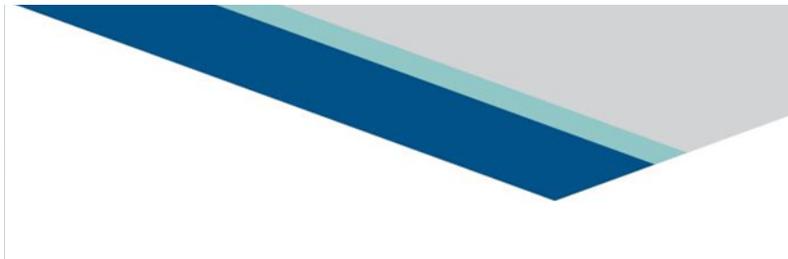




**LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT**  
**Mount Pleasant Central School District**  
March 21, 2018



## Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in February 2018 for the new superintendent of the Mount Pleasant Central School District. The data contained herein were obtained from input the HYA consultants received when they met with individuals and groups in either individual interviews or focus group settings and from the results of the online survey completed by stakeholders. The surveys, interviews, and focus group meetings were structured to gather input to assist the Board in determining the primary characteristics desired in the new Superintendent. Additionally the stakeholder interviews and focus groups collected information regarding the strengths of the District and some of the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years.

### Participation

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

| <b>Groups</b>              | <b>Personal interviews or focus groups</b> | <b>Online Survey</b> |
|----------------------------|--|----------------------|
| Board of Education Members | 7 - Individually                           | NA                   |
| Superintendent of Schools  | 1  | NA                   |
| Administrators             | 14   | 10                   |
| Faculty                    | 46   | 87                   |
| Support Staff              | 12   | 21                   |
| Students                   | 16   | 25                   |
| Parents and Community      | 25   | 296                  |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>121</b>                                 | <b>439</b>           |

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

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

The HYA consultants interviewed approximately 121 district and community constituents. Each of the individuals and groups were asked to share their thoughts regarding three questions:

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

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

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

The consultants would like to thank all the participants who attended focus group meetings or completed the online survey and the Mount Pleasant Central School District staff members who assisted with our meetings. In particular, Mary Beth Mancuso, the District Clerk, was especially helpful in organizing and scheduling focused group meetings and assuring that the consultants' time in the District went smoothly.

Respectfully submitted:  
Brenda Myers  
Debbie Raizes

March 21, 2018

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

### Consistent Themes from the Focus Groups

#### Strengths of the District

##### **Strong Community Support for the School and the Students**

All of the stakeholders noted that the Mount Pleasant Central School District is a close, tight-knit community and supportive of each other and their children. Parents are active and involved. Many families are multi-generational and former students return to the community to raise their children. Many of the teachers also live in the community. Participants noted the importance of the community coming together to pass the facility bond.

##### **Students**

Respondents shared that Mount Pleasant Central School District students are outstanding students. Beyond excellent achievement, the students are viewed as thoughtful young people who care about each other. Upon graduation Mount Pleasant Central School District students annually attend well-regarded colleges and universities. School spirit, a strong connection to their teachers and a wide-range of extra-curricular activities are noted by students as hallmarks of the District.

##### **A Professional Learning Environment**

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

The schools were praised for the quality of instruction and for recent changes towards a more rigorous and challenging curriculum, which offers a variety of choices. It was noted that the District is moving towards the implementation of the International Baccalaureate program and STEAM initiatives. Programs like the science research courses and the senior internships are important to building a 21st century learning program for students. Also noted was the Teachers College literacy program at the elementary schools and block scheduling at the high school. The high school program has become more rigorous and students are taking more advanced courses. Students are applying to more colleges outside of New York State and more competitive institutions.

