



**Santa Ana Unified School District
Superintendent Search**

**Executive Leadership Profile
April 27, 2016**

INTRODUCTION OF FINDINGS

This report presents the finding of the Executive Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) and presented to the Board of Education on Wednesday, April 27, 2016. The data contained herein were obtained from input the HYA consultants received when they met with individuals and groups in either individual interviews or in a focus group setting, and from the results of the online survey completed by stakeholders. The survey, interviews, and focus group meetings were structured to gather input to assist the Santa Ana Unified School District Board in determining the primary characteristics desired in the new superintendent. Interviews and focus group meetings were conducted on April 11 and 12, as well as some additional data were received via conference calls. Additionally, the stakeholder interviews and focus group meetings collected information related to the strengths of the District, some of the challenges the District will face in the coming years, and characteristics that the community desires in the new superintendent.

The consultants commend the Board for setting a goal of being transparent in gaining stakeholder input while maintaining the commitment to a confidential search to maximize the ability to attract the most highly qualified individuals to be considered for superintendent of the Santa Ana Unified School District (SAUSD). The Board's efforts to cast a wide net to include individuals identified by stakeholders as possible candidates increases the potential pool of highly qualified individuals matched to the District's Leadership Profile.

In addition, the consultants commend the Board for the decision to survey the community. The 1,344 surveys completed online demonstrate the high level of stakeholder interest in providing input to the Board. The large number of open-ended comments included in the surveys gives voice to stakeholders interested in sharing individual perspectives with Board Members. Appreciation is extended to the public information office of the district in getting the word out about the survey and to principals for making communication about the survey a priority at their schools.



Participants in Focus Groups

Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) met with Board Members, district administrators, teachers, parents, community partners/representatives on April 11 and 12, 2016 to gather information to assist the consultants in formulating a leadership profile desired of the new superintendent. Some additional data were received via conferences calls. The number of participants, by stakeholder group, is listed below:

Stakeholder Group*	Participants
Board Members	5
Business Owner/District Partner	3
Chamber of Commerce	1
City Police	1
Community Advocate	1
Community Members	12
Community Partners	6
Foundation	1
Heritage Museum	1
High School Inc.	1
LULAC	1
Parks and Rec/Public Library	1
Partner Agency	1
Parks and Rec/Public Library/Community Services	1
Santa Ana Public Library	1
Workforce Development and Advocacy	1
Total	38

(All five School Board Members participated in an individual interview. The individual and focus groups represented a cross section of stakeholders identified through the Board. It should be noted that it is likely some of those who were interviewed or participated in focus groups also completed the online survey.)

*Note that results from Stakeholder Surveys are presented in a separate document.

It should be emphasized that the data are not a scientific sampling, nor should they necessarily be viewed as representing the majority opinion of the respective groups to which they are attributed. Items are included if, in the consultants' judgment, they warranted the Board's attention.

Information obtained through the interviews, focus groups, and online survey reflects similar views from the various groups with respect to the strengths of the District. Consistent in the data was the theme that a superintendent who will make a long-term commitment to District is needed. Stakeholders often mentioned that the short tenure of



recent superintendents has undermined the sense of stability that is crucial to continued improvement efforts. Stakeholders also articulated the desire to have a superintendent who will work with students, parents, staff, and the broad spectrum of community partners through a shared vision, tapping the great potential within the larger community to continue the district's trajectory toward being one of the top urban districts in California.

The diversity and bilingual makeup of the District were consistently viewed as strengths of the District and the community as a whole. Stakeholders indicated broad commitment to support the District in producing graduates that will excel in their future educational or career goals.

Stakeholders consistently mentioned the importance of selecting a superintendent that will work collaboratively with the School Board to identify priorities and clearly communicate the District's goals, performance gaps, and progress to all segments of the staff and community. The size of the District was viewed as a significant factor in selecting an experienced superintendent. Communication was viewed as a top priority for the new superintendent and essential to build support for the long-term improvement goals needed for continued growth and success.

High quality, dedicated teachers and support staff were viewed as strengths, and the importance of providing stable leadership at school sites was identified as an important factor to continue many of the innovations that have been initiated during the last two years. Teachers were described as selecting to teach in SAUSD due to the diversity of the student population and the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of students. Once hired by SAUSD, the majority of teachers remain in the District until they retire.

The efforts of the community to support the modernization of facilities through bond measures and the commitment of the Board to provide state of the art facilities for students were commended and viewed as positive factors in promoting the District. Joint use of school grounds and facilities to provide recreational places for youth in the community was described as an important collaboration between the District and City that needs to continue with the new superintendent.

The theme of *telling the story of SAUSD* surfaced across groups as something that needs to be addressed. Stakeholders mentioned that there are misperceptions of the District and that, in fact, SAUSD is moving forward in positive ways. The importance of selecting a superintendent that understands what has been accomplished and is committed to building upon this work surfaced as an important theme when considering the professional and personal characteristics of a potential superintendent.

The work at the high school level around career academies was viewed as an innovation designed to engage students and improve outcomes. In addition, the increased access to technology for learning was viewed positively and identified as one of the strengths of the District. Business partnerships that support the academy focus at the high school level were identified as significant strengths for SAUSD.



The increased involvement of parents in the District, especially in the LCAP process, was described as an important indicator that the District values community involvement and continues to reach out to parents in meaningful ways.

Family-centric was a word that was used by stakeholders to describe parents and the community. This word was used to underscore the importance of family and community in Santa Ana.

The Board was identified as one of the District's strengths. Improved efforts to work with the City of Santa Ana in meaningful partnerships was viewed by many stakeholders as a positive asset that supports the potential to improve the overall community with education as the core. The positive relationship between the Board and City Council is also reflected in the partnerships with city departments and services. The relationship was viewed as collaborative.

