

Superintendent Search Survey Report



Columbia
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Columbia Public Schools
January 2025



**MISSOURI SCHOOL
BOARDS' ASSOCIATION**

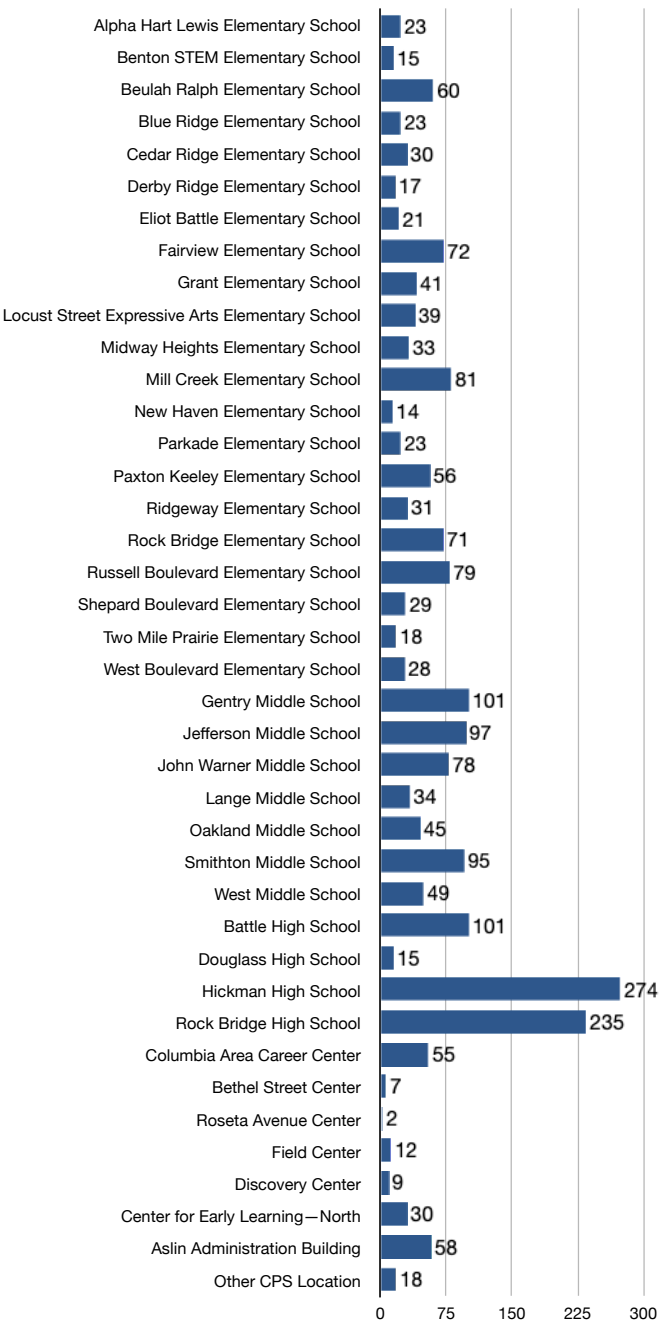
HELPING SCHOOL BOARDS ENSURE ALL STUDENTS SUCCEED

Purpose of the Report

This report is intended to inform the Columbia Public Schools Board of Education about the desired qualifications community members hope to have in the next superintendent.

The Missouri School Boards' Association (MSBA) recently conducted a stakeholder survey from December 2–29, 2024. The survey resulted in 1,276 total responses from students, employees, parents and guardians, district residents, and others. The feedback from the survey report may be used to inform the hiring process to ensure the next superintendent is a good fit for the district and community.

Respondents were asked to select the school(s) or location they or their students were affiliated with. Respondents could select multiple or no locations.

