

Stakeholder Input Report for

***Garfield RE-2 School
District
Rifle, Colorado***

submitted by

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EXECUTIVE RECRUITMENT & DEVELOPMENT

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Executive Summary

On January 7 and 14, 2025 consultants Dr. Christy Sinner and Dr. Ken Haptonstall conducted meetings with district stakeholders representing three different groups (Staff, Students, and Community) associated with the Garfield RE-2 School District. The consultant received input from approximately two hundred twenty (220) individuals in these groups. Input was gathered regarding the selection of a new superintendent for the Garfield RE-2 Schools.

Outlined on the first two pages is an Executive Summary of the major themes expressed by the participants at these sessions and graphs. Following the Executive Summary is a compilation of all the input received from these groups and individuals in response to four questions asked of each group and participant. The final section of the report consists of responses by individuals who completed the online survey and responded to the same four questions.

Executive Summary:

Strengths of Garfield RE-2

- **Community Engagement:** The district benefits from a supportive, close-knit community. Stakeholders noted strong involvement from families, local businesses, and staff in school events and activities.
- **Diversity:** A significant and growing Hispanic/Latino population (57%) brings cultural richness and diversity. Students and staff celebrate inclusive environments where differences are embraced.
- **Educational Programs:** Career readiness programs like agriculture (FFA), concurrent enrollment with CMC, and extracurricular opportunities were highlighted as standout features. Students particularly value access to diverse pathways.
- **Four-Day School Week:** Widely appreciated for its contribution to work-life balance and overall community satisfaction.
- **Strategic Plan Alignment:** The district has a strong strategic plan that has community and staff buy-in, ensuring consistency and focus on district goals.
- **Connection to Outdoors:** Stakeholders consistently praised the district's scenic location, offering recreational opportunities and a high quality of life.

Challenges Facing the District

- **Staffing Shortages:** Recruiting and retaining qualified teachers and classified staff is a pressing issue, exacerbated by high housing costs and competitive salaries in neighboring districts.
- **Equity in Resources:** Disparities in resources and opportunities across schools and communities must be addressed to ensure consistent support for all students.
- **Diverse Student Needs:** Rising Special Education (SpEd) and English Language Learner (ELL) populations demand better resources, staffing, and support.
- **Safety and Mental Health:** Concerns about school safety and student well-being call for enhanced protocols, mental health resources, and clearer communication during emergencies.
- **Community Engagement:** A lack of visible, direct connection between leadership and stakeholders has led to calls for improved transparency and outreach efforts.

Qualities Desired in the Next Superintendent

1. Leadership and Vision:

- Strong financial acumen to manage the budget and advocate for funding.
- Experience in public education with a clear understanding of rural dynamics and small-town values.
- A focus on strategic planning and innovation, building on existing successes without unnecessary disruption.

2. Community and Staff Engagement:

- Approachable, visible leadership to foster trust among students, staff, and the broader community.
- Transparency in communication, actively seeking input from all stakeholder groups.
- Commitment to inclusivity and representation, especially reflecting the district's diversity in staffing and programming.

3. Student-Centered Focus:

- Passionate about education and dedicated to improving academic outcomes while addressing non-college-bound pathways such as CTE.
- Advocates for practical skills development, like financial literacy and career readiness.

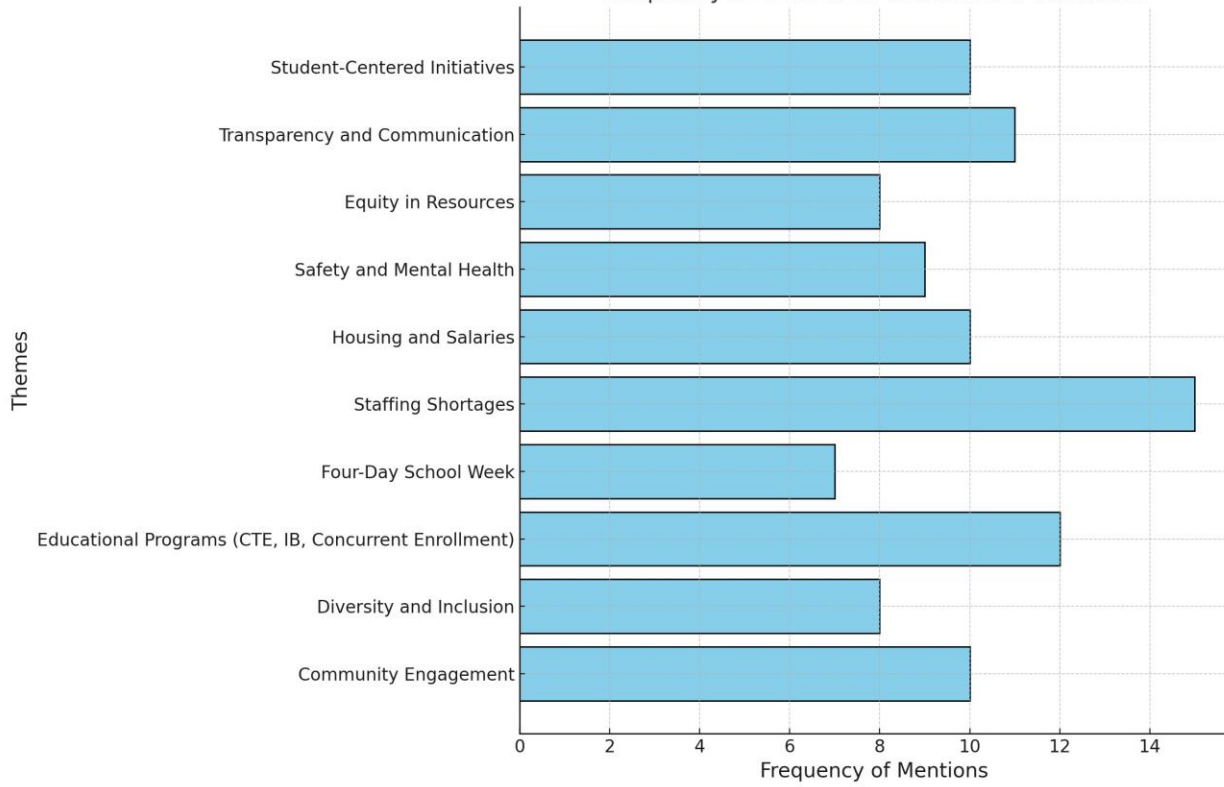
4. Problem-Solving and Adaptability:

- Resilient and collaborative, able to address sensitive issues like teacher shortages, housing affordability, and safety concerns with innovative solutions.
- Emotionally intelligent, balancing the needs of diverse groups while remaining calm under pressure.

