



Superintendent Leadership Profile Report Saugus Union School District March 3, 2026

Introduction

This report represents the findings of the *Superintendent Leadership Profile* compiled by Education Support Services February 9 – February 28. The information herein was gathered via focus group meetings, one-on-one interviews, virtual sessions, individual email correspondence, and an online survey. Data from this engagement process has been synthesized around common themes to assist the Board of Education in its screening, interview, and selection of Saugus Union School District’s next superintendent.

Each engagement session focused on three primary areas:

- a) strengths of the District
- b) challenges or issues facing the District
- c) qualities and characteristics desired in the next superintendent

Engagement Process – In Person and Virtual

The Governing Board invited a broad cross-section of Saugus USD stakeholders to share their perspectives. Over 100 employees, parents, community members, and students participated in individual and group sessions, including two community meetings open to the public. Their input focused on the district’s strengths, areas of need, and the qualities desired in the next superintendent.

Engagement Process – Online Survey

An online survey was conducted to enlist input about the overall quality of education in SUSD, along with the desired leadership skills, personal attributes, and expertise of the next superintendent. 426 responses were submitted. A summary of findings from the respondents is provided in Exhibit A.

Summary of Findings

Across all conversations, a strong sense of commitment and connection to Saugus Union School District stood out. Participants consistently expressed pride in both the district and the surrounding Santa Clarita Valley community, which is widely viewed as a desirable place to live, work, and educate children. Families and staff alike value the area’s strong reputation for student achievement, well-planned neighborhoods, abundant parks and cultural opportunities, access to higher education, and well-maintained infrastructure. It is

indeed a “destination district” which will undoubtedly attract several highly qualified candidates.

Engagement Insights

Strengths:

Community engagement was a clear strength, with parents and community members consistently demonstrating strong involvement and a shared commitment to student success. While priorities and perspectives vary, all participants agreed on the common goal of helping students and schools thrive.

The success of SUSD schools and the district have received a plethora of awards; these achievements are recognized as the result of the sustained efforts and strong teamwork of SUSD students, staff, and families.

In every interview and meeting, participants highlighted student achievement, noting strong gains following COVID-related disruptions. These improvements reflect intentional curriculum alignment across schools and grade levels, strengthened instructional practices, and meaningful professional development for staff. Many noted the increased focus on using data to both measure progress and refine teaching strategies as a strength.

Safety and security are clear strengths, with effective practices in place to protect both students and staff. Campuses are viewed as attractive, well maintained, and, while not identical, generally equitable across schools.

Technology is a clear strength of the District. Investments in infrastructure, equipment, staff, and training have supported effective use of technology for both student learning and operational efficiency. Stakeholders noted a smooth transition to online learning necessitated by COVID in 2020, especially in comparison to other districts, and families value the District’s accessible information and the effective use of ParentSquare for timely, clear communication.

Challenges:

Communication is widely viewed as an area for growth and was raised consistently across interviews and community meetings. While perspectives vary, many stakeholders expressed a desire for more proactive, transparent communication—especially around complex or sensitive topics. Others noted a need for more meaningful opportunities for two-way dialogue, sharing that some communication feels informational rather than truly collaborative. Together, these insights point to an opportunity to strengthen trust and engagement through clearer, more inclusive communication practices.

Recent distressing events and difficult topics, along with differing perspectives among the Board, staff, families, and community, have created ongoing challenges. Stakeholders noted the need to thoughtfully navigate complex issues while preparing to manage future demands related to budget, personnel, facilities, and board governance. Many noted the need to have a clear communication philosophy and strategy for high-profile issues.

Many participants expressed interest in stronger collaboration with neighboring districts, particularly the William S. Hart Union High School District, where SUSD students continue their education. Some noted the District can feel siloed and believe deeper partnerships would be beneficial.

While many praised the district's academic progress, some shared concerns about the organizational changes that supported those gains. A few participants noted discomfort with the shift from site-based curriculum decisions to greater districtwide consistency.

Many participants shared concerns about challenges within the Board, noting difficulty in exhibiting a clear, unified direction and working cohesively. These dynamics are seen as limiting the Board's ability to provide strong, consistent support to the new superintendent.

Ideal Leadership Qualities:

The organization seeks a balanced leader who values collaboration and thoughtfully engages others when addressing complex issues, while also demonstrating the confidence to take timely and decisive action. This leader maintains a strong focus on achieving goals and ensures consistent, transparent communication throughout implementation. He or she actively seeks authentic input and feedback, incorporates perspectives in a meaningful way, and takes full responsibility for the final decisions and their outcomes.

