

# **SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH PROFILE**

**Van Buren Local School District**

**January 14, 2020**



**Prepared for the Board of Education**



By  
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## **Van Buren Local School District Superintendent Search Profile Report**

January 14, 2020

This report presents the summary of findings from the Superintendent Search Profile forums conducted by K-12 Business Consulting, Inc. (K-12), on January 8, 2020, and from written search profiles submitted from various stakeholder groups. Once the Board of Education selected K-12 to conduct the superintendent search, a Search Profile Assessment document was created in order to solicit input from various stakeholders in the community. The Board and administration solicited input from a general community wide invitation to meet with K-12 staff members Deb Campbell and Karel Oxley in order to discuss the characteristics in greater depth. Any stakeholder who had a desire to express an opinion was welcome to submit a search profile and personally meet with K-12 at the open forums that were held at the Community/Board room in Van Buren High School. The information obtained through these sources, and summarized below, should be used to assist the Board in identifying characteristics requested of superintendent candidates.

The Search Profile Assessment form was made available to the district staff, identified stakeholders, plus all individuals who attended the focus group sessions. In addition to the 97 individuals who returned written search profiles, there were 87 individuals who participated in interviews and community forums facilitated by K-12. The results of the written Search Profile Assessment form are included in this report along with several comments received in face to face discussions held at community forums.

In accumulating the data used in this report K-12 sought opinions, recommendations and general comments with respect to preferred candidate characteristics, traits, qualifications and personal demeanor, as well as district strengths, weaknesses, issues and concerns which may have a bearing on future leadership strengths for your next superintendent. At the request of the Board, K-12 sought the views of a broad range of individuals represented in the district to assist in the search process. It was determined that K-12 would report the findings to the Board without revealing the identity of any citizen or staff member who provided information, thus equipping the Board with unbiased data to use as it proceeded to define the search profile for the next superintendent.

A Search Profile Assessment form was used to provide a framework for reporting the information compiled by K-12. Broad themes were highlighted in each question area into seven response groups (support staff, teaching staff, administrators, central office staff, students, community/parents, and the school board). Under each question in the report the response group's common themes were identified. The first category titled as "Consistent" are comments which were frequently heard from all or nearly all seven of the response groups. Comments heard less frequently or only heard in a specific response group are listed only under that response group. The responses noted under "Consistent" for any of the response groups are noted with the highest frequency first then descending to less frequently heard. It is important to note that the data compilation is not a scientific sampling, nor should it necessarily be viewed as representing a majority opinion of those interviewed in the response group.

K-12 would like to commend the Board of Education for its efforts to include many stakeholders of the school district in the development of the superintendent search profile. Many respondents expressed positive feelings about being involved in this process and the opportunity to help shape the Van Buren School District. We would also like to thank Dawn Jacobs, Treasurer, for the professional manner all arrangements were made, including mailing invitations and Search Profiles, as well as contacting and scheduling the focus groups that made this profile possible.

## **STRENGTHS OF THE DISTRICT**

**Question #1: What do you consider to be the two or three most significant strengths of the district?**

### **CONSISTENT THEMES**

The staff is caring, compassionate, experienced, student-focused and remain in the district for many years adding an element of stability and expertise to the schools.

The district has excellent academic achievement/rigor and a large student participation rate in a variety of extra-curricular activities.

The community and the parents support the schools and there is a “small town feel” with great pride in their schools.

Van Buren Schools enjoy an “enviable” reputation in Northwest Ohio and people desire to open enroll to the district to enhance their children’s educational options.

The staff and students are of high quality and support, respect, and help each other.

### **BOARD**

The academic programs provided are excellent and there are many extra curricular program options.

A strong and dedicated staff exists, and they are well qualified and have extensive experience.

This is a small, intimate community with excellent student/family support and teachers who rally to help anyone.

Great students who care about their education and their fellow students.

There is very little turnover in the staff which provides expertise and stability for the schools.

The Board of Education is very committed.

There is a strong Van Buren ‘brand’ which draws people to the schools.

### **CENTRAL OFFICE**

The community is engaged in the schools and people know each other as this is a small town.

The staff is caring, compassionate and student focused.

The staff has very little turnover as they like to work in this district.

A vast array of courses, programs and extra-curricular activities are available for students.

Students and staff love their food service options.

Van Buren has great students.

### **ADMINISTRATORS**

The community is engaged in the schools and people know each other as this is a small town.

The staff is caring, compassionate and very student focused.

The staff has very little turnover as they like to work in this district.

Administrators are talented and caring and work hard.

A vast array of courses, programs and extra-curricular activities are available for students.

Administrators care about and support each other’s needs and the needs of the entire district.

## **TEACHERS**

The teachers are dedicated, hard-working and caring with high expectations for themselves and their students.

