

# SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH PROFILE

Forest Hills Local School District  
Andership Township, Newtown, Ohio  
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Prepared for the Board of Education  
K-12 Business Consulting, Inc.



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## INTRODUCTION

This report presents the summary of findings from the Superintendent Search Profile focus group forums conducted by K-12 Business Consulting, Inc. (K-12), on May 13, 16, 17 and 18, and from written search questionnaires submitted by numerous stakeholders. Once the Board of Education selected K-12 to conduct the superintendent search, a Search Profile Questionnaire document was created in order to solicit input from various stakeholders in the community. The Board and administration developed a broad list of community stakeholders to solicit input from; as well as a general community wide invitation to meet with K-12 staff members Frank Forsthoefel and Keith Kelly in order to discuss, in greater depth, the search factors and desired new superintendent characteristics. Any stakeholder who had a desire to express an opinion was welcome to submit a search questionnaire and personally meet with K-12 at the open focus group forums. The information obtained through these sources, and summarized below, should be used to assist the Board in identifying the desired characteristics of superintendent candidates. K-12 had 268 participants attend and give input at the focus group sessions and collected 803 survey questionnaires. It should be noted that the 803 returned questionnaires is the highest return rate in K12's 21 year history.

The Search Profile Questionnaire form was made available to the district staff, identified stakeholders, plus all individuals who attended the focus group sessions. In addition to the individuals who returned written search profiles, there were stakeholders who took part in focus group sessions facilitated by K-12. The results of the written Search Profile Questionnaire form are included in this report along with several comments received in face-to-face discussions held at community forums.

In accumulating the data used in this report, K-12 sought opinions, recommendations and general comments with respect to preferred candidate characteristics, traits, qualifications and personal demeanor, as well as district strengths, weaknesses, issues and concerns which may have a bearing on future leadership strengths for your next superintendent. At the request of the Board, K-12 sought the views of a broad range of individuals represented in the district to assist in the search process. Focus groups were conducted at each Forest Hills school as well as with district office staff, support staff and community and student groups. It was determined that K-12 would report the findings to the Board without revealing the identity of any citizen or staff member who provided information, thus equipping the Board with unbiased data to use as it proceeded to define the search profile for the next superintendent. It should be noted that the information contained in this document is a summary of all that was heard and read and does not contain every comment submitted via questionnaire or focus group.

A Search Profile Questionnaire form was used to provide a framework for reporting the information compiled by K-12. Broad themes were highlighted in each question area into six response groups (support staff members, teachers, administrators, high school/middle school students, community members, parents and school board members). Under each question in the report, the response group's common themes were identified. The first category titled as "Consistent Themes" are comments which were frequently heard/read from all or nearly all six of the response groups. Comments heard less frequently or only heard in a specific response group are listed only under that response group. The comments shown for any of the response groups are noted with the highest frequency comments listed first, then descending to comments less frequently heard. Some comments are combined into one statement in the interest of

space. It is important to note that data compilation is not a scientific sampling, nor should it necessarily be viewed as representing a majority opinion of those interviewed in the response group.

K-12 would like to commend the Board of Education for its efforts to include many stakeholders of the school district in the development of the superintendent search profile. Many survey respondents and focus group forum participants expressed positive feelings about being involved in this process and the opportunity to help shape the Forest Hills Local Schools. We would also like to thank Josh Bazan, Coordinator of Communications and Marketing, Alana Cropper, Treasurer/CFO, Jodie McKinley Associate to the Superintendent and Adam Samuels, Technology Specialist for the professional manner in which all arrangements were made, including the dissemination of invitations and search profiles, as well as scheduling the focus group sessions that made this profile possible.

### ***STRENGTHS OF THE DISTRICT***

#### **Question #1: What do you consider to be the most significant strengths of the Forest Hills School District?**

##### **CONSISTENT THEMES**

- Quality and dedication of teachers and staff always willing to go the extra mile for students
- Instructional quality, rigor and maintenance of high academic standards
- A wide range of academic and extracurricular opportunities for students
- Involvement and support of the community and parents
- Financial stability and sound fiscal management
- A district that cares about the whole child