Many expressed a desire for a leader who will build cohesion and increase trust, both internally among groups as well as between district leaders, staff, and families. Participants consistently expressed a strong preference for a leader who will be visible in schools and the community, as well as someone who will work hard to get to know the people, practices, and culture of the district.

Many participants said they want an aspirational leader – one who has an abundance mindset, who inspires and models high standards and high performance. Participants frequently described their ideal leader as approachable, humble, open-minded, a relationship builder, and collaborative.

One participant succinctly stated, “We need a leader who can clearly articulate a goal, build a plan and the support to accomplish it, then keep us all focused on that North Star as we work to reach it.”

Conclusion

The search advisors would like to thank the more than 100 participants who attended meetings along with the 426 individuals who completed the online survey. We would also like to express our gratitude to Pam Dall, who orchestrated a seamless process to gather the thoughts/interests of multiple constituents and for her assistance in engaging education partners in the online survey and forums.

The ESS search advisors are honored to assist the Governing Board meet the challenge of finding an individual who possesses the leadership skills, personal attributes, expertise, experience, and drive to successfully lead the Saugus Union School District into the future.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven Keller, ESS Search Advisor

Kelli Moors, ESS Search Advisor

EXHIBIT A - PUBLIC VERSION

Superintendent Leadership Profile Report

Saugus Union School District

February 28, 2026

Introduction

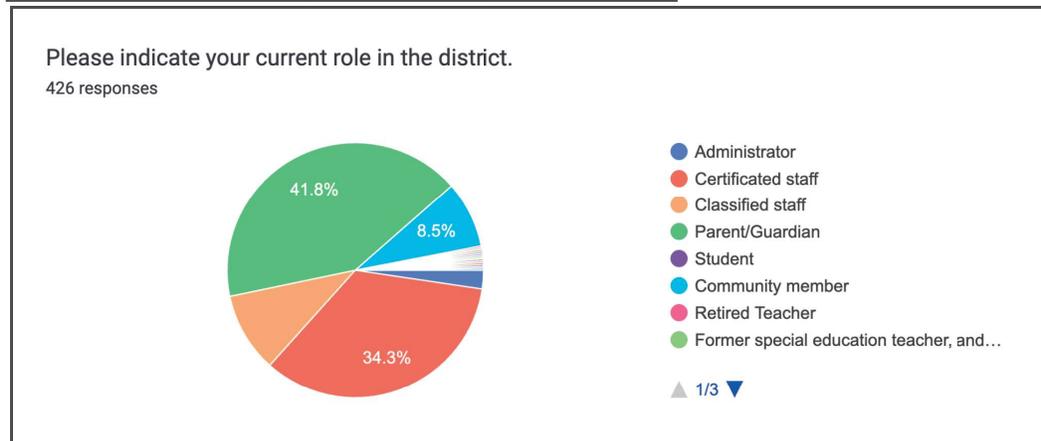
This report represents the findings of the Superintendent Leadership Profile conducted by Education Support Services Group (ESS) from February 9, 2026 through February 28, 2026. The information herein was obtained from an online survey. Data gleaned from this engagement process is intended to assist the Saugus Union School District with the selection of its next superintendent.

Online Survey

An online survey was distributed to enlist stakeholder perceptions about the overall quality of education in Saugus Union School District, along with the desired expertise and personal attributes of the next superintendent. 426 respondents completed the online survey. Respondents included members of the certificated and classified staff, parents, and community members (see below). Respondent feedback is summarized below.

