



Executive Recruitment and Development

Superintendent Search  
Stakeholder Feedback  
Final Report  
(Amended)

**Burlington**  
**School District RE-6J**  
**Burlington, Colorado**

Submitted by:  
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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 included:

- **Strong Community Support and Pride:** Community support, passionate community, we step up to help each other, Cougar Pride, and supportive community appear repeatedly. Respondents emphasize that people rally around students, schools, and especially athletics and extracurriculars. Pride in local identity and small-town values is strong, even when there’s recognition of areas for improvement.
- **Dedicated and Caring Staff:** Staff dedication, hard work, and flexibility are mentioned often (teachers care about students, hard-working staff, committed teachers). Many highlight specific school levels or programs, e.g., strong elementary teachers, vocational offerings (HOSA, FFA), and CTE opportunities. There’s recognition that even with limited resources, staff try their best.
- **Student and Whole-Child Focus:** Students are viewed as hard-working, great kids, and precious. Emphasis on the whole-child approach, extracurricular participation, and opportunities for student growth. Participants express pride in programs that engage students beyond academics: sports, band, career readiness.
- **Commitment to Improvement and Growth:** Words like potential, progress, hopeful, and opportunity for growth reflect a district in transition but with optimism about the future. Many acknowledge that while challenges exist (enrollment, need for discipline), there’s desire to be successful and dedicated leaders working for improvement. Frequent references to leadership, vision, and accountability signal that people crave sustained, transparent progress.
- **Effective (and Needed) Communication and Leadership:** Communication between staff, families, and the community is seen as both a strength and an area to maintain or improve. Respondents value visibility, collaboration, and transparency from leadership. Leadership, integrity, organization, and clear direction appear dozens of times—community members want consistent, guiding leadership that unites schools.
- **Rural Character and Sense of Belonging:** Pride in being a small town, rural, close-knit district. Appreciation for knowing students and families personally, smaller class sizes, and safety. Traditional and conservative values surface as part of community identity.
- **Areas of Emerging Promise:** Improved pay scales, vocational programs, and academic focus are recognized as positive changes. Multiple mentions of a space for culture reset and reform indicate readiness for new leadership that can harness this momentum.

3. The next question asked for perceptions (4.0 rating scale) about several operational facets of the Burlington 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>
Student Achievement	1.97
Relationships with Families	1.90
Relationships with Staff Members	1.89
Communications	1.84
Transparency	1.74
Preparing Students for College and Career	1.52
Financial Management	1.44

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	50.00%
Teacher Quality	50.00%
College and Career Readiness	38.24%
Academic Outcomes	34.31%
School Safety and Security	26.47%
Communication	24.51%
Financial Management	19.61%
Family and Community Relations	17.65%
Facilities and Grounds	12.75%
Mental Health Services	8.82%
Social Emotional Learning	7.84%
Diversity and Engagement	4.90%
Special Education Services	3.92%

5. As a follow-up question, respondents were asked to identify any additional critical issues the next superintendent should make a priority. Themes that emerged included:
- **Staffing, Quality, and Retention:** Hire and retain qualified, licensed teachers, especially in high school core subjects; reduce reliance on online and foreign hires seen as lower quality. Address staff shortages, high turnover, overwork, and the need for competitive pay, housing, and better working conditions. Provide high-quality professional development, mentoring for new teachers and principals, and protect teachers when they enforce expectations, so they feel safe doing their jobs.
  - **Student Behavior, Discipline, and Safety:** Establish fair, consistent discipline with real consequences, including for bullying, attendance, and disruptive behavior. Restore respect and classroom order; support teachers in holding students accountable instead of blaming them when they discipline. Strengthen school safety and climate so students and staff feel physically and emotionally secure.

