Superintendent Leadership Profile Report
St. Helena Unified School District
June 27, 2024

Introduction

This report represents findings from the *Engagement Phase* of the Superintendent Search facilitated by Education Support Services (ESS) Group from June 3-18, 2024. The data in this report was obtained from focus group sessions, individual interviews, a community forum, and online survey.

Input sessions were designed to gather information in three key areas: a) strengths of the district; b) challenges/issues St. Helena is (or may be) facing; and c) the qualities and characteristics desired in SHUSD's next superintendent.

An online survey was also distributed to give interested parties an opportunity to share their views about the overall conditions within the district, along with the important skills, attributes, and expertise the Board should consider in its superintendent selection. Input from the 253 survey respondents is summarized in **Exhibit A.**

Participation

A cross-section of employees, parents, students, and community members provided input to inform this process. All trustees also participated in individual interviews with the consultants. While the data in this report is not a scientific sampling, the information herein represents consistent themes and trends heard across groups or from constituents within a group.

The following individuals and/or groups participated in input sessions:

Individual/Group Interviews	Participants
Trustees/Senior Cabinet/Executive Assistant	8
District Office Managers and Staff	7
Principals & Assistant Principal	5
Student Leaders	2
SHTA Executive Board	4
CSEA Executive Board	3
DELAC	3
Monrovia Group	4
Napa Valley Superintendents	2
City Leaders	2
Community Forum	15
Total	**55**

Strengths of the District

When sharing overall district strengths, three universal themes emerged:

Size, Location, and Safe Community

St. Helena is viewed as an idyllic community where a diverse group of residents live, work, and learn. A high value is placed on the district's small size, safe schools, and welcoming atmosphere. Staff longevity and employee dedication were also touted as key contributors to the district's success. The specialness of SHUSD was poignantly described by a student who noted, "Wherever you live, whatever language you speak at home, or whatever your parents do for a living, we're all together from kindergarten to graduation."

Robust Programs and Learning Environment

SHUSD provides robust educational programs, course offerings, and support services well beyond what most public schools offer. With something for everyone, students experience an array of learning opportunities including: myriad CTE pathways, led by Future Farmers of America (FFA); dual enrollment with Napa Valley College; the arts; athletics; AVID; extracurricular activities; and small class size at all levels. A strong sense of pride and belonging permeates each campus, which is enhanced by modern facilities, technology upgrades, and inviting learning spaces.

Fiscal Stability

As a community funded (Basic Aid) district, SHUSD has one of the highest per pupil funding ratios in the state. As a result, the district can offer higher-than-average salaries and benefits to attract and retain experienced teachers, administrators, and support staff. Additionally, a generous and responsive group of foundations, non-profit agencies, and local businesses play a significant role in ensuring annual grants and donations keep innovative programs operating. At a time when most California districts are facing layoffs and budget reductions, St. Helena has maintained consistent and stable operations, labor relations, and positive staff morale.

Challenges and Issues Facing the District

When asked to describe any challenges or issues a new superintendent may encounter in leading the district, four overarching themes emerged.

Deferred Maintenance/Facilities Upkeep

Although school facilities have been modernized, most buildings are older and require further repairs. Facing an estimated $83 million in deferred maintenance costs, the district must secure additional funding sources. Some funds will come from state grants. Other funds will come from existing revenue, which may require reductions in other areas. A *Schools Facility Plan* has been approved to address priority projects, however current needs exceed available revenue. Facilities upkeep will be a challenge for the foreseeable future.

Declining Enrollment

Although declining enrollment is a statewide phenomenon, the impact on small districts like St. Helena is different than the impact on larger districts. Having too few students can affect program offerings, social engagement, teacher collaboration, and group activities. The ripple effect of declining enrollment will continue to impact staffing and class composition in the ensuing years.

Unified Vision and Strategic Plan

Despite many priorities and programs in SHUSD, participants expressed the absence of a unifying vision and coherent plan to move the district forward. For example, PLC's have been embraced as a key initiative, yet articulation is not universally practiced. Despite extensive resources, achievement gaps continue to persist. There is a perception that departments operate in silos, making it difficult to resolve problems or make decisions in an efficient manner. A strong desire was shared for the incoming superintendent to examine existing structures, systems, and plans to strengthen districtwide collaboration, alignment, and direction.

Connections/Outreach with Latinx Families

Maintaining deeper connections and more purposeful outreach with Latinx families was noted as an ongoing challenge. Participation of bilingual parents in meetings and key events is not at hoped for levels. People expressed a desire for better technology assistance and access for virtual meetings. The consistent availability of translators and headsets at meetings along with accommodations for working parents were also mentioned. The new superintendent will need to work closely with Latinx families to identify additional measures to strengthen connections.

