



Portland Public Schools Superintendent Search Constituent Engagement

Executive Summary

During the past three weeks, 1823 students, parents or family members, PPS employees, and community members participated in 1:1 interviews, focus groups, or completed the on-line survey. Those participants were asked about PPS strengths, challenges, and personal and professional qualities, attributes, skills, and experiences desired in the next superintendent of schools. This feedback learned from the Portland Public Schools staff, families, students and community shaped the development of the *Next Superintendent Criteria*. The draft document will be presented to the Portland Public Schools Board of Education for discussion and deliberation at their meeting on April 2, 2024. The Board will solicit additional public input on April 2 and at a subsequent meeting on April 9 before taking action.

The data contained herein were obtained from input received by Human Capital Enterprises consultants Robyn Bean, Tammy Campbell, Ph.D., Hector Garcia, Ph.D., Hank Harris, Christy Perry, Jay Rallion, Kathleen Rodden-Nord, Ph.D., and Steve Webb, Ed.D. The input was reviewed, and themes were identified. It is important to emphasize that the delineations below are not a scientific sampling, nor should they necessarily be viewed as representing a majority opinion, but rather the themes identified across the 1823 people who responded through the focus groups or online surveys. Items are included if, in the consultants' judgment, they warranted the Board's attention. The themes below are not ranked.

District Strengths

- **Commitment to Equity:** PPS's dedication to equity, especially focused on closing opportunity and achievement gaps for historically marginalized students, is highly valued. The district's efforts to integrate equity in both policy and practice, including Board goal alignment and equity-focused budgeting, are seen as vital to the district's future success. Many constituents identified the need for a renewed commitment to attracting and retaining BIPOC educators and leaders, and for the district to take action to advance equity outcomes.
- **Academic Programs, Curriculum, and Extracurricular Programs:** Recent efforts to provide a common and comprehensive core curriculum, including the adoption of new instructional materials, were noted as a district strength. Additionally, there is a strong focus on inclusive practices, and this is viewed positively. Respondents appreciate the breadth and depth of program choices, including language immersion, Advanced Placement, IB, focus-option schools, emphasizing the importance of meeting the diverse interests and needs of all learners. The value placed on arts, music, athletics, and various extracurricular activities reflects a desire for a well-rounded education.



- **Dedicated and Caring Educators and Staff:** Many respondents' express pride in the strong sense of community and the dedication of teachers and staff within their local school community. They appreciate the hard working, caring, and committed educators and staff who create safe, supportive, and engaging learning environments for students.
- **Community Engagement and Support:** The strong connection between schools and the Portland community, demonstrated through volunteerism, parental involvement, and voter support for school measures, is a source of pride. Ensuring continued collaboration and support from the community is a priority. Portland is a community that deeply values public education and believes PPS can and should be world class.
- **Student-Centered Approach:** The responsiveness to meeting the individual needs of each student is praised. The focus on student social-emotional well-being, creating a school culture of belonging, and personalized learning is something respondents believe should be sustained and expanded.
- **Board Vision:** There was positive feedback on the board's goals that set the vision and strategic direction for the district. It was noted that the board has respectful relationships, and was focused on student outcomes, specifically closing the achievement gap for black and brown students. There was a desire for a superintendent who can foster a healthy relationship with the board and community.
- **Support for Diverse Populations:** Efforts to support diverse student populations, including special education, second language learners, and services for economically disadvantaged students were highlighted. Efforts toward more inclusive practices for students with disabilities are noted as positive steps that need further support and development.
- **Facilities and Infrastructure:** Respondents appreciated the recent capital improvements, modernization of buildings, and the investment in educational infrastructure. They noted that these contribute to a better learning environment, it is acknowledged that these investments will need to be continued long term in order to provide high quality learning environments across the district.
- **Professional Development and Support for Teachers:** The presence of instructional coaches, teacher-mentors, and the focus on professional development are seen as beneficial for ensuring high-quality instruction and should be an ongoing priority.
- **Progressive Values and Social Justice:** Portland Public Schools and the community of Portland has a deep commitment to progressive values, social justice, anti-racism, and preparing students for global citizenship. This was a point of pride for many. Elevating student voice and activism was also identified as an important part of PPS.

District Challenges

- **Trust:** A breakdown in trust was highlighted across all groups. Attention should be paid to repairing and restoring trust with employees, parents and families, and community by enhancing transparency, communication, and community involvement in school and district decision-making.



- **Budget Management and Funding:** Ensuring adequate, stable and equitable funding remains a central challenge, with a need to lobby for increased state funding, creating efficiencies with district administrative services and operations, and prioritizing spending on student-facing roles and essential services. Some respondents recommend that the district consider school consolidation to optimize resource use, improve educational services, and “right-size” the number of schools to student enrollment served.
- **Labor Relations and Staff Morale:** Rebuilding trust and fostering collaboration with teachers and the PAT, especially post-strike, is viewed as a high priority. Improving support and resources will boost staff morale and job satisfaction, address the district's top-down culture perception, and ensure a safe and supportive work environment. Navigating collective bargaining effectively with all employee groups is key to district stability and ongoing public support of the district.
- **Facilities Maintenance and Modernization:** While the current work on facilities maintenance and modernization was highlighted, it was recognized that this work must continue and will need considerable new resources. Modernizing aging school facilities to ensure equitable access across the district to high quality learning environments, addressing school safety concerns, and implementing air quality improvements is needed in many schools.
- **Special Education Services and Student Support:** Enhancing support for special education and integrating inclusive practices was of concern. The district’s current implementation model was identified in multiple groups as an area that needs to be re-examined. It was also noted that providing additional staffing including specialists and paraprofessionals, and providing on-going professional development and staff training to more effectively serve differently-abled students in their least restrictive environment effectively is needed. More support for comprehensive wrap-around student services, including mental health services, should be added when possible.
- **Academic Achievement, Culturally Responsive Instruction, and Inclusive Schools:** Elevating academic standards and rigor, addressing opportunity and achievement gaps for historically marginalized students, and improving academic outcomes for all learners were identified as areas for improvement. While the focus on common curriculum and the instructional framework were noted as positive, fidelity of implementation is needed. In addition, there is a need to ensure that curriculum and instructional practices are culturally responsive. Creating the context and conditions where all students are accepted and feel a sense of belonging, including marginalized identities, needs to continue and be strengthened.
- **Communications:** Communication with students, families and the broader community was noted across all groups as an area for improvement. Respondents believe that transparent and ongoing communication, and engagement in the community by the district is critical to rebuilding trust and essential for the ongoing support and strategic efforts of PPS.



The team of Human Capital Enterprises is appreciative of the 1823 students, staff, families, and community members who engaged in this process and for the Portland Public Schools staff who worked tirelessly to pull off this large and complex project on a compressed timeline. It was evident throughout all the engagement that the people both within the district and the community love their school community and the community of Portland. Their greatest hope for their next leader is someone who provides continuous and authentic care for all members of the PPS community who can be a strong and visionary leader for the next chapter in Portland Public Schools.