##### **BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBER**

- Top Quality teachers
- Tremendous amount of community support

##### **ADMINISTRATORS**

- Terrific students from supportive families who come to school ready to learn
- Strong parent organizations, booster groups and community support
- Families that value education and high academic standards
- Positive teacher - student relationships
- A talented and caring staff who go above and beyond for students
- Maintaining a high academic standard for all students
- A student centered and whole child approach to educating the students
- The ability to meet students where they are at and adapt to their needs
- Strong, comprehensive academic and instructional programming including gifted services and programs for all types of special needs
- Strong fine arts, performing arts, athletics and extracurricular programming
- Faculty and staff encouraged to grow and innovate through a strong professional development program

- Collegiality and collaboration among faculty and staff
- Creative and innovative approaches to instruction
- Many faculty and staff live, raise their families and work in the district
- Destination district for teachers, principals and administrators
- Solid and improving instructional alignment across the schools
- Sound fiscal stewardship
- Two high schools
- Safety is a high priority

## **TEACHERS**

- Talented faculty and staff that care deeply and go the extra mile for students
- Supportive and involved parents and community
- Students who come to school ready to learn
- Strong relationships with students and their families
- High level of collegiality and trust among the faculty, principals and staff
- High academic standards and a whole child approach to educating students
- Student prepared for post high school opportunities
- Rich academic, instructional, fine arts, performing arts, career technical, elective and extracurricular programming
- Programs and support services for gifted students and students with special needs
- Student to Teacher ratio and class sizes
- The opportunity to regularly and intentionally collaborate around instruction
- 1:1 laptops for students and the use of a variety of instructional technologies
- Support for trying out researched based instructional methods and strategies and growing professionally
- Principals that value innovative ideas
- Many students return to raise their families and send their children to the FHSD
- Safety, counseling services and social and emotional learning
- Fiscal strength of the district
- The district attracts quality candidates for all positions
- Community and business partnerships that enhance teaching and learning

## **SUPPORT STAFF**

- The people that work in the district
- Bus drivers go the extra mile to accommodate pick-ups and drop-offs
- Maintenance and custodians work hard to take care of facilities
- Talented and caring faculty and staff that can teach a variety of abilities
- Resources and sound fiscal management
- Good students
- Outstanding academic, instructional, fine arts, performing arts, career technical, elective and extracurricular programming
- Highly ranked school district
- The longevity of staff
- Supportive families and community

- Strong administrators and principals that are transparent with the staff and community
- Many opportunities for students to get involved outside of the classroom

### **HIGH SCHOOL AND MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS**

- Students appreciate and care about their teachers
- Students feel the care from their teachers and know they will go above and beyond for them
- Appreciation for the dedication of educational, athletic, arts and extracurricular resources for students
- Students support each other in time of crisis
- Staff are always available in a time of need or crisis
- Teachers can meet the educational, social and emotional needs of a variety of students
- Staff are excellent role models for students
- Career technical course options for students
- Students are involved and take pride in their schools
- Family-like environment within the school buildings
- Principals are open to starting clubs and activities of interest to students
- Students are well prepared for college and other post high school opportunities
- Leaders are transparent about issues to parents

### **PARENTS AND COMMUNITY**

- A talented staff that cares deeply for students
- A focus on the whole child
- High expectations for all students
- Acceptance of students with special needs
- A consistent history of academic excellence
- Staff is responsive to a continuum of student needs
- Neighborhood elementary schools
- Two high schools that can offer a wide range of programming
- Supportive community
- Parents and community that value education and want to be involved
- Many students return to raise their families and send their children to the FHSD
- Many teachers live and work in the community
- A sense of pride in the school district and the community
- Families know one another
- Teacher student relationships are strong
- Staff longevity
- Strong real estate values
- Transportation services are excellent

continue

## ***IMPORTANT DISTRICT CHALLENGES***

### **Question #2: What do you consider to be the most prominent challenges facing the district?**

#### **CONSISTENT THEMES - Most Prominently Portrayed**

- The Board of Education is perceived as a polarizing force in the community and the district. There is genuine concern regarding the influences on the decision making of the Board; including political influences. There is belief that the Board is reticent to address key elements of student success such as mental health supports and diversity initiatives.
- There is a palatable division with the community which is perceived to be fueled by political beliefs. This is causing negative impacts to the classroom, to students, to teachers and parents.
- There is the perception that certain voices are driving the narrative of the district, has caused the district to be in the media frequently and is painting it in a negative light. This has caused a decrease in staff morale.
- There is genuine concern for the mental health challenges faced by students and staff. There is fear that this is not being adequately addressed and that those supports may be in jeopardy.
- The district is facing significant financial challenges and will be forced to ask the voters for a levy soon.
- There is a lack of diversity within the district which is impacting the inclusiveness among students and staff hiring practices.

