



Lawrence Public Schools
Superintendent Search Community Feedback Summary
February 14, 2024

Agenda

- **Search Update/ *Actualización de la búsqueda***
- **Community Engagement Report / *Informe sobre la participación comunitaria***
- **Job Profile / *El perfil del superintendente***

Our Shared Purpose

Our goal is to recruit, screen and select the next collaborative, inclusive, outcomes driven, superintendent of Lawrence Public Schools.

Our purpose is to lead a transparent superintendent search process, engaging as many people as possible, guided by input of the Lawrence staff, students, families, partners, leaders, and community, and designed to mitigate bias every step of the way.

Revised Superintendent Search Timeline



What we've accomplished and what's next

What we've accomplished:

- Communications and outreach to the community, launch of survey
- Virtual and in-person meetings, and completion of community survey
- Completion of job profile

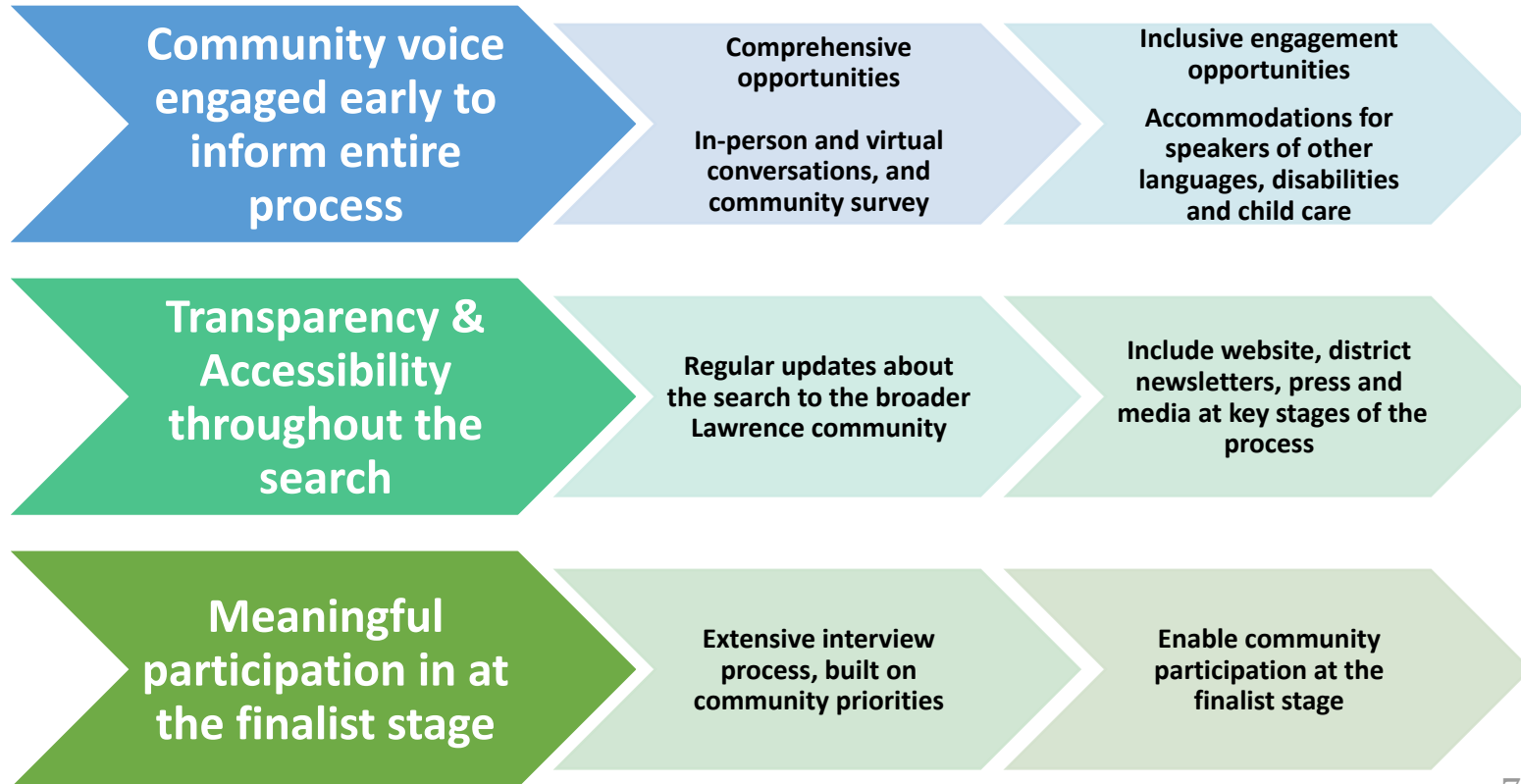
What's next:

