

Stakeholder Input Report for

***Pendleton School
District
Pendleton, Oregon***

submitted by



11725 Arbor St., Suite 220
Phone: 888-375-4814/402-991-7031
Email: mail@macnjake.com

Omaha, Nebraska 68144
Fax: 402-991-7168
Website: www.macnjake.com

January 15th, 2025



MCPHERSON *M* JACOBSON, LLC

EXECUTIVE RECRUITMENT & DEVELOPMENT

11725 ARBOR STREET, SUITE 220 ♦ OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68144 ♦ 402-991-7031/888-375-4814
FAX: 402-991-7168 ♦ EMAIL: MAIL@MACNJAKE.COM ♦ WEBSITE: WWW.MACNJAKE.COM

**Pendleton School District
Pendleton, Oregon
Preliminary District Stakeholders Report, January 2025**

Listening Session Executive Summary	3
Consolidated Stakeholder Group Responses	3
Summary of Responses by Question:	3
Key Trends	5
Participant Numbers	7
Frequently Used Terms and Phrases in Order of Use from Greatest to Least	7
Listening Session Notes	8
Stakeholder Group: Community Invited	8
Stakeholder Group: High School Staff	10
Stakeholder Group: Building Administrators	12
Stakeholder Group- District Office Staff	14
Stakeholder Group: Sunridge Middle School Staff	16
Stakeholder Group: District Office Cabinet	18
Stakeholder Group: Pendleton High School Students	20
Stakeholder Group: Classified Staff.....	21
Survey Responses	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Survey Response Consolidated Summary	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Listening Session Executive Summary

On January 13, 2025, Dr. Douglas Nelson and Mrs. Heidi Sipe, McPherson & Jacobson's consultants conducted meetings with the district stakeholders representing eight different groups associated with the Pendleton School District to gather input regarding the selection of the new superintendent. The consultants received input from approximately 135 individuals during the meetings.

Outlined below is an Executive Summary of the major themes expressed by the participants at these sessions. Following the Executive Summary is a compilation of all the input received from these groups and individuals in response to the four questions asked of each group and participants. The final section of the report consists of responses by individuals who completed the online survey.

Consolidated Stakeholder Group Responses

Summary of Responses by Question:

1. What are the great things about Pendleton and the Pendleton School District that potential candidates for superintendent should know?

- **District:**
 - Welcoming, supportive environment with strong community ties.
 - Teachers are dedicated and have longevity in the district.
 - Diverse range of programs and classes, including partnerships with local colleges.
 - Strong administrative support.
 - High-quality educators.
- **Community:**
 - Small-town feel with strong community support and involvement.
 - Rich tribal culture.
 - Active service organizations.
 - Strong arts scene and local traditions.
 - Unique demographics compared to neighboring towns.
 - Close-knit and interconnected.

2. What qualities, skills, and characteristics do you feel the next superintendent needs to have in order to be successful?

- **Community Engagement:**
 - Live in Pendleton and be actively involved in the community.
 - Attend key community events and build relationships with various groups.

- Understand and support the tribal relationship and the relationship with the Round-Up Association and other key community partners (arts, business, college and service groups).
- Understand and respect the town's culture.
- **Leadership:**
 - Strong leadership skills with the ability to work with diverse personalities.
 - Prioritize the Pendleton School District and lead the building administrators and cabinet effectively.
 - Communicate effectively and transparently with all stakeholders.
 - Have a vision for the district and be able to implement it collaboratively.
 - Be visible and approachable in the schools and community.
- **Experience and Skills:**
 - Have a genuine interest in the community and its traditions.
 - Be innovative and not complacent, seeking new ways to improve the district.
 - Have a strong understanding of technology.
 - Commit to the district long-term (7-10 years).
 - Experience with special education law and fiscal responsibility.

3. What are the critical areas of improvement that the next superintendent should address?

- **Student Behavior:**
 - Address student behavior issues that are perceived to contribute to families and staff members choosing to leave the district.
 - Implement effective behavior management strategies and support staff.
 - Consider alternative education options for students with behavioral needs.
- **Communication and Relationships:**
 - Strengthen relationships with all stakeholders.
 - Improve communication and transparency.
 - Build community and staff trust.
- **Other Areas:**
 - Analyze and address declining enrollment.
 - Improve technology integration.
 - Increase rigor and expectations, particularly at the high school level.
 - Provide more support for staff, including addressing burnout and pay scales.
 - Improve the district's social media presence.
 - Maintain school facilities and improve access for extra-curricular facilities such as the pool, tennis courts and land lab.