#### **BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS**

- Funding and finances - The district must balance the budget in order to retain quality educators
- Potential redistricting and consolidation of buildings

#### **ADMINISTRATORS**

- There is division within the community brought about by certain voices in the district. This has blurred the lines between perception and reality of what is truly happening in the schools. This has negatively impacted the trust in schools and staff. There is a need to bridge the gap between traditional and new thinking.
- The financial situation of the district continues to be a concern. The district will need a levy soon in addition to maintaining facilities that require updates.
- There is concern about the perceived political influences on the Board of Education decision making around Social Emotional learning, Diversity, CRT and fiscal matters.
- There is a need to tell a more positive story about the great things happening in the district.
- Other challenges include increased needs for special education students, aligning curriculum and professional development and leadership continuity.

#### **TEACHERS/STAFF**

- There is a divide in the community with political influences shaping the direction of the district and impacting what is taking place in classrooms.
- The Board's views do not reflect the broader community and are being influenced by political viewpoints. The agenda of the Board does not give the perception of a care for all students.

- The loudest voices in the community may not represent the broader community and are bringing negative media attention to the district. The negative activity on social media is having a detrimental impact on students, staff and parents. There is a strong need to educate the community about what is truly happening in the schools.
- The climate in buildings and morale of staff is decreasing and there is a feeling of a lack of professional trust for staff.
- There is deep concern about the budget situation and possible cuts to staff and student programming.
- There is concern regarding the growing mental health challenges among students, the possible lack of and/or reduction of much needed supports. This includes social emotional learning programming.
- Equality of all students and a climate of inclusiveness remains a strong area of concern for staff.
- There is concern over the direction of the district including multiple initiatives at one time.
- Diversity initiatives and hiring practices continue to be a source of worry for staff.
- There has been a high turnover of district office leaders recently and a concern regarding visibility of administrators.
- Communication transparency remains a concern.
- Staff retention and the substitute shortage continue to be an area of concern.
- Revised special education protocols and processes remain challenging for staff.

#### **SUPPORT STAFF (Transportation and Maintenance)**

- The political division within the community that is negatively impacting the classroom and students.
- The perception that the Board of Education is being influenced by politics in its decision making, and that this is impacting the reputation of the district.
- Funding for the district continues to be a significant issue including how finances are spent.
- Lack of diversity and diversity education.

#### **PARENTS AND COMMUNITY**

- A consistent theme from the community expressed significant concern with the current Board of Education. Specifically, concerns expressed were:
  - the Board's lack of experience and qualifications
  - the perception that political influences are impacting the Board's decision making. This is beginning to significantly impact teachers and building/classroom activities.
  - The perception that the Board is ignoring the mental health needs of the district; including social emotional learning programming.
- Another consistent theme centered on the division within the community. There is a lack of unity in the Forest Hills Community brought about by political divisions and a need to bridge this gap. This is having a negative impact on the reputation of the district.
- There is the belief that a small segment of the community is dominating the conversation about schools, specifically in a negative way. This includes negative and mistrusting social media posts about teachers and staff.
- There is significant concern regarding the mental health challenges of students and staff and that this important issue is not being addressed.

- There is a lack of diversity within the community which is negatively impacting hiring practices, programming and a feeling of inclusivity among students, staff and community.
- The financial stability of the district is a significant challenge. This includes a lack of funding, a primarily residential tax base, and needed improvements in the district's facilities.
- There is a perceived lack of transparency in decision making and communication from the leadership and Board of Education.

### **HIGH SCHOOL AND MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS**

- The students expressed concerns about the trustworthiness of the Board of Education and the political influences on its decision making.
- The students expressed a desire to have their voices heard more frequently in decisions that directly impact them; most specifically the decision to cancel Diversity Day.
- The students wished communication from the Board and District Office would include them first.
- The students desired more information on extracurricular activities and hoped for better communication between Anderson and Turpin High Schools.
- The students expressed a desire for more focus on their mental health struggles and need for better communication regarding this important issue.

### ***CHARACTERISTICS OF NEW SUPERINTENDENT***

**Question #3: Please tell us your two or three characteristics which you think the Board should look for in a new Superintendent.**

### **CONSISTENT THEMES**

- Willingness and ability to work collaboratively with the Board of Education, faculty and staff.
- A leader who is focused on students first; is a student advocate.
- Good listener with strong interpersonal, communication and public relation skills
- Someone astute at bringing the community together; a unifier.
- Personal involvement, visibility, and investment in the community
- Possesses strength of character, honest, caring, ethical and compassionate
- Someone who is open minded, transparent and unbiased
- Someone who is fiscally astute with a clear understanding of the budgetary needs of the district.
- Strong leader who will stand up for what is right
- A leader who values diversity and inclusivity.

