

**12/10/2024**

# **LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT**

## **SELECTION PROCESS**

The School District of Waupaca has retained the services of HYA to assist the Board with the hiring of the next superintendent. The consultant will screen applications and recommend candidates to the Board for interviews and further consideration. Any questions regarding the application process, selection process, and/or this Leadership Profile Report should be directed to: Mike Richie, HYA Vice President - email: [mikerichie@hyasearch.com](mailto:mikerichie@hyasearch.com).

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) during the month of November 2024 for the new superintendent of the School District of Waupaca. The data contained herein was obtained from input the HYA consultant received when he met with individuals and groups in either interviews or focus group settings. Additional feedback was also gathered from emails received from stakeholders. The 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 organization and some of the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years. It should be emphasized that the data is not a scientific sampling, nor does it necessarily represent the majority opinion of each respective group.

All seven current School Board members were interviewed by the HYA Associate. In addition, HYA conducted 14 focus groups.

The same questions were asked during each interview, focus group, and email response, and were as follows:

1. What are the strengths of the School District of Waupaca that the next superintendent can build upon?
2. What are the challenges facing the School District of Waupaca that the next superintendent should be aware of, or you would like to see be addressed?
3. What characteristics or traits are you looking for in your new superintendent?
4. Is there anything else you would like to share with us or that we should know about the School District of Waupaca?

Through the information gathered, common themes were generated by the respondents. In this summary report, we will highlight what those common themes were as identified by the following four groups:

- Community/Parents
- Board
- Staff
- Support Staff
- Students

## PROCESS

The structure of the individual meetings and focus groups was open, allowing for participants to build upon each other's comments. All of those involved in providing input were asked to respond to the questions on page one.

## PARTICIPATION

Responses were gathered from individual interviews, focus groups, or emailed responses. The HYA consultant conducted seven individual interviews and hosted 14 focus groups.

School District of Waupaca Focus Groups/Interviews
School Board (7 individual interviews)
Focus Group 1: Parents/Community/Staff Members
Focus Group 2: Support Staff
Focus Group 3: Support Staff
Focus Group 4: Support Staff
Focus Group 5: Support Staff
Focus Group 6: Certified Staff
Focus Group 7: Chamber/Businesses
Focus Group 8: District Office Staff
Focus Group 9: 9th/10th Grade Students
Focus Group 10: 11th/12th Grade Students
Focus Group 11: Central Office Administrators
Focus Group 12: Building Level Administrators
Focus Group 13: Any School Employees
Focus Group 14: Parents/Community Members
Email Comments

## DESCRIPTION OF THE DISTRICT

The School District of Waupaca is seeking a superintendent beginning on July 1, 2025. Waupaca is a city in east central Wisconsin, located in Waupaca County. It is a vibrant, small city boasting the beauty and seclusion of a rural setting and all the amenities and conveniences to rival big city living. While the resident population is approximately 6,400 persons, Waupaca's service area increases to 15,000 people including surrounding townships and to approximately 30,000 people during the summer tourist season. The Waupaca area is among the Midwest's most popular tourist destinations, including the famous Waupaca Chain O' Lakes, 22 spring-fed lakes. As abundant outdoor recreational opportunities continue to beckon thousands to the community, the local economy is also supported by vigorous manufacturing and service industries, providing local employment opportunities as well as goods and services in a global economy.

Four major highways intersect in the city, making travel to nearby metro areas such as the Fox Cities (40 miles), Green Bay (70 miles), and Stevens Point (30 miles), an easy and quick commute. Travel to major metropolitan areas of the Midwest is also within a few hours' drive, being approximately two hours from Madison and Milwaukee.

The 4K-12 School District of Waupaca consists of 160 square miles, and has an enrollment of approximately 2000 students with a student-teacher ratio of 12 to 1. The District has about 350 employees, with an operational budget of \$30,000,000. Education is provided in 4 buildings: Waupaca 4K, Waupaca Learning Center Elementary School, Chain Exploration Center, Waupaca Middle School, and Waupaca High School.

The School District of Waupaca elementary schools offer small class sizes that are rich with technology, offering students an education based on high expectations, clear accountability, a sense of ownership and belonging, and a safe and nurturing environment. Waupaca High School offers college readiness programs, advanced placement classes and strong connections with Fox Valley Technical College, providing a seamless transition from high school to a post secondary education or the world of work. #WaupacaWorks offers partnerships with local businesses and manufacturers to provide abundant learning experiences and career opportunities for all District students.

In 2022, the community supported a capital referendum to support building safety and security improvements with approximately 75% voter support.

Several regional airports are located within an hour of Waupaca such as Appleton, Green Bay, and Central Wisconsin (Mosinee), with larger airports in Milwaukee and Madison located approximately 100 miles away.

**Visit the School District of Waupaca website  
for more information:**  
[www.waupaca.k12.wi.us](http://www.waupaca.k12.wi.us)

**Link to School District of Waupaca Strategic  
Plan:**  
[Strategic Plan.pdf - Google Drive](#)

### **Strengths of the School District of Waupaca as identified by the SCHOOL BOARD:**

*Based on Interviews and Anecdotal Data Collected*

1. The Waupaca School District thrives with strong community support for education and an active, engaged chamber dedicated to fostering collaboration and growth.
2. The school district excels with its dedicated staff, modern and well-maintained facilities, and a clean, beautiful campus. Its strong financial management has eliminated the need for operational referendums, reflecting its commitment to efficiency and quality.
3. The school district values the arts and emphasizes strong Career and Technical Education programs, providing a well-rounded and future-focused education.
4. The Waupaca School District is in a prime location near the Fox Valley along the Highway 10 corridor, offering excellent accessibility and regional opportunities.
5. The board's listening sessions with staff were a positive step toward rebuilding trust and strengthening relationships within the district.

