



# LEADERSHIP PROFILE ACADEMY DISTRICT 20

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## Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in January 2019 for the new superintendent of Academy District 20. 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 collected information regarding the strengths of the District and some of the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years. The online survey data is consistent with the input of the focus groups.

## Participation

Interviewed by the consultants were a number of invited individuals and groups from within the Academy District 20 and the Colorado Springs community. Included within the focus groups or interviews were the following: teachers, teacher association leaders, classified staff, former board members, clergy, military community and charter school representatives, business community leaders, district level administrators, parents, principals, students, and individual school board members. The total number of individuals interviewed or participating within an interview group was 341. The total number of participants providing input into this report totaled 1,937 as a result of the 1,596 community members and staff who completed the on-line survey. The online survey is consistent with the input of the focus groups.

The responses provided by the individuals and focus groups during the interviews are listed in two places – 1) “Consistent Themes,” which are listed beginning on page 3 of the report and 2) all responses from individual and group meetings, which are listed in the Appendix on page 10. They are listed alphabetically with no attempt to prioritize them. The online Community Survey Report and a draft of the desired characteristics are provided under separate cover and are meant to be stand-alone complementary pieces to the Leadership Profile Report. 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
Administrator	61	84
Board	6	NA
Classified Staff	49	174
Licensed Certified Staff	18	369
Parents	61	908
Community Members		48
Students	146	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>1,596</b>

*The Community group included business community representatives, clergy, charter school representatives, former members of the Board of Directors, and representatives from the military community. Parents and community members are represented in the chart as a combined total because they were in attendance at the same open forum sessions. School Board Members were individually interviewed but were not disaggregated as a separate group on the online survey.*

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.

## **CONSISTENT THEMES**

### Strengths of the District

When asked about the strengths of Academy District 20, every group noted that Colorado Springs is a wonderful place to live and that Academy District 20 highly contributes to the quality of life in Colorado Springs because of excellent programs, staff, community/parent support, resources, and facilities. Several groups noted that families move to Colorado Springs because of the ASD 20 schools. ASD 20 is justifiably proud of the extensive support provided to the school district from parents, community partners, and local businesses. One example is the passage of the last bond initiative by a large percentage of voters for new and renovated facilities. In particular, the community and parents demonstrate a strong commitment to public education and children and high academic expectations for all students by devoting time, resources, and money to the school district. School outreach is strong as evidenced by the positive relationships between the school district and military community.

The 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. Moreover, many see ASD 20 as a leader in promoting academic excellence for every child in the community as well as supporting school choice and charter schools. The Board of Directors actively models respectful policy governance to a high degree. The management of the district is organized around a strong site based decision making model.

It was also notable that several issues were cited as both strengths and challenges for the future. Site based decision making is one example of a strength and challenge. Many individuals including administrators and teachers cited the need to define the parameters of site based decision making and clearly delineating the responsibilities of building level and district level administrators. The need for a district-wide Strategic Plan was often mentioned as a first step in defining “site based.”

Population growth was also listed as a strength of the district and a challenge for the new superintendent. It is estimated that Colorado Springs will surpass Denver in population size over the next ten years. Growth in population will contribute to the continuing change in demographics in ASD 20 over the next ten years. The new superintendent will need to be sensitive to the growing difference in socio-economic needs as the school district continues to grow in addition to the needs of military families and families who choose to enroll their children in ASD 20 schools from outside the district. ASD 20, like all Colorado school districts, will feel continue to feel economic pressure to meet the needs of all students and maintain its tradition of academic excellence with the continued decrease of financial support from the state. Additionally, not all quadrants of the school district are growing at the same pace. The new superintendent will need to possess the financial acumen and people skills to navigate a delicate balance to support growth on the east side of the school district and the decline in student population on the west side of the district while maintaining aging facilities.

Attracting a new superintendent with the people skills and knowledge of Colorado school finance presents a challenge to the district. The district and community have worked deliberately and systemically to build a culture of excellence and high expectations. The fine reputation of academic excellence in ASD 20 was noted as a strength by every focus group. However, all groups also noted the negative impact that academic pressure is having on many children by the time that they graduate from high school and the strong sense a “one size fits all” education leading to admittance to a four year program at a college or university may not meet the needs of all students.

Finally, when considering strengths, it is important to note that the district has enjoyed a tradition of long service in the superintendency. Given the frequent turnover of superintendents in many districts, this tradition of long service in the superintendency is a strong selling point in recruiting candidates for the current vacancy.

