SCHOOL EXEC CONNECT

COCHRANE-FOUNTAIN CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR PROPOSED COCHRANE-FOUNTAIN CITY PROFILE REPORT
October 9, 2018

The Cochrane-Fountain City Board of Education wants to have a better understanding of the school and community members' perceptions of the District as they begin their search for a new Superintendent. The Board requested *School Exec Connect* consultants Dr. Kenneth Dragseth, and Dr. Antoinette Johns to gather information from constituents regarding the strengths and challenges of the District as well as the characteristics, skills and attributes desired in the new superintendent. This report presents a summary of the comments of people who attended focus groups, those who were interviewed individually and people who responded to the District's On-line Survey.

Focus groups were held with: Principals/Administrators/Director, Elementary Certified Staff, Secondary Certified staff, Non-certified staff, Students (grades nine through twelve), and an Open Community members group. The District School Board members, the current Superintendent were met with individually.

The On-line Survey asked for respondents to self select from the following categories: Certified Staff member, Student, Administrator, Non-certified staff member, Community/Business member, Parents/Guardian (past or present). This survey was available on-line in English, and Spanish versions. No one completed the Spanish version of the survey. That does not mean they didn't participate as they may have completed the English version.

Due to the sampling methodology, this report should not be considered scientifically accurate. The on-line survey was intended to be completed only one time per email address. Respondents may have participated in both a Focus Group and the On-line Survey. The opinions set forth may not reflect the opinion of the majority of the staff or District residents. The judgments of what should be included in this report are those of the consultants based on the statements heard throughout the data-gathering process. The on-line survey results are rank-ordered and the Focus Group results are not rank-ordered.

The attached information includes the Board members individual responses combined as a group. Next we reported the input received from the open Community meeting. A separate document is the suggested Profile for a new superintendent.

Thank you to those who took the time to attend one of the focus groups or individual meetings. The results of this report will assist the Board as they enter the next phase in the search for a new superintendent of schools.

This report may be used in several ways:

- After reviewing the input from stakeholders of the District, the Board may modify and approve the attributes that will serve as criteria to be considered as candidates are screened and interviewed.

- The Board should review this report to become informed about the thinking of different constituent groups regarding the perceptions of those associated with the District.

- The Consultants will use this report as the foundation for screening and interviewing candidates who are well matched for the superintendent's position in this district.

- The Consultants recommend that this report be available to candidates for a better understanding of the District and its strengths and challenges.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth Dragseth   Antoinette Johns
President   Vice President

SCHOOL EXEC CONNECT consultants

BOARD INTERVIEW RESPONSES

BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Board of Education identified the following educational strengths/attributes for the District:

- Strong, dedicated staff in place; dedicated to learners
- Great students, top notch
- Financial stability of the district, fiscally conservative. Have built a fund balance, which is good for potential tough times ahead, and from where we were historically
- Strong community support historically and currently/school is the hub of the community
- Kids can have opportunity to participate in all athletics, activities and the arts in this district
- Board of Education works well together/progressive and data driven/transparent/want to make schools better/we're all on the same page now
- Good facilities
- Surrounded by colleges and tech school and are working on partnerships
- Pride in District
- Auditorium is open to the community
- Work well with others such as Head Start is here and a 3 year old program
- Kids pretty much look out for each other
- Our kids get really involved in activities i.e. FFA
- This spring the Seniors wrote suggestions for how to make this district better for those following them
- Elementary teachers very impressive-good start for kids
  Communication between Board/Superintendent, individual communication and need to move to communication with the full Board on questions etc.
- Data, we do collect some numerical data and have access to state data, our surveys completed, Financial and Taxpayer info through WI Policy Forum, the WI DPI and CESA 4.
- Communication: Is incorporated in two Board Goals, new website with mobile access, social media presence
- Facilities
- Small town
- Passage of our recent referendum
- School Climate: We have baseline data upon which to gauge future improvement efforts

The Board of Education identified the following educational challenges/barriers for the District:

- Lack of trust within district
- Communication between Board/Superintendent, individual communication and need to move to communication with the full Board on questions etc.
- Facility issues need to be addressed, decide on appropriate plan
- Money, funding for issues in the future
- Lack of leadership, moral purpose and selflessness from Administrative level
- Undermining of Board actions/policies
- Maintaining/filling Board vacancies with quality people
- Relationships with the community seem to be missing

