



Mansfield Public Schools Superintendent Search - 2015

Leadership Profile Report Executive Summary

**Prepared for the
Mansfield Board of Education
Superintendent Search Committee
by
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MANSFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH - 2015

Phase I: Research Report

INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT

The Mansfield Board of Education, in the capacity of Superintendent Search Committee, is conducting a search for a new superintendent to fill the vacancy resulting from the resignation of the permanent superintendent. An interim superintendent, Dr. Richard Kisiel, was hired to fill the vacancy until the Board of Education has appointed a new superintendent.

The selection of a school superintendent is a state-legislated responsibility of Boards of Education in Connecticut. Therefore, the Mansfield Board of Education members are fulfilling their statutory duty functioning as a search committee. To that end, the Mansfield Board of Education, after having negotiated a contract with Cooperative Educational Services (C.E.S.) Executive Search Services, directed the C.E.S. consultant to proceed with implementing the C.E.S. search model consisting of four phases: *Phase I: Research, Phase II: Recruitment, Phase III: Selection, and Phase IV: Transition*. More information about each phase of the C.E.S. search process is available on the district website for those persons wishing to learn more about the steps in the search process.

To implement the research component (Phase I) of the search model, the Board authorized the C.E.S. Executive Search Consultant, Dr. H. Kaye Griffin, to conduct data collection activities with Mansfield stakeholders focusing on the leadership expectations of the Mansfield school community as well as the challenges the district is facing in the near future.

The end product of the research phase is this report which provides documentation of the research data and equips the Mansfield Superintendent Search Committee and community with a general profile of leadership attributes and personal characteristics Mansfield stakeholders desire to see in the new superintendent. Additionally, the report documents the perceived strengths of the district and the challenges facing the district in the present and near future. The leadership profile is based on the data collected through the *online survey* administered from April 6-April 24 and the *focus groups* that were conducted in the school community on April 27, 28, and 29. The Search Committee will use the report as a guide in the selection of the next superintendent of schools.

PARTICIPATION IN THE DATA COLLECTION ACTIVITIES

The C.E.S. consultant used two research or data collection protocols: (1) administration of an online survey and (2) face-to-face focus group meetings. Seeking stakeholder input on a number of essential elements of superintendent leadership, the consultant asked the online survey respondents and the focus group participants to identify the skills, qualifications, and personal attributes and characteristics they deem most desirable for the new superintendent. Additionally, participants were asked, from their own perspectives, to identify and comment on the district's future challenges and their vision for the Mansfield Public Schools.

The data presented in the report represents input from a total of **255** people who participated in focus group meetings and/or the online survey that was accessible on the school district website. The consultant met with **97** people in the focus group meetings and **158** people took the online survey. The focus groups categories can be viewed on the district website by clicking on the link for superintendent search information. It should be mentioned that the consultant interviewed other stakeholders (Town Manager and Region #19 School District Superintendent), as well as the Interim Superintendent. The Board of Education also completed the online survey and results for that group are included in this report.

Persons who took the online survey were asked to identify their demographic or stakeholder category but were not asked to provide their names. The breakdown of the stakeholder categories is provided in the data charts included in **Appendix A**, a separate electronic file. The number of participants in each of the focus group meetings is provided in the data charts included in **Appendix B**, a separate electronic file.

In its entirety, this report contains an (1) an **Executive Summary** of the research phase of the search process and the findings contributing to the *Leadership Profile for the New Superintendent*, (2) **Appendix A** - compilation of raw data collected through the online survey, and (3) **Appendix B** - compilation of raw data collected in the focus group meetings, and **Appendix C** - compilation of raw data collected through the Board of Education online survey.

Frequently mentioned or consistent ideas and themes expressed by the stakeholders throughout the data collection activities are highlighted in this report and are organized by discussion of district strengths, district challenges, and leadership attributes and personal characteristics desired in the new superintendent.

It should be noted that respondents to the online survey may have participated in both a focus group meeting and the online survey, thus expressing their opinion/thoughts more than once in the process. Additionally, the conclusions set forth in this summary may not reflect the opinion of a majority of any singular category of stakeholders represented, particularly if the participation rate for that category was low. However, the number and cross-section of participants who took part in the data collection effort assures that many voices were heard.

Finally, the summary and conclusions are based comprehensively on the data collected throughout the research phase of the search and summarized in the data charts included in the addenda to this report. The online survey results, *with the exception of the open-ended questions*, are rank-ordered with the responses presented in order of frequency. The focus group comments are not rank-ordered and are presented randomly within a focus group category.

