

LAKE BLUFF SCHOOL DISTRICT 65

LAKE BLUFF, ILLINOIS

LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT

NOVEMBER 15, 2011

Introduction

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in October 2011 for the new superintendent in the Lake Bluff School District 65. 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. The stakeholder interviews and focus groups also collected information regarding the strengths of the District and some of the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years. In addition to the interviews and focus groups, stakeholders were encouraged to complete an online survey, which identifies the most important characteristics they desire in the next superintendent.

Participation

The numbers of participants, by stakeholder group, in the two methods of data gathering are listed below:

Group	Personal interviews or focus groups	Online Survey
Board	7	NA
Administrators	6	4
Faculty	21	29
Support Staff	14	8
Parents	15	62
Community (w/o children in District)	7	40
Total	70	143

The “community” group included non-parent elected officials of local government and individuals without children in District 65 that represent taxpayer interests in their school district. School Board members were individually interviewed. Due to the anonymous nature of the online survey, it is likely that some of those interviewed may have also completed the online survey.

The responses provided by the individuals and focus groups during the interviews are listed in two places – 1) “Consistent Themes,” which are listed beginning on page 6 of the report and 2) a listing of responses from individual and group meetings, which begin on page 12. They are listed alphabetically with no attempt to prioritize them. A separate appendix lists all comments made by online survey respondents, although negative statements about a single individual have been redacted, in no particular order. Finally, a first draft of the desired characteristics of the next superintendent can be found on page 31. This list will be discussed and revised at the Board meeting on November 15, 2011.

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.

Strengths of the District

When asked by the consultants about the strengths of the District, there was a unanimous expression of pride in the Lake Bluff School District and community. Many residents communicated that they moved to Lake Bluff for its excellent schools and quality of life. Clearly, the outstanding staff was overwhelmingly recognized for its innovation, hard work and dedication to children. Teachers do a particularly effective job at communicating with parents and engaging them in the learning process to benefit their children.

According to respondents, the students in District 65 demonstrate high academic performance and have an enriched fine arts experience that is valued by the parents. A focus on the development of the whole child is a shared value by the school community. All constituent groups viewed support for technology, specifically the one-to-one computer program, as a strength of the District.

Certainly a highly educated community results in high expectations for learning and involved parents and community. It was undisputed by those interviewed that the highly valued benefits of actively engaged parents and community also present challenges and opportunities that need to be effectively managed by the new school superintendent. The PTO and Alliance were frequently mentioned as effective at fundraising efforts and valuable partners in providing twenty first century learning opportunities for students.

The strong community support for its schools has resulted in the passage of successful school referenda allowing the District to address its aging school facilities. A new elementary school was recently built combining two older schools (K-2 and 3-5) and improvements were made to the middle school. Almost all interviewees mentioned the new school and updated middle school as strengths of the district.

Challenges/Concerns/Issues Facing the District

Although there is much to be proud about in the Lake Bluff schools, most constituents agree that major challenges facing the District relate to the need for strong leadership as a result of administrator turnover at the building and district levels. The absence of effective leadership resulted in an organization without a clearly articulated vision and with the Board of Education assuming responsibilities outside of its policy-making role. Consequently, establishing and aligning roles and responsibilities of the superintendent and Board was a consistent theme by respondents. The new superintendent needs to establish a strong, cohesive administrative team and hire talented administrators to replace several upcoming planned retirements.

All interviewees concurred that it is essential that the new superintendent build trust with all constituents in the school and community. Additionally, the need for improved, consistent, and effective communications with internal and external stakeholders was frequently mentioned.

Although District 65 is currently in a sound financial position as a result of local property tax funding, declining property values, a depressed economy and taxpayer concerns about being fiscally prudent necessitate improved communications and engagement with non-user taxpayers as well as parents. Declining enrollments and managing the personnel and fiscal impact was also frequently mentioned as a challenge. The teachers, in particular, desire a superintendent who will be an advocate for kids and teachers. In an era of diminished respect for the education profession as portrayed by the national media and some political leaders, the morale of teachers everywhere has been negatively impacted. The Lake Bluff teachers recently demonstrated a spirit of collaboration in approving a new three-year contract with the Board of Education.

Almost everyone concurred that parental involvement was both a significant strength, but also a challenge at times. In a district with high parental expectations and involvement, it was emphasized that the new superintendent needs to effectively manage parental and special interest pressures in order to insure that decisions are made in the best interest of all children.

A need for continued efforts in curriculum development was often mentioned as a concern. Similarly, improved efforts to articulate and collaborate across grade levels and with the High School and District 67 was an issue communicated by participants. Exploring options with the High School for shared services was suggested by several stakeholders.

Desired Characteristics

In discussing desired characteristics for a new superintendent, many groups commented on the strong leadership and open communication that the current interim superintendent has brought to the District and recommended someone like him. There is a strong desire that a new permanent superintendent possess many of those same skills and knowledge.

Based on past history, the most often-cited characteristics desired in a new superintendent centered on integrity, effective communication and collaboration, coupled with decisiveness. Also at the top of the list was a confident, approachable leader who can build trust with all stakeholders. An honest, bright person who is an effective listener and can work cooperatively with all constituents is viewed as critical. Such an individual would be child-centered, visionary, and capable of leading the Board and community in a focused direction.

Staff members in particular want a superintendent who cares about children and about the people who work in the District – someone with good people skills who is visible in the schools, supportive of teachers, open to innovation and knowledgeable about curriculum. Given that there is a new principal and an expected administrative turnover from retirements coming in the near future, there was a definite need for the new superintendent to do an outstanding job at hiring and building a strong administrative team.

