

**Comprehensive and Detailed Final Report:
Superintendent Stakeholder Input**



Methods for Collecting Input

To ensure an equitable, transparent, and comprehensive superintendent selection process, detailed methods utilized include:

1. Superintendent Listening Sessions
 - In-Person: June 3 & June 5, 2025, Villa Fundamental Intermediate School.
 - Virtual: June 4, 2025, via Zoom.
 - Participant groups: Staff, parents, students, community members.
 - Total Participants: 289
 - Staff: 123
 - Parents: 98
 - Students: 28
 - Community members: 40
 - Data prioritization marked explicitly by checkmarks, asterisks, and top-three selections.
2. LCAP Feedback Sessions
 - Integrated feedback from broader district-wide community engagement.
3. Student Listening Sessions
 - Conducted March-April 2025; 167 students provided 216 comments regarding their needs.

Data Collected & Detailed Findings

Superintendent Qualities and Leadership Traits

- Transparency & Integrity: Mentioned 58 times (35 prioritized).
- Visibility & Engagement: Mentioned 44 times (28 prioritized).
- Effective Communication (Bilingual-Spanish): Mentioned 41 times (24 prioritized).
- Equity & Cultural Competence: Mentioned 39 times (20 prioritized).

Sample Quotes:

- "Transparent responses and someone who can decipher fact from fiction." – Staff, June 3
- "Someone who is highly visible and genuinely engaged with schools." – Parent, June 5
- "Bilingual communication is critical for effective engagement." – Community Member, June 4
- "Understanding cultural nuances and promoting equity are essential." – Teacher, June 3

Top Priorities for Superintendent's First Year

- Academic Achievement (Literacy Focus): Mentioned 52 times (42 prioritized).
- School Safety & Mental Health: Mentioned 48 times (36 prioritized).
- Family & Community Engagement: Mentioned 44 times (31 prioritized).
- Employee Retention & Support: Mentioned 29 times (20 prioritized).

Sample Quotes:

- "Prioritize professional development to improve educational outcomes." – Educator, June 3
- "School safety should be paramount—students can't learn if they don't feel safe." – Parent, June 4
- "Mental health services expansion is urgently needed." – Staff, June 5
- "Strong community ties enhance student success." –Community Member, June 3

Equitable Access to High-Quality Education

- Support English Learners & Special Education: Mentioned 48 times (40 prioritized).
- Resource Equity & Intervention: Mentioned 42 times (34 prioritized).
- Educator Training & Support: Mentioned 32 times (27 prioritized).
- Inclusive Curriculum & Practices: Mentioned 28 times (22 prioritized).

Sample Quotes:

- "More training on inclusive practices for students with IEPs and in-class support." – Teacher, June 4
- "Equitable resources are needed for all schools, not just select ones." – Staff, June 3
- "Special education requires dedicated support and targeted interventions." – Parent, June 5
- "An inclusive curriculum ensures every student is valued and supported." – Community Member, June 4

Building Trust & Strengthening Relationships

- Clear & Consistent Communication: Mentioned 50 times (37 prioritized).
- Accountability & Responsiveness: Mentioned 46 times (33 prioritized).
- Active Community Presence: Mentioned 42 times (30 prioritized).
- Ethical Decision-Making: Mentioned 39 times (29 prioritized).

Sample Quotes:

- "Super transparent and someone who can follow through, not just overpromise." – Parent, June 5
- "Leaders must be accountable and responsive to community needs." – Staff, June 3
- "Frequent visits and active participation in community events build trust." – Community Member, June 4
- "Ethical decision-making is foundational for trust." – Teacher, June 5

LEADERSHIP PROFILE

The next superintendent should be a visionary, equity-minded leader with strong communication skills, fiscal responsibility, and a collaborative approach.



