



Grosse Pointe Public School System

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT AND SUPERINTENDENT PROFILE

March 15, 2021

In preparation for the search for a new Superintendent of Grosse Pointe Public Schools, the School Board requested that School Exec Connect consultants conduct a community engagement process that would document reflections and perceptions from District staff and community stakeholders. Representative focus groups, two open forums, and an online survey allowed all constituents in the District to contribute on a voluntary basis. Participation in the community engagement process was exceptional. Information from the focus groups, the open forums, and survey was used to create a New Superintendent Profile that will guide the recruitment, screening, interviews, and selection of a new Superintendent.

Focus groups participants included the School Board, District administrators, District support staff, building administrators, teachers from all levels, building support staff, parents, students, community members, and business leaders. One hundred twenty six (126) stakeholders took part in one of twelve focus groups or two open forums. All participants were asked to express their views regarding the strengths of the District, challenges facing the District, first-year priorities for the new Superintendent, and the specific characteristics, skills, and attributes to be sought in the next Superintendent.

The District also sought input from stakeholders via an online survey, open from February 9-March 5. Approximately one thousand people answered questions about perceived academic and managerial strengths and challenges the new Superintendent will face. Respondents also identified priorities for the new Superintendent to address and characteristics they associate with a successful Superintendent in Grosse Pointe. A summary of the survey results can be found after the focus group report.

Due to the sampling methodology, this report should not be construed as scientifically accurate. The opinions set forth in the report may not reflect the opinion of all staff, students, and residents, but do reflect the opinions of those who participated. Judgments regarding what is included in this report are those of the consultants, based upon the frequency of statements received throughout the data gathering process.

The consultants used the information gathered in this report to develop the **New Superintendent Profile**, found on the final page of this document.

This report may be used in several ways. The profile will be helpful to the consultants as they screen and interview candidates. The Board of Education will gain an understanding of the community's view of the District and the superintendency and can use the profile to prepare questions for the Board interviews with the candidates. The consultants also recommend the report be given to the newly appointed Superintendent for a better understanding of the issues and opportunities facing the District. The District may also choose to post the report on the Superintendent Search portion of the website to be viewed by stakeholders.

SCHOOL EXEC CONNECT

Focus Group Response Overview

Focus Groups were held with all constituencies including Board, parents, administrators, teachers, students, support staff and community leaders. One hundred twenty six participants in twelve focus groups and two open forums provided insights into the strengths and challenges facing the District, the priorities the new Superintendent should establish, and the qualities and skills the next Superintendent should possess. Below is a summary of the responses to each of the four questions asked in each Focus group.

The first question asked participants to identify the major strengths of Grosse Pointe School District and the community of Grosse Pointe.

- Exceptionally qualified and committed teachers and staff
- High levels of student achievement
- Strong academics, diverse programs and extra-curricular opportunities
- Strong district reputation
- Increasing diversity
- Strong community that values education
- Active involvement of parents and volunteers
- Opportunities for professional staff
- Good financial condition and a supportive foundation
- Attractive, tight knit community, sidewalks, parks and resources
- Reconfiguration and bond recently completed/in progress

The second prompt for the Focus Groups asked participants to identify the biggest challenges facing the District in the next few years.

- Significant enrollment loss due to attrition and Covid
- Strained relationships and divisiveness among district constituent groups
- Maintaining financial resources
- Response to diversity, socio-economic disparity, demographics and meeting all students' needs
- Curricular enhancements to address diversity
- Pathways for different learners
- "High-maintenance" district, not at a 9-5 job
- Lean Central Office
- Dwindling applicant pool and employee retention concerns
- Perceived culture of fear, lack of trust and collaboration

- Marketing needs
- Appropriate Board/Administrative roles
- Clear vision and transparent decisions
- Attention to special ed programming

Asked to identify priorities for the next Superintendent, Focus Group members' responses echoed items mentioned in the previous two questions.

- Marketing the district and recovering lost enrollment
- Building strong relationships, trust, and enhancing collaboration
- Continuing Covid issues and return to instruction
- Addressing weaknesses in online-learning revealed by Covid
- Addressing equity and diversity
- Selection and retention of staff
- Connections with Grosse Pointe municipalities and establishing a long-term system of communication
- Amplifying the student voice in district governance issues
- Transparent needs assessment; strategic plan
- Completion of reconfiguration and bond

The fourth question asked participants to identify those skills, personal qualities, and experiences that are important for the next Superintendent to possess.

- Strong equivalent experience
- Relationship builder who can unify the district
- Exceptional listener, communicator and spokesperson; explains decisions, can market the district to address enrollment concerns
- Culturally competent. Prepared to address equity and diversity issues
- Resilient, intestinal fortitude, courageous
- Stand-up leader who can make decisions and stand by them
- Charismatic, energetic
- Inspirational, visionary, innovative, future-focused problem solver
- Well educated. Can think on his/her feet, command respect
- Student-focused; advocate for students first
- Teacher; classroom experience
- Developer of others
- Passionate about the opportunity; long term.
- Communication skills are critically important, including listening to all constituents and demonstrating skill in speaking and writing. Engagement with the community is of vital importance.

