

July 18, 2024

Dear Ms. Slaughter,

The purpose of this letter is to formally withdraw my name from consideration for the role of Superintendent of the East Baton Rouge Parish School System. At the end of each of the days in which I have been engaged in this process I have prayed for guidance and analyzed the complex situation. Each day, until now, that analysis produced the result: proceed. However, given procedural anomalies and delays, my purpose-fueled drive to equitably serve the children of EBR is misaligned with the current focus of the board.

The process and the people agree: I clearly demonstrated the fortitude of character, emotional intelligence, academic track record, and leadership capability to lift the system to provide the schools children deserve. I emerged from this rigorous process as one of five semifinalists, one of three finalists, one of two who [interviewed](#). Being the last woman standing says everything about my commitment and capability to serve. I appreciate how reflective the results of the community survey are of that reality (attached).

Unfortunately, the conditions for success are near non-existent in this governance tableau. What should matter most is creating a district culture that drives life-changing, equitable outcomes for the city's children. Tragically, this is not the current focus and given that misalignment, I am withdrawing my name from consideration.

I am grateful to have built relationships with dozens of community members and stakeholders in this beautiful city. Grassroots and grasstops, parents, teachers, business owners and leaders. I have had support, encouragement, and deep respect exchanged. I pray that the board can act responsibly, ethically, equitably, and center the interests of the children and families that have historically least benefitted from this and other processes like it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrea S. Zayas', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Andrea S. Zayas

Attachment: community survey results



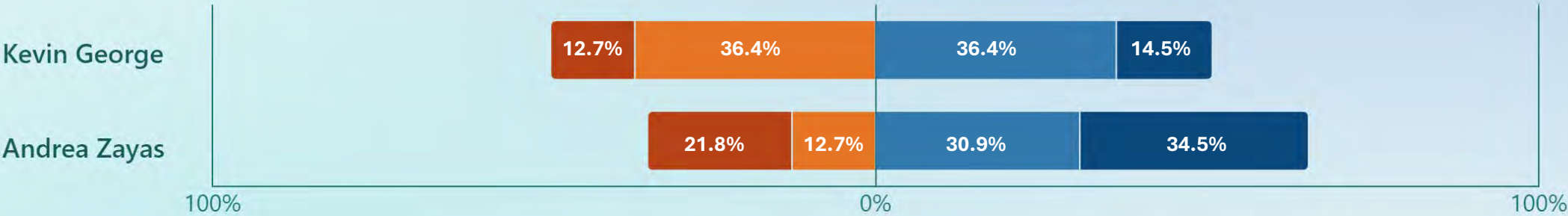
EBRPSS Superintendent Candidate Feedback Survey

July 2024

55 responses submitted

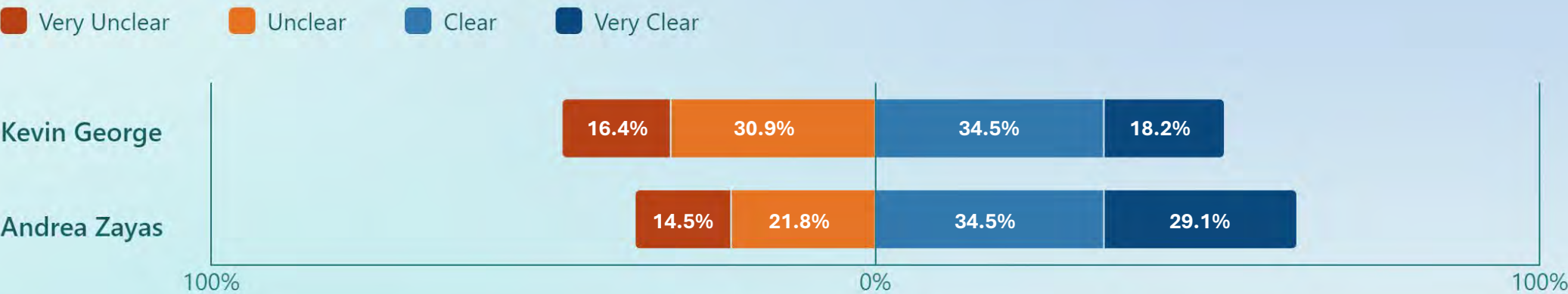
What was your overall impression of each candidate?

