



# LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT

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## North Penn School District, PA

## HISTORY/BACKGROUND

The North Penn School District is in Southeastern Pennsylvania, approximately 20 miles north of Philadelphia in Montgomery County. The district encompasses 42 square miles and has a total population of more than 98,000 residents. These residents reside in Hatfield, Lansdale and North Wales boroughs, Hatfield, Montgomery, Towamencin, and Upper Gwynedd townships, and the village of Line Lexington. The district consists of 13 elementary schools, three middle schools, one high school, and one credit recovery school. NPSD employs approximately 2,000 staff members. Approximately 13,000 students attend North Penn schools each school year.

The vision of NPSD is to be a school system that is student-centered with a focus on academic challenge, meaningful experiences, and personal responsibility. North Penn has a reputation in the region, state and nationwide as fulfilling this promise to its students and helping them develop into future leaders. NPSD's student achievement, as measured by the PSSA, continues to improve and closing the achievement gap is a priority. In 2019, North Penn School District was ranked as the 17th best school district in Pennsylvania by *Niche K-12*. Year after year, North Penn High School has ranked as one of the top schools in the country by U.S. News & World Report.

The school directors are looking for an innovative educator who will lead the effective, student-centered organization to help students become independent, adaptable, lifelong learners who use knowledge to create deeper understanding of concepts; who will foster creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking within the organization; who will help all students achieve to their highest potential in order to live as positive, responsible, and contributing citizens in a global society; and, who will inspire all within the school community to respect diversity and appreciate human differences.

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in March of 2022 in support of the search for the new superintendent of the North Penn School District. The data contained herein were obtained from input received by HYA Vice President, Dr. William Adams, and HYA Senior Associates, Stacey Adams, M.B.A., Dr. Monica Browne, and Mr. Ed McCormick after meeting with 173 individuals and Focus Groups in either an interview setting or larger group settings in the time spanning March – April 1, 2022, and from the results of the online survey completed by 3,844 stakeholders. The surveys, interviews, and focus group meetings were structured to gather input to assist the Board of Directors in determining the primary characteristics desired in the new superintendent. Additionally, the stakeholder interviews and focus

groups provided information regarding the strengths of the district and some of the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### Strengths of the District:

Among the most frequent strengths perceived and discussed by focus group participants and during interviews, as well as reflected in the survey, is the diversity of the school district, the scope of the programming offered to students, the strong sense of pride in the schools, and the highly dedicated staff.

North Penn's diversity is considered a strength as it a microcosm of the country. The school district has implemented diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives to support both students and staff. The inclusive practices that are the result of this attention to DEI are recognized by the stakeholders as impressive; while it is also understood that more work needs to be accomplished in this area. North Penn's engaged community, with its pride in the schools, results in a strong sense of community in the district.

North Penn is viewed as a well-run district. The Board of Directors are known for their unified approach to accomplishing long-term goals. Strong district leaders are widely respected by the staff and community for working as a team to implement innovative programming. The district incorporates sound fiscal practices which result in a financially stable organization.

The size of the district allows for the implementation of a wide variety of academic and extracurricular programming for the students. Dual enrollment programs, internships, many AP classes, athletic teams in many sports and at several levels, over 90 clubs, and exceptional performing arts programs are described by stakeholders as strengths of the district.

Despite the challenges presented in the following section, the North Penn School District has significant foundational pillars on which to continually improve. These include a history of innovation and academic excellence including a wide variety of programming, dedicated and supportive teachers, robust programs for students in athletics/arts/music/theater programs, systemic attention to DEI, an engaged and supportive community who take great pride in the schools, a strong leadership team, and an overall desire to continue the reputation of North Penn as a model school district of excellence in a diverse setting, preparing students to be academically and socially prepared for the global society.

## Challenges and Issues Facing the District

There exists considerable concern among students, staff, the Board of Directors, and community members for addressing the post-pandemic issues related to learning loss, social, emotional and mental well-being for students, and staff morale. Continuing and enhancing the excellent academic reputation of the district will be an area in which the new superintendent will need to focus. In addition, the social-emotional well being of the students is an ongoing concern; one that most stakeholders in the school community are willing to work together to address. As is common in school districts across the country, staff morale suffered over the last two years and it will be a goal of the new superintendent to ensure that all adults who work in the North Penn School District feel valued and understand their importance in the overall functioning of the schools.

Hiring and retaining teachers that reflect the diverse student population was illuminated as a concern related to cultural responsiveness, as well as a challenge in the current employment climate. Many participants in focus groups indicated an appreciation for the Equity and Inclusion work currently underway and would like to see it continued and enhanced based upon specific goals for agreed upon outcomes.

The unsettling dialogue at public meetings and during recent political campaigns is a general concern indicated during focus group discussions and on the survey. Unifying a divided community is a challenge that will need to be undertaken by the new superintendent. The new superintendent, with the support of the Board of Directors, will create a commonly agreed upon vision for the district, share that vision with all stakeholders, and accept responsibility for achieving the goals of the organization in order to unify the community in support of the students of the North Penn School District.

