



LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT
Garden City Union Free School District
October 11, 2017



HYA Executive Search
Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates



Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in September 2017 for the new superintendent of the Garden City Union Free School District. The data contained herein were obtained from input the HYA consultants received when they met with individuals and groups in either individual interviews or focus group settings and from the results of the online survey completed by stakeholders. The surveys, interviews, and focus group meetings were structured to gather input 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 some of the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years.

Participation

The numbers of participants, by stakeholder group, in the two methods of data gathering are listed below: *Not all focus groups were a group that was disaggregated for the on-line survey.*

Groups	Personal interviews or focus groups	Online Survey
Board of Education Members	4 - Individually	NA
Interim Superintendent of Schools	1	NA
Secretary to the Superintendent	1	NA
Central Office Administrators	5	NA
Administration and Faculty	23	NA
Administrators	NA	15
Teachers	NA	145
Support Staff	7	60
Parents and School/Community Groups	26	366
Students	7	13
Total	74	599

A draft of the desired characteristics can be found at the end of this report. The community survey report is presented as 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.

The HYA consultants interviewed approximately 74 district and community constituents. Each of the individuals and groups were asked to share their thoughts regarding three questions:

- 1) How would you describe the strengths of the District?
- 2) What do you see as the greatest challenges facing the District in the next 3-5 years?
- 3) What characteristics would you like to see in the next Superintendent?

What follows is a summary of the responses shared by the above persons. The first section provides the collective summary of all of the respondents. The second section provides response summaries from the various categories of individuals interviewed.

HYA and the Board intend to meet the challenge of finding an individual who possesses most of the skills and character traits required to meet the needs of the district. The consultants will seek a new superintendent who can work with the Garden City Union Free School District Board of Education to provide the leadership needed to continue to raise academic standards and student performance, while meeting the unique needs of each of its schools and the expectations of the community.

The consultants would like to thank all the participants who attended focus group meetings or completed the online survey and the Garden City Union Free School District staff members who assisted with our meetings. In particular, Cindy Morris, Secretary to the Superintendent, was especially helpful in organizing and scheduling focused group meetings and assuring that the consultants' time in the District went smoothly.

Respectfully submitted:

Debbie Raizes
Robert J. Roelle

October 11, 2017

Section 1: Summary of Responses from Interviews and Focus Group Meetings

Consistent Themes from the Focus Groups

Strengths of the District

Strong Public School Governance

A five member elected Board of Trustees governs the Garden City Union Free School District. Due to the recent resignation of one of its members, currently the Board is comprised of four trustees. The vacant seat on the Board will be filled by public election in May 2018. Constituents in the School District hold the Board of Education in high esteem – individually and collectively as the governing body of the School District. Nearly every constituent group referenced that the Board of Education “sets the positive tone for the District.” The Board is acknowledged for representing and advocating on behalf of students and the high expectations held generally by the community, parents, faculty, staff and administration.

A “Destination” School District and Community

Parents and community members of the School District are described as highly educated and have high expectations for their schools and for student achievement. In turn, there exists strong parent and community support for the schools through parent/community activities and fundraising for school programs. There exists excellent relations between the schools and the Garden City Police Department and other agencies. The community takes pride in the District’s outstanding faculty, staff, and administration, and the student successes in academics, the cultural arts and athletics. Many constituents said that the School District is a destination for many families who move to Garden City because of the multiple opportunities that their children will receive from the schools.

A Professional Learning Environment

The Garden City Union Free School District is a high performing school district. A strong, intelligent faculty, staff and administration who generally share a commitment to collaborative practice, serve the schools. The District is viewed as a child-centered, caring school system. There is also a strong commitment to ensuring that students come first.

The schools were praised for the quality of instruction in a rigorous, challenging curriculum, which offers a variety of choices. Many commented that at the secondary level, academic opportunities are available for students saying “there is something for everyone.” In addition to strong academic programs, there are vibrant art, music, athletic and afterschool programs.

Students

Respondents shared that Garden City students are outstanding students. Beyond excellent achievement, the students are viewed as thoughtful young people who care about each other. Upon graduation Garden City students annually attend well-regarded colleges and universities.