Poor Fair Good Excellent



55 responses submitted

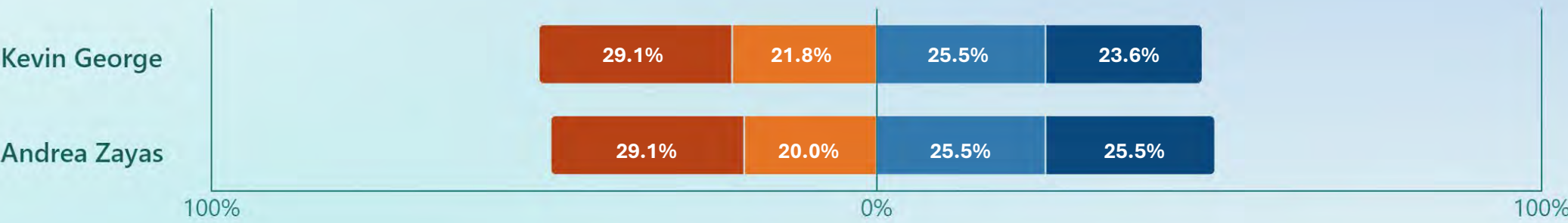
How clear and compelling did you find each candidate's vision for the future of the school district?



55 responses submitted

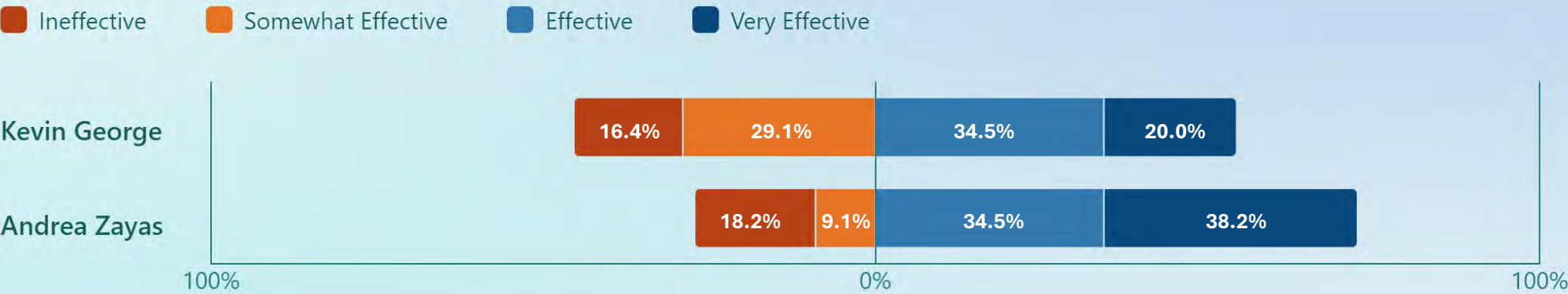
How confident are you in each candidate's experience and qualifications for the superintendent role?

Not Confident Somewhat Confident Confident Very Confident



55 responses submitted

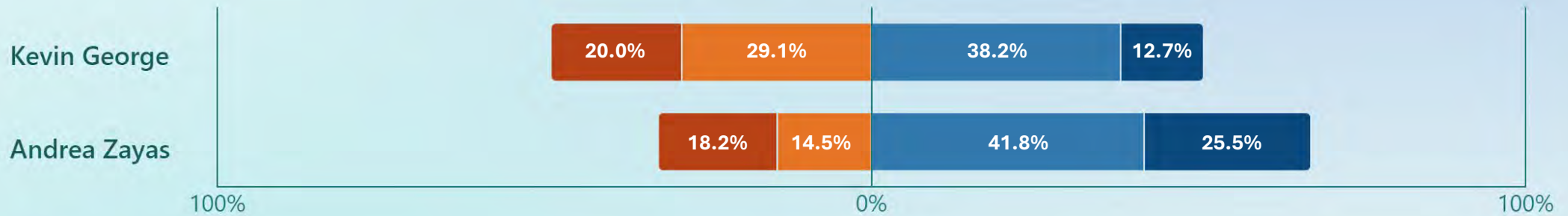
How effective were each candidate's communication skills during the interview?