The North Penn School District is a large and complex organization. In addition to the challenges described above, the new superintendent will need to have a firm understanding of the complicated nature of large school systems, as well as experience managing multiple renovation and building projects simultaneously. Ensuring that there is coordination between all levels of the organization, are similar expectations across the district for learning and behavior, as well as a general understanding the relationships between facilities and learning environments are important challenges that the new superintendent will need to address.

Lastly, the successor superintendent will need to build and maintain strong relationships with internal stakeholders, as well as with municipal officials and supporting organizations. There is a collective desire for an experienced, student-centered educator who can inspire others to create the best possible learning environment for the students of the North Penn School District.

### Conclusion

HYA and the Board intend to meet the challenge of finding an individual who possesses most of the skills and character traits required to meet the needs of the district. The search team will seek a successor superintendent who can work with the North Penn Board of Directors and stakeholders to provide the leadership needed to continue the equity and inclusion work, support the emotional well being of students and staff, raise academic standards and student performance, improve the learning environments, while bringing the community together in support of the schools.

The search team thanks all the participants who were interviewed, attended focus groups meetings and/or completed the online survey and the North Penn staff members who assisted with our meetings, particularly Dr. Mia Kim who organized the Focus Group meetings and Christine Liberaski who assisted with promotion and communication.

## PARTICIPATION

**Participation:** The number of participants by stakeholder groups and the two methods of data gathering are listed below. *(Note: Not all focus groups were disaggregated for the online survey.)*

Group	Personal Interviews or Focus Groups	Online Survey
Board of Directors	9	
Opts Team & Current Superintendent	4	
Cabinet	7	
Parents/Open Public Forum/Group Leaders	25	
Administrators (instructional/non-instr)	22	
Bargaining Unit Leaders	2	
Middle School Teachers	6	
High School Teachers	7	
Faith-based & Civic Leaders	2	
Community Government Leaders	1	
Elementary Administrators	11	
Secondary Administrators	12	
Parents/Guardians Current Students		971
Community Member/Business Member		164
Students	65	2247
Staff (via survey)		462
<b>Total</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>3844</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>4,017</b>

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 warrant the Board's attention. This caution is in no way intended to diminish the importance of the input that was provided by each and every stakeholder, but rather to put all of the data points into perspective. To achieve this raw data is provided in an unfiltered manner.

### Virtual Focus Group/ Community Survey Summary

A summary of the Virtual Focus Group/Community Survey results is presented as follows:

Of the 3,738 stakeholders who participated in the virtual focus group/community survey, it is interesting to note that over 60% or 2247 of the respondents were students attending one

of the schools in the district. The second largest group were parents of current students who comprised approximately 26% of all respondents or 971 of the total respondents.

On a Likert Scale of five (5), with five being the most challenging, the four greatest challenges facing the district were identified as:

1. Social-Emotional Support for Students: 63.9% ranked 4 or 5
2. Unifying the Community: 54.7% ranked 4 or 5
3. Maintaining & Attracting High Quality Staff: 54.5 ranked 4 or 5
4. DEI Outcomes: 52.8% ranked 4 or 5

On a Likert Scale of five (5), with five being the greatest, the four greatest strengths of the district were identified as:

1. High Quality Staff: 64.3% ranked 4 or 5 (tied with)
2. Strong District Leaders: 57.6% ranked 4 or 5
3. Wide Variety of Academic Offerings & Programs: 51.3% ranked 4 or 5
4. Engaged Community: 49.6% ranked 4 or 5

Respondents were asked to choose from a list of commonly desired characteristics for educational leaders, the five that are most important for the new superintendent of the North Penn School District. The results were as follows:

1. Student-Centered: 59.7%
- Tie: 2/3. Approachable/Visible: 59.4 & Problem Solver 59.4%
4. Respectful: 55%
5. Understands DEI: 45.7%

### Summary of Comments from Focus Group Meetings, Individual Interviews and Public Forum

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

- What do you consider the greatest immediate challenges for the district and what do you consider the greatest challenges over the next three years?
- What do you consider the greatest current strengths of the district and what strengths do you wish to see maintained and/or expanded?

- What are the 3 - 5 most desired characteristics that you believe the next North Penn superintendent will need to possess in order to succeed and to take the district to the next level of success?
- Is there anything else that you would like to add that would assist the HYA team in developing and preparing the leadership profile for Board consideration?
- Would you like to recommend any candidates to be invited to apply for this position?

Individual interviews were conducted in the same manner for members of the Board of Directors and for members of the cabinet/central office staff. To conclude each session, the HYA consultant asked if the participant(s) have any recommendations for specific candidates who should be notified of the process.

The results of the interviews and group meetings are compiled into a single document based on the interviewer's interpretation of the responses. These results will be presented to the Board of Directors and then utilized for recruiting and candidate evaluation purposes. Given that permission was not overtly granted, the names of individuals recommended as a potential executive leader of interest will not be shared in this document. The HYA consultants will contact those suggested and notify each about the process.

The summaries from community forums, focus group meetings, and individual interviews are reported at the end of this document and are provided to assist the Board in its deliberations regarding the desired characteristics of the successor superintendent.

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