



Executive Summary Leadership Profile Beaverton School District Superintendent Search

December 7, 2021

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Assessment conducted by Human Capital Enterprises in October and November of 2021 for the position of Superintendent of the Beaverton School District. The data contained herein were obtained from input received by Human Capital Enterprises Consultants Hank Harris, Kathleen Rodden-Nord, Robyn Bean, and Joy Ross when they conducted individual interviews and focus groups – as well as from the results of two online surveys completed by district 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 provided information for the consultants and for prospective applicants regarding the strengths of the District and some of the challenges and opportunities that the District will be facing in the coming years.

Participation

Engagement in this process was extensive, and we are very pleased with the number of stakeholders who took the opportunity to share their insights with us. While we cannot ascertain the exact number of individuals who participated (as we know that many individuals participated in more than one of the opportunities listed to the right), we expect that that number may very well be over 3000. We also want to make a special callout and thank you to the Beaverton students who took the surveys, as this was by far the most extensive student participation we have ever witnessed in a superintendent search survey – and it speaks highly to the work of student voice in the district, and the importance students must feel as valued stakeholders within the school district.

	Focus Groups	Survey #1	Survey #2
School Board	7		
Administrators, Supervisors, and Confidential Staff	93	41	25
Licensed Staff and Classified Staff	124	470	438
Parents and Community Members	92	1225	773
<i>Multilingual Stakeholders</i> (included in the above total)	42	29	19
Students	26	566	242
Total	342	2302	1478

We would like to express our appreciation to all the participants who attended interviews, focus groups meetings, or completed an online survey. We are also deeply appreciative to staff for the coordination of our staff/community outreach and their commitment to the important work that takes place at Beaverton School District every day and we are excited to help the Board find the next extraordinary leader for the schools of Beaverton.

While the extensive insights offered in interviews, focus groups, and via the online survey responses were extremely informative, it should be emphasized that the delineations below are not a scientific sampling, nor should they necessarily be viewed as representing a majority opinion. Items are included if, in the consultants' judgment, they warranted the Board's attention, and are listed in order of prevalence.

Strengths of the District

The Beaverton School District is widely viewed as a trailblazing leader that serves as a model to other Oregon districts, particularly with respect to its equity and inclusion initiatives, and its work supporting students' mental health and social emotional needs. The District also is known and respected for its broad and profound impact on Oregon's educational policy and legislation. The public's perception is that the district's staff is extremely talented and committed to the community, its schools, and its students. Beaverton's schools are described by students and families as welcoming and inclusive, and stakeholders are proud that BSD students have access to diverse and enriching opportunities and a variety educational and co-curricular options. Stakeholders recognize the district's commitment to supporting the needs of all students and appreciate the district's outreach and engagement with parents and the broader community.

Interviewees, focus group participants, and survey respondents were eager to share the many outstanding characteristics that make the Beaverton School District a place where people want to work, and where families actively seek to have their children educated. Respondents also remarked on the wonderful quality of life in Beaverton and noted that there is a great sense of pride in the city's multiculturalism and strong sense of community. While there are numerous strengths within the district that deserve mention, below are the most prominent themes that emerged from interviews, focus groups, and the online survey.

- 1. Beaverton – as a city and as a district – is wonderfully diverse, and this diversity is valued, respected, and supported at all levels of the organization.**

Fifty-four percent of Beaverton's students identify as racially, ethnically and/or linguistically diverse. More than one hundred languages are spoken by the district's

families. The district's rich diversity was described as the top strength by virtually every focus group – as well as by a great many of the survey respondents.

A number of stakeholders also expressed pride in the citizenry's election of its racially, linguistically, and ethnically diverse school board. Staff, students, families, and community members alike see and deeply appreciate the entire board's explicit commitment to becoming an anti-bias/anti-racist system where each and every student experiences a welcoming and inclusive environment and where every student is provided a high-quality education and truly equitable opportunities.

BIPOC, LGBTQ+, linguistically diverse, and students experiencing disabilities described feeling seen, heard, respected, and valued by the board, by district staff, and by most of their classmates. Participants in the eight multilingual focus groups described feeling respected and supported by the district. Almost to a person, multilingual focus group participants expressed appreciation for the district's translation and interpretation services, and for the many responsive services: particularly nutrition, transportation, and the amazing additional academic support provided to families during the pandemic. These focus group participants described feeling respected and "heard" by the district with multiple opportunities to engage and offer insights and input into how their children's needs could be best met.

