



HYA

HAZARD
YOUNG
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ASSOCIATES

LEADERSHIP PROFILE
School District of CAMBRIDGE
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INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in January – February 2021 for the new superintendent of the School District of Cambridge. 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 generated information regarding the strengths of the District and some of the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years. It should be noted that the interview responses and survey data were consistent.

Participation

The total number of individuals interviewed or participating within an interview group was 87. Adding the 276 community members, parents, and staff who completed the online survey, the total of participants providing input into this report totaled 363.

The consultants interviewed 12 individuals and hosted 13 focus groups across the school community. Included within the profile interviews were the following: teachers, special services personnel, support staff, CAP Board, Koshkonong Trail Board, site administrators, community members, parents of children attending school, PTO officers, the administrative assistant, a school board candidate, a past school board member, president of the Cambridge Foundation, CAP Board president, each individual school board member, and the current superintendent.

Municipal leaders were invited to participate in a designated focus group but did not join the specific group. Participants were also invited to complete the HYA Online Survey, with a link provided on the District's Website from January 18 – February 5, 2021. The survey data was disaggregated by five groups: administrator, community member, parent of student attending school, support or classified staff, and teachers or licensed staff. The School District Superintendent Search Survey was completed by 276 stakeholders. The largest stakeholder group surveyed were parents of students attending school representing 56.2% of the responses. 23% of all respondents were teachers (certified/licensed) staff. They made up the second most populous stakeholder group. The third largest participant group was support staff/classified staff at 11.2% of all respondents.

The complete summary of the Online Survey results is presented in a stand-alone document titled School District of Cambridge 2021 Superintendent Search Survey.

The numbers of participants by the stakeholder groups, in the two methods of data gathering are listed in the following chart. Not all focus groups were a group that was disaggregated for the online survey.

RESPONDENTS for CAMBRIDGE ENGAGEMENT

Group	Personal Interviews or focus groups	Online Survey
Board	7	NA
Key Communicators	5	NA
Administrators	4	4
Administrative Assistant	1	NA
Teachers	22	64
Social Services	10	NA
Community	9	22
Municipal Leaders	0	NA
Support Staff	2	31
Parents of student attending school	8	155
CAP Board	6	NA
High School Students	7	NA
Koshkonong Trails School Board	6	NA
Total	87	276

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 were attributed. Items are summarized as themes across the data collection.

Description of the District

The School District of Cambridge, located in Dane and Jefferson Counties close to the City of Madison, seeks a new Superintendent to lead the district. A highly regarded PreK-12 district, School District of Cambridge serves a 933 (*3rd Friday count) student population with an operating budget of more than \$14 million. The District serves 5,814 residents in nine municipalities.

The Superintendent works with an active Board of Education, consisting of seven elected members and two student representatives, and serves a supportive and involved community that has high expectations for its schools. In addition, the Superintendent leads a team of more than 165 outstanding educators and staff who are deeply dedicated to the academic success and well-being of students.

The School District of Cambridge is composed of four comprehensive schools: one EC to 5 elementary, one 6-8 middle school, one 9-12 high school, and one 7-12 environmental charter school. The District passed a \$1.6m referendum for recurring purposes of educational and operational expenses in 2016.

District Demographics: Total Student Third Friday Count – 933

.1%	American Indian
0%	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
.9%	Asian
1%	Black or African American
3%	Hispanic/Latina
93%	White
3%	Two or More
16%	Students with Disabilities
26%	Economically Disadvantaged
2%	English Learners
20%	Free and Reduced Lunch Participants

NOTE: Open Enrollment “IN” is 134 students.
Open Enrollment “OUT” is 88.

The School District Mission is: “The School District of Cambridge prepares citizens who learn from the past, achieve in the present, and envision the future.”