4. What do you believe will be the most significant challenges the next superintendent will have to confront?

- **Community and Culture:**
 - Gaining respect and buy-in from parents and the community.
 - Address negativity and lack of parent involvement.
 - Adapting to Pendleton's unique culture and generational nature.
 - Maintain community visibility and build trust.
- **District Issues:**
 - Addressing declining enrollment while maintaining programs.
 - Securing stable funding and avoiding cuts.
 - Dealing with resistance to change due to traditions.
 - Improving regional partnerships and support.
 - Addressing behavioral issues that are driving families away.
 - Developing and maintaining cohesiveness amongst the central office team and the building leadership teams.
 - Addressing staff shortages and high turnover in certain positions.

Key Trends

Based on the feedback provided by stakeholders in the Pendleton School District superintendent search, several key trends emerge:

1. Strong Community Emphasis:

- **Connectedness:** Pendleton is repeatedly described as a close-knit, interconnected community with strong traditions and a "small-town" feel. The next superintendent *must* be deeply involved in this community, attending events, understanding the culture, and respecting its traditions.
- **Visibility:** Stakeholders emphasize the need for a superintendent who is present and visible within the schools and the wider community. This signals commitment and builds trust.

2. Student Behavior and Support:

- **Behavioral Challenges:** Concerns about student behavior are prevalent across stakeholder groups. This includes disruptive behavior, lack of support for students with behavioral needs, and the impact of these behaviors on staff and other students.
- **Need for Solutions:** There's a clear desire for the next superintendent to prioritize addressing these behavioral issues, potentially through implementing new strategies, providing additional resources, and exploring alternative education options.

3. Leadership and Communication:

- **Strong Leadership:** Stakeholders want a superintendent who is a strong leader, capable of making difficult decisions, managing the district effectively, and building a cohesive team.
- **Effective Communication:** Open and transparent communication is crucial. This includes active listening, seeking input from stakeholders, and effectively conveying information to the community and staff.

4. Staffing and Morale:

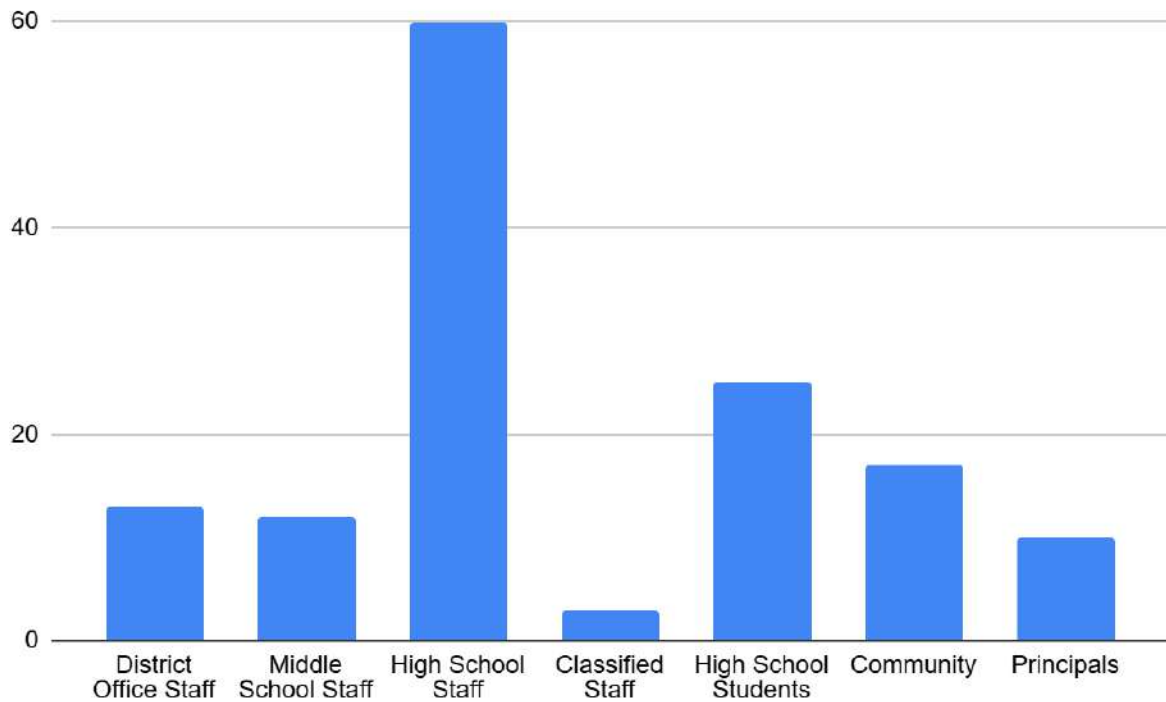
- **Staff Support:** There are concerns about staff burnout, inadequate pay for the roles they fill, and the need for more support in dealing with student behavior.
- **Teacher Concerns:** While there's appreciation for teachers, particularly their longevity in the district, there are also concerns about teacher quality, rigor, and resistance to change.