Community members without children in the school were most interested in a clear, consistent and effective communicator who values transparency and is interested and involved in the community. The new superintendent should be politically astute, have a firm knowledge of the District's finances and understand the challenges of a small district. Most parents and non-parents alike indicated that it is a high priority for the new superintendent to build a collaborative relationship and explore shared services with the High School and District 67. Parents were especially concerned that students entering the High School from Lake Bluff be well prepared and succeed academically.

Although almost all of the participants indicated that the new superintendent should be highly competent and have previous experience as a superintendent, some others expressed a preference for someone who has worked in a similar type community where there are high expectations for learning and active parent involvement. Thus, a person who values and appreciates active school community involvement may be better equipped to channel parental interests in a positive direction. Equally important to those interviewed, is that the new superintendent be decisive and able to say no when needed even under political pressure by parents, staff members, and special interest groups.

An overwhelming majority of those interviewed wanted the new superintendent to stay in Lake Bluff to provide stable leadership capable of moving the District forward. Many stated a strong desire that Lake Bluff be a destination job and not just a stepping-stone to another school district.

The online survey results reinforced many of the ideas and thoughts shared through interviews. The ideas of a professional climate of mutual trust and clear vision of what it takes to be an exemplary school district were often mentioned. Also the ideas of listening to stakeholders and effectively managing the district were priorities in both the online results and the interviews. The one topic that was a priority on the online survey that was mentioned slightly differently during interviews was the characteristic of recruiting, employing, evaluating, and retaining effective personnel throughout the District and its schools. This need was most often expressed as a concern during interviews when stakeholders talked about the number of leadership changes that had occurred over the past few years at the building and district level. The fact that these items came up as a priority on the online survey reinforces the desire for long-term stability within the system.

HYA cannot promise to find a candidate who possesses all of the characteristics desired by respondents. However, HYA and the Board intend to meet the challenge of finding an individual who possesses most of the skills and character traits required to address the concerns expressed by the constituent groups. We will seek a new superintendent who can work with the Lake Bluff District 65 Board to provide the leadership needed to continue the traditions of excellence while still helping the District move forward and continue to improve.

The consultants would like to thank all the participants who attended focus group meetings or completed the online survey. Also, we would like to thank all of the Lake Bluff District 65 staff members who assisted with our meetings and particularly thank Liz Zoellick for her efforts in facilitating our time in the District.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. JoAnn Desmond
Dr. Hank Gmitro

Consistent Themes

Strengths

Family oriented community
Fine arts programming
Great staff – hard working, dedicated and innovative
High performing kids
Highly educated community
New elementary and updated middle school
One to one technology initiative
Strong academic achievement
Supportive and involved parents and community
Supportive parents

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

Administrator turnover at building and district level
Articulation and collaboration across grade levels and with the HS and District 67
Building trust with all constituents
Continued efforts on articulated and aligned curriculum
Declining enrollment and potential fiscal impacts
Establishing and aligning roles and responsibilities of the superintendent and the Board
Managing parental pressures and special interests
Need for a clear vision and long range plan
Need for consistent and effective communications with internal and external stakeholders
Need to establish a strong cohesive administrative team
Understanding and valuing the high expectations of parents and community

Desired Characteristics

Ability to establish trust
Approachable
Can articulate a clear vision for the district
Can build a strong administrative leadership team
Child-centered
Confident, but not arrogant
Decisive leadership- able to say no when needed
Effective listener
Ethical
Experience as a superintendent
Financial knowledge and expertise
Good communication skills – sends clear and consistent messages
Good interpersonal skills
High expectations for self and others
Honest
Integrity

Intelligent

Makes decisions in the best interest of all students

Provides leadership and training for the Board

Respectful and respected

Someone like Ben Martendale

Trustworthy

Understands curriculum and instruction

Values and appreciates active school community involvement

Visible in schools and community

Wants to stay to provide stable leadership

Works collaboratively and cooperatively with all stakeholders

The top five characteristics from the online survey included:

- Foster a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators.
- Recruit, employ, evaluate, and retain effective personnel throughout the District and its schools.
- Have a clear vision of what is required to provide exemplary educational services and implement effective change.
- Listen to and effectively represent the interests and concerns of students, staff, parents, and community members.
- Align budgets, long-range plans, and operational procedures with the District's vision, mission, and goals.

Lake Bluff School District

Online Superintendent Profile Survey Results

The Superintendent Profile survey was completed by 143 stakeholders. Almost half of respondents were parents (43 percent), about 28 percent were community members, another 20 percent were teachers, and the rest were support staff and administrators.

Stakeholder		
	Frequency	Percent
Administrator	4	2.8
Community Member	40	28.0
Parent	62	43.4
Support Staff	8	5.6
Teacher	29	20.3
Total	143	100.0

The top-rated characteristics that respondents selected are:

- Foster a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators.
- Recruit, employ, evaluate, and retain effective personnel throughout the District and its schools.
- Have a clear vision of what is required to provide exemplary educational services and implement effective change.
- Listen to and effectively represent the interests and concerns of students, staff, parents, and community members.
- Align budgets, long-range plans, and operational procedures with the District’s vision, mission, and goals.

Percentages of respondents overall who selected each item, as well as percentages by stakeholder group, are given in the tables on the following pages.

In addition, differences were examined for statistical and practical significance to determine whether the mean scores by stakeholder group differed. Results indicate that, for many items, the various stakeholders were in agreement. On the other hand, there were several items that certain stakeholders valued more than others.