55 responses submitted

How well did each candidate address issues of diversity and inclusion?

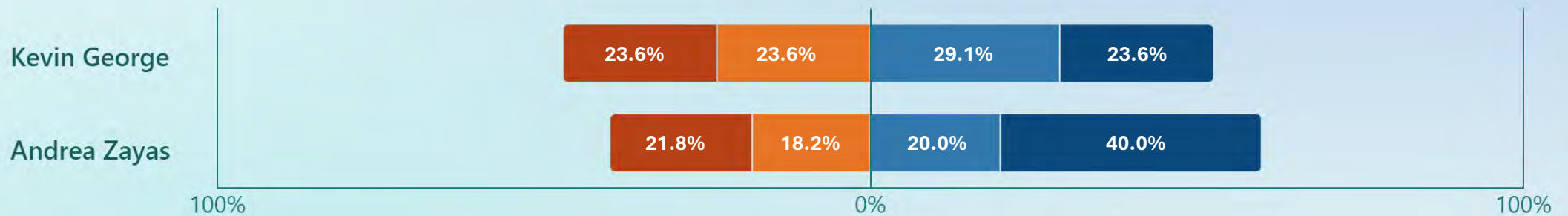
Poor Fair Good Excellent



55 responses submitted

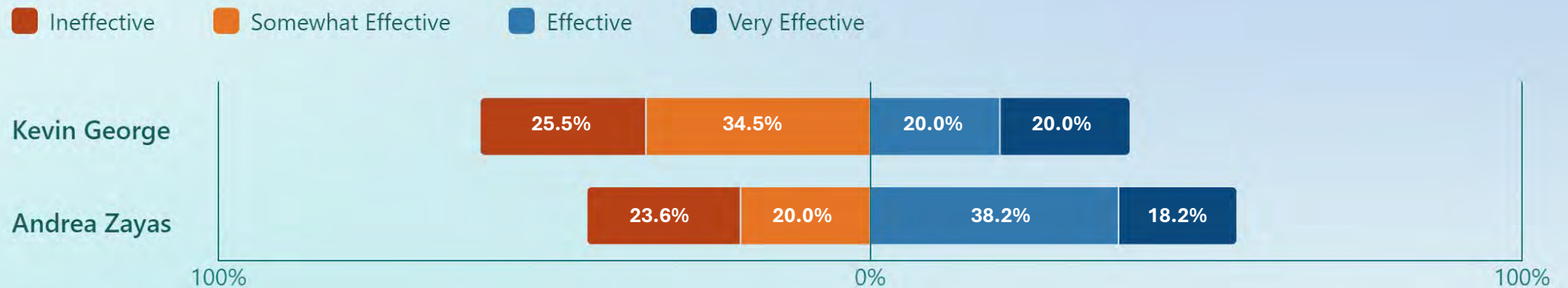
How well did you think each candidate will engage with the community and stakeholders?

■ Poorly ■ Somewhat Well ■ Well ■ Very Well



55 responses submitted

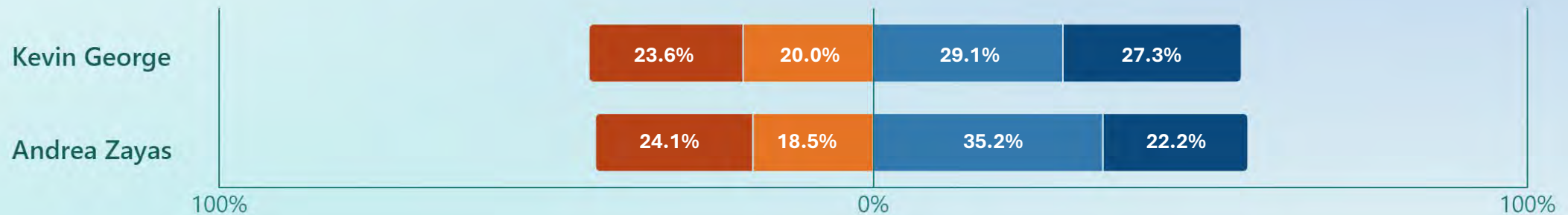
How effective do you believe each candidate will be at implementing change?