5. Declining Enrollment and Resources:

- **Enrollment Concerns:** Declining enrollment is a significant concern. The next superintendent needs to address the factors driving families away, potentially including employment issues, behavioral concerns, and competition from charter schools.
- **Resource Management:** The district may face budget cuts. The next superintendent needs to be fiscally responsible and find ways to maintain programs and support students despite potential resource constraints.

Stakeholders painted a clear image of the ideal candidate for Pendleton School District. The ideal superintendent will be a strong, visible leader who is deeply engaged in the community, prioritizes addressing student behavior and staff support, and can effectively navigate the challenges of declining enrollment and resource management.

Participant Numbers



Frequently Used Terms and Phrases in Order of Use from Greatest to Least

- Community
- Student Behavior
- Leadership
- Communication
- Experience
- Vision
- Support
- Relationships
- Culture (of the town, of the schools)
- Visible (the superintendent needs to be seen around)
- Enrollment (declining, a problem to solve)

Listening Session Notes

Stakeholder Group: Community Invited

Number of Attendees: 17

1. What are the great things about Pendleton and the Pendleton School District that potential candidates for superintendent should know?

- Strong district, no major issues
- Rich tribal culture
- Active service organizations with many retired educators
- Numerous programs for kids
- Community with volunteer spirit
- Strong arts scene and local traditions
- Most residents don't have children in school
- Partnerships with BMCC and EU (need strengthening)
- Key communicators program for district information
- Many teachers are alumni

2. What qualities, skills, and characteristics do you feel the next superintendent needs to have in order to be successful?

- Involved in the community, committed to long-term
- Respects traditions and is visible at events
- Good communicator with staff
- Knows teachers' names, supports them
- Is in classroom and lunchrooms
- Experience with SPED law
- Follows through on commitments
- Has a background in classrooms at different levels
- Is a leader and a doer
- Balances social media perceptions with reality
- Has the presence of a leader
- Has follow through
- Accepts support and shows caring
- Shows compassion and value students
- Committed to student safety in and out of school
- Embraces technology
- Skillfully diffuses issues
- Is friendly with good interpersonal skills
- Communicates effectively with "average" parents
- Understands Pendleton's culture and interconnected community

- Brings successful programs especially behavior

3. What are the most critical areas of improvement that the superintendent should address?

- Adapt to changing classrooms and demographics
- Disruptive behavior especially involving Special Education programs
- Ensure safety and address disruptive behavior
- Develop partnerships for behavioral and mental health issues
- Visible and approachable leadership
- Staff burnout and support of staff
- Consistency between schools
- Emphasize School to Career
- Improved communications
- Honesty about restrictions from laws
- Making district number one choice
- Partnering with business to strengthen community

