



## **LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT**

Irvington Union Free School District March 19, 2024

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in February and March 2024 for the new Superintendent of the Irvington Union Free School District. The data contained herein were obtained from input the HYA consultants received when they met with individuals and groups in either individual interviews or focus group settings and from the results of the online survey completed by stakeholders. The surveys, interviews, and focus group meetings were structured to gather input to assist the Board in determining the primary characteristics desired in the new Superintendent. Additionally, the stakeholder interviews and focus groups collected information regarding the strengths of the District and some of the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years.

## **Participation**

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

Groups	Personal interviews or focus groups	Online Survey
Board of Education Members	7	NA
Superintendent	1	NA
Administrators	15	11
Faculty	125	77
Support Staff	8	31
Students	5	32
Community/Parents/Guardians	71	-
Parents/Guardians with children in the Irvington Public Schools	-	278
Community members without children in the Irvington Public Schools	-	30
Total	232	459

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

It should be emphasized that the data are not a scientific sampling, nor should they necessarily be viewed as representing the majority opinion of the respective groups to which they are attributed. Items are included if, in the consultants' judgment, they warranted the Board's attention.

The HYA consultants interviewed 232 district and community constituents. Each of the individuals and groups were asked to share their thoughts regarding three questions:

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

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

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

The consultants would like to thank all the participants who attended focus group meetings or completed the online survey and the Irvington School District staff members who assisted with our meetings. In particular, Brian Friedman, the Board President, was especially helpful in organizing and scheduling focused group meetings and assuring that the consultants' time went smoothly.

Respectfully submitted: Dr. Susan Guiney Deborah Raizes

March 19, 2024

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

## **Consistent Themes from the Focus Groups**

The following CONSISTENT comments were heard by the vast majority of participants with whom the consultants met. The comments are listed in alphabetical order.

#### STRENGTHS OF THE DISTRICT - CONSISTENT THEMES

The input from the various constituent groups suggests that the Irvington School District is characterized by the following strengths:

- Academic excellence
- Administrators, faculty and staff are dedicated;
- Communication between school principals and families;
- Engaged and supportive community;
- Exceptional students;
- Fiscally sound;
- Irvington is a very caring community;
- Pride in the District.

#### CHALLENGES AND ISSUES FACING THE DISTRICT - CONSISTENT THEMES

The following are some key themes concerning the challenges facing the Irvington School District that emerged from the focus groups:

- Addressing the needs of all students, especially in special education;
- District size impacts the desired programs and resources and what the community can afford;
- Need to assess and align all curricula areas K-12;
- Recruit, hire and retain a diverse staff;
- Update instructional practices in classrooms to engage 21st century students and increase learning, particularly in high school mathematics.

#### DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT - CONSISTENT THEMES

The constituent groups CONSISTENTLY mentioned the following desired characteristics:

- An instructional leader with a deep understanding of curriculum, the use of data and professional development;
- Builds relationships;
- Engages the community;
- Good communicator and listener;
- Supports and mentors staff;
- Supports DEI;
- Thoughtful and empathetic;
- Visible;
- Visionary.

# SECTION 2: Summary of Comments from Focus Groups and Individual Meetings

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

- How would you describe the strengths of the District?
- What do you see as the greatest challenges facing the District in the next few years?
- What characteristics and areas of expertise would you like to see in the next Superintendent?

The responses are listed in alphabetical order. This is not a scientific sampling, nor should the comments be viewed as representing the majority opinion of the respective groups to which they are attributed. The items below are included if, in the consultants' judgment, they warranted the Board's attention.