- Administrators were significantly more likely than community members to select the Vision and Values item “Act in accordance with the District’s mission, vision, and core beliefs.”
- Community members were significantly more likely than teachers to select the Community Engagement item “Develop strong relationships with constituents, local government, area businesses, media and community partners.”
- Teachers were significantly more likely than community members to select the Communication and Collaboration item “Foster a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators”.
- Parents were significantly more likely than teachers to select the Management item “Align budgets, long-range plans, and operational procedures with the District’s vision, mission, and goals.”
- Community members were significantly more likely than teachers to select the Management item “effectively plan and manage the long-term financial health of the District”
- Parents and community members were significantly more likely than teachers to select the Management item “recruit, employ, evaluate, and retain effective personnel throughout the District and its schools”

Percentage of Respondents Who Selected Each Item (By Subgroups)

Number indicates rank order by overall results		ALL (143)	Admin (4)	Comm (40)	Parent (62)	Sup Staff (8)	Teacher (29)
1	Foster a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators. (CC)	48%	75%	33%	42%	75%	69%
2	Recruit, employ, evaluate, and retain effective personnel throughout the District and its schools. (M)	44%	25%	55%	52%	50%	14%
3	Have a clear vision of what is required to provide exemplary educational services and implement effective change. (VV)	43%	25%	40%	47%	63%	34%
4	Listen to and effectively represent the interests and concerns of students, staff, parents, and community members. (CE)	41%	25%	48%	34%	38%	52%
5	Align budgets, long-range plans, and operational procedures with the District's vision, mission, and goals. (M)	40%	25%	43%	52%	13%	21%
6	Effectively plan and manage the long-term financial health of the District. (M)	38%	0%	60%	34%	25%	24%
7	Provide meaningful guidance for systematic and comprehensive district-wide curriculum, instructional services, assessment programs, and professional development. (IL)	36%	50%	28%	39%	25%	41%
8	Lead in an encouraging, participatory, and team-focused manner. (CC)	36%	0%	30%	31%	50%	55%
9	Identify, confront, and resolve issues and concerns in a timely manner. (CE)	35%	50%	30%	37%	50%	31%
10	Communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and in a variety of ways. (CC)	34%	25%	35%	27%	25%	52%
11	Promote high expectations for all students and personnel. (VV)	24%	25%	25%	24%	25%	21%
12	Be an effective manager of the District's day-to-day operations. (M)	22%	25%	30%	21%	13%	17%
13	Involve appropriate stakeholders in the decision-making process. (CC)	21%	0%	18%	19%	13%	34%

Key	VV-Vision & Values	IL-Instructional Leadership	CE- Community Engagement	CC- Communication & Collaboration	M- Management
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Comments from Interviews and Focus Group Meetings

October 25th and 26th, 2011

Listed in alphabetical order

BOARD

Strengths

Board primary interest in providing high quality education in the most fiscally responsible manner to meet community expectations
Caring and dedicated board members without any personal agendas
Child centered environment in school and community
Community involvement with high expectations of its schools
Community pride in activism, its institutions and competence
Facilities – new elementary school and updated middle school
Financially sound and responsible fiscal management
Good fine arts emphasis along with core academics
Great teachers – highly qualified, innovative and willing to try new initiatives
High performing students – with focus on the whole child
Highly educated parents and community
Investment in technology
Kids come to school motivated for learning
Many people move to Lake Bluff for its schools
New three-year teachers contact – fair and fiscally responsible
Quality of life and values of small community
Sense of security and safety in schools and community
Small district allows flexibility
Strong administrative staff
Supportive and involved parents

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

Aligning staff development with curriculum
Articulation across grade levels and schools
Awareness of taxpayer concerns
Building trust with stakeholders – sending consistent messages
Collaboration with stakeholders
Community outreach efforts need to be made
Explore shared services with Lake Forest
How are we meeting the needs of all students – differentiation
Listening while being firm when necessary
Managing parental pressures and special interests
Managing the expectations of the community
Meeting the needs of high performing students – district has good reputation for special needs

Merger of K-2 and 3-5 staff and culture into new elementary school
Need for long term strategic planning – including capital plan for future direction
Need for more work on curriculum - review process, development and evaluation
Need for thoughtful communication plan to help community understand fiscal policies and decision-making
Need to build strong administrative team with anticipated retirements
Need to collaborate and clearly communicate
Opportunity to recapture collaboration and articulation with HS and District 67
Possible lingering anger and morale issues between former leadership and teachers
Potential legislative impacts on District
Re-evaluate administrative structure – cost/benefit analysis
Reputation of Board in community – need to know board is listening
Strong superintendent leadership needed to guide Board

Desired Characteristics

Assertive
Bright
Can articulate a clear vision
Can ask the right questions
Can build a strong administrative leadership team
Can effectively communicate with the Board
Can identify talent and recruit for future retirements
Can provide Board with clear sense of direction
Can understand and effectively manage different roles in the organization and community
Capable of building the trust and respect of the staff and community
Collaborative leadership style
Commands the respect of others
Compassionate
Confident and not arrogant
Considers how any decision affects kids
Creative thinker
Credible
Decisive
Energetic
Good interpersonal skills
Good listener
Good mentor
Good problem-solver
Has a backbone and won't cave into pressures
Highly competent
Hires well and allows people to excel at their respective jobs
Honest

Inspires confidence
Integrity - most important
Makes decisions in the best interest of kids
Makes fact based decisions
Not unduly influenced by special interest pressures
Open to different possibilities
Preference for experience as a superintendent
Proactive
Respectful and is respected
Responsive and follows through
Seeks input from all stakeholders
Skilled in hiring, coaching and mentoring staff
Someone like Ben Martendale
Someone who can understand and appreciate the culture of the community
Straightforward
Strategic planner
Strong core values
Understands curriculum and best practices
Understands education and educational processes
Understands finance and can clearly communicate about this to the community
Values the socio economic diversity in the schools
Visible in schools and community
Visionary- strong sense of direction for self and district
Willing to look out side the box for the best solutions
Willing to stay to provide stable leadership