4. What do you believe will be the most significant challenges the next superintendent will have to confront?

- Declining enrollment while maintaining programs
- Stable funding and avoiding cuts
- Address resistance to change because of traditions
- Improve regional partnerships and support
- Address behavioral issues driving families away
- Lack of resources for high-needs students
- Migration to a local charter district
- Maintain visibility in the community and build trust
- Understand and adapt to Pendleton's generational nature
- Community invested in finding the right leader
- Open to investigating solutions used by other districts
- Understanding the high school's proper role
- Understanding Oregon's issues, approaches and uniqueness

Stakeholder Group: High School Staff
Number of Attendees: ~60

- 1. What are the great things about Pendleton and the Pendleton School District that potential candidates for superintendent should know?**
 - Strong community collaboration, aware of district happenings
 - Strong community - rural small-town environment
 - Pride in diverse programs
 - Community traditions like Roundup
 - Caring staff with good communication
 - Support for students' new needs, both financially and emotionally
 - Many alumni return to teach
 - Great for raising families
 - Efficient district office
 - Strong connection with the native community (18% native in high school)
 - Like-minded, easy-to-fit-in community
 - Talented staff
 - Not litigious

- 2. What qualities, skills, and characteristics do you feel the next superintendent needs to have in order to be successful?**
 - Has a long-term commitment, roots in PSD
 - Had success with bond measures
 - Is a visionary and shares vision with staff
 - Listens to staff, no personal agenda
 - Has genuine relationships with staff, visible in district
 - Trusts leaders, not a micromanager
 - Had classroom experience, understands teachers
 - Knows how to move SPED students towards community integration
 - Has humble, hands-on leadership
 - Strong discipline and training leadership
 - Engages with teachers for improvement
 - Practical, not trend-driven solutions
 - Proven in addressing attendance, literacy, behavior
 - Relates to all staff levels
 - Willing to say yes, stand up to others
 - Builds local and statewide partnerships
 - Trusts staff's sincere ideas

- 3. What are the critical areas of improvement that the next superintendent should address?**
 - Improve facilities, especially high and middle schools
 - Address severe misbehavior, especially at the elementary level
 - Support for growing number of behavioral students
 - High percentage of SPED students (20% at high school)
 - Relate to staff, understand classroom realities

- Conduct exit interviews with parents pulling students
- Ensure readiness of students for high school
- Empower building leaders
- Avoid decision-making via back channels
- Improve pay and number of Paras
- Ensure availability of supplies, especially year-end
- Address frustration with superintendent pay

4. What do you believe will be the most significant challenges the next superintendent will have to confront?

- Focus on attendance, literacy, behavior issues
- PD driven by open dialogue with staff
- Open to ideas, improving PHS
- Transparent communication about decisions
- Preserve programs in spite of issues elsewhere
- Balance power dynamics within district office

Stakeholder Group: Building Administrators

Number of Attendees: 10

- 1. What are the great things about Pendleton and the Pendleton School District that potential candidates for superintendent should know?**
 - Pride in school and community
 - Strong community support (e.g., scholarships)
 - Unique community culture
 - Diverse branding of Pendleton
 - Community has a voice (positive and negative)
 - Wide range of classes (music, various courses)
 - Community resources attract families (pro and con)
 - Dual language programs with Umatilla language
 - Strong relationship with Umatilla Tribe and support for tribal students
 - Low staff turnover, stability
 - Strong building level administrative team collaboration
 - Abundant community resources (hospital, art center, children's museum, airport, restaurants, BMCC)
 - Stable population with multi-generational families
 - Large enough for anonymity
 - Strong ELD program
 - Various subgroups (dance, club sports)
- 2. What qualities, skills, and characteristics do you feel the next superintendent needs to have in order to be successful?**
 - Has good people skills, able to establish strong relationships
 - Able to create a team atmosphere within established culture
 - Able to bring together strong personalities
 - Is forward-looking, brings new ideas
 - Has experience in various roles and districts
 - Understands school systems and laws
 - Able to be a quality thought partner, engages and seeks solutions
 - Is committed to improvement
 - Lives in and is part of the community
 - Is visible and involved in events
 - Knows employees in various contexts
 - Is politically savvy
 - Has big picture vision, especially for facilities and activities
 - Has experience in passing bonds
 - Advocates for the district
 - Understands community and demographics of Pendleton
 - Trusts building leaders to run their buildings
- 3. What are the critical areas of improvement that the next superintendent should address?**
 - Address deferred maintenance (HVAC, athletics, flooring, roofs)