Visionary

Articulates a clear strategic vision for student success



Equity-Minded

Ensures fair access to education and resources for all students



Strong Communicator

Communicates openly, transparently, and effectively with a variety of stakeholders



Empathetic

Demonstrates genuine care and understanding for students, staff, and the community



Collaborative

Works in partnership with others to achieve district goals



Fiscally Responsible

Manages the budget prudently and ensures fiscal solvency



Builds Trust

Establishes and maintains trust through honesty and integrity



Visible

Is present and engaged in schools and the community

Comprehensive Report: Superintendent Stakeholder Input Survey

The Santa Ana Unified School District (SAUSD) Superintendent Input Survey gathered feedback from various educational partners including staff, parents, students, and community members on critical qualities, leadership characteristics, and prior experience deemed important for the next superintendent. It also addresses the importance of experience within the district or similar communities, as well as expertise in areas like facilities planning, school finance, and instructional initiatives. Furthermore, the survey explores strategies for improving student achievement, fostering stronger partnerships with families and organizations, and identifies top priorities and values the new superintendent should embody in their first year.

Based on the survey responses, the SAUSD the District has articulated a clear set of desired qualities, leadership characteristics, and prior experiences for the next superintendent of SAUSD

The survey was distributed via ParentSquare, social media, district email and district website.

- Total Responses: 587
- Staff: 42%
 - Certificated: 67%
 - Classified: 28%
 - Administrators: 5%
- Parents/Caregivers/Community Members: 25%
 - 95% reported having children enrolled in SAUSD
- Students: 33%

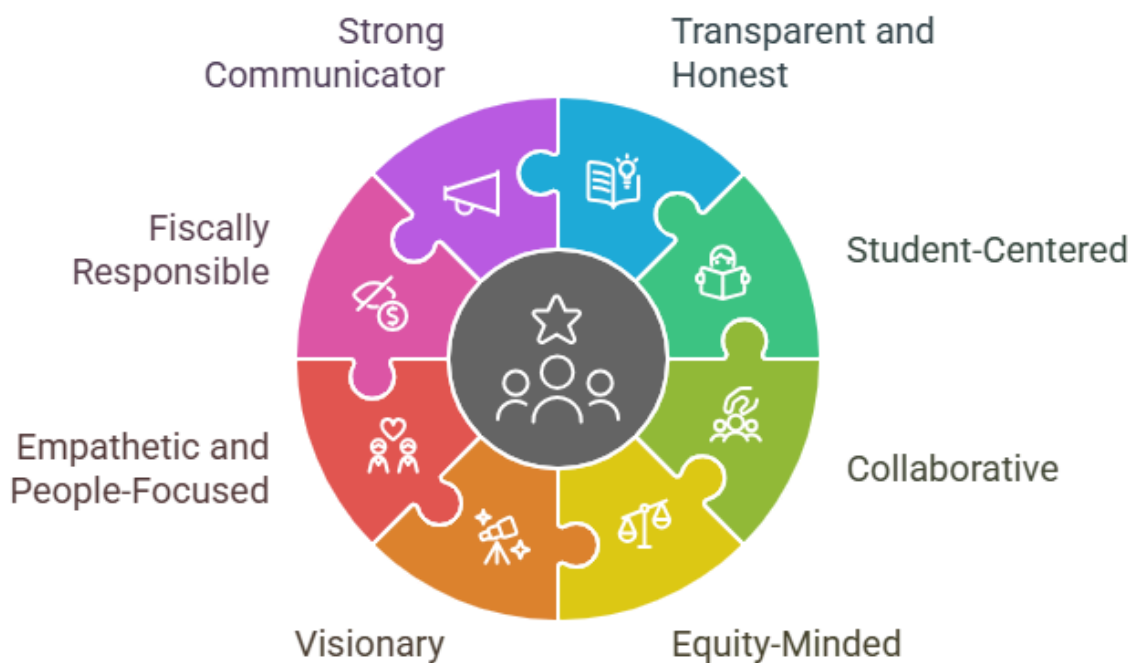
.Key Qualities Desired in the Next Superintendent

The educational partners emphasize several core qualities as most important for the next superintendent:

- **Transparent and Honest/Integrity:** This is a highly recurring theme, with many respondents stressing the need for honesty, clear communication, and ethical behavior in all decisions and operations.
- **Student-Centered:** The superintendent must prioritize what is best for students in every decision, ensuring support for all learners, especially those historically underserved. This also includes a strong focus on **academic achievement** and improving learning outcomes.
- **Collaborative:** The ability to work effectively with various groups, including staff, parents, and community organizations, is highly valued.