Due to the sampling methodology, the information included in this report should not be considered scientifically accurate. For example, although the online survey was designed to be completed only once for each person / computer IP, it might have been possible for an individual to submit the same responses more than once on the same computer or to respond to the survey on two different computers. To control for that possibility, the consultants manually monitored the responses and eliminated multiple responses that appeared to have been submitted by the same person more than once, retaining only one of the responses in the data set. Multiple responses from the same computer that were entered by different people were included in the data as "unique" responses. Thus, it was possible for public computers or family computers to process multiple responses to the survey.

The consultant cautions the Superintendent Search Committee and others not to look upon the identification and discussion of the challenges discussed in this report as criticism of the Mansfield Public Schools as an organization. Every school district faces challenges because school districts are very complex organizations.

Instead, the discussion of the challenges should be regarded as an attempt to "take the temperature" of the school community and assess what stakeholders perceive to be the most pressing challenges in the present and immediate future of the school district.

The Superintendent Search Committee will do a better job in the search process by knowing which challenges are of greatest significance to the stakeholders. The Superintendent Search Committee will use this information, along with the other data that was collected, to identify an individual in the applicant pool who has the skills-set and background to respond to the challenges.

Dr. H. Kaye Griffin (C.E.S. Executive Search Consultant) and the Board of Education / Search Committee, wish to express gratitude to those people who took the time to respond to the online survey and/or to attend one of the focus group meetings, and by doing so, participating in the search process.

Executive Summary of Data Collection Activities

Strengths of the Mansfield Public Schools

In the context of the focus group meetings, participants generated a list of school district's strengths. Many positive statements about the Mansfield Public Schools and community were shared in each of the meetings. Those comments have been organized around several broad areas that appear to be representative of the most frequently cited strengths across all focus group meetings.

Stakeholders in the Mansfield Public Schools who participated in the data collection activities expressed their personal pride in their community's heritage and diversity. They readily discussed their ongoing interest in and commitment to helping to shape the future direction of the Mansfield Public Schools, a central focus of the town they in which they enjoy living and working.

The list of strengths presented is not intended to suggest that any one strength outweighs another and is, therefore, arranged in random order. Although a wide range of comments around a variety of strengths was generated in the discussions, the consultant identified those most frequently expressed by the participants. Those selected strengths are listed below:

Mansfield Public Schools boasts as selected strengths, the following:

- **Being a part of a relatively small New England town that exudes a strong "sense of community" represented by a culturally and ethnically diverse citizenry who are consistently supportive of the public schools and proud of their town/schools successful shared services model;**
- **Possessing an excellent and diverse student body, ready and eager to learn;**
- **Employing dedicated and committed teachers, staff, and administrators, who take pride in their sustained efforts to improve teaching and learning, work that is further enhanced through the district's affiliations with the local universities (UConn and ECSU);**
- **Providing multiple diverse and rich academic and extracurricular opportunities for all of the Pre-K-Grade 8 students the district serves in both the general education and special education programs; and**
- **Being supported by highly engaged parents who are involved in their children's education.**

Discussion of Selected Strengths of Mansfield Public Schools

- **Mansfield Public Schools is part of a relatively small New England town that exudes a strong "sense of community" represented by a culturally and ethnically diverse citizenry who are consistently supportive of the public schools and proud of their successful town/schools shared services model.**

Focus group participants were quick to identify Mansfield as a relatively "small town" school community that, as a by-product of its "smallness," easily fosters relationships among students, staff, parents, and members of the community. This characteristic was considered by many participants to be a valuable "drawing card" for a new superintendent. A strong "sense of community" was language used to refer to Mansfield by many of the focus group participants. Mansfield's relatively small size, in the words of the participants, should be attractive to applicants seeking to work in a community in which building relationships and getting to know people both in the schools and the town would be very manageable.

Mansfield was described by many as a "culturally and ethnically diverse community," particularly for a town of its size and geographic location. Many attributed this asset of diversity to the fact that the local universities have faculty and staff from many other countries and that many graduate students who attend the University of Connecticut are from other parts of the world. This diversity is perceived to enrich the community and provide a benefit to the students attending the public schools.

Mansfield was also described as a community that cares about the children and the students of the Mansfield Public Schools. Education is a priority for this community, a community that values educating its youth, both in the present and historically. Many offered comments about Mansfield as a town that historically has provided the resources needed by the schools to educate the children. Mansfield is a desirable community - a place people move to have their children attend Mansfield Public Schools.