- Needs to pass a bond
- Address behavior issues
- Board support for superintendent in working with district office staff
- District office staff needs to be shaken up
- Educate board to have a broad lens and address all aspects of the district
- Prepare for a wave of retirees
- Ensure teachers are paid well
- District office making decisions for the building level

4. What do you believe will be the most significant challenges the next superintendent will have to confront?

- Declining enrollment while maintaining programs and services
- Lack of stable funding, avoiding massive cuts
- Maintain programming while strong in addressing issues and needs
- Address resistance to change ("we've always done it this way" vs. "we've never done that before")
- Level of autonomy at the building level
- Lack of needed support at the building level
- Not receiving services from ESD that district is paying for
- Improve regional partnership with ESD and at state and national levels
- Address issues driving families away at the elementary level (behavior issues, SPED behaviors)
- Lack of resources for high-needs students with mental health issues
- Migration of families, students, and teachers to a local smaller charter district

Stakeholder Group- District Office Staff

Number of Attendees: Approximately 10

1. What are the great things about Pendleton and the Pendleton School District that potential candidates for superintendent should know?

District

- Welcoming community
- Teachers love it, when they come, they stay and are community driven
- Programs and classes that would traditionally be in larger districts
- Diverse range of classes, strong partnership with BMCC,
- Lots of longevity with staff (in all areas)
- People are supportive of one another
- Staff are involved in the community and do a lot with the town

Community

- Small, hometown feel
- Community support is strong
- Strong ties and relationships
- Community rallies during hard times
- Fresh start is needed

2. What qualities, skills, and characteristics do you feel the next superintendent needs to have in order to be successful?

- Needs to live here, be connected to Pendleton
- Must be visible
- Needs to attend key community events.
- Needs to be in and of the community
- Needs to be able to work well with strong personalities and differing personalities
- Someone who will put the Pendleton school district first- There's a lot of groups to coordinate with but the schools need to be the clear priority
- Understands and supports tribal relationship
- Understands and supports the Round Up Association
- Needs to understand the culture of the town
- Innovative and not complacent
- Middle school electives are bare minimum, elementary doesn't have a lot of options, we need to be more innovative
- Go getter who will bring resource
- High energy
- Turns ideas to actions
- Needs to build relationships in the community to recruit the right people to work for, and help with the schools
- Someone who listens well to others and will culminate ideas and develop a shared vision
- While we have a very strong cabinet, we need a superintendent who can provide clear direction and effectively leverage their expertise to move the district forward
- Reflection of them is positive back to the district

- Technology use needs to be strong and understood
- No retire-rehire people, no one who is thinking of this as their last stop before they retire in a year or two.
- Need a 7-10 year person
- Needs to be a 24-7 person, the job is always “on”
- Needs to understand the challenges in the district and be ready to take them on with real action

3. What are the critical areas of improvement that the next superintendent should address?

- Longevity- they need to be ready to prove to people that they’ll stay
- Genuine interest in the community, a real want to be a part of the events and the traditions of the town.
- Relationships need to be strengthened
- Public relations
- Visible in the schools, need to show support and be in the buildings
- Student behaviors *must* be addressed
- Students are leaving the district because of the problems with student behavior
- Transparency in communication
- Communication needs to be key
- Positive working relationship with every person in the district office
- The community has experienced some challenges in their relationship with the superintendent's office. The new leader should be prepared to address any existing concerns and actively work to rebuild trust and confidence.

4. What do you believe will be the most significant challenges the next superintendent will have to confront?

- The community has experienced some challenges in their relationship with the superintendent's office. The new leader should be prepared to address any existing concerns and actively work to rebuild trust and confidence.