CONSISTENT THEMES – STRENGTHS

The input from the various constituent groups suggest that the Garden City Union Free School District is characterized by:

- A dedicated Board of Education committed to excellence in education
- Highly educated and involved parents who have high expectations for their children
- Strong academic programs guided by a rigorous curriculum throughout the District
- Strong cultural arts, athletic and activity opportunities for students
- A committed, dedicated and caring faculty
- Strong building principals – things run smoothly
- A high level of confidence in the business operations of the District – budgets pass
- Well maintained school district facilities
- The Garden City School District is a “good place to work”

Challenges and Issues Facing the District

The following are some key themes concerning the challenges facing the Garden City Union Free School District that emerged from the focus groups.

Managing and Maintaining Excellent Schools within a Tax Cap Environment

Through strong business and finance administration, the District has been able to maintain excellent academic and extra-curricular programs since the commencement of the New York State imposed Tax Cap legislation. Yet, questions have been raised as to how long the District can continue to propose annual budgets within the tax cap without curtailing programs, addressing capital needs and investing in technology. Many constituents commented, “The community would never support a budget that pierces the cap.” The next Superintendent and the Board will need to explore this issue. See next two items.

Monitoring Student Enrollments

At the beginning of this school year the District experienced an enrollment increase of 60+ students in the primary and elementary schools. Committed to maintaining small class size at this level, the Board authorized additional staff positions to accommodate the increased enrollments. It can be anticipated that the expenditure of money to fund contingency positions may have a negative impact on budgeting for the forthcoming school year. This increase in enrollment was unexpected, as the District had recently undergone a demographic enrollment review, which did not project such increases in enrollment, particularly at the primary level.

Student School Morning Start Time

Consistent with research which suggests the benefits of providing high school students with a later start time, a district committee to study student start time was established. The committee recommendation was consistent with the research. The cost of implementing the committee recommendation will be under review and potentially could prove to be too costly to implement within the confines of the tax cap.

Aging School Facilities

The District maintains 9 school facilities; the 7 school buildings, the administration building and the bus garage. While the facilities are attractive and well kept up, it was reported that the buildings are difficult and potentially costly to maintain. While the consultants were not advised of pressing issues associated with the aging buildings, the matter of the aging buildings and associated infrastructure should be within the long range thinking of school leaders.

Leadership Challenges

There exists generally strong support for district administrators and building level administrators. However, some concerns regarding the existence of low morale among building level administrators was brought to the attention of the consultants. In particular, consultants gleaned from wide spread discussions among all levels of building administrators that relationships between the Central Office leaders and building leaders was strained. Confusion seemed to exist regarding line and staff responsibilities, degree of autonomy within building leaders' authority, supporting building leaders as they address challenging issues and district leaders' expectations for building leaders in directly communicating with Board of Education members.

. Consistent Themes - Challenges/Issues/Concerns

- Supporting well educated parents who know what they want, yet being able to articulate a strong contrary view when necessary
- Maintaining and expanding opportunities for students in the tax cap era
- Working collaboratively with collective bargaining units
- Monitoring student enrollments
- Reviewing enrollment trends of English as a New Language students
- Building strong relationships between building administrators, Central Office administrators and the Board of Education
- Reviewing instructional technology and the skills students need in the 21st century
- Maintaining and expanding science education and encouraging increased student participation, especially female students, in advanced STEM education

Desired Characteristics of the New Superintendent of Schools

An Instructional Leader

Participants noted that the next Superintendent should be a strong instructional leader – someone with a vision for educational excellence in a high performing school district. The administration in particular expressed the hope that the next Superintendent would be a collegial problem solver. Generally, there exists a sense that the next Superintendent should not need to be a “quick” change agent. Rather, the next Superintendent should value the “slower path to excellence” and lead the District to higher levels of excellence within the existing frameworks.

An Experienced Leader

Participants in nearly every group suggested that it would be very important to recruit a superintendent who has significant leadership experience. While previous experience as a superintendent would be desirable, at a minimum, the next Superintendent should have had significant Central Office experiences and a record of distinguished accomplishments. There exists a strong sentiment that the next Superintendent would be someone who would make a long term commitment to the District.

