

Babylon School District
Babylon, New York

Leadership Profile Report

Introduction

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) on November 30 and December 1, 2011 regarding the search for a new superintendent of the Babylon School District. The report data were obtained from the input HYA consultants received when they met with stakeholders in individual interviews and focus group settings as well as from the results of the online survey completed by stakeholders. The surveys, interviews, and focus group meetings were structured to gather information to assist the Board in determining the primary characteristics desired in the new superintendent. Additionally, stakeholder interviews and focus groups collected information regarding the strengths of the District and identifying some of the challenges that it will face in the future.

Participation

The numbers of participants, by stakeholder group, in the two methods of data gathering are listed below:

Group	Personal interviews or focus groups	Online Survey
Board	7	4
Bldg/Central Office administrators	10	8
Community/Parents	47	308
Faculty/Support Staff	24	96
Students	3	6
Total	91	422

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 are attributed. Items are included if, in the consultants' judgment, they warranted the Board's attention.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

STRENGTHS OF THE DISTRICT

When asked about the strengths of the Babylon School District, nearly all groups interviewed noted the community's size, longstanding support for the schools, and the level of parental involvement. It was noted that the size of the district could be a disadvantage due to the limited opportunities for students and an over-awareness of personal lives. However, it was often reported that the district has good students and a variety of co-curricular activities in which they can participate. The dedication of staff at all levels was emphasized and supported with specific examples as well as an appreciation for recent good hires in administration.

In discussions with the consultants, both staff and community members referred to the community as "generational" with parents who attended the Babylon Schools and are now rearing their own children in the same community. Some now even work in the school district.

Casually and informally reported was the appreciation for the Board of Education's inclusiveness and transparency in the superintendent selection process.

CHALLENGES/CONCERNS/ISSUES FACING THE DISTRICT

While there is much to be proud of in the Babylon School District, the focus groups centered on several areas of concern. Among them is the need for more accountability at all levels and the need for greater academic rigor in order to raise the academic standards of the district. Test scores were a repeated area of concern. Although many voiced their opinions about Babylon being a good district, there was a strong sentiment that it is an underperforming system that has the potential to be great.

In discussion centered on curriculum, a significant number of groups voiced a concern about a need for greater articulation among and across all grade levels and between all schools. It was felt that whether perception or fact, this, if accomplished, will lead to improvement in the delivery of curriculum and instruction.

The District's budget and school finances are tied together as areas of concern. Although the community takes great pride in the approval of the recent school budgets, this remains a concern for the present and the future. Because of budget constraints, technology hardware is limited in the district in comparison to neighboring systems. The teachers' contract and its effect on the budget also appears to be on the minds of many.

Concerns for community climate were repeated with intensity, clarity, and illustrations. This issue appears to arise from anonymous and written criticism of an administrator and the concerns of a vocal group of parents who feel they have "not been heard." It seems that the difficulty is not as much with the message but with the way the message is delivered. This negative influence has apparently had an impact on behavior at some Board of Education meetings where respect, civility, and decorum now are sometimes absent. The school district has been one where collaboration and respect existed, even amidst those with differing voices and opinions. There is a concerted effort by many in the community, including The Board of Education to affect change. With a relatively new Board, it is hoped that renewed energy and serious attention will be given to Board procedures and protocols.

DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS

In discussing the desired characteristics for a new superintendent, many commented on the past superintendent and the current interim superintendent. Although significant characteristics have been identified, it is rare to identify one candidate who possesses them all. Based on past history, the often-cited skills desired in a new superintendent center on his/her ability to effectively communicate with all constituencies, be approachable, and be a strong educational leader who can inspire trust and confidence in parents, staff and community. Good listening skills, central office experience, good management skills, fiscal acumen, and a track record of success are also considered important. While making the necessary improvements, the new superintendent should be a leader who is creative and innovative; is visible in the schools and the community and can bring unity to the District. The new superintendent should demonstrate collaborative decision-making which leads the District to its untapped potential and prepares students for the 21st Century.

The large number of survey responses, and high level of focus group and community forum participation are strong indicators of the value the community and staff place on finding a talented leader who can build on the past, while energetically moving the District boldly forward toward greater student achievement and success.

HYA cannot promise to find a candidate who possesses all of the characteristics desired by respondents. However, HYA and the Board intend to meet the challenge of finding an individual who possesses most of the skills and character traits required to address the concerns expressed by the constituent groups. We will seek a new superintendent who can work with the Board to provide leadership needed to continue to raise academic standards in spite of financial challenges.

The consultants would like to thank all the participants who attended focus group meetings or completed the online survey. The online response to the online survey is indicative of the community's interest and the Board's intent of reaching out to the community to seek input in assisting with this important decision.

Finally, we wish to thank Linda Pesce in the District office who worked diligently to schedule the consultants' time during our two-day visit.

Respectfully submitted,

Sam Mikaelian, Ph.D.
Deborah Raizes

Babylon School District

Online Superintendent Profile Survey Results

The Superintendent Profile survey was completed by 422 stakeholders. More than half of the respondents were Parents (60 percent), about 23 percent were Faculty and Support Staff, another 13 percent were Community Members, and the rest were Administrators, Students, or Board Members.