Stakeholder Group: Sunridge Middle School Staff

Number of Attendees: 12

- 1. What are the great things about Pendleton and the Pendleton School District that potential candidates for superintendent should know?**

Community:

- Close-knit community
- Lots of involvement in service organizations
- Variety of activities and interests

District:

- Supportive staff with strong local ties
- Good working relationships with tribal partners

- 2. What qualities, skills, and characteristics do you feel the next superintendent needs to have in order to be successful?**

- Organized and strong communicator
- Able to connect with diverse community groups and build relationships
- Respectful of existing culture and willing to learn
- Action-oriented leader: Committed to making a difference, not just fulfilling a contract.
- Collaborative
- Able to share vision, gather input, and work effectively with others
- Visible and engaged
- Present in schools and actively involved in the community
- Experienced and knowledgeable
- Possessing the necessary background to address district needs- especially student behavior
- Fiscally responsible
- Invested in the community
- Living locally and having children attend district schools (if they have children).

- 3. What are the critical areas of improvement that the next superintendent should address?**

- Declining enrollment
- Need to analyze causes and address the trend of families leaving the district
- Improve the efficiency of technology support.
- Classroom behavior support is key
- Provide better support for staff in managing challenging behaviors
- Foster a more positive and collaborative culture with parents

- Enhance the district's social media strategy and communication
- Address a perceived decline in academic rigor
- Improve the upkeep of school facilities

4. What do you believe will be the most significant challenges the next superintendent will have to confront?

- Rebuilding trust with parents
- Many parents are facing challenges and may be distrustful of the district
- Overcome barriers to parent engagement in a high-poverty district.
- Show a genuine commitment to the community and its culture or the community won't support the work

Stakeholder Group: District Office Cabinet

Number of Attendees: 3

- **What are the great things about Pendleton and the Pendleton School District that potential candidates for superintendent should know?**

Community:

- Involved and supportive community
- Excellent facilities
- Strong partnerships with schools
- Hometown pride and strong arts community
- Unique demographics and tribal partnerships
- Abundant sunshine and food options

District:

- High-quality educators (teachers and administrators)
- Strong staff retention
- Community college partnership
- Longevity of staff

2. What qualities, skills, and characteristics do you feel the next superintendent needs to have in order to be successful?

- Honest and ethical
- Demonstrates integrity and makes decisions in the best interest of students
- Strong leader
- Possesses conviction and the ability to inspire and motivate others
- Consults with stakeholders and takes time to learn the history of previous work before making decisions
- Communicates clearly and effectively in both written and spoken forms
- Able to develop strong relationships with staff, families, and community members
- Able to gain the respect of and effectively manage principals
- Attends school and community events and actively participates in the community
- Effectively tells the district's story and keeps the community informed
- Demonstrates a genuine desire to serve the Pendleton community
- Uses data and information to inform decisions
- Fiscally responsible
- Manages district resources effectively, efficiently, and with strategic intention

3. What are the critical areas of improvement that the next superintendent should address?

- Improve cohesion, professionalism, and shared vision within the leadership team
- Improve shared commitment to work from district office to schools and into classrooms
- Clarify roles and responsibilities between the board and staff; support board development
- Increase understanding of the impact of poverty on students and families.

4. What do you believe will be the most significant challenges the next superintendent will have to confront?

- Improve rigor, professionalism, and student-centered decision-making at the high school
- Address potential staffing and budget cuts due to declining enrollment
- Navigate the challenges of limited and expensive housing options in Pendleton.
- Manage leadership transitions at the middle and elementary school levels.
- Establish a positive working relationship with the Executive Secretary and Cabinet Team to allow for positive collaboration and cohesive efforts K-12

Stakeholder Group: Pendleton High School Students

Number of Attendees: ~25

1. What are the great things about Pendleton and the Pendleton School District that potential candidates for superintendent should know?

- Variety of sports offerings
- Strong agriculture program that reflects the community

2. What qualities, skills, and characteristics do you feel the next superintendent needs to have in order to be successful?

- Community-minded
- Needs to live in Pendleton and have children attending district schools (if applicable)
- Attends school and community events; is recognizable to students
- Encourages and values student voice

3. What are the critical areas of improvement that the next superintendent should address?

- Expand language options beyond Spanish in high school.
- Encourage options for native Spanish speakers to obtain foreign language credit
- Expand foreign language instruction beyond the high school and encourage language learning in elementary and middle grades
- Provide students with take-home Chromebooks.
- Address behavior issues in middle school.
- Improve teacher professionalism
- Improve teacher support for the whole variety of school activities and athletics
- Support options for make-up work due to absences for school activities
- Offer more elective options at the middle school
- Ensure teachers are providing engaging and effective instruction
- Revisit the cell phone ban, considering its impact on students and refocus to teach appropriate use instead of banning a tool
- Invest in athletic and other facilities, with emphasis on pool, tennis courts, and the land lab
- Expand Advanced Placement (AP) course options and standardize AP practices

4. What do you believe will be the most significant challenges the next superintendent will have to confront?

- Resistance to Change
- Overcome potential resistance to change from teachers.