ADMINISTRATORS

Strengths

1 to 1 technology efforts
Community and Parents are both highly supportive
Contract has been settled
Coordination between LBMS and LFHS
Feel supported as administrators
Finances are in great shape
Great staff
Have had great Boards
Increased communication from superintendent this year
K-16 group potential
Lake Bluff is a great community and a great school district
Middle School is a very solid program and works well – very collaborative and cooperative staff and administration
New elementary school building
Organization is ready to move forward with new leadership
Small size makes for a very personable environment
Trust is being reestablished
Wonderful students

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

Bringing K-2 and 3-5 staffs together
Communication
Competition and comparisons with Lake Forest District 67
Curricular concerns
Elementary staff seems stressed
Enrollment is declining
Lack of cohesiveness among administrative team
Lack of systems and processes
Principal turnover
Small issues are often magnified into big problems
Superintendent turnover
The way the principal search process was handled

Desired Characteristics

Ability to say no when needed
Able to help the Board understand its role
Balanced approach to personal and professional life
Communicative with all stakeholders
Definitive and able to make decisions in the best interest of children
Establishes trust quickly and sincerely

Good sense of humor
High expectations for self and others
Intelligent
Involved in the community
Knowledgeable about North Shore expectations and culture
Respected by the Board and all stakeholders
Someone like Ben Martendale
Someone who wants to be in Lake Bluff over the long-term
Understands the culture of the District
Visible in the schools and the community
Well-rounded knowledge in all areas of District leadership
Willing to fight for District needs

COMMUNITY

Strengths

Active parent involvement
Community supportive of schools
Educated community
Excellent teachers
High achieving students primed for continued improvement
Positive view of schools from non-users

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

Board members influenced by parental pressures who represent only 20% of taxpayers
Board training and role definition – too much involvement in school operations
Board turnover and retraining
Community needs to allow Board and new superintendent to succeed
Concern about high taxes and people moving to Lake Forest where taxes are much lower
Declining enrollment and no commensurate decline in staff and expenditures
Desire for sound fiscal management and high quality education
Establish confidence in the District among non-parent community members
Maintaining good working relationships with other units of government
Many people in the community think they are “smarter” than the superintendent
Need for a clear vision and long term planning
Need to build trust with all stakeholder groups
Need to rebuild collaboration and shared services with High School and District 67
No non-parent taxpayer interest represented on Board
Questions/confusion about financial management and fiscal transparency

Desired Characteristics

Ability to build trust with all stakeholder groups
Able to astutely and honestly assess situations and problems
Able to establish buy-in to goals and objectives – use of metrics
Approachable
Can develop a strong administrative team
Capable of leading the Board
Clear and effective communicator
Collaborative – able to build a relationship with HS and District 67
Ethical
Experience as a superintendent
Good interpersonal skills
Honest
Integrity

Involved and interested in the community
Politically astute
Strong leader capable of making difficult decisions
Transparency
Understands curriculum and finance
Understands the challenges of a small school district
Visionary
Willing to listen and not be influenced by parental pressures

FACULTY

Strengths

Best school district in area
Collaboration between special education and regular education
Common plan time
Communication/partnership between teachers and parents
Financially the District is in the black
Fine arts curriculum is a strength
Grade level teams
Great community involvement
High quality staff – collaborative, innovative and child-centered
Innovative curriculum reflects best practice
New elementary school
One to one laptop initiative
Openness to new curricular ideas
People love to work in Lake Bluff District 65
Professional development opportunities
Progressive education
Small size of school and community
Smaller class size
Special Education department and personnel are exceptional
Staff goes the extra mile
Strong cohesive staff interested in whole child – academic and social/emotional
Supportive PTO
Teachers allowed flexibility to make choices about what’s best for kids - differentiation
Teachers are involved in curriculum decision-making
Teachers are trusted as professionals
Teachers are dedicated and work really hard
Twenty first Century learning skills focus

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

Advocacy and support for hard working teachers in a national climate that unfairly targets the profession
Better communication about curriculum changes
Bringing all stakeholders together
Budget and taxpayer concerns
Communication
Creating a more open environment with staff
Curricular leadership needs
Curriculum development is the weakest area
Declining enrollment
District operates without defined systems
History of collaboration has eroded in past years

Meeting the needs of talented learners
Merging of K-2 and 3-5 building cultures
Need for an aligned, articulated curriculum and review cycle
Small town culture causes some problems
Special education numbers are a challenge
Strong rumor mill
The two schools work very independently of each other
Trust issues
Turnover in administration

Desired Characteristics

Able to guide the Board – clarify roles and responsibilities
Ability to bring everyone together
Approachable
Decisive- able to make difficult decisions when needed and explain rationale
Elementary teaching experience
Establishes trust
Experience as a superintendent
Friendly
Involved in school and community activities
Knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction
Open door policy
Open to innovation
People skills
Professional approach and interactions
Resourceful
Secure
Someone like Ben Martendale
Supportive of the Fine Arts
Understands the needs of special education
Understands the staff have personal lives
Visible in schools and community
Vision for direction of the district
Wants Lake Bluff as career destination

PARENTS

Strengths

Alliance for Excellence
Family oriented community
Fine arts opportunities in the schools
Good balance of academics, arts and social/emotional learning
Good teacher communication with parents about students
Great staff – dedicated, work hard, go the extra mile, children oriented
High expectations for students
Kids are happy
Lake Bluff is very child centered community
New elementary school and updated middle school
Operating their own special education preschool class
Parents are very involved
PTO is a great asset to students and teachers
Relatively affluent community – provides a safety net for lower income families
Responsiveness to parental concerns
Smaller class size and individualized approach to learning
Someone like Ben Martendale
Students involved in many after school activities
Students perform well academically
Studying the financial model at NSSED

