
Greenwich Public Schools
Greenwich, CT

Leadership Profile Report
February 1, 2009

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***LEADERSHIP PROFILE ASSESSMENT
GREENWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Superintendent of Schools Search
February 1, 2009***

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of the *Leadership Profile Assessment* conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates, Ltd. (HYA) for the Board of Education of the Greenwich Public Schools. After the Board selected HYA as consultants in its search for the next superintendent, an assessment instrument was prepared to solicit input which would be used to help the Board clarify important considerations in the search. The School Board made the instrument available, through direct meetings, posting on the web site, and distribution in other venues, to a wide variety of stakeholders including administrators, faculty, support staff, parents, community leaders, and members of the wider Greenwich community.

In developing this *Leadership Profile Report*, the consultants sought comment in face-to-face meetings or in written response on three broad questions – the strengths of the Greenwich Public Schools; issues and concerns confronting the Schools and their leadership; and important characteristics to be sought in the preferred candidates for the superintendent's position. At the interviews and meetings, we publicly noted that the School Board was seeking the views of a broad range of individuals and groups to assist in the search process, but that our consultants' report would summarize the findings to the School Board without including the identity of any individual contributor. The resulting interviews and feedback forms appeared to show an appropriately responsive candor.

The items that were presented with some consistency from the individuals and groups included in the assessment are presented in this report – first in a narrative Executive Summary, and then in an alphabetical listing. The comments are listed alphabetically since the data are anecdotal, rather than a scientific sampling calibrated for priority. Nor should any item be viewed as necessarily representing the majority opinion of the stakeholders or the respective group in which they originated. Items are included if, in the consultants' judgment, they were repeated by a sufficient number of respondents to warrant the Board's attention.

The consultants are thankful to those with whom we met for their cordiality and candor, and to all who took the time to complete the forms. We would also like to thank Carol DeSalvo and the Board of Education for the assistance they provided in arranging the interviews.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The data contained herein were obtained from reviewing 97 completed *Leadership Profile Assessment* forms and notes of our meetings with 140 staff or stakeholders. The constituents were identified by the Board for meetings in individual or group settings, which were conducted during full days on January 15, 20, and 21, or in part-day meetings or phone calls between December 30, 2008 and January 27, 2009. The questionnaire, interviews and focus groups were structured to gather data to assist the Board in determining the primary characteristics important in its next Superintendent, while also identifying what stakeholders perceived as existing strengths, and current and emerging issues which the Greenwich Public Schools may be facing.

Strengths of the Greenwich Public Schools

The national – and indeed, international - reputation of the Greenwich Public Schools is an obvious source of pride, shared in a large measure by those who participated in interviews or submitted written responses. Closely related to that pride was an expressed appreciation for community support, not least of all as seen in historical commitments to school funding which annually result in per pupil expenditures at the highest levels in Connecticut. Yet even while such resources were cited as a telling measure of community support, parent interest and volunteerism were as often – or even more often – invoked with pride as other valued assets. Staff members in particular were consistent in appreciation for the commitment of parents to what is best for students, and the schools.

The staff in turn was accorded recognition as another overall strength of the Greenwich Schools. The general quality of the teaching faculty was most often lauded, but principals, other administrators, and support staff also received bouquets of recognition.

Students were seen as another great strength of the schools. Staff members were quick to give voice to the talent and responsiveness of students, and other groups consistently hailed Greenwich students and their achievements. Some pointed to the students' strong overall performance in mandated testing as particularly praiseworthy, given the fact that their scores compare quite favorably with those of other affluent Fairfield districts, which have nothing like the diversity of the Greenwich student population.

Looking more closely at the make-up of the student population, diversity was also often cited as a strength. Individuals and groups made it a point to identify the extent and nature of ethnic and income diversity in the Greenwich community and schools, lest it be overlooked in the larger reputation for academic success or general affluence. Around a quarter of Greenwich students might be identified as minorities, with a significant and growing share of that quarter speaking Spanish as a first language. Most often seen as a visual reminder of the schools' diversity were the flags of many nations adorning the Commons area of Greenwich High School, representing all the nationalities enrolled. The High School itself is generally described as the

culminating point for bringing the diverse elements of the student population under one large roof, after the eleven neighborhood schools do their work at the elementary level, and the three middle schools begin to draw them together. This K-12 structure is also seen as a strength.

