



Executive Recruitment and Development

Superintendent Search
Online Stakeholder Feedback Survey
Final Report

Eagle County
School District RE-50J
Eagle, Colorado

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October 2025

Stakeholder Survey Summary Report

This report summarizes stakeholder feedback in the Eagle County School District Superintendent Search from 530 online survey submissions gathered between September 22 and October 8, 2025. There were 500 surveys submitted in English and 30 surveys submitted in Spanish.

Stakeholders were presented with the opportunity to respond to a combination of multiple choice, rating scale, and constructed response questions. The cumulative results (all respondent groups combined) of answers to these questions are included in this executive summary. Responses disaggregated by specific respondent groups are presented as separate addendums to this report. Constructed response trend results, when present, are provided for respondent groups with at least 25 responses ($n > 25$).

When asked to identify the one group that most closely identified the respondent's connection to the school district, the largest group, as expected, of respondents self-identified as parents of current students (58%). This group was followed by staff members (34%), others (3%), parents of former students (3%), and community members (2%).

1. Respondents were next asked, "What one word best describes how you feel about the district?" Presented here is a word cloud that visually represents the most frequently submitted responses:



2. Respondents were then asked via constructed response to answer the question, “What are three strengths of the school district that superintendent candidates should know?” The most common themes emerging from these responses (in rank order) included:
- **Dedicated teachers and staff:** This was cited repeatedly as a core strength, showing commitment and professionalism even amid local challenges.
 - **Community connections:** Stakeholders value strong partnerships, collaboration with families, and a supportive environment.
 - **Diversity:** The district is recognized for a diverse student body, multicultural perspectives, and efforts to honor different cultures through programming and staffing.
 - **Dual language opportunities:** Robust bilingual and dual language pathways are praised for meeting community needs and preparing students for future success.
 - **Student-centered focus:** The district is acknowledged for its attention to equity, social-emotional wellness, and fostering academic growth for all students.
 - **Safe and inclusive schools:** Stakeholders note well-maintained facilities, a welcoming atmosphere, and prioritization of safety and inclusion.
 - **Community-based approach:** Smaller community feel with collaborative problem solving and a tradition of working together to support students.
 - **Innovative and adaptable:** Staff and administrators are described as willing to try new approaches and adapt to challenges, reflecting a growth mindset.
3. The next question asked for perceptions (4.0 rating scale) about several operational facets of the Eagle County School District. These included (a) Student Achievement, (b) Communications, (c) Preparing Students for College and Career, (d) Relationships with Families, (e) Transparency, (f) Relationships with Staff Members, and (g) Financial Management. The chart below represents the collective ratings of each item:

<u>Operational Facet</u>	<u>Weighted Average</u>
Communications	2.55
Relationships with Families	2.42
Relationships with Staff Members	2.26
Student Achievement	2.20
Transparency	2.17
Preparing Students for College and Career	2.14
Financial Management	1.91

4. Respondents were asked to select the three most critical issues from a list of 13 frequently identified issues in school districts. The ranking of these critical issues (from most important to least important) indicated:

Staff Recruitment and Retention	53.60%
Teacher Quality	46.80%
Academic Outcomes	36.00%
School Safety and Security	30.00%
College and Career Readiness	29.00%
Financial Management	21.20%
Family and Community Relations	18.00%
Mental Health Services	17.60%
Diversity and Engagement	15.20%
Social Emotional Learning	9.60%
Special Education Services	9.40%
Communication	7.60%
Facilities and Grounds	4.80%

5. As a follow-up question, respondents were asked to identify any additional critical issues the next superintendent should make a priority. Six themes emerged as additional critical issues. They were:

- **Grading system confusion:** The standards-based grading scale (often cited as unclear, inconsistent, and poorly communicated) is a source of confusion for both families and staff, impacting perception of student achievement and readiness.
- **Housing and cost of living:** The high cost of housing in Eagle County severely limits teacher ability to live locally and remain in the district, fueling further retention issues.
- **Transparency:** Stakeholders identified poor or inconsistent communication between district leadership, staff, parents, and the broader community, focusing on transparency on key issues.
- **Administration and leadership:** Stakeholders want strong, visible district leaders who build trust, set clear goals, are present in schools, and communicate effectively. Frustrations were reported over central office staffing, perceived inefficiencies, and lack of alignment across departments.
- **Political and social issues in curriculum:** Objections to perceived politicization, DEI initiatives, social-emotional learning, and other non-academic programs were measurable as was a desire to focus more squarely on academics.
- **School calendar and attendance:** There is measurable discontent over frequent breaks, late-start Wednesdays, and what is seen as fewer instructional days compared to other districts and states.