### **Challenges of the School District of Waupaca as identified by the SCHOOL BOARD:**

*Based on Interviews and Anecdotal Data Collected*

1. There are concerns regarding leadership at the high school level and there is a desire to foster a more supportive and approachable environment for staff and students.
2. The district and board need to consistently adhere to established policies and procedures to ensure transparency and accountability.
3. The school district needs to focus on increasing enrollment, improving test scores, and strengthening its athletic program by boosting participation, improving training, and fostering a culture of success and teamwork.
4. The district needs to rebuild its culture, which has been challenged in recent years, and adopt a more progressive mindset. This includes embracing growth such as welcoming new businesses and residents.
5. The district needs to build stronger business partnerships and increase opportunities for apprenticeships to provide students with valuable hands-on experience.

Desired Characteristics of the next Superintendent as identified by the BOARD	
Personal Attributes	Leadership Qualities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Approachable and personable</b> Fun-loving, approachable, and able to interact with kids and staff in a professional yet casual manner.</li> <li>• <b>Great personality</b> Connects with staff and students in meaningful, positive ways.</li> <li>• <b>Honest and open, no Napoleonic complex</b> Displays humility, honesty, and self-awareness without arrogance.</li> <li>• <b>Keeps personal beliefs and politics out of the district</b> Respects all viewpoints and prioritizes objectivity in decision-making.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Strong leader</b> Confidently takes charge while maintaining respect and professionalism, even when addressing Board members.</li> <li>• <b>Business-minded with good financial sense</b> Makes sound financial decisions</li> <li>• <b>Honesty and transparency</b> Upholds ethical standards, is forthright in communication, and ensures clarity in all actions.</li> <li>• <b>Accountability</b> Holds staff and schools accountable for maintaining high standards across the district.</li> <li>• <b>Decisive, not a pleaser</b> Makes firm decisions, sticks to them, and avoids trying to please everyone.</li> <li>• <b>Trustworthy</b> Earns confidence through integrity, consistency, and reliability.</li> </ul>
Interpersonal Skills	Community Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Team player</b> Encourages collaboration, values input from others, and fosters teamwork across the district.</li> <li>• <b>Trusts people to do their job</b> Empowers staff by delegating responsibility and showing confidence in their abilities.</li> <li>• <b>Great communicator</b> Clearly conveys ideas, listens actively, and fosters open dialogue among all stakeholders.</li> <li>• <b>People-oriented and outgoing</b> Builds strong relationships by being visible, interactive, and genuinely interested in others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Engaged and present</b> Actively participates in school, activities, and community events to strengthen relationships.</li> <li>• <b>Builds excitement and motivation</b> Inspires enthusiasm and a sense of shared purpose within the district.</li> <li>• <b>Prioritizes the school district</b> Puts the needs of the district before other community commitments.</li> <li>• <b>Living in the district</b> Preferably resides in the district or close proximity to Waupaca and has personal ties and is vested in the Community.</li> </ul>
Vision and Adaptability	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Open to new ideas</b> Welcomes innovation and is willing to explore different approaches for growth.</li> <li>• <b>Understands both sides</b> Balances diverse perspectives and removes personal opinions to find equitable solutions.</li> <li>• <b>Builds trust and values conversations</b> Engages in meaningful dialogue, respects others' viewpoints, and fosters a sense of inclusion.</li> </ul>	

### **Strengths of the School District of Waupaca as identified by the COMMUNITY/PARENTS:**

*Based on Interviews and Anecdotal Data Collected*

1. The School Board is a key strength of the district, providing strong leadership and support for its initiatives.
2. The district is fiscally responsible, effectively managing its budget to ensure resources are used efficiently and sustainably.
3. The staff genuinely cares about students, going above and beyond to support their academic, emotional, and personal growth.
4. The district has strong connections within the community, with business partnerships and a high level of engagement that foster collaboration and support for students.
5. The district offers a wide range of opportunities across academics, clubs, activities, and school-to-work programs, ensuring students have diverse pathways to success.

### **Challenges of the School District of Waupaca as identified by the COMMUNITY/PARENTS:**

*Based on Interviews and Anecdotal Data Collected*

1. Students need additional social and emotional support to help them navigate challenges and thrive both academically and personally.
2. The district should enhance communication efforts, especially to engage non-parents, and work toward modernizing its practices to better prepare for the future.
3. Staff morale is a concern, and there is a need to restore the district to its previous positive atmosphere and sense of unity.
4. Most of the administrative team does not reside within the district, which may impact their connection to the community.
5. Vaping has become a significant issue at both the high school and middle school, requiring attention and intervention.

## Desired Characteristics of the next Superintendent as identified by: **COMMUNITY/PARENTS**

Approachability and Stability	Data Driven Decision Making
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Be approachable</b> Easily accessible and welcoming, making it simple for staff, students, and community members to communicate and engage.</li> <li>• <b>Can't be a stepping stone</b> Needs to be someone who views the role as a long-term commitment, rather than a temporary position for career advancement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Experience with qualitative and quantitative data analysis to guide change</b> Skilled in analyzing data to inform decisions and drive positive changes within the district.</li> </ul>
Leadership Experience	Community Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Charter school experience</b> Brings valuable experience from managing or overseeing charter schools, understanding unique educational environments.</li> <li>• <b>Administrative experience</b> Has prior experience in school leadership or administration, with the ability to effectively manage a district.</li> <li>• <b>Impact on Board member development</b> Contributes to the growth and development of the Board, helping them to be more effective in their roles.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inclusive</b> Actively promotes an environment where everyone feels valued and involved, ensuring all voices are heard.</li> <li>• <b>Zest for community engagement</b> Passionately participates in and fosters strong connections within the community, showing a deep commitment to its well-being.</li> <li>• <b>Personal connection to the community</b> Prefers someone who is personally tied to the district, either through residency or active involvement in local life.</li> </ul>
Personal Attributes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Humble</b> Demonstrates modesty, listens to others, and values the contributions of all team members.</li> <li>• <b>Brave and compassionate</b> Takes courageous actions while being empathetic and understanding toward others.</li> <li>• <b>Ethical</b> Upholds high standards of integrity and transparency; owns mistakes and is honest even when facing challenges.</li> <li>• <b>Visionary</b> Possesses the foresight to guide the district toward long-term success and growth, setting a clear path for the future.</li> </ul>	