## **BOARD OF EDUCATION (7)**

#### **Strengths**

Academic excellence

Caring community and District who really care about students

Collaborative Board

Do not micromanage

Good relationship with the Superintendent

Dedicated and caring administrators, faculty, and staff

Diversity work

Each school building offers a unique and wonderful experience for students

Elementary to Middle School transition

Energy of newer staff, faculty and administration

**Engaged parents** 

**Facilities** 

Fiscally sound

High expectations

Highly functional Board

Hiring process

K-12 STEM program

**PLTW** 

National awards and recognition at the HS level

Leadership team

**Smart** 

Understands education

Understands students

Learning environment is safe and nurturing

Many elective opportunities at the secondary level for students

People move here for the schools

Pride in district

Resilient faculty

School district is viewed as central to the community

Secondary focus

Social Emotional Learning

Special education

Student oriented District

Students receive a wonderful education

Supportive environment

Tight knit community

Well resourced

#### Challenges/Issues/Concerns

Academic pathways

Access to all students

Honors classes

Creating excellence in all academic areas for students

Taking a fresh look at things

Accountability

Approaches to discipline

Bullying

Restorative practices

College application process

Communication with families

Feedback on student performance

Special education

Continuing support and progress of DEI

Continuing support of transitions between the school buildings

Create a data culture

To inform decision making

To create engaging classroom experiences for students

To inform instructional practices

Developing partnerships with community resources and departments Diversity

Further work in the area is ongoing

Ensuring support for non tenured administrators

Impact of the pandemic

Increasing partnerships with the village and utilizing what the area offers Leadership changes

Making everyone feel heard

Managing parents' expectations

Mental health

Pressure on students to do well

Recruit, hire, and retain a diverse staff

Student engagement in the classroom

Support instructional practices at the secondary level

English

Writing

Higher order critical thinking

Math

Early tracking

Inflexibility

Updating instructional practices

Using instructional time effectively to engage students

What is the role of the teacher evaluation

Veteran faculty

#### **Characteristics**

Able to drive instructional change

Able to have difficult conversations with care

Able to navigate challenges

Authentic

Builds trust

Can manage the community

Confident

Courageous

Dedicated

Empathetic

Empowers other district leaders

Engages the community

Engaging

Even keeled

**Excited about learning** 

Experienced superintendent

Fiscal knowledge

Flexible thinker

Good communicator

Great listener

Hands-on

Humble

Innovative

Intellectually curious

Knowledgeable about data to inform decision making

Makes decisions with students' best interests in mind

Makes everyone feel heard

Mentors leadership team

Open mindset

Partner with the Board

Personable

Proactive about social media

Professional

Represents the District with confidence

Sees the potential in their staff

Strong instructional leader

Supports DEI

Thinks out of the box

Thoughtful

Transformational leader

Visible

Visionary

Willing and able to have difficult conversations with students, faculty, community Wonderful relationship with Board