The community/parents support the schools and there is a “small town feel” with great pride in their schools. The small size of the district is a plus and the district offers many creative opportunities for the students.

Van Buren enjoys an excellent student population.

The staff is independent and can work well with very little guidance.

Technology and innovation are an added advantage for the district.

## **SUPPORT STAFF**

The community and parents support the school district and rally around the schools.

There are strong academics with many extra -curricular options for students.

A strong and dedicated staff exists, and they are well qualified and have extensive experience and stay with the district.

Class sizes are small enough to care about students and support their needs.

Good food service options/excellent group of contributors.

## **COMMUNITY/PARENTS**

The community is close knit and has a small town feel and families who support the schools.

Academic excellence and the exemplary reputation of the district allows students to thrive academically.

The principals, teaching staff, and support staff value and respect the students and truly care about them.

There is significant parent and community support and involvement with the school district.

The school climate and culture present a positive environment for students.

The availability of extra-curricular programs and creative educational options are a draw for the district.

One campus provides an enhancement for the district.

## **STUDENTS**

The staff cares about the students and wants them to be successful; a mutual respect exists.

Students receive personal attention from the teachers, and they treat you as an individual.

The academic program is strong and offers the students many opportunities for a small school.

There is a “small town” feel to the district and we feel safe and comfortable with each other.

The community supports the school district and rallies around the schools.

Strong adult leadership is present and anyone on the staff would help a student in need.

The extra-curricular programs (music mentioned numerous times) are varied and strong and many students participate in them.

Students appreciate and value the technology innovations.

## **IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING DISTRICT**

**Question #2: What do you consider to be the two or three most important issues facing the district?**

### **CONSISTENT THEMES**

Fiscal concerns are of paramount importance in the district. There needs to be a leader who clearly and with transparency communicates the fiscal needs to all stakeholders. Levies need to be passed.

A leader who is visible in the district and a presence in all aspects of the Van Buren Schools/community events.

Communication needs to be clearer and addressed with all stakeholders.

The older facilities need maintenance/updating and consideration should be given to future bond issues to address the aging facilities and growing population.

Trust needs to be re-established between all entities.

A five-year fiscal forecast (FTE audit) with department budgets aligned to the district strategic plan with follow through on decisions.

Accountability measures put into place and fairly executed with performance reviews for all staff/administrators.

### **BOARD**

Aging buildings and a growing district create a challenge to the Board and the community.

Continued financial stability and passage of future levies.

Lack of a vision, data driven decision making and engagement of people to support and follow through on that vision.

The district needs a strong leader with interpersonal and public relations skills who listens to the feedback from the stakeholders.

A leader practicing fairness in all decision-making while building trust.

Training for our Board of Education and more people stepping forth from the community to serve.

### **CENTRAL OFFICE**

Passing future bond issues and levies to maintain financial stability. Communicating these needs clearly to stakeholders.

Accountability for job performance; appropriate job responsibilities.

Creating a vision for the district and following through on the strategic plan.

Communication to all stakeholders of Van Buren in all areas of district and school actions.

Visibility at community/school events; there is a desire to see their leader.

### **ADMINISTRATORS**

Personal involvement and interest in the community; visibility at events and with students.

Keeping the community engaged in the schools and clearly understanding the fiscal needs.

Revisiting the strategic plan and following through on decisions pertaining to it.

Allowing everyone to know the fiscal pieces so we can support each other's needs as leaders.

Establish a facilities plan with budgeting to address the current concerns.

## **TEACHERS**

Passing future bond issues and levies to maintain financial stability. Communicating these needs clearly to stakeholders.

A facilities and growth plan for the outdated and aging facilities and growing population.

Increased communication to all stakeholders. Teachers sometimes feel they are the last to know.

Creating a culture of trust.

Visibility as everyone wants to see their leader in all aspects of the school, extra-curricular events, and community activities.

Bring in fresh ideas from outside the district.

Accountability and clear job performance targets.

## **SUPPORT STAFF**

Passing future bond issues and levies to maintain financial stability. Communicating these needs clearly to stakeholders.

Increased communication to all stakeholders.

Secure financial resources.

Too much unnecessary hiring of outside people to run committees, searches etc.

Trust is an issue among stakeholders and various groups.

Five - year fiscal plan with budgets is desired.

## **COMMUNITY/PARENTS**

Passing future bond issues and levies to maintain financial stability. Communicating these needs clearly to stakeholders.

Funding concerns due to growth and additional student needs; concern for the agricultural community.

There must be more transparency in how the funds are being spent in the district.

A Strategic Plan/five -year fiscal planning with department budgets (FTE review) should be created and communicated to the community so that people understand where the funds are being spent each year and over the next 3 to 5 years.

