



## **RUMSON-FAIR HAVEN SCHOOL DISTRICT**

### **SUPERINTENDENT PROFILE REPORT**

**JUNE 21, 2018**



## Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in May, 2018 for the new superintendent of the Rumson-Fair Haven Regional School District. The data contained herein were obtained from input the HYA consultant received when she 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. While the results of the survey (reported separately) are not expressly included in this report, the findings are consistent.

## Participation

The numbers of participants, by stakeholder group, in the two methods of data gathering are listed below: The count may be partially duplicated due to the fact that individuals may have completed the survey and also have been interviewed. Board members were not differentiated on the survey but were interviewed individually. Their collective ideas are presented in this report.

<b>Group</b>	<b>Personal interviews or focus groups</b>	<b>Online Survey</b>
Administrators	12	2
Board Members	8	N/A
Community	25	13
Parents		118
Students	13	27
Support Staff	60	7
Teachers		32
<b>Total</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>199</b>

The 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.

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 consultant's judgment, they warranted the Board's attention.

### Strengths of the District

The Rumson-Fair Haven School District is highly regarded by its constituents and by measures typically used to assess quality, it is a superior public school. The ingredients that contribute to its success are its community support, parental engagement, the quality of the staff and the students who come to school prepared and motivated to learn.

The community takes great pride in the high school and supports it through volunteer efforts, fundraising, direct contributions, and attendance at school activities; especially athletics. In focus groups, the term *Mayberry* was used occasionally to describe the greater community.

Parental support and engagement were consistently listed as assets. In responses, this strength generally referred to positive parenting at home as well as support for the goals of the district and the efforts of teachers.

The staff as a whole appears to be well-regarded. Many respondents noted the increased time and effort required of the school to respond to social and emotional health issues as well as student safety concerns. The expanded role of administrators is recognized and appreciated.

Teachers are respected and well-liked. They were consistently described in superlative terms such as *committed, caring, hard-working, dedicated* and *professional*. The teachers enjoy a high degree of camaraderie within their group.

The students are regarded as a major strength of the district. Polite was frequently used to describe the typical student demeanor. Their academic results as well as their athletic accomplishments contribute to the overall fine reputation of the school and its high rankings. Staff members describe their students as *highly motivated* and *eager to learn*.

## Challenges and Issues Facing the District

Every organization faces new challenges as time progresses and experiences issues that require attention. Through focus groups and individual interviews, HYA has identified the following challenges and issues that the next Superintendent will likely need to address.

Ensuring the proper balance between academics and athletics will be difficult but should be addressed, nonetheless. Some feel that balance is fine the way it is. Others, mostly the teaching staff, feel that academics have recently *taken a back seat* to athletics in terms of funding, time and attention. Deciding the proper balance and securing “buy in” from community, parents, teachers and students will require finesse and expertise of the new Superintendent!

The administration has initiated a school-wide effort to address the growing social and emotional needs of students, including but not limited to student safety, mental health, social media impact and drug and alcohol abuse. As in all schools, this work is far from finished!

Initiatives have also been started in the areas of scheduling and technology integration. However, the total curriculum has been identified by many constituents as in need of review and potential upgrading to ensure that the school keeps pace with new and emerging trends, particularly in science and technology.

The effectiveness of the organizational structure of the school has been questioned by several staff members. Two frequently reported concerns involve the need to clarify roles and responsibilities of the Principal and Superintendent and to improve the functioning of the supervisory team.

With regard to role clarity, teachers and parents need to know *who handles what* and not be allowed, intentionally or unknowingly, to selectively pick one or the other to answer questions or resolve issues. The topic of supervisory team effectiveness is more complex and deserves further study. The next Superintendent will need to assess equity of workloads and, if necessary, equalize them. In addition, s/he will need to build a more cohesive team and establish clear systems of accountability and responsibility for this crucial administrative group.

Other components of organizational effectiveness involve *chain of command* and consistency of rule enforcement. Many staff members expressed concern that individuals with grievances often circumvent the chain of command and seek remedy from the level they believe will be most sympathetic. Or, alternatively, they go through the chain but don't stop until they get the decision they want, even if that decision may not be in the best interest of the student or good for the general population of the school. This situation places undue expense on administrative time and potentially weakens the system's willingness or ability to fairly and consistently regulate.

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 consultant will seek candidates for consideration who can work with the Board to provide the leadership needed to continue to raise academic standards and student performance, while meeting the unique needs of each of its schools and community.

The search consultant would like to thank all the participants who attended focus group meetings and completed the online survey. Thanks also go to the Board of Education for actively participating in the design of the intake process and to Mr. Frank Gripp, Business Administrator/Board Secretary, and his staff for working with HYA on administering the on-line survey and for organizing the four days of focus groups and interviews.

## **Comments from Interviews and Focus Group Meetings**

*Listed in alphabetical order; repeated comments or concepts within the group*

The structure of the focus groups was open, allowing for participants to build upon each other's comments. Participants were asked to respond to the following questions.

1. What do stakeholders value regarding the schools? What strengths do they desire to retain and build upon?
2. What are the issues this District currently faces, and, will face in the next three to five years?
3. What personal and professional characteristics are expected in a new Superintendent?