6. Respondents were asked to select the five most important characteristics the next superintendent should have from a list of 23 leadership characteristics. The ranking of these characteristics (from most important to least important) was:

Demonstrates high integrity and ethics and leads by example	46.20%
Places the needs of students above anything else	28.40%
Promotes safety and security across the district	27.40%
Values educating the whole child	26.80%
Possesses a background in public education	25.60%
Takes responsibility and is accountable for their actions	25.40%
Uses data to make informed and transparent decisions	25.20%
Is committed to equitable access to learning for all students	24.60%
Delivers improved student outcomes	24.40%
Communicates effectively	23.00%
Builds strong community relationships	22.60%
Thinks and acts strategically	20.80%
Engages and listens to stakeholders	19.00%
Resolves conflicts with dignity and grace	15.80%
Promotes student participation in the arts, athletics, and extracurricular activities	15.60%
Spends time in classrooms	15.40%
Builds strong and diverse teams	13.80%
Stands firm behind decisions that may not be popular	13.80%
Maintains a vision focused on the future	13.40%
Fosters creativity, risk taking, and innovation	13.20%
Adapts effectively to changing circumstances	11.80%
Values school autonomy	11.20%
Previous experience as a superintendent	9.40%

7. Respondents were then asked via constructed response to identify any additional characteristics the next superintendent should have. Four frequent themes emerged from these comments. They included:

- Experience in rural/mountain settings, and cultural awareness were often specifically referenced.
- A superintendent from outside current district leadership and a fresh perspective were frequent themes.
- Bilingual or multicultural experience and willingness to engage Spanish-speaking families were valued.
- Long-term commitment and resistance to using the position as a “steppingstone” were frequently mentioned.

8. Respondents were next asked to identify three things that might encourage a candidate to relocate to the area. The most frequent responses included:

- Outdoor activities and natural beauty
- Strong, supportive community
- Family-friendly environment and quality of life
- Diversity
- Excellent staff
- Community resources

9. Finally, respondents were asked if there were additional things they thought the Board of Education should consider during this search process. The most common themes arising from these comments included:

- **Leadership qualities:** Comments consistently called for a superintendent who provides a clear vision, demonstrates strong leadership, and inspires connection and support among staff, teachers, and students. There was wide agreement on the need for someone capable of having difficult conversations, making tough decisions, and rallying staff around shared goals. Stakeholders expressed the need for a leader who treats all staff fairly, avoids favoritism, and is relentless in pursuing district improvement.
- **Internal vs. external candidate debate:** Some favored hiring from within for continuity, trust-building, and familiarity with local challenges. Others advocated for an external candidate to bring new ideas and break through perceived stagnation but emphasized that deep vetting and authentic understanding of the community were critical for outsiders. Comments reflected a tension between the risks and benefits of internal versus external hires, often referencing past superintendent transitions and lessons learned.
- **Community and staff engagement:** Stakeholders highlighted the importance of involving teachers, staff, and the broader community in the hiring process. Calls for transparent and open communication, including ongoing feedback opportunities and visible school board leadership, appeared frequently.
- **Diversity, equity, and inclusion:** Stakeholders focused on the need for a candidate who understands and reflects the community's diversity, especially around bilingual needs, cultural responsiveness, and closing achievement gaps. Also important is a leader who can bridge political divides, ensure all voices are heard, and prioritize inclusivity while respecting local values.
- **Specific district needs:** Housing affordability, competitive teacher pay, retention, and fiscal responsibility were cited as major challenges for any new superintendent. The importance of academic rigor, clear and consistent grading practices, and a renewed focus on student achievement over non-academic initiatives such as SEL were recurring topics.
- **Vision and commitment:** Stakeholders urged the Board to select a leader committed to long-term service, professional growth, and the success of every student. There were numerous reminders that the position must prioritize education, evidence-based decision making, and a strong ethical foundation.

Respondent Group: Parents of Current Students
292 Responses

This section summarizes stakeholder feedback in the Eagle County School District Superintendent Search from 292 respondents who identified themselves as parents of current students.