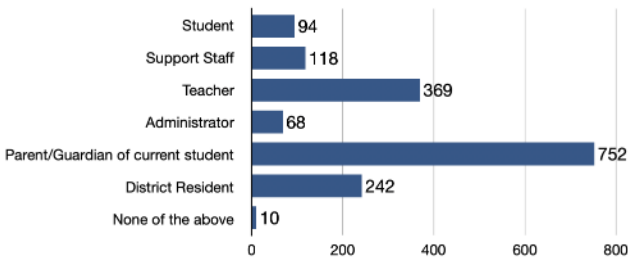


Additional Survey Considerations

The community survey reflects the perceptions of individual respondents and should serve as one among multiple data points to be used in selecting a superintendent.

The survey was open to the public and all responses were anonymous unless personally identified details were provided within the individual responses. There were no restrictions on multiple submissions; it is therefore possible that respondents completed the survey more than once.

Respondents were also asked to select the group or role that best represented their affiliation with the district. Respondents could select multiple roles.



Perceived District Strengths

Survey Question: What are the strengths or points of pride for the Columbia Public School District?

Here are the top themes identified from all stakeholder responses:

1. Collaboration between staff, students, and the community is frequently highlighted as a strength, emphasizing teamwork and cooperation within the district. (749 mentions)
2. Teachers and staff are often praised for their dedication, professionalism, and positive impact on student learning. (499 mentions)
3. The sense of community and collective support for the school district stands out as a point of pride, reflecting strong local involvement. (458 mentions)
4. Students themselves are seen as a source of pride, often described in relation to their achievements, diversity, and growth. (318 mentions)
5. Positive mentions of achievement highlight academic success, student accomplishments, and overall school performance. (244 mentions)
6. School facilities, including school buildings and resources, were commonly mentioned in the context of their quality and availability for learning. (210 mentions)
7. Leadership within the district, including the district office and CPS administration, was frequently noted as a significant factor in school success. (156 mentions)
8. Diversity was praised as a strength, with recognition of a culturally rich student and staff population. (144 mentions)
9. The quality of education, including curriculum and teaching effectiveness, was often mentioned as a positive aspect of the district. (129 mentions)
10. Opportunities for student growth, extracurricular activities, and advanced learning programs were highlighted. (127 mentions)
11. Emotional and academic support for students, including care and mentoring, was frequently praised. (118 mentions)

The top five response themes from...		(See summaries above for details)
<u>Students</u>	<u>Staff</u>	<u>Parents/Guardians</u>
Achievement (19 mentions)	Collaboration (398 mentions)	Collaboration (405 mentions)
Community (17 mentions)	Community (327 mentions)	Teachers (293 mentions)
Leadership (17 mentions)	Teachers (264 mentions)	Community (199 mentions)
Teachers (16 mentions)	Students (192 mentions)	Achievement (192 mentions)
School Facilities (14 mentions)	Achievement (132 mentions)	Students (172 mentions)

Perceived District Challenges

Survey Question: What are the challenges facing the Columbia Public School District?

Here are the top themes identified from all stakeholder responses:

1. Challenges related to student performance, behavior, and engagement were frequently noted as areas of concern. (723 mentions)
2. Issues involving teacher retention, workload, and support were commonly raised as significant challenges. (705 mentions)
3. Concerns were raised about community involvement, collaboration, and the need for stronger connections between schools and families. (553 mentions)
4. Challenges mentioned included the condition of school facilities, overcrowding, and disparities between different schools in the district. (530 mentions)
5. A lack of essential resources, such as materials, technology, and funding, was frequently cited as a major issue. (319 mentions)
6. Leadership concerns focused on district-level decision-making, accountability, and trust in administrative processes. (284 mentions)
7. Issues with education quality, including curriculum effectiveness, learning outcomes, and instructional strategies were commonly mentioned. (215 mentions)
8. The need for better support systems for both students and staff, including emotional and professional support, was highlighted. (151 mentions)
9. Poor communication and transparency from district leadership and between schools and families were frequently noted as challenges. (109 mentions)

The top five response themes from...		(See summaries above for details)
<u>Students</u>	<u>Staff</u>	<u>Parents/Guardians</u>
Students (57 mentions)	Teachers (430 mentions)	Students (413 mentions)
School Facilities (39 mentions)	Community (380 mentions)	Teachers (400 mentions)
Leadership (20 mentions)	Students (331 mentions)	School Facilities (337 mentions)
Community (14 mentions)	School Facilities (216 mentions)	Community (258 mentions)
Teachers (11 mentions)	Leadership (178 mentions)	Resources (196 mentions)

Expectations for the Next Superintendent

Survey Question: What are your expectations for the next Superintendent of the Columbia Public School District?