### **ADMINISTRATORS (15)**

#### **Strengths**

Academic performance of students

Administrative team works closely together

Collaboration within buildings

Collaboration within the District

Administrators are true instructional leaders

Planning process for buildings and district occurs annually

Strong leaders

Attention to detail

Attuned to students

Balanced approach to learning

**Academics** 

Athletics

Belief that students can accomplish great things

Board is very supportive

Buildings are focused and consistent

Cares about every student

Cohesiveness among the school buildings

Alignment

Collaboration

Collaborative

Commitment to supporting students

Diversity

Equity and access

Fiscal responsibility

Socially and emotionally

Student centered

Systemically

Communication

Celebrations

Weekly with families

Community Spirit

**Engaged community** 

Families are central

Community Support

**Facilities** 

Financial

Students have what they need

Culture of collegiality

Value each other

Dedicated teachers and staff

DEI

Commitment to work

Professional development

Developed K-12 systems and structures

District does the work

Deeply engaged in work

Not about the buzzwords

District prepares students for life after high school

District uses data to assess programs and student growth

Established working committee structure in place and functioning well

Genuine focus on meeting the needs of students

Goal is for students to succeed

Good fiscal health

Good relationships with collective bargaining units

Great community and wonderful families

High level of participation

High performing District

Highly professional

Community

Educators

Serious about education

Facilities support teaching and learning

Clean

Instructional spaces are up to date

Safe

Portrait of a graduate

Productive conversations among administrators to support students

Programmatic growth to address students' needs

Stable District

Strategic plan

Strong relationships with parents

Strong and supportive District Office team

Strong sense of community

People return to Irvington to raise their families

Pride in District and community

Relationships are very important and matter

Students come to school ready to learn

Student centered

Student voice and choice is valued

Students are intellectually curious and are looking to impact the world

Students are well supported

Supportive of teachers and administration

Welcoming community

#### Challenges, Issues, Concerns

Addressing the educational needs of all students

Aligning expectations

Cost vs value

Financial impacts

Collective bargaining units

Communication

Constantly evolving standards in technology and PPS

DEI

Access

Professional development

Socio-economic

Understanding what it means to be culturally responsive

Deep curriculum work

Assessing current position in all curriculum areas

Focus has been on DEI

K-12 alignment

Setting focus and direction forward

Use of consistent language

Implementing the new strategic plan

Portrait of a graduate

Increasing numbers of students in crisis

Introducing updates and change in the District

K-12 alignment

Curriculum development

Curriculum mapping

Teaching thinking

Managing expectations of parents, faculty, staff and students

Modernization of organizational structures

Envisioning with the learning community

What does a learning community look like now?

Planning

Sees opportunities for alignment

Need for systemic work and conversations around curriculum

Account for global changes

Account for students

Ongoing support of curriculum

Professional development

Reading

Ongoing support of Special Education

Outspoken community members

Post COVID impact

Finding a work/life balance

Effort not to send emails over the weekend

(Past practice)

Models and reinforces boundaries to live by

Recruiting, hiring and retaining high quality administrators, faculty and staff Revising K-12 systems and structures to honor past practice and build on strengths

Continue to build on PPS

Continue to build on Technology

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

#### Scheduling

Athletics

Instructional program

School start times

Transportation

Small district

Becoming aware of outside influences and larger community outside of Irvington

Can be insular

Everyone knows everyone

Good and challenging at the same time

Mindful of all of the connections

Sometimes having to figure it out

Resources can come later

Time to build the inner team

Transportation

Veteran staff

Change can be challenging for some

#### **Desired Characteristics**

A reader

Able to build on the portrait of the graduate

Able to de-escalate situations

Able to make decisions and explains the rationale why

Able to manage a crisis

Aware of safety protocols

Keeps a calm clear head

Responsive

Understands the increasing number of students with mental health issues

Able to mentor staff and administrators

Able to navigate difficult situations

Political divides

Able to partner with the Board

Able to stand firm

Accessible

Analytical

**Authentic** 

Available to the administration team

Discuss situations

Feedback on ideas

Partner

Believes in the team

Can go "up to the balcony" and see it all

Can listen and acts

Clear leader

Collaborative

Comfortable with dissent

Compassionate

Confident

Culturally responsive

Dedicated to the District

Deep knowledge of curriculum, curriculum development and instruction

Deliberate

Depth over breadth

Desire to think creatively

Elevates and grows building leadership

Instructional leaders who are allowed to take the lead in buildings

Eloquently able to push back and redirect disrespectful behavior and discussions

Engages well with parents and community

Ensures work is well done

**Excellent communicator** 

Excellent public speaker

Experience working in a similar size district

Experienced

Fair

Focuses on students

Follows through

Gets things done

Globally aware

Good presentation skills

Growth mindset

Hardworking

Has a clear vision

Has a thick skin

Has integrity

Holds staff accountable

Honest

Humble

Informed

Inspires character in students, staff, and the community

Inspires staff to have pride in the District and take ownership of their work

Intellectual

Intellectually curious

Interested in what leadership thinks

Keeps impact of decisions in mind during the process of decision making

Kind and a good human

Open to new ideas

Organized

Passionate

Present

Prioritizes teaching and learning

Puts things into perspective

Respectful

Building leadership

**Parents** 

Sense of humor

Sensitive to the community

**Dynamics** 

Socio-economics

Sets District priorities with timelines

Stability

Strong

Student centered

Supports and understands the roles and responsibilities of each member of the staff