55 responses submitted

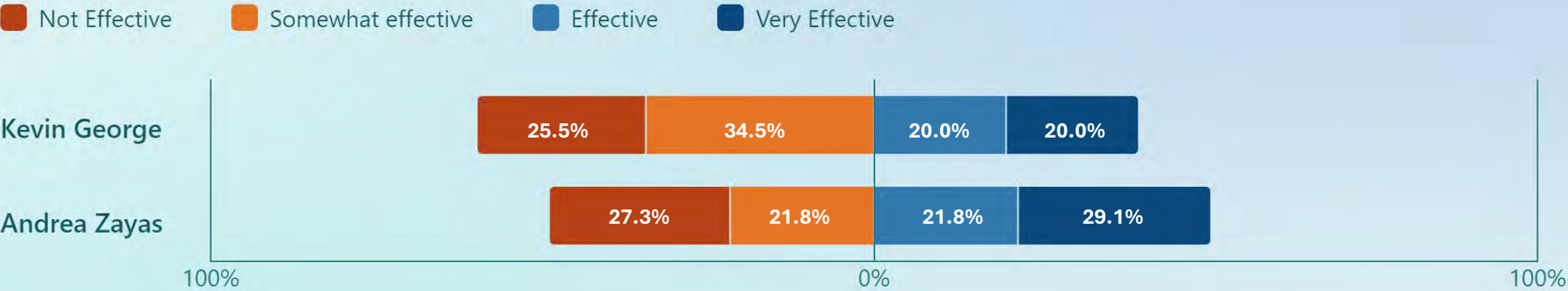
How would you rate each candidate's leadership style and ability to inspire and motivate others?

Poor Fair Good Excellent



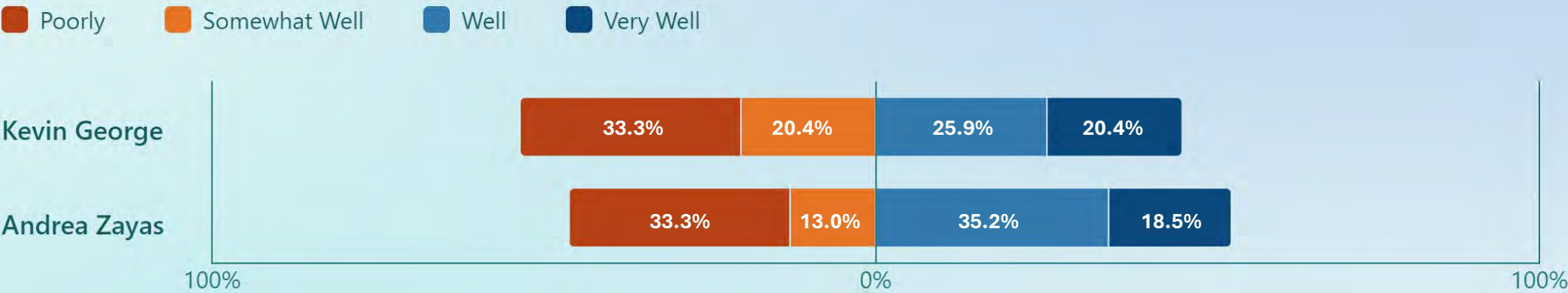
55 responses submitted

How effective do you believe each candidate will be in raising student achievement scores in the district?



55 responses submitted

How well do feel the candidate is prepared to improve morale and hopeful unity in the district and school district community?