A Leader with Strong Interpersonal Skills

Participants talked about the importance of a leader who would consistently demonstrate caring and respect for others and who would operate with integrity. The next Superintendent should be committed to promoting a climate of mutual trust and respect for all.

In nearly every group, constituents reflected upon the view that the next Superintendent should have good people/human skills. They hoped that the next Superintendent will actively listen to the views of others and that s/he would possess great communication skills. Most participants want to see the Board hire an individual who is approachable, warm, and personable - one who makes people feel valued and can create a feeling of “family” among the constituents and staff of the Garden City Union Free School District.

Consistent Themes - Desired Characteristics

- A visible and approachable leader who can develop a level of trust in the Board and the Administration
- A good listener and observer – someone who can convey a genuine interest in what people have to say, even when he/she will need to present a contrary response
- A good communicator – oral and written – with confidence to respond to well informed parents and community members
- An instructional leader who is “a visionary” in his/her thinking, but not a rapid change agent
- A leader who is technologically savvy and can advance the effective use of technology within the educational programs so that students graduate with 21st century skills
- A strong manager and motivator who can move the instructional goals forward

- A problem solver – someone who can anticipate issues and address them before they become problems
- A governance leader – someone who will work well with and provide leadership for the Board
- A person who will make a long term commitment to the District

SECTION 2: Summary of Comments from Focus Group and Individual Meetings

The structure of the focus groups was open, allowing for participants to build upon each other's comments. Participants were asked to respond to the following questions.

- What do stakeholders value regarding the schools? What strengths do they desire to retain and build upon?
- What are the issues this District currently faces, and, will face in the next three to five years?
- What personal and professional characteristics are expected in a new Superintendent?

The responses are listed in alphabetical order.

BOARD OF EDUCATION (4)

Strengths

Academics, athletics, the arts

Administrators/ teachers – dedicated, caring – a true asset

Board of Education members work well together – respectful of superintendent, administrators

No one wants to micromanage

Treat people professionally

Respect the jobs educators do

Collaborative culture

Culture of continuous improvement – we can always do better

Exceptional students who do very well

Financially strong – very careful stewards of the public's resources

High expectations for achievement

How can we do better for our students – students are the focus

Middle School clusters

Mission statement taken very seriously

Very supportive parents and community

Wonderful district – destination location

Challenges/Issues/Concerns

Communication between the Board and the Superintendent – agreeing and clarifying what should come to the Board, role of the Board

Communication/social media – things happen so fast – need to be able to respond quickly

What is and is not appropriate – staff, students, parents

Contracts

How to integrate technology in a meaningful way without supplanting the valued relationships between teachers and students

Infrastructure can support the demands - how to successfully and meaningfully leverage technology in our educational programs to enhance student learning

Increase number of females in higher level STEM programs

Increasing enrollment

Making sure every child is challenged

Meaningful professional development for all staff

Parental expectations

Special Education – people move here for the programs - how to support the needs of the students and manage expectations of the parents

Special Education population growing

Litigious parents

Tax cap/ financial realities/financial planning

Desired Characteristics

Advocate for students and the District but not a lightning rod for controversy

Believes in a culture of continuous improvement and accountability for everyone

Can hire talented people and mentor them

Can relate to issues of two income families – understands the modern family dynamics

Central Office experience

Charismatic, dynamic, knowledgeable, can build trust

Collaborative

Comfortable and confident public speaker

Develops priorities and keeps focus

Empowers and mentors administrators

Financially savvy – creative financial ideas

Focus not just on content but on the skills and habits of mind that students will need throughout their careers and lives

Fosters a climate of professionalism and respect

Has good working relationships with the unions

Knows how to manage finite resources

Makes well informed decisions to improve student outcomes based upon data, research and best practices

Problem solver – engages staff in finding solutions

Someone who can set Garden City apart – makes Garden City stand out among the best

Strong educational leader with high expectations

Technology – innovative uses of technology in his/her current district
Understands how technology is used effectively in the classroom
Understands Special Education in a litigious community
Vision of what a high performing district should be