Supports staff and mentors them

Systems thinker

Takes on challenges to move District forward

Technology literate with a vision for the future

True instructional leader

Literacy

**Project Based Learning** 

True partner to the administrative team

Truly cares about students

Trusts very competent staff and leadership team to do the work

Understands that all of the parts make up the whole

Understands the dynamics of working with a Board

Roles and responsibilities

Values all areas of academics

**Athletics** 

Health

Physical Education

Various perspectives

Values authentic distributed leadership

Consideration of valid and reliable data when issues arise

Visible

### FACULTY (125)

#### **Strengths**

Clear goals and values

Portrait of a Graduate

Has enabled the District to become unified behind curriculum

Communication and as much transparency as possible

Hearing about what is happening before it goes out to the parents and community

Dedicated, experienced faculty and staff create a positive learning environment Involved parents

Know the students and the students know the faculty more than just as teachers Recognized and invested in social emotional learning

Safe place for students

Kid focused, friendly

Size of district

Creates a personalized experience

Grow local culture

Keeping the community connected to the schools

Strong administrators have classroom experience

Students receive an excellent education

**Programs** 

Wide range of student needs are addressed Time spent invested in instructional practices Veteran faculty

#### Challenges/Issues/Concerns

Administrators are too data driven and miss the human element Balance addressing standards versus providing opportunities Community feels disconnected from the schools

Pre COVID, families used to come into the buildings Security

Consolidating potential opportunities with other school district Encouraging well rounded faculty

Professional development to Incentivize teachers

Should not have to be directly related to what they are teaching

Faculty and parents need safe environments to offer opinions

Faculty undercompensated compared to similar districts

Intense parent involvement

Complicated situations

Leadership has become fractured

Professional development individualized to meet the needs of the faculty and staff Special Education

Compliance and regulations

The black and brown students

Making sure they are treated equitably

#### **Desired Characteristics**

Appreciates faculty
Be a part of the solution
Builds relationships
Effective communication

Even exchange of information

Informal rounding

Provides information to faculty in a timely manner

Before parents and community know

Commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion

Understanding the needs of marginalized students

Welcoming parents

Empathetic and supportive of staff

Good listener

Honor work that has been done and build on it

May be a person of color or a woman

May speak multiple languages

Navigate discrepancy between outcomes and compensation

Readiness and ability to have a base to make out of the box changes

Seasoned, well connected to superintendents in the State

Secure in their leadership to make decisions that are best for the students

Seeks understanding first

Sees all sides and has the back of the staff

Sees the community, faculty, and students as a partnership

Feels that the administration is an extension of the Board

Shares values

Sees the faculty as partners in learning and innovations

Supports the teachers

Goes a long way toward morale

Understands and embraces neurodiversity

Use veteran faculty as a resource

Values professionalism and leadership of the faculty

Willing to stand for principles

What is best for students

## **SUPPORT STAFF (8)**

#### Strengths

A great District

Academic achievement is valued

Board is smart and has a heart

Dedicated staff

Teacher aides are in classrooms with students

Facilities in great shape

**Great students** 

One big family, people come back to work

The Board who works well each other and the administration

#### **Challenges/Issues/ Concerns**

"A rich poor district"

Appreciates the staff

Professional development

Teacher aides are put in classrooms to teach

Dows Lane

Main Street

Middle School (floating aides)

Teacher aides need to be treated equally across the buildings

Communication

Keeping parents and community informed

Diversity

Recruiting, hiring and retaining diverse staff

Managing expectations of small vocal groups

Parents are rough

Use of social media

Special education

#### **Desired Characteristics**

Appreciative

Approachable

Caring

Close collaboration and involvement with administrators and staff

Collaborative

Compassionate

Engages the community

**Excellent communicator** 

Experienced superintendent

Fair

Friendly

Good decision maker

Good leader

Good listener

Great rapport with the staff

Has a good relationship with the village

Has a good sense of humor

Honesty

Humble and has ego in check

Integrity

Organized

Protects the District

Respectful

Smart

Someone who wants to stay

Stability

Strong

Supports the staff, listens to concerns and has a good working relationship

Team player

Tech savvy

Thick skinned

Thoughtful

Treats everyone as an equal

Visible

Wants to work together with all staff as well as the faculty

Willing to listen

Willing to support the staff

## STUDENTS (5)

#### **Strengths**

A lot opportunities for students

Evoking change

**Academic Commons** 

Scheduling

Focusing on holistic approach

Homework

Best when not graded

Inclusive atmosphere

School open to new ideas

Encourage students to be creative

Teachers very supportive

Always people to talk to

Social emotional help

Meditate in gym

Mindfulness

#### **Challenges/Issues/Concerns**

A lot of turnover in administrators

Advanced Placement (AP)