Stakeholder Survey		
	Frequency	Percent
Administrator	8	1.9
Board Member	4	.9
Community Members	55	13.0
Faculty/Support Staff	96	22.7
Parents	253	60.0
Students	6	1.4
Total	422	100.0

The top-rated characteristics that respondents selected are:

- Promote high expectations for all students and personnel. (VV)
- Listen to and effectively represent the interests and concerns of students, staff, parents, and community members. (CE)
- Have a clear vision of what is required to provide exemplary educational services and implement effective change. (VV)
- Increase academic performance and accountability at all levels and for all its students, including special need populations. (IL)
- Hold a deep understanding of the teaching/learning process and of the importance of educational technology. (IL)
- Identify, confront, and resolve issues and concerns in a timely manner. (CE)
- Recruit, employ, evaluation, and retain effective personnel throughout the District and its schools. (M)

Percentages of respondents overall who selected each item, as well as percentages by stakeholder group, are given in the tables on the following pages.

In addition, differences were examined for statistical and practical significance to determine whether the mean scores by stakeholder group differed. Results indicate that, for many items, the various stakeholders were in agreement. On the other hand, there were several items that certain stakeholders valued more than others.

- Parents were significantly more likely than faculty and support staff to select the Vision and Values item “Promote high expectations for all students and personnel”.
- Board members and parents were significantly more likely than community members, faculty, and support staff to select the Instructional Leadership item “Increase academic performance and accountability at all levels and for all its students, including special needs populations.”
- Board members were significantly more likely than administrators, faculty, support staff, community members, parents, and students to select the Community Engagement item “Maintain positive and collaborative working relationships with the school board and its members.”
- Teachers and support staff were significantly more likely than parents to select the Communication and Collaboration item “Communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and in a variety of ways.”
- Faculty and support staff were significantly more likely than community members and parents to select the Communication and Collaboration item “Foster a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators.”
- Faculty and support staff were significantly more likely than parents to select the Communication and Collaboration item “Lead in an encouraging, participatory, and team-focused manner.”
- Parents were significantly more likely than faculty and support staff to select the Management item “Recruit, employ, evaluate, and retain effective personnel throughout the District and the schools.”

Percentage of Respondents Who Selected Each Item (By Subgroups)

Number indicates rank order by overall results		ALL (422)	Admin (8)	Board (4)	Com (55)	Fac/SS (96)	Parent (253)	Student (6)
1	Promote high expectations for all students and personnel. (VV)	42%	13%	50%	35%	27%	51%	33%
2	Listen to and effectively represent the interests and concerns of students, staff, parents, and community members. (CE)	40%	25%	25%	24%	43%	42%	83%
3	Have a clear vision of what is required to provide exemplary educational services and implement effective change. (VV)	37%	0%	25%	33%	35%	41%	17%
4	Increase academic performance and accountability at all levels and for all its students, including special needs populations. (IL)	36%	25%	100%	24%	19%	45%	33%
5	Hold a deep understanding of the teaching/learning process and of the importance of educational technology. (IL)	36%	25%	25%	24%	33%	40%	33%
6	Identify, confront, and resolve issues and concerns in a timely manner. (CE)	36%	25%	25%	35%	38%	36%	17%
7	Recruit, employ, evaluate, and retain effective personnel throughout the District and its schools. (M)	35%	0%	25%	31%	23%	42%	33%
8	Foster a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators. (CC)	33%	63%	25%	31%	60%	23%	17%
9	Strive for continuous improvement in all areas of the District. (VV)	31%	25%	25%	20%	33%	33%	33%
10	Provide meaningful guidance for systematic and comprehensive district-wide curriculum, instructional services, assessment programs, and professional development. (IL)	30%	38%	25%	25%	28%	32%	17%
11	Effectively plan and manage the long-term financial health of the District. (M)	29%	0%	0%	25%	29%	32%	0%
12	Guide the operation and maintenance of school facilities to ensure secure, safe, and clean school environments that support learning. (M)	23%	0%	0%	24%	26%	23%	17%
Key	VV-Vision & Values	IL-Instructional Leadership	CE- Community Engagement	CC- Communication & Collaboration		M- Management		

Percentage of Respondents Who Selected Each Item (By Subgroups)