2. District staff, at all levels of the organization, are high caliber, caring, and responsive to students' needs.

Students and their parents described Beaverton staff as "Kids First" professionals who do whatever it takes to meet students' needs, and this includes employees across the organization: classified staff, teachers, school leaders, district leaders. The Beaverton School District workforce is widely seen as a group of talented and dedicated professionals, skilled in their craft. And beyond their professional expertise, Beaverton's educators and support staff are characterized as caring and genuinely committed to their students. In general, students feel seen, valued, and cared for by the Beaverton staff, including their school administrators. While a number of BIPOC students expressed a desire to have more educators and administrators who look like them (we heard that actual phraseology several times), they also stated that, on the whole, the staff works hard to understand and appreciate the student body's diversity, and students see and appreciate that the staff is working hard on equity and anti-racism efforts.

Employees are proud to work for the Beaverton School District; a great many staff members spoke about how hard it is to get hired by the district and how once one

joins the district, they often stay for the remainder of their careers. There are opportunities for advancement in all employee groups, and many employees described their worksite's culture as positive, collegial, and collaborative. Many staff members expressed the ultimate trust and confidence in the district by choosing to have their own children educated in BSD.

3. Students are provided a well-rounded education and have access to extensive electives and Options programs. There is demonstrated support for the arts, and for students' mental health and social-emotional needs.

The District's high-quality staff and diverse program offerings, including special education, dual language, AVID, and the arts programs, attract many, many families to Beaverton so that their children can attend a Beaverton school. The district's many Options programs, with particular emphasis on the Rachel Carson Environmental Science Program and the Arts and Communications Magnet Academy, were cited as exemplary by students, parents, and community stakeholders.

High school students also talked about the range of magnet schools and programs available to them as well as dual credit opportunities offered in partnership with Portland Community College. Students' access to a wide range of CTE programs was also frequently mentioned; students are able to explore careers in healthcare, accounting and marketing, and arts and communication as well as manufacturing, automotive technology, construction, sustainable foods and more. Students also spoke about the number of clubs and affinity groups available to them and appreciate that there are many opportunities for positive affiliations outside of athletics.

The district has invested heavily in its Early Learning Programs and has been adding between two and four preschool programs to its elementary schools each year. Families appreciate this investment, and teachers reported seeing a greater level of school readiness in incoming students who had participated in a district preschool program. The district has demonstrated a deep and genuine concern for the *whole child*, and an understanding that many students have experienced trauma and mental health crises in recent years. Additional counselors and social workers are helping to address these needs and the district's Social-Emotional Learning program proactively supports students' behavioral and emotional development from preschool through high school.

4. Community Support is High, and Impactful.

Despite Beaverton School District’s size as Oregon’s third-largest (and occasionally second-largest) school district, parents, students, staff, and community members talked about a strong sense of community and a “small district” feel. Patrons feel closely connected to their schools and their district, and they are deeply invested in the district’s success.

The district enjoys considerable support from parents, businesses, non-profit organizations, and the broader community. The collaborative relationship between the district and the Tualatin Hills Parks and Recreation was described as a true partnership benefitting students and the entire community.

Many of the district’s school foundations and Parent Teacher Organizations (especially those in higher SES schools) rally to raise funds to provide enrichment opportunities for students. Further, a broad array of social services is available to assist students and families in need.

The district is perceived by the public as well-managed, fiscally responsible, focused on improvement and forward-thinking in its approach to facilities and programs. The community has shown its strong support for the district by resoundingly passing the district’s general obligation bonds and local options levy. As a result, many of the district’s long-range facilities goals have been achieved or are in reach; the local option levy provides the district with 300 additional teachers and robust support for the arts education programs K-12.

5. Strong parent engagement and effective communication practices.

Parents described the district as having increasingly strong communication practices and report that their input is regularly sought, considered, and used to inform a number of the decisions that affect their children. They especially appreciated the frequent, detailed communications coming from teachers, building administrators, and the Central Office during the pandemic; they noted that the district had been very responsive to parents’ desire for improved communication and are largely satisfied with the clarity, quality, and quantity of the district’s communications. Stakeholders see the district working hard to engage *all* families such as through the SIA engagement process and the use of community liaisons and bilingual resource specialists. They also appreciate the district’s willingness to engage in conversations about race and equity.

Students also expressed gratitude for the accessibility and responsiveness of the board and the current superintendent. They very much appreciate being included in conversations with leadership and being invited to offer input and ideas.