1. Respondents were asked, “What one word best describes how you feel about the district?” Presented here is a word cloud that visually represents the most frequently submitted responses:



2. Respondents were then asked via constructed response to answer the question, “What are three strengths of the school district that superintendent candidates should know?” The most common themes emerging from these responses (in rank order) included:
 - **Strong sense of community support:** Parents frequently highlight collaboration, care, and engagement among educators, families, students, and local organizations, saying this foundation produces a nurturing school climate.

- **Diversity and inclusion:** Families appreciate the district’s multicultural programs, dual language learning, and emphasis on equitable access to opportunity for all students, regardless of background.
- **Dedicated, passionate teachers and support staff:** Parents consistently describe educators and support professionals as caring, committed, and willing to go above and beyond for student growth.
- **Safe and supportive schools:** The district is recognized for prioritizing student safety, offering mental health resources, and cultivating a welcoming, inclusive environment where children feel secure and valued.
- **Comprehensive academic opportunities:** Parents value the availability of advanced placement courses, dual enrollment options, strong special education supports, and a range of extracurricular activities suited to individual interests and needs.
- **Active parental and community involvement:** There is frequent mention of strong engagement by families and local organizations, fostering deep partnerships and high levels of buy-in for district initiatives.
- **Student-centered focus:** Parents appreciate that the district prioritizes what’s best for children, promoting growth in academics, social-emotional skills, and overall well-being.
- **Support for innovation and improvement:** Parents highlight the district’s willingness to adapt, embrace change, and respond to community feedback to deliver meaningful learning experiences.

3. The next question asked for perceptions (4.0 rating scale) about several operational facets of the Eagle County School District. These included (a) Student Achievement, (b) Communications, (c) Preparing Students for College and Career, (d) Relationships with Families, (e) Transparency, (f) Relationships with Staff Members, and (g) Financial Management. The chart below represents the collective ratings of each item:

<u>Operational Facet</u>	<u>Weighted Average</u>
Communications	2.55
Relationships with Families	2.37
Student Achievement	2.18
Relationships with Staff Members	2.10
Transparency	2.01
Preparing Students for College and Career	1.95
Financial Management	1.60

4. Respondents were asked to select the three most critical issues from a list of 13 frequently identified issues in school districts. The ranking of these critical issues (from most important to least important) indicated:

Teacher Quality	51.03%
Staff Recruitment and Retention	47.95%
Academic Outcomes	36.64%
College and Career Readiness	35.62%
School Safety and Security	33.90%
Financial Management	18.84%
Mental Health Services	16.44%
Family and Community Relations	15.75%
Diversity and Engagement	13.70%
Social Emotional Learning	9.93%
Communication	7.19%
Special Education Services	6.85%
Facilities and Grounds	4.45%

5. As a follow-up question, respondents were asked to identify any additional critical issues the next superintendent should make a priority. Five frequent themes emerged as additional critical issues. They were:

- **Housing affordability and teacher pay:** Support for educators is seen as a priority, as both staff recruitment and retention are deeply affected by cost-of-living issues in Eagle County.
- **Grading and accountability:** The district's current grading scale, especially standards-based grading, is viewed as inconsistent and confusing, with calls for returning to a clear, objective traditional grading system (A-F) and more consistent application.
- **The need to avoid political agendas:** Calls to reduce the focus on DEI, political ideologies, LGBTQ+ topics, and to create neutral classrooms are repeated throughout the feedback.
- **Transparency in finances:** Strategic budgeting (including passing local tax levies), and fair resource distribution are seen as necessary to maintain and improve educational quality.

6. Respondents were asked to select the five most important characteristics the next superintendent should have from a list of 23 leadership characteristics. The ranking of these characteristics (from most important to least important) was:

Demonstrates high integrity and ethics and leads by example	46.92%
Places the needs of students above anything else	33.22%
Promotes safety and security across the district	31.85%
Delivers improved student outcomes	28.42%
Values educating the whole child	27.40%

Takes responsibility and is accountable for their actions	26.71%
Uses data to make informed and transparent decisions	23.97%
Communicates effectively	22.95%
Is committed to equitable access to learning for all students	22.95%
Builds strong community relationships	21.23%
Possesses a background in public education	20.21%
Promotes student participation in the arts, athletics, and extracurricular activities	19.18%
Thinks and acts strategically	17.12%
Spends time in classrooms	15.41%
Fosters creativity, risk taking, and innovation	15.07%
Engages and listens to stakeholders	14.38%
Builds strong and diverse teams	14.04%
Stands firm behind decisions that may not be popular	13.70%
Resolves conflicts with dignity and grace	13.01%
Adapts effectively to changing circumstances	12.33%
Maintains a vision focused on the future	10.27%
Values school autonomy	9.93%
Previous experience as a superintendent	9.25%