Many classes don't get through the curriculum

A lot of busy work

Assignments that don't serve any purpose

More prep for the AP tests for the upperclassmen

**English Department** 

Grammar is not taught

Teachers are making classes harder so AP class sizes will be lower Excessive pressure on grades, testing

Cut throat

Constantly being tested

Hours of homework

Not learning to learn

Rampant cheating

Talk about social emotional stress and then that goes out the door

Teachers need to adjust more to the students they are teaching

Library

Not an inviting atmosphere

Not reasonable regarding discipline

Math Department

**Packets** 

Some teachers do not teach

Needs to be more interactive

Same classes, different teachers (AP)

Need to be more consistent in terms of expectations, assignments and grading

Schedules

A lot of wasted time and still hard to find time for help

Student Teaching Assistants (TAs) should not be grading papers of other students

Teachers should not delegate important work to their student TAs

Teachers concerns with getting through the curriculum

Teacher attitude

Support is spotty

It depends on the teachers who are willing to give up their time Teachers complain to students about how much work they have to do Teachers will say they don't have time for students

Testing schedule

Grouping doesn't work

#### **Desired Characteristics**

Educated Motivated, excited to be here Open minded Visible in the classroom

Feedback in person and then ignored

## **COMMUNITY/PARENTS/GUARDIANS (71)**

#### **Strengths**

Academic excellence

Array of opportunities

**Assistant Superintendents** 

Board, faculty, administrators open to suggestions

Breath of offerings

Class size

Student/teacher ratio

Personalized attention

Communication, especially from the teachers, principals and the District Strong communication between the families and the schools

Community is #1

Dedicated, committed, energetic faculty, administrators

Dynamic district

Engagement makes Irvington a special place

Facilities

Feels very personalized (experiences)

Fiscal strength, managed well

Focus of schools for different age groups

Very good transitions to the various schools

Paved the way to success for the children

Focus on languages and the arts

Great pride

High achieving and not highly competitive

ICT program

Impressive students

Opportunities for volunteerism

Professional development

Quality educational program

Resources

**Parents** 

So many different experiences for the students

Time and investment in supporting students

Right balance of academic and social emotional support

Rigorous and meets students where they are

Size of the District

Students do not fall through the cracks

Small tight knit community

Parents have a wide range of skills that can benefit the students

Social emotional wellbeing of the students

IASK, CAB

Strong athletic program with spirit

Support for students, particularly for the younger students

Wonderful reputation

#### Challenges/Issues/Concerns

Address experiences of minority students

Impact the sense of well being and belonging

Assuring that the abilities of all students are supported

Teachers could use more professional development

Differentiation

Clubs and after school activities

Building community in the schools

Participate in a more cost effective way

Need to strengthen extracurriculars after school

Need more information from the school about clubs and afterschool activities at the elementary level

Changing population

Influx of new families from NYC

Competing priorities

Small groups looking to be a priority

Encourage collaboration between the towns and the schools

Traffic issues regarding Broadway

**English Department** 

Essay writing for college

Need more professional development

Enriching afterschool programs

Very popular, was funded by a grant

May not be available next year

Everyone wants transparency

Focus on excellent schools

Foreign language

Encouraging students who already speak a foreign language

Maintaining and growing academic excellence

Managing the taxes and the needs of the District

Master schedule

Disparity concerning the number of classes students can take

Amount of stress

Impact on the GPA

Mandate lunch

More manageable

More and more empty nesters are leaving Irvington because of taxes

More balanced approach to the use of data

Decisions should be more nuanced

More development in the town will impact the schools

Phones affect on students

Social media

Quality of teachers

Recruiting and retaining teachers of color

Technology

Should be on the forefront controlling personal devices

Racial issues for students

Feeling that all students belong

Consistent application of the Code of Conduct

Retention of minority staff

Need more support for the teachers of color

Provide a welcoming environment

Safety in the schools

School counselors

College planning process, informing the parents

Class choice help starting in 9th grade or earlier with what are the implications for the college planning process