The School District of Cambridge seeks an energetic and collaborative team leader, excellent communicator, visionary thinker, and knowledgeable in school business finance and strategic planning. The Superintendent leads the development of authentic relationships with staff, students, families, and community members across nine municipalities and two counties in small town and rural areas and is the face of the district. Being engaged in the school community and being highly visible are critical and frequently articulated expectations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Strengths of the District

When asked about the strengths of the School District of Cambridge, groups noted that the community is a wonderful area in which to live and that the District highly contributes to the quality of life because of excellent programs, staff, resources, and facilities. The School District of Cambridge is justifiably proud of the extensive support provided to the school district from parents and community partners. In particular the community and parents demonstrate a strong commitment to public education and children and hold high academic expectations for all students by devoting time, resources, and money to the District. The school community has high expectations for its school system, as evidenced by the long list of desirable traits for the next superintendent highlighted later in this report.

Families in the School District of Cambridge value their schools. The Board of Education greatly appreciates their trust and support as evidenced by the 2016

referendum passage for \$1.6m for recurring purposes of educational and operational expenses and the many community partnerships thriving in the District.

An appreciation for staff was mentioned in almost all groups. Staff are described as highly qualified and motivated, caring, willing to go “above and beyond” to help students, and dedicated. Focus groups also mentioned the supportive, close-knit community as an asset. Many parents stated the reason they moved to the area was The School District of Cambridge. The District is viewed as being attentive to the needs of students and noted in several focus groups that serving families in need is very important to the staff as well as The Cambridge Foundation and other partners. In addition, the CCAP program (Cambridge Community Activities Program) is a highly regarded asset in the school community – viewed by many as “Best in Class.” Community partnerships were frequently listed as essential strengths including CCAP, police liaisons, The Cambridge Foundation, library, food pantry, museum, etc. The participants noted the importance of continued community collaboration and consensus building.

The school district contributes positively to the overall quality of life in Cambridge. A small town safe feel combined with a great environmental area and access to the Madison and Milwaukee metro areas make Cambridge a desirable place to live. Many participants commented that people move to Cambridge because of the schools and lifestyle. The school is the hub of the community and while small in size, Cambridge was described as being “mighty”.

Challenges of the District

The School District of Cambridge is a small K-12 district with less than one thousand students. Its future stability is a delicate balance of careful management and development and promotion of attractive assets to insure its productive future. The School District of Cambridge is changing. An increasing number of families in need

are living in the community. Several participants noted the need for more affordable housing or starter homes, for a safety net to support the needs of children, and for a staff trained to serve the needs of disadvantaged students. These participants also noted the need for increased professional learning of staff in the areas of social and emotional learning as well as building a viable SEL (Social and Emotional Learning) curriculum for all students. Attention to mental health needs was frequently mentioned in focus groups. In addition, a focus on equity and closing the achievement gap was frequently articulated.

The School District of Cambridge is a critical component of the community. The District will need to facilitate community conversations that highlight factual information and build consensus with a variety of topics that impact both the school district and the community. These topics include: housing, equity, solar energy, gaps in student achievement, budget building and balancing, embracing diversity, embracing change, arts/athletics balance, recreational offerings and expansions.

While the small town atmosphere was noted as a strength, it was also noted as a concern. The caution is to be alert for insular thinking, cliques, and for the attitude of “we’ve always done it this way.” It is important to fully engage with robust conversation and in depth research on the topics facing the school and community.

Effective communication and transparency, inside and outside the District was mentioned as a challenge by every focus group. Consistent clearly reasoned and articulated messaging to the school community was viewed as a critical need. Many mentioned the need for increased listening to staff. The frequency indicates a need for a greater level of understanding of the process of decision making in the District. Some indicated that lack of formal data readily available gives rise to misinformation being shared rapidly via social media. Clearly, this is a topic that will require attention.

While numerous opportunities exist for students within Cambridge, it was suggested that the district expand their efforts in helping students explore careers and post high school options. Helping students explore and connect to life beyond Cambridge is desired. Additionally, because of the lack of diversity in Cambridge, the district and community need to support all students and their understanding of the more diverse world they will be living and working in. This challenge is not unique to Cambridge but is essential for student success in the future.

It appears that the School District of Cambridge is at a crossroads with some in the community wanting things to stay the same and some in the community wanting to embrace changes. These different perspectives will require some bridge building and consensus building in order to move forward productively. Engagement of all stakeholders is critical.