Stakeholder Group: Classified Staff

Number of Attendees: 3

1. What are the great things about Pendleton and the Pendleton School District that potential candidates for superintendent should know?

- Small, close-knit community with a strong sense of connection.
- Supportive environment where alumni often return to work and contribute.
- Culture of respect and kindness.

2. What are the great things about Pendleton and the Pendleton School District that potential candidates for superintendent should know?

- Visible and Present
- Actively engaged in schools and the community
- Honest and Ethical
- Demonstrates integrity and makes decisions in the best interest of students
- Provides clear direction, makes tough decisions, and inspires confidence
- Strong enough to make the final call and stand by tough decisions
- **Excellent Communicator:** Communicates effectively through various channels, actively listens, and responds promptly.
- **Experienced:** Possesses the necessary background and knowledge to address district challenges.

3. What are the critical areas of improvement that the next superintendent should address?

- Address significant student behavior challenges
- Create dedicated spaces and resources for behavioral support (e.g., behavior room, behavior school)
- Implement clear and consistent consequences for disruptive behavior
- Acknowledge and address the heavy workload and emotional toll on staff
- Provide adequate resources and support for staff dealing with challenging student behaviors
- Ensure fair compensation that reflects the multiple roles staff members fulfill
- Expand alternative education options to include grades K-8
- Provide strong, decisive leadership and address challenges head-on
- Advocate for the needs of all students
- Foster a positive and supportive work environment for staff- recognize staff dedication and achievements

4. What do you believe will be the most significant challenges the next superintendent will have to confront?

- Address the current power dynamic where the central office administration team seems to hold more influence than the superintendent