In final comments, Focus Group participants acknowledged that the new Superintendent will be facing the unique circumstance of leading through a pandemic, and that multiple challenges face the District in the coming year. Building trust, repairing relationships, and developing effective methods of communication are essential to the Superintendent's success. Participants want the new Superintendent to reach a deep understanding of this community that feels like a small town but is actually a complex system with competing needs and priorities. A community passionate about education and willing to support its schools, Grosse Pointe is a destination district; the strong hope is that the new Superintendent will become deeply rooted in the community and stay in that position for many years.



Grosse Pointe Public Schools

Survey Results

The Grosse Pointe community completed the survey in significant numbers, with 958 individuals responding to eight questions. More than three fourths of respondents are parents.

The charts that follow show the responses to each question, beginning with a breakdown of respondents, then listing the top answers for each prompt. Each question offers a variety of forced-choice responses, and several questions provided space for open-ended answers. More than half of respondents left one or more comments.

| 1. Survey Respondents | | |
|---|-----|------------|
| Parent of current/past student (past 5 years) | 76% | 731 |
| Community member/Business leader | 15% | 140 |
| Student | 1% | 11 |
| Teacher/licensed staff | 19% | 179 |
| Support Staff (aides, custodians, clerical, maintenance) | 6% | 53 |
| Administrator | 2% | 22 |
| Other | 2% | 11 |
| TOTAL (Individual respondents – some in multiple categories) | | 958 |

The survey data provides information about the educational community's needs and expectations and lays out a roadmap to action that can help a new Superintendent succeed in Grosse Pointe Public Schools.

| 2. Please select the five (5) items that represent the greatest educational strengths of Grosse Pointe Public Schools. | |
|---|------------|
| | ALL |
| Overall student achievement | 50% |
| Engaged and supportive parents and community | 44% |
| Student readiness for the next level of their education | 44% |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Environment that attracts and retains highly effective personnel | 36% |
| Focus on development of student skills in communication, creativity, innovation, critical thinking, problem solving, technology | 34% |

| 3. Please select the five (5) items that represent the greatest educational challenges of Grosse Pointe Public Schools | |
|---|------------|
| | ALL |
| Clearly articulated vision of Grosse Pointe Public Schools | 48% |
| Understanding and supporting diversity and equity | 38% |
| Environment that attracts and retains highly effective personnel | 29% |
| Knowledgeable and innovative District and school leaders | 29% |
| Strong communication with parents and the community | 27% |

| 4. Please select the areas you consider the top three (3) managerial or organizational strengths of Grosse Pointe Public Schools. | |
|---|------------|
| | All |
| Clean and well-maintained schools and grounds | 50% |
| School safety | 35% |
| Relationships with other units of government | 30% |
| 5. Please select the areas you consider the top three (3) managerial or organizational challenges of Grosse Pointe Public Schools. | |
| | ALL |
| Long range strategic plan and implementation | 46% |
| Open two-way communication and trust between District office and schools | 34% |
| Image/reputation of the district | 32% |

| 6. Please select three (3) priorities that the new Superintendent should focus on during the first year in Grosse Pointe Public Schools. | |
|---|------------|
| | ALL |
| Selecting and retaining excellent teachers and leaders | 40% |
| Development of 21 st Century Skills (communication, creativity, innovation, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, use of technology | 37% |
| Strong relationships with staff and community members | 35% |

| 1. Please select five (5) characteristics/skills that the new Superintendent needs to be successful at Grosse Pointe Public Schools. | |
|---|------------|
| | ALL |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Articulates a clear vision for leading our District that inspires others | 52% |
| Makes decisions based on what is best for students | 49% |
| Builds effective teams and brings out the best in others | 43% |
| Practices transparency in decision-making | 41% |
| Possesses a deep knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and student learning | 40% |

- 2. What else would you like the Board to consider as they conduct the Superintendent search?** Responses to this question were typed in by participants, with more than half of respondents providing additional information for the Board. These responses are reflected in the Focus Group report and are incorporated into the Superintendent profile on the next page.



New Superintendent Profile: Grosse Pointe Public Schools

Profile of the New Superintendent

(For review and by the Board of Education)

The new superintendent should be a person who:

- Is an exceptionally strong, inspirational and empathetic leader with proven skills and experience in building trusting relationships and unifying district constituencies.
- Is an effective communicator and spokesperson with demonstrated ability to effectively market the district to potential customers.
- Brings strong experience and a proven track record from a district with similar challenges and needs.
- Is an innovative, energetic and future-focused problem solver.
- Brings deep knowledge, experience and effective solutions in addressing issues of equity and diversity.
- Is a thoughtful but resolute leader who makes well-informed decisions and demonstrates the fortitude to stand by them.
- Is a resourceful, well-educated and informed educational professional who conveys confidence and earns the respect of others.
- Is flexible, open, non-defensive, humble, highly visible and a good listener.
- Has teaching experience or strong knowledge of the teaching/learning process.
- Is an effective developer of others' talents.
- Is passionate about a long-term opportunity to take a strong district to higher levels of excellence and can bring a fresh perspective to district challenges.