Although we heard some criticisms in this area as well which are delineated elsewhere, it is notable (and not easily accomplished) that a district the size of Beaverton receives such accolades in the area of parent communication.

6. An equity-focused, deeply committed, and professional School Board that works well together.

Across stakeholder groups, the school board is described as high-functioning, respectful, equity-focused, action-oriented, and courageous. As noted previously, the increasingly diverse and representative board is seen and valued by the staff, students, parents, and other district stakeholders. These stakeholders see and appreciate the board and the district's explicit focus on equity and its visible support for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students and staff, as well as effective supports for students' learning differences and linguistic diversity.

7. Innovation in Technology, Nutrition, Transportation, and Finance.

Quality programming also extends to the district's support services and business department. The Instructional Technology Department was described as innovative and effective in leveraging community and business partnerships. The Nutrition and Transportation departments were described as "equity focused" rather than bureaucratic and the district's finances and financial practices were described as sound, future-oriented, and driven by a "Students First" approach to budgeting. A number of stakeholders expressed gratitude to the CFO and his team for the turnaround in the financial department.

8. Families whose primary language is not English are appreciative of district efforts toward communication and inclusion.

In our multilingual focus groups, accolades were shared from stakeholders who speak a language other than English. There is a general theme of appreciation for the robust level of support for their students, and the responsiveness with translation/interpretation services. Many spoke of friends who have students in other school districts who can only yearn for the quality of support that is afforded in Beaverton. There is also a sense that issues of discrimination and race-based bullying are less prevalent in Beaverton and managed with greater skills and sensitivity than elsewhere.

Opportunities and Challenges for the District and the New Superintendent

1. Most stakeholders expect a continued, tenacious focus on equity and demand action. Some do not.

In our focus groups, we note that staff, parents, and students alike overwhelmingly identified the need to fearlessly persist with the district's equity initiatives despite the pushbacks from what is believed to be a very vocal but small minority. While a handful of parents expressed their desire that the district "focus more on academics" and "less on politics", the vast majority recognize and share a sense of urgency about moving the equity work forward. In our surveys, we also saw a significant percentage of stakeholders insisting that elements of DEI are among the most important components to focus on in this superintendent search; and, it must be noted, a sizable minority insisting that it not be.

Some stakeholders also stated that the equity work is being inconsistently implemented across the district, and seems too dependent upon the skills and cultural competence of individual building administrators. Staff and students expressed some concern that the district's equity efforts have slowed or stalled; there is a powerful force wanting and expecting the board and next superintendent to ensure that the ABAR Equity Action Plan is implemented. A number of staff members and stakeholders noted that real disparities continue to exist across the district, citing examples ranging from inequitable opportunities due to boundary issues and inconsistent and punitive discipline plans in some schools. Further, staff and some parents noted that PTA funding and enrichment opportunities seem almost entirely dependent on the affluence of the school. There is a perception that there are "have" and "have not" schools and that parents who are most privileged are more likely to get what they want for their students: whether it is with respect to a transfer, facilities improvements, or enrichment and acceleration opportunities.

Beaverton students are remarkably passionate, engaged, and ready to collaborate. Students want visible and tangible action on issues of equity, and they are eloquent, passionate, and determined in this. Among other things, they expressed strong feelings about reviewing and possibly eliminating the SRO program. They expressed some frustration that they had been invited to engage in work to address their concerns about the program and then "things just stopped". Students described some of their classmates as being traumatized by SROs carrying weapons and that these

law enforcement officers respond ineffectively and differentially when disciplining students of color.

Successfully shepherding the District through the vitally important equity challenges that await will almost certainly be among the most profound and complex work that your new leader will face – from day one and in the months and years that follow.

2. SEL for students as well as staff; and hunger for additional SEL staff and for lower class sizes.

As noted previously, Beaverton’s educators are seen to be first-rate. And like educators elsewhere, they also are increasingly exhausted and leaving the profession at an alarmingly high rate and they are pleading for more patience, understanding and support from the district. We heard concerns expressed that staffing challenges are resulting in class sizes that are too high at the upper elementary grades, and that less experienced teachers are being deployed to teach key content areas and AP classes. Students want more mental health specialists, saying that the district’s counselors are great at what they do, but they are not trained, nor do they have the time to be therapists.

3. Staffing Challenges and Diversification of the Workforce.

Virtually every stakeholder group identified the need to diversify the workforce so that it is reflective of the students and families served. While the staff affinity groups are helpful and are viewed favorably, many stakeholders described challenges in retaining the few BIPOC educators in BSD. In addition to increasing the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of the Beaverton staff, students also expressed the hope that more non-binary and transgendered staff would be hired, supported to be successful in their positions, and retained by the district.