Communication needs to improve so all understand the message, not just a few people.

The district needs a person who can bring the people together for the common good regarding issues and rebuild trust.

Visibility across all areas both in the community and school.

Vested in the Van Buren community.

Farmers represented on the school board and their voices heard.

## **STUDENTS**

Passing future bond issues and levies to maintain financial stability. Communicating these needs clearly.

Visibility and knowing who we are and supporting our events.

Communicating clearly.

Visibility and vested in the community. Make decisions such as school delays from within the community.

Overcrowded busses; parking are issues.

Two types of grading systems in existence; clarify one system as to not be confusing to students.

Equal funding for all sports; fiscal disparity between traditionally male and female programs.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF NEW SUPERINTENDENT**

**Question #3: Please tell us your two or three characteristics that you think the Board should look for in a new Superintendent.**

### **CONSISTENT THEMES**

The next superintendent must possess strong communication skills.

Someone who is approachable, caring, honest, and fair.

The person who understands, respects, and is involved with the staff and community.

A strong leader who can interact with people and remains student focused.

Someone who is fiscally responsible with an understanding of school finance.

An educator energetic, engaging, innovative, forward thinking and visible in our schools and the community.

### **BOARD MEMBERS**

A leader who is an excellent communicator and can engage with the diverse population of Van Buren.

An educator who is energetic, engaging and can systematically make changes that need to take place.

A visionary willing to set goals, objectives, and outcomes for the good of the district.

An honest, fair, approachable individual who is transparent on all levels within the district and the community.

The candidate must be the “right fit” for the district and bring unity and purpose to all stakeholders.

### **CENTRAL OFFICE**

A successful educator who is willing to get to know the students, staff, and community.

Excellent communication skills.

Demonstrated ability to be the face of Van Buren Schools for the staff and community.

A person who has a good work ethic, dedicated to the district, and willing to do whatever to get the job done.

A leader who values the qualities of the district as much as the employees, students, and community values them.

Someone who is fair and equitable in the treatment of staff and students.

### **ADMINISTRATORS**

The leader needs to be a strong communicator.

Someone who is approachable, caring, honest, and fair with all students, employees and the community.

The person with proven leadership abilities to unite, motivate, and excite people about our schools and the good things that are happening.

An educator who understands, respects and is involved with the students, staff, and community.

A student-centered leader who can hold people accountable while moving the district forward.

### **TEACHERS**

Someone with excellent communication skills who is a real “people person”.

A great leader who understands and respects the staff and community.

The new leader must be approachable, caring, honest, and fair with people.

The superintendent needs to be visible and active in the schools and the community.

A person who is knowledgeable, trustworthy, and can unify the stakeholders.

A leader who is engaging, energetic, innovative, and forward thinking.

## **SUPPORT STAFF**

Demonstrated ability as a good communicator, is personable and can build relationships.

A leader who is approachable, caring, honest, and fair.

A student-centered person with experience as a superintendent.

Someone who understands and respects the staff and community.

Committed to being involved in the community and getting to know the staff and students.

## **COMMUNITY/PARENTS**

Someone who has excellent communication skills with all people.

A person with strong leadership skills to ensure trust and confidence throughout the school and community.

A leader who is fiscally responsible and has knowledge of school finance.

A proven leader who understands the community and respects the values and traditions of the district.

He/She is visible in the school and community.

Someone who is approachable and honest.

A person with proven administrative experience.

## **STUDENTS**

The new superintendent must have excellent communication skills with all people.

Someone who is approachable, caring honest, and fair with everyone.

A superintendent who is visible at student events and activities and supports and respects the students.

He/she is a strong compassionate leader.

A leader who cares about students and staff and is passionate about education.

The new superintendent understands that this is a special community and will respect and embrace our traditions and values.

Someone who understands school finance and is careful about how they spend district money.

## SUPERINTENDENT CHARACTERISTICS BY RANKING

**1 = MOST IMPORTANT**      TO      **10 = LEAST IMPORTANT**

CRITERIA	BOE	ADMIN	TEACHERS	SUPPORT STAFF	PARENTS & COMMUNITY	STUDENTS
Ability and willingness to deal fairly with faculty, staff, students and parents	3	6	2	1	4	3
Effective at creating and implementing a vision for the district	4	5	5	2	1	1
Expertise in design and implementation of instruction and curriculum	8	9	9	3	9	10
A leader who can help drive improvements in academic performance	9	8	7	4	8	5
Successful experience as a superintendent	7	4	8	5	6	8
Experience with socially and economically diverse student populations	10	10	10	6	10	9
Fiscal management expertise	6	7	4	7	2	7
Effective organizational and management skills	2	3	6	8	5	6
Personal involvement and interest in the community	5	1	3	9	7	2
A leader with strong interpersonal and public relations skills	1	2	1	10	3	4