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

Administrative turnover – need stability
Are students adequately prepared for transition to HS?
Concerns over consolidation talk for Districts 65 and 67
Concerns over leaving NSSED
Curriculum leadership needs
Does District 67 have a more rigorous curriculum?
District does not have a strong history of serving special education needs
Elementary school space concerns
Financially needy students
Helping the Board understand its role
High expectations of parents
How the principal search process was handled
Improve articulation and collaboration with High School and District 67
Lack of knowledge about specific needs of handicapping conditions
Loss of some good teachers
Need for clear communication
Need for more communication and explanation regarding leadership decisions
Need for more preschool integration
Need for staff education regarding special needs

Need to remove a few poor performing teachers
Opportunities for parental input
Preparation of District 65 students for high school
Questions about the Boards' handling of the Superintendent's employment
Renovations needed at the Middle School
Responsiveness to special education needs
Teacher morale concerns over staff reductions
Turnover in leadership at the elementary school
Understanding the importance of retaining good teachers
Working with the Board of Education

Desired Characteristics

Ability to achieve consensus among strong opinionated people
Ability to provide guidance to School Board
Able to deal with high levels of parental involvement
Able to draw boundaries, make decisions and say no when necessary
Active listener
Approachable
Builds trust
Can channel parental interests in a positive direction
Can foster a collaborative spirit
Child-centered for all students
Confident and competent
Engaged in the professional arena to know what works
Establishes good rapport with staff
Establishes good working relationship with park district and village
Ethical
Experienced in similar socio-economic environment
Familiar with the area and high expectation community
Financial expertise
Good communicator – sends clear and consistent message
Hires well and can build a strong administrative team
Honest
Humble
Insightful
Knowledgeable about special education
Open to parental input
Previous experience as a superintendent
Primary focus is on the needs of the children
Prior experience with successfully implementing pilot programs
Proactive vs. reactive
Progressive
Response to special education needs
Strategically plans for the future
Transparency

Visible in school and community
Visionary and can clearly communicate a direction
Willing to learn from other districts
Willing to remove poor performers
Works cooperatively and collaboratively with all stakeholders

SUPPORT STAFF

Strengths

Children first community
Family oriented community
Great community
Great place to work
Great staff
High achieving students
One to one technology
Size of schools
Wealth of resources in school and community
Well-disciplined students

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

Administrative turnover
Communication and need to keep staff informed as what is happening
Curriculum changes
Elementary school coming together as one staff
Great need for everyone to be open and listen to others and new ideas
Leadership concerns
North Shore expectations and culture
Technology training for support staff

Desired Characteristics

Ability to say no when needed
Approachable
Cares about staff and students
Desire to get to know staff
Friendly
Honest
Integrity
Listener
Makes a decision and stands by it
Not wishy-washy
Puts kids first
Respectful of everyone and the role they serve
Strength as a leader
Strong communication skills
Understands the values and culture of the community
Visible in schools and community

Appendix A

Comments from Online Survey

Stakeholder	Please add any additional comments you wish to make regarding what you believe are necessary characteristics for a superintendent.
Administrator	District needs a strong, experienced leader who is not afraid to confront, tackle and follow through to resolve difficult issues. We need a collaborative problem solver who connects well with all constituents. We need a leader who helps guide all (board, teachers, parents, administrators, and community) in knowing their roles and assisting them in doing an exemplary job in those roles.
Administrator	Someone who: Welcomes challenges - does not avoid confrontation Has high expectations for administrators and staff AND his or her self Makes decisions based on facts of the situation and in the best interest of children Has a sense of humor Is energetic, compassionate, fair Is willing to adapt to the Lake Bluff culture and to understand and embrace the community
Administrator	Someone with an intelligent, realistic vision but who implements or establishes the vision through strong relationships with all. Staff, students, parents---all work hard for people they trust, respect, and with whom they make a connection. Most candidates have most of the skills but not all can execute in respectful, inspiring manner.
Community Member	A person of intelligence who lives their life with integrity, who treats all with respect while able to make tough decisions that are not always popular. A natural leader who is able to guide and educate the School Board. Someone who has such strength of character that there is an automatic trust in their ability to guide the staff, parents and students.
Community Member	Additionally, I would like to see someone who will most likely commit to several years in our community. They must have a "thick skin" to do this job as we have so many here that want to be involved in inappropriate ways. Communication is great - but I do hope we let the administrators do their job. Civility is sometimes not the strong suit of our residents.
Community Member	Assure that the staffing of non-classroom certified teacher personnel is truly commensurate with the objective, quantifiable needs of the student population as a whole.
Community Member	Beyond being a fully competent administrator, a superintendent must recognize, accept, and encourage input from all stakeholders in the community. The Lake Bluff district has a large number of skilled professionals in all fields, many of whom are retired, have time available during the day, and are looking for ways to contribute to the community. Involving such stakeholders serves a twofold purpose: tapping a wide range of expertise for the schools, and giving older residents who do not have a direct stake in the public schools through their own children a reason, through the value placed on their own involvement, to support necessary levels of funding to achieve the district's goals and educational mandate. Any candidate who does not realize this and does not volunteer it in the interview process is, in my view, unsuitable for the position.
Community Member	Collaborative style, innovator, recognizes successes and promotes District locally and Nationally.
Community Member	Do a top to bottom evaluation of Administrative (non teaching staff). Make sure to coordinate LB with Lake Forest HS. LB students seem to be at disadvantage to LF grade school students when entering LFHS. LB should conduct an annual survey of the parents of LB students who are currently enrolled in LF and other area high schools to get parent feedback on quality of LB education.
Community Member	Find a candidate who has worked in a similar district and will understand the culture of Lake Bluff.
Community Member	fiscal responsibility reflecting the needs and concerns of all community members, not just current users.
Community Member	I am very concerned by what I have heard in recent months about the school district and the relationship between the board, the staff, and the superintendent. It's important to hire a superintendent who will work collaboratively with the board, but that's a two-way street. The board needs to understand its role and allow the superintendent to do his/her job without the board members being involved in day-to-day activities. The superintendent will need to be an excellent manager of people in order to establish cooperative and productive relationships with teachers and staff.