## Group Name: Board Members

8 Participants

### Strengths:

- Community that values education and supports its schools.
- Good Board/Union relationship
- Good, hard-working Board
- Great teachers; committed and hard-working
- Strong academic program that prepares students for college
- Strong families; involved with children
- Successes in academics and sports
- Well-behaved students, ready and willing to learn

### Challenges/Concerns/Issues:

- Achieving the proper balance between athletics and academics
- Addressing the social and emotional well-being of students
- Becoming more proactive; less reactive
- Clarifying and maintaining lines of authority and decision-making
- Expanding K-12 articulation initiatives
- Implementing curricular changes, especially to keep pace with science and technology
- Managing parental demands effectively

### Desired Characteristics:

- Agent for considered and necessary change
- Consensus builder; bridge builder
- Educator well-versed in new and emerging trends
- Even-tempered, flexible and open
- Expert communicator
- *Face of the District*; establishes a clear and balanced vision for the district
- Good delegator; able to maintain responsibility and accountability
- Motivational and inspiring leader
- Thick-skinned; able to manage multiple and strong pressures on the office of superintendent

## Group Name: Central Office Administrators

5 Participants

### **Strengths:**

- Dedicated staff, caring and open to new ideas
- Great students; high achieving, polite, generally happy
- Identity and recognition of the school
- Involved parents
- Strong families
- Student Achievement
- Success in both academics and athletics
- Supportive community
- Tradition and school spirit

### **Challenges/Concerns/Issues:**

- Demanding parents
- Expanding needs in areas of social and emotional health
- Tendency to bow to parent pressure
- Unclear chain of command

### **Desired Characteristics:**

- Collaborative yet decisive leader
- Consensus builder
- Effective communicator
- Innovator and researcher
- Strong leader; instills accountability and high expectations
- Systems thinker; able to organize and instill discipline in decisions
- Team builder
- Tech savvy curriculum planner and communicator

## Group Name: Community and Parents (Open Forums and Focus Groups)

25 Participants

### Strengths:

- Caring community that supports its schools
- Competitive academic standing of the school
- Involved parents
- Quality of the staff
- Well-behaved, academically motivated students
- Well-rounded programs including academics, arts, sports and clubs

### Challenges/Concerns/Issues:

- Adequacy of state and local funding sources to maintain quality programs and services
- Communication with community (information and platforms)
- Integration of technology in the curriculum
- K-12 articulation of programs and services
- Safety and security of the facility
- Slippage in high school's competitive edge: academic standards/performance and competitions
- Social and emotional health of students
- Student access to drugs and alcohol

### Desired Characteristics:

- Accessible and responsive
- Actively engaged with students, staff and community
- Effective communicator
- Financially astute
- Firm but fair; has fortitude to withstand undue pressure
- Forward thinking, progressive, innovative
- Resourceful
- Skilled instructional leader and manager
- Tech savvy



**Group Name: Students (Student Council Class Officers)**

13 Participants

**Strengths:**

- Caring teachers who want student to succeed
- Closely knit school; small class sizes
- Focus is on the individual student
- Student involvement in sports, clubs, arts, and activities
- Success of the sports program

**Challenges/Concerns/Issues:**

- Inadequate student parking
- Inefficiency of the security system
- Lack of consistency in grading: standards and feedback
- Lack of role clarity between Principal and Superintendent
- Perceived uneven enforcement of student discipline by teachers and administrators
- Student daily schedule could be improved (split period 9 before and after school for extra help)

**Desired Characteristics:**

- Current and knowledgeable regarding social issues
- Open-minded
- Out-going and visible to students

## Group Name: Supervisors

7 Participants

### **Strengths:**

- Committed, professional teachers
- Community positive about education and supportive of the school
- Great students: actively involved and eager to learn
- School spirit shared by students and community
- Supportive parents
- Well-resourced programs

### **Challenges/Concerns/Issues:**

- Chain of command issues; unclear and/or unfollowed
- Decline in professional autonomy regarding curriculum and professional development
- Increased needs of students in emotional and mental health including drugs and alcohol
- Perception by some that group members receive uneven treatment by administrators
- Time required to deal with parents who challenge grades, discipline, etc.

### **Desired Characteristics:**

- Academician; able to manage competing demands on staff and maintain focus on instruction
- Acts in best interest of students
- Fair, firm and consistent
- Good delegator; holds accountable but does not micromanage
- Honest and ethical; has strong moral compass
- Open communicator
- Team builder

## Group Name: Teachers (58) and support Staff (2)

60 Participants

### **Strengths:**

- Collegial teaching staff
- Excellent extra-curricular program
- Family-feel of the school
- Motivated students
- Professional, dedicated teachers
- Rigor of the academic program
- Supportive and generous parents

### **Challenges/Concerns/Issues:**

- Curriculum designed almost exclusively for 4-year college bound students
- Delivery of PD (mandated and/or turn key vs. personalized)
- Emphasis on sports vs. academics
- Parental demands and challenges to teacher decisions
- Strained relations between teaching staff and administration
- Student use of cell phones
- Uneven or inadequate enforcement of rules by administration

### **Desired Characteristics:**

- Collaborative leader
- Courageous; does not bow under pressure
- Consistent, even-tempered, and ethical
- Curious, intelligent and innovative thinker
- Empowering of teachers
- Fair and just decision-maker
- Respectful and personable
- Seasoned and secure; not defensive
- Socially aware