People skills
Firm with decisions
Forthright in communication
Trustworthy
Knowledge with experience in the business of schools; financial background

Forward thinking
Inclusive
Outside candidate; get rid of nepotism
One who values courses that may lead to “blue collar” jobs

What questions/areas would you like the Board to ask the candidates as they select the superintendent?

What do you see as the biggest hurdle in the St. Francis school district? What steps would you take when you start?
What brings you to the St. Francis school district? Why did you apply?
Describe your management style.
How would you bring back students who have left St. Francis?

Group: **Building Administrators**

Number in Attendance: 8

List the three most important goals for your school district to achieve in the next three years.

Raise test scores
Balance the budget
Bring trust and confidence to the community about the budget to help pass operating levy
Develop benchmarks
Have difficult conversations when needed
Trust abilities of the staff – strengths and weaknesses
Student focused decision-making
Enrollment issues

List your district’s three greatest strengths/attributes for achieving these goals.

We want to succeed.
Lots of talent in-house.
Great community
Located close to Twin Cities and to Duluth and the North Shore
Untapped potential within the staff and in the community
Willing staff
Community support
Resources available for special education students
Front end of bond work.
Lots of potential for kids...opportunities for kids

List your district's greatest challenges/barriers for achieving these goals.

Overcoming budget issues – staff somewhat uncertain about the future
Repair relationships with the community (budget cuts a year ago)
Challenge of providing staff development to teachers
Align curriculum with technology and keep it (tech) supported

Describe the three most important characteristics/skills the next superintendent needs to possess to be successful.

Instructional leader
Understands instruction
Background in education – classroom, administrator, district office positions
Be consistent with the message
Be available
Focused on student achievement and makes decisions accordingly
Push other leaders in the district
Promote the community; attend events
Strength of character
Let staff fail at times
Communication – where and to whom for what
Be on the front end of educational issues; forward thinkers
Growth mindset; visionary
Focus on leadership v. management
Be in the buildings; approachable
One who uses a feedback cycle
Service mindset
Students first; mission later

What questions/areas would you like the Board to ask the candidates as they select the superintendent?

Present an action plan to addressing negative enrollment trend
Please give us a success story on raising student achievement
How does tech fit into the school district? Role and importance of tech?
How do you see all the components of a district fitting together?
How do you retain and recruit staff?
Community engagement – how are you visible.... when do you invite parents into the classroom?
How do you build trust in a community and with staff?
Budget cuts.....how and when do you tell staff and parents bad news?
Day 1 priority? Day 100?

Group: District Office Administrators

Number in Attendance: 9

List the three most important goals for your school district to achieve in the next three years.

Retaining and serving students

The new superintendent needs to embrace and continue implementation of the Strategic Plan

Alignment of both District and building administrators

Developing effective relationship with and within the Board

Consideration of an operating levy

Equity v. Equality

Close achievement gap

Build trust

List your district's three greatest strengths/attributes for achieving these goals.

Supportive community that rallies together in times of need

Staff is really strong and they are committed to the community and families

The incredible potential of this District – a place for a new superintendent to make a mark

The community support that was evident in the bond referendum

The next outer ring suburb with significant growth potential

A beautiful and spacious District and place to live

List your district's greatest challenges/barriers for achieving these goals.

Struggle at times with the identity of who we are

Limited finances/possible operating levy needed

Board division at times

Professional development is not aligned with the curriculum – need more collaboration on the 30 hours of outside professional development

Large geographic area and eight communities can be a logistical challenge

Declining enrollment

Describe the three most important characteristics/skills the next superintendent needs to possess to be successful.

Has had strong leadership experience

Someone with the ability to focus upon leading the District forward amid possible distractions

Aligning the organizational structures in the District

Financial acumen

A trust builder

A highly open and visible leader

Someone who understand the importance and complexities of Special Education

What questions/areas would you like the Board to ask the candidates as they select the superintendent?