- **Equity-Minded:** A leader who understands and champions fair access to education and resources for all students, fighting for those historically underserved, is crucial.
- **Visionary:** The community seeks a forward-thinking leader with a clear strategic vision for student achievement and district growth.
- **Empathetic and People-Focused:** The superintendent should listen, understand, and value educators as professionals and people, showing genuine care for the community.
- **Fiscally Responsible:** Strong knowledge of school finance, budget development, and ensuring fiscal solvency is considered very important, with 67.5% of respondents deeming it "Very important".
- **Strong Communicator:** The ability to communicate clearly and effectively with the school board, staff, parents, and the community is highly valued.

Key Qualities Desired in the Next Superintendent



Desired Leadership Characteristics or Professional Styles

The next superintendent's professional style should reflect their ability to foster trust, make informed decisions, and engage effectively with all educational partners:

- **Listens Well:** This is consistently highlighted as a fundamental characteristic, emphasizing active listening to all stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and community members.
- **Builds Trust Across Groups:** The ability to earn and maintain trust through consistency, transparency, and standing up for what's right is seen as essential for unifying the district.
- **Makes Data-Informed Decisions:** There is a strong preference for a superintendent who uses data to identify needs, measure progress, and make sound decisions, while also considering nuance and community input.
- **Visible and Present in Schools/Community:** Respondents desire a leader who actively engages with the community by visiting school sites regularly, attending events, and being accessible to families and staff.
- **Accountability:** The superintendent should hold themselves and others to high standards of performance and integrity, following through on commitments.
- **Problem-Solving:** The ability to resolve problems effectively and strategically is also a key characteristic.



Desired Prior Experience

The survey results highlight a broad range of prior experiences that are considered important for the next superintendent:

- Classroom teaching experience is desired by 77.4% of respondents.
- School site leadership experience is desired by 77.4% of respondents.
- Budget management and fiscal oversight is important to 73.0% of respondents. This is reinforced by 67.5% of respondents indicating it's "Very important" for the superintendent to have deep expertise in school finance.
- Community/ family engagement experience is desired by 67.5% of respondents.
- Experience with districts similar in size and demographics is desired by 59.5% of respondents, and 67.6% consider it "Very important".
- District-level administration experience is desired by 53.6% of respondents.
- Experience working with school boards is desired by 46.0% of respondents.
- A strong understanding of curriculum development and instructional leadership is considered "Very important" by 77.0% of respondents.
- Experience with key instructional initiatives such as early literacy, dual language programs, career technical education, and college readiness pathways is also considered "Very important" by 76.8% of respondents.
- Additionally, several "write-in" responses emphasize the importance of the superintendent being bilingual (Spanish), having special education knowledge, being from the local community, and having a proven academic leadership record.

What values should the next superintendent model?

