

Ledyard Public Schools

Superintendent of Schools

Leadership Profile

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SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS LEADERSHIP PROFILE

Introduction

Selecting a leader is a big responsibility. There are tangible and intangible aspects of leadership required in a superintendent who is going to work with the Board of Education and the whole community to provide high quality education to Ledyard's children.

This Leadership Profile presents findings from 11 focus groups and interviews, multiple conversations, and an online survey conducted in May 2016. The consultant spoke with 33 individuals, including students, parents, teachers, Central Office staff, administrators, board of education members, town council members, town officials, and other residents. In addition, 80 Ledyard residents and staff completed the survey posted on the Ledyard Public Schools website. In conducting the focus groups and developing the survey, the consultant used an unbiased, structured approach involving a series of consistent questions. In addition to asking about strengths and challenges of the Ledyard Public Schools and community which could affect future leadership requirements, she asked about the qualities, characteristics, experience, and skills most desirable in the next Superintendent of Schools. She is presenting the findings to the Ledyard Board of Education without revealing the identity of any individual contributor.

The Ledyard Board has made a commendable effort to include voices from many diverse and varied groups within the schools and community. Many thanks to the interviewees, focus group participants, and survey respondents whose commitment to the district and Town of Ledyard was evident as they provided their perspectives.

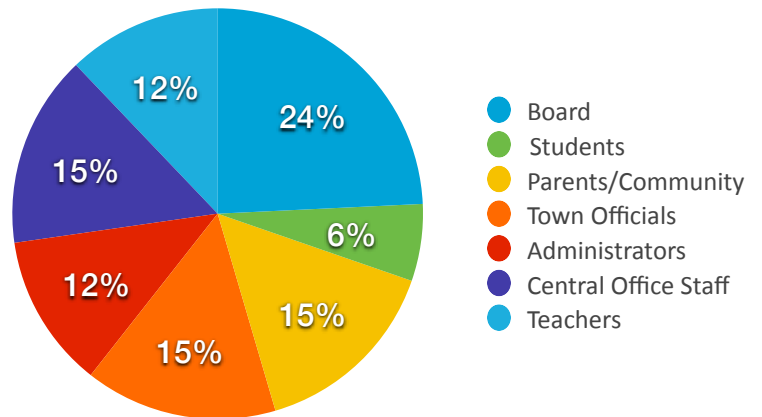
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Data Collection

In total, about 113 individuals participated either through a focus group or the online survey:

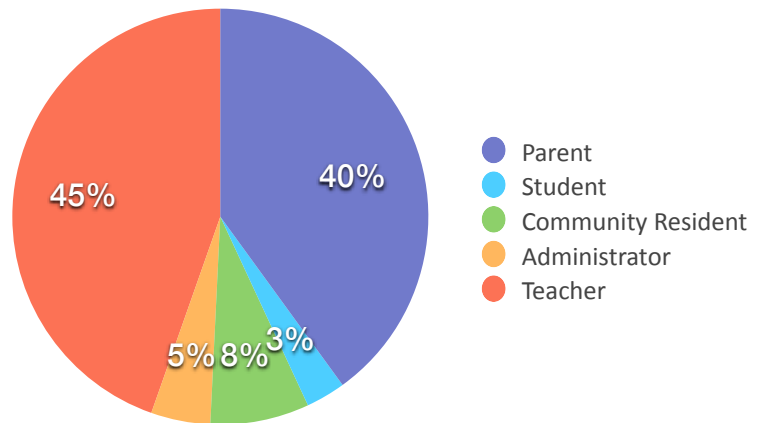
Focus Group Participants

PARTICIPANT	33	%
Board	8	24.2%
Students	2	6.1%
Parents/Community	5	15.2%
Town Officials	5	15.2%
Administrators	4	12.1%
Central Office Staff	5	15.2%
Teachers	4	12.1%