## **CONSISTENT THEMES – STRENGTHS** **(Listed in alphabetical order)**

The input from the various constituent groups suggest that the Mount Pleasant Central School District is characterized by:

- A committed, dedicated and caring faculty.
- A high level of confidence in the business operations of the District.
- Extensive cultural arts, athletic and extra-curricular opportunities for students.
- Highly involved parents who have high expectations for their children.
- Many committees and volunteer groups who give their time and expertise.
- Strong academic programs guided by a rigorous curriculum throughout the District.
- Talented, compassionate and engaging student who care for each other and are respectful of adults.

## **Challenges and Issues Facing the District**

### **Managing and Maintaining Excellent Schools within a Tax Cap Environment**

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

### **Monitoring Student Enrollments**

Several new housing projects are being developed in Mount Pleasant Central School District which will impact future enrollment. The elementary schools have already noted an increase in student enrollment requiring 8 classroom sections at each grade level. Commitment to maintaining small class sizes is a concern and ensuring there is space for the projected student growth. In addition, the District is experiencing an increase in students who need English as a New Language (ENL) services and there is an expected change in the overall demographics of the district.

### **Aging School Facilities**

Although the District recently passed a major facility renovation bond, many feel that the District is just catching up with critical facility infrastructure issues. While the buildings are attractive and well maintained, they have not been able to upgrade the facilities to enhance specific programs including the arts, athletics and 21st century learning environments. The matter of additional

facility upgrades and associated infrastructure changes should be within the long range thinking of school leaders. On everyone's mind as well is the issue of school safety and the design of the school buildings.

### **Leadership Challenges**

Consistently stakeholders noted concerns about communication and decision-making. The success of the School District is rarely recognized and more needs to be done to get out the word that this is a great place to work and learn. There is hope that the new Superintendent will build the District's identity which may include rebranding the District and creating a more visible persona. Across the District there is a desire to be celebrated and to ensure the successes of the District are shared and appreciated.

Constituents wanted to feel more a part of decision-making and felt plans were often made without enough input or understanding of the impact on all staff and students. The District might think about more transparent planning processes that would allow stakeholders to have a chance to provide input and ensure their ideas are listened to. The impact of all strategic plans need to include support for each building and address meeting the needs of all students including acceleration, specialization and differentiation. Ensuring that all students are provided quality services in their home school district is important to parents.

There were concerns raised regarding the existence of low morale among teachers and staff and the strained relationship between the Mt Pleasant Teacher Association and administration. The consultants also gleaned during the focus groups that there is a feeling of a lack of continuity, cohesion and communication between District Office leadership and building-level leadership. Confusion seemed to exist regarding line and staff responsibilities, degree of autonomy within building leaders' authority, supporting building leaders as they address challenging issues and district leaders' expectations for building leaders. Many system changes are relatively new including the business operations, special education services and teacher learning opportunities. They will need continued support, reflection and analysis from the new Superintendent.

### **Consistent Themes - Challenges/Issues/Concerns (Listed in alphabetical order)**

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

- Building strong relationships between faculty, building administrators and District Office.
- Ensuring appropriate programs are provided in the District to meet the needs of students with disabilities.
- Maintaining and expanding facilities to support educational learning opportunities.

- Maintaining and expanding opportunities for students in the tax cap era.
- Reviewing enrollment trends based on new housing growth and an increased number of English as a New Language (ENL) students.
- Reviewing instructional technology and the skills students need in the 21st century.
- Supporting parents who know what they want and engaging them in a supportive way.
- Working collaboratively with collective bargaining units.

## Desired Characteristics of the New Superintendent of Schools

### **An Inspirational Leader**

Participants desire an inspirational leader who is able to motivate the District and community to move from good to great. The leader needs to be affirming and celebrating successes, recognizes talent and challenges everyone to dream and innovate. Maximizing the strengths and commitment of the community and the District is a top priority for the stakeholders. As one person stated, “know us, love us and bring out the best in us.” Being visible, approachable, transparent, open-minded and honest are characteristic that all stakeholders valued highly.