7. Respondents were then asked via constructed response to identify any additional characteristics the next superintendent should have. Three frequent themes emerged from these comments. They included:

- Non-political, neutral, and not influenced by extreme views
- Passionate about public education, learning, and motivating students and staff
- Experience or understanding of small mountain communities and bilingual/Spanish-speaking populations

8. Respondents were next asked to identify three things that might encourage a candidate to relocate to the area. The most frequent responses included:

- Natural beauty and outdoor recreation
- Small town living with amenities
- Healthy, active lifestyle and work-life balance
- Support for education and innovation
- Potential for meaningful impact

9. Finally, respondents were asked if there were additional things they thought the Board of Education should consider during this search process. The most common themes arising from these comments included:

- The importance of selecting someone with experience in similar communities, especially rural or mountain districts, and someone who can effectively navigate local challenges such as cost of living and staff retention.
- Frequent, but split comments on whether to hire internally or conduct a broader search. Some strongly supported promoting existing district leaders familiar with local issues, while others advocated for bringing in new perspectives from outside to address perceived stagnation and to avoid insular thinking.
- Significantly differing thoughts about the district's stance on equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives, with some opposing what they described as "woke" agendas and others emphasizing the need for a leader who is genuinely inclusive and representative of the district's diverse population.
- A relatively consistent theme of the importance of focusing on core academic skills, increased instructional time, and high educational standards, rather than perceived political topics or social issues.
- Requests to conduct thorough background and reference checks and actively listen to staff and parent input throughout the search.

Respondent Group: Staff Members

170 Responses

This section summarizes stakeholder feedback in the Eagle County School District Superintendent Search from 170 respondents who identified themselves as staff members.

1. Respondents were asked, “What one word best describes how you feel about the district?” Presented here is a word cloud that visually represents the most frequently submitted responses:



2. Respondents were then asked via constructed response to answer the question, “What are three strengths of the school district that superintendent candidates should know?” The most common themes emerging from these responses (in rank order) included:
 - **Hard-working, committed staff and teachers:** Staff frequently describe colleagues as dedicated professionals who go the extra mile for students.
 - **Strong sense of community:** Staff highlight supportive relationships among educators, students, families, and local organizations, emphasizing that collaboration and connection drive district success.

- **Dual language and multicultural programming:** The district’s commitment to bilingual education, inclusion of diverse cultures, and responsive support for second language learners are celebrated as distinguishing features.
- **Student-centered focus:** Staff value being able to prioritize what is best for students, including equity, wellness, and holistic educational growth.
- **Professional autonomy and growth:** Many note the opportunity for autonomy in classrooms, robust professional development, and a willingness to try innovative approaches.
- **Inclusive and supportive environment:** Creating belonging, celebrating student identities, and ensuring all students’ needs are met, especially for marginalized and multilingual learners, are repeatedly mentioned.
- **Quality facilities and resources:** Staff appreciate well-maintained, updated schools and resources that support effective teaching and learning.
- **Transparency and communication:** Staff identify open collaboration, clear policies, and transparent budgets as important strengths.
- **Strong community partnerships:** Relationships with local nonprofits and organizations help support students’ diverse social, emotional, and academic needs.
- **Resilience and adaptability:** Despite unique challenges such as cost of living and recruiting, employees take pride in their adaptability, strong work ethic, and willingness to embrace change to benefit students

3. The next question asked for perceptions (4.0 rating scale) about several operational facets of the Eagle County School District. These included (a) Student Achievement, (b) Communications, (c) Preparing Students for College and Career, (d) Relationships with Families, (e) Transparency, (f) Relationships with Staff Members, and (g) Financial Management. The chart below represents the collective ratings of each item:

<u>Operational Facet</u>	<u>Weighted Average</u>
Communications	2.65
Relationships with Staff Members	2.58
Relationships with Families	2.54
Preparing Students for College and Career	2.50
Transparency	2.45
Financial Management	2.42
Student Achievement	2.29

4. Respondents were asked to select the three most critical issues from a list of 13 frequently identified issues in school districts. The ranking of these critical issues (from most important to least important) indicated:

Staff Recruitment and Retention	64.71%
Teacher Quality	40.59%
Academic Outcomes	33.53%

