



Barrington Community Unit School District 220

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT AND SUPERINTENDENT PROFILE

November 17, 2020

In preparation for the search for a new Superintendent, the School Board of Barrington Community Unit School District 220 requested that School Exec Connect consultants gather data regarding the perceptions of the District from District staff and community stakeholders. As a result, representative Focus Groups were held and an online questionnaire was made available to all constituencies in the District. Information from the focus groups and questionnaire were used to create a New Superintendent Profile that will guide the recruitment, screening, interviews, and selection of a new Superintendent.

Focus groups participants included the School Board, District administrators, District support staff, building administrators, teachers from all levels, support staff, students, community/business leaders, and parents. Eighty-nine (89) stakeholders took part in the focus groups. All participants were asked to express their views regarding the strengths of the District, challenges facing the District, first-year priorities for the new Superintendent, and the specific characteristics, skills, and attributes to be sought in the next Superintendent.

This report lists the responses from each of the stakeholder groups. Due to the sampling methodology, this report should not be construed as scientifically accurate. The opinions set forth in the report may not reflect the opinion of all staff, students, and residents, but do reflect the opinions of those who participated. Judgments regarding what is included in this report are those of the consultants, based upon the frequency of statements received throughout the data gathering process.

As mentioned above, the District sought further input from stakeholders via an online questionnaire. Eight hundred thirty-eight (838) respondents answered questions similar to those posed to focus group participants. Information on the questionnaire results can be found after the focus group response summary.

The consultants used the opinions expressed in this report to develop the **New Superintendent Profile**, found on the final page of this report.

This report may be used in several ways. The responses will be helpful to the consultants as they screen and interview candidates as well as to the Board of Education as they prepare questions for the Board interviews with the candidates. The consultants also recommend the report be given to the newly appointed Superintendent for a better understanding of the issues and opportunities facing the District. The District may also choose to post the report on the Superintendent Search portion of the website to be viewed by stakeholders.

SCHOOL EXEC CONNECT

Focus Group Response Overview

Focus Groups were held with all constituencies including Board, parents, administrators, teachers, students, and community leaders. Eighty-nine participants in fourteen meetings provided insights into the strengths and challenges facing the District, the priorities the new Superintendent should establish, and the qualities and skills the next Superintendent should possess. Below is a summary of the responses to each of the four questions asked in each Focus group.

The first question asked participants to identify the major strengths of Barrington Community Unit School District 220. Respondents noted the strong sense of community and pride in the schools that bring alumni back to live and work in Barrington. The community is in a desirable location, and new residents are warmly welcomed. A recent capital referendum was overwhelmingly approved, a further indicator of community support for the District. High-achieving students and excellent teachers are a source of pride; parents are highly involved in their children's education. Teachers feel free to innovate and take risks, but they also demonstrate a sense of balance between creativity and respect for tradition. A collaborative atmosphere exists among teachers and leaders, with many in-house experts encouraged to share their knowledge with others. High expectations for leaders, staff, teachers, and students are well-established, and Barrington is a well-respected leader at the local, state, and national level. Community members and employees all expressed pride in the abundance of opportunities available to students in courses and school programs, but also in sports, music, drama, arts, and clubs. Innovative technology is integral to District operations, focusing on instruction, management systems, student support, and remote learning. The Superintendent is visible and active in the community. The geographically large District is comprised of a diverse population; a unit District presents opportunities for alignment and continuity for families. The Board and administration make decisions that are fiscally responsible, with excellent financial ratings recognizing their efforts.

The second prompt for the Focus Groups asked participants to identify the biggest challenges facing the District in the next few years. The multiple effects of the pandemic appear to be uppermost in people's minds at this time. Concerns about student learning, community harmony, Board operations, and the safety and health of students, staff, and the entire community were raised. The challenges of addressing a possible 'learning gap' and of healing the divisions within the community face the next Superintendent. Other challenges include implementation of the large capital project under new leadership, maintaining momentum on current initiatives, and keeping an aging community engaged in school issues. The topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion were frequently mentioned, with many expressing the hope that more progress can be made in meeting the varying needs of a diverse population, including students with special needs. Building trust and raising morale, especially after a tense year dealing with Covid-19, is a challenge for a new leader. Communication is vital in reaching all constituencies on a regular basis as is using media that is most accessible to each group. The next Superintendent will be

following highly-respected leaders and will be expected to maintain the District's reputation for high-performance and competitiveness in multiple areas.