### **Strengths of the School District of Waupaca as identified by STAFF:**

#### *Based on Interviews and Anecdotal Data Collected*

1. The staff demonstrates strong support for one another, fostering a collaborative and positive work environment.
2. The district benefits from strong community partnerships that enhance opportunities and support for students and schools.
3. The district offers a diverse range of clubs and activities, providing students with opportunities to explore their interests and develop new skills.
4. The district provides exceptional opportunities for students, including dual-credit classes to earn college credit, robust special education programs with targeted support and interventions, and diverse educational choices such as a charter school and the Rural Virtual Academy (RVA).
5. The district is in a strong financial position, allowing for effective management of resources and sustained support for its programs and initiatives.

### **Challenges of the School District of Waupaca as identified by STAFF:**

#### *Based on Interviews and Anecdotal Data Collected*

1. The district faces challenges with high administrator turnover, rapid system changes, and a shift toward a "big district" model that does not align with Waupaca's needs. Additionally, many administrators do not live in the district or are not deeply connected to the community, which contributes to a lack of trust between administrators and staff, including a perceived undervaluing of teachers' professional judgment.
2. High School teachers do not support the implementation of target-based grading, citing significant confusion. Additionally, the ongoing lack of substitute teachers places added strain on staff and disrupts the learning environment.
3. The district's business office needs to improve accountability, particularly in resolving payroll errors. With many new staff members, it's important to establish clear expectations and ensure accountability across the organization.
4. There is a need to boost school pride among students and establish greater consistency across the different buildings to create a unified and cohesive district culture.
5. The district needs to overcome a mindset of resistance to change, where there is a desire for improvement but reluctance to alter teaching methods or traditional practices. The "Waupaca Way" mentality, which focuses on doing things as they've always been done, has created a culture of complacency. There is a need to move beyond the "good enough" mindset and foster a culture of continuous improvement across the district.

**Desired Characteristics of the next Superintendent as identified by the STAFF**

Leadership & Vision	Communication & Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Strong Leadership Skills:</b> Ability to inspire and lead, fostering a positive direction for the district.</li> <li>• <b>Make Tough Decisions:</b> Willing to make difficult choices based on what's best for students, even when unpopular.</li> <li>• <b>Growth Mindset:</b> Open to learning, adapting, and improving continually.</li> <li>• <b>Work with the Board:</b> Collaborates effectively with the Board to drive initiatives and improvements.</li> <li>• <b>Not Just Riding Out the Years:</b> Actively seeks to improve and move the district forward rather than maintaining the status quo.</li> <li>• <b>Objective Focus and Goals:</b> Ability to focus on clear objectives and set measurable goals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Visible:</b> Regularly present in the community and in schools, actively engaging with staff, students, and families.</li> <li>• <b>Effective Writer and Speaker:</b> Communicates clearly and persuasively in both written and spoken forms.</li> <li>• <b>Open to Feedback and Giving Feedback:</b> Willing to listen and provide constructive feedback in a collaborative manner.</li> <li>• <b>Present at Events and in the Community:</b> Engages with the community and public events to share updates and build relationships.</li> <li>• <b>Establish Relationships:</b> Builds strong, trust-based relationships with staff, students, and the community.</li> </ul>
Professionalism & Accountability	Community & Culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Fiscally Responsible:</b> Manages resources effectively, ensuring financial health and sustainability.</li> <li>• <b>Non-Micromanager:</b> Trusts staff to perform their roles while providing necessary support.</li> <li>• <b>Someone Willing to Accept They Don't Have All the Answers:</b> Open to collaboration and seeking input from others.</li> <li>• <b>Be the Same Person in School and Away From School:</b> Consistent in behavior and values, both professionally and personally.</li> <li>• <b>Focus:</b> Ability to stay focused on key priorities and goals without distractions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Part of the Community:</b> Actively involved and invested in the local community.</li> <li>• <b>Good Culture:</b> Fosters a positive, inclusive, and respectful culture within the district.</li> <li>• <b>Student-Centered:</b> Prioritizes the needs and well-being of students in decision-making.</li> <li>• <b>Advocates for All:</b> Advocates for all students, including those in co-curricular activities beyond sports.</li> <li>• <b>Cultural Sensitivity:</b> Understands and supports the cultural changes within the community.</li> <li>• <b>Focus on Culture &amp; Mending Wounds:</b> Listens to concerns, works to heal divides, and rebuilds trust within the staff.</li> </ul>

Personal Qualities & Work Ethic	Fairness & Objectivity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Good Human Being:</b> Kind, respectful, and empathetic toward others.</li> <li>• <b>Someone Who Likes Teachers:</b> Values and supports teachers, understanding their critical role in student success.</li> <li>• <b>Love Your Job:</b> Passionate about the work and dedicated to the district's success.</li> <li>• <b>Energizer:</b> Brings positivity, enthusiasm, and support to those around them.</li> <li>• <b>Not Quick to React:</b> Thoughtful, measured, and reflective in decision-making and responses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Treat Women Equally:</b> Promotes gender equality and inclusivity in all aspects of the district.</li> <li>• <b>Keeps Religion and Political Views Out of School:</b> Maintains a neutral, inclusive stance, keeping personal beliefs separate from the educational environment.</li> <li>• <b>Vetting Issues Without Personal Bias:</b> Evaluates situations fairly, without personal bias, focusing on the best outcomes.</li> <li>• <b>Praise in Public, Discipline in Private:</b> Recognizes achievements publicly while addressing issues privately and respectfully.</li> </ul>
Integrity & Accountability	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Honesty &amp; Integrity:</b> Trustworthy and transparent, takes responsibility and owns up to mistakes.</li> <li>• <b>Integrity and No Excuses:</b> Upholds ethical standards and leads by example.</li> <li>• <b>Clean Google Search:</b> Maintains a professional reputation and conducts themselves appropriately.</li> </ul>	