In summary, strengths of ASD 20 include:

- Academic achievement
- Charter schools

- Choice enrollment
- Destination district, great school district
- Fiscally responsible
- Great students
- Great staff
- High expectations
- High performing district that strives to be the best
- Parent involvement and support
- Safety
- Site-based management and schools
- Strong Board of Directors
- Strong reputation
- Supportive community
- Varied opportunities and programs for students
- Well maintained facilities

Regarding the State of the District, the following statements from the online survey were perceived to be district strengths:

- The district has high standards for student performance.
- District schools are safe.
- Technology is integrated into the classroom.
- Facilities are well maintained.
- The District employs effective teachers, administrators, and support staff in its schools.

### Challenges/Concerns/ Issues Facing the District

All of the groups expressed a great deal of pride in the accomplishments of the Academy District 20 schools and emphasized that there is no need for a new superintendent to “clean house” but rather to have the ability to inspire and lead the school district to the next level. This includes having the ability to articulate a clear inspirational, compelling vision and developing and leading a district-wide Strategic Plan. While there is much to be proud of in ASD 20, the focus group input, while covering a multitude of topics and issues, did identify six broad areas that may pose a challenge to the next superintendent. The most frequently cited issues by almost everyone were related to understanding diversity in all its forms, fidelity of the implementation of technology, growing vocational programs in all of the high schools, managing growth across the district, building relationships with faculty/support staff and legislators, and future school funding.

All of the participants expressed a great deal of pride regarding the instructional program across the district including the innovative use of technology. Technology presents a special challenge because of the cost of new infrastructures and equipment that change very quickly. The new superintendent will need to have an understanding of the role of new

technologies and the impact on instruction to help all stakeholders understand how the digital world will continue to change education and the future of today's students.

While maintaining high academic achievement across the district was expressed as a priority, many expressed concern that there is an assumption across the community that attendance at a four year college/university is appropriate for all students. Key analysis questions include: What percentage of ASD 20 students graduate from a four year college/university? How will the district meet the future needs of students who may not wish to attend a four year institution? How will the district grow more programs for regular education students described as the "kids in the middle" by most groups and close the achievement gap for some minority groups? These questions will present a future challenge to the district.

Most groups, including students, expressed a concern about balancing district/parent academic expectations with emotional well-being. Increasing pressure to succeed academically is creating a great deal of anxiety for some students and parental concern for their child's social emotional well-being. Several groups/individuals mentioned the need for more social workers, counselors, and psychologists and the difficulty in finding qualified personnel to meet the needs of the individual schools.

Concern was expressed in almost every group about the ability of the new superintendent to build relationships with all stakeholders, particularly with teachers, parents and legislators. Teachers, as well as students, are feeling anxiety from the pressure to lead all students to higher and higher levels of academic success. Teachers in ASD 20, like those of their counterparts across the country, are also feeling anxiety from the increase in accountability and expectations from the public. They are expected to accomplish more in their classrooms each year. This anxiety may lead to tension between the Board of Directors and teachers in the future. The new superintendent will need to find ways to reach out to staff to affirm their importance to the ASD 20 learning environment, actively listen to their concerns, and defend decisions that affect staff and students. Attention to these areas will be important in order to build strong working relationships with staff over the next few years.

Finally, last but certainly not least, is the ability of the new superintendent to navigate the political climate in Colorado. Almost all groups expressed concern that future school funding for public education in Colorado and working with a legislative body that may not wholly support public education will be issues on the front burner for all school districts. Maintaining the strong positive relationships established by a successful past superintendent while advocating for public education in ASD 20 and across Colorado will present a challenge to the new superintendent.

In summary, challenges/concerns/issues include:

- Achievement gap
- Changing demographics: district sectors, school population
- Diversity among student population
- Growth trends: aging neighborhoods, different rate of growth across district

- Hiring and retaining talented teachers
- Initiative overload
- Maintaining a high achieving district yet challenge the status quo
- Not rest on our laurels
- Parent expectation challenges
- Site based decision making: define, range of autonomy, alignment
- Social emotional health
- Strategic plan and vision needed
- Teacher and staff compensation and benefits
- Technology: implementation, training, and expectations
- Too much pressure

### Desired Characteristics

The groups and individuals would like a superintendent who is “everything to all people,” thus the lists from all groups are long and comprehensive. There are many agreements that are worth noting.