- **Academic Rigor, Curriculum, and Readiness:** Raise academic expectations; stop making classes too easy and ensure students must truly meet standards to pass. Modernize curriculum, ensure rigorous standards, and improve instruction so students are ready for college, trades, and adult life (not just to graduate). Better serve both struggling students and high achievers so top students are challenged and supported, not lost in the shuffle.
- **Facilities, Consolidation, and Resources:** Update or replace aging, dirty, or embarrassing facilities, grounds, and sporting spaces; address middle school building concerns. Consider consolidating buildings to reduce overhead and free funds for curriculum, staffing, and student services. Maintain safe transportation, address an aging bus fleet and driver shortages, and be fiscally responsible with spending and initiatives.
- **Communication, Culture, and Leadership:** Provide strong, visible leadership that is present in schools, holds everyone accountable, and models integrity and fairness. Improve transparent, respectful communication with staff, parents, and the wider community; reduce perceived favoritism and elitist mentality. Develop and follow a clear strategic plan, unify board and administration, and create a positive, consistent culture across all schools.
- **Mental Health and Student Supports:** Expand student mental health services, partnerships with community providers, and staff training to respond to crises. Support student engagement and wellness (attendance, counseling, neurodiversity, special education, and whole-child supports) as core priorities, not add-ons.

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	50.00%
Stands firm behind decisions that may not be popular	38.24%
Takes responsibility and is accountable for their actions	35.29%
Places the needs of students above anything else	32.35%
Communicates effectively	29.41%
Possesses a background in public education	25.49%
Values educating the whole child	22.55%
Previous experience as a superintendent	22.55%
Spends time in classrooms	22.55%
Delivers improved student outcomes	19.61%
Builds strong community relationships	19.61%
Engages and listens to stakeholders	18.63%
Promotes safety and security across the district	18.63%
Resolves conflicts with dignity and grace	17.65%
Maintains a vision focused on the future	16.67%
Is committed to equitable access to learning for all students	16.67%

Uses data to make informed and transparent decisions	13.73%
Thinks and acts strategically	12.75%
Promotes student participation in the arts, athletics, and activities	12.75%
Builds strong and diverse teams	8.82%
Fosters creativity, risk taking, and innovation	5.88%
Adapts effectively to changing circumstances	5.88%
Values school autonomy	4.90%

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

- **Integrity, Fairness, and Moral Character:** Repeated calls for integrity, honesty, strong moral character, and fairness; not being swayed by wealthy families, board politics, or loud voices. Expectation that the superintendent puts all students first, applies rules consistently, and resists favoritism or special treatment.
- **Strong, Courageous Leadership:** Desire for a decisive leader who can make tough, sometimes unpopular decisions and then stand behind them. Frequent mention of needing a backbone to uphold policy, enforce the chain of command, hold staff, students, and parents accountable, and push for needed change.
- **Commitment to Rural Community and Equity for All Students:** Respondents want someone who understands rural communities and small-town politics, values local morals, and is willing to live and be active in the community. At the same time, they stress equity and cultural responsiveness: caring about all students (including non-wealthy, non-Christian, non-college-bound) and liking kids genuinely.
- **Instructional, Business, and Strategic Expertise:** Desire for deep instructional experience (10–15 years teaching, multiple roles), plus superintendent and budget/finance competence. Expectations that the superintendent can lead strategic planning, be data-driven, fiscally responsible, hire strong principals, and focus on academic achievement over sports or politics.

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

- **Small-Town, Rural Lifestyle and Safety:** Described as rural, quiet, slower-paced, with small town charm, low or limited traffic, and generally low crime. Emphasis on feeling safe, knowing your neighbors, and having space, clean air, and outdoor life while still being close to I-70 and larger cities.
- **Strong, Caring Community and Support for Schools:** Repeated references to a close-knit, friendly, welcoming community where people are relational, hard-working, and take care of each other. Community pride, high involvement in

school events (athletics, FFA, band, Old Town events), and a track record of rallying around youth and schools with time, energy, and funds.

- **Family-Friendly Quality of Life and Opportunity:** Seen as a good place to raise a family, with diverse students, lots of activities for kids, faith-based and small-town values, and a sense that families will be taken in as one of our own. Lower cost of living and housing than metro areas, existing amenities (hospital, Safeway, restaurants, shops, movie theater, bowling alley), and the chance for a superintendent to make a visible, authentic impact in a community eager for change.