## RANKING OF TOP AND BOTTOM FIVE (5) IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS ALL GROUPS

RANK	TOP 5 CHARACTERISTICS
1	Effective at creating and implementing a vision for the district
2	Ability and willingness to deal fairly with faculty, staff, students and parents
3	A leader with strong interpersonal and public relations skills
4	Personal involvement and interest in the community
5	Organizational and management skills
RANK	BOTTOM 5 CHARACTERISTICS
6	Fiscal management expertise
7	Experiences as a Superintendent
8	A leader who can help drive improvements in academic performance
9	Expertise in design and implementation of instruction and curriculum
10	Experience in socially and economically diverse student populations

## SUMMARY

The information gathered through surveys and interviews bears strong similarity across all groups with respect to the Van Buren School District's strengths, issues and concerns facing the district, as well as the characteristics desired in the next superintendent.

Clearly, all groups and individuals expressed that Van Buren's *greatest strengths* include district's (A) The staff is caring, compassionate, experienced, student-focused and remain in the district for many years adding an element of stability and expertise to the schools; (B) The district has excellent academic achievement/rigor and a large student participation rate in a variety of extra-curricular activities; (C) The community and the parents support the schools and there is a "small town feel" with great pride in their schools; (D) Van Buren Schools enjoy an "enviable" reputation in Northwest Ohio and people want to come to the district to enhance their children's educational options; (E) The staff and students are of high quality and support, respect, and help each other. In short, the Van Buren School District has an exemplary reputation and is held in high regard in northwest Ohio. The district has many reasons to be proud of the schools and the community.

The *top concerns* facing the Van Buren Board of Education and the new superintendent in the future – all of which surfaced repetitively through focus group sessions and from the written Superintendent Search Profiles that were submitted individually – included: (A) Fiscal concerns are of paramount importance in the district. There needs to be a leader who clearly and with transparency communicates the fiscal needs to all stakeholders. Levies need to be passed; (B) Visibility in the district and a presence in all aspects of the Van Buren Schools/Community events; (C) Communication needs to be clearer and addressed with all stakeholders; (D) The older facilities need maintenance/updating and consideration should be given to future bond issues to address the aging facilities and growing population; (E) Trust needs to be re-established between all supportive entities; (F) A five-year fiscal forecast (FTE audit) with department budgets aligned to the district strategic plan with follow through on decisions; (F) Accountability measures put into place and fairly executed with performance reviews for all staff/administrators.

It is important to note that the district is well respected in the area and that families want to open enroll their children in the Van Buren district for academics and the extra-curricular activities. Van Buren Schools afford students the opportunity to participate in multiple extra-curricular events at the same time which allows a collaborative spirit with the leaders of those extra-curricular activities which is sometimes rare in a district.

It was difficult to capture all the characteristics that respondents were looking for in a new superintendent. It is certain that no one person could possibly embody all that was mentioned for attributes of the next superintendent.

In reconciling the many concerns and *characteristics sought in a superintendent* for the Van Buren School District, the vast majority respondents expressed the need for the person to have: (A) The next superintendent must possess strong communication skills; (B) Someone who is approachable, caring, honest, and fair; (C) A person who understands, respects, and is involved with the staff and community; (D) A strong leader who can interact with people and remains student focused; (E) Someone who is fiscally responsible with an understanding of school finance; (F) An educator energetic, engaging, innovative, forward thinking and visible in our schools and the community.

The new superintendent should be visibly active in the community, serve as role model personally and professionally, be sincere, approachable, and exhibit trustworthiness and integrity. While Van Buren School District seems to be growing it still has that “small town” feeling where people know each other.

We believe the Van Buren School District is approaching an important period of transition in the next couple of years. Difficult decisions will be required of the new superintendent to balance stakeholder expectations of a high performing district while keeping a realistic eye on available resources. This individual will need to possess effective communication skills, maintain the collaborative vision of the district and implement decisions based on stakeholder input. A skillful superintendent will have the opportunity to help the district navigate through challenging issues, and the district must do so if it is to thrive and continue to build on student success and continue to engender community support. We will look for this key set of skills, and ones that complement each other, in candidates for the next superintendent.

The Van Buren School District serves a close-knit community that is full of pride about their school district’s academic and extra-curricular successes. We believe that the right candidate for superintendent will recognize the opportunity this environment has for them to really be involved in making a difference in the lives of children and to have a quality of life. This position will be of interest to the right superintendent candidates. We believe we will find the right candidate(s) who have the attributes outlined herein, possess the skills and energy needed to address the issues and concerns expressed by respondents, and who will be happy to be a part of the Van Buren School District community.

Respectfully submitted:

K-12 Business Consulting, Inc