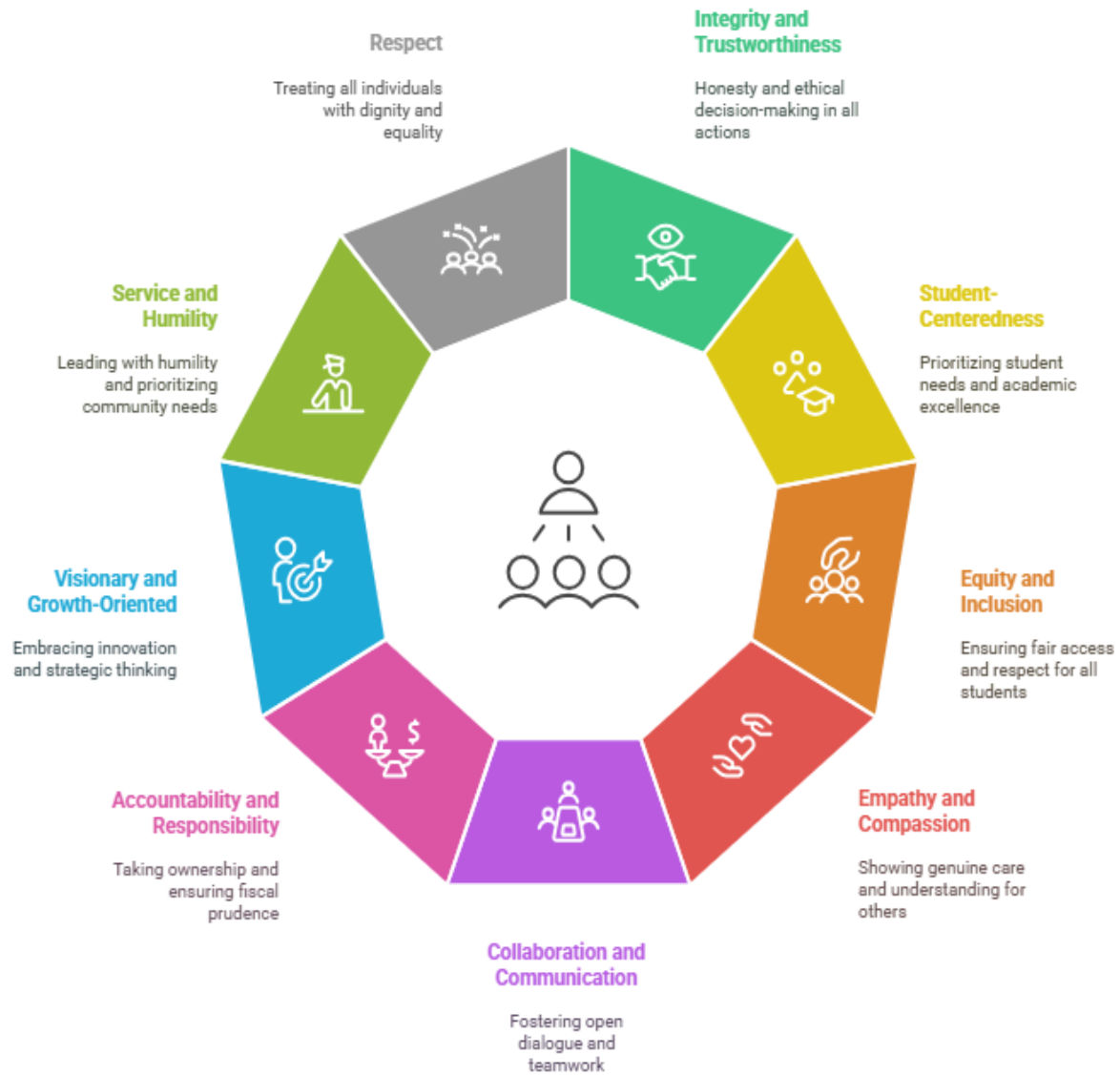
The educational partners have clearly articulated a desire for the next superintendent to model a comprehensive set of values that prioritize trust, student success, and inclusive leadership. These values are seen as foundational for improving the district's culture and achieving its goals.

Here are the key values and characteristics the next superintendent should model:

- Integrity and Trustworthiness: This is a paramount value, frequently expressed as a need for honesty, transparency, and ethical decision-making in all interactions and operations. The superintendent should be someone whose word means something, owning decisions, following through on commitments, and not engaging in "double talk" or "backtracking". This includes being transparent about challenges and successes.