What experience have you had in dealing with equity issues?

Group: **Parents**

Number in Attendance: 6

List the three most important goals for your school district to achieve in the next three years.

See that the bond issue is carried out and implemented as described
Meet the unique needs of all learners in the District
Financial security
Study how best to communicate the great opportunities in the District and retain students
Work to truly become an E-21 District to serve all learners
Continue innovative learning such as the Saints online program
Focus upon social emotional development, especially in the early years
Provide more parental education
Implement the Strategic Plan
Provide more activities for our middle level students

List your district's three greatest strengths/attributes for achieving these goals.

The Strategic Plan with its mission and goals
Having the online program with its warm and caring teachers
District staff are exceptional and supportive
The current superintendent has helped to overcome some of the negativity in the District

List your district's greatest challenges/barriers for achieving these goals.

Recent staff turnover
Financial barriers including the lack of technology funding
Lack of business tax base puts a large reliance on residential taxpayers
Some people can't get over the broken trust of the past
Kids don't always feel safe at school

Describe the three most important characteristics/skills the next superintendent needs to possess to be successful.

A visible leader
Has an understanding of schools finances
Understands that all kids are not the same and supports programs to reach all

Embraces and implements the Strategic Plan
Communicates with intentionality about the many opportunities that exist in our District
A creative thinker and leader
A strong communicator in all aspects

What questions/areas would you like the Board to ask the candidates as they select the superintendent?

Where do you see our district going in 3-5 years?
What are your most important contributions to your current district?
What is your definition of an E-21 District?

Group: Middle School Students

Number in Attendance: 8

List the three most important goals for your school district to achieve in the next three years.

Larger budget to afford more teachers – down to one band teacher
Reduce fees for activities
We need an improved honors program
Increase the number of activities for middle school students

List your district's three greatest strengths/attributes for achieving these goals.

Teachers and support staff are very helpful
Students are all friends – few cliques
The student rules are fair to all
The district tries to put students first

List your district's greatest challenges/barriers for achieving these goals.

Large class sizes
Sports and gym equipment need upgrading
More and newer textbooks would be nice
Food could be improved

Describe the three most important characteristics/skills the next superintendent needs to possess to be successful.

Someone who really cares about the students and meets with students and staff
Someone who can make tough decisions when needed
Is visible in all the schools

What questions/areas would you like the Board to ask the candidates as they select the superintendent?

What are your first-year priorities?

What experiences and successes have you had?

How do you build relationships with students?

How do you communicate to the community?

Group: High School Students

Number in Attendance: 5

List the three most important goals for your school district to achieve in the next three years.

Implement bond issue

Budget – reinstate and improve course offerings

Reduce class sizes

Offer more AP classes

Increase student involvement at the Board level

List your district's three greatest strengths/attributes for achieving these goals.

Arts program

Students support one another

Board curricular offerings

Able to make an impact; there is room to grow

Students feel safe

List your district's greatest challenges/barriers for achieving these goals.

Budget

District is large geographically

Low numbers of minorities

Describe the three most important characteristics/skills the next superintendent needs to possess to be successful.

Embrace this community

Become involved as the superintendent

Someone who is easy to talk to

Be present

Be positive

What questions/areas would you like the Board to ask the candidates as they select the superintendent?

What have you done in your current district?
What did you do in high school?
How do you balance arts and athletics?
How would you handle budget cuts?
What can you bring to our community?
How can we make our schools more attractive to others?
How can you help us improve our multicultural groups?

Group: Community At Large

Number in Attendance: 3

List the three most important goals for your school district to achieve in the next three years.

Overseeing completion of the bond
Rebuilding trust with the community
The new superintendent must be highly visible and involved in the community
Consideration of a levy referendum – it's the elephant in the room in discussing many needs
Retention of students
Make others aware of our beautiful community and hometown feel

List your district's three greatest strengths/attributes for achieving these goals.