- Recruiting candidates for the role
- Interview and selection of candidates

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Strategies for ensuring engagement + transparency



Community Conversations



62

MEETINGS

1:1 interviews and focus groups with students, staff, families, and community partners

390

PARTICIPANTS

Students, parents/caregivers, staff, community members and district partners

Virtual and In-Person sessions maximized opportunities to connect with a wide range of community members.

Outcome of our Engagement

Between December and January, the Alma team collected input from the Lawrence community through various channels including our community survey, virtual, and in-person sessions

1866

SURVEY
RESPONSES

Students, parents, staff,
community members and
district partners

62

MEETINGS

1:1 interviews and focus
groups with students, staff,
families, and community
partners

390

PARTICIPANTS

Students, parents, staff,
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district partners

Our Community Conversations

We asked the following guiding questions:

1. **What are 1 or 2 things** that are top of mind when you think about **the kind of education you want for your child** in LPS?
2. What is **working well in LPS** that the **next Superintendent should champion and protect**?
3. **What are the top 2 to 3 areas of improvement** for LPS?
4. **What skills or experiences will be most important** for the Superintendent to have in order to be successful in this role?
5. **What would you like to see from us** that would demonstrate to you that what you shared with us made a difference in this process?

Survey generated 1866 responses representing a range of community stakeholders

Of the 1866 survey responses submitted, we're excited to see the range of stakeholders represented including students, staff, and caregivers.

Caregivers

- Parent/Family: **857**
- Family ELL: **123**
- Family IEP/504: **194**

Students Current/Former

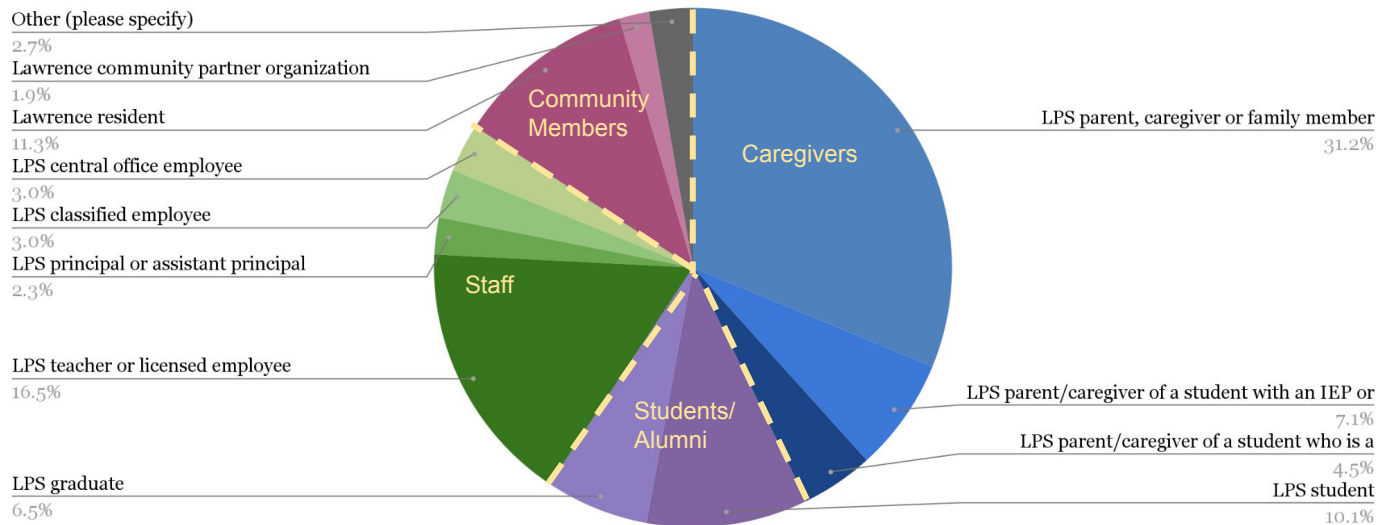
- Student: **277**
- Graduate: **177**

Staff

- Principal/AP: **63**
- Teacher/Licensed: **452**
- Central Office: **82**
- Classified: **83**