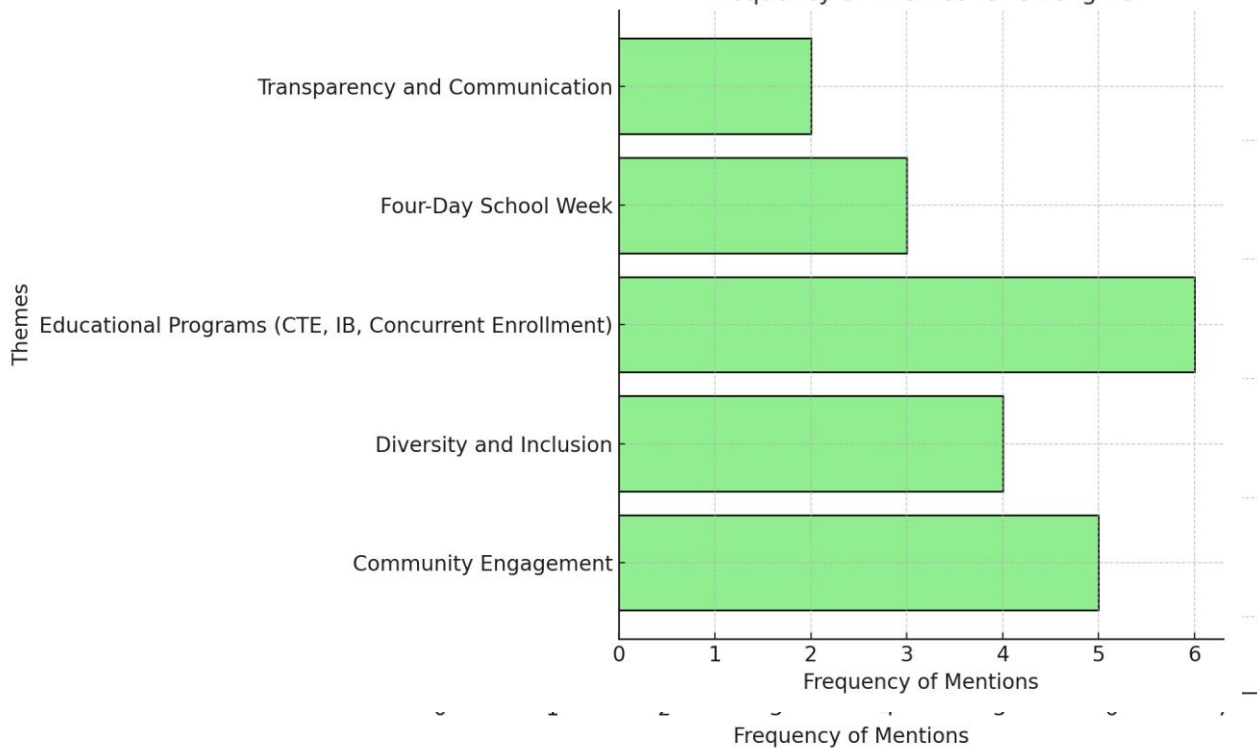
Critical Areas of Improvement

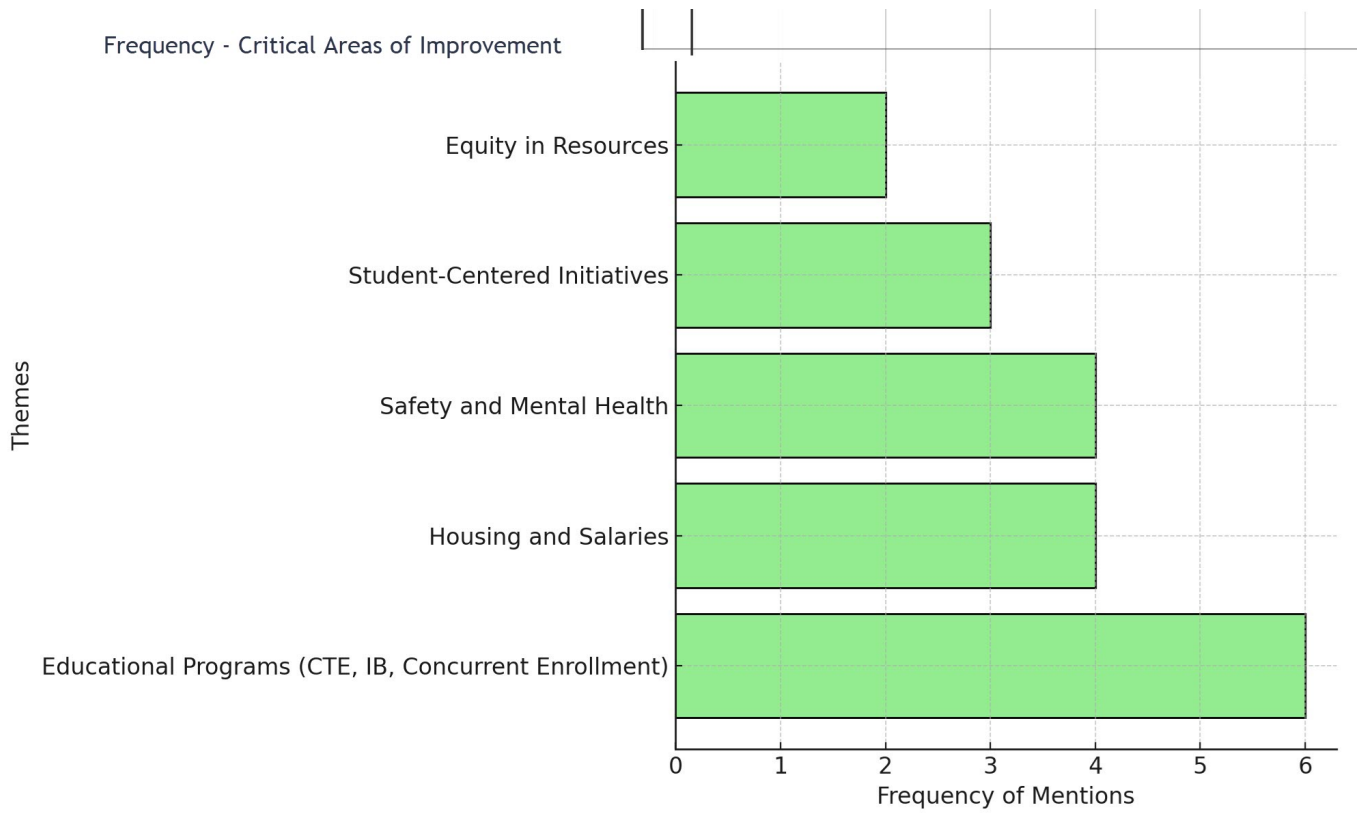
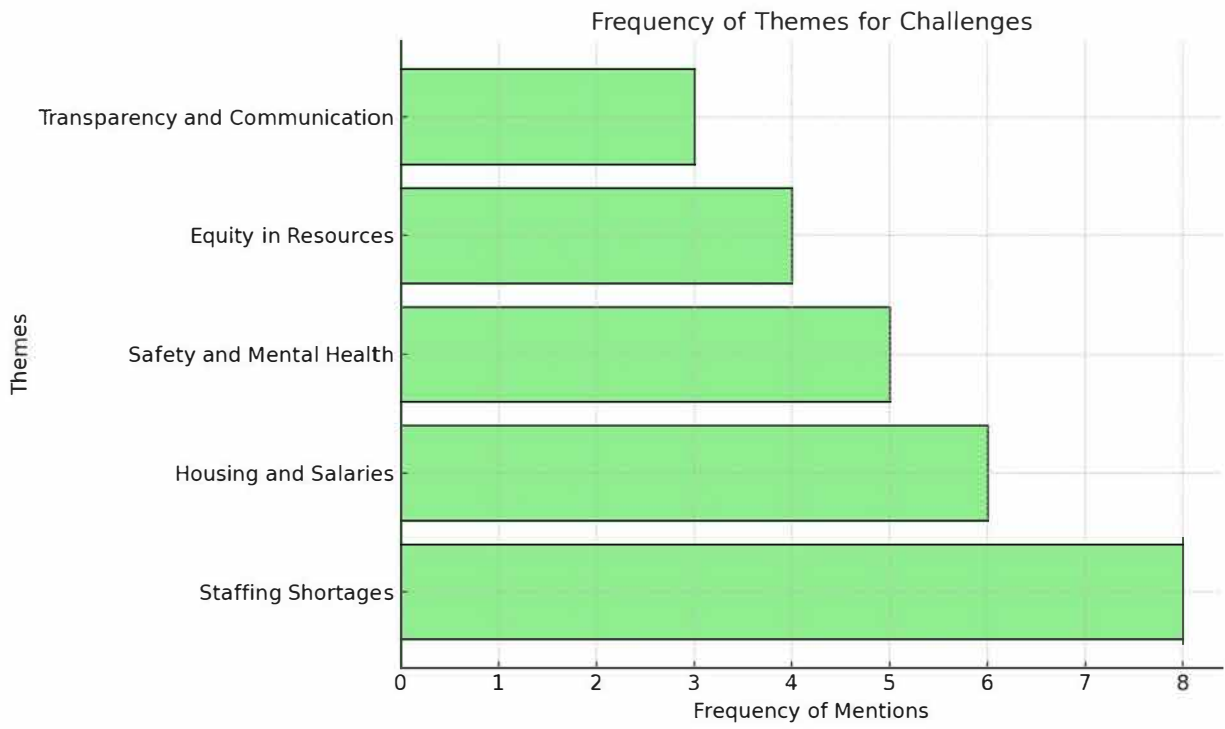
- **Career Pathways:** Expand CTE opportunities in agriculture, trades, and business, introducing programs earlier in middle school.
- **Housing and Salaries:** Explore creative solutions for affordable housing and competitive compensation to retain quality educators.
- **Equity and Inclusion:** Improve support for ELL and SpEd students, ensuring fairness across all schools.
- **Student Engagement:** Increase mentorship and extracurricular opportunities to build a stronger sense of school pride and community.

Frequency of Themes in Stakeholder Feedback



Frequency of Themes for Strengths





Garfield RE-2 Student Stakeholder Meetings

Please tell us great things about your community and Garfield RE-2 that potential candidates for superintendent should know.

- Support from community
- Community attends the games
- Teachers get involved in activities and support students
- Teachers attend after school events - give their own time to support
- Community is academically driven and provide incentives
- Sponsorships from businesses (yearbook sponsorships)
- Local businesses donate to activities (jackets and at events)
- Community is close knit - everyone knows each other
- Awareness of student differences and support for others - Make a Wish
- Adults are role models for students
- Reach out to individual teachers and connection throughout high school
- Students value the district's ability to stand up for what is right and speak out against decisions or policies they disagree with.
- The agricultural (ag) program is highly regarded, offering career-ready pathways and opportunities for students to explore trades and other interests.
- Access to college prep options, such as concurrent classes through Colorado Mountain
- College (CMC), is appreciated alongside the International Baccalaureate (IB) program.
- Students feel strongly about having diverse opportunities, both academic and extracurricular, that cater to different interests and career goals.
- School pride and spirit are important, but students see room for improvement in building a stronger sense of community.

What qualities, skills, and characteristics do you feel the next superintendent needs to have in order to be successful?

- Openminded
- Involved and see what is going on
- Actively ask question
- Ask students' perspective
- Well rounded in what they find important and value
- Personal connections
- Drive to make big things happen at the school
- Ability to problem solve and find solutions
- Honesty with who they work with
- Good feedback to who you manage
- Face the fact of mistake or something being wrong

- Good communication - with students and community
- Take responsibility and accountability
- Passion for role
- Patience and work with different styles of learning towards students and parents
- The superintendent must be transparent and communicative, particularly about changes that impact students, staff, and the community.
- Hosting informational meetings or using social media to share updates is seen as effective for reaching a broader audience.
- They should value student input, prioritize their needs, and actively seek their opinions before making decisions.
- Approachability and the ability to foster a respectful, two-way dialogue with students are critical.
- The superintendent should be invested in the district, treating it as a long-term commitment rather than a stepping stone.
- Emotional intelligence and the ability to address concerns without talking down to students are highly valued.
- A good superintendent would demonstrate fairness, genuinely listen to student feedback, and take actionable steps to address their concerns.

What are the critical areas of improvement that the next superintendent should address?

- Personal connection with the schools - currently doesn't know who the superintendent is
- Build relationships with the students
- Create a connection to schools feeding high school so students stay in district
- Offer more AP or dual enrollment classes
- More input from the students not just parents
- Face-to-face is different and means more than survey (did earlier)
- More involvement of students in programs - need a push or left out or not involved as not interested in what is offered
- Support on futures - colleges, career fairs
- Increasing awareness of scholarship opportunities for those wanting college
- CMC offerings need publicized - Trio Program
- Bring people from college into school to talk to prospective students
- Trades, military pathways shared for additional careers
- Internships or apprenticeship to help build hours as needed
- Lunch Program: Students expressed concerns about limited lunch options and the inefficiency of current systems, especially with a potential move to a closed campus.
- Extracurricular Equity: Expand recognition and support for activities beyond major sports, including arts programs and less-prominent sports.

- CTE Expansion: Broaden career and technical education (CTE) offerings, especially in agriculture, business, and financial literacy, and introduce these programs earlier in middle school.
- School Spirit: Enhance efforts to build school pride through more inclusive and engaging events that foster community and participation.
- Teacher and Staff Support: Improve teacher evaluations, provide better support for educators who need assistance, and address student concerns about specific teachers.
- Safety and Communication: Ensure clarity during lockdown drills and improve protocols for real emergencies. Provide better training for teachers to remain calm during crises.

What do you believe will be the most significant challenges the next superintendent will have to confront?

