

SCHOOL EXEC CONNECT

WILL COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT 92 New Superintendent Profile

January 15, 2019

OVERVIEW

The WILL COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT 92 Board of Education seeks to have a good understanding of the school community members' perceptions of the District as the search for a new Superintendent proceeds. The Board requested that *School Exec Connect* consultant Tom Madden gather information from constituents regarding the strengths and challenges of the District as well as the skills and attributes desired in the new superintendent. This report presents a summary of the comments of people who attended Focus Group meetings and Open Forums, and responded to the district's online survey.

In addition to interviewing Board members, Focus Group interviews were held with various employee groups, as well as open forums for community and staff. These meetings all focused on three basic questions:

1. What are the strengths of the school districts?
2. What are the issues and challenges facing the district and will face the next superintendent?
3. What are the qualities and characteristics the next superintendent should possess in order to be successful in this school community?

This process generated literally hundreds of comments. The consultant looked for common threads, a synthesis of which is included at the end of this report.

The judgments of what should be included in this report are those of the consultant and are based on the statements heard and received throughout the data-gathering process, online survey results, and his experience with superintendent searches.

The Executive Summary presents the general findings of the Focus Group and Open Forum conversations as well as the online survey. The report will give direction to the Board of Education as it enters the next phase of the process. A final summary of the characteristics desired in the next superintendent is presented below and will provide the basis and filter that will be used by the consultant to screen and recruit candidates, subject to changes/additions provided by the Board.

In addition, the results of the online survey are presented at the end of this report.

SUMMARY OF THE CHARACTERISTICS DESIRED IN THE NEXT SUPERINTENDENT

The next superintendent should be a person who:

1. Is a strong and established educational leader, preferably as a superintendent or high level assistant district administrator, with a proven track record, and will provide focused guidance and follow through for the board and the staff.
2. Is resourceful, astute, resilient and “thick skinned.”
3. Easily mingles and interacts with all stakeholders, and knows the names of staff members and many students.
4. Will be visible and approachable in the school buildings as well as the community.
5. Has the people skills, including empathy, needed to stand up to others without being confrontational, genuinely listen to others before making decisions and resolve conflicts in ways that are fair and in the best interests of the school district.
6. Will be vigilant regarding all the mandates and regulations that come from Springfield and implement them appropriately.
7. Genuinely exhibits honesty, integrity, humility and a genuinely collaborative work ethic.
8. Will create and maintain a positive culture of high expectations for students, staff and board, and will hold people (including him/herself) accountable for expending their best efforts to ensure students are prepared for their high school experience and the district is academically competitive in the region.
9. Will create positive and productive physical learning environments that will ensure teachers are able to accommodate the needs of the next several generations of students.
10. Is flexible, treats everyone with equal respect and makes decisions based on what is best for the children of the district.
11. An excellent and proactive communicator and strategic thinker.

- 12. Will establish clear processes of communication, decision-making and follow through.**
- 13. Understands the difference between Activity and Accomplishment, and sees the big picture and how all the pieces should fit and work together to accomplish the intended outcomes of the district.**
- 14. Will gain an understanding of and ameliorate the various perceptions of distrust, favoritism, paranoia (fears of reprisals for expressing opinions) and confidentiality breaches.**
- 15. Will establish and maintain a clear understanding of the concept of Chain of Command, how it should be followed by all and how to address issues the Chain of Command may fail to address effectively.**

This report may be used in several ways:

- After reviewing the input from members of the District, the Board may modify and/or approve the attributes that will serve as criteria to be used as candidates are screened and interviewed.
- The Board should review this report to become informed about the collective thinking of different constituent groups regarding the needs of the District.
- The Consultant will use this report as the foundation for screening and interviewing candidates to determine those best suited for the superintendent position.
- The Consultant recommends that this report be available to candidates for a better understanding of the District and its issues.

Thank you to those who took the time to respond to the online survey or to attend one of the Focus Groups/Open Forums. The results of this report will assist the Board as it enters the next phase in its search for a new superintendent of schools.