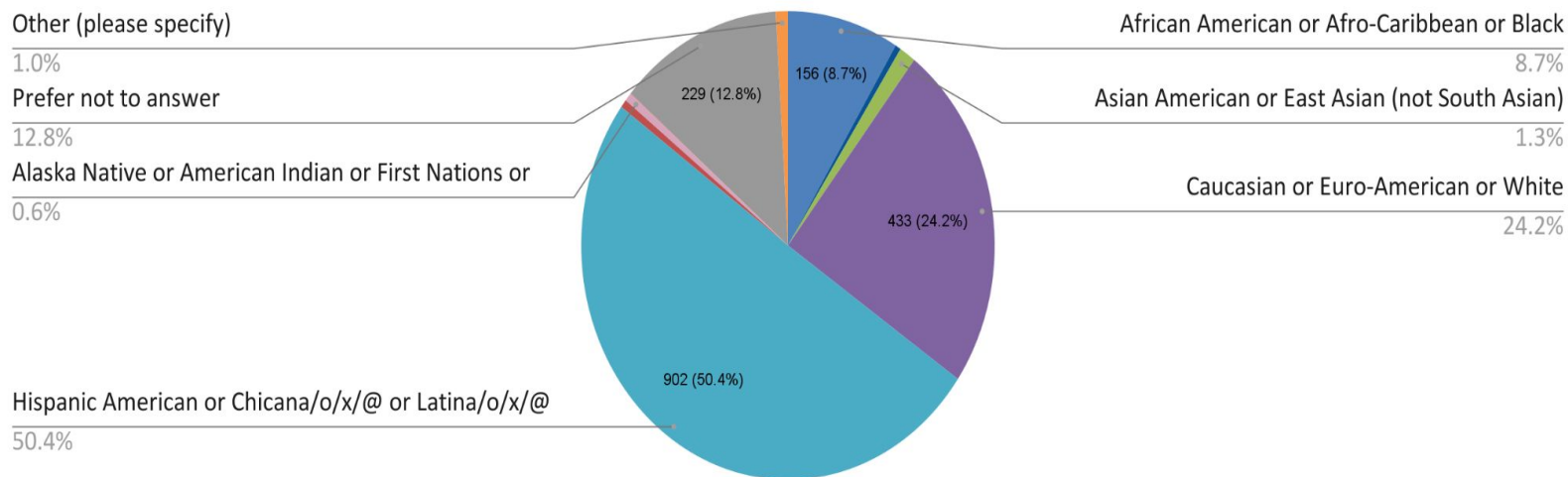
Community Members

- Resident: **310**
- Community Partner: **51**



Racial/ethnicity of survey respondents, nearly 700 responses were completed in Spanish

Of the 1866 survey responses submitted, 662 were submitted in Spanish demonstrating a great deal of engagement across the community.



Community Engagement

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED SO FAR

Diverse ideas. Honest, vocal, and candid points of view.

Context about Lawrence



Lawrence is a **resilient, caring and very involved community** that wants to maximize and strengthen the opportunities available for students, teachers, staff, leaders and families. Many members of the community shared this as important context for an incoming leader to know and be able to navigate. Some key things we learned include...

- **A strong and very involved political climate in Lawrence.**
- **Lawrence has a rich history of resilience, diversity and mutual aid and support.**
 - *“You have to know that we [Lawrence] take care of each other. If its COVID, or the gas explosions, we take care of each other.”*
- **Resources to aid families are essential for the success and stability of students**
- **School autonomy while described as a positive; also poses some challenges**
 - *“There are challenges with autonomy: difference of services, resources for schools, specifically special education and multilingual services, consistent translation to Spanish or other languages,...inclusion programs are not available in all schools.”*
 - *“The autonomous structure allows us to make decisions that are best for our students. - Leader*
- **Differing perspectives exist about the benefits and challenges of state receivership.**
 - *“Education receivership has been a hot-button issue since local control has been taken away. 12 years and still have low performance.”*
 - *“With receivership, there is a lot of leverage to run the district without a lot of red tape. There is more leverage to make change; I do not want to take that away from the new superintendent.”*

