

Santa Ana Unified School District
Leadership Profile Report
March, 2011

Participation

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) on March 16 & 17, 2011 for the new superintendent of the District. The data contained herein were obtained from input that HYA consultants received when they met with the individuals and groups in interview or focus group settings and the data from the online survey completed by stakeholders. The surveys, interviews and focus group meetings were structured to gather data to assist the Board in determining the primary characteristics desired in the new superintendent. Additionally the stakeholder interviews and focus groups collected information regarding the strengths of the District and the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years. The number of participants, by stakeholder group, is listed below:

Stakeholder Group	Focus Group	Online Survey
Administrators	15	58
Board	5	1
Community/Parents	46	40
Faculty	3	372
Support Staff	6	
Total	75	471

The responses provided by the individuals and focus groups during the interviews are listed in Appendix A. Responses are listed alphabetically with no attempt to prioritize them. 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.

Strengths

Many stakeholders view the community's dedication to its youth as a significant strength. Santa Ana has one of the youngest populations in the nation and their commitment to providing a high quality education which meets the needs of their students is commendable. The work that has been done to implement best practices and understand the learning styles of the students has resulted in improved student performance, especially in the elementary grades.

The Superintendent's leadership team is also seen as a strength. There is receptivity to new ideas and sites are able to try promising programs and initiatives. Parents are highly motivated to be involved in the education of their children. They seek ways to play a larger role in assisting the District in meeting their educational goals.

Elementary schools have experienced success in raising the academic achievement level of their students. Principal training programs, teamwork and best practices embedded in the elementary programs have proven effective.

Community organizations play a large role in providing resources for the students. The District enjoys the availability of a myriad of programs provided by community groups, each attempting to provide services needed by students and their families. Partnerships with area colleges and universities is a major resource to secondary students. Noteworthy is the Santa Ana College, the gateway to higher education for many students. Middle College High, too, offers an opportunity for students to gain college credits while attending high school.

The unprecedented State financial situation has caused hardship and uncertainty regarding school funding, however the District management of its budget has helped reduce some of the impact of loss of revenue.

Challenges

There is considerable concern regarding the achievement levels of the secondary schools. The drop-out rate, graduation rates, offering algebra at eighth grade, class sizes, and students unprepared to enter the work force are part of a problem which must be addressed by the new leader.

Communication with parents and community organizations is seen as strained. Protocols and procedures may be hindrances to gaining access to information needed by parents as they seek help for their students. Information disseminated at the sites is often not received in a timely manner, if at all. The development of better ways to efficiently communicate necessary information should be explored. Some staff members, too, express concern about their ability to be heard and receive a response.

The reputation of the District and the community at large is not always seen as positive despite some of the very fine work going on in the District. A method to

communicate about the positive aspects of the District is needed. Marketing the schools and the District is important not only to the school community but to the business community as well. An educated work force is essential to a strong community.

Consistent Superintendent Characteristics

A large urban District such as Santa Ana needs a superintendent with a proven track record of leading a successful District with similar characteristics. Understanding the complex issues that face secondary schools with large numbers of English language learners would be an asset. A superintendent who is bilingual and can engage the predominantly Spanish speaking community would be an asset. An understanding of the many cultures that make up the District would also be important.

An individual with excellent communication skills is desired. Listening and responding to all constituents, following up on issues raised, serving on Boards and being accessible for dialogue regarding issues affecting the school District and the community are essential. Employee groups want regular interface with the superintendent.

The District has experienced considerable change in the past few years and there is concern that the new leader give serious consideration to what is in place and what is working before implementing new initiatives. Santa Ana Unified School District does not need fixing; it needs continued emphasis on those things that are resulting in academic gains for students. Recognizing that students face many challenges in their lives, the new superintendent should be cognizant of social and emotional needs of students and address them when possible.

The new leader should be able to manage a large, complex District, providing supervision and accountability. S/he should embrace diversity, advocate for students, build trust and establish positive relationships with all stakeholder groups and the community. Finally, this individual should be ethical, honest, fair, and transparent.

The challenge that the Board and HYA have is to find that uniquely qualified individual who can build upon the District's outstanding reputation and successfully address the challenges that the Santa Ana School District currently faces and those it will face in the future. HYA would like to express our sincere appreciation to Ms. Cynthia Gastelo for all the help that she has provided to this process. Superintendent Russo has been more than welcoming during our two day stay.

Respectfully submitted,

Rudy Castruita, Ed.D
Carolyn McKennan, Ed.D.

Consistent Themes Across Groups

Consistent Strengths

Dedication to the youth of the community is pervasive. The School Board, District employees, the parents, the community and the City all place a high value on the success of their students.

Always striving to meet the needs of the students, the Board, the administration, and the teaching and support staff were recognized for their efforts to improve instruction.

A strong committed administrative team, led by the superintendent and acting in the best interests of the students is evident and appreciated. There is a sense of openness to new ideas and better ways to promote academic success.

Parents want to be part of the District to foster the delivery of a high quality education for their children.

Academic improvement at the elementary level has occurred through implementation of best practices and professional development. The elementary schools have shown sizeable improvement with many being recognized at the State and Federal level.

Stewardship of the budget is praised especially in light of circumstances at the State level.

Partnerships with community organizations are a rich resource for the District and provide valuable services helping to meet the unique needs of the students they serve.

Parents, staff and administrators believe the District is headed in the right direction in addressing student achievement.

The relationship with the teacher's collective bargaining unit is perceived as strong.

The Board of Education is focused on student achievement.

Relationships with Higher Education institutions is strong

Challenges

Academic improvement in secondary schools is a significant challenge facing the District. Growth made in the elementary schools is not sustained. Academic achievement in middle school plateaus and in high schools it regresses.

Engaging parents as part of the educational process is problematic. The perception that parents are not included as members of the educational team contributes to the image of a District not truly interested in improving the quality of education they offer their students.

Clear, consistent and timely communication would help members of the school community understand District practices, procedures and protocols.

Keeping the Board well informed regarding all issues relating to instruction, management and operation of the District is sought.

Marketing the success of the District needs attention. Publicizing the initiatives under way, program innovations, and the many ways the community supports its students could contribute towards improving the reputation of the District.

The issue of educating English Language Learners continues to be a challenge.

The financial status of the District due to the State budget cuts are a concern.

Keeping our schools safe.

Desired Characteristics

Someone who understands, appreciates, and engages all segments of the community, including the Spanish language community. Being bilingual would be an asset.

An educator with a proven record of success in a similar type district.

Secondary school experience would be an asset.

Honest and open about challenges facing the District.

A constant communicator who will communicate the values, goals and mission of the Santa Ana Unified School District and close the communication loop with all stakeholders.

Recognizes the momentum under way in the District's educational programs and only make changes which will improve upon the educational experience of the students.

Able to strengthen community relationships and build consensus for where the District is going.

Integrity, honesty, transparency, fairness.

A team builder.

Is a good listener but can be decisive when necessary.

A leader who is proactive not reactive.

Holds all accountable including the superintendent.

A visionary leader who can move the District forward.

Treats employees as professionals.

Understands special education needs.