Community Member	I think it is important that the superintendent interface regularly with parents of students and members of the community as to understand our concerns. He or she should also emphasize the role that parents must play in their children's education. In addition, I believe the superintendent should focus on improving the standards of character and discipline at our schools, although naturally that responsibility rests more with parents than anybody else.
Community Member	I was somewhat disappointed with this survey as there were no statements reflecting the concerns of the 80% of District 65 households who pay taxes but have no children in the schools. Any new Superintendent to be sensitive to this issue. Also, I would recommend the school board conduct a community wide survey on the conduct and performance of the current school board as many of us have serious concerns regarding the direction it has taken us.
Community Member	It's important that this person be able to guide the Board regarding financial issues. Most all districts are facing financial crisis and this is a unique issue for Little Lake Bluff but they are not exempt. Money is tight and this leads to lots of issues they need to face and deal with and anticipate so there is not a disaster on their hands.
Community Member	Knowledgeable in all phases of education. Someone who will stand up to the forces involved.
Community Member	Lake Bluff will benefit from hiring a superintendent who has experience working in Illinois and who understands the high expectations and culture of a north shore school district.
Community Member	Must live in the Lake Bluff Community. Stay within a realistic budget that the community can afford.
Community Member	objectivity in evaluating how best to allocate the district budget by reviewing administrative and operating costs to ensure focus on effective spending
Community Member	Search firms have many candidates all lined up to take positions like this one available in Lake Bluff. Beware of only considering the candidates being pushed by search firms! Many times such are just typical superintendent types. Out there are dynamic, visionary, and inspiring educational leaders who might not have been previously in the "right" districts, but who would be ideal for Lake Bluff. All schools districts need superintendents who read recent / current research and are aware of exemplary best practices and who have the courage to implement changes in curriculum and educational methodologies that are on the leading edge. We need a superintendent who believes that EVERY child can learn if given the right amount of time and the appropriate instruction--sometimes that means that group instruction might need to give way to individualized instruction.
Community Member	Someone that served as a superintendent in another district. Do not hire a local district's Asst. Superintendent (Head of Human Resources)
Community Member	Strong leadership is needed to establish and address educational and financial goals of the District.
Community Member	The new superintendent must insist that school Board members participate in a comprehensive work shop on Board governance (conducted by a third party) and establishes guidelines with board members as to: presence in school, communication with teaching staff and insists on clear chain of command. Superintendent must cut budget to reflect decrease in enrollment Superintendent must align district curriculum with LFHS curriculum and seek whenever possible saving opportunities through shared services
Community Member	The willingness to cooperate and collaborate with District 67 and 115 to provide a common and high quality background of educational experiences for the students in Lake Bluff who will be entering Lake Forest Community High School.
Community Member	While a Superintendent is a CEO, a public school is not a business. A superintendent's role should reflect a greater concern for the people who are in our schools daily (students, teachers, and paraprofessionals) not numbers. The preparation of students to assume the roles of responsible citizens relies on more than test scores. Effective teaching involves a range of skills not measured by tests. Hiring and firing teachers should never be based on reducing budget costs. Budgets should not be the driving force in educational decisions. Class size and curricular decisions need to focus on student needs. Teachers should be a part of the decision making processes. A superintendent should model a cooperative leader who involves the community in our schools. S/He must model the character traits we encourage in students to foster civility.
Parent	Be fiscally sound and understand the various aspects of potential changes in state funding while balancing the educational needs of our children.

Parent	Build trust with parents, teachers, and administrators Be decisive gathering info and and input to make informed decisions.
Parent	District 65 needs a strong leader as a Super Intendant.
Parent	DO NOT HIRE A PREVIOUSLY RETIRED SUPERINTENDENT FROM ANOTHER STATE SEEKING A SECOND PENSION
Parent	Equally adept at fiscal and educational management.
Parent	Have we considered merging with Lake Forest? Children from LB & LF funnel into the same high school district so it makes sense to have consistent curriculum and leadership. If we do not merge with LF and maintain our own Superintendent, I believe that person should have prior experience with a suburban district (preferably North Shore) rather than a rural district. The challenges here are different. Also, let's focus on someone who is mid career and focused on achievement rather than padding a pension near the end of their career.
Parent	honesty, integrity, team builder, communicator, organized, children first approach, collaborator
Parent	How does this person lead? Does this person work with teachers and assist in leadership and decision making? How does this person implement change? Does this individual have a shared vision with co-workers and value the organization's personnel. Does this individual recognize shifts or anticipate the need to change?
Parent	I believe it's much more important to hire someone who can effectively manage all aspects of the district than to focus too much on "cheerleader" traits. We don't need a motivational speaker who can't get things done--someone who is highly effective will motivate others through modeling what it means to strive for excellence. Someone with a proven track record for identifying and solving problems would be better than a candidate who claims to be "team player" or "strong motivator", etc.
Parent	I believe that we should hire a superindent with a record of working collaboratively with all stakeholders. I also feel that his/ her resume should include experience working in a similar socio-economic district.
Parent	I believe the person should understand the nuances of this community both inside and outside the building walls. We can't pluck a person from Kansas here & expect him or her to find success. I believe the person should have K-12 experience in order to articulate well with both district 67 & 115.
Parent	I feel some of the areas of importance are in the area of working on climate within the schools. Getting to know staff and faculty and being invovled with the schools. I feel administrators often spend too much time running in circles trying to please a board - many who have good intentions but do not know much about education or where time should be allocated.
Parent	I recommend the Board hire an individual with experience at the elementary and middle school level; one who understands their role as Superintendent as well as the appropriate role of other Central Office Administrators and hold each member accountable for doing her job; one who can implement personel change in the Central office so that the team works in collaboration WITH parents, teachers and staff With the District being as small as it is, I strongly encourage the Board to look as job sharing with Lake Forest, or other surrounding Districts. Oak Grove,for example, has contracted with Liberyville, for Business Services. This would be wise for D65. Also, it is frightening to a parent that the Board, over the past few years, voted to get rid of the Curriculum Director and Vice Principal while keeping a full-time Communication Director. How can a SCHOOL district promtoting education remove these two positions directly related to student contact and achievement?
Parent	I would like to see a formal gifted program brought to the distirct, such as one similar to the as the Lake Forest district. The Lake Bluff kids will be lagging behind the Lake Forest children by the time they get to high school.
Parent	I would like to see a person of character that brings pride to Lake Bluff and sets a good example for all. Seeing them at many community functions would make this man/woman more approachable. Having experience is important but want this person to be young enough to bring about new ideas.
Parent	I would like to see the District focus more on candidates from similar suburban areas to Lake Bluff versus continually targeting candidates from 'downstate' Illinois. It would be a good thing to find a candidate that is not always so close to retirement age so we can have a long relationship with this important educator. It is amazing how many Superintendents have gone through the school system. I'd like us to take a chance on someone perhaps on the North Shore, ready to take the Superintendent job as their first big job, a person with passion and commitment for a long term relationship with Lake Bluff.