Desirable Characteristics

The groups and individuals would like a superintendent who is “all things to all people,” thus there was a wide range of suggestions about what the new superintendent should bring to the position. Although the lists of desirable characteristics from all groups were long, there were similarities that are noteworthy.

Those interviewed mentioned that they desire a visionary leader who has strong communication skills, is collaborative, shows dedication toward the school and community, and leads the school community to a strong strategic plan for the future. He/she should be a highly visible leader who is willing to invest the time and energy necessary to develop relationships within and outside of the district. The future leader of the District should be interested in continuous improvement and closing emerging achievement gaps. Furthermore, all groups indicated that the next superintendent should take time to learn and understand the culture and history of

the District in order to build trust and a positive school culture. It is expected that a new leader will act with integrity in all aspects of the position and strive to bring people together for the good of the District.

The next superintendent needs to have a sound understanding of school finance and the ability to negotiate vigorously and effectively on behalf of the District's interests. The next superintendent will need to be able and willing to wear many hats – tactically nimble – as is typical for leaders in small school districts. The superintendent needs to possess the desire to differentiate and distinguish the District as desirable to families, students and staff in order to maintain the viability and vitality of the district.

The survey responses, along with the participation in the interviews and the focus groups, are strong indicators of the value the community and staff place on finding a talented leader who can value the work and success of the School District of Cambridge, yet motivate all stakeholders to insure success for all students. HYA Search Consultants will seek a new superintendent who can work with the School District Board of Education to provide the leadership and governance needed for the benefit of all students.

This is an exciting time for the future of the School District of Cambridge. The hiring of a new superintendent is critical for future success and it is the most important work the Board of Education will do. This time is also one of great transition for the district and the retiring superintendent, and that transition can be bittersweet. The impact of leadership over time is evident in the School District and the District is known as a high quality system because of the dedication of many. It is also an invigorating time as the Board of Education now selects the next Superintendent for the current needs and ensures a strong future. We extend our appreciation to the

Superintendent and current and past board members for their dedication to the community and families.

HYA and the Board intend to meet the challenge of finding an individual who possesses most of the skills and character traits required to meet the needs of the district. The search team will seek a new superintendent who can work with the District of Cambridge to provide the leadership needed to continue to raise academic standards and student performance, while meeting the unique needs of each of its schools and communities.

The consultants would like to thank all the participants who engaged in interviews, attended focus groups and/or completed the online survey. The consultants are especially grateful to Mary Kay Raether, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent, for arranging the meetings and coordinating the many contacts needed to facilitate the completion of this report.

Respectfully submitted,

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DATA SUMMARY

The individual and group interviews of stakeholders generated the following responses. Comments have been summarized, and careful attention has been made to accurately convey the message. They are listed with no attempt to prioritize them. The top-rated categories from the on-line survey are also shown. Topics in the stakeholder interviews and the survey results appear to be congruent and that is a positive finding. The variety of data collection methods as well as the presentation of disaggregated data across stakeholder groups produced similar results with very little variance on issues.

Strengths and Points of Pride: School District Stakeholder Comments

- Community support for schools
- Variety of program choices for kids and families
- Community partnerships
- Community input and engagement
- Facilities
- Dedicated strong staff
- Commitment to success for all
- Balance in academics, athletics and arts
- Strong vocational offerings
- Teachers willing to help and support each other
- Small town atmosphere and close knit community
- High standards for student performance
- Comprehensive offerings and opportunities for a small district

Top Rated District Strengths:

School District Online Survey*

- Facilities are well maintained. (M) 88% support
- District schools are safe (TL) 86% support
- Technology is integrated into the classroom. (TL) 79% support
- The District employs effective teachers, administrators and support staff in its schools. (M) 79% support
- The District has high standards for student performance (VV) 76% support

82% of all respondents rated the overall quality of education as a 4 or 5 on a 5 point scale with 5 being the highest.