What is really the role of the counselor in the college application process

Socio-economically diverse

Shortened days

Effect on learning time

Is there a better alternative for staff to receive professional development

Special needs students

Enhancing partnerships among stakeholders

Ensuring social emotional as well as academic needs are met

Ensuring that appropriate equipment is in place for students

Increasing professional development particularly around neurodiversity

What is the climate and what is happening

More transparency regarding MTSS

Very little communication to parents when a child is in the program

No communication about the progress of the child

Ongoing challenges from COVID

Students who need more challenges also should be addressed

Teachers

Disparity in performance of some teachers

Some teachers don't engage teachers

HS math and social studies

Tracking and scheduling

Scheduling honors classes and, for example, lunch

Tutoring

Hides problems

Some cannot afford the tutoring, inequalities

Volunteers

Difficult to get parents to volunteers Informing students and parents

Need more communication

#### **Desired Characteristics**

Able to be efficient

Financially

Using technology

Able to develop, empower and give voice to the principals

Able to redirect the conversation to focus on academic excellence and overall wellness of students, faculty and staff

Approachability

Background in instructional practice

Balance decisions based on data and what is best for the students

Builds a team

Partners with administrators

Builds relationships with parents and with outside resources

Business background

Can bring in thought partners

Can bring people together

Can identify talent and bring it to the District

Collaborative

Communication and transparency

Confident and courageous

Dedicated to the District

Digitally literate

Diversity, equity and inclusion

Can bring the community together

Effective, sophisticated communicator

Emotional intelligence

Engages with the community

Excellent communicator

Experience as a superintendent

Experience in a similar district with engaged parents

Experience with curriculum

Holding teachers accountable

**Evaluating teachers** 

Experience with large projects

Experience with special education

Teacher of special education students

Understands the law and the mandates and that they are being followed

Financially savvy

Flexible

Foundation in teaching

Good grasp of the future

New trends

Technology

Growth mindset

Has a strategic vision

Informed about the data

Innovative ideas, what will learning look like in the next decade

Inspirational

Encourage families to be part of the school community

Integrity, not be defensive

Mindful of the impact of COVID

Longevity

Open to hearing input

Open minded

Values differences

Passionate about learning

Proactive

Responsive

Secondary school background

Strong enough up to stand up to do what is best for the students and the District Understands and supports a community that supports athletics

Athletics is an important department and builds spirit Because of size, many students are all season athletes

Visible

Visionary

Forward thinking Strong leadership Technologically adept

Wants a second pair of eyes independent for the Superintendent Wants growth within the staff Willingness to partner with families Welcoming

# Irvington Union Free School District Superintendent of Schools

## DRAFT DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS

After seeking input from its Board members, parents, staff, students and the community via focus groups, interviews, and an online survey, the Irvington Board of Education seeks a strong educational leader who:

- A courageous and engaging leader who is able to navigate challenges, empower other district leaders and physically represent the district with confidence;
- Embraces the District's commitment that all students feel welcome and have a sense of belonging in all schools;
- Fosters and models excellent communication through thoughtful interactions and makes everyone feel heard and valued;
- Has a deep understanding of curriculum, the use of data for assessment and decision making, and professional development to improve learning outcomes for all students;
- Is a visible leader who builds relationships through community and school engagement;
- Is a servant-leader who partners with administrators, faculty, staff, parents and the community to support students' learning and the success of the District;
- Is a visionary problem solver who addresses the changing needs of students in a global society;
- Supports and mentors new and veteran administrators, faculty, and staff.

#### The successful candidate will:

- > Be certified as a superintendent, or capable of gaining certification, in New York State:
- ➤ Demonstrate a sincere commitment to the long-term success and well-being of the District.