### **BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS**

- Someone that thinks out of the box with regards to funding
- Strong leader not afraid to make tough decisions
- A leader that is present and visible in the district

## **ADMINISTRATORS**

- Able to lead, educate and work collaboratively with the board of education
- Able to engage with faculty, staff and students in a fair manner
- Able to bring people together and bridge the political divide with a focus on educating the whole child
- Possesses effective organizational, management and leaderships skills
- A reflective, calm and mindful thinker who can make difficult decisions
- Able to trust and inspire the expertise of faculty and staff toward the vision and mission of the FHSD
- Expertise in design and implementation of instruction and curriculum
- Demonstrates cultural competency
- Able to advance and enhance the current educational vision of the district after learning, listening and observing
- A strong conviction and belief regarding what it takes to continue the academic excellence of the FHSD
- A leader who possesses courage, empathy and listening skills
- Invested in the community and able to build effective community partnerships
- Visible and approachable in the the community and in the schools and classrooms
- Cares for and enjoys interacting with students

## **TEACHERS**

- Advocate for staff and students
- Strong leader with conviction and belief in educating the whole child
- Visible and approachable in the schools and classrooms
- Invested and visible in the community
- Maintains high expectations for herself/himself and others
- A willingness to get to personally know staff
- A strong communicator and listener that is reflective and able to make tough decisions
- Possess the ability to stand strong in the face of criticism
- Demonstrates a sense of humor and can be “real” with staff
- Able to advance and enhance the current educational vision of the district after learning, listening and observing

## **SUPPORT STAFF**

- Visible, approachable, transparent and authentic
- Knowledgeable about educational programming and operations
- Works collaboratively with the treasurer
- Possesses strength of character
- Able to face criticism with resiliency
- Understands contract negotiation processes and current compensation markets
- Lives in the district and invested in the community
- A knowledgeable and experienced leader

**PARENTS AND COMMUNITY**

- Able to lead, educate and work collaboratively with the board of education, faculty and staff
- Demonstrates empathy, courage, integrity, honesty, vulnerability and resiliency
- Possesses strong communication skills and is transparent with all stakeholders
- Demonstrates the ability to reflect and act with conviction and belief when making decisions
- Experience as an instructional leader and advocates for the whole child
- Makes all students feel welcome and is culturally competent
- Understands school funding and budgets and can manage the financial plan beyond five years
- Demonstrates diplomacy when navigating the sometimes difficult political waters of the district
- An experienced leader with a focus on outcomes and excellence
- Able to inspire and compel others
- Praises, affirms and recognizes faculty, staff and students
- Visible in the community, schools and classrooms

**STUDENTS**

- Enjoys interacting with students and providing students a voice
- Personal involvement and investment in the community
- Able to effectively manage the budget and set priorities
- Demonstrates the ability to listen with objectivity and act with courage when making
- Visible in the community, schools and classrooms
- Demonstrates a vision for the district
- Values diversity
- Successful leadership experience

**SUPERINTENDENT CHARACTERISTICS BY RANKING**

**1 = MOST IMPORTANT**

TO

**10 = LEAST IMPORTANT**

<b>CRITERIA</b>	<b>ADMIN</b>	<b>TEACHERS</b>	<b>SUPPORT STAFF</b>	<b>COMMUNITY &amp; PARENTS</b>	<b>H.S. STUDENTS</b>
Ability and willingness to deal fairly with faculty, staff, students and parents	2	2	3	1	3
Effective at creating and a vision for the district	8	3	2	2	7
Expertise in design and implementation of instruction and curriculum	3	7	8	10	8

Effective with both written and verbal communication	10	5	5	8	6
Successful experience as a superintendent	9	10	10	4	9
Experience with socially and economically diverse student populations	4	9	9	3	10
Fiscal management expertise	6	6	4	6	2
Effective organizational and management skills	5	4	6	9	5
Personal involvement and interest in the community	7	8	1	7	1
Strong interpersonal and public relations skills	1	1	7	5	4