### **Strengths of the School District of Waupaca as identified by SUPPORT STAFF:**

*Based on Interviews and Anecdotal Data Collected*

1. A variety of educational options are available, ensuring students have access to programs and opportunities tailored to their unique interests and needs.
2. Dedicated staff members support one another and collaborate effectively to create a positive and productive environment.
3. Strong leadership from the administrative team fosters a supportive atmosphere for students, staff, and the community.
4. High-quality facilities provide an excellent environment for learning and growth.
5. Safety and security are prioritized, with proactive measures in place to ensure a safe learning environment for everyone.

### **Challenges of the School District of Waupaca as identified by SUPPORT STAFF:**

*Based on Interviews and Anecdotal Data Collected*

1. A review of wage and benefit packages for support staff is necessary, along with consideration of longevity pay or other incentives to reward and retain long-term employees.
2. Charter schools, though not a current priority, could play a role in meeting diverse student needs. Strengthening school spirit and pride also remains an important area for growth.
3. Improving transparency and communication is essential to ensure all staff, including aides, receive the same critical information as teachers. A clearer understanding of each staff group's roles and responsibilities is also needed to enhance collaboration and efficiency.
4. Involving relevant stakeholders in decision-making and addressing inconsistencies in the implementation of practices, policies, and procedures will ensure greater alignment and effectiveness.
5. Accountability must be emphasized to ensure expectations are met and standards are maintained across all areas.

## Desired Characteristics of the next Superintendent as identified by **SUPPORT STAFF**:

Vision and Strategy	Community Engagement/Personal Investment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Global Thinker and Sees the Big Picture:</b> Focuses on long-term goals and the broader vision for the district, beyond daily tasks.</li> <li>• <b>Open-Minded to Educating Special Ed Students:</b> Embraces inclusive practices and is comfortable working with students who have special education needs.</li> <li>• <b>Innovative to Keep Students Here:</b> Fosters creative solutions to retain students and enhance their educational experience.</li> <li>• <b>Step into the New Age:</b> Embraces modern changes and innovative methods, recognizing that change is necessary for progress.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lives in the Area:</b> A leader who is personally invested in the community, living locally and understanding the district's context.</li> <li>• <b>Vested in the Community:</b> Actively involved and engaged in the local community, showing commitment to the area beyond professional responsibilities.</li> <li>• <b>Someone Who Wants to Be Here for Awhile:</b> A superintendent who is looking for long-term involvement, ensuring stability and sustained growth for the district.</li> <li>• <b>Teamwork:</b> Fosters a spirit of collaboration and cooperation among staff, building a unified team focused on shared goals.</li> </ul>
Personal Attributes and Skills	Decision-Making and Practical Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Extrovert:</b> Outgoing and sociable, easily engages with staff, students, and the community.</li> <li>• <b>Genuine:</b> Authentic in communication and actions, not driven by political agendas or empty promises.</li> <li>• <b>Good Speaker:</b> Communicates effectively in public settings, clearly articulating ideas and strategies.</li> <li>• <b>Warm and Welcoming:</b> Creates a positive, inviting atmosphere for staff, students, and the community.</li> <li>• <b>Approachable:</b> Open to conversations and feedback, making others feel comfortable sharing ideas and concerns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Good Listening Skills:</b> Actively listens to others, making sure all voices are heard and valued.</li> <li>• <b>Needs to Lead:</b> Demonstrates strong leadership capabilities, with a focus on guiding the district toward success.</li> <li>• <b>From a Similar Size District:</b> Seek candidates with experience in districts of a similar size and context, rather than large urban environments.</li> <li>• <b>Keep Religion and Political Views Out of Job:</b> Maintains a professional and neutral stance, separating personal beliefs from decision-making in the school district.</li> </ul>
Leadership Qualities and Skills	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Support for Charter Schools:</b> A leader who is open to and supports charter schools as part of the educational options.</li> <li>• <b>Be a Leader, Not a Boss:</b> Leads by example, inspires others, and fosters a collaborative environment, rather than simply commanding from above.</li> <li>• <b>Work with and Stand Up to the Board:</b> Willing to assertively advocate for the needs of the district, even when it requires standing firm against the Board.</li> <li>• <b>Visibility:</b> Regularly visits buildings and interacts with staff, creating a presence throughout the district.</li> <li>• <b>Not Afraid to Think Outside the Box:</b> Open to innovative approaches and willing to embrace change to meet the evolving needs of the district.</li> <li>• <b>Well Organized and Multitasker:</b> Demonstrates effective time management and organizational skills, handling multiple priorities with ease.</li> </ul>	

### Respect and Inclusion

- **Include All Students:** Ensures that all students are included and supported, regardless of their background or learning needs.
- **Treat Staff with Respect:** Demonstrates respect for all staff, valuing their contributions and fostering a positive working environment.
- **Respect for Gender Equality:** Open-minded and values both male and female staff equally, avoiding any gender biases.
- **Values Everyone's Opinion:** Actively listens to and considers the perspectives of all stakeholders.
- **Cultivate the Right Energy:** Creates a positive, cohesive environment where everyone is aligned and working toward the same goals.

### **Strengths of the School District of Waupaca as identified by STUDENTS:**

*Based on Interviews and Anecdotal Data Collected*

1. A strong sense of community fosters a supportive and connected environment for students, staff, and families.
2. Quality teachers, deeply committed to the well-being and success of each student, are a significant strength.
3. Strong community partnerships enhance collaboration and support, enriching educational opportunities for students.
4. The dual credit program provides valuable opportunities for students to earn college credits while still in high school.
5. Diverse clubs and activities offer students a wide range of opportunities to explore their interests and develop new skills.