Those in school district and town leadership spoke impressively about the long-standing town/schools shared services model that continues to benefit the town of Mansfield, the Mansfield Public Schools, and the Region #19 School District, even after more than two decades of partnership. By sharing such operations as fiscal services, facilities management, technology services, and self-funded health insurance programs, the town and the schools maximize the taxpayers' dollars, avoid redundant spending, and foster solid working relationships among employees throughout the separate organizations. The new school superintendent will need to embrace the concept of "shared services" and be ready to assume a full partnership on the team of professionals in Mansfield who work diligently within this model to support their town and its citizens, including the children in the Mansfield Public Schools.

- **Mansfield Public Schools has an excellent and diverse student body, ready and eager to learn.**

Mansfield Public Schools takes pride in its student population. Focus group participants spoke often of the excellent student body throughout the school district; students who come to school prepared and ready to learn. Mansfield students participate in both school and community activities, take learning

seriously, and behave respectfully and responsibly toward their teachers, peers, and the community. The students themselves stated they "have access to and appreciate the many opportunities available to them" in the Mansfield Public Schools and community at large, such as sports, clubs, and special programs and events.

The students commented that they recognize how they benefit from having good teachers, access to strong extracurricular activities, and the opportunity to attend school in a town that is a caring community. They appreciate that their teachers challenge them to do their very best in their classes. They also are grateful that extra help with their learning is there when they need it.

The student body is diverse in many ways including ethnicity, socio-economic status, cultural backgrounds and experiences, and learning styles and needs. One member of a focus group stated, "Mansfield has a good blend of people from all over the world." As a result, the school district honors and respects the diversity of students and strives to meet the academic, emotional, social, and developmental needs of all Mansfield students. The school district's efforts to support the social-emotional and developmental needs of the students is enhanced through strong partnerships with both the youth services and human services departments within the Mansfield town organization.

- **Mansfield Public Schools employs dedicated and committed teachers, staff, and administrators who take pride in their sustained efforts to improve teaching and learning, work that is further enhanced through the district's affiliations with the local universities (UConn and ECSU).**

The Mansfield Public Schools employs administrators, teachers and support staff who are dedicated to their professional practice, who are involved with and supportive of their students, who care about one another and who share a sense of camaraderie. They appear to understand the recursive nature of new initiatives in school district organizations and the challenges that sometimes surround such efforts, but they remain committed to the success and growth of the school district.

School district organizations are first and foremost "people organizations" and Mansfield's human resources, overall, constitutes one of the district's greatest strengths according to the many voices participating in the data collection effort in the superintendent search process. Mansfield enjoys a high retention rate for its faculty and staff and hiring practices promote "selective hiring" of quality staff - people want to work in Mansfield. One participant stated that it is "easy to recruit good teachers when vacancies are available."

Mansfield employees appear to be resourceful professionals, particularly when materials and supplies are lacking because of budget constraints or other obstacles that inhibit seamless integration of new practices and procedures, e.g., lack of up-to-date textbooks. Additionally, the teachers expressed a desire to continue to grow and develop as educators so they can continue to best serve the students in the Mansfield schools. The administrators stated that the "staff is focused on supporting the positive growth and development of the whole child." As a team of professionals, members of the faculty and staff stated, "We seek the same excellence that we strive for our students; we work with amazing, devoted professionals." In the focus group for members of the Town Council, a member stated, "The quality of the classroom teachers is extraordinary and teachers are very involved with the students, knowledgeable about their content, techniques, and pedagogy."

Mansfield Public Schools enjoys productive affiliations with the local universities. Many stakeholders remarked on the various partnerships that exist with UConn with the Neag School of Education faculty and many more. People recognize that the universities in the region provide important resources for both students and faculty and staff. For example, both UConn and ECSU provide the school district with quality interns, student teachers, and opportunity for grants. One participant commented that the universities provide the school district "a great pool of student volunteers who serve our children."

The Mansfield Public Schools administrators, teachers and support staff impose high standards on themselves for facilitating achievement for all students. Similarly, central office staff and school office staff help to set a very professional environment for the school district and contribute much to the success of the district. Mansfield's relatively new administrative team is perceived to be strong and totally committed to the important work they do to facilitate teacher success and student growth.

- **Mansfield Public Schools provides multiple diverse and rich academic and extracurricular opportunities for all of the Pre-K-Grade 8 students the district serves in both the general education and special education programs.**

Although the district, like most districts throughout Connecticut, faces the immediate challenge of revamping curriculum to align with Common Core State Standards, Mansfield Public Schools can boast its ongoing efforts and commitment to improve teaching and learning, particularly at the school level and individual teacher level.