Asked to identify priorities for the next Superintendent, Focus Group members' responses echoed items mentioned in the previous two questions. They want the new Superintendent to focus on students: individual student needs, equity across the District, academic achievement, and social and emotional needs of students at all levels. Participants mentioned the need for strategic planning and establishing a good working relationship between the Superintendent and Board. Every group mentioned the importance of encouraging the Superintendent to take time to get to know the District and its residents and employees, to embark on a 'listening tour' before introducing new initiatives or programs. Participants mentioned the importance of a recovery plan to address the impact of the pandemic on student learning, District budget, and relationships among teachers, administrators, Board, and parents. They want the new Superintendent to prioritize visibility and accessibility, and to be active in the schools and community. Building strong teams and establishing effective working relationships with administrators and teachers is important. The new Superintendent should be a visionary leader who will develop a clear, ambitious strategy for the future that enjoys support among the staff and community.

The fourth question asked participants to identify those skills, personal qualities, and experiences that are important for the next Superintendent to possess. Participants want the Superintendent to be genuinely student-focused, making decisions based on what is best for students. A proven leader with identifiable accomplishments, the next Superintendent should be hard-working, proactive, transparent, visionary, and strategic. The new Superintendent should be familiar with how a unit district functions and should allocate time and resources equitably among all the schools and grade levels. The next Superintendent should be skilled at Board management, fostering a professional, productive working relationship with the Board and its individual members. Understanding finance, business operations, and capital projects is important for the new Superintendent, as is a deep knowledge of curriculum and instruction. Focus Group participants want the District's Superintendent to work closely with community leaders as well as state and federal officials. The new Superintendent should display humor, compassion, warmth, and approachability. Experience with contract negotiations is important, as is the capacity to develop positive relations with labor groups. The new leader should have the ability to balance confidence and humility, to act decisively, but to listen carefully and work collaboratively in reaching those decisions. A key to success for the new Superintendent will be understanding the economic and racial diversity of the district and supporting programs that promote equity and inclusion. Communication skills are critically important, including listening to all constituents and demonstrating skill in speaking and writing. Engagement with the community is of vital importance.

In final comments, Focus Group participants recognize that the new Superintendent will be facing the unique circumstance of leading through a pandemic, and that multiple challenges face the District in the coming year. They also stressed the importance of the new Superintendent reaching a deep understanding the complex community and building on the support that was evidenced in the successful capital referendum. A community suffused with the spirit of volunteerism and generosity, the participants hope for someone who will immerse him/herself in the life of the community and schools.

SCHOOL EXEC CONNECT

Barrington Community Unit School District 220

Questionnaire Results: Listed below are charts summarizing the responses to the questionnaire which was administered between October 7-30. Eight hundred and thirty-eight (838) staff members, parents, administrators, students, and community members completed the online survey, an outstanding response rate. More than 450 people responded in the last three days the questionnaire was open. Note that results are reported for each item only if 20% or more of respondents marked that answer.

Participants:

Parents:	566	Support Staff	42
Teachers	175	Admin	24
Community	102	Students	46
		Other	20
TOTAL:	975	(137 people marked multiple categories)	

Question: Please list 4 items that represent the greatest educational **strengths** of District 220.

Answer Choice	Responses (in rank order)
Quality of teaching staff	63%
Use of technology for learning	44%
High-achieving student learning environment	37%
Challenging and state-of-the-art curriculum	36%
Development of skills in the areas of communication, creativity, innovation, critical thinking, problem-solving, technology	28%
Student readiness for the next level of their education	27%
Opportunities for students outside the classroom	25%
Parent commitment that fosters student learning	20%
Safe student and staff learning environment	20%

Question: Please select four (4) items that represent the greatest educational challenges in District 220.