### **Challenges of the School District of Waupaca as identified by STUDENTS:**

*Based on Interviews and Anecdotal Data Collected*

1. Funds need to be allocated more equitably across different groups to ensure resources are distributed fairly and not disproportionately favoring certain areas.
2. Enhanced communication and translation services are necessary to better support non-English speaking students. Staff preparation must be improved to assist struggling, at risk, and special education students.
3. Addressing past administrative challenges that have impacted staff and students is essential, along with improving communication and organization. Strong student resistance to target-based grading at the high school level also needs to be acknowledged and addressed.
4. A mentoring program for new teachers, guided by veteran educators, should be established, along with opportunities for observing and learning from experienced colleagues.
5. The growing issue of drug use and vaping, particularly loitering and substance use in bathrooms, is a critical challenge requiring immediate and sustained attention from leadership, as it is a pervasive and complex problem.

### Desired Characteristics of the next Superintendent as identified by STUDENTS

Leadership Qualities and Skills	Engagement with Students and Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Open-Minded:</b> Willing to consider new ideas and approaches, fostering a culture of innovation and inclusivity.</li> <li>• <b>Innovator and Problem Solver:</b> Creative in finding solutions to challenges, with a proactive approach to problem-solving.</li> <li>• <b>Someone Who Knows What They Are Doing:</b> Competent and knowledgeable, with the ability to make informed decisions.</li> <li>• <b>Passionate About Job and Students:</b> Dedicated to the role, with a strong passion for both the success of students and the school community.</li> <li>• <b>Progressive:</b> Forward-thinking and open to modern, evolving educational practices.</li> <li>• <b>Inspirational:</b> Motivates and encourages others, setting a positive example for staff and students alike.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Interacts with Students:</b> Actively engages with students, being visible around the school and involved in their daily activities.</li> <li>• <b>Someone Students Can Connect With:</b> Relatable and approachable, building strong connections with students and understanding their lives outside of school.</li> <li>• <b>Goes to Events and Activities:</b> Enthusiastically participates in school events and activities, showing genuine interest and involvement.</li> <li>• <b>Part of the Community:</b> Actively involved in the local community and demonstrates a genuine interest in its growth and well-being.</li> </ul>
Communication and Relationships	Background and Experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Good Communicator:</b> Effectively communicates with staff, students, and parents, ensuring timely and clear information is shared.</li> <li>• <b>Takes Criticism and Respects Opinions:</b> Open to feedback, valuing the perspectives of others and using criticism constructively.</li> <li>• <b>Listens to the Student Population:</b> Actively listens to students' concerns, opinions, and feedback, making them feel heard and valued.</li> <li>• <b>Gets to Know All Staff:</b> Engages with all staff members, not just teachers, fostering strong relationships across the district.</li> <li>• <b>Respects Students:</b> Treats students with dignity and respect, ensuring a safe and positive learning environment.</li> <li>• <b>Open to New Ideas and Values Student Options:</b> Encourages diverse student choices and ideas, valuing their input in shaping the school experience.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Has a Teaching Background:</b> Brings a deep understanding of the educational process through personal teaching experience.</li> <li>• <b>Knows and Understands Waupaca:</b> Has a strong knowledge of the community and its specific needs, and is genuinely invested in the area.</li> </ul>



## SCHOOL DISTRICT OF WAUPACA'S NEXT SUPERINTENDENT

Many of the discussions pertaining to strengths and challenges for the School District of Waupaca flow into the expectations/characteristics for the next superintendent. Several of the characteristics that are present in the profile for the next superintendent build on the current strengths of the organization in addition to addressing the challenges ahead. The search team will seek a new superintendent who will understand issues facing the District.

To address the district's resistance to change and the entrenched "Waupaca Way" mentality, the new superintendent must inspire a shift from complacency to a culture of continuous improvement. As indicated in the survey, it is equally important to implement changes at a sustainable pace, ensuring that stakeholders have the time and resources needed to adapt effectively. Moving too quickly risks alienating those who may already feel uncertain, while a thoughtful, measured approach can build trust and create lasting progress. The new superintendent will need to set ambitious yet achievable goals, celebrate progress, and understand that excellence is a journey, not a destination.

It will be important for the new superintendent to address declining enrollment by positioning the district as a destination for quality education and community engagement. The superintendent should work to build a stronger sense of identity and belonging through initiatives that celebrate student achievements, foster school spirit, and strengthen connections between schools and the community to increase school pride. Improving athletic programs should be a component of this effort, as successful and inclusive sports programs can boost morale, create opportunities for student development, and attract families seeking well-rounded educational experiences.

The new superintendent must prioritize increasing transparency and accountability to rebuild trust and improve morale throughout the district. The survey also indicated that they should empower principals, teachers, and staff by providing clear expectations and support without micromanaging their work. They should trust the expertise of those closest to students while offering guidance and resources when needed to create a collaborative environment where everyone feels valued and capable. By modeling transparency, fostering accountability, and respecting the autonomy of staff, the new superintendent can restore trust, strengthen relationships, and boost morale, while empowering the district to move forward together.

Effective communication will be a cornerstone for the new superintendent's success in uniting the district and its stakeholders. Streamlining communication to ensure consistency, clarity, and accessibility is essential. This involves adopting up to date, user-friendly platforms, simplifying messaging, and ensuring information is delivered promptly and reliably and in all languages desired across the community. It's crucial that all stakeholders—paraprofessionals, teachers, students, parents, and community members who are not parents—receive the information they need to feel informed and engaged.