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:

- **Hire for Quality, Fit, and Change Leadership:** Find the best candidate, not the first or cheapest; avoid warm body hires and yes men. Seek a proven leader (often with rural experience) who can turn around a struggling district, rebuild trust, and focus on long-term improvement, not status-quo management.
- **Involve Staff and Community in the Process:** Strong calls for staff input beyond a token survey and for staff to sit on interview panels. Desire for meaningful community voice, transparency about the process, and a superintendent who will live in-district and learn the community.
- **Address Staffing, Retention, and Working Conditions:** Emphasis on compensating and retaining quality teachers and reducing turnover. Requests to support staff with discipline, reduce initiative overload, and ensure special education and counseling systems work effectively.
- **Focus on Academics, Discipline, and Student Safety:** Many ask the Board to pick someone who will put academics over sports, raise rigor, and improve instructional quality and outcomes. Repeated concerns about student behavior, lack of consistent discipline, and safety; desire for a leader who backs teachers and restores accountability.
- **Fix Facilities, Finances, and Systems:** Calls for attention to aging facilities, possible consolidation, and thoughtful spending priorities (buses vs. other needs). Desire for a superintendent skilled in finance, operations, and strategic planning who can streamline systems, ensure compliance (including special education), and align initiatives.
- **Board Self-Reflection and Governance:** Some comments press the Board to question advice more critically, understand statutes and regulations, and avoid undue influence from special interests. There is a clear expectation that the Board choose a superintendent with integrity and backbone—and then support them in making necessary, sometimes difficult, changes.

## Respondent Group: Parents of Current Students 49 Responses

This section summarizes stakeholder feedback in the Burlington School District Superintendent Search from 49 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 included:
  - **Supportive, Close-Knit Community:** Frequent mentions of community support, community pride, small town values, and close-knit relationships. Respondents emphasize that families back the schools, especially around students and extracurriculars, and are hopeful and willing to partner in improvement.
  - **Dedicated Staff and Leadership:** Many highlight valued, committed teachers and staff, particularly at the elementary level, plus caring principals and building-level leaders. Staff are seen as trying their best with limited resources and are invested in the district’s growth and success.
  - **Great Kids, Activities, and Student Potential:** Comments repeatedly note great kids, and significant student potential across a diverse student population. Strong

emphasis on athletics, band, MCC/extracurricular activities, and improving academics/test scores as points of pride and opportunity.

3. The next question asked for perceptions (4.0 rating scale) about several operational facets of the Burlington 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	1.86
Financial Management	1.29
Relationships with Families	1.84
Relationships with Staff Members	1.90
Student Achievement	1.84
Transparency	1.78
Preparing Students for College and Career	1.45

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	57.14%
College and Career Readiness	44.90%
Staff Recruitment and Retention	44.90%
Academic Outcomes	34.69%
School Safety and Security	26.53%
Family and Community Relations	16.33%
Financial Management	16.33%
Communication	14.29%
Facilities and Grounds	12.24%
Mental Health Services	12.24%
Social Emotional Learning	8.16%
Special Education Services	8.16%
Diversity and Engagement	2.04%

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

- **Staffing, Teacher Quality, and Retention:** Need for qualified teachers, especially in high-school core areas (history, science, math); concern about overreliance on online and foreign hires. Repeated calls for teacher/ staff retention, housing and recruitment plans, better pay and appreciation, and ongoing training and support.

- **Student Behavior, Discipline, and Safety:** Strong demand for fair, consistent discipline for bullying, attendance, and disruptive students; teachers need problematic students removed so others can learn. Emphasis on school safety, addressing drug and alcohol use, and ensuring students feel secure and accountable for their actions.
- **Academic Rigor, Curriculum, and College/Career Readiness:** Concerns that classes are too easy, students can earn A’s with little effort and are unprepared for college or workforce expectations. Requests to strengthen core academics, expand elective and CTE options beyond Ag/FFA, challenge high-achieving and gifted students, and prioritize academics over athletics.
- **Facilities, Consolidation, and Operations:** Many comments about aging, dirty, and embarrassing facilities, particularly the middle school; desire for facility upgrades and improved maintenance. Some advocate consolidating into one building to reduce costs and redirect funds to curriculum and staffing; others highlight needs like sporting facilities and transportation.
- **Communication, Relationships, and Board Governance:** Need for better communication with parents and the broader community, including newsletters and sharing positives, not just negatives. Calls for board transparency and listening, clear policies for private/home-school participation, and resistance to favoritism or elitist mentality and special treatment for certain families.
- **Student Supports, Mental Health, and Equity:** Desire to strengthen student mental health services, student services and wellness supports, and special education compliance and delivery. Emphasis on treating each student as an individual, ensuring every child has worth and belongs, and addressing divisions between public, home, and private school students.