LPS has many strengths to champion and protect

- **Caring educators and dedicated staff**
 - *“I’ve noticed in this district that if a student needs something we are on top of it - if its a coat, a lunchbox, any of the basics, we will do whatever it takes to meet those basics.” - Teacher*
 - *“My teachers are always there to help me. We have really nice and caring teachers.” - Student*
- **Students who care about their future and want to be heard**
 - *“I have some of the most resilient and hardworking students, I have ever met.” - Teacher*
 - *“Kids are special all over but here relationships matter, at least more than anywhere I’ve been.” Principal*
- **Consistent professional development for new teachers and expansion of PD for other roles**
 - *Keep improving PD for teachers so we can be on top of the curriculum and content for our students.” - Teacher*
- **History of school autonomy and evolving earned autonomy model**
- **Strong partnerships with community organizations to support schools and families**
 - *“Almost everyone really cares about the city and wants to move it forward.” Staff/Teacher*
- **Developing a diverse pipeline of bilingual paraprofessionals and educators**
- **Family Resource Center and school-based parent liaisons**
 - *“Family resource center - there are amazing staff there, really dedicated and smart, reflects the community and they know what’s going on.” - Caregiver/Community Member*
- **Emerging practices and programs implemented to support literacy, special education and programs for multilingual students.**
 - *“Having the science of reading program; this puts us way ahead of the neighboring districts.” - Union Rep*

Opportunities for Improvement

We heard a great deal of agreement across community members about eight areas for improvement.

- **Recruitment and Retention** - recruit young, multilingual staff, retain new teachers who have been trained, and encourage teachers to live in the community.
 - *"I've had so many graduates come teach for a couple years and can't stay here because they can't afford to live in Lawrence and teach."* - Union Rep
 - *"We take advantage of our bilingual staff members and we are denigrating the work of a professional translators."* - School Leader
- **Safety and Security** – the perceived and/or real safety and well-being of students, teachers and the community is a paramount concern
 - *"As a district, we have moved to restorative practices but we haven't been successful in following through what it looks like at a school or district level."* - Teacher
- **Inclusive communication and access to information in the home language e.g. Spanish**
 - *"We need interpreters at all meetings. When we don't see this, it makes us feel eliminated."* Elected official
 - *"The people have to feel like they are being invited in."* - Caregiver / Community
 - *"The parents feel like they lost their voice. A lot of parents say 'why do I bother?'"*
- **Coordinating and organizing resources to address the mental health needs of students**
 - *"It is tough in the sense that a lot of us are immigrants from the Caribbean.... They go through depression more than someone who is from here. It is tough on students during the winter. - Student*

Opportunities for Improvement (Cont.)

- **Increase options for before and after school extracurriculars activities, ensuring student access to these opportunities that also include transportation**
 - *"It's frustrating because I need after school care for my child, but its not available at his school. I can't afford to get him to a program, so what can I do." - Parent*
- **Improve alignment and coordination of community partnerships**
 - *"We're ready and want to work to support students and families, we need more coordination with the district."*
- **Improve human resources expertise and support for principals/school leaders**
 - *"Don't create bureaucracies where I have to jump through hoops to get a basic question answered." - School Leader*
- **Increase resources and access to services like inclusion for Students with Disabilities and Multilingual Learners/Newcomers at all schools**
 - *"We are just getting to the place where services are offered at all schools, but we are still triaging services." - Teacher*
 - *"Our SPED teachers have a caseload that is as large as a gen ed teacher. The teacher is sharing the smaller classroom with another teacher. It is not creating a safe space for the students." - Teacher*
 - *"There are programs and services that children need and the process that it takes to get the service is especially long. If we want to add something to the IEP, we have to start the RTI process all over again and it can take months to get the services." - School Leader*

Top 5 Priorities by Stakeholder Group

Question: Please rank what you see as the top 5 most important priorities for the next Superintendent.

Rank	All Respondents	Parent/Caregiver of a student with IEP or 504	Student	Teacher or Licensed Employee
1	Investing in social, emotional and behavioral health resources for students	Investing in social, emotional and behavioral health resources for students	Preparing students for career pathways	Investing in social, emotional and behavioral health resources for students
2	Prioritizing and improving student academic performance	Expanding enrichment opportunities for students	Investing in social, emotional and behavioral health resources for students	Prioritizing and improving student academic performance
3	Expanding enrichment opportunities for students	Prioritizing and improving student academic performance	Expanding enrichment opportunities for students	Expanding enrichment opportunities for students
4	Preparing students for career pathways	Preparing students for college	Preparing students for college	Recruiting and retaining a diverse and multilingual staff
5	Preparing students for college	Preparing students for career pathways	Prioritizing and improving student academic performance	Increasing transparency and communication between the district office and the community

Color Key:

Highest Priority

2nd Priority

3rd Priority

Top 5 Priorities by Race/Ethnicity

Question: Please rank what you see as the top 5 most important priorities for the next Superintendent.