- The way the world is changing - phones and others things that come up; technology is changing and how to integrate and use in school
- Handle different opinion, controversies, and criticism
- Navigating which problem needs directed towards first and focusing on those less needed later
- Catering to different learning styles - parents taught college was the only option but need to adapt and share different pathways for careers
- Shortage in teachers; hiring incredible teachers to teach even though low staffed
- Language barriers and being able to still communicate
- Elementary and middle involvement as middle (8th) are nervous to come and need inclusion into larger school will be helpful
- How to handle threats and rumors that aren't safe
- More awareness for lockdowns, fire drills, and practice them more
- Some don't want to participate but need to be encouraged and explained the 'why' it is done a certain way
- Making school a safe place - some have hard home lives and shouldn't struggle in both places; awareness to help and see what they need at school
- More mental health issue awareness and how to spot it
- Providing resources for help based on different barriers and understanding what they look like
- More resources for service academies (West Point is more intricate and needs support on completing)
- Colleges and scholarships on how to find and apply to them
- Being aware of scholarships that are available
- Giving support on how to make your high school career successful and what colleges look for freshman year
- Other opportunities besides SAT for programs, volunteering that colleges will see that are important and valuable

- CMC has lots of classes but offers many more; dental hygiene is available and how to have those classes on-line if they don't have transportation to the campus for the classes
- How to prepare for big test and lessen anxiety for them
- Time management for test completion
- Cell Phone Policy: Implementing and managing the new cell phone policy is expected to face significant backlash from students and parents.
- Staffing Changes: Navigating ongoing staff turnover and ensuring stability within leadership and teaching roles.
- Budget Constraints: Balancing financial challenges while maintaining and expanding programs that are important to students.
- Community Buy-In: Building trust and long-term support from the community, especially when tackling divisive issues.
- Safety Concerns: Addressing student anxieties related to safety in schools, including physical security and emotional well-being.
- Student Engagement: Keeping students invested in their education and extracurricular activities, particularly those who are not college-bound.
- Students want more opportunities for mentorship programs, especially to help younger students transition into high school or CTE pathways.
- Expanding art classes and ensuring access to them for interested students are priorities.
- Students emphasize the importance of a superintendent who listens to their voices, treats them as partners in education, and ensures their concerns are addressed in policies and decisions.
- They would like the superintendent to actively support community-building efforts, such as attending events and promoting inclusivity across all student activities.
- A superintendent who understands the importance of practical life skills, like financial literacy and budgeting, would be well-received.
- Students desire open-minded leadership that values collaboration, transparency, and respect for diverse perspectives.

Garfield RE-2 Staff Stakeholder Meetings

Please tell us great things about your community and Garfield RE-2 that potential candidates for superintendent should know.

- Good with people in three towns
- Work together
- Great district
- Communication has fostered teamwork
- Stability in leadership at schools; limited turnover in admin
- Common direction from strategic plan
- Aligned with what we want for district and schools - consistent
- Rural and recreational community lifestyle
- Many have spent entire career here; strong roots
- Smaller district; personable with everyone
- Ability to approach tasks among building based on leaders implementation
- The how it gets done is left to the leader to decide
- Four-day school weeks
- Supportive district - teacher, admin, district office, classified staff to each other
- Strategic plan in strong, bought into from community, schools, BOE for direction
- Involved community
- Community attends school events - all activities
- Staff is integrated into community
- Kids have opportunities to create diverse opportunities
- Open communication
- Strong facilities team.
- Many extracurricular activities for students and families.
- High level of diversity, with 54% Hispanic/Latino population.
- Free breakfast and lunch through CEP.
- Outdoor recreation opportunities and scenic beauty.
- Supportive local businesses and family-oriented culture.
- Simple living with low crime and minimal traffic.
- Proximity to city amenities while retaining a rural feel.
- Strong family involvement in school activities.
- Four-day school week.
- Strategic plan with widespread buy-in.
- Longevity in administrative roles, outpacing average superintendent tenure.
- Outdoor appeal; there is a lot to do
- Community is connected to the land; part of identity and place; sense of history that people value
- Lots of connection
- Connection Among members of the community and how they know each other
- Small town but is welcoming

- Open community
- Friendships all over the board
- Even though small, we are diverse - lots of backgrounds and passions
- Integration along with diversity; co-mingling among students; they all play together no matter background
- Valley is laid out so many work up valley but connected among communities and still feel they have a place
- Need to understand dynamics of valley; integrated up and down - all connected; Colorado river valley as well as Roaring Fork Valley; really from Grand Junction to Aspen: what happens in one affects the others in some way
- Small town but lots of opportunities as up valley (Aspen) extends opportunities
- Families hop from community to community; trade around kids
- Connections with the high schools and CMC
- CMC give opportunities
- Has morphed into lots of possibilities and increase working partnership with CMC
- Other Colorado universities have reached out to partner
- Strong community partnership that have profound role in lives of students
- Community support; town rallies around the school and what it is doing
- Good vibe and image
- People love it here and are invested in the community; people invest in it
- Want full process followed for hiring the new superintendent to assure transparency of school board
- Garfield RE-2's community is described as highly supportive, tightly connected, and focused on student and staff well-being.
- The district fosters a strong sense of teamwork and collaboration among staff and leadership.
- Many residents appreciate the district's transparency and efforts to communicate effectively with stakeholders.
- The district's location, with access to outdoor recreation, is seen as a significant asset for community members and potential staff.
- Generational ties in the community create a foundation of trust and tradition.
- Programs like Share the Love demonstrate a culture of appreciation and recognition for contributions across all roles.
- Garfield RE-2 is recognized for its close-knit community and strong collaborative spirit among staff and families.
- The district's diversity, with a significant Hispanic-Latino population (54%), is viewed as a valuable asset.
- Outdoor recreation and natural beauty of the region are seen as major attractions for both residents and potential candidates.
- Initiatives like free breakfast and lunch programs (CEP) contribute to student well-being and equity.
- The district's strategic plan is considered a significant accomplishment, providing clear goals and direction for the future.

- Longevity in leadership roles within the district demonstrates stability and commitment.
- The four-day school week is highly valued by the community for its impact on work-life balance and family time.
- The community benefits from engaged local businesses and organizations that actively support schools.
- Addressing staffing shortages and improving retention through competitive pay and benefits.
- Enhancing services for students with special needs to meet growing demands.
- Expanding advanced programs such as Gifted and Talented and Career and Technical Education (CTE).
- Creating a unified discipline matrix across schools for consistency.
- Modernizing equipment and infrastructure, including bus radios and classroom technology.
- Hiring a grant writer to secure additional funding for district priorities.
- Strengthening connections with families, especially non-English-speaking households.
- Preparing for fluctuations in student enrollment due to local economic conditions.
- Garfield RE-2 is a district with significant diversity, ranging from long-standing residents with generational ties to newcomers who are not yet deeply connected to the schools.
- The Latino community now constitutes 57% of the district's population, with some schools nearing 70% Latino representation, but the staff and administration do not reflect this diversity.
- There is a strong emphasis on honoring the district's historical roots while also integrating new voices and perspectives.
- The area's outdoor lifestyle is a significant draw, providing opportunities for recreation and connection to nature.
- High costs of living and housing pose substantial challenges for staff recruitment and retention, making relocation and settling in the area difficult for new hires.
- The community's high expectations are balanced by a history of resilience and teamwork among district staff and leadership.
- Garfield RE-2 is comprised of three unique but interconnected communities, which have made significant strides toward functioning as a cohesive district.
- The community is rural, with strong small-town values, and does not align well with urban or "big city" approaches.
- Residents have strong opinions and are passionate about their beliefs, which requires a leader with a strong backbone and the ability to unite diverse viewpoints.
- The community is generally welcoming and kind but can be direct and critical when strong opinions arise, as seen in board meetings.
- The area offers a mix of rural and outdoor activities, alongside proximity to more urban amenities in Glenwood Springs and Grand Junction.

- High cost of living and housing affordability are major challenges for the community and district, impacting hiring and retention.
- Generational families are deeply rooted in the area, creating a strong sense of tradition and support during hardships.
- The district's emphasis on higher education and college readiness provides significant opportunities for students and teachers, such as dual enrollment and partnerships with local colleges.
- Many local graduates return to the district as educators, fostering a sense of continuity and community involvement.
- The community values family-oriented policies and flexibility, understanding the challenges of work-life balance for educators and staff.

What qualities, skills, and characteristics do you feel the next superintendent needs to have in order to be successful?

- Effectively communicate across a variety of students, community members in a variety of modes
- Understand building level systems and time requirements on administration, teachers, and staff at the building level to focus on academic success
- Triage what is the most important so academic success stays at forefront
- Knowledgeable of secondary and elementary
- Listen to people and make sure they are heard
- Strong enough to know you won't make everyone happy and make the right decision
- Genuine
- Knowledge of how a high school should operate, maybe secondary leadership experience
- Truly cares and isn't a sh'mo
- Transparency
- Authenticity
- Care about all the people you work with; carry on tradition
- Feel valued
- Integrity
- Learn history of where been and where we are going - stick to our plan
- We aren't broke and don't need to be fixed; refresh is good but not a rebuilt
- Embrace us
- Organizational skills - to have a plan on how to get it done
- Understand capacity of all staff
- Strong idea of what school success is beyond math and reading scores
- Faith in people; don't need micromanagement
- Vision for what you will be facing (teacher shortage) and how to combat it
- Business minded as well
- Sense of humor; can laugh when needed
- Grit and toughness - sustain pressure of position for the long run

- Create equality for schools and community across the district
- Prior experience as a superintendent or in high school leadership.
- Open-mindedness to small-community dynamics.
- Financial and business acumen.
- Visibility in schools and willingness to engage with staff and students.
- Strong focus on safety for staff and students.
- Respectful, approachable, and willing to listen.
- Strong backbone without being confrontational.
- Open-mindedness to learning about diverse cultures and needs.
- Listen to district employee and community; take all in before making critical changes
- District works differently than city/larger district
- Must understand small community investment within the school
- Understanding changes made at the school affect entire community
- Ability to connect with the Latino community
- Wont meet test scores unless Latinos make the academic growth
- Hard to reach Latino communities; not connecting to the way needed and its a problem
- Expertise in special areas and understand laws specifically sped and ELL
- Experience in administration of large organization
- Managing lots of people experience
- Large budget that needs to be kept track of
- Supports teachers and education
- Someone who has been in education and ideally classroom experience - teachers need to
- feel they have their back
- Good ideas on how to make things better but not swoop in
- Lots of things going well and not everything needs changed
- Continue trajectory the district is on
- Focus on observation the first year to understand the systems and district as a whole before changes
- Understand finance, mil levy knowledge
- Trusted by community; local helps but not required big city attitude wont work
- In community outreach on a level that is understood without being condescending
- Look at potential of dual language elementary school; could be potential
- Personable, normal, nice and will talk to you if you attend a meeting
- Humble
- Manages personalities
- Gets out in buildings and is visible; spend time getting to know teachers and students
- Live in the school district boundaries
- Experience with a teachers union and positive relationship
- Experience with master agreements
- A superintendent with previous leadership experience in schools is preferred.