Many who participated in the focus group meetings spoke about the current "breadth and depth" of the curriculum offered to Mansfield students and voiced their desire to retain a comprehensive educational program for all students regardless of their individual interests and needs. Beginning with the students themselves, many participants in the focus group meetings touted the district's outstanding diverse academic and extracurricular opportunities for Mansfield students. A participant in one of the focus groups stated, "Our music programs, language programs, enrichment programs, and athletics are awesome!" A participant in the middle school faculty and staff focus group pointed out that the Mansfield curriculum and educational programs "go beyond the test and students have clear guidelines, with cross-disciplinary teaching and collaboration." Enrichment programs at all four schools are well-developed and offer students differentiated learning experiences.

Additionally, several participants noted that the Mansfield Public Schools has a reputation for offering excellent services to students in the district's special education programs. Students who receive special education services in Mansfield schools are included in general education classrooms most of the time through the district's well-developed inclusion model. The program enjoys a rich history of excellence and focus group participants were quick to state that they perceive that the special education programs in Mansfield to be a "drawing card" for other families in the region. However, it should be noted that some parents expressed concern regarding gaining access to some services, an area that the Board of Education and the new superintendent will need to explore further to define and address what the issues are surrounding this concern of some parents.

Some spoke in regard to Mansfield having "Award-nominated schools, including Goodwin Elementary School as a Blue Ribbon nominee and Mansfield Middle School as a past Blue Ribbon School winner." Statements such as the one above reveal that Mansfield stakeholders, in general, both honor and celebrate their diverse and rich academic and extracurricular offerings for students and would want to

sustain that characteristic of their school district. Mansfield educators, parents, and taxpayers in general have invested time and resources toward these varied academic and extracurricular opportunities for students and their efforts continue to benefit the youth in this community.

Overall, the district participates in many programs that promote the diverse racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds of the students. Students can study four different world languages, they can participate in band/orchestra/chorus, they can participate in international exchange programs to China and Germany, and they can take courses at E.O. Smith High School when accelerated learning is desirable. The well-respected E.O. Smith High School offers students who exit the Mansfield Middle School, as well as other schools throughout the region, a rigorous program of studies that prepares them for rewarding careers in many disciplines.

➤ **Mansfield Public Schools boasts being supported by highly engaged parents who are involved in their children's education.**

Participants in the focus groups stated that Mansfield parents are very involved in their children's education, supportive of the schools and educators, and focused on helping the Board of Education, the administration, and the staff improve the schools for the benefit of the students. In focus group meetings, they voiced their commitment to supporting the school district's efforts to focus on the *individual child's* needs and promoted sustained comprehensive educational programming and small class size, in spite of the fiscal challenges the district might face going forward. Mansfield parents are very visible in the school community and stand ready to assist the Mansfield Public Schools through their role as parent partners in the education of their children.

Family involvement in the schools was noted as very positive. In the focus groups, parents were passionate and spoke openly and frankly about the school district's many assets. They also recognize that, as an organization, the district must remain focused on further growth and development to ensure that their children, and future students in Mansfield, benefit from access to "high quality, comprehensive educational learning opportunities." Many parents applaud the school district's efforts to stay focused on educating the "whole child" and to maintain a proper and healthy balance between externally imposed mandates for standardized testing and high quality, comprehensive educational learning experiences for all children.

Selected Challenges Facing the Mansfield Public Schools

In the focus group meetings and through the online survey, stakeholders were asked to consider the future of the Mansfield Public Schools under new leadership in light of the challenges the new leader would encounter. As expected, Mansfield's known challenges, concerns and issues were at the forefront of their thinking as the stakeholders responded.

The consultant considered identification of the most pressing challenges to be of significance to the success of the selection of the new superintendent, knowing that criteria for selection of the new superintendent would include assessment of a candidate's "readiness" to lead the effort to address those challenges. Thus, the input on district challenges was very helpful and will influence the superintendent search process and outcome.

The random listing of selected challenges presented below is not intended to suggest that any one challenge outweighs another and is, therefore, designed to avoid giving such an impression. Although there was a wide range of comments and perspectives around a variety of challenges, the consultant identified those challenges *most frequently* expressed by stakeholders for the purpose of this report.

Mansfield Public Schools faces the selected challenges of . . .

