

## Los Gatos Union School District LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT

### Executive Summary

The Los Gatos Union School District (LGUSD) began as a one room schoolhouse, one teacher and nineteen students in 1863 and now includes four elementary schools and one middle school: Blossom Hill Elementary, Daves Avenue Elementary, Lexington Elementary, Louise Van Meter Elementary and R.J. Fisher Middle School. The LGUSD community encompasses the students, faculty, staff, parents, alumni, businesses, and the citizenry of Los Gatos, a town with a rich history and long-established neighborhoods. The Town of Los Gatos is a gem in Silicon Valley and the LGUSD is integral to the community. Today, the District educates approximately 3,200 students in grades K-8. The success of the Los Gatos Union School District is most readily measured by high student achievement scores, college acceptance rates, and Project Cornerstone accomplishments. Our elementary and middle schools are consistently ranked and listed as some of the best schools in California. After over 150 years, the Los Gatos Union School District is still innovating and improving.

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in March, 2018 for the new superintendent of Los Gatos Union School District. The data contained herein was obtained from input the HYA consultants received when they met with individuals and groups in either individual interviews or focus group settings and from the results of the online survey completed by stakeholders. The surveys, interviews, and focus group meetings were structured to gather input to assist the Board in determining the primary characteristics desired in the new superintendent. Additionally, the stakeholder interviews and focus groups collected information regarding the strengths of the District and some of the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years.

## Participation

The numbers of participants, by stakeholder group, in the two methods of data gathering are listed below: *Not all focus groups were a group that was disaggregated for the online survey.*

<b>Group</b>	<b>Personal interviews or Focus Groups</b>	<b>Online Survey</b>
Board	5	5
Administrators	13	4
Certificated	101	58
Classified	22	13
Parents	38	364
Community	24	67
<b>Total</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>511</b>

It should be emphasized that the data are not a scientific sampling, nor should they necessarily be viewed as representing the majority opinion of the respective groups to which they are attributed. Items are included if, in the consultants' judgment, they warranted the Board's attention.

## Strengths of the District

### *Educational Excellence and the Staff*

Students in the district achieve at high levels, and the teaching staff is well regarded for its commitment, expertise, and dedication to the well-being and success of all students. The staff's attention to developing well-rounded students in addition to small class sizes were greatly valued. The district has high standards for student performance and all groups felt that students were being prepared to be college and career ready. Stakeholders frequently noted the strength of administrators and support staff as critical to the success of the District. The district's focus on the development of the social emotional needs of students, in addition to the rigorous academic offerings, is important to all groups. Credit is given to the Foundation and Home and School Clubs

for significant funding to expand program offerings and supplement staffing to promote educational excellence and opportunities for staff and students.

#### *Parent involvement*

A highly educated and supportive community with a high level of parent involvement is seen as key to the success of the District. Parents directly support music, art and athletic programs. They provide resources to support staffing, technology and supplies for students and staff. All stakeholder groups praised the degree of parent involvement in the schools.

#### *Community Support*

The Foundation and the Home and School Clubs were consistently mentioned as one of the great strengths of the district for providing an abundance of resources for a variety of programs. Although Los Gatos receives relatively low funding from state and federal sources due to their basic aid status, the resources provided by the community and parents enable the schools to offer many enrichment and intervention opportunities for students. There is a great sense of pride in the schools and many of the parents and staff members who have chosen to live and work in the community are proud alumni of the Los Gatos schools.

#### *Facilities and the Community*

The District is made up of five unique schools with beautiful facilities to support student learning. Online survey respondents gave the facilities high marks for being well maintained. Stakeholders see the Town of Los Gatos as a key district partner. They also see the location, safe schools and small size of the district as a strength. The voter approved bonds provided resources to upgrade all school sites.

## Challenges and Issues Facing the District

#### *Fiscal Concerns*

Budget and financial issues were often mentioned as a challenge for the district in spite of their Basic Aid status. All stakeholders cite the failure of their last parcel tax by a very small margin as a concern. There were significant raises given for the last year and the increased contributions to STRS and PERS will continue to be a challenge. The high cost of living in the area and the impact of that on attracting and retaining staff were also mentioned as issues. Additionally, the underfunding of Special Education by state and federal sources continues to be a challenge as schools strive to address needs of all students.

### *Transitions*

The upcoming changes in the Leadership were also noted as a concern. The new Superintendent and CBO will need to rebuild trust and instill confidence in the new leadership team. They will need to create clear and transparent processes with authentic stakeholder involvement to ensure informed decisions by the Board and District to realign the vision and strategic plan to get buy-in from all stakeholder groups. The need to balance autonomy and equality of schools without micromanagement by the new leaders was seen as an area that will need attention.

### *Communication*

Increased communication across the district, schools and community is seen as key to rebuilding relationships. There will be a need to reopen the discussion on a parcel tax in the future to provide the programs and services expected. There are very high and sometimes unrealistic expectations that may be lessened with increased communication, transparency and processes that involve all key stakeholders.

### *Technology*

While online survey respondents felt that technology was well integrated into the classroom, interview participants expressed a concern that there was a lack of vision and future direction for the technology program as a whole. As schools wrestle with the balance of whole child approaches, academic excellence and high standards, the role of technology may not be clear.

## Desired Characteristics

### *Experience*

The role of the Superintendent requires a broad range of experience in a variety of areas including proven leadership in curriculum and instruction, budget and public relations in a district similar to Los Gatos. Successful teaching as well as administrative experience was also valued.

### *Communicator and Active Listener*

Being a good communicator and a listening leader were seen as critical attributes for the next Superintendent of the district. Active involvement in the community, including listening to hear and understand and value others' points of view, is important. Communicating transparently and with integrity to all members of the school community while building trust through collaborative relationships is important to stakeholders.

### *Continuous Improvement*

Having a track record in balancing innovation and implementation, as well as success in translating vision into practice, while demonstrating a deep understanding of educational research and emerging best practices was seen as very important. Being a strategic thinker with a strong operational background who can recruit, employ and retain effective personnel is seen as important to most groups. This continuous improvement approach to move from tactical to strategic practices should be based on what is best for children.

### *Community Engagement*

Actively and authentically engaging the community is important to all; groups often mentioned that they want someone who is involved in the Town and connected to both the school and the community. It will be important that the new Superintendent advocates for the District within the broader community and that he/she has political acumen since the District will likely consider another parcel tax at some point. Stakeholders also value someone who is visible, available and accessible.

### *Personal Characteristics*

All groups mentioned that they wanted the new Superintendent to be student-centered and to enjoy working with children. Fostering a positive, professional climate of mutual trust and respect is seen as essential. They want their leader to be someone who models excellence personally, has high expectations for students and staff and who is excited to take on tough challenges while being an active member of the Los Gatos community.

HYA and the Board intend to meet the challenge of finding an individual who possesses most of the skills and character traits required to meet the needs of the District. The search team will seek a new superintendent who can work with the Los Gatos Union School District Board to provide the leadership needed to continue to raise academic standards and student performance, while meeting the unique needs of each of its schools and communities.

The search team would like to thank all the participants who attended focus groups meetings or completed the online survey and the Los Gatos School District staff members who assisted with our meetings, particularly Michelle Strachan, Marla Rodriguez, and the site principals who organized the search team's time in the district. Thank you also to the Board subcommittee, Peter Noymer and Daniel Snyder who provided guidance for the Superintendent Search Process.