Here are the top themes identified from all stakeholder responses:

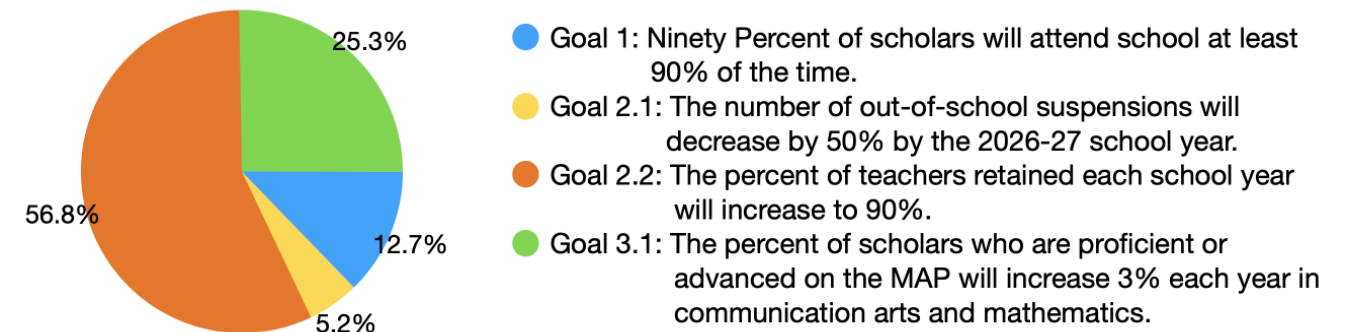
1. Strong community involvement, collaboration, and building trust were frequently highlighted as essential expectations for leadership. (690 mentions)
2. Ensuring teacher support, retention, and empowerment was a primary expectation from the next superintendent. (654 mentions)
3. Focus on student-centered policies, academic success, and well-being was a common priority. (501 mentions)
4. Effective and visible leadership, particularly from the superintendent, with an emphasis on ethical decision-making was a repeated expectation. (470 mentions)
5. Parents and staff expressed a need for improved school facilities, improved infrastructure, and equitable facility distribution. (393 mentions)
6. Education quality, including high academic standards, curriculum effectiveness, and consistent learning outcomes were identified as priorities. (171 mentions)
7. Emotional and academic support systems for both staff and students were frequently mentioned as areas requiring attention. (163 mentions)
8. Clear, honest, and transparent communication between district leadership, families, and staff was a repeated demand. (114 mentions)

The top five response themes from...		(See summaries above for details)
<u>Students</u>	<u>Staff</u>	<u>Parents/Guardians</u>
Students (35 mentions)	Community (453 mentions)	Teachers (354 mentions)
School Facilities (18 mentions)	Teachers (380 mentions)	Students (348 mentions)
Leadership (17 mentions)	Leadership (282 mentions)	Community (335 mentions)
Community (15 mentions)	Students (234 mentions)	Leadership (230 mentions)
Education Quality (8 mentions)	School Facilities (188 mentions)	School Facilities (227 mentions)

The themes highlight the community's desire for a superintendent who is a strong leader, but also an approachable and engaged presence within the district who prioritizes communication, values teachers, and maintains a focus on student success.