- **Rebuilding trust in district leadership and restoring positive and productive working relationships with the extended community of Mansfield;**
- **Addressing variables and obstacles currently impacting the district's ability to provide all students "high quality" curriculum and instruction, including completing implementation of the Common Core as a "baseline" for curriculum, articulation and alignment of the Pre-K-Grade 8 comprehensive curriculum, professional development of faculty and staff, rise in class sizes, and adequate funding for program sustainability and improvements.**
- **Advocating for and taking the lead on moving forward on developing a long-range plan for upgrading the Mansfield Public Schools aging school facilities that currently present limitations for both the teaching and learning processes.**

Discussion of Challenges

- **The Mansfield Public Schools faces the challenge of rebuilding trust in district leadership and restoring positive and productive working relationships with the extended community of Mansfield.**

Data collected via the online survey and in the focus group meetings suggests that many of the stakeholders in the Mansfield Public Schools community believe that the district has undergone and is still experiencing a tumultuous period in which a loss of "trust" on the part of the faculty, staff, the administrators, the parents, the Board of Education, and town officials has cast a shadow over the school district organization. The predominant reason offered for why the employees, in particular, feel the loss of trust within the organization and throughout the community has occurred centers on the circumstances under which the former district leader exited the school district. They agree that this unfortunate circumstance has raised questions in the minds of many stakeholders and overall weakened the relationship between the school district and the citizens of Mansfield. Some commented that this state-of-affairs is contributing to low morale of staff, frustration and disappointment, feeling of a loss of respect for the organization, and concern for the future of the school district.

Some described the situation as one in which "administrative trust (district leadership) must be re-established within the community." Others expressed concern that the "scandal of the past superintendent has tarnished the school system and hurts its reputation, including school employees shocked about what transpired." Parents also sense that the breakdown of trust at the top level of district leadership has taken its toll on the school district and they expressed concern.

Some commented on their observations of the recent incident with the district leadership and their expectations for the relationship that the Mansfield Board of Education and the new superintendent should be in the future. They recognize both the board and the superintendent play leading roles as a part of the governance team and that school districts, as complex organizations, work best through the efforts of both the board and the superintendent when they each understand and regard the role and responsibilities of the other and provide an effective degree of mutual oversight to the task at hand.

The new superintendent will need a skill set that equips him or her to rebuild relationships in the school organization, restoring the Mansfield Public Schools to a district that enjoys and benefits from a trusting climate and positive, productive, and professional culture that is recognized by all members of the extended community.

- **The Mansfield Public Schools faces the challenge of addressing variables and obstacles currently impacting the district's ability to provide all students "high quality" curriculum and instruction, including completing implementation of the Common Core as a "baseline" for curriculum, articulation and alignment of the Pre-K-Grade 8 comprehensive curriculum, professional development of faculty and staff, rise in class sizes, and adequate funding for program sustainability and improvements.**

Data collected via the online survey and in the focus group meetings suggests that many of the stakeholders in the Mansfield Public Schools community believe that a major challenge for the new

leadership will be to take a leadership role in the district's efforts to manage implementation of several new, and for the most part, externally imposed initiatives affecting teaching and learning in Connecticut while also preserving the district's comprehensive programming that focuses on educating the "whole child."

Mansfield Public Schools, like most other school districts across Connecticut, has been challenged over the past three to four years by an aggressive timeline for simultaneously developing and implementing major curricular shifts as a result of the Common Core initiative with limitations on new/revised resources. It was very clear to the consultants that Mansfield stakeholders consider the Common Core State Standards to be a "baseline" for general education in their schools because they expressed repeatedly that their school district desires to offer students a well-rounded education that includes the performing arts, the visual arts, world languages, and enrichment learning for every child.

Additionally, a complete revision of how the state assesses student achievement through standardized testing is looming in the form of a new assessment program (SBAC) that replaces the former CMT and CAPT testing programs with new technology demands. Along with these two major initiatives, school districts have gone through and are still refining implementation of performance evaluation and professional development plans for both teachers and administrators.

Some participants in the data collection activities recognize how so much change in such a short timeframe has contributed to a dip in staff morale over the past two-three years. In that regard, Mansfield educators, like educators throughout Connecticut, have experienced stress as a result of too many change initiatives occurring in a timeframe they perceive to be unrealistic. Additionally, they have felt the strain of the overall magnitude of the change initiatives without, what they perceive to be, a lack of comprehensive support from central office leadership, particularly in the area of curriculum development.

Others commented on the lack of cohesion and both vertical and horizontal alignment of curriculum across the school district. For example, one participant commented, "Curriculum can be disjointed as the result of a good level of autonomy from classroom to classroom - horizontal and vertical alignment (of curriculum) challenges exist." Other participants voiced concern regarding their perceived loss of support for development and implementation of the Pre-K-Grade 8 curriculum initiatives. For example, one group commented that the "Loss of curriculum consultants presents a huge challenge to teachers, who benefitted from support of previous consultants - (there are) future implications for student achievement."