- We don't solidly grab onto something and follow through
- Teacher pay issue, resolution for long term
- Administrator competency and approachability
- Maintaining stability of finances
- Small town and students grow and go away
- Making students aware of post-secondary options other than 4 year college
- Rumor mill
- Air quality issues
- Kids have a lot of pressure upon them, negativity, worry
- Need support for kids working hard, and give them some recognition
- Mental health needs of students
- Need much more in career and technology. Our work force is losing highly skilled individuals and we need the vision to build these programs
- Establish more partnerships with business and expand the curriculum
- Special education needs
- Not aware that all levels of evaluation are being completed
- "Good old Boys Club" atmosphere
- Kids feel shut down, like their input is not wanted
- Making kids aware of post-secondary options available other than four year college
- Used to have programs that no longer exist i.e. Project Science and a history program
- Everyone takes everything personally/need objectivity
- Need objective decision making

The Board of Education identified the following goals for the school district in the next three years:
- Maintain financial stability and strength, have a balanced budget
- Develop and implement district wide mental health program
- Healthy environment, i.e. air quality
- Strategic Plan development and implementation, set goals and measurements for accountability
- Prepare kids for workforce, college or career, assuring we track them to see their readiness and if they felt they had options
- Improve community engagement, as there are even greater opportunities to collaborate
- Continue to build and offer a strong, rigorous curriculum with a variety of courses to meet all students' needs
- Data, not used to using it, although used some we have used intuition, seems some professional development would benefit people
- Want kids to be safe, successful and achieve
- Communication: Have an ill-defined and decentralized system of communication. Haven't fully utilized traditional channels not kept up with new forms as they have developed
- Need expectations set out for teachers, coaches, activity advisors regarding communication/publicity, hit or miss now
- Confusing organizational structure leads to confusion about "who is responsible for what and who do I go to about this concern"
- Strained administration and board relationships has created some polarization among staff, sometimes leading to rumors in our small community

- Reduce/eliminate factors that hamper/impair an optimal learning and work environment: including physical factors like safe and clean facilities/substandard technology/emotional factors such as mental health and bullying issues
- Give people an opportunity to be heard, involve them in decisions affecting them
- Thriving community needs a thriving district
- School Climate: biggest barrier to improving school climate is the desire to do "business as usual", perhaps a lack of understanding as to importance of climate in the context of student success, no one wants to be the "bad guy" but cracking down on cell phone use during class or hours of employment for employees, those issues definitely have a bearing on student success, recently seen acceptance and understanding of need to embrace change from some individuals
- Be creative with financing; so it we can use it more effectively
- Improving and increasing the communication between the District and the community, open, honest communication that connects, engages and supports families and community members
- Improve school climate, affecting student success
- Improve physical environment and safety
- Improve disciplinary standards, fairness and accountability to the social emotional environment
- Clarify roles and responsibilities, with clear and understandable lines of authority and delineation of responsibilities
- Encourage innovation and celebrate successes
- Recruit and retain high quality teaching staff and reduce some class sizes
- Implement new Board policies and cascade them to all staff
- Need HR and Communications support personnel
- Functional Board with appropriate Board and Administrative relationships
- When developing budget need to come closer to how we end up each year
- Establish goals and carry through
- Need mental health services to meet student needs
- Use data informed decision making collect and analyze data to inform and guide in way that promotes success

The Board of Education identified the following characteristics/skills needed by the next superintendent to be successful
- Been in schools before but thinks out of the box
- Genuine, authentic, engaging, empathetic, unconditional positive regard for others
- Experiences as a Sup't, (not the end all, be all though)
- Visionary-sees the needs for the district's future, skilled in strategic planning
- Knowledgeable about current research and trends
- Embraces change and encourages others to do so
- Team player, engaging, motivating, and unifying, exudes enthusiasm and excitement about the district and its potential
- Able to communicate with all
- Possesses the ability to bring stakeholders together to work as a team to reach the district's potential
- Fair, yet firm manager who delegates appropriately, with accountability and fidelity to established policies and administrative rules
- Leadership skills
- Complete understanding that we are all here for student success/really into kids