- The new leader must be approachable and actively engaged in school and community events.
- Strong financial acumen and strategic thinking skills are essential to managing the district's budget and advancing its goals.
- The superintendent should lead with compassion, treating all staff and community members with respect.
- An understanding of small-town culture and a willingness to learn about and integrate into the local community are crucial.
- The ability to listen, adapt to new ideas, and respect diverse perspectives is critical.
- Prioritize safety measures for students and staff.
- A commitment to embracing the district's diversity and fostering inclusivity.
- Transparent communication and a willingness to interact directly with staff and families are essential.
- The next superintendent must be a strong communicator who is purposeful, prompt, and direct in their interactions.
- Building relational trust with staff, students, and the community is critical to fostering collaboration and shared goals.
- They must be willing to delegate responsibilities while being the visible face of the district, particularly during high-profile initiatives like mill levy or bond campaigns.
- Consensus-building skills are essential, as the superintendent will need to navigate and reconcile diverse opinions within the community.
- The leader must have a strong backbone, demonstrating resilience and the ability to address controversy and challenges effectively.
- Transparency, vulnerability, and a commitment to learning the district's history and context are key to establishing credibility and trust.
- Business acumen is necessary to manage the district's \$60 million budget efficiently, especially as one of the lowest-funded districts in the state.
- A background in diverse educational settings and experience at multiple grade levels are advantageous.
- The superintendent should be an advocate for public education, demonstrating passion and commitment to its value and purpose.
- Visibility and involvement in the community, including attending events and building relationships with local stakeholders, are vital to success.
- Drive the district forward with innovative strategies that build upon existing successes.
- Show compassion for staff, students, and families while maintaining accountability and high standards.
- Be highly visible and actively participate in local events, fostering connections and trust.
- Serve as a vocal supporter of public education at the local, regional, and state levels.
- Develop and empower a strong leadership team, leveraging their expertise to achieve district goals.

- Promote diversity and inclusion in hiring, leadership development, and educational opportunities.
- The superintendent must be a strong listener, valuing input from staff, students, and community members.
- Building and maintaining relationships is critical, fostering teamwork and a shared vision for the district.
- The leader should balance approachability and accountability, caring about individuals while ensuring standards are upheld.
- Objectivity, consistency, and transparency are essential traits to guide decision-making and maintain trust.
- Recognizing the progress made by the district and respecting the hard work of the staff is crucial to earning respect.
- A willingness to lead by example and collaborate as a team player is highly valued.
- The superintendent should avoid micromanagement, trusting staff to fulfill their responsibilities while providing constructive feedback.
- Being involved and visible in the community is important to foster trust and engagement.
- The leader should prioritize student success while balancing business acumen and operational management skills.
- The ability to coach and develop staff, recognizing their individual strengths and helping them grow, is a key characteristic.
- Conflict resolution skills and an understanding of school finance are critical for navigating challenges.
- Support for the district's strategic plan is essential, ensuring continuity and alignment with community goals.
- Drive the district forward with a clear, actionable vision aligned with community and educational goals.
- Show compassion and understanding for staff, students, and families while balancing accountability.
- Build a culture of collaboration, valuing diverse perspectives and fostering teamwork.
- Communicate openly and honestly with all stakeholders, building trust and confidence.
- Actively participate in community events and maintain a visible presence across the district.
- Prioritize decisions that enhance student outcomes and opportunities.
- Represent the district's interests effectively at local and state levels.

What are the critical areas of improvement that the next superintendent should address?

- Teacher shortage - hard to recruit and need ideas
- Housing and childcare needs
- Cost of living vs wages - environment can be a challenge with various

- Need a mil levy
- Enrollment is increasing and out of space
- Alternative school beyond high school - Yampah Alternative funding to come home
- Sped and ELL students are increasing
- Sped staffing is on break of disaster
- Vision to take strategic plan to next level and meeting goals, action steps
- Test scores are used to measure - is it a true measure of what we do: teachers can't win
- Student need to enjoy what they are doing and not just working towards a test
- Focus on what is good for the school/students - communicate that out to community
- Get students back who have gone to virtual, Goal, Colorado Connections
- Balance history perspective with global perspectives outside of the districts
- Increased needs related to transgender and social-emotional support
- Student needs and behaviors - trauma experienced
- Incremental pay increases for staff.
- Recruitment and retention of teachers that reflect the community's demographics.
- Continuation of progress in pay, benefits, and insurance affordability.
- Planning for population fluctuations.
- Leadership to advocate for bonds and mill levies for funding.
- Determined leadership to represent staff needs to the board.
- Achievement in ELD students and how will strategic plan goals for these
- Many ELD students haven't been in an English speaking classroom
- Pay is a challenge for teachers and classified with surrounding districts; need to keep teachers here
- Other perks to make staff feel special and valued; look outside of norm
- Grow Your Own for employees; Cherry Creek implemented this
- Received foundation for teaching as a para in the district but classified staff didn't have
- health insurance under 29 hours a week
- Classified should be year round pay with benefits in order to keep them employed and in the districts
- Big difference between high schools academically and socially
- Many paras work additional jobs after school and have a pay differential (higher in the after school program)
- Refer to teachers and entire staff as educators; not just teachers as educators as teachers couldn't do job without support staff
- Community doesn't support increase in taxes as they don't want more taxes
- Below state average in reading and math for state assessments - it's a problem
- Political diversity of area but fringes can be quite vocal and needs managed or will become decisive
- Address shortages in critical positions, including bus drivers, special education staff, and other support roles.

- Expand and enhance special education services to meet increasing needs effectively.
- Establish district-wide standards for student discipline to ensure consistency and fairness across schools.
- Modernize outdated equipment, including bus radios and classroom technology, to enhance operational efficiency and safety.
- Invest in a dedicated grant writer to secure funding for technology and capital improvements.
- Address the lack of diversity among staff and administrators to better reflect the student population.
- Build on the strategic plan to elevate student performance and align educational outcomes with community expectations.
- Overcome challenges related to the high cost of living and housing shortages to attract and retain qualified educators and staff.
- Improve services and staffing for special education, ensuring compliance with state regulations and addressing increasing student needs.
- Strengthen connections between the district and its communities, ensuring all voices are heard and represented.
- Enhance both physical and emotional safety measures to address concerns raised by students and families.
- Advocate for increased funding and explore creative solutions to address budget constraints, including potential tax initiatives.
- Develop a long-term strategy to manage the anticipated retirement of key staff and retain institutional knowledge.
- Rebuild trust with the community through transparency and open communication.
- Elevate academic performance by setting higher standards for teachers and students.
- Address challenges related to housing, salaries, and building a supportive culture to retain quality educators.
- Improve services for students with special needs, ensuring adequate staffing and resources.
- Enhance communication within the district and with external stakeholders, ensuring clarity and responsiveness.
- Advocate for equitable funding and efficient use of district resources to meet diverse needs.
- Foster growth opportunities for staff, promoting a culture of continuous improvement and accountability.

What do you believe will be the most significant challenges the next superintendent will have to confront?

- Community
- BOE pressing on the superintendent
- Student population of changing demographics

- Lack of funding
- Political groups
- 24/7 position
- Continue to work with the board and get to where they need to go as well as be the person for the admin staff
- Assistant Super and Super retiring at the same time so learning curve will be high
- Finances - lack there of
- Passing of mil levy in community that doesn't support it
- Community needs to know the students/parents are different between the schools in the district: three different communities
- All three groups advocate for what they want which is different
- Need to find the best decision for what works for all
- Pride our self in being a school district and not a district of schools but a challenge with diverse groups
- Hard to hire in Silt/New Castle as don't want to drive for same position/pay in Rifle
- Intrinsic benefits for appeal to work - be creative with benefits
- Housing for superintendent will be hard to find
- The new superintendent will be hiring an assistant superintendent
- Economic and social challenges in the community.
- Balancing diverse political views within the valley.
- Gaps in advanced programs like gifted and talented education.
- Understand expensive to live
- Finances are a challenge
- Losing good teachers to area districts due to salary schedule
- Raising test scores - big push from school board
- Community partner perspective and need for mental health support - needs spoken about
- Alternative pathways to graduation needs to be improved
- Opportunity to take more CMC classes or multiple classes in a content
- Alternative high school in Rifle and not send students to Yampah
- Knowledge of internships
- CTE alternative pathways to education opportunity
- Many more options that should be explored for career pathways
- Overcome barriers posed by the high cost of living to attract and retain qualified staff.
- Filling critical positions in a competitive hiring environment.
- Successfully navigate the challenges of integrating into a close-knit, protective small town community.
- Balance increasing needs with limited resources, ensuring that priorities align with the district's strategic goals.
- Handle politically sensitive issues while maintaining neutrality and fostering unity.
- The superintendent should actively support efforts to improve community engagement, particularly with non-English-speaking families.

- Collaboration with principals and department leaders is vital to address specific needs and implement changes effectively.
- A focus on retaining experienced staff through competitive compensation and a supportive work environment is critical.
- Prioritize the safety of students and staff, including investments in bus cameras and updated safety protocols.
- Encourage professional development opportunities for all staff to foster growth and improve job satisfaction.
- The superintendent should take an active interest in understanding the day-to-day challenges faced by various departments, including transportation.
- The new superintendent should be someone excited to work with the district, not simply seeking to escape a previous role.
- Maintaining and expanding on recent progress in staff benefits, such as reduced insurance costs, is critical.
- Efforts to secure a mill levy or bond to increase funding for schools and salaries should be prioritized.
- Community members emphasize the importance of a student-centered approach, ensuring that children's needs remain at the forefront.
- A superintendent with strong advocacy skills to represent the district's interests at the state level will be valuable.
- The district would benefit from a leader who values collaboration and fosters a sense of unity among diverse stakeholders.
- Navigating the unique needs and perspectives of the district's three diverse communities (Newcastle, Silt, and Rifle).
- Managing the growing politicization of public education and advocating for its value within the community.
- Addressing the nationwide shortage of teachers and ensuring adequate support for students with special needs.
- Living up to the legacy of long-serving leaders while charting a new path forward.
- Balancing the demands of being a regional advocate and maintaining a strong presence within the district.
- Building a more inclusive environment that values and leverages the district's diversity.
- Ensuring that the strategic plan remains a living document, with progress continuing on initiatives already underway.
- The next superintendent must prioritize building relationships and trust while respecting the district's history and accomplishments.
- Balancing fresh ideas with established systems will be key to achieving long-term success.
- The superintendent must lead by example, demonstrating resilience, adaptability, and a commitment to the community.
- Supporting teachers and staff in professional growth and ensuring they feel valued will be essential to fostering a positive district culture.