In spite of their concerns, the teachers and administrators, and parents as well, expressed their commitment to working with the new superintendent in partnership to meet the new standards but in the context of what is their reality - a school district that honors and promotes student individuality and recognizes that learning is personal. They expressed that for a majority of the faculty and staff there exists a strong desire to focus on "what is good for the students" and work strategically and consistently with the new superintendent and the Mansfield Board of Education on improving the overall quality of the learning experience for students.

The challenge of increasing and improving professional development opportunities for the school administration, faculty, and staff was identified in both the focus group discussions and the online survey. The overall concern seems to be that teachers should be given the opportunity to be more involved in planning for their own professional development and that new initiatives should be

supported by adequate training of the faculty and staff prior to holding them accountable for being proficient in new instructional strategies. Some commented that the current Interim Superintendent has already begun the discussion on this issue with the faculty and staff and that some progress is already being made.

The issue of rising class sizes was of major concern for the faculty, staff, and parents, as well as the students who expressed that "Larger classes are tough for teachers to help individuals (for example, math class with 29 students)." The students went on to say, "Students struggle as the result of too many students in a classroom - causes students to get frustrated and give up."

Clearly, the issue of changes in class sizes deserves more careful study and analysis by the new superintendent before definitive work can be done to address the issue and impact on student learning. It should also be noted that the student population, in general, appears to be decreasing - a variable that could be directly related to the shift in class sizes, particularly in some grades and certain courses.

When asked about what seems to be driving some of these more recent issues related to curriculum, instruction, and programming in general, participants were not hesitant to state that recent "flat budgets" in recent past years are beginning to take a toll on the district's ability to sustain programming, staff, resources, and other variables that contribute to the overall quality of the child's educational experience in the Mansfield Public Schools. Other participants expressed concern about the level of funding for the school district as being too costly for the town, in spite of the flat budgeting that has occurred. Not unlike other similar towns across the state, Mansfield faces this tough issue of funding its public schools at a level that meets the needs of both the school district and the citizens in the extended community.

The new superintendent, in the role of district's educational leader, will need to research further each of the variables discussed above to determine their interconnectedness and their individual impact on the delivery of instruction to Mansfield students. Additionally, he/she will need to advocate, along with the Board of Education, for increased financial support for the schools where warranted.

- **Advocating for and taking the lead on moving forward on developing a long-range plan for upgrading the Mansfield Public Schools aging school facilities that currently present limitations for both the teaching and learning processes.**

The participants in the data collection activities expressed much concern in regard to the current condition of Mansfield's school facilities, and in particular the elementary schools. Many survey takers commented on the "aging infrastructure" of the schools and all but one focus group included the school facilities issue as a challenge facing the district and the town.

Many shared that this issue is not a new discussion for the town and added that Mansfield, as a community, has been responsible in recognizing the problem with the school facilities and taking steps toward addressing the issue in some preliminary planning. Specifically, school renovation / construction options have been identified and were discussed four-five years ago just prior to the downturn in the national and state economies.

Although participants were quick to recognize and appreciate the town's fiscal support of the operational aspects of the school district that are addressed in annual school budgets, they clearly

have the expectation that the town of Mansfield will revisit the school facilities issues in the near future to avoid compromise of the educational experiences of the students going forward.

The aging basic infrastructure of the school buildings was commented on more frequently, but students were clearly aware of many of the school building issues that impact their daily lives, including the condition of the gymnasium floor, scoreboard, and bleachers. Additionally, they commented on the inadequacies of the current track at the middle school when they stated, "Track team does not have an actual track - (they) are forced to run on pavement." Many of the adults who commented on the condition of the school buildings spoke about how they are "old, outdated, and in need of renovation or rebuilding." All involved in the discussion recognized that the school district and the citizens of Mansfield need to complete the conversation around the various options that could be considered for improving the school facilities. They believe that this challenge for the school district needs attention in the very near future.

The new superintendent will need to take a leadership role, along with the Board of Education, in resurrecting this important topic / conversation in the Mansfield community. Prior experience in working on school construction / renovation projects or other relevant experience will be paramount in the eyes of the Board of Education as they consider applicants for the position.

Closing Comments:

Participants in the data collection activities commented on many other important issues they believe present challenges to the school district currently or in the near future. All of these challenges are important and will require further investigation and discussion through the leadership of the new school superintendent.