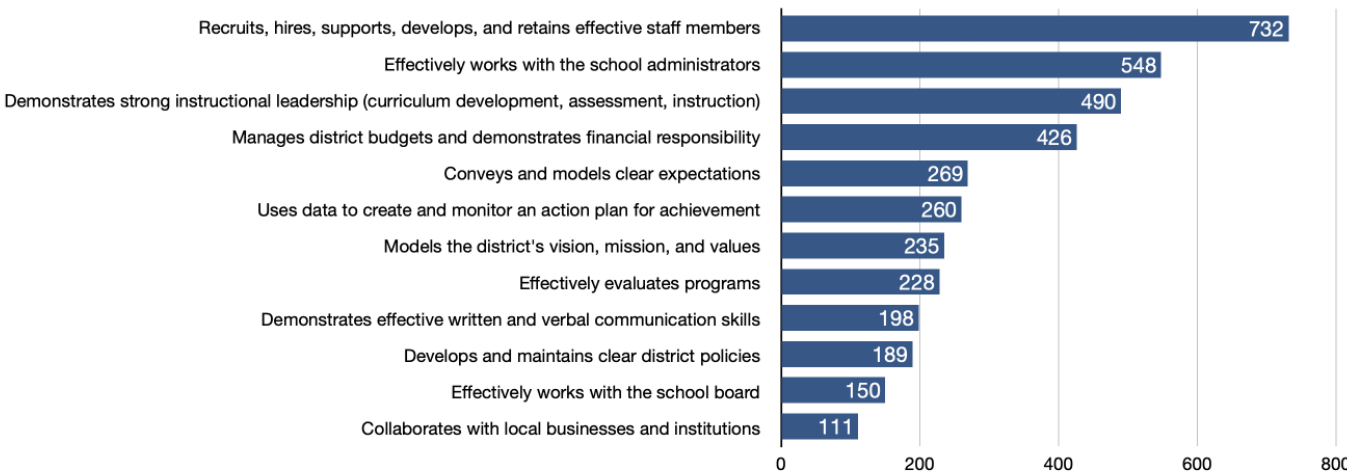
Top Priority for the District

Survey Question: What is your **top priority** for the district in regard to their Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP) goals?

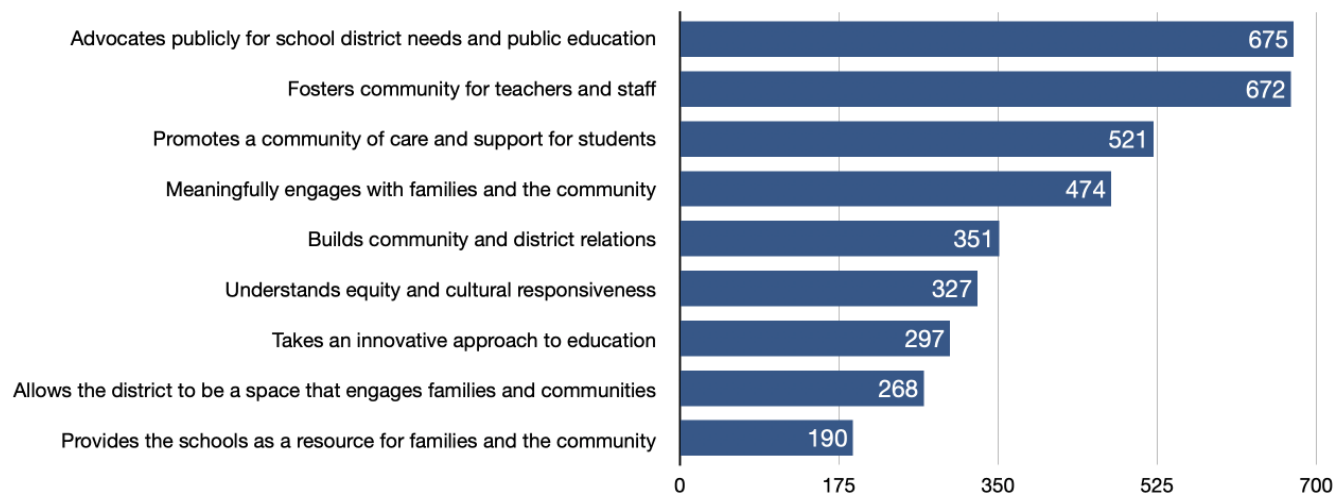


Most Important Professional Skills, Qualifications, and Personal Traits

Survey Question: Please select the 3 most important professional skills and qualifications for **leading and operating our school district**.