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	53.06%
Places the needs of students above anything else	40.82%
Takes responsibility and is accountable for their actions	36.73%
Stands firm behind decisions that may not be popular	30.61%
Possesses a background in public education	30.61%
Delivers improved student outcomes	24.49%
Values educating the whole child	24.49%
Previous experience as a superintendent	24.49%
Communicates effectively	22.45%
Uses data to make informed and transparent decisions	20.41%
Maintains a vision focused on the future	18.37%
Is committed to equitable access to learning for all students	18.37%
Resolves conflicts with dignity and grace	18.37%
Spends time in classrooms	18.37%
Promotes safety and security across the district	16.33%
Builds strong community relationships	14.29%

Promotes student participation in the arts, athletics, and activities	14.29%
Thinks and acts strategically	12.24%
Engages and listens to stakeholders	12.24%
Adapts effectively to changing circumstances	10.20%
Builds strong and diverse teams	8.16%
Values school autonomy	4.08%
Fosters creativity, risk taking, and innovation	2.04%

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

- **Integrity, Backbone, and Student-First Equity:** Repeated calls for integrity, honesty, and moral strength, including not being swayed by wealthy families, politics, or special interests.
- **Communication, Visibility, and Relationships:** Strong desire for excellent communication skills, transparency, and openness (open-door style, responds instead of reacts). Expectation that the superintendent is visible and active in schools and the community, builds strong bonds with staff and students, and genuinely likes kids.
- **Rural Fit and Community Engagement:** Preference for experience in small, rural community public education and understanding small-town politics and culture. Someone willing to learn the community, be part of it, advocate for local resources, and engage parents and community partners.
- **Leadership, Governance, and Change Orientation:** Calls for strong leadership skills, strategic planning ability, and a systems/governance mindset that respects board–superintendent roles and shields educators from harassment. Desire for an innovative, flexible change leader who can streamline initiatives, focus on academics, and reset or align the system rather than preserve the status quo.
- **Instructional, Financial, and Data Skills:** Expectations for solid education and superintendent background, including experience improving student outcomes. Need for budget/finance and management skills, data-driven decision making, organized operations, and clear plans to ensure teacher quality and academic focus.

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

- **Small Town, Rural Lifestyle and Safety:** Described as rural, small town, quiet, and slower paced, with simple life, little traffic, and easy access to necessities. Emphasis on low crime/safe and family friendly, where you know your neighbors, will never feel alone, and can raise children comfortably.
- **Strong, Supportive Community and School Pride:** Frequent mentions of community support, engagement, and togetherness, especially for youth activities (athletics, FFA, band, drumline). Pride in small town values, faith

based and community-oriented culture, and a tradition of rallying around schools with time, energy, and funds.

- **Family Friendly Quality of Life and Opportunity to Make a Difference:** Seen as a great place to raise a family, with diverse students, lots of activities for kids, great restaurants, and a welcoming atmosphere. Lower cost of living than metro areas, proximity to larger cities, and a sense of high potential for measurable improvement, giving a new superintendent the chance to lead authentic change in the absolute best of rural America.