Some of the other challenges identified were based on current policies, procedures, and practices in both the general education and special education arenas. As stated earlier in this report, some parents expressed concern regarding policies and/or procedures they perceive prohibit their child's access to special education services, an issue warranting further discussion.

Some challenges discussed revealed a dichotomy of philosophical beliefs or values of Mansfield's citizenry, particularly around the topic of funding for the schools. Overall, all participants appeared to be strong proponents of quality public education for Mansfield's children and expressed a commitment to work to sustain what is successful and improve upon what are now challenges.

Additionally, participants in the focus groups were asked to comment on what is their vision for the future for the Mansfield Public Schools. Although that discussion of that data is not included in the general discussion in this report, the comments, recorded in Appendix B, offer both the new superintendent and the Board of Education valuable insight into expectations from stakeholders. The consultant recommends that these comments be used as a stimulus for further discussion and that the new superintendent take a leadership role in leading that discussion with all stakeholders.

All in all, the participants who contributed to this phase in the superintendent search process were supporters of their schools, their town, and most importantly, the children in Mansfield. The consultant is left with the impression that the new superintendent will find a most willing community to join in partnership with him/her in facing and resolving the challenges of the Mansfield Public Schools.

Leadership Profile: Summary of Online Survey Responses

The new superintendent for the Mansfield Public Schools will need to be prepared to build upon the strengths identified by stakeholders in their efforts to address the challenges the school district is now facing.

Mansfield stakeholders expect the new superintendent to have the necessary required certifications and graduate degrees; however, they are almost evenly split on the choice of highest degree earned and would not, overall, require the successful candidate to have earned a doctorate.

Additionally, stakeholders have some general expectations for the new superintendent in regard to his/her past professional experience, past leadership achievements, current administrative skill set, and personal characteristics as a leader. The following general leadership attributes and personal characteristics provide a summary of what the data collection participants expressed in their comments.

Preferred Past Professional Experiences in Ranked Order of Importance:

- Served as a classroom teacher or other certified faculty position at the school level preferably within the Pre-K - Grade 8 span
- Served as an assistant superintendent in another district preferably with experience in supervising curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development
- Served as a school principal or an assistant principal preferably within the Pre-K-Grade 8 span
- Served as superintendent of schools in another district preferably in a small to mid-size school district / town environment in which he or she has had to perform / lead multiple central office functions and operations

Selected Past Leadership Achievements in Ranked Order of Importance:

- Facilitated school administrator and staff efforts to create and sustain a positive learning environment and school climate for ALL students in both general and special education programs
- Worked with the Board of Education to engage in strategic and long-range planning for the school district, particularly in regard to addressing school facilities upgrades / renovations
- Facilitated, monitored, and sustained a "healthy and productive school district culture" based on expectations of excellence in performance of all, including district leadership serving as the moral compass for all
- Facilitated and sustained a climate of trust within a school district in a leadership role
- Improved and expanded professional development programs for ALL staff, particularly in regard to inclusive models that give faculty and staff a "voice" in the process
- Recruited, trained, and retained "high quality" district and school employees
- Raised student achievement for all students, both in general education and special education

Preferred Administrative Skills Set in Ranked Order of Importance:

- Ability to foster good, productive community relations and communications
- Ability to foster good faculty relations within and across the district
- Ability to facilitate the development of a "high quality" curriculum, the implementation of the district curriculum, and the assessment of programs and student achievement on both quantitative and qualitative measures

- Ability to facilitate inclusive and effective professional development of staff, both certified and non-certified
- Ability to function as an educational / instructional leader at the district level who sets high standards for student achievement and education of the "whole child"
- Ability to communicate and advocate for the district's needs and goals through the annual operations budget
- Ability to oversee the district's operational budget development and management with the "shared services" model
- Ability to implement and monitor policies and administrative regulations and procedures to achieve accountability throughout the school district organization

Comprehensive Leadership Profile: Specific Leadership Attributes and Personal Characteristics of New Mansfield Superintendent

1. Communications and Community Relations

The new superintendent will . . .

- a. Be perceived as honest, trustworthy, diplomatic, responsive to others in the community and worthy of their respect; be a role model for leadership.
- b. Be an excellent and effective communicator who possesses excellent writing skills and speaking skills with large and small groups; be articulate.
- c. Bring diverse groups together within the community; be approachable and visible in the community; reach out to all stakeholders; possess excellent interpersonal skills.
- d. Facilitate group activities and discussions on challenging topics and issues both within the school district and throughout the extended community.
- e. Work with parents in collaborative ways; reach out to all parents throughout Mansfield's diverse community and foster a relationship between them and the schools.
- f. Influence and involve community groups in important school issues and activities and be very visible in the district and community; know people and be known by them.