Rank	All Respondents	Hispanic American or Chicana/o/x/@ or Latina/o/x/@	Caucasian or Euro-American or White	African American or Afro-Caribbean or Black
1	Investing in social, emotional and behavioral health resources for students	Expanding enrichment opportunities for students	Investing in social, emotional and behavioral health resources for students	Tied for #1 Investing in social, emotional and behavioral health resources for students
2	Prioritizing and improving student academic performance	Investing in social, emotional and behavioral health resources for students	Prioritizing and improving student academic performance	Expanding enrichment opportunities for students
3	Expanding enrichment opportunities for students	Prioritizing and improving student academic performance	Expanding enrichment opportunities for students	Prioritizing and improving student academic performance
4	Preparing students for career pathways	Preparing students for career pathways	Recruiting and retaining a diverse and multilingual staff	Preparing students for career pathways
5	Preparing students for college	Preparing students for college	Preparing students for career pathways	Preparing students for college

Color Key:

Highest Priority

2nd Priority

3rd Priority

Student Voices and Perspectives

Representing:

- Superintendent's Cabinet
- Arlington MS
- Nuestro Mundo
- Parthum MS
- Lawrence HS
- Unidos Academy
- Oliver MS
- SPARK Academy

68

Student in-person
participants

277

Student survey
respondents



Lifting Student Voices

What we want to protect...

- **The sense of community within the schools and district**
 - *“School is like family to me. We meet new people through sports and other activities.”*
- **Student voice and community are celebrated and honored**
 - *“We aren’t shut down if we want to speak out. There is always someone to listen. They give you that space.”*
 - *“Here we are celebrating our race, our culture and our ethnicities; we are all together and we celebrate our differences.”*
- **Newcomers appreciated the effort schools make to welcome them into the community and help them make friends and join activities.**



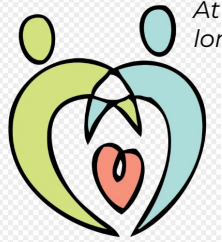
Areas to improve...

- **Additional course offerings including classes with real world application** (budgeting, taxes, renting versus buying, how to run a business and basic life skills)
 - *“We are about to be on our own, so something that would help with the transition would be good.”*
 - *“We are becoming adults and we don’t have people to ask about those things. We need to have a foundational knowledge of these things.”*
- **Increase the number of school activities** (middle school sports, clubs, field trips, enrichment options, pep rallies, and spirit days for the entire student body)
 - *“Enrichment on Fridays was a great decision and we need more options.”*
- **Consistent enforcement of policies** (discipline and uniform)
 - *“Because of where we are and the uniforms, the students are treated differently based on where they are. I have seen students come without a uniform and they aren’t spoken to, but when I come I am without a uniform, I am yelled at.”*
- **Increase mental health services and support**
- **Strengthen measures to promote and create safer schools**
 - *“The safety of students impact our mental health; my little brother goes to school, and I worry about him.”*
- **Improve the quality of food in the cafeteria and offer more options that reflect the culture of our community**

Lifting Caregiver/Community Voices

What we want to protect...

- **Increased collaboration and receptiveness to working with and listening to parents**
 - *"The Family Resource Center - there are amazing staff there, really dedicated and smart, reflects the community and they know what's going on."*
 - *"The schools are creating a more inclusive environment for all children and the communication is ever increasing."*
- **Supportive and caring teachers, staff and leaders**
 - *"I believe that we have great teachers, wonderful leadership and teachers who care. We have the tools and resources."*
 - *"Being inclusive with the parents, the app we use is Class Dojo and teachers send communications to parents."*
- **Community Partnerships**
 - *"They have opened up a lot more to community partnerships and they need to double down on this. At the beginning, it will be hard to do, but the results long term will be great for students and families."*



Areas to improve...