- Out and about in classrooms
- Model and build trust
- Strong school knowledge of school finance
- Politically astute and active in local government and at the legislature
- One who has had the appropriate prerequisite responsibilities to become a Superintendent
- Ability to work effectively and collaboratively with others
- Effective communicator before groups and in written form
- Personable, good with people, good listener and willing to work with all groups
- Public relations front liner – our spokesperson, be visible within and outside of the district buildings at community events as active participant
- Good management of staff
- High integrity/Transparent/honesty/ambition/moral purpose
- High achieving leader/risk that openly demonstrates selflessness
- Aware of what our community's kids are going through, mental health needs
- Have PR skills/leader within district and the community
- Able to work with various stakeholders
- Work with professional staff development
- Experienced Superintendent
- Visible in the community and at school events/activities
- Need to have empathy and be able to mend from where we are/unifier
- Doesn't procrastinate/organized
- Able to make tough decisions objectively, systems thinker based on kids and needs

The Board identified the following questions to ask candidates as they select the Superintendent:
- What experience do you have with college preparedness/post-secondary programming?
- Please provide specific examples of demonstrated progress you have made in any organizations you've led. (Examples include higher test scores, fewer remedial courses, increased graduation rate, etc.)
- Please provide specific evidence that you have been successful in rallying the broader community to accomplish the district's goals. (Examples include business community involvement, parental involvement, creating a program to increase the number of students who graduate with some college credit, etc.)
- Demonstrate with specific examples how you've been involved with the community
- How do you determine when you need staff development?
- What is the most important role of the superintendent in a District our size?
- What's the most important "first steps" a superintendent should usually take in a new district"
- What would you do about a marginally effective teacher or administrator?
- What methods will you use to keep yourself and this board "current" on important matters?
- Describe the job performance evaluation system you would implement at C-FC.
- Under your leadership and in a District our size, describe what a good principal does.
- What changes would you want to make but would wait 6-12 months to garner support?
- In personnel evaluation, what is the role of the principal, superintendent, and board of education?
- Have you used, developed or revised a personnel evaluation system? For whom: certified, non-certified?

- What role have you had in building a complete district budget? Your role, the Boards, and the bookkeepers?
- What is the most important school business function a superintendent should perform?
- What is the role of the superintendent and board of education in curriculum development and/or innovation? The Principal's role?
- What are your thoughts about Board committees? What should the superintendent's role be?
- Do you recommend the district contract the transportation service or be district operated?
- What are your thoughts about minimal competency testing for all staff positions?
- The Board has completed community surveys and received concern that the school is too focused on athletics. What do you think the role of extracurricular activities should be in this district based on the communities concern?
- Assume the Board wants to go back to the basics to improve the school at all levels, how would you assist to make this happen?
- What is the extent of academic offerings a school district this size should offer?
- How should this district's curriculum be split between college prep and vocational courses or programs?
- What is your philosophy on seeking or needing an operating referendum?
- Share your knowledge/understanding of the state funding formula?
- What do you see as the chain of command in a district this size, including the board of education?
- How do you see yourself in this community?
- How would you see yourself engaging with this Board?
- What makes you a good administrator? Values, experience, education?
- How will you get to know your staff, and students?

OPEN COMMUNITY MEETING

The Open Community Group identified the following as the educational strengths/attributes of the District:
- Excellent teachers, engaged and passionate
- Having the Head Start programs
- Community location, near larger communities
- Everyone knows everyone, cares about kids
- After school programs
- Booster club support
- Volunteers
- Facilities are well maintained
- Fundraising support

The Open Community Group identified the following as the educational challenges/barriers for the District:
- Very little resources in the community thus we have poverty without the needed supports
- Lack of technology in the area
- Lack of major businesses

- Lack of transportation for some students
- Long bus rides for kids
- Class size issues and lack of class options
- Increasing poverty
- Mental health issues without needed services

The Open Community Group identified the following goals as important for the school district to achieve in the next three years:
- Be more progressive, innovative
- More college class options for students such as on line classes, STEM, and IT
- Be financially responsible
- Work with technical schools to have more program options
- Consistent behavioral management
- Support Administrative structure,
- Transparent succession plan

The Open Community Group identified the following characteristics/skills needed by the new superintendent to be successful:
- Ability to be a servant leader, be a team player
- Collaborative work style
- Vision for early childhood
- Communicator, approachable
- Finance, HR background
- Curriculum expertise
- Generate enthusiasm
- Be a cheerleader for the district, face of the district

What questions/areas would you like the Board to ask the candidates as they select the superintendent?
- What have your experiences been and what are you proud of?
- What would your current staff say about you?
- Tell us something unique about yourself.
- What do you do if the Board is perceived as difficult?
- Why do you think people are in poverty?
- Why Cochrane-Fountain City?
- What do you bring to our district?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 or 10 years?