McPherson Jacobson, LLC

Executive Recruitment and Development

# Waverly School District 145
# Superintendent Search
# Executive Summary of Stakeholder Focus Groups

**Prepared for the Board of Education**

**Draft Prepared 10/27/2026**

Stakeholder Input Sessions — October 21, 2026

Six stakeholder groups

**McPherson & Jacobson, L.L.C.**

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SCOPE AND METHOD

# About This Summary

This narrative summary synthesizes six stakeholder input sessions conducted on October 21, 2026, as part of the Waverly School District 145 Superintendent Search. Consultant Steve Joel met in person with five groups during the school day: Building Administrators, Directors, High School Student Council Leaders, Classified/Support Staff, and Certified Staff/Faculty. Consultant Mike Lucas then facilitated an open Community and Parent Forum that evening in the high school auditorium. Stakeholders unable to attend a session could respond through an online survey open October 20–27; those results are reported separately and are not reflected here.

Each group responded to the same four questions and was given a review of the selection process along with an opportunity to ask questions about the search. This document reports, for each question in turn, the themes that recurred across groups and what those themes imply for the Board's decisions. Direct quotations are drawn from facilitator notes as recorded.

The five daytime sessions — four employee groups and one student group — account for the largest share of the recorded input. The Community and Parent Forum drew seven attendees, so the community and parent perspective in this summary rests on a small number of voices and should be read alongside the survey results. Findings described here as widely shared reflect themes raised independently by separate groups rather than emphasis within any single session. Where a theme appears in only one group, that is noted.

QUESTION ONE

# Strengths of the Communities

Every group described the District 145 communities in strikingly similar terms: a small town with a family feel, where the schools sit at the center of community life. Four of six groups named the small-town character directly, describing a "small town feel," a "great place to live and raise kids," and a community that is "tight knit." A fifth spoke of a "family feel within community and schools" in which educators are valued. One group added a locational advantage that will matter to candidates: "all the Lincoln resources without having to live in Lincoln."

Beneath the small-town identity, three assets recurred. The first is community support for the schools, raised in some form by five groups. Stakeholders described a community "invested in high quality education," offering "great community support for schools, activities and high quality education," and a relationship that runs in both directions: "community support for the schools and vice versa." One group said simply that "schools are the center," and another that "families move here for the schools." The second is people. Three groups used the words "great people" or "supportive people," one noted "lots of multi-generational families in the area," and others described people "willing to volunteer to help" and parents who "are partners." The third is belonging. One group described an "easy community to become part of" where students are "easily accepted" and there is "something for everyone to do." The community forum added a point unique to a district that spans more than one town: "our five communities get along." One group also pointed to a community that looks after its own, citing "resources like Food Banks for students in need."

Two qualifications run beneath the praise. The first is trust. One group reported that the "community has high level of trust in district, superintendent and board," yet four groups elsewhere raised the district's recent failed bond issues. Both accounts may be accurate: a community can trust its schools and still decline to raise its own taxes. The second is direction. One group paired the small-town feel with "community growth," and another expected that "growth is coming," while a third described "declining enrollment." A small town absorbing growth is a different leadership assignment than one managing contraction, and this question is taken up again under Question Four.

QUESTION TWO

# Strengths of the District

Every group named the quality and commitment of staff, and this was the most consistent strength in the study. Staff were described as willing to "do whatever it takes for kids to succeed," as "dedicated staff being the best they can be," and as "great and dedicated teachers." One group said that "every building is student centric—everyone is here for the kids," and another that teachers "go above and beyond and are very encouraging." The most personal evidence was also the simplest: "teachers attend graduations and weddings." Students credited "great relationships with teachers" and "excellent family communication." Two groups offered retention as proof of the culture, noting that staff "tend to remain" and describing staff longevity and retention as "best in conference."