### **An Instructional Leader**

Participants noted that the next Superintendent should be a strong progressive instructional leader – someone with a vision for educational excellence in a high performing school district and knowledgeable about future trends. The District has made excellent progress in moving forward key instructional initiatives and the participants want to see this trajectory towards excellence and rigor continued. They want to know that there is a cohesive plan that supports all programs and buildings and links the initiatives together. The instructional program must address the needs of all learners and ensure that students with specific talents and learning needs receive additional supports and opportunities for acceleration. The District is also positioned with a strong technology infrastructure to move forward with a comprehensive plan for instructional technology integration.

### **An Experienced Leader**

Participants in every group suggested that it would be very important to recruit a superintendent who has significant leadership experience. While previous experience as a superintendent would be desirable, it is preferable that the candidate have had Central Office experience and a record of distinguished accomplishments. The new Superintendent will need a strong background in management and operations as well as strategic planning experience building an innovative and progressive learning environment. Additionally, the ideal candidate’s background should include substantial experience as a teacher and building-level leader. There exists a strong sentiment that the next Superintendent should be someone who will make a long-term commitment to the District.

### **A Leader with Strong Interpersonal Skills**

Participants talked about the importance of a leader who would consistently demonstrate caring and respect for others and who would operate with integrity and transparency. The next

Superintendent should be committed to promoting a climate of mutual trust and respect for all and be a visible leader in the buildings and the community.

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

**Consistent Themes - Desired Characteristics  
(Listed in alphabetical order)**

- A good listener and observer – someone who can convey a genuine interest in what people have to say, even when they will need to present a contrary response.
- A visible, truthful, transparent and approachable leader who can develop a level of trust with the Board, administration, faculty, staff, students, parents and the community.
- An excellent communicator – oral and written – with confidence to respond to well informed parents and community members
- An instructional leader who is visionary and innovative in their thinking.
- An instructional leader who understands 21st Century learning environments and supportive of applied learning, design-based thinking and the tenets of the International Baccalaureate (IB) program.
- A leader who is technologically savvy and can advance the effective use of technology within the educational programs so that students graduate with 21st century skills.
- A problem solver – someone who can anticipate issues and address them before they become problems.
- A strong manager and motivator who can move the instructional goals forward.

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

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

- What do stakeholders value regarding the schools? What do they see as the strengths of the District?
- What are the issues/concerns the District currently faces and will face in the next three to five years?
- What personal and professional characteristics are expected in a new Superintendent?

### Summary of Consistently Reported Comments and Observations from Interviews and Focus Groups

*Responses are listed in alphabetical order, consistent responses are NOT repeated in the individual groups.*

#### **CONSISTENT STRENGTHS**

- Dedicated teachers and staff committed to the students who go above and beyond
- Instructional program improvement around IB and STEAM
- Parents and the community are very involved and invested in the childrens' education
- Small, close knit, caring community
- Students who are supportive and caring of each other, well rounded and grounded

#### **CONSISTENT CHALLENGES/ISSUES/CONCERNS**

- Although the District passed the bond, the monies will take care of the basics but will not include programmatic updates that are needed
- Low morale among teachers/staff – not respected, not appreciated
- Meeting the needs of the District under the tax cap.
- Potential for enrollment growth
- Special Education – keeping the students in the District, having a District –wide plan, providing the needed services
- School safety in response to what has happened across the country.

#### **CONSISTENT DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS**

- Able to build trust, be honest and transparent

- Appreciates what the District has accomplished
- Effective communicator with strong listening skills
- Genuine
- Fiscally responsible, can manage budgets and bonds
- Knowledgeable about special education, keeping students in the District
- Open minded
- Transparent, visible, accessible
- Visible and connects to students, staff and families.... has a presence, charismatic, wants to be part of the community, present in the buildings

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

### **Strengths**

- Academically a strong core
- Everyone comes together for the kids
- Good administrators
- Low rate of student discipline issues
- Many committees and volunteer groups who give their time and expertise
- Rate of acceptances at colleges of the students' choice has risen and students are applying to more colleges
- Well-oiled operations – budget, audit, accounts controlled