Answer Choice	Responses (in rank order)
District's understanding and support of diversity	43%
Instructional methods that engage all students	34%
Closing achievement gaps among student subgroups	34%
Instruction tailored to individual student gifts/needs	29%
Vision for the direction of the school district	28%
Quality of District and school administrators	24%
Emphasis on educating the whole child (tie)	23%
Support for social emotional student development	
Development of student skills in the areas of communication, creativity, innovation, critical thinking, problem-solving, technology	21%

Question: Please select the areas you consider the top four (4) managerial or organizational strengths and challenges of District 220.

Strengths	Responses in rank order
Up-to-date technology	59%
Communication with parents and community	42%
Image of the District	40%
Clean and well-maintained schools	39%
School safety	35%
Stewardship of financial resources/Community support of education (tie)	33%
Long range strategic plan and implementation	27%
Challenges	Responses
Long-range strategic plan and implementation	40%
Staff Morale	39%
Communication with parents and community	38%
Board governance	37%
Stewardship of financial resources	31%
Support for education by the community	31%
Student conduct and discipline	27%
Clean and well-maintained schools	23%
Educational mandates from the legislature	21%

Question: Please select three goals that the new Superintendent should focus on in the first year in District 220.

Answer Choice	Responses (in rank order)
Development of 21 st Century skills (communication, collaboration, creativity, innovation, critical thinking, problem-solving, and media and technology literacy)	40%
Building a culture of collaboration among all stakeholders	37%
Student growth and achievement	35%
Relationships with staff and community members	28%
Facilities improvement	26%
Equity issues	26%
Communication with staff, parents, and the community	25%

Question: Choose the top five characteristics/skills (assuming honesty and integrity) you believe are most important for a person to be successful as the new Superintendent of Barrington Unit School District 220.

Answer Choice	Responses (in rank order)
Makes decisions based on what is best for students; is student-centered	60%
Demonstrates a clear vision for leading our schools that inspires others	50%
Practices transparency in decision-making	48%
Possesses a deep knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and student learning	42%
Builds good teams and brings out the best in others	41%
Works collaboratively and includes others in decision-making	36%
Demonstrates excellent people skills; shows warmth, humor, and interest in others	27%
Understands finance and the business side of the District	24%
Is open-minded and flexible	23%



Superintendent Profile

Barrington Community Unit School District 220

The new Superintendent should be a person who:

- Makes decisions based on what is best for students; keeps students as the focal point of planning and decision-making
- Communicates a clear vision for the future of District 220 and inspires others to act in accordance with that vision
- Demonstrates strong interpersonal skills and develops positive relationships among all constituencies while displaying warmth, good humor, and interest in others
- Focuses on effective communication, listening closely, speaking and writing with a high degree of skill, and employing a variety of media to reach all constituencies
- Works collaboratively and professionally with the Board, aligning decision-making with the District vision and goals and pursuing those objectives with passion, transparency, and persistence
- Builds effective teams through collaboration, mentoring, and clear communication; empowers others to fully develop their leadership capacity and to accept responsibility for their work
- Establishes and maintains strong relationships with local, regional, and state leaders and with local labor groups, using networks to learn, to share, and to support District goals
- Demonstrates commitment to addressing issues of equity and diversity, focusing on the academic and personal development of all students and inclusion of all families in school life
- Promotes excellence in the quality of the teaching staff, placing a priority on hiring a diverse and highly skilled corps of teachers while providing development opportunities for all
- Understands curriculum, teaching, and learning and promotes instructional methods that are engaging and supportive of high academic achievement; uses technology to support instruction and to enhance student engagement
- Values the unique needs of every student and allocates resources for programs that support their academic, personal, and social-emotional growth, including the development of creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills
- Exhibits a balance between self-confidence and humility; acts decisively, but listens carefully before making a decision
- Understands the community, recognizing the diversity of District 220 residents and students
- Displays knowledge and skill in fiscal and legal matters affecting the District
- Understands the impact of the pandemic on students, families, teachers, and the community and develops plans to address issues that have emerged