Desired Superintendent Characteristics

Education partners seek a superintendent with an authentic, adaptable style. Specifically, they desire a leader who is approachable, responsive, and:

- Can wear many hats.
- Leads by example.
- Exhibits empathy and sensitivity toward others.
- Unifies people around a shared vision and focus.
- Supports the deeper work of PLC's using student data.
- Possesses a laser-like focus on high achievement for ALL students.
- Asks questions, listens, and leverages relationships to make needed changes.
- Is a community convener and face of the district.
- Supports consistency without complacency to continuously improve.
- Proactive decision-maker who takes calculated risks.
- Communicates effectively, transparently, and in a timely way.
- Recognizes the changing generation of students, families, and groups they serve.
- Understands the unique nature of serving a small district and community.
- Is willing to make a long-term commitment to the district.
- Works hand-in-hand with the governing board to create boundaries, build coherence, align goals, and prepare for the challenges ahead.

CLOSURE: The ESS consultants would like to thank everyone who participated in individual interviews, focus group sessions, and completed the online survey. Gratitude is also extended to Executive Assistant, Erica Madrigal who went above the call of duty in scheduling meetings, handling logistics, setting up the website, and ensuring a smooth process for all involved.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Gary Rutherford   *Dr. Suzette Lovely*

Exhibit A: Online Survey Data

Participation:

Role	Frequency	Percentage
Administrator	8	3.2%
Certificated Staff	43	17.0%
Classified Staff	21	8.3%
Parent/Guardian	122	48.2%
Student	34	13.4%
Community Member	17	6.7%
Other	8	3.2%
Total Respondents	**253**	**100%**

Table 1: Expertise and Experience

Survey respondents rated areas of *Expertise and Experience* by <u>scale of</u> importance:

Area of Expertise/Experience	Critically Important	Mildly Important	Not Important
Teaching and Learning	204 (85.3%)	33	2
Experience as a Site Principal	108 (45.7%)	115	13
Understands School/ Community Culture	206 (86.5%)	29	3
Negotiations/Labor Relations	98 (42.0%)	124	11
Fiscal Management	130 (55.5%)	99	5
Facilities Management	94 (40.1%)	130	10
Community Relations	178 (75.1%)	52	7
Board Governance	107 (45.9%)	109	17

Table 2: Most Important Leadership Skills (Top 5)

Survey respondents identified the following *Leadership Skills* as <u>most important</u> for SHUSD's incoming superintendent to possess:

Leadership Skills	Frequency	Percentage
1. Creates an atmosphere of trust.	186	77.5%
2. Forward thinker and open to new ideas.	155	61.%
3. Present/visible throughout the district and community.	152	60.1%
4. Knowledgeable about current practices surrounding teaching and learning.	144	56.9%
5. Can effectively navigate political and/or controversial issues.	126	49.8%

Table 3: Personal Attribute Rankings (Top 5)
Survey respondents identified the following *Personal Attributes* as deserving the <u>most attention</u> in the Board's assessment of candidates:

Personal Attributes	Frequency	Percentage
1. Honest and ethical	205	81.0%
2. Problem Solver	169	66.8%
3. Approachable and personable	168	66.4%
4. Exceptional communicator	131	51.8%
5. Inclusive (seeks broad input)	121	47.8%

Table 4: District Conditions
In assessing the general conditions across the district, respondents selected their level of agreement with each statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
1. Students receive a high-quality education that prepares them for college, career, and life.	50%	44%	4%	.04%	1.6%
2. Academic goals are aligned across the district.	28.7%	43%	16.6%	1.2%	10.5%
3. Adequate resources are provided to support student learning.	43%	43.4%	10.4%	1.2%	2.0%
4. Students feel valued and connected to their schools.	33.6%	49.8%	12%	2.9%	1.7%
5. Staff members feel valued and connected to their workplace.	28.7%	40.1%	15.4%	5.3%	10.5%
6. School safety is a high priority.	48.2%	39.8%	8.8%	.8%	2.4%
7. District facilities are clean and well-kept.	39.8%	42.2%	15.3%	1.2%	1.6%
8. Communication from the District is clear and timely.	30.3%	43.1%	20.5%	4.5%	1.6%
9. The district is responsive to the diverse interests and needs of its families.	22.1%	41%	24.9%	5.2%	6.8%
10. The district is constantly improving.	24%	36.2%	26%	5.3%	8.5%

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