Future Challenges: School District Stakeholder Comments

- Host community conversations on controversial topics and build consensus based on sharing facts and research
- Equitably meeting the needs of all students
- Lack of accountability and follow through
- Communication needs attention, lacks transparency
- Need mental health training and services
- Understand and improve pathways for underserved students
- Create opportunities for success for all
- Building trust with all constituencies
- Make strategic plan
- Work in harmony with the School Board to carefully monitor budget and clearly articulate background and research for proposals and in a timely manner
- Recognize and address changing needs/socio-economics of community

Desired Superintendent Characteristics:

School Board Stakeholder Comments

- Establish cultures of high expectations for students and personnel
- Unwavering and courageous
- Build leadership teams
- A relationship builder
- Be available, approachable and visible
- Get everyone on the same page/train
- Hold people accountable
- Treat all people with the same respect regardless of position or status
- Authentic
- Be visible, be involved, build trusting relationships
- Collaborative
- Holds people accountable
- Honest
- Listens
- Organized
- Problem solver
- Strategic
- Strong communication skills are important
- Foster positive, professional climate of mutual trust and respect
- Strong leader, courageous, proactive, delegator
- Transparent communicator
- Trustworthy – able to build trust with staff, Board and community
- Visible and engaged
- Work with and provide leadership for Board
- Recruit, employ and retain effective personnel
- Supportive of staff

Thinks outside of the box, cutting edge thinking, visionary, positive and energetic

Top-rated Characteristics of the Superintendent:

School District Online Survey*

- Foster a positive, professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators (CE) 65% support
- Recruit, employ, and retain effective personnel throughout the District and its schools (M) 52% support
- Provide transparent communication (CE) 47% support
- Be visible throughout District and actively engaged in community life. (CE) 37% support
- Establish a culture of high expectations for all students and personnel (VV) 35% support

***School District Online Survey**

The data from the district survey is provided in a separate copy included with this report. The district performance data and desired characteristics of a superintendent data are tabulated in four categories as referenced above:

Vision and Values (VV)

Teaching and Learning (TL)

Community Engagement (CE)

Management (M)

Additionally it should be noted that there was strong congruence between survey groups in their responses to the above mentioned four categories. This demonstrates agreement across stakeholders.

School District of Cambridge
Superintendent of Schools
Desired Candidate Profile

The Board of Education seeks an educational leader who in collaboration with the Board, staff, community and students will focus the district on shared goals. After seeking input from Board members, staff, students and community via individual and group interviews and from the results of the Superintendent Profile Survey, the Board of Education seeks a strong, visionary educational leader who is certified, or is eligible to be certified, as a superintendent in Wisconsin and who possesses the following characteristics:

A visionary, inspirational leader who:

- Builds strong relationships with all stakeholders
- Develops and implements a collaborative vision and strategic plan with the Board, community, faculty, staff, students and administrators
- Holds a deep appreciation for diversity, inclusion and the importance of providing safe and caring school environments
- Listens to and effectively represents the interests and concerns of students, staff, parents and administrators
- Builds strong school board and superintendent relationships with a clear understanding of governance and the development of governance skills

An effective communicator who:

- Fosters trust and respect among the Board, staff and community by listening, being decisive and courageous
- Has the ability to resolve conflict effectively
- Is open and honest, has a sense of humor, and is energetic
- Possesses public relations skills, is technologically literate and collaborative
- Strives to work with local media

An instructional leader who:

- Empowers others and motivates
- Fosters a positive climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff and administrators
- Has a clear vision of what is required to provide an excellent educational program for all students and uses data to influence decisions
- Holds a deep understanding of the teaching/learning process and of the importance of educational best practices and pedagogy
- Increases academic performance and accountability at all levels and for all its students, especially improving achievement gaps
- Is visible, involved and part of the community

An efficient manager who:

- Aligns budgets, long-range plans, and operational procedures with the District's vision, mission and goals
- Attracts, leads, evaluates and retains an effective team of administrators and staff
- Effectively plans and manages the long term financial health of the district
- Identifies, confronts and resolves issues and concerns in a timely manner
- Is accountable and holds others accountable
- Organizes people and resources to accomplish goals
- Possesses strong organizational and change management skills, demonstrating creativity and risk-taking where appropriate
- Understands systems thinking and implements system strategies and strategic plan