The new superintendent must be a visible and active presence in schools and at school events, demonstrating a genuine commitment to the district's success and the well-being of its students and staff. Regularly visiting classrooms, attending athletic games, performances, and community gatherings will show a hands-on approach and build trust with stakeholders. Visibility sends a strong message of accessibility and investment, allowing the superintendent to connect with

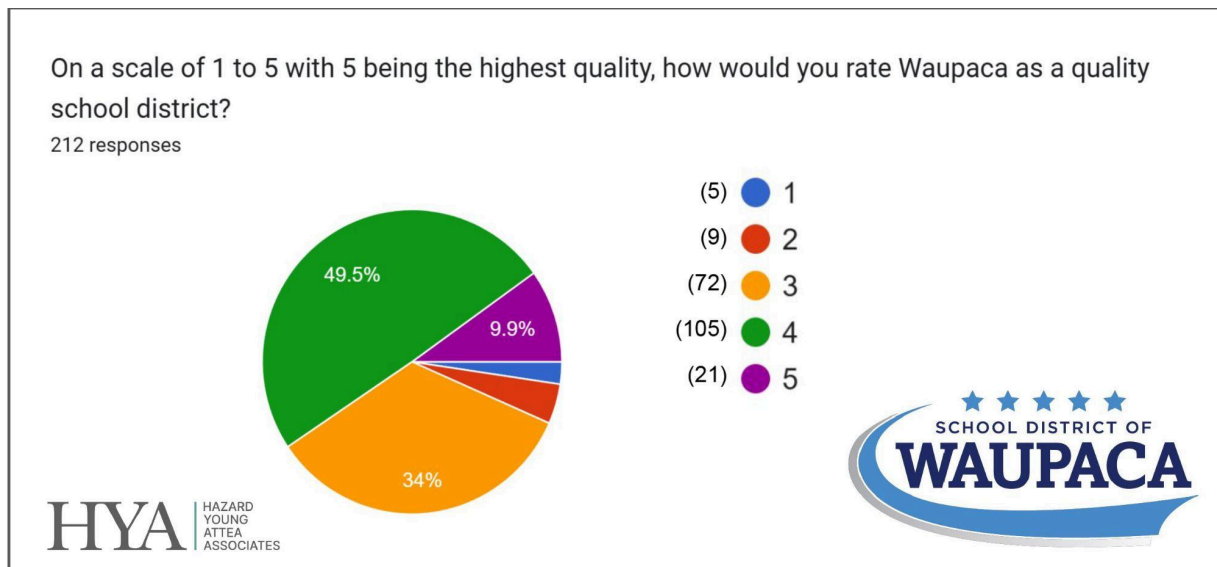
students, families, teachers, and community members on a personal level. Survey and focus group comments indicated that living locally is critically important to the Waupaca community, as it reinforces the superintendent's dedication to the district and its future.

### **SCHOOL DISTRICT OF WAUPACA SUPERINTENDENT DESIRED CANDIDATE PROFILE**

The School District of Waupaca seeks a superintendent who in collaboration with the board, staff, students, parents and community, will focus the District on shared goals and vision. After seeking input from board members, staff, students, parents and community members via individual and group interviews, focus groups, emails, and survey, the School District of Waupaca seeks a courageous, engaged, visionary superintendent who possesses the following characteristics:

- **Involved Community Member:**
  - Actively participates in school, activities, and community events to strengthen relationships.
  - Partners with local businesses, nonprofits, and civic groups to strengthen community ties and support mutual goals.
  - Actively promotes an environment where everyone feels valued and involved, ensuring all voices are heard.
  - Understands and supports the cultural changes within the community.
- **Cultivator of Growth and Continuous Improvement**
  - Welcomes innovation and is willing to explore different approaches for growth.
  - Open to learning, adapting, and improving continually.
  - Ability to focus on clear objectives and set measurable goals.
  - Embraces modern changes and innovative methods, recognizing that change is necessary for progress.
- **Trust and Morale Builder**
  - Earns confidence through integrity, consistency, and reliability.
  - Empowers staff by delegating responsibility and showing confidence in their abilities.
  - Takes courageous actions while being empathetic and understanding toward others.
  - Leads by example, inspires others, and fosters a collaborative environment, rather than simply commanding from above.
- **Respectful and Inclusive**
  - Actively promotes an environment where everyone feels valued and involved, ensuring all voices are heard.
  - Promotes gender equality and inclusivity in all aspects of the district.
  - Ensures that all students are included and supported, regardless of their background or learning needs.
  - Considers the perspectives of all stakeholders.

Out of 213 survey responses, 49.5% of respondents rated the School District of Waupaca a 4 out of 5, reflecting a positive level of satisfaction with the district.



1 - lowest, 5 - highest. Survey conducted November, 2024.

Thank you for the opportunity to work with the School District of Waupaca, we look forward to finding your next leader that fits the criteria of your stakeholders. The HYA Associates would like to thank the School District of Waupaca staff who helped coordinate the schedules, invitations, dates and arrangements which supported the data collection for this report. Additionally, we thank all participants who shared their thoughts, opinions and suggestions throughout this search process. We value the opportunity to work with your school district and we look forward to finding your next leader that fits the criteria of your stakeholders.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mike Richie, HYA Vice President

## DATA SUMMARY

The interviews and focus groups of stakeholders generated the following responses. Careful attention has been made to accurately convey the message. The comments listed below emerged from statements made by stakeholders and they are to be considered personal opinions of the individual making the comments regarding the School District of Waupaca.