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION (6)

Strengths

Academic achievement celebrated
Board – bright, committed, devoted
Budgets pass by overwhelming majority
Central Office – deliberate and thoughtful in how things get done
Collegial working environment
Education is the priority – community vested in the success of the schools
Family oriented town – multi generational – destination community because of the schools
Good atmosphere at Board meetings - handle difficult situations well
Parents very involved – knowledgeable, educated – raise the level of everything we do – high expectations
Strong leadership and commitment

Challenges/Issues/Concerns

Budget – tax cap
ENL numbers up
Increasing enrollment
Special Education numbers up
Concern over low morale of other administrators
Contracts
Dynamics of the Village – keeping positive relationship with police, village trustees
Finding time for professional development
How best to use mental health staff effectively
Litigious community
Modernize approach to STEAM – need more female students
Technology – trying to keep up, not get behind

Desired Characteristics

Approachable
Charismatic – energetic spirit
Confidence to be able to interact with high powered, intelligent parents
Forward thinking
Good communicator
Good listener
Global perspective – legislation
Inclusive leader - collaborative
Keeps the course

Must be savvy – intelligent – not a push over
Needs to understand Special Education
Problem solver
Respectful
Sets the tone of the District
Strength, empathy, and compassion
Team builder – not top down – cohesive
Thick skinned
Visible
Vision for school community
Wants to see how it is from the teachers’ point of view – extends hand to the faculty

ADMINISTRATORS (20)

Strengths

BOE strong and experienced
Community values education, the arts, athletics
Good rapport between the schools
High expectations of faculty, staff and students – level of excellence throughout the district
Motivated, hardworking students
 Many come in at kindergarten and stay through 12th grade
 Students committed to service
Parents move here for the schools – highly supportive of the schools
Stable school environment – longevity among staff
Strong academic and extra curricular activities
Strong parental involvement
Support for Special Education students
Teachers, administrators – committed, dedicated

Challenges/Issues/Concerns

Administrators look to the Central Office for support, work as a team, want to feel heard
Building security
Budget constraints – tax cap – increasing enrollment – educational opportunities
 Increase number of English as a New Language students – need professional development
 Don’t propose new courses – impairing creativity
 Mental health staffing not adequate for the needs of the students
 Old buildings – costly to maintain
 Would like the resources to provide students with experiences outside the “Garden City Bubble”
High pressure environment for the students– just beginning to talk about helping students deal with anxiety, depression
No Special Ed coordinator
Not an innovative district – very deliberate in decisions – cautious about change and innovation
Open contracts

Parental involvement – must follow chain of command

Professional development – regulation based

Need more training on students with disabilities

STEAM – need to encourage more female students

Superintendent needs to handle expectations of parents, support administrators

Wall between Board and administrators

Desired Characteristics

Able to communicate effectively

Adept at handling and managing stressful environment

Approachable, accessible

Builds a team, creates a shared vision

Builds community

Calm – easy going

Confident in his/her abilities but not arrogant

Demonstrated track record of creative problem solving

Experience as a building principal

Grit, stamina

Good communicator

Good listener

Has integrity

Humane, empathetic, compassionate

Inclusive leader – collaborative

Makes a decision, owns it – in a timely manner

Puts kids first

Sees the big picture

Sets a tone of openness and respect

Someone from whom the administrators can learn

Trustworthy, supportive

Understands high schools, teaming at the middle school

Values, appreciates and supports the administration, faculty and staff

Visible in the schools – gets to know staff and community

FACULTY (3)

Strengths

Academics, the arts and athletics –excellence across the board is what is strived for

Dedicated and caring faculty

Good communication

Good environment in which to work – sense of family – safe

Board and Superintendent very supportive of teachers

Board works well with the Superintendent

Great kids

Supportive, involved parents and community

Challenges/Issues/Concerns

Changing student schedule – HS start time
Increasing class sizes
Some parents can be challenging
Teacher contract