2. Educational Leadership

The new superintendent will . . .

- a. Demonstrate a commitment to the academic, emotional, physical and social development of all Mansfield students, from early childhood through middle school.
- b. Create and sustain a collaborative district culture among the administrators, teachers, staff, students, parents, and Board of Education that focuses on supporting the work of teaching and learning in the classroom and throughout the district.
- c. Use data effectively and appropriately when making educational programming decisions and recommendations and in the development and implementation of accountability systems for the student achievement; know the value of qualitative data as a measure of a school district's success.
- d. Promote use of a "process or system" for developing curriculum that is consistent with reform requirements, local requirements and that will genuinely meet the needs of the "whole child" through individualized or personalized learning.
- e. Demonstrate leadership in setting performance expectations for student achievement in a well-rounded comprehensive educational program framework that includes the visual and performing arts, world languages, sports, and other enriching learning experiences.
- f. Advocate in support of educating every Mansfield child to his/her full potential.

3. General Leadership Skills

The new superintendent will . . .

- a. Motivate staff and students, bolster morale and generate enthusiasm and pride throughout the school district and the community.
- b. Motivate others to assume leadership roles and develop the capacity of all staff.
- c. Effect change in a meaningful, non-threatening way and work with administrators and staff to assess the impact of change on them and the students; provide support throughout the change process to all affected by the change, including parents.
- d. Use innovative means or have ideas of ways to solve problems and acquire new resources to supplement the operational budget; work effectively and professionally within the town's shared services model.
- e. Successfully delegate authority and responsibility, as appropriate, and hold staff and self accountable for professional performance and behavior.

- f. Assess the organization's propensity for success of student achievement and reorganize staff and resources as necessary, revise procedures, and implement policy changes, working with the Board of Education to improve efficiency and effectiveness overall; such work must be done with input from all stakeholders through a strategic planning effort.

4. Decision-Making Skills

The new superintendent will . . .

- a. Integrate research data into the decision-making process appropriately and help others understand its relevance as necessary; incorporate excellent resources available for state-of-the-art evidenced-based practices by working with UConn and ESCU faculty and staff.
- b. Establish a strong and effective management team — coordinate decision-making with other administrators across the schools; promote a district wide "team" mentality for aligning and articulating programs and decision making.
- c. Involve staff and community in decision-making by using participatory decision-making processes and providing a rationale for decisions made.

5. Board-Superintendent Relations

The new superintendent will . . .

- a. Facilitate the Board of Education's efforts to enhance its leadership role as the body responsible for education in the Mansfield community and work collaboratively with them to address the challenges facing the school district for the benefit of the students being served.
- b. Outline a program of board-district goal setting and long-range planning, as part of a strategic planning process, including addressing school facilities needs.

6. Personnel Management

The new superintendent will . . .

- a. Have skill and experience in developing and coordinating staff professional development programs to ensure ongoing growth and development of their skills and abilities as they practice their craft.
- b. Use an effective model or process for recruiting and selecting "high quality" teachers, administrators, and staff as well as retaining them after they have been hired.
- c. Work effectively with the administration, faculty, and staff by being open-minded, inclusive, collaborative, professional, visionary, inspirational, motivating, fair and committed to the success of all employees.
- d. Practice an "open door" for administrators, faculty, and staff and be perceived as respectful of them, genuinely interested in their welfare, responsive to their concerns, and supportive of their efforts to fulfill their duties within the school district.
- e. Be perceived as a "visionary and inspirational leader" who motivates all employees to strive for excellence in serving the students in the Mansfield Public Schools.

7. Budget and Finance

The new superintendent will . . .

- a. Possess knowledge of "best practices" in school budget operations and budget management and work effectively with the Director of Finance, the Board of Education, the Town Manager, the Superintendent of Region #19 School District, and all employees participating in the town's shared services model.
- b. Work with the Board of Education and other town officials to present the annual school budget to the Mansfield community in a clear, transparent, comprehensive manner that fosters greater understanding of the school district's educational needs.
- c. Work with the administration, the Director of Finance, and the Board of Education to identify variables that will be impacting long-range fiscal planning for the school district and engage in long-range planning of budget management.
- d. Speak knowledgeably on general aspects of school district budget and keep the school community informed about the budget in a transparent manner.