Issues/Needs/Concerns of the Greenwich Public Schools

Given the national and international economic crisis that dominates the headlines of late, it would have been a surprise had concerns about school funding not been prominently mentioned by virtually all those we engaged. But while budget issues were indeed often put on the table of discussion, points of view and focus varied across the budget landscape. Certainly the construction/renovation projects at the Hamilton Avenue and Glenville Schools were a source of budget worry, but related management questions were as often mentioned, along with thoughts about the complex fiscal relationship between Town and Schools. Often noted were calls for improvements in the effectiveness of that relationship, though analysis of who might work those improvements, and how, varied widely, save for agreement that the time and effort required often sapped energy away from other pressing subjects. More generally shared were concerns about how the larger problems of the economy might still further complicate school funding in Greenwich, whether in attending to facilities needs remaining even after recent improvements, or in providing appropriate annual budgets without sacrificing current advantages of program or staffing. Will an influx of students from independent schools put more pressure on budgets? Are resources now allocated appropriately to meet the needs of all students across the spectrum of learning needs? Might some be shortchanged in favor of others as money becomes tighter? Such questions consistently came up when talk turned to budgets, though without any apparent unanimity about answers.

More focused were concerns directly involving the leadership and staffing of the Schools; foremost was concern over the turnover in the superintendent's position. Without exception, the need for a superintendent who will succeed and provide consistent leadership over a significant period of time was felt by all, even alongside the recognition that the demands of the job in Greenwich are prodigious. Related to the turnover of the superintendent's position was recurring concern about pending changes in Cabinet-level leadership, where retirements, reassignments, or resignations will mean new people in four of the eight positions. Likewise, concern was expressed over the possibility of changes in the Board of Education, where four of the eight positions are subject to election in November, 2009, only months after the potential designation of the new superintendent. Not so directly related, but of concern nonetheless, was a perception that retention of some faculty could be compromised by high costs of housing within reasonable commuting distance, especially as their family circumstances change.

In keeping with the Greenwich reputation for both high performance and high expectations, there was ample willingness among respondents to identify issues, needs, and concerns. Indeed, the descriptions often heard in our meetings suggested that outspoken public comment may sometimes connect to issues of civility, respect and morale. Though emphasis and interpretation differed in perspective, many spoke of morale issues among the staff at various levels. The Board of Education too was mentioned in this regard; concerns were heard about the appropriate use of policy governance, the sometimes negative tone of public meetings, and the apparent tensions within the Board's own dynamic.

Superintendent of Schools - Characteristics

There was no shortage of opinion about the necessary characteristics of the person who will succeed as the new Greenwich Superintendent of Schools, and to a remarkable degree, opinions clustered into consensus. Most consistently noted was a desire to see a new leader commit to the Greenwich Schools over time – longevity was cited as necessary for stability, morale, and consistency of efforts toward improvement. Many were quick to note that a desire for longer term service could not simply be a characteristic of the Superintendent, but a need that would be fulfilled only through consistent support of that new leader from all elements of the school community. Indeed, many expressed hopes that the new Superintendent would become a part of the community, taking the time to understand its needs, and perhaps even living in or near Greenwich.

Excellent communications skills were seen by nearly all respondents as key to the next Superintendent's success. Terms like "good listener," and "articulate," recurred in interviews and on feedback forms; "sense of humor" was also seen as part of the necessary communications skill set. Some called for nothing short of eloquence, in person and on paper.

Visibility is strongly desired, and in the opinions of many, linked to the outstanding ability to communicate – the leader who is "accessible and approachable" will be more in touch with all the many constituencies of the school community. Along with the desire for visibility come yearnings for a commanding presence, characterized by confidence equal to the many demands of the job.

More specific pieces of expertise were also frequently noted – fiscal expertise, a close understanding of how the budget process works in Greenwich, political savvy, and experience in working with a Board were all included. Just as often, expertise in education was named as a necessary ingredient; most respondents believed that successful experience as a superintendent in a setting of some similarity was vital to success. Often mentioned, though not as consistently as superintendent experience, was a hope apparently related to the current Secondary Schools Review, that the new leader might bring secondary school experience to the job.