Desired Characteristics

Approachable
Can disarm difficult situations
Can work with all kinds of people
Does not have an adversarial history with unions
Has backbone
Loyalty – commitment to the job – longevity
Receptive to different ideas, then decisive
Sense of humor – works well with people
Strong educational leader
Teaching experience
Thick skin
Understands that the Superintendent runs the day to day operations of the District
Visible in the schools and the community
Will make well informed decisions based on data

SUPPORT STAFF (8)

Strengths

Academics, athletics, the arts
Close relationship with the police
Great staff
High expectations for students and faculty
Kids generally ready for college
Lighthouse district in NY State
Many Advanced Placement/college level opportunities for students
Many families come back here to raise their children – sense of history
 People move here for the schools
Quality kids who succeed at what they do
Students first

Challenges/Issues/ Concerns

Changing demographics – more diverse
Community is very demanding
Paraprofessionals in second year without a contract
Some expectations very high, hard to attain
Some students recruited to colleges for athletics but can they do the academics

Sometimes the District puts too much emphasis on athletics
Support staff would like to feel they are a part of the District – disconnected from the rest of the staff/Central Office

Would like to see the Superintendent more often, not just when there is a problem

Technology could be tweaked

Too much emphasis on Advanced Placement, can create a stressful environment for students

Desired Characteristics

Approachable, open, accessible–would like to have more face to face contact with Superintendent

Builds morale

Brings people together – builds trust, confidence and rapport

Can motivate the employees

Can prioritize needs of the District

Delegator – excellent staff – use them

Good communicator – can clarify decisions

Clear definition of what is to be done

Good listener

Good manager

Has a vision for the District

Keeps the socio-emotional needs of the community, staff in mind

Open door policy

Recognizes staff

Successful in current district

Supportive of faculty

Treats all employees the same, notwithstanding roles

Visible – at school functions

STUDENTS (7)

Strengths

Academics – a class for everyone - whatever you want is available

Athletics – a lot of teachers are coaches – form a special bond with students

English as a New Language (ENL) – excellent program – very supportive

Environment – safe, good academics

Extra-curricular activities – a lot to offer – so many different opportunities

Guidance counselors are “amazing” – always accessible – open to hearing students’ issues

Solve problems – flexible - accommodating

Great teachers/administration

HS very involved with transition from lower schools – “know there will be someone there for you”

School psychologists

Resource room

SAT review courses

Writing Center

Afterschool Regents prep courses
Student tutors
Library – great place to go – quiet – nice place to work
Motivated students
People move here for the school
Special education “superb” – extra time – “spectacular”
A lot of accommodations – extra help – “teachers always there to help you do your best”
Teachers like connecting with their students – faculty offer help
Through your phone – reminders – homework, class reviews, tests

Challenges/Issues/Concerns

Common Core – need to stay up to date
Community changing – need more help
Need for more translators and help for students who do not speak English
Middle School
Limited number of guidance counselors – students feel they need more emotional support
Special Education
IEPs, accommodations – need for more flexibility
Should be able to test out of classes at the HS (especially math)
Sports – parents have too much influence – let coaches make the decisions (particularly at lower levels)

Desired Characteristics

Can handle difficult situations – manage PR when people are upset
Empathetic
Good communicator with parents
Good grasp of Common Core
Involved in the school community
Knowledge of Garden City
Understands the needs of Special Education students – helps, to make things “smoother”

PARENTS/COMMUNITY (26)

Strengths

Achievement orientated district
Blue Ribbon High School
Caring, committed teachers
District has good working relationship with school and community groups – good collaboration
Exemplary teachers
Good administrators – caring, know their groups
Good resources for the arts
Great relationship with the police department, village trustees and mayor

Legacy – many parents went to school here, have moved back to send their children to the Garden City schools

People move here for the schools – destination community

PTA meets with the Superintendent on a regular basis – have a seat at the table

Safe, comfortable environment

Students – hard working, community oriented, supportive of each other, kind to each other, respectful

Teachers, administrators – open to meeting with parents – want to come here and stay

Very involved parents and PTA

Well educated, involved community who enjoy living in Garden City

Challenges/Issues/Concerns

Average students – need more attention, opportunities, encouragement

Best Practices - hard to implement innovative, research based idea in such a traditional environment – need to think differently – successful programs district wide – evaluate what works and isn't working