Business is viewed as an important partner to the work of the District, and Santa Ana was described as a business-friendly environment. Business leaders look to the District for future employees, and there is a genuine interest in supporting the district's efforts to produce well-prepared graduates who are college and career ready.

District efforts to reduce suspensions and expulsions through restorative approaches to discipline were identified as strengths. Stakeholders consistently described the District as having a student-centered culture in which all students are important, and the success of all students is a shared-commitment among the Board, District staff, and the community. This was often called an assets-based way of viewing students that focuses on the whole child.

The population and housing density within the community and the lack of adequate and affordable housing were some of the consistent themes that related to challenges the community faces. The need for the District to work in partnership with the City was considered important to finding solutions, especially utilizing Joint Use Agreements to provide recreational spaces within the community.

Partnerships with higher education, especially Santa Ana College and Cal State University Fullerton, were described as assets that support increased academic success for students across the system. Collaboration was the term used to describe this relationship. The focus on helping students attain college acceptance and on identifying scholarships to support students who cannot afford the tuition was also identified as a strength of the District.

Stakeholders communicated the theme of pride in being part of Santa Ana across all groups. Leaders are viewed as having deep roots in the community; often leaders are graduates of SAUSD. The pride that comes from being a graduate of SAUSD was clearly communicated by leaders interviewed and individuals who have moved to Santa Ana and observed the importance of being from the community.

Many expressed a desire that the new superintendent know Santa Ana and have demonstrated knowledge of the school district. Being part of the culture of Santa Ana was viewed as a significant asset for a new leader. Acknowledging that the new superintendent



may come from outside the District, stakeholders encouraged the new leader to respect and value the assets of the District and community.

Success examples were shared by the stakeholders that were interviewed during the process of soliciting input for the Leadership Profile. The examples were extensive and communicated with pride. Santa Ana was described as a community on the move that has strong leadership at the Board and city levels, supported by partnerships with business, higher education, and community agencies and services. With leadership stability, the District can move to the next level was a common theme.

Respondents agreed upon many of the attributes that would assist a new superintendent in successfully addressing the issues that confront SAUSD. The leader must have demonstrated knowledge and skill in working in a large, complex school system. The new superintendent must value diversity and be comfortable in engaging the linguistic and cultural diversity of the schools and community. There is a strong expectation that the new superintendent will remain in the District for a significant time to provide stability and to build on all that has been accomplished in recent years.

The new superintendent should have a demonstrated history of being an effective communicator that builds trust and inspires the employees and community to work together on behalf of students. It is hoped that the new superintendent will see the strengths of the District and be willing to work collaboratively with all stakeholders to build positive relationships and to *tell the story of SAUSD* to the larger community.

Being able to work well with business partners within the community is essential, as well as having the ability to reach out to city agencies and departments on behalf of the District. These skills must be clearly evident in the new superintendent to ensure District partners see that their involvement is valued and will be nurtured and sustained by the new leader.

The new superintendent comes to a district that values stability and seeks to have someone who can make a long-term commitment to work with the Board and all other stakeholders. Someone who demonstrates that SAUSD will be his/her primary focus and who values the importance of relationships with all stakeholder groups will be well received by employees and district partners. SAUSD and the larger Santa Ana community demonstrate pride in their history, achievements, innovations, businesses, foundations, graduates, family-centric parents, and the potential for a successful future. The selected superintendent comes to a district with significant assets, ready to move forward to accomplish even greater successes.

The consultants thank all participants who attended focus group meetings or completed the online survey. We also thank the Santa Ana Unified School District staff members who assisted with our meetings and for facilitating our time in the District.

Respectfully submitted,

Rudy Castruita and Maria Ott



SUMMARY OF CONSISTENT THEMES

Strengths of the District

- Bilingualism of students and community
- Board is focused on students' needs
- Business partnerships and business support for school district
- Career academies at high school
- Collaboration with community partners
- Collaborative relationships with city leadership and partnerships to provide services to students and families
- Family-centric community
- Focus on graduates that are college and career ready
- Focus on the whole child
- Historical ties within community
- Inclusive community
- Joint use efforts between district and city
- Linguistic and ethnic diversity
- Parent engagement
- Parent support for education—believe in the potential of their children
- People care
- Pride in being part of Santa Ana and SAUSD
- Quality of leadership
- Restorative justice approaches to discipline
- Stable and committed district employees
- Technology innovations
- Welcoming environment

Issues/Concerns/Challenges of the District

- Academic performance/graduation rates
- Complexity of district
- Crime within larger community
- Density of district and housing costs
- Impact of poverty
- Need to improve communication
- Need for stability in leadership
- Need to expand outreach to community
- Need to expand student experiences beyond classroom
- Need to *tell Santa Ana story*
- Neighborhood issues and public safety
- Workforce preparation



Desired Characteristics of the New Superintendent

- Ability to work effectively with the Board and manage different points of view on Board
- Action oriented
- Approachable and accessible
- Avoids favoritism
- Can *tell Santa Ana story* and build support for the District
- Committed to SAUSD and the Santa Ana community
- Courageous in addressing district's needs and challenges
- Demonstrated success in running a large and complex organization
- Demonstrates humility and respect in leadership style
- Demonstrates vision for the district, reflecting the strengths and assets of SAUSD
- Effective communicator
- Effective team builder who instills trust
- Enthusiastic leader who will be committed to being involved in community
- Fiscal expertise
- Knows how to support staff while ensuring accountability
- Positive and high-energy leader
- Skilled educator
- Strong political skills
- Trust-worthy and honest
- Values diversity and has demonstrated success working with diverse ethnic and linguistic groups
- Works well with Board