Survey Respondents

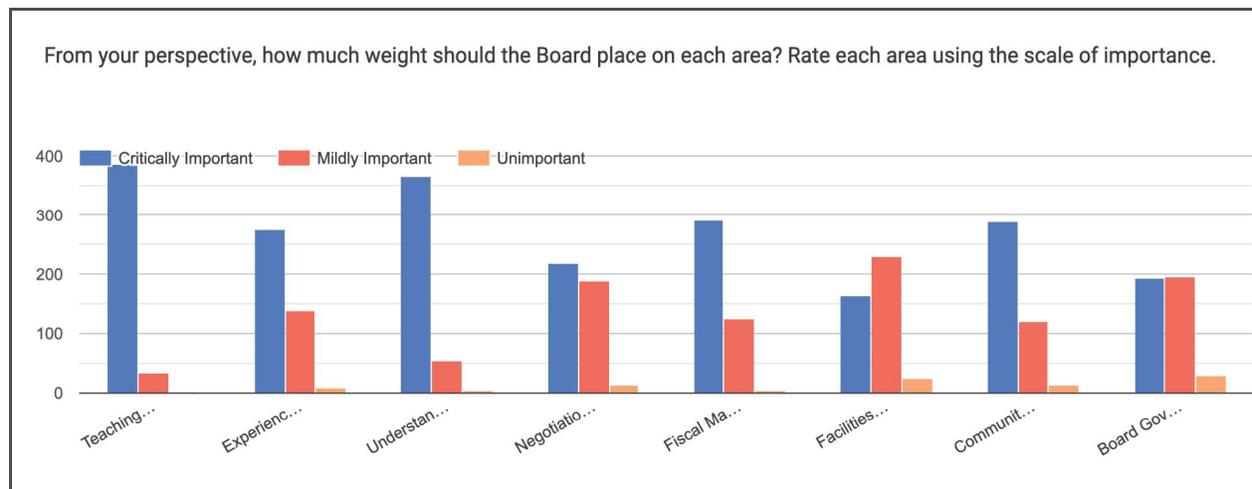
Role	Frequency	Percentage
Administrator	10	2.3%
Certificated Staff	146	34.3%
Classified Staff	43	10.1%
Parent/Guardian	178	41.8%
Student	0	0
Community Member	36	8.5%
Other	13	3.1%



Expertise and Experience

From your perspective, how much weight should the Board place on each area based on the scale of importance?

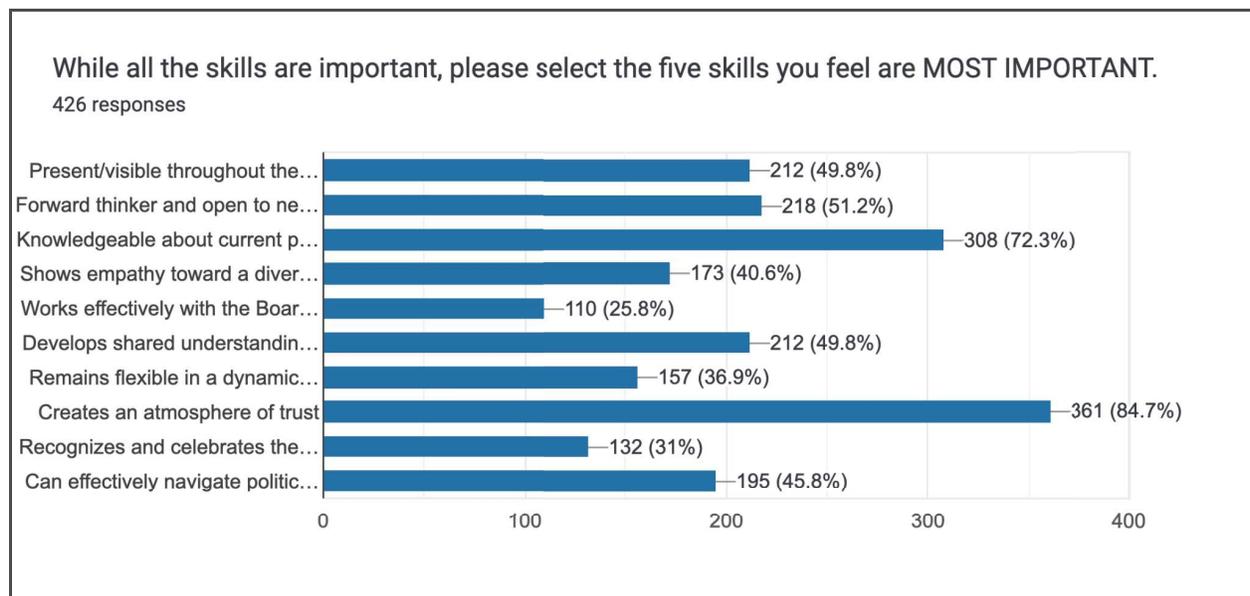
	Critically Important	Mildly Important	Unimportant
Teaching and Learning	387	34	2
Experience as a Site Principal	275	140	8
Understanding School and Community Culture	366	55	4
Negotiations/Labor Relations	218	189	14
Fiscal Management	292	126	4
Facilities Management	164	231	26
Community Relations	290	121	13
Board Governance	193	197	30



Leadership Qualities

While all the skills are important, please select the five skills you feel are MOST IMPORTANT.