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:

- **Hire the best change leader, not a placeholder:** Preference for someone with a proven record turning districts from failure to success, willing to challenge we've always done it this way, and able to stabilize and reset systems even if tenure is shorter.
- **Focus on staffing, compensation, and retention:** Strong pressure to financially compensate and retain quality teachers, address serious staffing shortages, and end the practice of filling positions with minimally qualified people. Desire for a superintendent skilled at recruiting/retaining strong staff, supporting special education compliance, and building a positive, accountable culture.
- **Emphasize academics and student success over extras:** Repeated calls to put academics ahead of athletics/Ag alone, prepare students for education and life beyond Burlington, and raise expectations. Respondents want a leader who will keep students in district (reducing flight to online, home, or private schools) and ensure success in life, not just graduation.
- **Ensure rural fit, community engagement, and values alignment:** Board is urged to select someone who understands rural, small-town life, is willing to live in and be part of the community and reflects local values while valuing all students. Comments highlight the importance of a leader who can promote the district positively, rebuild trust, and love children and education.
- **Strengthen governance, transparency, and stakeholder voice:** Requests for community and staff input in the search and for the Board to scrutinize candidates' records, not just resumes. Desire for clear, transparent communication from leadership and for someone who will tell the Board when a decision is not good for students, then hold people accountable respectfully.

## Respondent Group: Staff Members 28 Responses

This section summarizes stakeholder feedback in the Burlington School District Superintendent Search from 28 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 included:
  - **Strong, Caring Community:** Frequent mentions of being community oriented, good community, supportive community, and a passionate, caring community that rallies around schools and athletics. Community wealth and willingness to support programs financially are seen as assets, alongside small-town connectedness and pride (Cougar Pride).
  - **Dedicated Staff and Hard-Working Students:** Staff are described as hard-working, flexible, and student focused, with many committed to improving student outcomes even under pressure. Students are portrayed as hard working, diverse, and eager to learn and be seen, with many people still caring deeply about the district’s future.
  - **Student Opportunities, Programs, and Continuous Improvement:** Respondents highlight multiple academic offerings, strong vocational/CTE options (HOSA, FFA), band, athletics, drumline, and many ways for students to

participate. There is recognition of improving academics, higher pay for staff, collaboration with BOCES, and a district culture that is inviting, communicative, and committed to ongoing improvement.

- The next question asked for perceptions (4.0 rating scale) about several operational facets of the Burlington 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>
Student Achievement	2.29
Relationships with Families	2.25
Relationships with Staff Members	2.21
Communications	2.04
Transparency	1.82
Preparing Students for College and Career	1.64
Financial Management	1.52

- 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:

Communication	50.00%
Staff Recruitment and Retention	46.43%
Academic Outcomes	42.86%
Teacher Quality	32.14%
College and Career Readiness	21.43%
Family and Community Relations	21.43%
Facilities and Grounds	17.86%
School Safety and Security	17.86%
Diversity and Engagement	14.29%
Financial Management	14.29%
Mental Health Services	10.71%
Social Emotional Learning	10.71%
Special Education Services	0.00%

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

- Staffing, Teacher Quality, and Leadership Stability:** Strong concern about teacher and staff retention, high turnover, and the need for visible, consistent building leadership. Calls to improve teacher quality and competency, provide

meaningful professional development, protect staff when they enforce expectations, and avoid overworking them so they return each year.

- **Student Behavior, Discipline, and Mental Health:** Repeated emphasis on student behavior and accountability, fair and consistent enforcement of rules, and support for teachers managing discipline. Recognition of a mental health crisis among students and a need for better training, systems, and family partnerships to address it, alongside maintaining school safety.
- **Academic Outcomes, Curriculum, and Student Retention:** Desire to strengthen academic outcomes, keep the district out of improvement status, and update curriculum so instruction meets the needs of all learners. Concern that families and high-achieving students are leaving or going online; respondents want the superintendent to improve rigor and engagement to retain students in district.
- **Facilities, Resources, and Work Conditions:** Comments highlight aging facilities and the need for upgrades, better furniture/classrooms (especially at BMS), and improved grounds and buildings. Attention to teacher work conditions, including planning time, work–life balance, and differentiated training that actually helps staff.
- **Communication, Culture, and Governance:** Need for respectful, transparent communication with staff, families, and community; consistent messaging about expectations such as CMAS. Calls for a healthier climate and culture—shared leadership, staff support, trust in teachers, and putting education first while reducing overemphasis on sports and favoritism.