Parent	It is extremely important to me that we hire someone who will increase the amount of time spent on math & science in our district. We are woefully inadequate in these areas & our children are not well prepared for math & science classes at LFHS.
Parent	It is important that we do a thorough background investigation with respect to our candidates previous employers.
Parent	It's important to have someone with exemplary communication skills. I'd also like to see someone who has experience in working with members of other school districts to get input on best practices and ways to improve curriculum. A big concern is how we hear that the Lake Bluff students are not as well prepared, and often behind academically, compared to the students in Lake Forest. As our kids end up at the same high school, we need a superintendent who can work with the superintendents in Lake Forest to ensure that Lake Bluff children are getting an equivalent education to ensure their success when they get to the high school.
Parent	Knowledge of the community, experience with a variety of different age-levels and school systems that allow a unique perspective for approaching, mediating and resolving school/community issues.
Parent	Need someone who is willing to go against the status quo and help our schools transform into cutting edge schools that are willing to create true 21st century learners. This includes curriculum that addresses all student needs throughout the spectrum and makes use of the amazing community and its resources that are here in place. Lake Bluff IS a true community and we need to have the schools be an integral part of this great place to live.
Parent	Needs to listen to the parents in the district and not just run with their own agenda.
Parent	Put more emphasis on foreign language in LBES by re-adjusting LBES Spanish curriculum and evaluating Spanish teachers based on children's progress. Children are learning Spanish since kindergarden and so far no progress in learning, no visible Spanish teacher & curriculum.
Parent	The new super needs to take whatever means are necessary to bridge any gap that may exist or may be forming between Lake Bluff students' level of academic excellence as compared with that of Lake Forest's students. I am concerned that the level of educational cohesiveness between the two sister cities has declined. Is there even a shared curriculum? I would hate to see LB students falling behind their LF peers at LFHS. Is DPM outscoring LBMS? If so, that should serve as a wake-up call. Where is a good, effective leader? If we can attract such stellar teachers to our district, surely we can attract top-notch, effective administrators. Please make your search a thorough one.
Parent	The new superintendent, will need to develop the most successful way to operate with the school board, in providing what ever is best for the students. This will be a difficult task, as a community member and a parent, I feel the school board exerts too much pressure for their own agendas and not necessarily what is best for the district and our educational environment. This will be perhaps the most difficult task for our new person. The new superintendent will also need to create a long term plan for hiring and retaining qualified candidates for school administration including curriculum leadership.
Parent	The next Superintendent must have the following qualities (not in order of importance): 1. Cooperative and educational approach to parents and Board members: Our next Superintendent must understand that he or she will be interacting with a highly educated and motivated parent group and embrace that partnership. Administrators with a dictatorial approach must be culled during the interview process. The Board also has to acknowledge its own past weaknesses: its collective lack of acumen in the area of education, its failure to select a Superintendent who will be a good fit for the district, and its failure to properly inform the public of the need to make an important decision before it does so. A strong, yet humble and open Superintendent can shepherd the Board and the public through this repetitive decision-making process by openly addressing the public's concerns and counseling the Board to be open too, counseling it to give details to the public in its announcements of topics to be discussed at upcoming meetings and then having those difficult discussions about decisions that need to be made in the future. The past practices of the Board and Superintendent have been troubling: give little detail about what is to be addressed at an upcoming meeting, make a decision that upsets the public and then spend months justifying it. That simply doesn't work and an experienced administrator can guide the board through this process and encourage them not to do that. Board Members and the Superintendent work for Lake Bluff residents, not the reverse. That fact is often lost in this process. 2. Come from a high achieving district: I also strongly believe that our elementary school district needs an educator/administrator with a background comparable to districts such as ours: high achieving (eg. Lake Forest, Deerfield, Highland Park, Stevenson, Libertyville, etc..). Parents have a right to demand it and we will. 3. Require teacher accountability: Our next