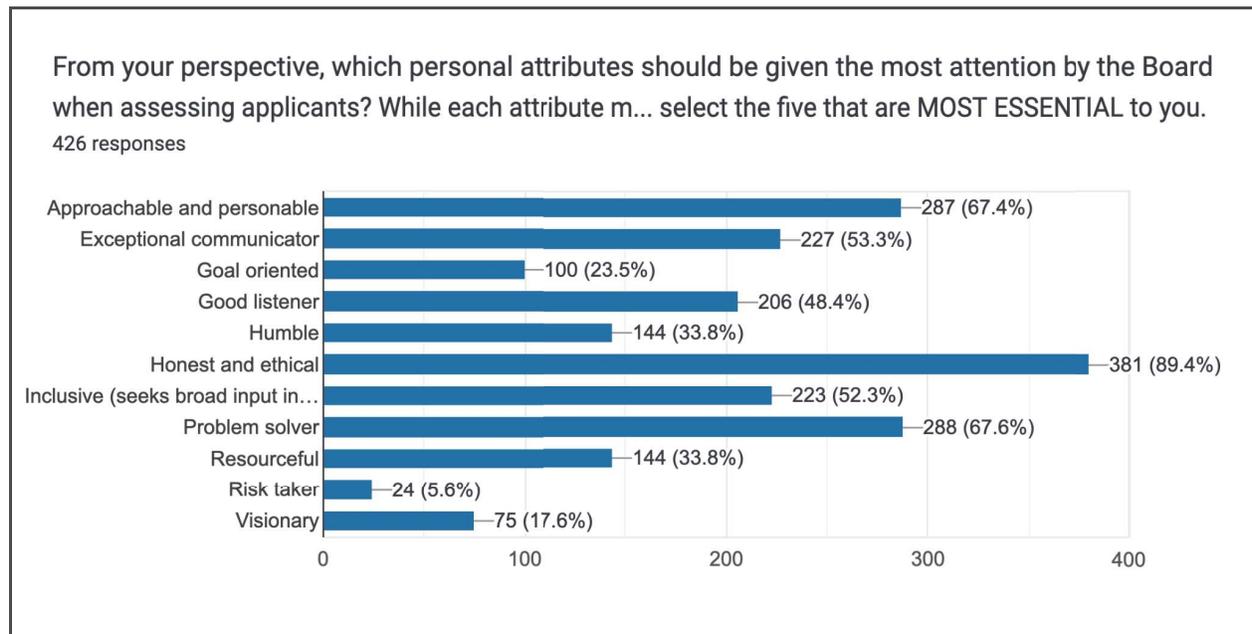
	Frequency	Percentage
Creates an atmosphere of trust	361	84.7%
Knowledgeable about current practices surrounding teaching and learning	308	72.3%
Forward thinker and open to new ideas	218	51.2%
Present/visible throughout the District and community	212	49.8%
Develops shared understanding of District goals and priorities	212	49.8%
Can effectively navigate political and/or controversial issues	195	45.8%
Shows empathy toward a diverse group of education partners	173	40.6%
Remains flexible in a dynamic environment	157	36.9%
Recognizes and celebrates the contributions of others	132	31%
Works effectively with the Board of Education	110	25.8%



Personal Attributes

From your perspective, which personal attributes should be given the most attention by the Board of Education when assessing applicants? While each attribute may be important, select the five that are MOST IMPORTANT to you.

	Frequency	Percentage
Honest and ethical	381	89.4%
Problem solver	288	67.6%
Approachable and personable	287	67.4%
Exceptional communicator	227	53.3%
Inclusive (seeks broad input in making decisions)	223	52.3%
Good listener	206	48.4%
Humble	144	33.8%
Resourceful	144	33.8%
Goal oriented	100	23.5%
Visionary	75	17.6%
Risk taker	24	5.6%



District Conditions

As you think about the general conditions across the District, select the response that best describes your agreement with each statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Students receive a high quality education that prepares them for college, career, and life.	152	226	29	9	7
Academic goals are aligned across the District.	126	209	50	6	28
Adequate resources are provided to support student learning.	130	148	108	29	3
Students feel valued and connected to their schools.	133	219	52	10	8
Staff members feel valued and connected to their workplace.	114	127	110	32	37
School safety is a high priority.	168	143	68	38	5
District facilities are clean and well-kept.	161	227	20	4	7
Communication from the District is clear and timely.	119	151	108	34	9
The District is responsive to the diverse interests and needs of its families.	105	170	85	36	25
The District is constantly improving.	112	142	110	37	21