**RANKING OF TOP AND BOTTOM FIVE (5) IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS--ALL GROUPS**

**1 - 5 MOST IMPORTANT TO 6 - 10 LEAST IMPORTANT**

**RANK**

**TOP 5 CHARACTERISTICS**

- 1 Ability and willingness to deal fairly with faculty, staff, parents, and students.
- 2 Strong interpersonal and public relations skills.
- 3 Effective at creating and a vision for the district
- 4 Personal involvement and interest in the community. (tie)
- 4 Fiscal management expertise. (tie)

**RANK**

**BOTTOM 5 CHARACTERISTICS**

- 6 Effective organizational and management skills.
- 7 Effective with both written and verbal communications.
- 8 Experience with socially and economically diverse student populations.
- 9 Expertise in design and implementation of instruction and curriculum.
- 10 Successful experiences as a superintendent of schools.

## SUMMARY

The information gathered through surveys and focus group sessions bear strong similarity across all groups with respect to the Forest Hills District's strengths, issues and challenges facing the district, as well as the characteristics desired in the next superintendent.

The consistent themes expressed by groups and individuals about the Forest Hills School District's *greatest strengths* include: (A) Quality and dedication of teachers and staff always willing to go the extra mile for students. (B) Instructional quality, rigor and maintenance of high academic standards (C) A wide range of academic and extracurricular opportunities for students (D) Involvement and support of the community and parents (E) Financial stability and sound fiscal management

The top *concerns and challenges* facing the Forest Hills Board of Education and the new superintendent in the future - all of which appeared on surveys received and were expressed during the focus group sessions – include the following: (A) The Board of Education is perceived as a polarizing force in the community and the district. There is genuine concern regarding the influences on the decision making of the Board; including political influences. There is belief that the Board is failing to address key elements of student success such as mental health supports and diversity initiatives. (B) There is a palpable division with the community which is perceived as being fueled by political beliefs. This is causing negative impacts to the classroom, to students, to teachers and parents. (C) There is the perception that certain loud voices are driving the narrative of the district, has caused the district to be in the media frequently and is painting it in a negative light. This has caused a decrease in staff morale. (D) There is genuine concern for the mental health challenges faced by students and staff. There is fear that this is not being adequately addressed and that supports may be in jeopardy. (E) The district is facing significant financial challenges and will be forced to ask the voters for a levy soon. (F) There is a lack of diversity within the district which is impacting the inclusiveness among students and hiring practices.

It quite often is difficult to capture all the characteristics that respondents were looking for in a new superintendent. It is certain that no one person could possibly embody all that was mentioned as desired attributes for the new superintendent. The clear majority of survey respondents and focus group session participants expressed the need for the new superintendent to be a person who has the following characteristics: (A) Willingness and ability to work collaboratively with the Board of Education, faculty and staff. (B) A leader who is focused on students first; is a student advocate. (C) Good listener with strong interpersonal, communication and public relation skills. (D) Someone astute at bringing the community together; a unifier. (E) Personal involvement, visibility, and investment in the community (F) Possesses strength of character, honest, caring, ethical and compassionate (G) Someone who is open minded, transparent and unbiased (H) Someone who is fiscally astute with a clear understanding of the budgetary needs of the district. (I) Strong leader who will stand up for what is right (J) A leader who values diversity and inclusivity.

The consistent themes summarized above were either shared with K-12 during the focus group sessions or submitted in writing on the surveys that were returned to K-12.

The new superintendent will need to be visibly active in the school buildings and in the community. He/she must be willing to undertake the task of unifying the community that is currently divided. It will be essential for the new superintendent to collaborate with, coach and counsel the Board of Education; a majority of which are new to their offices. The new leader must understand and address the reported declining morale of the outstanding Forest Hills faculty. The new Superintendent must include ways to

engage the staff, parents, and community. The new leader must be an experienced administrator who is sincere, approachable, open - minded and collaborative, and able to demonstrate trustworthiness and integrity. The new Superintendent must be versed in the financial elements of public school funding and specifically the budget situation in Forest Hills.

We believe that the right candidate for superintendent will recognize that: (1) Forest Hills School District is a close-knit community that is full of pride about the school district; (2) Parents and the community genuinely care about the school district and are supportive of the students; and (3) The district has provided high quality education for many years in the Cincinnati area and is recognized nationally for excellence. This position will be of interest to the right superintendent candidates. We believe we will find the right potential candidates who have the attributes outlined herein, possess the skills and energy needed to address current and future issues expressed by survey respondents, and who will be happy to lead the district and the community into the future.

Respectfully submitted:

K-12 Business Consulting, Inc.