- Stabilizing staffing levels and addressing high turnover due to systemic challenges like housing and pay.
- Engaging a diverse and passionate community with varying perspectives.
- Handling conflicts with grace and professionalism, especially in high-stakes situations like board meetings or disciplinary actions.
- Maintaining and building upon the district's strategic plan while addressing emerging challenges.
- Advocating for district needs at the state level, particularly regarding funding and policy decisions.
- Managing extensive demands while maintaining personal well-being and fostering a collaborative work environment.
- Dealing with the emotional and logistical challenges of student discipline, especially in complex situations.
- The superintendent must build upon the strong foundation established by the outgoing leader, acknowledging the progress made.
- Balancing fresh ideas with respect for established systems is key to success.
- A servant-leader approach, focusing on empowering others and fostering collaboration, is highly desired.
- The superintendent should value family, work-life balance, and a supportive workplace culture.

Garfield RE-2 Community Stakeholder Meetings

Please tell us great things about your community and Garfield RE-2 that potential candidates for superintendent should know.

- Turn out from parents is low but those who do show up are really invested
- Steady involved volunteers
- Great place to live in the whole country and state
- Taught in different districts and RE-2 has the kids who are integrated with each other and the material; favorite to teach in
- Strong presents of those who grew up here and who have moved from all over
- Close knit
- Every school is trying new things; each elementary has their own programs - afterschool program, Spanish club, experiential education would be ideal to have at every school
- Great staff, teachers, admin who are invested in our kids
- Rural community with traditional values
- Heavily involved with experiential learning emphasized and being pushed
- Not a true north stare to rally against; commuter community
- Need to know what community looks like to integrate into
- FFA and 4H presence but doesn't include everyone
- Sports are tribal
- Bringing unity at core level
- Small town feel with good diversity of programs
- Helpful oriented
- Outdoor programs have been brought in and spanned socio economic spectrum so living in Colorado
- What's a good fit for kids and families in Colorado
- Trips are remembered
- Area is historical and taught in 2nd and 4th grade level; program or package for state level historical
- Lots of parents travel to work up valley - hard to get out of district and up valley is begging for skills and get skills to employable in trades right out of high school; plumbing, HVAC so can afford to live here and college not for everyone
- How to leverage BOCES vo-tech and partnering with CMC - career pathways
- How to help kids on the pathways - mesa state outreach potential and package of support
- Medical field opportunities from CMC and teacher from CMC with a few years of college and limited expense
- Small community and know they have to work closely with others and love long term relationships with the same providers
- Business owners can teach classes and reduce costs
- Large church community who would give support if wanted

- The superintendent should understand the unique needs of the Garfield RE-2 community, including its rural and diverse demographics.
- Recognize that rural areas like Garfield RE-2 differ significantly from urban or suburban communities in other states.
- Candidates must value and respect the community's tight-knit nature while understanding its lack of urban amenities like Red Lobster or Trader Joe's, and its small-town culture.
- Economic challenges, such as the rising cost of living and commuting barriers, significantly impact family engagement and student outcomes.
- Volunteers play a vital role, with some parents continuing their involvement long after their children graduate, but overall parent engagement is limited due to logistical challenges like commuting.
- Demographic changes within the district, such as population growth in areas like Rifle, need to be addressed with an open mind.
- A superintendent must understand the disparity in resources and demographics between schools in different parts of the district, such as Newcastle and Rifle.
- The district benefits from strong community ties, but the superintendent must avoid stereotypes and work to understand the nuanced diversity of the area.
- Community trust is paramount. Candidates need to understand the importance of not "burning bridges: as relationships in small communities are long-lasting and interconnected.
- Garfield RE-2's community is described as extremely tight-knit, supportive, and deeply
 - invested in the success of its students, staff, and overall district well-being.
- The district's evolving diversity, especially its growing Spanish-speaking population, has become a defining characteristic and strength.
- Residents appreciate the district's location and natural surroundings, providing a balance of work, school, and outdoor recreation.
- The four-day school week is highly valued by the community, contributing to family and work-life balance.
- Strong generational ties in the community create a sense of tradition and pride.
- The district is recognized for its emphasis on raising teachers from within its own systems to fill educational roles.
- Law enforcement and safety measures are widely supported and respected by the community.
- Garfield RE-2 has a tight-knit, supportive community that deeply cares about its students, staff, and overall well-being.
- The district has evolved significantly over the past decade, with increasing diversity, particularly in its Spanish-speaking population.
- The community values its beautiful location and outdoor lifestyle, which balances work, school, and recreation.
- The four-day school week is highly regarded and contributes to the community's lifestyle and family balance.

- Residents appreciate the district's strong sense of tradition and its ability to embrace new ideas while respecting its historical roots.
- There is strong local support for law enforcement and community safety.
- Garfield RE-2 encompasses three distinct communities, each with unique schools, cultures, and environments.
- Residents value small-town principles combined with access to outdoor and recreational activities.
- The Latino community within the district is growing, contributing to its increasing diversity.
- The area is known for resilience and durability, often weathering economic and political fluctuations better than other regions.
- Strong community support is available for leadership but is contingent on honesty, reliability, and hard work.
- Candidates should understand the community's focus on service over personal career advancement.
- The district's facilities are in reasonable condition, with no immediate need for large-scale capital campaigns.

What qualities, skills, and characteristics do you feel the next superintendent needs to have in order to be successful?

- Diplomacy
- Open mind
- Control a large budget - strong financial understanding
- Bonds are sundowning need to bring community together to dip into the pockets; need to get to the next level and how to secure and bring understanding in
- Track record of helping students meeting goals of reading
- Good resume - experience, facts
- Experience in multi-lingual communities; needs leveraged more with engagement and achievement
- Someone who can say 'no'
- Rural community and values are different than front range - honor and recognition of this is important; state wants us to do things but aren't valued here
- Values and maintains heritage
- Community is more split than many are aware of; would be a disservice if lean one way
- Recognizes beauty in both sides of values
- Monday -to- Thursday district with both advantages and disadvantages
- Bullying needs accountable and transparent to dealing with it
- Multiple groups of kids need help but can only help so much - defender for kids; ingrained with program that has worked and compatible with strategic plan
- Isn't afraid of reporting negative results and creates a plan to tackle it - like test scores
- Someone who wants to interact with parents and individual community members

- Approachable
- Experience in a classroom, knows what it is like to work with kids and be on the other side which is a better fit for leadership, know who they are trying to help; understand what education is really about
- Point of public education is to help everyone thrive, create a good education and work together
- Interested in vibrant strategic plan that is in place
- Interested in being part of the community and living here
- Reference and glowing report of being a good leader and support of them
- Expensive to live here
- Appreciate public school for what it is
- Wants to continue a good public education that is in place
- Gets parents and people involved and into the school system
- WHHW program to integrate into the system and all on the same page
- Financially responsible and business minded as a leader and puts good people around them and achieve strategic plan goals
- Empathetic but results drive
- Bilingual candidates (English and Spanish) are strongly preferred due to the district's demographics.
- Approachability and kindness are key, along with a firm demeanor to ensure they are not easily walked over.
- Strong communication skills are critical, with an emphasis on active listening and engaging stakeholders.
- The superintendent must be passionate about education, children, and improving the community.
- Fairness and the ability to avoid taking sides are essential to maintaining district unity and inclusiveness.
- They must demonstrate empathy, understanding the challenges faced by families, students, and teachers.
- Strong advocacy for public education is needed, including knowledge of legislative processes and funding mechanisms.
- Candidates should have extensive experience in public education, ideally in multiple roles, and an unwavering passion for supporting students and teachers.
- They must be innovative, willing to challenge outdated practices, and committed to finding creative solutions.
- Effective delegation and team-building skills are critical for managing a large and complex district.
- Leadership should foster high expectations for students, staff, and administrators while maintaining empathy and support.
- The superintendent must be politically astute, balancing the apolitical nature of the role with the political realities of education.
- The superintendent must have a clear vision for the district's future and the ability to advocate for its needs at the state level.

- Recognizing the unique challenges faced by students, families, and staff is vital for creating effective policies and practices.
- Effective delegation to team members, based on their strengths, ensures smoother district operations.
- Building lasting relationships and establishing stability within the district is critical for sustained success.
- The superintendent must value diverse perspectives and foster a collaborative environment for all stakeholders.
- The superintendent must build genuine relationships, getting to know staff, students, and community members personally.
- Open communication, both in person and through accessible platforms like social media, is vital for fostering trust and transparency.
- The superintendent should understand and honor the district's strategic plan, ensuring continued progress without unnecessary regression.
- A commitment to celebrating and embracing diversity, as well as diversifying staff and leadership, is critical.
- The district needs a leader invested in staying for the long term to ensure stability and growth.
- Remaining calm under pressure and working collaboratively to unify the community are essential traits.
- A deep understanding of education, budgeting, and system-wide operations is required for effective leadership.
- The superintendent must develop creative solutions to attract and retain qualified staff amid housing and salary challenges.
- A strong ability to advocate for district needs at local and state levels while maintaining a neutral, inclusive stance.
- The superintendent must be able to communicate effectively across political, socioeconomic, and cultural lines. Building trust and fostering genuine relationships with staff, students, and community members is essential.
- The superintendent should view this position as a long-term commitment, actively engaging with the community and treating the role as more than a stepping stone.
- A focus on celebrating and incorporating the district's growing diversity is critical, along with efforts to diversify staff and leadership.
- The superintendent should remain calm under pressure, avoid polarizing the community, and prioritize unity and collaboration.
- They must understand and support the district's strategic plan while advocating for programs that benefit students and the community.
- A solid understanding of school systems, budgeting, and educational leadership is vital for effective management and decision-making.
- Developing novel approaches to recruit and retain qualified teachers and staff is a key skill.
- The superintendent should naturally assume leadership in any group setting, demonstrating authority without being domineering.