Beyond staff, three assets recurred. The first is academic momentum. Four groups described academics as a strength, and two supplied evidence of improvement: "test scores increasing," "teachers becoming more effective instructors," a "great reading curriculum," and a "25% increase in student achievement." One group singled out special education services as "outstanding." The second is activities and involvement. Four groups praised the activity program — "activity program is superb," "strong extra-curricular programming," and an "outstanding student band and music program with great community support" — and students valued "clubs for non athletes like Ed Rising," dual credit, and the sense that "student ideas are valued." Two groups observed that size works in the district's favor: "smallness means everyone is engaged and connected," and it is "easier to get things done due to small size." The third is a sound organizational foundation, described principally by one group: "in good shape financially," with "16 Million in cash reserve," increased classified staff pay, a partnership with the University of Nebraska and other colleges, and an "excellent strategic plan in place—recently revised."

Two qualifications run beneath the praise. The first is balance. The activity program draws real pride, and one group described the district's mission as "rooted in school pride and success," but another asked for a superintendent "invested in academics" because it "feels like athletics is more emphasized." The community forum cautioned, "Don't leave out and neglect the Fine Arts," and students asked for "equal visibility" at all school activities. Read together, these responses suggest stakeholders value activities but want them understood as broader than athletics and never at the expense of academics. The second is grade level. Students praised "great teachers—especially K-8," and the high school was the subject of the most specific requests recorded under Question Four. The district's academic gains appear to be felt most strongly in the earlier grades.

QUESTION THREE

# Characteristics the Next Superintendent Should Have

This question produced the clearest consensus in the study. Five of six groups named communication explicitly, and the sixth asked for an "open office" and a leader "willing to engage with all staff and community." The community forum recorded the request in capital letters: "Excellent COMMUNICATOR." Stakeholders were specific about the audiences — "internal and external stakeholders" and "staff and community" — and about the purpose, asking for the "ability to articulate the vision with leadership, staff and community." One group tied communication directly to "transparency," and another defined it as listening: a "good listener willing to engage." The request has substance behind it. Under Question Four, one group described a "lack of communication about job changes and new ways of doing things," and another asked the next superintendent to "create deeper dialogue with the staff."

Visibility was named by five of six groups, and stakeholders specified where it should occur. In the schools, they asked a superintendent to "be present in the buildings," to be "visible and involved in the classrooms and buildings," and to practice "hands on leadership—knowledge of what is happening in schools and classrooms." In the community, they asked for "high visibility within schools and community events" and a leader "engaged and involved and visible throughout our communities." The forum put it plainly: "We want and need to see our supt 'out and about.'" Two groups added a standard of fairness to visibility. Students asked for presence at all school activities with "equal visibility," and another group asked the superintendent to "treat all levels equally in terms of importance." Approachability completed the picture: a "people person" who is "relatable and approachable and accessible," "warm and welcoming," and "personable and respectful and compassionate."

Strategic and financial leadership formed the second cluster. One group asked for a "visionary leader that will take an active role in strategic planning and budgeting," with "the ability to evaluate the existing system and help us become more aligned to our mission and goals," and described the ideal as a "systems thinker" effective at both short- and long-term planning. Another asked for "the ability to align the district." The community forum asked for "strong financial and budget skills," the ability to "work within budget constrictions," and the discipline to "prioritize needs vs. wants due to high property taxes." These requests connect directly to the bond and tax concerns that dominate Question Four.

Groups also described how they want that leadership exercised. Two asked for a collaborative leader, and one group converted that into a concrete expectation: be "collaborative and open minded" and "learn the culture before launching on changes." Another asked for a superintendent who "models servant leadership." Two groups asked for problem-solving ability, including the "ability to manage conflicts" and "adaptability." At the same time, stakeholders did not equate approachability with softness. The forum asked for "a strong presence that can command a room," and another group wanted a leader "supportive of leadership and key decisions." The composite is a strong, strategic leader who is also accessible and humble enough to listen first.