Respectfully submitted,
Thomas Madden, Ed. D.
School Exec Connect Partner

FOCUS GROUP FEEDBACK

WILL COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT 92

SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH

SYNTHESIS

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES	QUALITIES & CHARACTERISTICS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financially stable • Will spend on improvement • Staff Development • Staffing needs • Building upgrades/remodeling • Extra-curricular activities • Band program • Technology • No personal agendas by board • Very strong, dedicated teachers and administrators and support staff - Overall • Well prepared for H.S. • Low turnover • Good parents who care and work with teachers • Admin support of teachers and kids • Interventions • Community pride • Small = Flexible in taking initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide disparity of board members • Board members with mini-agendas • Chain of command • Allow principals to run schools • Pete's departure • Developing better relationships and more trust with the union • Unify the four schools • Board members spread across continuum • Regaining trust of comm. And teachers • Test score decline at Jr. High • Test scores could be better, data hasn't been routinely provided • Data informed decision making • People go directly to board members, who don't re-direct via chain of command • Board leans toward micro-managing • Past nepotism – people hired 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same demeanor all the time • Proactive, not a procrastinator • Doesn't work in a silo • Won't play favorites • Being a strong leader with excellent delegation skills • Approachable, available • Sit, listen, take feedback genuinely • Is Honest, has Integrity and is trustworthy • Know everyone by name • High character • Unifier and will Unify the four schools • Great communicator with the district and community • Can take criticism constructively • Thick skinned • Experienced superintendent or a very strong administrator • Increase test scores • Put people in position to excel

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology Change when appropriate • Many teachers know how to engage technology 	<p>based on affiliation with Administrators or board members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distrust of staff toward administration – Voicing opinions can be problematic • Strategic plan is somewhat dormant • Too much flux, too many things • Get everything back on path • Firm data needed for decision making • Top heavy – 3 Assistant Superintendents • Culture • Intimidation • Too many disconnects • No confidence with union by staff • Don't micro-manage the supt. • Teachers are overwhelmed • Grade centers and the need for better communication among the various schools • Too many initiatives too often • Too many things, but even with resources can't do everything • Too many consultants are my way or highway • Plates are overflowing for teachers • Job descriptions lacking creating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current on regulations, esp. testing • Collaborate and seek consensus from those who have to do the job • Visible in community...needs to get community support • Make the chain of command work • Principals should have control over buildings, not go through a bureaucracy to get approvals • Mend fences in the community • Provide the right learning environment for the next two to three generations of kids • Strong ethical leader • Will push back and confront appropriately • Climate builder, some building staff feel intimidated, pushed around • Can lead and train a board • Astute • Can motivate others to embrace change • Can monitor personnel programs and tweak only if necessary • Past nepotism – people hired based on Admins or board members • Can make decision • Develop and implement a vision • Establish trust
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	<p>hostility and misunderstandings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum is not understood district wide • Principals are supposed to be in charge of buildings but, especially with maintenance issues and even the curriculum, they are hampered • Trust issues • Haves and have not's • Fear of Repercussions • Confidentiality • State/funding changes • Negotiations • State requirements/testing always changing • Teachers pulled out of the classroom too often • Decisions must be made in the best interests of the kids • Evaluation equity/inconsistency • Finances –can be too good...hard thinking not that necessary at times • Lack of Transparency • Just a small handful of teachers creating issues • Lack of a language program at primary level as a life skill • Some board members micromanage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong communicator: active engagement/listener; presenting • Can translate board's vision into reality • Improve/change culture • Be out in front of issues • Able to take on the strong personalities • Show teachers they are appreciated • Can make all the pieces fit together • Appreciates the time constraints • Elementary Teaching experience • Value everyone's opinion respectfully • Open minded • Listener, empathy • Consistent • Deliberate decision maker • Really understands district wide communications • Wide, successful experience and in a district like ours • Principal experience • No Baggage • Strong decision maker • Stand behind decision • Strong leader and manager • Supports confidentiality
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some division within union • Potential upcoming change in the board and how it'll play out • Community voice isn't heard • Board is going to do whatever it wants • Staff have to be very cautious • Calendar coordination could be much better • Top down board and some administrators • Disjointed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great interpersonal communication skills/People person • Small district, so willing to work, hands on • Cares about everyone, all employee groups • Get the facts before acting • Visible, approachable, available • Allows people to do job, not a micromanager • Informed support, not blind • Friendly and supportive • Maintain fiscal health • Non-reprisal type • In touch with the challenges of all parts of the organization • Knows what everyone does • Gets lay of the land before making changes • Not impulsive
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