- **Improve academic and technical offerings for our students so they have more choices in the future and success.**
- **Improve school safety especially outside and perimeter of school grounds**
 - *"It is a top-down thing with discipline. The principals needs to be supported in their discipline decisions and be backed up."*
 - *"Sometimes it feels as if we are not listened to when many behavioral situations happen with misbehaving students."*
 - *"There is a lot of bullying and miscommunication between parents and teachers, a lot of invalidation as to what is bullying and a lot of teachers dismissing it."*
- **More inclusion and additional supports and services for multilingual learners and students with IEPs and 504s (before and after school)**
 - *"There are a lot of things that parents don't know in terms of advocating and our rights in terms of special needs"*
 - *"We are not meeting our 45 day turnaround. We are out of compliance. Parents have written letters on behalf of their children, wanting them to be tested and the district will kick it back and force them to do the RTI process, which takes 24 weeks."*
- **Communication and transparency**
 - *We need to share things fully and honestly about what is happening."*
 - *"We need true participation and not simulated; so that we can participate in the process in more effective ways." - Parent*
- **More quality and culturally diverse food options in schools**

Top 5 issues in open text response: “Lawrence Public Schools will be successful if we accomplish these 3 things within the next 5 years...”

- **Recruiting, retaining and supporting teachers, school leaders and support staff** by providing them with the time, resources, professional development, and pay they need to do what’s best for their students
- **Staying focused on academics**, including improving graduation rates and rigor, maintaining high standards, selecting a strong curriculum, closing achievement gaps, and providing clear measures of student achievement
- **Improving school safety for students and staff** by reducing behavior issues, revamping discipline policies, eliminating bullying, increasing security personnel and equipment
- **Increasing trust, collaboration and transparency** between all stakeholders by improving communications
- **Engaging and involving families / caregivers more** by providing tools for them to enable them to support their students, maintaining open lines of communication, and providing schedule-friendly events they can attend

Top issues raised in open text response: “Anything else you would like to share about the search and selection of the next Superintendent?”

Of the 1866 survey respondents, 435 answered this question. The top issues raised are consistent with feedback heard during community sessions.

70

- **Seeking a candidate who is either already well knowledgeable about Lawrence or committed to becoming an engaged member of the community**

62

- **Focus on teachers and staff recruitment, support (e.g. resources, time, pay, mental and emotional well-being) and retention**

42

- **Need to engage and communicate with parents and caregivers more**

40

- **Change is needed to improve behavior and discipline and make schools safer for students and staff (including managing bullying)**

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Critical Skills for the next Superintendent

The Lawrence community wants an experienced educational leader who celebrates and embraces the diversity of the community. A leader who skillfully builds trusting relationships and fosters a safe and supportive environment for students, teachers, staff, and families through collaboration and transparency with a laser focus on continuous improvement and student centered decision-making.

A leader who...

Is **culturally competent, open-minded**, and appreciates the diversity of the community.

A leader who fosters **open dialogue and transparent communication** and is **responsive to feedback** from students, parents, and staff.

Is fully committed to **creating a culture of trust and respect**, regardless of differences.

A leader who keeps the **impact on students as the primary focus** when making decisions.

Is **deeply knowledgeable** and has track record of success **improving academic and socio-emotional outcomes** for students.

An **adaptable** leader who willing to explore and pursue **innovative** ways to address new and existing challenges.

Is active in **promoting an inclusive environment** that fosters a sense of being welcome and valued.

A leader who **provides the resources and support needed** for all to excel.

About the Job Profile

THE KEY RESPONSIBILITIES - THE “WHAT”

- Develop the vision and implement the strategy to improve student outcomes at every level
- Maintain visibility and communication between district, schools and families in a collaborative way
- Ensure that district systems and structures are accountable to and in support of students and schools
- Steward and manage the financial and operational resources of the district
- Organize and support a diverse and high performing workforce
- Partner effectively with the state, city-appointed and elected officials

... AND THE SKILLS & EXPERIENCES NEEDED - THE “HOW:

- Effective relationship builder and two-way communicator
- Track record of success in school improvement and turnaround
- Cultural competence and fluency
- Strategic and student-centered leadership and vision
- Team leadership and management

Thank you!