Number indicates rank order by overall results		ALL (422)	Admin (8)	Board (4)	Com (55)	Fac/SS (96)	Parent (253)	Student (6)
13	Encourage a sense of shared responsibility among all stakeholders regarding success in student learning. (IL)	23%	13%	25%	20%	30%	21%	33%
14	Be visible throughout the District and actively engaged in community life. (CE)	22%	25%	25%	27%	16%	22%	50%
15	Lead in an encouraging, participatory, and team-focused manner. (CC)	21%	13%	25%	25%	34%	15%	0%
16	Align budgets, long-range plans, and operational procedures with the District's vision, mission, and goals. (M)	21%	0%	50%	13%	20%	23%	17%
17	Be an effective manager of the District's day-to-day operations. (M)	20%	0%	50%	25%	20%	19%	17%
18	Maintain positive and collaborative working relationships with the school board and its members. (CE)	17%	25%	100%	11%	23%	15%	0%
19	Communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and in a variety of ways. (CC)	17%	38%	50%	18%	29%	10%	33%
20	Seek a high level of engagement with principals and other school-site leaders. (CC)	15%	25%	25%	15%	14%	15%	50%
21	Hold a deep appreciation for diversity and the importance of providing safe and caring school environments. (VV)	14%	13%	0%	16%	15%	12%	50%
22	Utilize student achievement data to drive the District's instructional decision-making. (IL)	14%	13%	0%	13%	7%	16%	33%
23	Involve appropriate stakeholders in the decision-making process. (CC)	12%	0%	0%	11%	14%	13%	0%
24	Act in accordance with the District's mission, vision, and core beliefs. (VV)	11%	25%	50%	13%	16%	8%	0%
25	Develop strong relationships with constituents, local government, area businesses, media, and community partners. (CE)	10%	0%	50%	20%	10%	7%	33%

Key	VV-Vision & Values	IL-Instructional Leadership	CE- Community Engagement	CC- Communication & Collaboration	M- Management
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Comments from Interviews and Focus Group Meetings

November 30 & December 1, 2011 (Listed in alphabetical order)

STRENGTHS

CONSISTENT

Caring community – everyone knows everybody
Co-curricular activities
Dedicated staff
Good hires – strong principals
Good students
Involved, supportive parents and community for public education
Size of district

BOARD

Approachable staff
Class size
Educating the whole child
Relationship between teachers and staff

ADMINISTRATORS

Collaboration of principals with each other and central office

FACULTY

District is pro education
Good relationship between staff and students
Good relationship with Board/Union/Central Office
Staff well prepared for teaching

SUPPORT STAFF

Generational community
Quality education for the students

STUDENTS

Academics
Teachers get to know students well
Teachers help students succeed

COMMUNITY/PARENTS

Budgets have passed
Encourage students to be connected to the community
Students are empowered
Teachers know the students
Teachers responsive, principals approachable
Volunteerism

CHALLENGES/CONCERNS/ISSUES

CONSISTENT

Articulation of curriculum among and across the grades and the schools

Budget/finances

Need for accountability for all levels

Need for more academic rigor/raise academic standards

Respect, civility and decorum at Board meetings

Small district

Technology – hardware, professional development

Test scores

BOARD

Building trust/building relationships

Complacent attitude often prevails, “This is the way it has always been done.”

Declining enrollment

Effective communication

Expectation for immediate change

Number of administrators for the size of the district

Teachers’ contract

Teachers need to be part of the vision and the mission of the district

Transparency

ADMINISTRATORS

Autonomy versus micromanaging

Protocols, procedures outdated or nonexistent

Respect for chain of command

Sustainable professional development

FACULTY

Common core standards

Lack of staff diversity

Parent/community treatment of the BOE

Tax cap by State

SUPPORT STAFF

Feeling of entitlements

Implementation of evaluation system

Maintaining the buildings – adequate supplies

Need more staff training

Political community– everybody knows everybody

STUDENTS

All aspects of the school should get equal treatment (arts, athletics and academics)

Class size

CHALLENGES/CONCERNS/ISSUES (Continued)

COMMUNITY/PARENTS

Challenge all the children, not just those at the top

Class size

Declining enrollment

Need to be responsive to parental concerns

Need to bring the district into the 21st Century

Need to look for more innovative programs

Often reactive rather than proactive

Perception of teaching to the test

Review current organization of Central Office

Sense of mediocrity often prevails

Small district – limited academic choices for students

Tax base

Team up with other districts – economy of scale/shared costs

Union – work to rule

CHARACTERISTICS

CONSISTENT

Ability to communicate with all constituencies
Approachable
Central office experience
Courage of his/her convictions
Creative, innovative
Effective interpersonal skill
Fiscal acumen
Good listener
Good manager
Knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction
Strong educational leader
Successful track record

BOARD

Ability to accept criticism
Ability to build trust and confidence
Can speak to students
Capable of stating an opinion with supportive information
Knowledgeable about special education
Teaching experience preferred
Will empower staff

ADMINISTRATORS

Accomplished in field/profession
Less micromanagement/empowers staff
Open, honest, straight forward
Smart – knows more than we do
Supports the administrative staff
Teachers' and administrators' contracts

FACULTY

Collaborative decision making
Ethical
Honest and has integrity
Knowledgeable about secondary education
Open, honest
Strength of character
21st Century leadership
Values the arts

CHARACTERISTICS (Continued)

SUPPORT STAFF

Fair
Knowledgeable about finances
Team builder

STUDENTS

Likeable
Outgoing
Visible
Well respected

COMMUNITY/PARENTS

Ability to build trust
Aligned with academic excellence
Believes in transparency
Change agent
Empowers staff
Fair
Forward thinking
Hands –on, involved
Knowledgeable in the area of special education
Passion for educating children
Respects and respectful
Responsive
Team builder
Thinks outside of the box
Will not accept the status quo