Survey Responses

PARTICIPANT	80	%
Parent	26	27.5%
Student	2	2.5%
Community Resident	5	6.3%
Administrator	3	3.8%
Teacher	29	36.3%
Support Staff	15	18.8%
Board of Education	0	0.0%
Town Official/Staff	0	0.0%



Please note that the data collected do not represent a scientific sampling, but a representation of Ledyard Public Schools and community. Though the consultant heard the perspectives of many, this profile cannot entirely capture the complexity and nuances of the schools and community. Nevertheless, the information yields some useful insights for the search process. Items are included in the following report if, in the consultant's judgment, they were repeated by a sufficient number of respondents to warrant the Ledyard Board of Education's attention.

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select choir.”) Several participants spoke with pride of the economic diversity of Ledyard itself, with its mix of professionals, sailors, military, firefighters, and so forth.

Committed to volunteerism:

The caring culture extends to a spirit of volunteerism throughout Ledyard. Parents volunteer through PTOs and the Ledyard Educational Advancement Fund (LEAF), which provides significant resources for innovation and technology the schools would otherwise be unable to afford. Faculty, administrators, and staff all care a lot and go above and beyond the expectations of their roles. One community member spoke of the AgriScience students sharing their love of the animals and gardens with preschoolers. Others noted that students volunteer throughout the schools and community.

Program Strengths:

Students, staff at all levels, and community members spoke with pride about the generally strong curriculum. Starting at the top, the governance team has developed and worked to implement strategic plans, keeping the district forward-looking. Strong, stable, caring district leaders have generated a culture where principals feel autonomy and extend that to their faculties, who, in turn, seek to be the best they can. In an era of significant pressure from Hartford and Washington on teachers in the classroom, Ledyard administrators have attempted to mitigate teacher burnout by considering carefully the effect of mandates and working to ease those pressures.

Students enjoy a wide range of academic and co-and extra-curricular options at the high school. Participants routinely mentioned certain areas as major strengths and points of pride for Ledyard: **Music** (a third of the high school students are in band or chorus and win numerous awards), **AgriScience** (the major draw for students from 12 sending districts), and **STEM** (including Project Lead the Way, offered at the high school for a number of years and soon to be in place in elementary and middle schools). The community also takes great pride in its athletics, with nearly 60% of students participating at the high school. Students’ efforts in athletics and the arts are “equally noticed by fellow students, parents, and staff, so they are not competing.”

These programs generate students who, in addition to being kind and caring, do quite well on state measures of progress and are prepared for life after high school. Many students go on to honors programs in college.

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Town Council — Board of Education Relations

Many participants raised concerns about the relationship between the Ledyard Town Council and the Ledyard Board of Education, citing lack of trust, civility, and respect. Partisan politics are seen to interfere with effective leadership and governance, and the boards seem tied up in animosity and control issues. The lack of trust between the two bodies results in blurred lines of responsibility. Most members of the Board of Education are quite new to this service and will need some guidance.

Infrastructure

Whether or not operating budgets have failed to address building upkeep, as some suggest, Ledyard's school infrastructure is aging, detracting from an educational environment that supports learning and is regionally competitive. A building project has passed that will eliminate one elementary school (Ledyard Center) and rebuild another (Gallup Hill) and Ledyard Middle School. The other buildings will have to wait for needed work.

Enrollment and Competitiveness

Ledyard, like most communities in Connecticut, is forecast to lose sizable numbers of students due to birth rate changes between now and 2025. Making this more difficult are a couple of other enrollment trends. Though Ledyard's program and culture have a lot to recommend them, the schools are still losing students to magnets because of eroding infrastructure and programming, since many new competitors have brand new facilities. Losing Ledyard students to magnets and resulting tuition expenses add to the fiscal burden. In addition, it is hard to attract families from the 12 sending communities when alternatives look more appealing.