One request surfaced in a single group and is noted because it may serve as a useful screen: "understanding rural aspects of district." Although named only once, it is consistent with the small-town identity every group described under Question One.

QUESTION FOUR

# Critical Issues to Prioritize

Fiscal concern appeared in all six groups, but it is not a concern about day-to-day solvency. One group described the district as "in good shape financially" with "16 Million in cash reserve." The consistent concern is how the district will pay for what comes next. Four groups raised the failed bond issues — the community forum named "two failed bond issues" — and asked the next superintendent to address the "failure of the bond and cost of projects going forward" and to "rethink bond failure and create plans to address facilities and infrastructure in the future." Two groups named property taxes, the forum stating that "we have an over-reliance on local property taxes," and a third explained the structural cause: "the disadvantages of a middle class district that doesn't get as much state aid." Groups asked for "budget processes that are transparent and consistent," for "prioritizing budget expenditures," and for "managing high community expectations within financial realities." A healthy reserve and two failed bonds are not contradictory, but voters will hear them together, and the next superintendent will need to explain both.

Facilities were named by five groups and are inseparable from the bond question. Stakeholders cited "building space needs," the "ability to prioritize facility planning and use of budget funds," and the "cost of projects going forward." One group drew the most consequential link in the study: a "school security needs shortfall due to bond failure—have to rethink priorities." Two other cost pressures each surfaced in a single group. One noted "technology challenges increasing at a higher rate than fund availability," and another named "transportation costs, cross town bussing, scheduling and staffing."

Enrollment is the one factual disagreement in the study and should be resolved before candidates ask. One group anticipated "enrollment challenges—growth is coming," while another described "limited resources/declining enrollment." These positions may reflect different buildings or different time horizons rather than different facts, but the answer shapes nearly every other priority: whether facility needs are about capacity or reallocation, and how a future bond proposal should be framed to the community.

Academic expectations emerged as the priority with the most specific requests. Two groups raised it directly, and both were close to the classroom or to families. One asked the next superintendent to "prioritize academics," to develop "more academic opportunities for college-focused students—ie, AP courses are needed," and noted that the "high school needs to be studied to determine how kids are scheduled and other opportunities that they are unable to participate in." The community forum asked for a "focus on academic improvements" and observed that "our grading system is different than most of our Class B peers." Together with the academics-and-athletics concern under Question Two, these requests point to the high school as the place where a new superintendent's academic leadership will be tested first.

Staff voice and workload were raised by two employee groups and deserve attention precisely because retention is one of the district's strengths. One group described a "lack of communication about job changes and new ways of doing things" and "jobs becoming more complex and time consuming." Another asked the next superintendent to "provide better opportunities for staff to grow and be promoted" and to "value and respect teacher as professionals," and recorded that "teachers sometimes feel like some decisions made for students and parents and not teachers." Because the same group also listed "administration supports staff" as a strength, these are best read as early signals worth addressing before they affect retention. A third group asked for "developing strategies to more effectively engage with community," linking communication to the bond results.

Prepared by McPherson & Jacobson, L.L.C., Executive Recruitment and Development, as consultant to the Waverly School District 145 Board of Education. Findings reflect six stakeholder input sessions conducted on October 21, 2026. Online survey results are reported separately.

McPherson & Jacobson, LLC

Executive Recruitment and Development

# Waverly School District 145
# Superintendent Search
# Executive Summary of Online Survey Results

**Prepared for the Board of Education**

**Draft Updated 10/28/2026**

Phase II — Stakeholder Input

172 survey submissions · October 20 – October 28, 2026

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SCOPE AND METHOD

# About This Summary

This narrative summary synthesizes the online stakeholder survey conducted for the Waverly School District 145 superintendent search. The instrument drew 172 submissions between October 20 and October 28, 2026, with nearly three-quarters arriving on the opening day and on October 26. Findings from stakeholder focus groups are reported separately and are not reflected here.