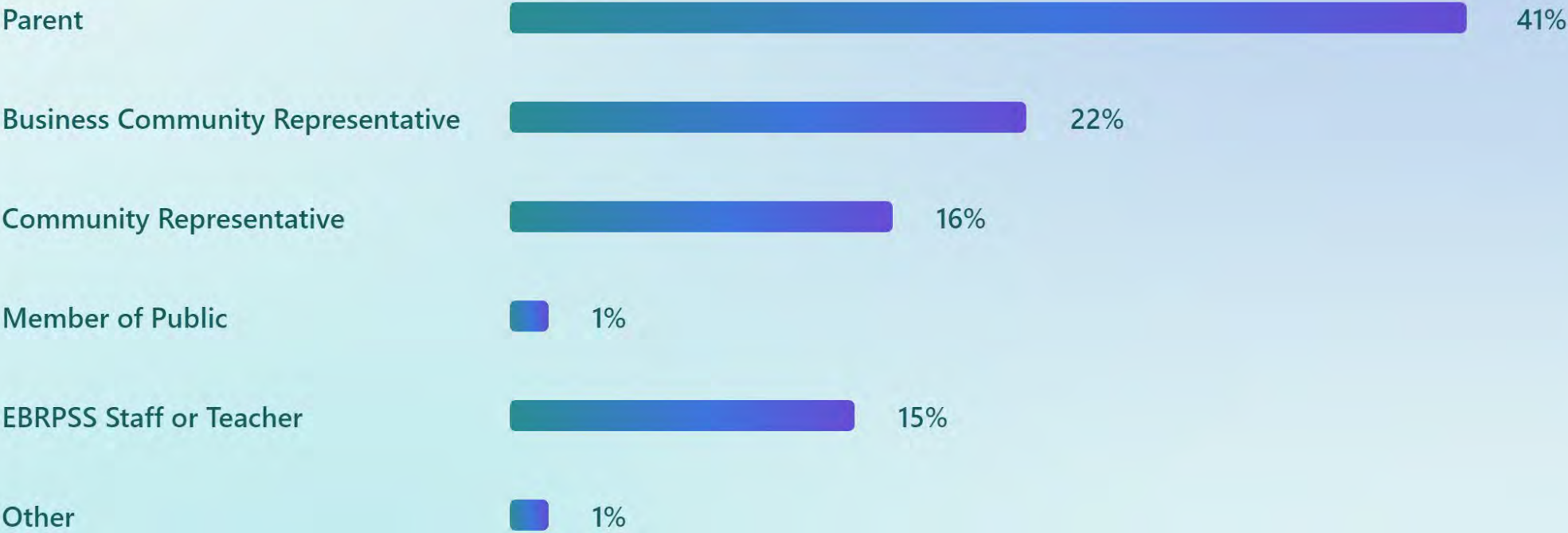
55 responses submitted

Which candidate to you prefer for the superintendent position?



55 responses submitted

I am a



Comments:

- SSA Consultants did an amazing job
- Both are strong.
- They both have weaknesses but Ms. Zagaz proves to be knowledgeable as well as experienced in areas needed to succeed in this position. Her communication skills are superior along with practice of involving community in schooling/education solutions.
- Very, very disappointed that Adam Smith was not included in the interview process. He's the superintendent that EBR needs and wants
- "I think Mr. George will stay and give it his best. However, I do not feel like he is prepared to take on EBR. He is under-qualified but, the best out of the 2 if I had to choose. Mrs. Zyaz is intelligent, She interviews well but, I think she will use EBR as a stepping stone. Her resume shows this and she clearly has no problems with job hoping, "
- Thank you for the opportunity to be part of the superintendent selection process and give my input.

Comments:

- "George is not ready to lead this district ! He is not a researched based practitioner.Data drives outcomes he had none to subsequent his ideas. On the other hand Zayas is a builder , strategist and leader.She has worked her way throughout education to have been in several spaces to know what works best . Best practices ."
- Choose Adam smith.
- I believe each of the candidates have different strengths to bring to the role and will need to address different areas of concern. Whoever the board chooses they should do their best to unite around that candidate and set him or her up for success.
- While I found Mr. George to be quite eloquent, I felt his answers were practiced and polished but without as much substance, nuance, and depth. I felt like I was being spoken to by a politician. I found Ms. Zayas to have a stunning level of emotional intelligence in addition to having a robust understanding of the many facets of education. Her answer indicating that she would work hand in hand with Mr. Smith to repair community trust was reassuring. I find both of the candidates to be qualified, but I have a strong preference for Ms. Zayas.