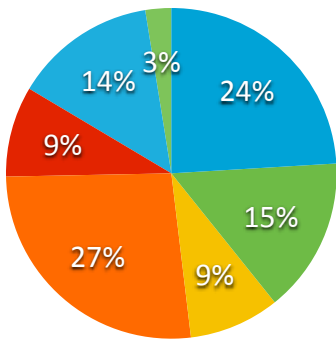
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Desired Qualities and Characteristics in a Superintendent:

Given these strengths and challenges, what would be the most important qualities and characteristics in a new superintendent to meet Ledyard’s challenges and allow the students and schools to thrive? An analysis of survey responses yielded the following:

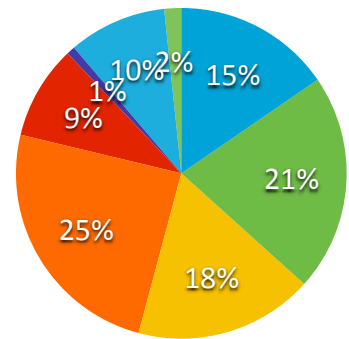
DESIRED EXPERTISE IN NEW SUPERINTENDENT	#1	%	#2	%	#3	%	TOP 3	TOP 3
Fosters Shared Vision	19	23.8%	8	10.0%	10	12.5%	37	15.4%
Communicates / Collaborates	13	15.0%	15	18.8%	23	28.75%	51	21.3%
Expert in Budget; Resourceful	7	8.8%	13	16.3%	22	28%	42	17.5%
Builds Trust throughout Community	21	26.3%	26	32.5%	12	15%	59	24.6%
Emphasizes Staff Growth and Teamwork	7	8.8%	9	11.3%	6	8%	22	9.2%
Delegates with Dignity	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	3%	2	0.8%
District Champion	11	13.8%	8	10.0%	4	5%	23	9.6%
Other	2	2.5%	1	1.3%	1	1%	4	1.7%
	80	99%	80	100.0%	80	100%	240	100%

First Choice Expertise



- Fosters Shared Vision
- Communicates / Collaborates
- Expert in Budget; Resourceful
- Builds Trust throughout Community
- Emphasizes Staff Growth and Teamwork
- Delegates with Dignity
- District Champion
- Other

Top Three Choices



The top three first choice selections in “desired expertise in a new superintendent” of the 80 survey respondents included 1) Builds trusting relationships with students, staff, and community members (26.3%); 2) Develops and fosters a shared vision to move Ledyard schools to excellence (23.8%); and 3) Communicates and collaborates effectively in schools and community (15%).

In analyzing the top three desired areas of expertise, values shift a little. Building trusting relationships remains #1 at 24.6%, but communicating and collaborating moves into second place, 21.3%. Next, an addition to a top priority is expertise in budget and finance/ resourceful, at 17.5%, and Fostering a shared vision moves to fourth priority at 15.4%.

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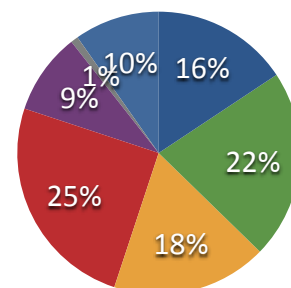
The 80 survey respondents also indicated priorities for desired qualities for the new superintendent:

DESIRED QUALITIES IN NEW SUPERINTENDENT	#1	%	#2	%	#3	%	TOP 3	TOP 3
Visionary	5	6.3%	5	10.0%	6	8%	16	15.8%
Accessible, Approachable	20	25.3%	17	18.8%	17	22%	54	21.8%
Student Centered	24	30.4%	24	16.3%	15	19%	63	17.9%
Inspirational Team Builder	6	7.6%	9	32.5%	10	13%	25	25.2%
Decisive, Confident, Objective, Resilient	11	13.9%	10	11.3%	22	29%	43	9.4%
Committed to Ledyard	10	12.7%	11	0.0%	5	6%	26	0.9%
Other	3	3.8%	2	10.0%	2	3%	7	9.8%
	79	100%	78	98.8%	77	100%	234	101%

First Choice Qualities



Top Three Choices



In addition to the leadership characteristics and expertise addressed in the prior section, respondents' top first choices for qualities in a new leader were 1) Student Centered (30.4%); 2) Accessible/Approachable (25.3%); and 3) Decisive, Confident, Objective, and Resilient (13.9%). Aggregating the top three choices adds an inspirational Team Builder (25.2%), and Visionary (16%).