*Survey Question: Please select the 3 most important professional skills and qualifications for **supporting our school district community**.*



*Survey Question: Please select the 3 most important **personal traits** or qualities you hope to have in a new superintendent.*



Survey Question: Why do you believe these qualifications and traits are most important for the new Columbia Public Schools Superintendent?

The responses emphasize the importance of a superintendent who can foster a strong sense of community involvement and collaboration. Respondents expect the next leader to engage actively with families, students, and staff, building trust and maintaining transparency in decision-making processes. A visible and approachable leadership style is frequently mentioned, with calls for regular communication and presence in school buildings to better understand the needs and concerns of the entire school community.

Leadership qualities are a major focus, with many highlighting the need for ethical, visionary leadership that prioritizes the district's core values and educational mission. The ideal superintendent is expected to demonstrate strategic decision-making skills while remaining accountable for district performance and equitable policy implementation. Respondents also stress the importance of strong management practices, with an emphasis on effective resource allocation, fairness, and long-term planning to meet the diverse needs of all students and staff.

Support for teachers and students is another recurring theme. Respondents want a leader who champions teacher retention, professional development, and morale. Teachers are described as the foundation of the district's success, and ensuring their voices are heard and valued is critical. Similarly, students' needs are central, with expectations for a superintendent who prioritizes student success, safety, and equitable access to quality education. Strong support systems for both academic achievement and emotional well-being were emphasized.

Finally, there is a clear call for continuous improvement in educational quality and school facilities. Respondents expressed concerns about the need for well-maintained, equitable learning environments that are safe and conducive to academic success. High standards for curriculum quality and expanded learning opportunities, such as advanced coursework and extracurricular programs, were frequently mentioned. Ultimately, the responses reveal a shared expectation for a superintendent who can balance leadership, accountability, and compassion while prioritizing the diverse needs of the district.

Interview Topics and Questions

Survey Question: (OPTIONAL) Share any key topics or interview questions that should be shared with superintendent finalists.

The interview topics and questions for superintendent candidates focus on leadership philosophy, educational priorities, community involvement, and decision-making strategies. Many of the questions revolve around understanding the candidate's approach to improving student learning outcomes and instructional quality. Topics cover how the candidate plans to support curriculum development, equity in education, and strategies for maintaining high academic standards across all schools in the district.

Leadership style and professional philosophy are key focal points. Several questions aim to assess how the candidate views their role in balancing administrative leadership with community engagement. These include inquiries into how much time they plan to spend directly engaging with staff and students, their decision-making approach, and how they plan to build trust with stakeholders. Emphasis is placed on collaboration, visibility, and accountability in leadership practices.

Community relationships and stakeholder involvement are prominent themes in the questions. Candidates are asked how they will engage with diverse community groups, maintain transparency in their decisions, and ensure open lines of communication between the district, families, and staff. There is also a focus on handling challenges such as equity gaps and resource distribution, seeking insights into how candidates would foster inclusivity and address systemic issues.

Finally, the questions probe the candidate's long-term vision and strategic planning skills. They are asked to describe their priorities for the district's growth, how they will ensure fiscal responsibility, and their strategies for staff retention and morale improvement. Overall, the questions are designed to explore both the candidate's professional qualifications and their ability to align with the district's values and community expectations.

These example questions reflect the most frequently recurring themes in the data and address leadership, equity, community involvement, and academic excellence:

- How will you ensure the academic success of all students in the district?
- What strategies will you implement to support teachers and improve staff morale?
- How do you plan to engage with the community and maintain open communication with families and stakeholders?
- What is your approach to promoting equity and inclusivity across all schools?
- How will you address resource allocation and ensure all schools have the tools needed for success?
- What leadership style do you bring, and how will you foster collaboration among staff, students, and the community?
- How will you balance the needs of students, teachers, and administrative staff while making district-wide decisions?
- What specific plans do you have to improve curriculum quality and learning outcomes?
- How will you handle teacher retention and professional development within the district?
- What steps will you take to ensure transparency and accountability in your leadership?