- Approachability and interpersonal skills are vital to building trust with staff, parents, and students.
- Strong collaboration and teamwork abilities are essential, along with business acumen to manage financial and operational aspects of the district.
- They must adapt quickly to new legislation and rules specific to Colorado's educational landscape.
- Open-mindedness, willingness to listen, and availability to community members and parents are crucial.
- Conflict resolution skills and the ability to manage crises effectively are necessary.
- Innovation and efficiency in decision-making and problem-solving are important traits.
- Presence in the community, such as attending sporting or school events, is highly valued.
- Integrity and a strong moral compass are essential leadership qualities.
- The superintendent must balance relationships with the school board, acting as a buffer and maintaining focus on district goals.
- Establish and articulate a clear vision for the district's future.
- Recognize and address the unique challenges faced by students, staff, and families.
- Foster partnerships within the community to create a supportive ecosystem for education.
- Ensure open and honest communication with all stakeholders.
- Demonstrate a long-term commitment to the district, building stability and trust.

What are the critical areas of improvement that the next superintendent should address?

- Vocational training skills
- Bi-literacy programming
- Afterschool option
- Enrichment programs
- Continue to improve academic achievement
- Recruiting and retaining teachers - need to get the best applicants
- Empathetic but results drive which has created problems for not being able to read and do math; need basic skills to flourish
- Maintaining a child focus and not pulled in a variety of directions
- How does this serve the children as top priority
- Homeschool community wants to be involved in public ed - inclusive and empathetic
- District does a lot with a little - kids supported at home do well those that aren't as supported there isn't funding to help
- Young teachers can't afford to live here; salary doesn't get you an apartment, just roommates
- Incentive ideas to bring and keep

- Understands recruiting and fostering local students into teaching
- Significant improvements are needed in special education to better serve students and rebuild trust with families.
- Addressing graduation rates and ensuring students are prepared for college or careers is essential, especially with a focus on career technical education (CTE).
- The district must develop innovative strategies for attracting and retaining qualified staff, considering salary constraints and rural location challenges.
- Improving transparency and engagement with parents and the broader community is a priority. The district should explore alternatives to traditional surveys to gather input.
- Addressing disparities in resources and opportunities across schools and communities is important for overall district success.
- Addressing the challenges of housing affordability and competitive salaries to retain talented educators and staff.
- Improving support and resources for special education programs to meet growing needs.
- Strengthening efforts to engage Spanish-speaking populations and enhance translation services for families.
- Expanding school safety measures to ensure students and staff feel secure and supported.
- Developing more pathways for students not bound for college, including career and technical education (CTE).
- Reducing wasteful spending and ensuring effective allocation of the district's budget.
- Addressing challenges related to housing affordability and competitive salaries is essential for attracting and retaining qualified staff.
- Improving support and resources for special education programs is a pressing need.
- Enhance efforts to integrate and involve the Spanish-speaking population and other underrepresented groups.
- Optimize budgets and reduce wasteful spending to ensure resources are used efficiently.
- Strengthen school safety measures to ensure that both students and staff feel secure.
- Focus on supporting teachers' growth and ensuring they have the tools to succeed.
- Elevate academics across all grade levels by holding teachers and students to higher standards.
- Address challenges in finding and retaining high-quality educators.
- Increase alignment between parents and the district's academic goals.
- Address student concerns related to bullying and the impact of social media.
- Collaborate with community organizations to improve access to resources for families.
- Bridge gaps between different cultural and economic groups within the district.

- Improve transparency and foster trust through consistent and effective communication.

What do you believe will be the most significant challenges the next superintendent will have to confront?

- Polarizing side of the valley - two distinct sides that need addressed in a common way
- Funding
- Negative press recently
- Integrate children at all ages who aren't near the standard and trying to navigate a different culture
- Sundowning of the bonds and potential mil levy
- Student retention within RE-2 public district and not to online, homeschool, charters, or neighboring school districts
- Rural and recreational community but only noted as rural community for funding
- Integrate WHHW program and integrated into strategic plan which is focus
- Rebuilding trust with the community and stakeholders is an ongoing challenge, particularly post-COVID.
- Improving academic outcomes and addressing systemic challenges in education is critical.
- Strengthening the relationship between the superintendent and the school board is essential to ensure collaborative governance.
- Increasing meaningful parent engagement, particularly beyond temporary or reactive involvement, is necessary.
- Bridging gaps between various district communities to foster a sense of inclusion and belonging is crucial.
- A focus on "listening tours" to gather insights from all district stakeholders is highly recommended.
- The superintendent should prioritize innovative solutions to improve both academic and career readiness outcomes.
- Candidates must address systemic issues like rising costs and limited resources, which impact families and staff.
- Creativity and adaptability in addressing recruitment, retention, and programmatic challenges are crucial for success.
- The superintendent's primary focus must remain on student outcomes and fostering growth opportunities for all students and staff.
- Balancing the high cost of living with limited housing availability for staff.
- Preparing for potential shifts in immigration policies and their impact on staff and families.
- Handling politically charged issues with grace and neutrality to unify the community.
- Building and maintaining trust with stakeholders by being visible, approachable, and consistent.

- Ensuring that the district continues its positive trajectory without losing momentum on key initiatives.
- The superintendent must honor and continue the work outlined in the district's strategic plan.
- More mentorship and alternative learning opportunities should be created to support students with diverse needs.
- The community emphasizes the importance of a superintendent who listens, learns, and adapts rather than arriving with a fixed agenda.
- A dedicated grant writer could help the district secure funding for capital projects and program enhancements.
- Students and community members want a leader who prioritizes practical life skills, such as financial literacy, in education.
- Clear, respectful, and honest leadership is essential to building trust and ensuring long-term success in the district.
- Balancing the high cost of living with limited housing availability poses ongoing challenges for staffing.
- Navigating the complexities of political opinions and maintaining neutrality while advocating for the district's best interests is critical.
- Preparing for potential shifts in immigration policies that could impact staff and families is essential.
- Building and maintaining trust with the community will require transparency, open communication, and consistent actions.
- Ensuring the district continues its positive trajectory without regressing or losing momentum on key initiatives.
- The superintendent must honor the district's existing strategic plan and ensure continuity in its implementation.
- Efforts to increase mentorship opportunities, alternative learning options, and programs for non-college-bound students are highly valued.
- A focus on diversifying communication methods, such as translating materials into Spanish and improving outreach, will strengthen community engagement.
- The community desires a leader who listens, learns, and adapts to the unique needs of the district without imposing a one-size-fits-all agenda.
- A dedicated grant writer to pursue funding opportunities could address budget constraints and enhance program offerings.
- Students, staff, and community members emphasize the need for a superintendent who is approachable, transparent, and focused on long-term stability and growth.
- Rebuild trust in leadership and the district's direction.
- Stabilize staffing by creating a culture that encourages long-term commitment.
- Advocate for additional funding while effectively communicating the district's financial needs to the community.
- Align with the district's strategic plan while driving meaningful progress.
- Manage the extensive demands of the role without compromising personal well-being.

- Represent the district's interests effectively at the state level, especially in a rural context.
- Navigate the district's large and diverse scope, balancing local needs with overarching goals.
- The superintendent must prioritize innovative and realistic solutions to district challenges.
- Strong advocacy for public education and a commitment to equity are essential.
- Candidates should have a clear plan for their first 90 days, including immediate wins and strategic alignment.
- Community presence and visible engagement are key to fostering trust and rapport.
- The role requires balancing high expectations with compassion and support for staff and students.
- Addressing the rural nature of the district while leveraging its strengths is vital for long-term success.

Garfield School District RE-2 Superintendent Search Survey

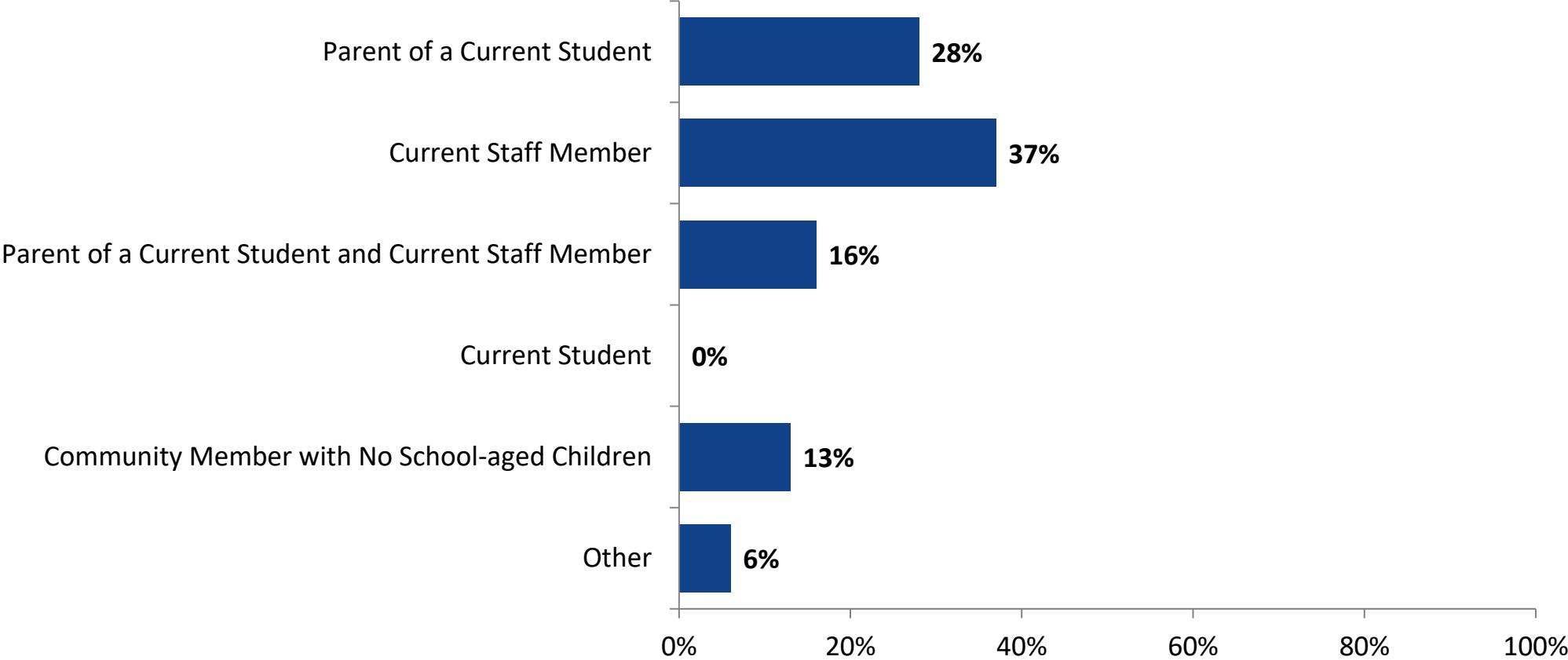
Results and Analysis

McPherson & Jacobson
January 2025



Relationship to District

Which of the following best describes your relationship to Garfield School District ? (N=134)





Good Points About the Community



Good Points About the Community

Please tell us great things about your community and the Garfield School District that potential candidates for superintendent should know.