Financial Management	24.71%
School Safety and Security	22.94%
Family and Community Relations	21.76%
Mental Health Services	19.41%
College and Career Readiness	18.82%
Diversity and Engagement	18.82%
Special Education Services	11.76%
Communication	8.24%
Social Emotional Learning	7.65%
Facilities and Grounds	6.47%

5. As a follow-up question, respondents were asked to identify any additional critical issues the next superintendent should make a priority. Four frequent themes emerged as additional critical issues. They were:

- **Staff Alignment and leadership a accountability:** Aligning district staff around a shared mission, vision, and culture is a high priority, as is holding all leadership, especially district office staff, accountable for clearly articulated goals and follow-through. Teachers want district-level leaders to be visibly present in schools and to work directly with teachers, students, and families to build trust.
- **Competitive pay, housing, and cost of living:** Teacher compensation is a top concern, with repeated calls for salaries and benefits that are competitive with neighboring districts. Affordable housing, rent-to-own programs, and capped housing prices were suggested. The high cost of living is seen as driving high turnover and making retention difficult.
- **Equity, access, and school structure:** A need for smaller class sizes, alternative pathways for students, improved support for multilingual learners, and enhanced services for marginalized or high-needs students were frequently noted.
- **Financial management and mill levy:** Financial transparency and strategic management are seen as critical to gain community trust and ensure appropriate allocation of resources. Frequently mentioned is the importance of passing a mill levy or securing other funding to address compensation, staffing, and programming gaps.

6. Respondents were asked to select the five most important characteristics the next superintendent should have from a list of 23 leadership characteristics. The ranking of these characteristics (from most important to least important) was:

Demonstrates high integrity and ethics and leads by example	43.53%
Possesses a background in public education	36.47%
Is committed to equitable access to learning for all students	28.82%
Thinks and acts strategically	27.06%
Engages and listens to stakeholders	27.06%
Values educating the whole child	27.06%

Uses data to make informed and transparent decisions	26.47%
Builds strong community relationships	25.29%
Communicates effectively	24.71%
Promotes safety and security across the district	21.18%
Takes responsibility and is accountable for their actions	20.59%
Resolves conflicts with dignity and grace	20.59%
Places the needs of students above anything else	20.00%
Maintains a vision focused on the future	17.06%
Values school autonomy	15.88%
Delivers improved student outcomes	14.71%
Stands firm behind decisions that may not be popular	14.12%
Spends time in classrooms	14.12%
Builds strong and diverse teams	12.94%
Fosters creativity, risk taking, and innovation	11.18%
Promotes student participation in the arts, athletics, and extracurricular activities	10.59%
Adapts effectively to changing circumstances	9.41%
Previous experience as a superintendent	8.24%

7. Respondents were then asked via constructed response to identify any additional characteristics the next superintendent should have. One additional discernable trend was identified.

- Advocacy for students and staff, including support staff, and for student needs, mental health, safety, and professional growth.

8. Respondents were next asked to identify three things that might encourage a candidate to relocate to the area. The most frequent responses included:

- Outdoor and lifestyle appeal
- Supportive and engaged community
- Quality of life
- Diversity and progressive values
- Innovative and dynamic schools
- Opportunities to make an impact

9. Finally, respondents were asked if there were additional things they thought the Board of Education should consider during this search process. The most common themes arising from these comments included:

- Wanting a superintendent who can articulate a clear, inspiring vision for the district, rebuild trust, and support staff, administrators, and students equally. They stress the need for learning before acting, fair treatment, transparency, and someone who rallies the district together rather than perpetuating favoritism or division.

- Varied opinions on internal vs. external candidates with some recommending only hiring externally if the candidate brings exceptional, vetted expertise and understands the community's diversity and challenges.
- A transparent hiring processes, genuine stakeholder input, staff involvement, and avoiding a reliance on outside search firms, stressing direct Board accountability for vetting candidates thoroughly. Examples included specific previous hires as problematic, pointing out lessons learned and warning against repeating mistakes with unqualified or poorly matched leaders.
- The importance of knowledge of the local context, especially the need for someone who understands high cost of living, housing difficulties, and the wide spectrum of socio-economic backgrounds among families in the valley.
- Balancing innovation with stability, moving away from standards-based grading, and hiring someone committed to holistic education, bilingual programs, and equity for diverse backgrounds. and focusing on student achievement above all else.
- Concerns whether candidates will view the role as a true career goal or a steppingstone, emphasizing the need for stability and strategic planning for future district leadership.