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:

Communicates effectively	50.00%
Stands firm behind decisions that may not be popular	50.00%
Demonstrates high integrity and ethics and leads by example	46.43%
Builds strong community relationships	28.57%
Places the needs of students above anything else	28.57%
Possesses a background in public education	28.57%
Takes responsibility and is accountable for their actions	25.00%
Spends time in classrooms	25.00%
Engages and listens to stakeholders	21.43%
Values educating the whole child	21.43%
Previous experience as a superintendent	21.43%
Resolves conflicts with dignity and grace	17.86%
Promotes safety and security across the district	17.86%
Is committed to equitable access to learning for all students	14.29%
Promotes student participation in the arts, athletics, and activities	14.29%
Builds strong and diverse teams	10.71%
Fosters creativity, risk taking, and innovation	10.71%
Maintains a vision focused on the future	10.71%

Thinks and acts strategically	7.14%
Delivers improved student outcomes	7.14%
Values school autonomy	7.14%
Uses data to make informed and transparent decisions	7.14%
Adapts effectively to changing circumstances	0.00%

7. Respondents were then asked via constructed response to identify any additional characteristics the next superintendent should have. Discernable trends identified were:

- **Strong, Visible, and Principled Leadership:** Desire for an experienced leader who inspires and motivates staff, visits buildings regularly, follows through, and holds administrators and staff accountable. Emphasis on a backbone with the board and community, enforcing chain of command, applying policies consistently (no favoritism), and making tough, principled decisions even when unpopular.
- **Communication, Relationships, and Staff Support:** High value on a superintendent who listens to staff, provides ways to share concerns, develops rapport, and is transparent and forthcoming. Expectations that they value and appreciate staff, protect and support them publicly, and build trust by being professional, visible, and approachable.
- **Instructional Depth, Rural Fit, and Equity for All Students:** Requests for strong instructional experience (10–15 years in classrooms, multiple roles) and prior superintendent experience, plus understanding of rural Colorado communities. Desire for someone who knows every student and many staff by name, pushes both college and vo-tech/alternative pathways, and is culturally responsive, empathetic, and committed to all students, not just a vocal few.
- **Fairness, Accountability, and Whole-Student Focus:** Respondents want a leader who is strict but caring and balanced, holds students and parents accountable for behavior, and supports non-college-bound students through alternative programs. Integrity, high moral values, consistency, and professionalism (including how they present themselves) are repeatedly named as essential characteristics.

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

- **Rural, Small-Town Lifestyle and Safety:** Described as rural, quiet, peaceful, with limited traffic and a slower pace of life. Emphasis on low crime and feeling safer than in urban areas, while still being close to I-70, metro areas, and the mountains.
- **Close-Knit, Supportive Community for Schools:** Repeated references to a tight-knit, welcoming community where people are relational, hardworking, and care deeply about students. Strong community support and involvement in schools, athletics, and events, with many established families invested in the district’s long-term future.

- **Family-Friendly Quality of Life and Amenities:** Seen as a good place to raise kids, with good education, community activities, and youth opportunities. Benefits include cheaper housing than big cities, local amenities (restaurants, hospital, shops, movie theater, bowling, parks), small town convenience, and a community that values education and has a strong moral compass.
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:
- **Hire the best, stable leader (not just first/cheapest):** Seek out the best candidate, not just the first one to apply, and avoid convenient hires, including leaders who failed elsewhere. Prioritize strong instructional and leadership experience, rural fit and longevity, and a proven record of turning around or improving districts rather than a micro-manager.
  - **Ensure staff voice and ongoing input:** Multiple comments ask that staff participate in interviews and have clear ways to voice concerns beyond a token survey. Staff want the Board to treat them as trained professionals, use their insight on building needs, and consider their input on what needs to change.
  - **Align with community values and willingness to change:** The Board is urged to consider community values and morals and to pick someone who understands rural life but is also willing to make needed changes instead of doing what's always been done. Respondents want a superintendent who can withstand pressure from small-town politics and special interests while keeping education first and standing strong amid pressure from interest groups.