Occasionally in the course of discussions, when focused on either the educational aspects of the job, or when looking more at the budget and political responsibilities, a question might arise about whether the superintendent's job description should be more centered in one area or the other, with the balance of responsibilities delegated elsewhere. Almost invariably in that situation there was the collective equivalent of a step back, and a conclusion that to be the strong school leader Greenwich needs at this time, the whole package needs to be in the hands of the Superintendent, with education expertise wedded to the skills of politics and budgets. Finally, there was a recognition that the successful candidate would also need to meet the requirements of the state for certification as a school district administrator.

While anecdotal, a few voices used telling phrases to sum up hopes that the next superintendent would recognize Greenwich as "a land of opportunity," "hungry for a strong

educational leader” who will have what it takes to persevere over the time, and bring the whole school community to a renewed consensus of support and universal pride in its public schools.

Next Steps

This report will be presented to the Board of Education, and in turn shared with the members of the school community. After confirming with the Board the understandings that bear upon recruitment, the consultants will review applications received in response to national advertising, and – importantly in a search for this position in Greenwich – will undertake confidential outreach to potentially strong candidates who have not applied. The aim is to present the Board with a strong slate of potential semi-finalists by mid-March, allowing time for the Board’s subsequent steps to unfold toward the choice of the next Greenwich Superintendent later in the spring, and an orderly transition of leadership over the summer of 2009.

Respectfully submitted,

John Chambers
Deborah Raizes
Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates, Ltd

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CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT **pp 10-12**

STRENGTHS OF THE GREENWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CONSISTENT

Community and support
Dedicated, caring faculty, administrators, and support staff
Diversity, and a K-12 structure aimed to serve all students
Parents committed to the schools as volunteers as well as financially
Reputation of the Schools and community
Resources
Talented, responsive students

BOARD

Administrative teamwork and development
Neighborhood and magnet schools
Resources
Solid history of achievement and college prep
Strong support for teachers

ADMINISTRATORS

Communication with parents and the PTA
Parents love their schools
Supportive administrators – supportive of work with teachers

FACULTY

Emphasis on educating the whole child
Extensive extra curricular activities
Flexibility to structure curriculum to the needs of the class
Quality support staff
Reputation of the schools
Variety of academic opportunities of all students

SUPPORT STAFF

Curriculum
Dedicated curriculum coordinators
Extra curricular activities
Reputation of the Greenwich Schools
Student/teacher relationships
Wide variety of course offerings

STRENGTHS OF THE GREENWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS (CONTINUED)

PARENTS/COMMUNITY

ALP (Advanced Learner Program)
Community loves its schools
Community spirit across the system
District does a good job of delivering services to all children
High school has a large variety of offerings
Inclusion district
International community

ISSUES/NEEDS/CONCERNS OF THE GREENWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CONSISTENT

Budget pressures
Civility and respect at Board meetings
Hamilton Avenue and Glenville facilities problems
Morale of staff
Possible influx of private school students
Improving trust with the town government, the staff and the community
Retention of best teachers
Struggle with implementation of Policy Governance – role of Board
Superintendent turnover
Tensions on the Board which become apparent at Board meetings
Turnover at Havemeyer (Cabinet level positions)

BOARD

Achievement gap
Allocation of resources
Erosion of confidence in the schools within some constituencies
Need to celebrate schools' successes
Responding to the needs of all community members – those who have and do not have children in public schools
Secondary School Review
Tensions in relationship between the Town government and the Public Schools
Test scores – making sure all students are achieving to their potential

ISSUES/NEEDS/CONCERNS OF THE GREENWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS (CONTINUED)

ADMINISTRATORS

District in crisis management
Frequent turnover in superintendents, district has lost focus
More and better communication with superintendent
Need to align with best practices – not there yet
Provide an open process for replacing administrators
Too many initiatives without a master plan
Too much emphasis on test scores
Understanding the themes and financial commitment needed by the magnet schools

FACULTY

Administrators fall short in communicating with each other and faculty
Emphasis on testing
Equity among the schools
Hiring and keeping qualified administrators
Keeping a professional, open, honest dialogue between administrators and teachers/schools
Need more time to focus on what teachers are currently doing rather than more initiatives
Not enough time to plan and communicate with colleagues
Serving the “average” child