Comments:

- "I find it deeply disturbing that a leader of a certified hate group was allowed on the parent portal. I was DEEPLY disturbed at Nathan Rust appointing her and Emily Soule supporting her. They made a mockery of this evening and proved yet again they are unfit to serve on the school board. Nathan even told a parent that he will "sleep like a baby tonight" in supporting Paige Lowry on the panel. Nathan and Emily have made it abundantly clear they are going to do everything in their power to dismantle this school system and will not serve with even the best intentions, let alone good intentions. Shame on them and shame on the rest of the board for allowing this to happen. You all have a DUTY to serve in the best interests of this school system and everyone in it. Apathy in allowing this certified hate group leader on a parent panel, supporting her and appointing her on the panel, have all made this entire school system and everyone involved in it look like fools on a NATIONAL stage. Isn't it bad enough that the white board members have gone out of their way to constantly collude to prevent the best person for the job, Adam Smith, be appointed as superintendent? Must you also embarrass us and malign us (again, on a national scale!) by supporting the leader of a certified hate group? You have a moral imperative to do the right thing. And it's not too late—you're not legally bound to only choose between tonight's two candidates. Do the right thing, for once. Appoint Adam Smith and try to salvage what little faith those of us who actually support the public school system, who've grown up in this system, who put our children in this system, have left. And to Mr. Bellue, Mr. Gaudet, and Mr. Martin: I especially implore you to do the right thing. And to distance yourself *in the strongest way possible* from this certified hate group, from those who openly support and appoint her, and from this national embarrassment. And more importantly: Vote for the very best candidate for every man, woman, student, teacher, aid, principal, professional, paraprofessional, cafeteria worker, bus driver, custodian in this district. Vote your conscience, it's not too late: vote for Adam Smith. "

Comments:

- "I felt like Kevin George, while he answered questions, he actually gave a lot of non-answers. He used key words in my opinion and talked in circles. I do think he gets a plus for already knowing our area. But his experience is less community based. He is used to privatized funding rules and less accountability requirements to follow. Andrea Zayas was such a joy to listen to. She made me and every other person on the panel feel so special for taking the time to come. She has job jumped more often, but I do think she has spent enough time in other places to have learned what works and what didn't work for those areas. She wants to implement some of those more effective ideas. I love all of her ideas around engagement sessions and also her plans for addressing the underlying causes of truancy. I think they will both be successful in implementing changes. I just think Zayas' plan for involving community engagement would result in more effective changes. Might not be as fast, but also won't be as controversial. "
- Both candidates were excellent. My concern for Andrea as Superintendent is that the community may have quite an adverse reaction and feel as though she's an outsider. Understanding that she offers varied perspectives that could benefit an innovative approach to her leadership, I am still have trepidation in my recommendation.

Comments:

- The superintendent search has been grossly compromised by outside interest.
- Zayas was more knowledgeable
- Both finalists are excellent. Very impressed. Either will do a solid job for EBR's kids. Now we need the school board to SUPPORT their new superintendent. Don't tolerate the troublemakers who are more concerned about the status quo and their own comfort than the learning and development of children into their full potential.
- George danced around questions all evening. He sounds like a politician and not a superintendent. Zayas had a better interview, but is only driven by data.

Comments:

- "Both Candidates are very strong. They are actually compliment each other quite well. Kevin comes across as a visionary with superintendent experience that has a record of driving needed improvements. I believe he will need a strong innovative team surrounding him to support his vision. Andrea comes across as a passionate innovative leader with a track record of driving meaningful change. Her vision for the district sounds more like a mission, which makes me wonder if she will be too far into the weeds versus able to pull up to be the inspirational leader that others will follow. In a perfect world I could see Kevin as the superintendent and Andrea as his deputy superintendent as they are quite complementary to one another. "
- "Mr. George's answers to questions were not really answers. He was not able to provide specific examples. His answers were not able to be elaborated on. Ms. Zayas took the time to thank each person for their question. She asked for clarification. She answered the questions and expanded on her answers to fully answer. She seems personable and likable. "