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

- Continuity in the District Office
- External forces that can't be controlled – changing demographics, high stake needs around security, kids at risk
- How do we improve student performance and make resources available to parents?
- Meeting the needs of all students
  - Heterogeneous versus homogeneous groupings
- Need more attention paid to transition from Columbus to Middle School
- Need to increase expectations of some parents for their children
- Relationship between the District Office and the faculty
- Relationship with the teacher union

### **Desired Characteristics**

- Able to put Westlake on the map with a 21<sup>st</sup> century vision
- Able to set high expectations, hold everyone accountable and build a system of support
- Advocates for students, develops a continuum of services, ensures no one falls through the cracks
- Consensus builder
- IB supporter – experience with IB would be helpful
- Inspiring
- Smart

- Strategic planner – analyzes information, data driven, follows up on initiatives, assesses successes, monitors areas for growth
- Strong leader who can recognize talents and bring people together around a common goal
- Understands the community, can relate to them, responsive
- Will take the District to the next level

## **ADMINISTRATORS (14)**

### **Strengths**

- Block scheduling
- Learning environment grounded around what is right for students
- Moving the District towards increased rigor
- Passing the bond will help with needed infrastructure issues
- Push towards excellence for all students
- Strong expectations for hiring and for meeting tenure expectations
- Teachers/administrators – not a high turnover, competent, stable, professional

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

- Changing population with more students requiring ENL services
- Concerns about the students leaving to attend private schools at the high school level
- Difficult to find time for professional development
- District has a five year plan but time needs to be spent mapping the impact on departments, buildings and programs. Important to build connections between the vision and the plans, programs and the daily work
- District needs a Social Emotional Wellness framework
- High performing District but doesn't get the recognition it deserves, branding
- Look at the math program for coherence and acceleration
- Many faculty retiring in next few years – need a plan
- Need to look at the art staffing at the elementary schools, now have 8 sections
- Not all teacher voices are heard and people are eager to have their voice heard
- Strong technology infrastructure, the District needs to develop a clear plan for technology integration to enhance instruction
- Trust is difficult
- Union contracts

### **Desired Characteristics**

- Able to build a district-wide culture and climate to support learning
- Ability to bring people together for a common purpose
- Ability to communicate a vision and a message
- Able to mentor administrative team
- Affable. collegial and confident
- Calm under pressure
- Experienced district level leader with building level experience

- Has a successful track record
- Includes administrators in decisions
- Innovative, risk-taker
- Instructional leader – K-12 perspective
  - Knowledgeable and supportive of technology integration
- Knowledge of what it means to run a building
- Proactive and sees the trends
- Supportive of professional learning for teachers and leaders
- Understands legal ramifications of decision-making and is committed to supporting and following through on decisions
- Values IB, applied learning and global citizenship
- Visionary and able to help everyone to commit to the vision

## FACULTY (46)

### Strengths

- Collaborative teachers who work together
- Have resources other districts don't have – classrooms well stocked, smartboards
- IB was a rigorous process, teachers worked collaboratively on the plan
- Strong sense of community among the teachers
- Students open to learning and trying hard courses
- Teacher initiated differentiated curriculum
- Teachers stay for a long time

### Challenges/Issues/Concerns

- A lot of issues with Sp Ed program – one social worker for entire district, cut out speech and language teachers, cut all teaching assistants in classrooms
- Class sizes too large
- Communication – hear different things at different meetings
- Disconnect across grades and curriculum, no integration – District Office does not understand the issues in the buildings
- Distrust – need honest communication and transparency
- Expectations and asking teachers to do too much
- Faculty feel undervalued and not supported
- Fractured staff – many different bosses
- Lack of consistency and follow through with district initiatives – introduced haphazardly – no explanations – no criteria – no attempt to explain to teachers why something is being done
  - No curriculum leaders
- Limited resources, remember this is a school and not a business
- Low morale – divide and conquer
- Mt Pleasant used to be a family, we have lost that feeling