There is a strong desire that the new superintendent be able to build and nurture relationships with a multi-faceted community, including: the school board, staff, parents, community, charter schools, school choice and military leaders. The new superintendent needs to be a good listener and possess strong communication skills with all stakeholders. This person will need to develop a deep understanding of the ASD 20 culture of high expectations and traditions, needs of the ASD 20 schools and Colorado Springs community, and the state of Colorado particularly in the area of school finance. It is expected that the new superintendent will be fully engaged in school and community life, highly visible, and politically savvy to deal with internal and external stakeholders. This individual is expected to live in the community, have a strong background in education preferably with teaching and administrative experience with a proven track record in school districts with similar characteristics as ASD 20. A deep understanding of educational research and innovative practices in addition to success as an instructional leader will be essential to solving future challenges that the District will face.

Groups and individuals would like a collaborative educational leader who understands the importance of gaining the trust and respect of staff, parents, and the community. Maintaining the strong, productive working relationship with Board members that has been a hallmark of past administrations is vitally important. The new superintendent needs to have a deep understanding of the change process in order to develop and implement a district-wide Strategic Plan aligned to each school’s site plan, define new levels of excellence and innovation, and lead the District forward. Someone with an inclusive management style that continues to empower and affirm staff is highly desired. All groups noted that financial acumen and an understanding of school finance and the political climate in Colorado are essential skills of the new superintendent. This individual should be courageous in defending recommendations that benefit students, accessible, approachable, open to new ideas, supportive of innovation and be of unquestioned integrity.

In summary, the next leader of Academy District 20 should be a strong educational leader who possesses the following characteristics.

A leader who has demonstrated the ability to

- Address changing demographics of the student population fairly and equitably.
- Analyze, organize and lead in a complex school district.
- Articulate and rally support for the district's vision and mission.
- Make data based decisions that focus on the needs of all students.
- Manage student enrollment growth and its related impact.
- Promote and sustain an environment of mutual trust, collaboration, and transparency.
- Respond to Board expectations and build productive board-superintendent relationships.
- Serve the needs of multiple constituencies simultaneously.

A leader who believes in and understands

- Benefits of parent and student choice to maximize educational opportunity.
- Charter schools as a vital community option.
- College and career readiness programming and services.
- Educational research and emerging best practices along with implementation strategies.
- Improving student achievement and the individual.
- Innovation and challenging the status quo.
- Policy governance.
- Pressures within an educational setting in concert with mental health and social emotional needs.
- Respecting diversity among all individuals.
- School finance.
- Site-based decision making and continuous improvement.
- Special needs of students and the array of services required in supporting those needs.
- Strategic planning to provide direction, focus, and alignment of school initiatives.
- The importance of maintaining the District's reputation and relationships with all stakeholders.
- Traditions of excellence in a high expectation school district.

A leader who is

- A courageous leader in the face of adversity.
- A skilled communicator and listener.
- A systems and strategic thinker capable of leading continuous improvement and innovation.
- An instructional leader committed to professional learning and supporting staff.
- Approachable, personable and a relationship builder.
- Collaborative, a team builder and emanates a sense of humor.
- Fair, of strong moral ethics and an advocate for the students.
- Mindful of pressures within the school setting, initiative overload and delivery capable.
- Passionate about learning with demonstrated success in prior teaching and leadership.
- Student-centered in mission, current in practice and visionary in thinking.
- Visible and engaged in the community.



The top-rated leadership profile characteristics that emerged from the online survey responses reinforced many of the themes expressed in the focus group interviews and in order of importance included the following:

- Foster a positive, professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators.
- Recruit, employ, and retain effective personnel throughout the District and its schools.
- Effectively plan and manage the long-term financial health of the District.
- Continue to maintain a culture of high expectations for all students and personnel.
- Demonstrate a deep understanding of educational research and emerging best practices and implement strategies.

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 ASD 20 Board to provide the leadership needed to continue the tradition of excellence in all aspects of the school environment and lead the District to the next level, while continuing to meet the unique needs of each of its schools and communities.

The search team would like to thank all of the participants who attended focus group meetings or completed the online survey and the ASD 20 staff members who assisted with our meetings, particularly Katrina Adad, Allison Cortez, Tracey Johnson, Doug Lundberg, and Karin Reynolds for their efforts in facilitating our time in the District.

Sincerely,

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