- **Student-Centeredness and Academic Focus:** The superintendent must unequivocally prioritize what is best for students in every decision. This includes a strong belief in academic rigor, early literacy and numeracy, high expectations for all students, and a love for learning and reading. They should be dedicated to improving student achievement and ensuring students are prepared for college and careers.
- **Equity and Inclusion:** The community expects a leader who is deeply committed to equity, fighting for fair access to education and resources for all students, especially those historically underserved. This includes addressing systemic inequalities, respecting cultural diversity, supporting students with disabilities (e.g., special education, neurodivergent, Deaf or Hard of Hearing), and promoting anti-racism and anti-ableism. They should ensure everyone feels seen, valued, and respected.
- **Empathy and Compassion:** The superintendent should be empathetic, kind, and people-focused, listening with an "open heart" and understanding the diverse experiences and challenges faced by students, staff, and families. They should show genuine care for the well-being of the community.
- **Collaboration and Communication:** A strong emphasis is placed on the ability to foster collaboration and open communication with all stakeholders. This includes being visible and present in schools and the community, actively listening to diverse voices, and facilitating two-way communication.
- **Accountability and Responsibility:** The superintendent should model accountability for themselves and others, taking responsibility for outcomes and addressing misconduct or systemic problems directly. This also ties into fiscal responsibility and ensuring efficient use of funds.
- **Visionary and Growth-Oriented:** The community seeks a forward-thinking and strategic leader with a clear vision for student achievement and district growth. They should embrace continuous learning, be open to new ideas, and encourage a growth mindset across the district.
- **Service and Humility:** Many responses emphasize the importance of a servant leader who puts students, staff, and the community first, leading with humility and heart, rather than ego or personal gain.
- **Respect:** The superintendent should model respect for all individuals, including students, staff, parents, and diverse community viewpoints, treating all staff equally regardless of title.

Key Values and Characteristics of a Superintendent



How can the superintendent build stronger partnerships?

To build stronger partnerships with families and community organizations, the next superintendent should prioritize a multi-faceted approach centered on transparency, active engagement, and authentic collaboration.

Here are the key strategies and characteristics the superintendent should demonstrate:

- **Be Visible and Present in the Community and Schools:**
 - Actively show up at school sites, community forums, neighborhood events, and cultural celebrations, not just press events or ribbon cuttings. This demonstrates sincerity and commitment.
 - Make unannounced visits to campuses to see what is happening in classrooms and talk directly with students, staff, and families.
 - Engage with the community directly rather than just sending assistants or staff in their place.
- **Establish Clear, Transparent, and Two-Way Communication Channels:**
 - Communicate openly and honestly about district goals, achievements, and challenges.
 - Provide regular updates, newsletters, and information in accessible formats and bilingual/multilingual options (especially Spanish).
 - Implement feedback tools and active listening sessions, such as regular town halls, open forums, and informal "coffee with the superintendent" meetings at various school sites and community centers.
 - Listen to understand, not just to respond, giving genuine consideration to diverse voices, especially from immigrant, Latino, low-income, and non-English speaking communities. This includes teachers, staff, and parents.
 - Provide childcare, food, and transportation as needed to remove barriers to participation.
- **Build Trust and Relationships:**
 - Lead with integrity, honesty, and transparency to rebuild trust that may have been damaged by past leadership. This means owning decisions and following through on commitments.
 - Acknowledge past harms and take visible steps to repair relationships with staff, students, and families.
 - Demonstrate consistency and reliability.
 - Cultivate positive relationships and a sense of shared purpose across all groups.
- **Foster Collaboration with Families and Community Organizations:**

- Create inclusive advisory councils (e.g., parent, student, community) that reflect the district's diversity and allow for co-creation of solutions and policies.
- Partner strategically with local nonprofits, grassroots groups, faith-based organizations, businesses, and civic groups to provide wrap-around support for students and families.
- Integrate community organizations into the school ecosystem through on-campus activities, mentorship programs, mental health services, and job training.
- Encourage and support parental involvement in school activities and initiatives, including strengthening Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTOs).
- **Demonstrate Cultural Competence and Understand Community Needs:**
 - Understand and respect the lived experiences of diverse communities, including Latino, immigrant, working-class, and underserved families.
 - Prioritize addressing real family needs, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, citizenship workshops, and mental health services, while also recognizing and building on the strengths and assets of these families.
 - Ensure staff are trained in cultural competency and trauma-informed practices.
 - Be mindful of racial bullying and discrimination, promoting anti-racism and inclusivity for all students regardless of race or ability.
- **Focus on Student Outcomes and Well-being as the Driving Force for Partnerships:**
 - Align partnerships with district goals for improving student achievement and closing opportunity gaps.
 - Demonstrate that all decisions are student-centered.
 - Ensure student well-being, mental health, and safety are central components of district goals supported by partnerships.