- Need more teachers' voices and involvement. There is a loss of supporting faculty expertise
- Need to strike balance between academics and athletics and the arts
- Shared specialists
- There are structure in place, but they are not being used authentically
- Top down – no dialogue – if don't do it - retaliation

### **Desired Characteristics**

- Can give positive feedback as well as negative
- Collaborative and easily works with all stakeholders
- Confident and open to all ideas
- Decisive – takes a stand when necessary
- Embraces Sp Ed
- Healer- will mend the relationship with the faculty
- Humane
- Innovative and insightful – sees the big picture
- Integrity- driven by what is in the best interest of students
- Previous experience as a teacher and building leader
- Proactive rather than reactive
- Reflective, takes ownership if there is an issue and uses feedback to improve
- Respects the faculty
- Secure within themselves, empowers staff
- Sense of humor
- Steady – thinks quickly under stress
- Strong team builder
- Thinks outside the box

## **SUPPORT STAFF (12)**

### **Strengths**

- District holds people accountable
- HS internship and science programs
- Passing of the bond for improved facilities
- Reputation of the District for academic success
- Strong athletic programs
- Strong budget forecasting and successful negotiations
- Strong standards for receiving tenure

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

- Communication needs to be better organized, more focused
- Computer skills are not being taught any more in elementary schools
- Continuing to move forward with the strategic plan
- Expectations in each building are different – more parity across the District, buildings are silos

- Everyone has a lot on their plates
- Have to balance the needs of the District with the loudest voices
- Keep moving forward, don't want to fall backwards
- Morale – feeling of not being respected – disconnect with District Office – operating with a sense of fear, a lot of grievances
- Multi-generational families and longevity of staff is a positive attribute but it can also make it harder for the District to change, grow and innovate
- Need for more training for the aides
- Tendency to put Band-Aids rather than really fixing something

### **Desired Characteristics**

- Able to say “no”
- Authentic
- Backbone
- Be able to prioritize the needs of the schools
- Be a unifier
- Calm and professional
- Collaborative culture where everyone works together
- Creative leadership with “out of the box” thinking
- Decision maker with priorities aligned and focused
- Decisive, strong leader
- Empathetic
- Experience in classroom, building leadership, district level leader
- Experience working with unions
- Keeps their word and sticks to it
- Long term commitment
- Pleasant, welcoming, acknowledges the great work of each person
- Strong, fair, consistent
- Supportive of all staff and listens to the needs of all positions
- Values every unit, fair and equitable

## **STUDENTS (16)**

### **Strengths**

- Block scheduling – good use of time – more in depth lessons – easier to balance sports, clubs – prepares students for college – 40 minutes classes, so little time
- Guidance Department – wonderful people – helpful, available - they want students to utilize them – approachable, easy to talk to, personable – they attend a lot of events – interested in students' lives – more personal connections
- Great school spirit
- HS administrators have created a warm, caring, friendly atmosphere
- Really close relationship with teachers

- Sense of fun – looking forward to going to school
- Teachers encourage students to do their best – students are encouraged to achieve
- Very good academically
- Well rounded students – a lot of different electives, clubs, sports

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

- A lot of things happen behind closed doors – would like more involvement with students
- Encourage good teaching with incentives
- Facilities – schools to be better maintained
  - Bathrooms aren't open and those that are, are in disrepair
- HS outshines the middle school and elementary schools
- MS students need a support system – perhaps if they were more involved, students wouldn't leave the District
- Reputation – need to get out the word that this is a great place
- School safety – security – protection – needs to be a priority
  - Should have a policeman here every day
  - IDs that do something: fobs
  - Students should not be able to walk in and then asked who you are

### **Desired Characteristics**

- Aware and in touch
- Energetic and driven
- Have a breakfast with the Principals Advisory Group
- Keep students in the loop about changes
- Personable, goes the extra mile
- Visible – sees students – makes presence known – gets to know the students
- Willing to hear students' ideas and understand students' needs