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Appendix

Additional slides for reference

Most important skills and attributes of the next Superintendent: By Stakeholder Group

Rank	All Respondents	Parent/Caregiver of a student with IEP or 504	Student	Teacher or Licensed Employee
1	Seeking and responding to feedback from students, parents, and staff	Centering the needs of students in all decisions	Centering the needs of students in all decisions	Seeking and responding to feedback from students, parents, and staff
2	Centering the needs of students in all decisions	Seeking and responding to feedback from students, parents, and staff	Ability to build trust and respect across lines of difference	Centering the needs of students in all decisions
3	Ability to build trust and respect across lines of difference	Ability to build trust and respect across lines of difference	Seeking and responding to feedback from students, parents, and staff	Ability to build trust and respect across lines of difference
4	Being innovative and open to new creative solutions	Being innovative and open to new creative solutions	Being innovative and open to new creative solutions	Creating an inclusive and welcoming environment
5	Being a clear and culturally fluent communicator	Being a clear and culturally fluent communicator	Creating an inclusive and welcoming environment	Celebrating, motivating and inspiring others

Most important skills and attributes of the next Superintendent by race/ethnicity

Rank	All Respondents	Hispanic American or Chicana/o/x/@ or Latina/o/x	Caucasian or Euro-American or White	African American or Afro-Caribbean or Black
1	Seeking and responding to feedback from students, parents, and staff	Centering the needs of students in all decisions	Seeking and responding to feedback from students, parents, and staff	Seeking and responding to feedback from students, parents, and staff
2	Centering the needs of students in all decisions	Seeking and responding to feedback from students, parents, and staff	Centering the needs of students in all decisions	Centering the needs of students in all decisions
3	Ability to build trust and respect across lines of difference	Ability to build trust and respect across lines of difference	Ability to build trust and respect across lines of difference	Ability to build trust and respect across lines of difference
4	Being innovative and open to new creative solutions	Being a clear and culturally fluent communicator	Creating an inclusive and welcoming environment	Tied for #4 Being innovative and open to new creative solutions
5	Being a clear and culturally fluent communicator	Being innovative and open to new creative solutions	Being innovative and open to new creative solutions	Being a clear and culturally fluent communicator

Summary of Meetings Held

Groups	Number of Groups	Number of Attendees
Caregiver/Community Members	5 groups	147
Student Groups	6 groups	68
Central Office	6 groups	48
Principals	3 groups	26
APs/Deans	2 groups	18
Union Leadership/Building Reps	3 groups	16
Staff	3 groups	25
Family Liaisons	1 group	2
External and Community Partners	8 groups	15
One on One Meetings	25 individuals	25
TOTALS	62	390

Additional Quotes from the Survey

“There needs to be a nuanced understanding that we teachers are people with lives and responsibilities outside of work. There needs to be a return to humanizing the teaching field and respect for the teachers. I shouldn't have to worry about taking time off to care for my infant son who gets sick at daycare when I have a strong commitment to my school and my students, as well as a record of being a strong and reliable staff member.” - LPS Teacher or Licensed Employee

“The next superintendent should be extremely community-focused and should be driven by a “Lawrence First” motto. This will resonate with the community because the quest to regain local control, center students, and establish pathways to lifelong success are the pivotal needs in the district. The ideal candidate is very familiar with Lawrence and is dedicated to spreading the message of achievement in this community far and wide. Solidifying LPS as an innovative, competitive environment for top talent will contradict common narratives about Lawrence and will make us a model for other communities with similar demographics.” - LPS Teacher or Licensed Employee

“Everyone has the students' success as their main goals but at times it feels like we're working against each other rather than as a team. In my opinion, leadership is best when the people at the top are relational and can model those skills for the their teams.” - LPS Teacher or Licensed Employee

Quotes from the Survey

“The next Superintendent's most important quality would be the ability to understand and celebrate the unique culture of Lawrence. We are a mill city, a city of immigrants. Many groups have called Lawrence home as they immigrated for the opportunity at the American dream. Our current population is no exception. Our student and families depend on us for a hand up. They look to us for much more than academics. They look to us for access to social, financial and medical systems. They look to us with trust.” - LPS Teacher or Licensed Employee

“I grew up in this wonderful city and attended many of the schools throughout the district. It was such a positive experience for me. I knew this is where I wanted to teach from the day I started college. It is where my heart was. Over the years, I have seen such a sad decline in teacher morale and increase in teacher burnout. We need and deserve a leader who understands the demands of teaching and realizes the impact that has on the students, staff and overall climate of a school. We need a leader who is willing to fight to make this city as great as it once was. A district that teachers WANT to work in for the long term, not just a stepping stone or something to write on their resume.” - LPS Graduate and Teacher or licensed Employee