Respondents identified their primary connection to the district as parents of current students (64 percent), staff members (27 percent), community members (4 percent), parents of former students (3 percent), and other (1 percent). No students responded. Parents of current students (110 responses) and staff members (47 responses) are the two groups exceeding five percent of the sample and together account for 91 percent of all submissions.

The survey combined multiple-choice selections, four-point rating scales, and constructed-response questions. This document reports, question by question, the themes that recurred, the figures that carry them, and what each finding implies for the Board's decisions. Quoted language is respondents' own, as recorded; names of individual employees and Board members that appeared in some comments have been omitted.

Interpretation note: this was an open, self-selected survey rather than a probability sample, so the results describe the people who chose to respond and should not be read as broader opinion. The results file provided for this summary reports combined totals only and does not link individual answers to respondent role, so results are not disaggregated by parents and staff; where a comment's author identified their own role, that is noted in the text. Percentages on the critical-issues and characteristics questions reflect multi-select items and therefore total more than 100 percent. Theme rankings for constructed-response questions are based on the frequency with which each theme was raised.

SURVEY QUESTION ONE

# How Stakeholders Feel About the District

Asked for the one word that best describes how they feel about the district, respondents produced a vocabulary that is clearly positive in its center of gravity. The largest terms in the combined response are proud and pride (17 mentions together), good (13), and positive (8), followed by community, supportive, strong, satisfied, and great. Of the 172 responses, the survey platform classified 105 as positive (61 percent), 34 as negative (20 percent), and 29 as neutral (17 percent).

The negative fifth is small but coherent, and it clusters around two subjects rather than scattering. The first is trust: mistrust, untrustworthy, disillusioned, dismissed, dismissive, unsupported, and conflicted. The second is money: wasteful, expensive, "spends to much," and "great school, has budget issues." Disappointed was the most frequent single negative word, at five mentions. Respondents who declined the one-word format and wrote a phrase or sentence instead skewed critical, most often of district or Board leadership.

The neutral vocabulary is also informative. Words such as growing, developing, potential, striving, improvement, and stagnant describe a district in motion rather than at rest, and community appeared six times on its own — respondents name the district and the town as one and the same thing. That identification recurs throughout the survey.

SURVEY QUESTION TWO

# Strengths of the District

Asked to name three strengths that candidates should know about, 150 respondents produced a consistent rank order. Community and family support was the single most frequent theme by a wide margin, described as involved parents, a community that rallies around its own, and schools that are "the heart of the community."

The quality and dedication of teachers and staff followed, with notable emphasis on longevity: respondents cited low staff turnover, colleagues with fifteen or more years in the district, and the view that "most teachers stay in District 145 because it's a special place to work." Several credited support staff and office staff, not only teachers.

Small-town character and tradition came next — "small town = big family," families "united by generations," and "the best of both worlds," a small-town community vibe paired with a strong education. Academic quality, described as rigor, high standards, and strong elementary schools, and the breadth of activities completed the leading group.

The programs cited were specific: band and music, athletics, theatre, fine arts, career and technical education, early childhood, and special education, which drew several unprompted compliments from families of students with special needs. Respondents also named the district's foundation support, free busing including activity buses across a large rural geography, safety practices such as weather-related cancellation decisions, and sound district finances as strengths in their own right.

Two features of this question deserve attention. First, roughly one in ten respondents answered with qualities they want in the next superintendent rather than strengths of the district — budget savvy, the ability to pass a bond, visibility, communication — which signals how present the search is in respondents' minds. Second, a few strengths were offered with an edge: athletics praised alongside the warning that "everything revolves around football," and homogeneity described as a strength by one respondent and a lack of diversity by another. Respondents also described the district's values in opposite terms, some praising its conservative and traditional character and others its inclusive and welcoming one.