Comments:

- I thought both candidates did well. Kevin George was charismatic and there is no doubt he is confident in his ability to deliver (maybe overconfident). I found Andrea Zayas to be very smart and thoughtful and I appreciated her precision, commitment to transparency, and approach to process. For the good of the district, the community, and our students, I encourage each of our school board members to fully participate in the process that they agreed to by selecting one of these two candidates. Once a candidate is selected, it is imperative that we as a community wrap around that person to ensure their success by empowering them to lead and make the changes necessary to move us forward. Thank you for including me in this process--you can count on me to be a vocal supporter of either Kevin or Andrea as we move forward.
- The two candidates are both qualified for the position. Mr. Georges appeared to be more political and spoke at a high level (less engaging) but had more of a command of the room while Mrs. Zayas appeared to be more detailed and less political in her responses. Many details about the District that Mrs. Zayas did not seem to be familiar with but can come with time. Difficult decision and will lean purely on what the Board is looking for.

Comments:

- "Kevin George said he could get the school district to an A in a few years. This is a joke to him. He obviously doesn't know about the changing rubric and doesn't understand what's going on in this district? Zayas is absolutely clueless and she said the first thing she would need to do is pay money to do all these assessments we've already done and then decide for herself. A quick Google she could've found out that we did a staff and salary survey and need to act on that."
- Please include Adam Smith
- I found Zayas to be a practical instructional leader. I found George to be approachable and results-oriented. My concern about Zayas is I don't feel she understands the full scope of the position and has unrealistic ideas (i.e. she will have time to spend with all of her 70 principals doing walkthroughs and discussing curriculum) and may become overwhelmed, but I do appreciate her ability to intelligently discuss curricula and I think she could develop a good strategic plan. My concern about George is that, although I appreciate his desire to allow a lot of autonomy to school leaders, I am not confident that principals who lack integrity will have adequate oversight nor that George genuinely understands the instructional aspect of school leadership as well as he understands the operational aspect.

Comments:

- "Zayas was unprepared and George seemed overconfident.Do over."
- There is no way George can achieve the things he proposes. Is this all we've got to choose from? Do better
- We want ADAM SMITH. Listen to us, the parents and constituents of EBRSS.
- Neither candidate met all expectations, but I believe Mr. George was closest in meeting my expectations.
- The best Candidate was already in place as interim. Mr. Adam is and always will be the people's choice. It's disappointing that he was not chosen or allowed at one point to apply for the position. However he was good enough to fill in? Make it make sense. Stop gambling with the education and leadership for our children and do what's right. Because these people are not it.
- "George's name is spelled wrong in this survey.Neither candidate were particularly compelling and changing leadership would be disruptive.The business community needs stability and someone who knows what's actually going on now and doesn't need to pay for studies we have already done."

Comments:

- "Kevin George has three strong assets that appeal to me regarding his aptitude to fill the position:
1. He not only grew up in Louisiana, his entire tenure of experience is in Louisiana so one can assume he will fully understand the nuance of EBR Schools and how we are unlike any other district regarding the parochial/private vs. public schools. 2. He has direct experience running other school districts. 3. He was a classroom teacher (high school level) for 5 years. Mrs. Zayas unfortunately only taught 2 years (elective only) and only has experience as board positions for charter schools. She has never run a district before and does not have experience with public schools at all. She did not communicate clear plans (such as actually meeting with teachers, principals, etc. or going INTO schools. Overall, I feel strongly that Mr. George is an astronomically better fit for the position."
- "There is something fundamentally wrong with Ms. Zayas, and she's not particularly being transparent on what happened at her last job. Mr. I'm very concerned about Mr. George relationship with former St. John the Baptist staff that already work in EBR. Better to appoint Adam Smith."

Comments:

- I prefer Adam Smith but will take the lesser of 2 evils Andrea Zayas
- With everything that is happening around the district I commend both candidates for the willingness to attack the problems head on, I can see EBRPSS led by either individual, truly I can, but as a parent I would feel more comfortable with Mr. George. He seems to be just a little bit more energetic and enthusiastic about comforting the issues at hand.