Needless to say, all of these skills are essential in a leader, yet they point to the prioritized needs of the community at this point in time. This profile will explore these areas of expertise and dimensions of leadership, integrating perspectives garnered through survey comments, focus groups, and interviews.

Builds trusting relationships with students, staff, and community members

The successful candidate will build trusting relationships throughout the schools and town. Listening first, the individual will get to know staff, students, and the community, valuing what has come before and the initiative that exists in the district.

A politically skilled "people person," the new leader will demonstrate genuine interest in others and especially love students. The leader will have a passion for involvement in the community. Working well with diverse populations, including sending communities and the tribal nation, the new superintendent will partner with the community to build the schools and facilities the community desires. Savvy with social media, the new leader will engage and educate the community and help to heal trust issues.

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Fosters a shared vision

The successful candidate will be a bold leader focused on teaching and learning, with a clear vision of excellence and high standards. Thinking deeply about issues and challenges, always child focused, the leader will challenge norms and the status quo when necessary, committed to making Ledyard schools the top choice for families.

Committed to creating a safe, motivating, caring, learning culture the leader will demonstrate commitment to the personal and professional growth of all who work and volunteer on behalf of the system, including central office staff, principals, teachers, support staff, students, and parents.

This leader will also work effectively to grow a highly capable board of education, guiding board members in their roles and supporting them with training. A long range planner, the leader and the Board will commit to carrying out a five year plan with strategic focus. This superintendent will give the Board good recommendations, even if the Board is resistant.

Communicates and collaborates effectively in schools and community

The successful leader will be a champion for Ledyard, effectively promoting the district, and generating pride for its schools. The leader will model civil dialogue and openness in collaborating with students, parents, teachers, administrators, the Board of Education, Town Council, the community, business owners, and the tribal nation to develop, communicate, and implement a five year plan, ensuring all see their self-interest in the collective goals of the district.

A strong delegator who empowers others and trusts them to do their jobs well, the leader will always encourage people toward improving and pursuing excellence in academics and all other areas of school life. This individual will be a team builder and team player, an ego-free leader who knows how to inspire others to flourish.

The successful leader will support Board of Education members to grow individually and collectively. Students who serve as board representatives will feel supported in their roles and in communicating with fellow students.

A transparent, visible leader who keeps an open door and attends student events, this individual will also be an effective public speaker and writer.

Resourceful: Expert in Budget

The next superintendent will be well versed in budget and finance and will find ways to bring resources to the district.

Experience

In addition, the community would like the new leader to have experience as a superintendent, building principal, and teacher and be knowledgeable about special education and school construction.

Qualities

Perhaps more important than any expertise an individual brings are the human qualities that make them who they are. Though many are included in the description above, what follows is a summary of the qualities and characteristics Ledyard residents, staff, and students believe are most important in their new leader, with those cited most often leading the list. The list is long, so this is limited to those qualities that were mentioned more than once:

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The people of Ledyard would like the new superintendent to be caring, empathetic, and compassionate so that Ledyard graduates “treasure the caring they have received here.” The new leader should be personable, approachable, and genuine. This leader should set boundaries, knowing what to commit to.

Poised in the heat of politics, the leader will set a tone, tamping down emotion, defending without being defensive. The individual will be patient, but will move forward without waiting for permission. A sense of humor will be helpful while approaching challenges with an open heart, thick skin, and strong backbone. This leader will stand for beliefs and not back down to pressures.

The next leader will be an excellent listener who can help others talk through issues and come to their own conclusions. The successful new superintendent will be highly committed to Ledyard, modeling leadership for staff, students, and the community.