SURVEY QUESTION THREE

# Perceptions of District Performance

Respondents rated seven operational facets of the district on a four-point scale, with an option to answer "I don't know." The reported weighted averages score that option as zero, which depresses facets that many respondents felt unable to judge. The table therefore shows both the reported figure and the average among respondents who offered a rating.

| Operational facet | Reported | Excl. "don't know" | Don't know | Good or excellent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Student achievement | 2.90 | 3.01 | 3.5% | 79.1% |
| Communications | 2.85 | 2.89 | 1.2% | 73.7% |
| Relationships with families | 2.65 | 2.75 | 3.5% | 63.4% |
| Relationships with staff members | 2.23 | 2.76 | 19.2% | 53.5% |
| Transparency | 2.21 | 2.35 | 5.8% | 45.0% |
| Preparing students for college and career | 2.14 | 2.73 | 21.5% | 50.6% |
| Financial management | 1.75 | 2.14 | 18.2% | 31.2% |

Weighted averages on a four-point scale (poor = 1, excellent = 4). "Reported" scores "I don't know" as zero, as in the survey results; the adjusted column excludes those responses. Percentages are of all respondents rating each facet (170 to 172).

Financial management is the lowest-rated facet under either method — 1.75 as reported and 2.14 among those who offered a rating. It also drew the largest share of "poor" ratings in the instrument (25.9 percent) and the smallest share of "good" or "excellent" (31.2 percent). Nearly one respondent in five said they did not know how well the district manages its finances, which is itself a finding for a district that has recently asked voters to approve bonds.

Transparency is the second-lowest facet once the "don't know" effect is removed (2.35), and it drew the second-largest share of "poor" ratings (21.1 percent). The contrast with communications is instructive: communications is the second-highest facet at 2.89, with barely one percent of respondents unable to judge it. Respondents distinguish between receiving information, which they rate well, and understanding how decisions are made, which they do not. One respondent put the distinction directly: families "don't need to agree with every call, but they should be able to understand it."

Two facets are understated in the reported figures. Preparing students for college and career (21.5 percent "don't know") and relationships with staff members (19.2 percent) both rise to roughly 2.75 among those who rated them, level with relationships with families. Read that way, the instrument shows a strong top tier in student achievement and communications, a solid middle of four facets, and two clear outliers at the bottom — financial management and transparency.

SURVEY QUESTION FOUR

# Critical Issues to Prioritize

Respondents selected the three most critical issues from a list of thirteen. Financial management ranked first at 38.95 percent and was the only issue chosen by more than a third of respondents. Behind it, six issues fall within five percentage points of one another — school safety and security, teacher quality, staff recruitment and retention, college and career readiness, academic outcomes, and family and community relations — which means there is a clear first priority but no consensus second.

| Critical issue | Percent of respondents | Selections |
|---|---|---|
| Financial management | 38.95% | 67 |
| School safety and security | 31.98% | 55 |
| Teacher quality | 31.40% | 54 |
| Staff recruitment and retention | 29.07% | 50 |
| College and career readiness | 28.49% | 49 |
| Academic outcomes | 27.91% | 48 |
| Family and community relations | 27.33% | 47 |
| Communication | 18.02% | 31 |
| Facilities and grounds | 18.02% | 31 |
| Mental health services | 16.28% | 28 |
| Social emotional learning | 12.21% | 21 |
| Diversity and engagement | 11.63% | 20 |
| Special education services | 8.72% | 15 |

Respondents selected three of thirteen options among 172 respondents, so the column totals roughly 300 percent.

The middle cluster sorts naturally into three concerns. People: teacher quality and staff recruitment and retention together drew 104 selections, more than any single item. Students: college and career readiness and academic outcomes together drew 97. Safety stands on its own near the top. At the other end, special education services ranked last at 8.72 percent — consistent with the praise special education received as a district strength — with diversity and engagement and social emotional learning just above it. Facilities and grounds drew a modest 18.02 percent on the list, but as the comments show, it is far more prominent when respondents write in their own words.