What strategies and priorities should the new superintendent focus on for district improvement?

The educational partners have emphasized that the next superintendent should focus on a core set of strategies and priorities to drive district improvement, particularly revolving around student success, financial stability, and rebuilding trust within the Santa Ana Unified School District (SAUSD). These priorities are deeply intertwined with the values of integrity, transparency, collaboration, and student-centeredness that the community expects the new leader to model.

Here are the key strategies and priorities for district improvement:

Top Priorities in the First Year

The educational partners articulated several critical areas for the new superintendent's immediate focus:

- **Rebuilding Trust and Strengthening Relationships:** This was consistently highlighted as a paramount concern. The superintendent should work to shift the focus away from personal or political drama and back to students. This includes fostering a respectful, student-centered culture among board members, staff, and the community. It requires acknowledging past harms, listening without defensiveness, and taking visible steps to rebuild trust through action, not just words. Furthermore, it means engaging with staff, students, and families through active listening sessions.
- **Improving Student Achievement and Academic Focus:** A strong emphasis was placed on returning to core educational principles. The superintendent should focus on academic performance and improvement above all, particularly in reading, writing, and arithmetic, recognizing that these are foundational skills. Strategies include strengthening academic programs for college and career readiness, expanding access to advanced coursework, and ensuring students receive the necessary support to succeed in a rigorous academic environment.
- **Strengthening Financial Stability and Transparency:** This involves correcting the budget and reducing district office spending. The superintendent must prioritize the district's financial health by making informed decisions and educating the community about school funding. It's crucial to eliminate unnecessary expenditures and manage wasteful spending.
- **Supporting Teachers and Staff:** Educational partners highlighted the need to rehire teachers and avoid further layoffs. Priorities include providing better support for teachers and instructional aides, particularly in special education, and addressing staff disillusionment and morale. Reducing class sizes, especially in elementary grades, was also frequently mentioned to ensure adequate learning.
- **School Safety and Student Well-being:** The superintendent should prioritize campus safety and address student well-being, mental health, and social-emotional learning. This includes providing school police and security officers and ensuring students' health needs are met, such as healthcare and nutrition.
- **Increasing Enrollment and Retention:** Strategies should focus on assessing why families are leaving the district and implementing retention strategies to attract and keep students.
- **Accountability:** The superintendent should model and implement accountability for staff, administrators, students, and parents.

Strategies to Improve Student Achievement and Close Opportunity Gaps

Specific strategies to enhance student achievement and bridge opportunity gaps include:

- Prioritize early literacy and numeracy support.
- Focus on high-quality teacher recruitment and training.
- Develop career pathways and real-world learning opportunities.
- Implement more inclusive special education practices.
- Foster a culturally responsive curriculum.
- Expand dual language or bilingual programs.
- Offer expanded after-school and summer learning programs.
- Address student discipline and accountability.
- Invest in social-emotional learning (SEL) programs, trauma-informed practices, and mental health support for students and staff.
- Ensure equitable access to all areas of instruction, including arts, physical education, science, and history, not just core subjects.
- Reinforce the importance of parent-teacher associations at every school site.
- Focus on retaining strong administration and providing consistent systems across the district.
- Implement stricter technology use policies, particularly regarding cell phones, to minimize distractions in classrooms.
- Ensure student well-being and safety are central components, supported by active partnerships.
- Develop mentorship opportunities for students not meeting academic standards.
- Promote anti-racism and anti-ableism through cultural sensitivity training to reduce bullying and discrimination.

By focusing on these interlinked strategies and priorities, and by consistently modeling values of integrity, empathy, and service, the next superintendent can work towards substantial district improvement and foster a more connected and successful SAUSD community.