- **Educational Excellence and Student Success:** Participating parent/guardians value the strong academics at the district and its impact on student success. Participants highlighted the high academic standards, emphasizing core subjects such as literacy, math, science, and history.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Parents/Guardians expressed pride in the diversity of their district. Comments mentioned how the community includes people from various racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Participants highlight the community's desire to advocate for respect and inclusion of all members of the community.
- **Sense of Community:** Respondents expressed strong feelings of belonging and support within their community. Parents/Guardians described the community as “tight-knit,” “small town values,” “great place to grow up,” and “neighbors helping neighbors.” This highlights the cohesion and mutual care that exist among residents. Parents/Guardians also noted the strong participation from parents in children’s education.
- **Small-Town Atmosphere with Growing Population:** Participants view Garfield as a tight-knit, rural, small-town community where people care about each other and take pride in their schools. The growing population is seen as a positive development, bringing new opportunities and diversity to the area. However, there is also a desire to balance this growth while preserving the community’s traditional, small-town values and connectedness.
- **Strategic Plan** Participating parents/guardians expressed satisfaction with the district's ongoing strategic plan and recommended that the new superintendent continue working toward its goals.
- **Values and Ideology:** Community values were mentioned as a central focus, with mixed opinions expressed about educational and societal values. Participants noted the diversity in ideology among community members and that the district must remain neutral and inclusive and avoid extreme changes, particularly in curriculum and political influence. This ideological diversity suggests the need for a superintendent who can balance diverse viewpoints and maintain community harmony.

Good Points About the Community

Please tell us great things about your community and the Garfield School District that potential candidates for superintendent should know.

- **Community Diversity:** Participating staff noted that the district is characterized and strengthened by diversity, both in terms of demographics and geography. Each community within the district has its own unique identity, and this diversity is embraced as an asset. Diversity in demographics is seen through both long-time residents and newer immigrant families.
- **Dedicated and Passionate Staff:** Staff praised the dedication of the district's teachers and staff, who are committed to the students' success and constantly strive to improve educational opportunities. Leadership at various levels, especially within individual schools, is recognized as a strength, highlighting academic, sports, music, and drama efforts.
- **Positive Geographic and Recreational Opportunities:** Participants highlighted the natural beauty of the area, including access to outdoor activities such as fishing, hunting, and rock climbing. The location is considered ideal, with proximity to Colorado's major attractions but without the overwhelming tourist traffic. Community members value the quality of life the region offers, emphasizing the blend of small-town atmosphere and access to outdoor recreation.
- **Strong Sense of Community:** Participating staff described the district as having a tight-knit, supportive, and diverse community. There is a strong sense of unity and collaboration among staff, parents, and community members. Despite differences, the community comes together to support one another, especially in times of need.
- **Strategic Planning and Leadership:** The outgoing superintendent is praised for servant-hearted leadership, fostering positive community relationships, and supporting staff and students. The desire for similar qualities in the new superintendent is expressed. Participants highlighted the strategic plan put in place and the desire for the new superintendent to continue working toward its goals.
- **Student-centeredness:** Participants highlighted the district's efforts toward student-centered goals and plans, which are vital to continuing progress. There is a strong focus on meeting the diverse needs of students to ensure they have the opportunities to thrive academically and socially, particularly those facing difficult life circumstances.

Good Points About the Community

Please tell us great things about your community and the Garfield School District that potential candidates for superintendent should know.

- **Community Passion and Dedication:** The community takes immense pride in being actively involved in the lives of students and schools. They care deeply about their children and work to create a supportive environment. There is a high level of engagement in education through attending school events, fundraisers, and school board meetings. The community places a high value on being connected and working together for the benefit of the children.
- **Dedication to Education and Student Well-being:** There is a strong focus on maintaining high educational standards for all students. The community values a well-rounded education and encourages student input in their learning and extracurricular activities. Teachers are trusted and respected, with the expectation that they will be empowered to do their jobs effectively. Respondents emphasized the need for supporting not just students' academic success but also their emotional and social well-being. This holistic approach to student development is a priority for the community.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** The community acknowledged its evolving demographic diversity, including a high population of families where English is not the primary language. They see this diversity as enriching the shared experiences of the community. There is a clear desire for inclusivity, ensuring that every student, regardless of their background, receives the support they need to succeed. The community wants the school system to embrace diversity in race, culture, gender, and affiliations.
- **Rural Identity and Connection to Nature:** The community takes pride in its rural, agricultural roots. Respondents valued preserving the community's unique, rural way of life. They expressed concern over maintaining their small-town values and identity, especially in a rapidly changing demographic and social landscape.
- **Teacher and Administrative Support:** The staff, including teachers and administrators, were described as enthusiastic, dedicated, and putting in considerable effort to make the school district successful. Their work is valued and appreciated by the community.



Characteristics, Attributes, Skills



Characteristics, Attributes, Skills

What qualities, skills, and characteristics do you feel the next superintendent needs to have in order to be successful?

- **Commitment to Inclusivity and Cultural Awareness:** Participating parents highlighted the importance of cultural literacy, respect for diversity, and bilingual capabilities, particularly in districts with diverse student populations. They stressed the need for a superintendent who can build bridges between different cultural and ideological groups within the community.
- **Community Engagement and Connection:** The ideal superintendent will actively engage with the community and work to build strong relationships. This involves understanding local culture, investing time in the area, and having a long-term commitment to the district's success.
- **Experienced Leader:** Respondents want someone with strong leadership skills, relevant educational experience, and a proven track record of success in public schools. The next superintendent should be visionary, strategic, and capable of navigating internal and external challenges.
- **Independence from Political Agendas:** Respondents noted that the superintendent should not allow politics to interfere with their decisions or pursue personal or partisan agendas. The focus should be solely on the well-being of the students and the community, with integrity and transparency as core values.
- **Listening and Communication:** Respondents emphasized the need for the next superintendent to be an exceptional communicator. They should be open to feedback, able to hear the community's concerns and provide clear, honest communication. This includes engaging with diverse perspectives and making public input opportunities accessible.
- **Student-Centered Leadership:** Participants expressed the importance of putting students' needs first, ensuring their success and safety, and providing a well-rounded education that goes beyond standardized test scores.
- **Support for Teachers and Staff:** Respondents noted the importance of teacher/staff retention, emphasizing the need for a superintendent who values, supports, and empowers school employees.
- **Technological Adaptability:** Given the ongoing technological transformation in education, the next superintendent needs to be adaptable to the rapid changes technology brings. Participants want leadership that can handle modern challenges like cyberbullying and AI.

Characteristics, Attributes, Skills

What qualities, skills, and characteristics do you feel the next superintendent needs to have in order to be successful?

- **Bilingual Skills and Cultural Awareness:** Stakeholders highlighted the need for a superintendent who is bilingual (preferably in English and Spanish) and understands the specific cultural and socioeconomic challenges faced by families in the area.
- **Commitment to Community and Longevity:** Respondents stressed the importance of choosing a leader who understands the district and is willing to stay long-term. A superintendent who has deep ties to the area or a commitment to invest in the community over time would be highly valued.
- **Experience in Teaching and Administration:** Respondents desire a superintendent with experience in teaching and administrative roles, someone who understands the intricacies of school operations from multiple perspectives, with experience working in secondary and elementary settings.
- **Fiscal Responsibility:** Respondents noted that the superintendent should be financially responsible, with a clear understanding of district finances and budgeting processes.
- **Leadership and Decision-Making:** Stakeholders are looking for a decisive leader who can balance long-term vision with the unique challenges of different schools in the district. The ability to handle difficult decisions while remaining unbiased and politically neutral is crucial.
- **Non-Polarizing and Politically Neutral Leadership:** Respondents highlighted the need for a superintendent who is not driven by a political agenda but focuses on student welfare and educational outcomes. They need to navigate the district's varied political landscape, balancing diverse viewpoints without alienating any particular group.
- **Transparent Communication:** Transparency and clear, consistent communication are critical traits desired in a superintendent. Respondents want a leader who communicates openly with both staff and the public, ensuring that everyone feels informed and included in district decisions.
- **Trust and Relationship Building:** Building trust through strong relationships with students, parents, staff, and the broader community was mentioned as a key factor in the superintendent's success. The ability to connect with individuals on a personal level while maintaining professionalism is highly valued.

Characteristics, Attributes, Skills

What qualities, skills, and characteristics do you feel the next superintendent needs to have in order to be successful?

- **Community Engagement:** Active involvement and listening to all stakeholders, including a commitment to equity and inclusion. The superintendent is expected to be visible and actively engaged within the community. Respondents expressed a desire for a leader who listens to and respects the voices of students, teachers, parents, and community members alike. There is also a clear call for the superintendent to engage with the Latino population and foster strong community relationships.
- **Desire for Experienced Leadership:** The community seeks a superintendent with strong ties to the area and a deep understanding of the needs of the district's staff and students. They want someone who has already been involved in the community and can align with the values established by previous leadership. The new superintendent should embrace the district's strategic plan, understand the local community's diverse needs, and foster collaboration among staff, families, and the broader community.
- **Empathy Toward Teachers and Marginalized Students:** Participants repeatedly emphasized the need for a leader who is empathetic toward teachers' and students' needs, including marginalized communities. The ideal candidate must demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity and understand the importance of student recognition and validation.
- **Expertise in Community Needs:** Participating community members desire a superintendent who understands and honors the needs of its diverse community. They noted a superintendent must be fluent in both Spanish and English to effectively communicate with a diverse school community. Cultural competency, especially understanding the unique cultural backgrounds of the students, families, and staff, is critical. However, they must also understand and respect the rural lifestyle of the community. The ability to bridge cultural gaps is seen as a key trait.
- **Strong, Independent Leadership:** A leader who can balance tradition with innovation and stand up to political pressures or external influences. Respondents want a strong leader who is not influenced by external political pressures or vocal minorities.
- **Transparency and Integrity:** Honest, open communication and decision-making based on facts and best practices, not politics.