The constructed-response follow-up, answered by 107 respondents, named seven recurring additional priorities. Fiscal discipline led: staying within budget (one respondent wrote it three times), eliminating waste, holding down administrative and management costs, and streamlining purchasing. Facilities, growth and bonds followed closely, framed around crowded buildings, dated high school and career and technical spaces, heating and cooling needs, and two failed bond elections. Respondents were split on the remedy: some insist "we have to pass a bond," while others ask the district to "stop forcing bonds" and to separate needs from wants with a five- and ten-year plan.

Safety and student treatment came third, and its character is distinctive. Alongside secure building entrances, respondents repeatedly raised bullying — including concerns about how some adults, coaches among them, treat students — and asked for a consistent K–12 policy. Some described reluctance to raise concerns for fear of consequences for their children. Communication, transparency and trust, and staff retention, pay and workload completed the shared list, with staff commenters describing burnout, special education teams and paraprofessionals spread thin, and, from a classified employee, a lack of benefits for classified staff.

Two further themes are specific to Waverly. The balance between athletics and academics drew pointed comments about coaching absences, substitute coverage, and resource allocation, along with three separate requests to update the grading scale, which respondents believe disadvantages graduates for scholarships. And a district identity theme ran through the responses — "we are not LPS" — paired with practical concerns about Lincoln annexation, growth in Eagle, and transportation across a district that spans several towns and many acreages.

SURVEY QUESTION FIVE

# Characteristics the Next Superintendent Should Have

Respondents selected five characteristics from a list of twenty-three. Integrity ranked first by a wide margin: demonstrates high integrity and ethics and leads by example drew 62.79 percent, and no other characteristic reached 40 percent. Builds strong community relationships ranked second at 38.37 percent, followed by takes responsibility and is accountable (35.47 percent), thinks and acts strategically (34.30 percent), and communicates effectively (33.14 percent). These five form a distinct top tier, nearly eight points clear of the next item.

A second tier is oriented to students and schools: promotes safety and security (25.58 percent), places the needs of students above anything else (25.00 percent), engages and listens to stakeholders (23.26 percent), spends time in classrooms (22.67 percent), and possesses a background in public education (20.93 percent). The ranking of community relationships in second place is the most Waverly-specific result on the list, and it is reinforced everywhere else in the survey.

What respondents declined to prioritize is equally informative. Values school autonomy finished last at 6.40 percent, below adapts effectively to changing circumstances (7.56 percent), fosters creativity and innovation (11.63 percent), and commitment to equitable access (12.79 percent). Previous experience as a superintendent drew 13.37 percent — the same share as promoting arts, athletics and activities. On the list, respondents rank character and community fit above credential, although, as the final question shows, a vocal minority argues the opposite in their own words.

The constructed-response follow-up, answered by 83 respondents, sharpened the picture. Visibility and presence drew the most specific language: a leader seen in every building and at every kind of activity, with some respondents adding "not just boys sports." Listening to and valuing staff followed, with requests to communicate with paraprofessionals and teachers, not only administrators, and to act as a morale builder. Character traits recurred — honest, trustworthy, fair, firm, and possessing "thick skin." Community fit and commitment completed the shared list: live in the district, "plant roots," understand small Nebraska communities, treat Eagle, Alvo, Walton, Davey and the rural acreages equally with Waverly, and avoid simply following Lincoln Public Schools. Respondents also asked for financial wisdom, specifically experience building community support for bonds. A small number of comments carried cultural or political framing, and those comments pointed in opposite directions.

SURVEY QUESTION SIX

# Community Draws for Candidates

Asked to name three things that might encourage a candidate to relocate, 115 respondents produced a stable and consistent list. The community and its people ranked first — close-knit, welcoming, supportive, a place where neighbors "take care of one another." Proximity to Lincoln and Omaha ranked a close second, and the small-town feel third. The single most repeated idea in the dataset combines the two: small-town living with quick access to big-city amenities.