Similarly, a number of stakeholders expressed the hope that with the new superintendent will come “fresh” leadership in the ranks of upper management, and that more administrators could be hired from outside the district, which might meet a two-pronged objective: first, to diversify the senior level of the organization, and secondly to upend the insular culture that some see flourishing in the upper management ranks.

4. Relations with the Beaverton Education Association are increasingly tense.

Association leaders and administrators alike characterized their relationship historically as congenial and collaborative. Up until very recently, the relationship between the teachers' union and the district was described as feeling very "local" and functional. Management described concern with more statewide OEA influence and overreach into the labor-management relationship while union leaders describe needing to get more vocal in order to be heard, and more active in order to respond to what they view as increasingly top-down decision making.

While teachers acknowledge that Beaverton School District is a very desirable place to work and they have successfully bargained for very high pay and benefits, they want more attention to be paid to "how teachers are feeling." They described themselves as exhausted and without the energy to respond to all the "top-down initiatives." It also was of some concern that parents, business partners and community leaders expressed awareness of the tension in labor relations, and that teachers are reporting feeling unheard and not being respected.

5. Academic and Programmatic Growth.

With all the accolades regarding Beaverton's educators, there is a sense that systems of academic support (including other forms of student support) could be improved. Some of the most oft-cited comments are as follows:

- Student literacy rates, based on standardized assessments, are low. Some argue that the approach to reading instruction needs to be aligned with brain research; and some claim that other districts are showing better improvement in this area than BSD is.
- SEL programming and staffing needs to be consistent across the district, with increased professional development, resources, and specialists.
- There should be a commitment to growing and expanding the Dual Language program, with more rigor at the middle school level and hopefully more DLI administrators who are bilingual – and, given the linguistic richness of Beaverton, in additional languages beyond Spanish.
- Curriculum and instructional materials need to be more inclusive and culturally relevant.
- The need for more mentors and/or programs to help students make good decisions was of particular interest to multilingual stakeholders. This includes after-school academic support.

6. Stakeholders are asking for more transparency and inclusion into district decisions.

The notion of transparency was one of the most-oft stated attributes that came out of our online surveys, and it was prominent in our focus groups as well. While the district’s communication with parents and community members was described as a great strength, many of these same stakeholders are asking for even more information and transparency around the “Why?” of big decisions around boundaries, facilities, staffing, and resource allocations between buildings and programs. There is sometimes a sense that power and information is closely held by a handful of individuals at the Central Office. Our belief is that there may very well be valid reasons for some of these decisions (such as where new schools are located) but that a deeper level of transparent communication might ameliorate some of these concerns.

Parents and community members also want the district to see that many creative ideas and rich expertise exists in the greater community: for example, parents with extensive special education training and SEL and mental health expertise; and community members with great professional expertise in facilities, contracting, and purchasing. These stakeholders are eager to engage on a deeper level in order to contribute to the district’s success, and are eager to be involved in charting the District’s path in their areas of expertise because they are so invested in the District’s success.

7. Balance between local decision-making and districtwide consistency.

Many teachers expressed a desire for greater autonomy and professional freedom when it comes to curriculum and instructional practices. At the same time, a number of stakeholders —primarily parents and administrators— expressed a need for more equitable instructional resources and consistent implementation of research-based strategies across the district.

Relatedly, some teachers expressed frustration with being asked by the district for their professional input with (in their perception) seemingly little intention of using that input to inform the decisions or plans that impact them. The recent middle school schedule changes were offered as an example: educators said they understand and support the intention for these changes, but say the plan is not working at the building level, as there are too many transitions for students and such short instructional periods mean that there is not enough time for core content. Teachers and students also spoke to the need to improve communication and training around significant changes, such as those recently made to the district’s grading systems.

Several teachers felt like the changes were made at the upper levels in a top-down way and parents and students were informed of changes before they were.

Conclusion

In summary, Beaverton is a remarkable school district with an outstanding reputation that is well-deserved in so many respects. Although not without its challenges – and no school district is without them – Beaverton appears to be well-positioned for even greater successes in the years to come. We applaud the many initiatives that are well-thought-out and well-executed in Beaverton and look forward to supporting Beaverton’s board in identifying an extraordinary new leader to assume the very impactful role of School Superintendent in the summer of 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

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REDEFINING HUMAN RESOURCES LEADERSHIP