### Strengths as Identified by Board Members:

- Great staff
- Good facilities and beautiful campus - clean and up to date
- 4 billion- plus tax base
- 16th lowest mill rate in state - \$5.01
- Never went to an operational referendum - good money management
- No debt
- Affordable and upscale housing is available
- Great location in the Fox Valley - HWY 10 corridor
- Business trying to create jobs
- City administrator and hometown hero
- Community that values service above self
- Community values the arts
- Staff is solid, learning targets, assessments, PLC's
- Staff like being done at 3:30 pm
- Community is supportive
- Small community yet big enough to offer good programming
- Strong CTE programming (career technical education)
- Community based
- Great Chamber that is very involved in the community
- Teachers have targets and are teaching the same curriculum at each grade level - this was a concern in the past
- Offers a good mix of activities - hockey, dance and the arts
- Wonderful dedicated people that work in the district
- Community that really supports education
- Arts are really strong and important to the district
- The listening sessions that board did with the staff went a long ways and was a good start to bring back trust
- Change of leadership will be good for the district - moving in the right direction
- Dedication to students
- Dedication to programs and clubs
- Great academics

### Strengths as Identified by Community/Parents:

- School Board is a strength
- Hard working people throughout the district
- Strong community
- Supportive parents
- People participate in the public comment section at board meetings
- People volunteer at school
- Increasing diversity
- Fiscally responsible
- Staff cares about students
- Connections within the community - library/internship programs
- Good opportunities across the district (clubs, activities, academics, school to work)
- Small tight community - community is full of people that know each other
- Business partnerships - strong level of engagement

### Strengths as Identified by Staff:

- Staff really support each other
- Staff wants what's best for students
- Dedicated teachers
- Facilities
- Community partnerships
- Clubs and activities
- Community outreach
- AP participation (13 classes)
- Gifted and Talented classes
- Dual credit classes -college credit
- Special education programs, support and interventions
- Charter School and Rural Virtual Academy (RVA) options for families
- Opportunity for professional growth
- Community and school are very intertwined
- Staff is very connected to the local community
- Strong staff
- Great level of support
- Great facilities
- Early childhood and 4K program
- Community and Business involvement
- Academic Achievement Gap Reduction (AGR)
- Camaraderie of staff members
- Business partners
- Good position financially
- Good administrative team

### Strengths as Identified by Support Staff:

- Educational options
- Great staff that support each other and work well together
- Administrative team seems to be working well together
- Core team collaborates well together
- Parental choice
- Caring students
- Have families best interest at heart
- Good group of people working in the district - working for same goals
- Great activities
- Great facilities
- Feel safe
- Mental health awareness has improved a lot
- Great educational choices at the high school level
- ACP - is strong
- Strong relationships with staff - many staff from Waupaca
- Great teaching staff
- Strong sense of community
- Stable enrollment
- Good learning environment
- Admin has done a good job hiring staff
- Great newsletter sent out by district
- The district has embraced the safety and security issues

### Strengths as Identified By Students:

- Good sense of community
- Like the pep rallies
- Wide variety of classes
- Perfect size school district
- Upper class can mentor younger students
- Feel safe at school and good security measures are in place
- Quality teachers that care about well being of students
- Like the feedback from teachers and principals
- We feel like we have a voice
- Good community partnerships
- Community recognizes the students in a good way
- Job shadowing
- Great counselors in place that really help students
- Certain classes go on trips
- Great student exchange program in place
- Good work study program
- Dual credit option is strong
- Good variety of AP and CAPP classes
- Challenging classes
- Good school spirit

- Good diversity with clubs and activities
- Teachers are very helpful and want students to learn
- Start College Now program is strong
- Good speakers that come in
- Equal opportunities
- Many resources
- Teachers are willing to listen
- Incredible work experience program
- Very diverse allocation of resources
- There are always more opportunities and outside world experiences that students can benefit from

### Challenges as Identified By Board Members:

- Enrollment, enrollment, enrollment
- Need to get rid of the not in my backyard mindset and be more progressive
- Some people don't want growth (new businesses or people)
- Athletic program needs to be strengthened - participation and being more successful
- Need to improve test scores
- Rebuild the trust between the administrators and staff (was lacking with former superintendent)
- Listening sessions with the Board and staff was a bandaid - Board felt they needed to step in
- Board responsibility is Governance
- Little things go a long way with staff
- Build better business partnerships - would like to see more apprenticeships
- Unfounded mandates are tough - special ed, title 9 etc.
- Some buildings (1) need better leadership
- Need to provide better benefits to staff
- Budget was balanced over the years on the backs of the staff
- Staff not willing to take on extra duties
- Need to build a better culture - really torn down over the last 3 to 4 years
- High school test scores need to be improved
- Need to educate Board - test scores are not the bottom line
- Financial situation - need to keep a close eye on - look for appropriate budget cuts
- Need to increase enrollment
- Bring in more businesses to area and create more jobs
- Need to educate the community on what a great district Waupaca is
- Allow teachers to do their job - do not micromanage - don't continue to look over their shoulder
- In the past teachers were told that they cannot talk to the Board or communicate with the Board - This has changed for the better
- Budget is a big thing on everyone's mind
- Enrollment is a challenge - how do we draw people in - Buildings are underutilized
- Foundry has brought in lots of non-speaking English families

- There were unhealthy workplace dynamics prior to hiring of the the interim superintendent
- Previous leadership used a commanding approach to influence by intimidation  
Parents are not as engaged as they once were
- Last superintendent was my way or the highway - this was really tough on the staff
- Groups don't listen to understand, only to persuade
- District/Board needs to follow policies and procedures
- Some Board members are overstepping roles and boundaries
- Missing some shop equipment and no one has been held accountable
- Damage to school and no one held accountable
- HS principal will call police if students don't have a parking pass
- The high school principal uses an intimidating approach, which has made the work environment difficult
- School needs to take a complete inventory of what they have
- In the past there has been conflict of interest with some positions - Good old boys club
- Don't have an open checkbook
- Need to get through the school year and heal the school