## **PARENTS/COMMUNITY (25)**

### **Strengths**

- Block scheduling
- Elementary schools – many specials – science lab, health
- HS – happy with principal, guidance department
  - Students College ready – a lot of offerings
- MS – STEM, robotics, STEAM symposium – warm atmosphere, more like home
- Music program – something for everyone
- Open enrollment in AP classes
- PTA – community events, fundraising, social events (build relationships, bring people together), also Foundation
- Principal Advisory Board
- Seeing the progression of the academic rigor and the results in the number of colleges and universities the students are going to

- Sp Ed parents provided framework, support – Supervisors for elementary and secondary
- Well rounded students able to function in society

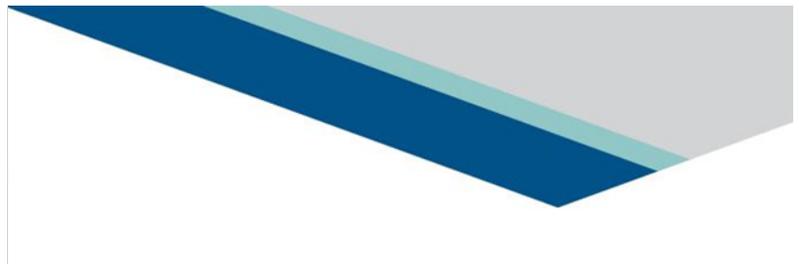
### **Challenges/Issues/Concerns**

- Are we embracing the multicultural aspects of the District?
- Character education – social, emotional learning
- Class sizes have gone up
- Consider honors classes in MS – took away homogeneous grouping  
Are the students being challenged?
- Discipline – no follow through, not consistent
- Equity in the sports programs - finding good coaches – gender equity
- Fiscally conservative community
- Lack of trust – administrators have to be responsible for their actions
- Need more guidance counselors at elementary schools
- Small district – sometimes aren't enough options because of small numbers – scheduling is an issue and limits choices  
Can we share classes with Valhalla?
- Special education – what is the interpretation of the least restrictive environment – special classes still needed – not just inclusion  
Several special programs cut
- Teachers' union and Superintendent do not get along – parents are put in the middle – pay teachers very well, considering our ability to pay
- What are we doing for working parents – all meetings for parents are during the day
- Would like foreign language in the elementary schools

### **Desired Characteristics**

- Approachable
- Can mentor principals
- Cares about kids, parents and staff
- Classroom experience
- Creative finding funding alternatives
- Engaging
- Experienced – has worked in a similar district
- Good negotiator
- Grant writing experience or connection with grant writers
- Kind, firm, holds people accountable
- Knowledgeable about safety issues
- Motivated and can motivate
- Takes the schools to the next level
- Tech savvy – has a vision of what will be and can bring that vision into the schools
- Thick skinned
- Understands special education (k-12) and NYS laws

- Will gain respect and be respectful
- Will make a strong connection with the Education Foundation



## **Mount Pleasant Central School District**

### DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS

## **Superintendent of Schools**

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

- An honest, transparent and approachable leader who can develop a level of trust with the Board, the Administration, the faculty, staff, students, parents and community.
- A good listener and observer who is open minded and has a genuine interest in what people have to say.
- A good communicator – oral and written – with confidence to respond to well informed parent.
- An instructional leader who is a visionary in their thinking, but not a rapid change agent, who will appreciate what the District has accomplished and can move the instructional goals forward.
- A fiscally responsible manager who will be able to deal effectively with bonds and budgets.
- A leader who is technologically savvy and can advance the effective use of technology within the educational programs.
- A strong manager and motivator who can move the instructional goals forward.
- A visible leader who enjoys connecting with students, staff and families, has a presence, is charismatic, wants to be part of the community and present in the buildings.
- Knowledgeable in issues involving Special Education.
- Supportive of the IB program.

The successful candidate will:

- Be certified as a superintendent, or capable of gaining certification, in New York State.