SUPPORT STAFF

Communication between schools and Board of Education
Equity among the schools
Establishing a workable attendance policy with Board support
Keeping technology current
Lack of support and supplies for the special education program
Loss of sense of community – poor communication
Not enough programs for non-college bound students
People feel underappreciated and not respected
Reestablish teamwork
Teachers, coordinators overburdened

PARENTS/COMMUNITY

Although most parents and community members agree about the one high school, there is still a concern about its size and the best way to educate all students
Balancing NCLB with teaching to the test and meeting the needs of all students
Central administration needs to provide more assistance to the principals who are doing a good job
Concern about perception that a great school system is being harmed by the turnovers
Conclusions of Secondary School Reviews
Equity among the schools, neighborhood schools and the magnet schools

ISSUES/NEEDS/CONCERNS OF THE GREENWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS (CONTINUED)

PARENTS/COMMUNITY (CONTINUED)

Good quality curricula, data collection and ongoing progress monitoring of special education students
Need a clear, articulated vision and a plan on how to achieve it
Need to review what is taught in resource rooms and how it is monitored and evaluated
Raising the bar for all students, including those already achieving at a high level but also not forgetting about those student who are not college bound
Should review curriculum:
 Are there areas that are outdated, including textbooks?
 How much differentiated learning is going on in the classroom?
 Is curriculum consistent across the schools?
 Is curriculum supporting the needs of all the students?
 Is there a need for smaller classes? Are class sizes uneven in the district?
 Should there be more of an emphasis on the basics?
Some members of the community do not feel that the school board handles their money prudently
Starting time of schools

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

CONSISTENT

Accessible and approachable
Commanding presence
Confident
Desire to commit to the Greenwich Schools:
 Live in or close to Greenwich
 Longevity
 Part of the community
 Takes the time to understand the needs and desires of the community
Excellent communicator - articulate
Experience as a superintendent or in the central office
Fiscal expertise
Good listener
Needs to understand how budget process works in Greenwich
Needs to understand politics of working with the Board
Outstanding communicator
People person
Politically savvy
Secondary school experience
Sense of humor
Strong educational leader
Visible

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT (CONTINUED)

BOARD

Able to win confidence of Town leaders
Can ask the right questions
Consensus builder with staff and community
Good manager
Innovative
Intelligent
Person who shapes issues rather than reacts to them
Team builder
Thinks outside the box

ADMINISTRATORS

Articulates vision and can inspire staff
Can deal with a crisis while maintaining focus on other important issues
Can manage conflicting agendas in a political arena
Cheerleader
Encourages administrators to be part of the decision making process
Enjoys discussion and allows dialogue
Financial creativity
Open door policy
Prior experience as a teacher and principal
Reflective, self-aware
Staff needs to feel valued
Thick skinned
Understands the needs of a diverse student body

FACULTY

Ability to create a productive, lasting working relationship with the BOE
Advocate for all students
Compassionate
Embraces the curriculum before looking to make a change
Motivational leader
No personal agenda – listens to community and staff
Patient and understanding
Self confident but not arrogant
Sets realistic and achievable goals
Strength of character and integrity
Supports and respects staff
Willingness to work with the teachers

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT (CONTINUED)

SUPPORT STAFF

Ability to interact with a diverse population
Able to work with and understand all staff and faculty
Champion for education – courage of his/her convictions
Compassionate
Experience as a teacher and principal
Hands on
Healer
Listen to feedback
Love of education
Open minded
People person
Team builder
Thick skinned
Vested interest in and knowledge of a demanding community
Willing to make sure changes/new programs are feasible, also willing to change things
that don't work
Won't listen to just the squeaky wheel

PARENTS/COMMUNITY

Able to work effectively with the Board
Ability to motivate a team and individuals
Believes in transparency
Collaborative/team builder
Consensus builder
Courage of convictions
Credible
Energetic – not at end of career
Earns respect
Good at delegating
Helpful to be familiar with CT
Priority is strong academics for all students
Reaches out to political entities – builds a common spirit
Rolls with the punches
Straight shooter
Understands special education – familiar with the current research, recognizes the need
for individualized curricula and approaches
Understands spread of learning abilities
Willing to tackle difficult issues