	<p>Superintendent needs to demand teacher accountability and discourage teacher absenteeism. Over the last two to three years, the quality of teacher, especially at Lake Bluff Elementary, has seriously declined and there is an obvious and pervasive malaise. I am aware of no parent with children my age who say that they have been, OVERALL, satisfied, year over year, with the quality of teacher his/her child has been assigned. Teacher turnover is far too high. In my own children's case only four of their ten teachers remain: all of the others were fired- none retired. Properly vetting, hiring and then retaining teachers by paying them a good salary is a critical function of a district and reflects its health. Lake Bluff elementary is clearly very unhealthy. 4. Prioritize coming into party with Lake Forest schools: Empirical data over the last two to three years, as reported in numerous press sources, reveals that Lake Bluff students are not as well prepared for high school at Lake Forest High School as are Lake Forest elementary school children. The reasons are obvious: Lake Forest administrators interact with each other frequently and are unilaterally in control of curriculum, K to 12. Lake Forest and Lake Bluff primary school districts need to meet and interface regularly and frequently on subjects relating to curriculum in order that Lake Bluff students are best prepared for high school. If we had our own high school of course this would not matter, but the reality is that by the time our children arrive at high school, it may be too late to gain ground. Whatever LB and LF elementary districts are doing now on this subject doesn't work for our children. I am aware that the curriculum is quite dissimilar in these two towns. One wonders why these two feeder elementary districts haven't merged in the past if we are sharing one high school. I hope the board displays better collective judgment in hiring than they have in the recent past. I am now considering having my children finish grade school in a private school setting in order that they be best prepared to attend Lake Forest high. At this point, I'm concerned for my property's value which, of course, is directly tied to the health of this district.</p>
Parent	They need to be a liaison with District 67 and the High School - we all need to be on the same page if our kids are going to the same schools.
Parent	This Superintendent should look to the positive and meaningful things other districts do to implement new ways of learning.
Parent	Two main issues: the budget and the curriculum. The school district seems to have lost touch with the community and the reality of today's economy. Approximately 80% of our population in LB does not have children in the school district, yet those residents do share the common goal of having a good school district in our community. I would hope the new superintendent would look to the greater community for ideas, and follow the lead of the Village and the Park Board, which have adjusted their spending and their staffing to meet today's economic situation. I say this as a parent with 2 children in the school district. Despite increased spending and smaller class size, I see no evidence that our academics have improved. Our kids remain saddled with a bottom-tier math program and an essentially nonexistent gifted program. I hope the superintendent can look to LF and HP schools and do more about cooperating with local schools so our children are on equal footing. Losing the sharing arrangement with LF's curriculum director was a huge loss, and I hope the new superintendent can do something to patch that up.
Parent	We need an effective, honest, forthright leader who sets an example of excellence and hard work for all under his or her watch. We need a doer, not a talker.
Support Staff	Approachable and good communicator
Support Staff	Someone who is visible, accessible and will communicate effectively, & consistent with staff, community, parents.
Support Staff	Try to get to know the staff; when passing in the hall please try to stop and ask who you are and what your job is at the school.
Teacher	Administration and building need to work together for the good of the students.
Teacher	I believe that a superintendent needs to be someone who is respected by all staff, faculty, parents, community, & board alike. It is important for this person to be able to communicate effectively and maintain a high level of leadership at the same time. In addition, I feel there should be collaboration of ideas of what staff & faculty are looking for as far as professional development and that it aligns appropriately with the overall initiatives of the school district.

Teacher	I would hope that the Superintendent chosen will responsibly represent the interest of students first. Will be strong, intelligent and professional enough to stand for what he/she believes in what is right for students.
Teacher	Someone who can balance political pressures with appropriate decision-making---I know it's not easy. Someone who can be clear and consistent with their actions. Someone who had a variety of strengths (not just in one area, while lacking in others.)
Teacher	Someone who sees Lake Bluff as a destination, not a stepping stone.
Teacher	With the current climate of our district from the previous years, I feel that it is imperative that we have a superintendent who is experienced with collaboratively working with all stakeholders. It is important that this new superintendent would know the importance of data collection, while also holding the experience to understand how to interpret data to apply to the growth of all students. Specifically this includes the understanding that some students require a variety of tools to show their growth. This person also needs to truly understand curriculum development across grade levels.

LAKE BLUFF SCHOOL DISTRICT 65

Superintendent of Schools

Desired Characteristics

After seeking input from its Board members, parents, staff, students, and community via focus groups, interviews, and an online survey, the Board of Education of Lake Bluff School District 65 seeks a strong educational leader who possesses the following characteristics:

An educator who:

- Is child-centered and makes decision in the best interest of all children
- Knows curriculum and instruction and is able to lead continuous improvements efforts in these areas
- Understands the personnel, financial, and operational requirements of a high performing school district
- Values parental involvement and engagement in their child's education
- Visionary and able to help prepare students with 21st century learning skills
- Desires to help all children reach their individual potential

A collaborative leader who:

- Is approachable and engaging with all stakeholders
- Is improvement oriented and goal focused
- Involves stakeholders and seeks to build consensus
- Communicates effectively and regularly in order to keep everyone informed
- Values and celebrates the talents and commitment of staff
- Listens and learns before making decisions and initiating change efforts
- Provides direction and support for the Board, the staff, and the community
- Is highly visible and engaged in the schools and the community
- Desires to be in Lake Bluff to provide long-term leadership

An individual who

- Is honest and forthright in his/her dealings with others
- Demonstrates integrity in both actions and words
- Builds trust and relationships quickly and sincerely
- Respectful and respected
- Decisive when needed and able to say no when necessary

With regard to leadership experiences and accomplishments, the successful candidate should:

- Be certified in the State of Illinois or able to obtain Illinois certification
- Have an earned doctorate degree in Education
- Have served as superintendent in another district
- Have had experience as an educational leader in a community similar to Lake Bluff