The schools themselves ranked fourth — quality staff, good students, involved parents, and an established, well-regarded district with "a culture of success." Respondents then named the opportunity to make an impact on a growing community, safety, cost of living and home prices, the rural and agricultural lifestyle, nearby state parks and lakes, and access to the University of Nebraska. Several framed the role itself as a draw, describing a strong district positioned to move "to the next level."

SURVEY QUESTION SEVEN

# Guidance to the Board of Education

The final question invited any additional considerations for the Board, and 79 respondents answered it. Listening to staff and involving stakeholders was the leading theme. Respondents asked the Board to read every survey, to weigh the views of those who work in the buildings, and to seat a hiring panel that is a genuine cross-section — classified and certified staff, "bus drivers, janitors, cooks, secretaries, new teachers and those ready to retire" — along with community representatives such as a local business owner, a farmer, and a city resident.

Longevity and commitment ranked second. Respondents described turnover among superintendents and principals as detrimental and costly, and asked for a leader who sees Waverly as "the destination, not a stop on a trip to another job," who will commit to living in the district, and who is not "ready to retire within 10 years."

Experience versus fit ranked third and was frequently raised but not resolved. One group asked for prior superintendent experience, a doctorate, or a proven record of leading a growing district through budget and facility pressure. Another urged the Board to "interview the person, not their resume" and to value strengths and fit over having done the job before. Internal versus external candidates drew a similar split: explicit calls to hire from outside the district for a fresh perspective and calls to consider current administrators for continuity were roughly equal in number.

Preserving district identity followed — "we want to remain Waverly," with repeated caution against modeling the district on Lincoln Public Schools — balanced by a smaller set of respondents asking for a leader focused on the future who can plan for Lincoln's eastward annexation. Fiscal stewardship closed the shared list: a reasonable salary, an understanding of how agricultural land taxes fund the district, skepticism of bonds that bundle security with wish-list items, and, from one respondent, a call to review consultant and contractor arrangements following failed bond attempts.

Finally, a small number of respondents directed their comments at the Board itself rather than at the search, ranging from calls for resignation to unresolved grievances over pandemic-era decisions. Others thanked the Board for its work during the bond and search processes. Comments about the outgoing leadership were similarly mixed, with several critical and at least one strongly supportive.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

# Where Stakeholders Converge

Four findings recur across every part of the survey, and they are the findings no constituency can dismiss as someone else's complaint. Fiscal stewardship is the through-line: financial management is the lowest-rated facet of district performance, the top-ranked critical issue at 38.95 percent, and the most frequent additional priority in respondents' own words. Integrity ranks first among desired characteristics at 62.79 percent, and transparency — understanding how decisions are made, not simply being informed — is the second-weakest facet. Community is both the district's leading strength and its leading draw for candidates, and building community relationships is the second-ranked characteristic. And the people of the district, its teachers and staff, are named as a core strength while their recruitment, retention and workload rank among the top priorities.

Five tensions are large enough to shape recruitment and interviewing. On facilities, respondents agree the need is real but divide sharply on whether another bond is the answer. On growth, they want a leader who can plan for annexation and enrollment while preserving a small-town identity they describe as non-negotiable. On activities, they prize the district's athletic and arts programs while asking that academics come first. On credentials, the closed-list results favor character and fit over prior superintendent experience, while a vocal minority in the comments argues for a proven sitting superintendent. And on the candidate pool, preferences for an internal or external hire are roughly balanced.

Because the results file reports combined totals only, this summary does not separate parent and staff responses. Parents of current students and staff together account for 91 percent of submissions; if the Board wishes to see where those two groups diverge, the survey results can be re-exported with responses filtered by role and this summary extended accordingly.

Prepared by McPherson & Jacobson, L.L.C., Executive Recruitment and Development, as consultant to the Waverly School District 145 Board of Education. Findings reflect 172 online survey submissions gathered October 20 through October 28, 2026. Stakeholder focus group findings are reported separately.