Significant Opportunities



Significant Opportunities

What do you see as significant opportunities for improvement for the next superintendent of the Garfield School District?

- **Community Engagement and Political Neutrality:** There was a strong call for the superintendent to avoid political agendas and focus on uniting the community, including addressing the needs of vulnerable student populations, such as homeless, immigrant, and LGBTQ+ students.
- **Curriculum and Educational Focus:** Participants want to refocus on fundamental subjects such as math, reading, literacy, history, and science. Additionally, respondents expressed the need for education that prepares students for real-world challenges, suggesting courses in budgeting, basic life skills, and vocational education pathways.
- **Diverse Learning Opportunities:** Respondents stressed that a "one-size-fits-all" curriculum is not effective and that the district should provide more personalized learning opportunities to cater to different student needs and learning styles.
- **Facilities and Infrastructure:** Improving playground equipment and outdoor spaces was mentioned as a pressing issue.
- **Student Safety and Discipline:** With rising concerns about school safety in light of swatting threats and other security incidents, some respondents prioritize strengthening security measures to ensure students and staff's safety. Another concern raised was the overuse of mobile devices and social media in schools.
- **Support for English Language Learners:** Respondents noted that the district needs to focus on how to best support and integrate the growing Spanish-speaking population.
- **Teacher Retention and Support:** Teacher pay and retention are critical issues. Respondents said improving teacher salaries and working conditions is necessary to retain qualified educators and attract new talent. The disparity between teacher salaries in RE-2 and neighboring districts is a particular concern. Additionally, participants feel that teachers should be provided with adequate resources for their classrooms and should not have to rely on their personal funds to meet basic needs. Teacher appreciation and recognition for their hard work is also emphasized.

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What do you see as significant opportunities for improvement for the next superintendent of the Garfield School District?

Communication: Respondents expressed frustration with a lack of communication from district leadership during critical incidents, such as school threats. There is a desire for more transparent and timely information-sharing between the district office, staff, parents, and the broader community.

Educational Equity: Respondents expressed concern over the disparity between wealthier and poorer schools, stating that resources and opportunities are unevenly distributed.

English Language Development (ELD): Participants highlighted the need for improved ELD support, with some advocating for separate immersive programs for non-English-speaking students to prevent disruption in mainstream classrooms. Better handling of language barriers between students and staff is essential for academic success.

Funding Shortages: Respondents recognized that many of the district's challenges stem from inadequate funding. They want the next superintendent to find new funding streams, whether through grants or state advocacy, to ensure competitive salaries, improved facilities, and overall educational quality.

Increase Support for Special Education: Responses suggested that special education, particularly severe needs programs, are inadequately managed. Efforts to integrate special needs students into general education classrooms have negatively impacted both groups. Respondents call for dedicated staffing, resources, and possibly separate facilities for these programs.

School Safety: Respondents prioritize improved school security, including better cameras, safety protocols, and dedicated personnel to oversee these measures. Given recent incidents and safety concerns, they see security as a critical issue that needs immediate attention.

Teacher Pay, Retention, and Work Conditions: Participants highlighted the need to increase teacher and staff pay to match inflation and competitive rates offered by nearby districts. There was a strong emphasis on the fact that current wages are insufficient, leading to difficulty retaining staff and teachers, many of whom cannot afford to live in the area due to the high cost of living. There was a perceived shortage of substitutes and paraprofessionals.

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What do you see as significant opportunities for improvement for the next superintendent of the Garfield School District ?

- **Building Trust and Collaboration:** There was a call for the superintendent to focus on building trust and fostering collaboration between the district, families, local businesses, and other community institutions. Ensuring that every decision is centered on students' well-being and success is key to the district's future.
- **Educational Supports:** The need to address special education gaps and ensure that the district has a clear language access plan for its large Latino population was highlighted. The district's need for a plan is seen as a critical issue, which may lead to the exclusion of families from full participation in school activities and programs. Participants highlighted the importance of recognizing Spanish-speaking students by offering assessments in their native language and expanding bilingual programs.
- **Fiscal Responsibility:** Respondents expressed concern about overspending and the need for more efficient use of resources. There is a desire for the district to allocate resources more effectively and ensure that spending is aligned with student needs.
- **Safe and Supportive Environment:** The next superintendent is expected to prioritize ensuring a safe and inclusive school environment for all students, where they feel supported emotionally and socially, including focusing on bullying occurring on and off campus. The prevalence of bullying, especially through smartphones, is seen as a pervasive issue that impacts student well-being.
- **Staffing and Workload:** There was a strong sentiment that teachers and staff are overburdened with too many responsibilities and insufficient support. The importance of staffing schools adequately—especially with qualified specialists for diverse learners—was emphasized to ensure that all students, including special education, gifted, and multilingual learners, receive equitable instruction and support.
- **Teacher Pay and Retention:** A recurring concern was the low and uncompetitive pay for teachers and staff, leading to difficulty in retaining quality educators. Respondents expressed the need for increased teacher salaries to compete with surrounding districts and prevent the loss of talent.



Significant Challenges



Significant Challenges

What do you believe will be the most significant challenges the next superintendent will have to confront?

- **Community Division:** Parent/Guardian feedback points to the challenge of managing and creating unity despite growing ideological and demographic divides within the community.
- **Funding and Resource Allocation:** Underfunding of the district is a recurring theme, with concerns over inadequate resources to pay teachers, support students, and maintain facilities. The new superintendent will likely have to navigate challenges in budgeting and securing additional funding.
- **Student Diversity and Inclusion:** Respondent feedback touches on challenges related to student diversity. Some express concern that marginalized students may be negatively impacted by school policies. Others stress the importance of ensuring that all students, regardless of background, feel welcome and safe in school.
- **Student Well-being and Mental Health:** Many highlight the challenges related to students' mental and physical health. Issues like social media, bullying, drug use, burnout, staying in school, and housing are mentioned. There is a call for more physical education, better access to nutritious meals, and overall attention to students' holistic well-being and student belonging.
- **Teacher Retention and Compensation:** Respondents emphasize the difficulties in retaining and attracting quality teachers due to low pay, high housing costs, and the overall cost of living. Staff retention is a major concern, with specific references to teachers leaving for better-paying districts or states. Compensation is seen as a critical factor in maintaining instructional quality.
- **Technology and Modernization:** Issues related to technology, such as the use of AI by students and teachers and cellphone use were mentioned. Managing the appropriate integration of technology in education is an anticipated challenge for the superintendent.

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- **Board Relations and Governance Challenges:** Participating staff members expressed concerns about the school board, citing strong opinions and political divisions that could make it difficult for the new superintendent to navigate decision-making processes. Building trust with the board and finding ways to balance competing perspectives will be crucial.
- **Budget and Funding Issues:** Participants noted budgetary constraints, with concerns about the financial limitations of the district and the need to address salary disparities. Respondents highlighted the challenge of offering competitive wages to staff while ensuring financial stability. There are calls for the superintendent to lead efforts to secure additional funding, such as through mill levy or bond initiatives, to support staff wages and other district needs.
- **Community Engagement and Trust:** Respondents emphasized the need for open communication, transparency, and collaboration. Fostering unity within a politically divided community will be a significant challenge.
- **Educational Priorities and Consistency Across Schools:** Respondents highlighted the need for consistency in educational practices across the district. Ensuring that schools align on curriculum, policies, and educational goals will be important.
- **Leadership Transition and Gradual Change:** Respondents note that the next superintendent will face difficulties in following a long-serving leader and will need to approach change cautiously. Many emphasize the importance of a gradual transition to ensure continuity and maintain respect for both teachers and students. There is concern that attempting to change too much too quickly could lead to pushback, particularly from staff and community members accustomed to the current system.
- **Political and Social Divides:** Respondents noted significant political and social divisions within the community. The superintendent will need to balance these tensions while focusing on education. Respondents expressed concern that political agendas could detract from student needs, and the superintendent will need to manage these pressures while fostering inclusivity and resisting outside interference.
- **Teacher Shortages and Staff Retention:** Respondents highlighted staffing challenges, including teacher shortages and employee retention. The feedback underscores concerns about low salaries, the high cost of living, and limited affordable housing, all of which contribute to difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified teachers. Succession planning is highlighted as important, given the upcoming wave of retirements among long-term staff.

Significant Challenges

What do you believe will be the most significant challenges the next superintendent will have to confront?

- **Community Division and Distrust:** Participants noted the division within the community, fueled by political tensions and differing ideologies. This division has led to a breakdown in trust between the school board, families, and staff. The next superintendent will need to work toward rebuilding trust and bridging the divide to create a more unified community.
- **Inclusivity and Addressing Inequities:** Respondents highlighted the next superintendent will need to prioritize inclusivity, and creating an environment where all students feel represented and supported.
- **Overcoming External Pressures and Agendas:** Respondents expressed frustration with outside influences, including book bans, curriculum battles, and individuals seeking to push controversial agendas into the district. Participants urge that the superintendent will need to navigate these pressures while keeping the focus on education and student success. By engaging the community in meaningful dialogue and resisting divisive agendas, the superintendent can help refocus attention on the district's core goals
- **Safety Concerns and School Environment:** There is a growing concern about safety in schools, with references to fights and behavioral issues among students. Participants noted that the superintendent will need to address these safety concerns head-on, promoting transparency and parental involvement to ensure that the school environment is conducive to learning and safety for all students.
- **School Funding and Resource Allocation:** The issue of school funding is raised as a significant challenge, with concerns about state and federal funding cuts. Respondents highlight the need to allocate resources effectively. The superintendent will need to manage these challenges carefully to ensure that the district remains financially stable while continuing to provide quality education
- **Teacher Retention and Support:** Teacher retention was identified as a critical challenge, with respondents emphasizing the need to attract and retain high-quality educators. Respondents also stressed the importance of fostering a positive and respectful work environment where educators feel valued and empowered. Retaining teachers will help ensure consistency in education and strengthen relationships within the learning community.

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