#### Challenges as Identified By Community/Parents:

- Lack of trust and confidence in the district has been a big concern over the past five years
- Students need to feel safe no matter what their background is or what they believe in
- Students need social/emotional support
- Declining enrollment
- Would be nice to project out more than two years regarding state funding
- What will the tone of the US be when it comes to supporting and funding public schools - political climate
- Communication needs to improve especially trying to reach community members who are non-parents
- Bring the district into the future
- Staff morale is an issue - Need to bring the district back to what it was before
- Most of the administrative team does not live in the district
- Curriculum challenges
- Staff is surveyed for opinion and then told they are wrong
- Only one library media specialist in the district
- Finances and budgeting
- Morale is in the tank
- Need to foster a better school environment
- Need to value teacher input
- Improve communication and needs to be clear and effective
- District seems to be a farm system (minor league) compared to Appleton and other Fox Valley school districts
- Vaping is an issue at the high school/middle school



### Challenges as Identified By Staff:

- Lots of turnover with administrators
- Past administration tried to make systemic changes too fast
- Trying to change a small district to big district model
- Lots of administrators do not live in the district and are not vested in the community
- Lack of trust - administrators don't trust staff professional judgement
- A lot of things weren't broke but they got fixed
- There has been a lot of micro managing from top down in the past (not current interim)
- Parent apathy
- Curriculum
- High free and reduced lunch rate - high poverty
- Target based grading at the high school is causing confusion and staff members don't want it
- Lack of substitute teachers
- Teacher work load
- Business office should be held accountable for payroll mistakes
- People need to be held accountable
- FMLA problems
- Successful graduates have been negative toward high school
- School pride is very low amongst students
- Lack of consistency from the different buildings
- Very confusing chain of command
- Insufficient funding for certain projects/activities
- Micromanaging
- Major snafu with instructional minutes at the high school
- Understand paid paras
- Misconception about the charter school amongst staff and community
- Issue with time off allocations
- It is a challenge to be both the parent and teacher of a student in the district
- Communication in general
- Board policy
- Compassionate leave
- Reluctant to make change
- Policy goes out the window depending on who you know
- Awareness of population and wanting to move the needle, however resistant to change
- Staff know they need to improve but they don't want to change the way they teach or do things.
- People are stuck in "The Waupaca Way" - that's the way we've always done it
- Get rid of the good enough mindset - culture of improvement is difficult throughout the district
- Outdated practices - not always consistent - Sometimes it depends on who you know
- Lots of turnover
- Old school mentality - behind other school districts in some ways

- Lots of administration turnover
- When implementing a change - district takes 3 or 4 steps back first
- School finances
- Building maintenance at the charter school
- Culture must improve
- Need leadership that bleeds Comets
- Great area to live
- If someone is being held accountable there is a fear of being fired

#### Challenges as Identified By Support Staff:

- Financial
- Upkeep of charter building
- Charter school is not a priority - limited view of school
- School spirit and pride need to be worked on
- Need to value all schools in the district
- Look at wage and benefit package for support staff
- Need to look at longevity pay or reward people for staying here
- Look at improving rooms in the special ed area for certain needs
- Worried about drastic change with new leadership
- Compensate support staff for what they are doing
- Transparency needs to be improved
- Communication between administration and staff (some emails go only to teachers but aids need to get the same information)
- Understand the roles of each staff group as to what they do
- Need to move the needle to get students to next level
- 95% of staff work very hard - more awareness of what everyone's schedule is or is not
- Need good human resources
- What are the goals and vision of the district?
- When making changes need to include the people that are involved
- Inconsistency with practices and carrying out policies and procedures
- Things are not communicated to all staff
- Business office needs some accountability
- Need better separation for High School / District Office Entrance
- Be a servant leader
- Need to follow chain of command
- Must define process that will be adhered to
- Lots of administrative turnover
- Lack of confidence with Superintendent position because of the way he exited
- Seems like silos within work spaces
- People are treated differently
- Need to hold people accountable
- Making every effort to support non English speaking students with the resources we have
- High turnover rate with support staff

### Challenges as Identified By Students:

- Vaping is a big problem
- Vandalism
- Some bullying issues
- Large amount of people are afraid to speak out
- Spread out money better amongst groups - certain groups get more money than others
- Focus on all activities not just sports
- Need more variety of classes
- Need more translation/interpretation for non-English speaking students (better ways to communicate)
- Staff is not as well prepared in dealing with the students that are behind or are struggling
- Some groups of people do not get the attention they need (at risk population)
- Punishments can be extreme in certain situations and not harsh enough in other situations
- In the past drama amongst the administration has trickled down to the teachers and then affects the students
- Communication and organization need to be improved
- Trying to push 3-2-1 grading - students do not like it.
- Need to really understand student needs and what they are going through
- Make sure teachers have the things they need
- Provide more supplies for bathrooms (especially female)
- One bathroom has been closed for a month because one person vandalized it - not fair and not right
- Take advantage of all resources that are available
- Emails need to be answered
- Need to see respect and interaction with administrators and school board
- Most of the administrators don't live in the district - would like to see new superintendent live in the district
- Need to be proactive rather than reactive
- Don't hide stuff. It's better to be open and honest
- Better decisions when calling snow days or icy roads - not last minute
- Lots of hesitation when negative things happen
- Transparency and communication will go a long way
- Want respect from staff and administration - students don't want to be just a number
- Students really want to see superintendent, School Board and staff at their events
- If students miss a day, they feel teachers can do a better job helping them catch up when they are back
- Hire quality teachers
- Need a mentoring program where veteran teachers can mentor the new teachers
- New teachers should have a different schedule where they have time to observe other classes and teachers
- Relationship between former superintendent, administration and the school board was unhealthy
- More professional development and training for teachers

- Teachers need to prioritize - tests are not graded in a timely manner
- Allow students to do survey on how teachers are doing
- Inappropriate content being posted online. There is a fine line between “what happens out of school stays out of school” and what needs to happen when it does get brought into school.
- The battle against drugs and vaping will not stop no matter what school you go to and it is a battle that every new superintendent should realize is much larger than anticipated
- Our school has a HUGE problem with loitering in the bathrooms to smoke marijuana or use vaporizing products