A great tight knit community in spite of the district's 165 square miles
The Board is working to rebuild trust
The teachers are great and many live in the community
Teachers truly care about their students
There are staunch supporters in the community

List your district's greatest challenges/barriers for achieving these goals.

The large area of the district can be a challenge to communication for administrators and the Board
Communication needs to be improved between the municipalities and the school
Possible additional Board turnover could be a challenge with a lack of experienced Board members

Describe the three most important characteristics/skills the next superintendent needs to possess to be successful.

Ability to help the Board facilitate their own development
Visible and involved in the community
Someone from the outside with fresh ideas

Able to put the history of the District in the past
Marketing and networking skills
Someone who loves their job
Has a diverse background
A strong listener
Someone who is not ego driven

What questions/areas would you like the Board to ask the candidates as they select the superintendent?

Why St. Francis?
How do you bring balance to your work and personal life?
What is your experience in working with special needs parents and students?

Group: Civic/Boosters

Number in Attendance: 9

List the three most important goals for your school district to achieve in the next three years.

Financial solvency
Fiscal responsibility
Manage staff in the district
Hold staff accountable
Rebuild trust with faculty and community
Student success issues; keep them competitive

List your district's three greatest strengths/attributes for achieving these goals.

Tight-knit community
Test scores remain strong.... good end product
Improved facilities forthcoming
Large majority of staff really care about the kids
Good location – woods, parks
Strategic Planning is in place
We are “rurban” (blend of rural and urban)
Safe community

List your district's greatest challenges/barriers for achieving these goals.

Community buy-in and trust
Communication needs to continue and be improved
May need an operating levy in the future

Describe the three most important characteristics/skills the next superintendent needs to possess to be successful.

Strong ethical core
Fiscal accountability and responsibility
Longevity
Open-minded
Financial background
Strong leader who can challenge the Board
Do the job and not worry about keeping the job
Excellent communication skills to the staff
Follow through skills
Good sales person
Strong interpersonal skills
Someone from outside the District

What questions/areas would you like the Board to ask the candidates as they select the superintendent?

How do you foster relationships in the community?
How long do you see your tenure in the District?
How do you define success?
What has been your experience working with multiple townships/communities?
How would you reach out to other districts for ideas?

PROFILE FOR THE NEW SUPERINTENDENT

THE NEXT SUPERINTENDENT SHOULD BE A PERSON WHO DEMONSTRATES THE FOLLOWING ATTRIBUTES:

Personal - Is personable, relational, approachable, of high integrity, ethical, trustworthy, transparent and listens with an open mind. Possess a sense of humor.

Fiscally Astute – Understands schools finance and the business side of the District. Realizes the impact of student enrollment and staffing on the budget and makes recommendations as needed to either reduce expenditures or increase revenue.

Leadership – A visionary leader who builds a strong, close and productive working relationship with the School Board and staff. Fosters a positive climate of mutual trust and respect among employees and members of the community. Works to restore trust throughout the community.

Decision Making - Models collaboration, seeks input, demonstrates strong problem-solving skills, fosters teamwork, is able to reach consensus and make difficult decisions while holding others accountable.

Visible – Is visible throughout the District and is actively engaged in community life. Interacts comfortably with students, staff, parents, and community members.

Instructional Leader - Is a curricular and instructional leader who understands best practices and research so that all students learn no matter their diverse needs, abilities and backgrounds. Places students first at the forefront of all decisions.

Communicator – Speaks, writes and listens effectively while working with the School board, staff, students, parents, media and the community.

Politically Astute - Is politically astute in advocating for students, establishing legislative networks and strengthening coalitions.

Administrative Knowledge - Has a working knowledge and experience with labor negotiations, federal and state education statutes, and curriculum/instruction analysis related to state test scores.

Planning – Embraces the District’s Strategic Plan and works collaboratively with stakeholders to implement the plan’s mission and actions.