- Do students have the skill sets they need – reevaluate curriculum – not just test based

 - Different types of assessments

 - Project based learning

- How do students learn – learning should be intrinsically motivated

- Keep what is best for students in mind – balance the needs of all students (k-12)

 - Social/emotional needs

 - Stress, pressure starts in kindergarten

- Lack of consistency in curriculum/culture in the primary and elementary schools

 - Schools should be able to do their own thing – don't want cookie cutter but do want best practices

 - Equitable results, equivalent experiences

- Look at type of homework assignments given to students

 - Value of homework, projects – are they teaching 21st Century skills

 - When should homework start – is kindergarten too early - how much homework in lower grades?

- Need cohesive technology curriculum

Changing start time at HS

Communication – need to change culture of responsiveness

- Needs to be more proactive, not reactive

 - Inundated with emails

 - Use of social media

Continue good relationship with police departments (local, Nassau County)

Litigious community

Need more communication between the Superintendent and the sports, other groups in the Community

Need to bring Special Education into the 21st Century – not cutting edge – short staffed

A lot of self-contained classrooms – hard to get out
Aides need more training
Children aren't necessarily in home school – more information; the sooner, the better
Look at what other districts are doing
Lunch – importance of interacting
More co-teaching
More opportunities for students not going to college
OT and PT should not be outsourced
Teachers need to feel supported by the District
Opted out over 60% - teachers encouraged it
Parents – strong, opinionated, will challenge staff
Tax cap – property owners fund vast majority of budget – balancing needs of students with fiscal constraints - community has high expectations on all levels
Increasing enrollment
Can add another section in each building but after that....
Supervision of staff – mentor administrators - articulate a vision – achieve goals

Desired Characteristics

Aware of best practices, innovative
Can effectively manage parental expectations
Can evaluate programs – communicate change
Can get off to a quick start – a lot of issues that need attention
Can make sure there is consistency but not cookie cutter
Communication with parents, teachers – handles parents as professional public advocates
Able to communicate that concerns are heard
Honest
Proactive communicator – uses technology
Responsive to parental concerns in a timely manner
Demonstrated experience to manage people
Encourages teachers, can bring out the best in what they have to offer
Engages and connects with demanding parents with high expectations
Engenders trust
Fiscally responsible educational leader – spend money wisely
Looks at every decision at how it will benefit the students – sets the tone for the District
Forward thinking
Has a vision more than just achievement – success in non-traditional ways – thinks outside the box – willing to take risks
Has to understand personality of the District – comfortable handling a high performing district
Intelligent, energetic
Interpersonal skills
Knows how to present things in a transparent manner
Needs to have an open door
Needs to understand the national and state issues – advocates for the District

Patient – calm, reassuring

Sees students as people, not statistics

Strategic, systems thinker

Visible, approachable, accessible– embraces the community

Visits classrooms, including Special Ed classrooms

Vision for a high performing district

Analyzes what works in other districts – what would work here

DRAFT FOR BOARD DISCUSSION

Garden City Union Free School District

DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS

Superintendent of Schools

After seeking input from its Board members, parents, staff, students and the community via focus groups, interviews, and an online survey, the Garden City Union Free School District Board of Education seeks a strong educational leader with the following characteristics:

- A visible and approachable leader who can develop a level of trust in the Board and the Administration
- A good listener and observer – someone who can convey a genuine interest in what people have to say, even when he/she will need to present a contrary response
- A good communicator – oral and written – with confidence to respond to well informed parents
- An instructional leader who is “a visionary” in his/her thinking, but not a rapid change agent
- A leader who is technologically savvy and can advance the effective use of technology within the educational programs so that students graduate with 21st century skills
- A strong manager and motivator who can move the instructional goals forward
- A problem solver – someone who can anticipate issues and address them before they become problems
- A governance leader – someone who will work well with and provide leadership for the
- Board
- A person who will make a long term commitment to the District

The successful candidate will:

- Be certified as a superintendent, or capable of gaining certification, in New York State
- Make a long term commitment to the District
- Have experience as an accomplished Central Office administrator