Pendleton School District Superintendent Search Survey

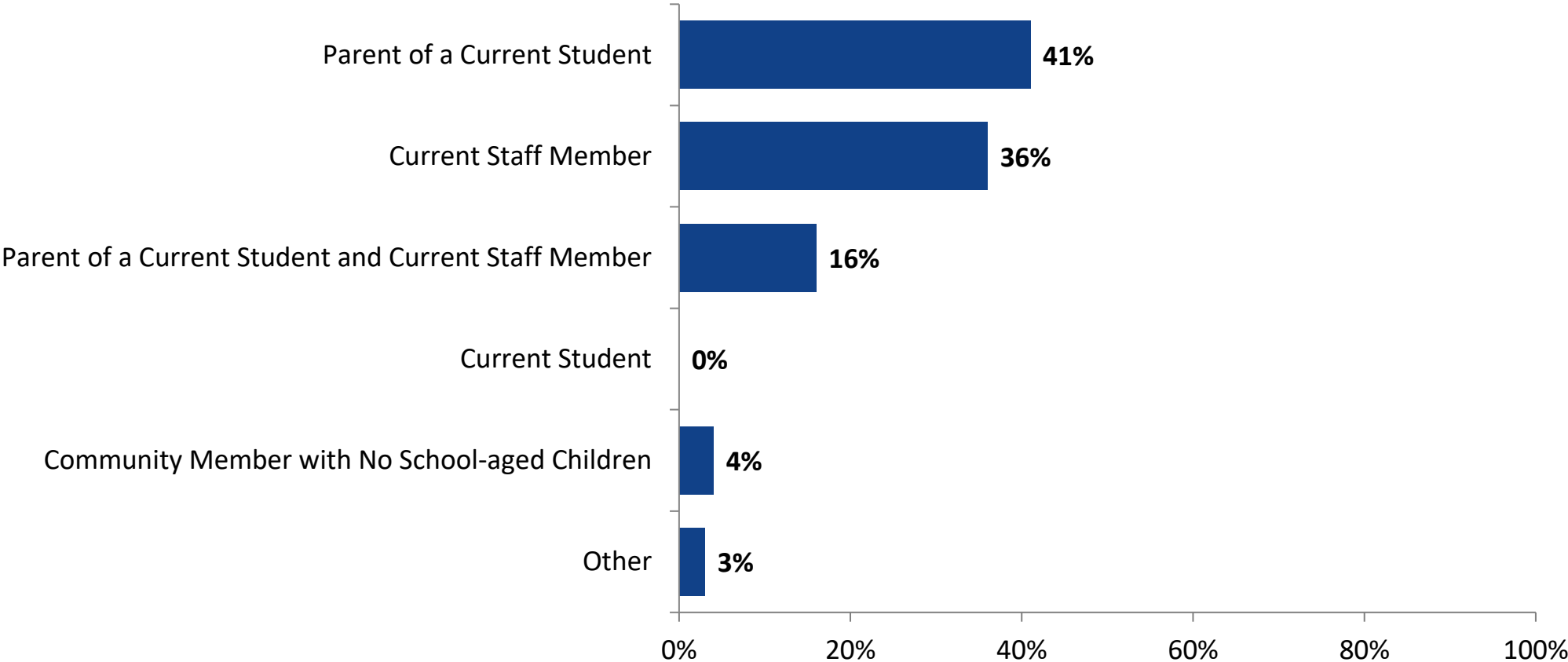
Results and Analysis

McPherson & Jacobson
January 2025



Relationship to District

Which of the following best describes your relationship to Pendleton School District? (N=76)



Good Points About the Community

Please tell us great things about your community and school district that potential candidates for superintendent should know. (N=67)

- **Arts and Culture:** Pendleton's arts and culture programs were mentioned as a positive aspect, with opportunities for students to get involved in activities like the symphony and local arts initiatives.
- **Career and Technical Education (CTE):** CTE programs were highlighted as a strength, with participants suggesting they should be expanded and more visible, as they provide valuable real-world opportunities for students. Participants highlighted the investment in youth from various sectors of the community, such as local businesses, tribal partners, and civic organizations. These partnerships are seen as essential.
- **Community Engagement:** A key strength identified was the strong sense of community in Pendleton. Many participants emphasized that volunteering is at the heart of the town, with the Pendleton Round-Up playing a central role in bringing the community together. Community members are actively involved in supporting schools, including through local businesses, civic organizations, and charitable efforts. This spirit of support is seen as an essential asset for the school district and a potential attraction for a new superintendent.
- **Local Pride and Traditions:** Participants noted that local traditions are integral to the school district and the community's identity. They suggested that a new superintendent should be aware of and respect these traditions while also being open to innovation and growth.
- **Supportive Environment for Students:** Respondents expressed that the community and the schools provide a supportive environment for students, helping them succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. The community takes pride in fostering students' sense of belonging and resilience. Participants noted the importance of ensuring that student safety and well-being are prioritized in decision-making.
- **Supportive School Staff:** Teachers, staff, and administrators are seen as caring, dedicated, and invested in the success of their students, contributing to a supportive educational environment. There was praise for the longevity and commitment of many teachers in the district, with participants appreciating that educators often stay for the long term, fostering stability and familiarity. The district's communication with parents and the availability of resources were also noted as strengths, suggesting that efforts to keep families informed and engaged have been effective.

Characteristics, Attributes, Skills

What qualities, skills, and characteristics do you feel the next superintendent needs to have in order to be successful? (N= 74)

- **Commitment and Longevity:** There was a clear call for someone who is committed to the role long-term, ensuring stability and consistent leadership.
- **Experiences in Education:** Experience in education and leadership, as well as an understanding of both elementary and secondary education, were highlighted as essential. Financial acumen and experience with policy implementation were also mentioned.
- **Engaged in the Community:** A strong theme was the desire for a superintendent with ties to the community who will actively engage with students, staff, families, and local organizations. Visibility and involvement in the community were highly valued.
- **Innovative:** The ability to adapt to changing needs and embrace innovation while maintaining what works was seen as important.
- **Integrity and Ethics:** Many participants emphasized the importance of integrity and honesty in the next superintendent.
- **Strong Communication:** Effective and transparent communication was widely discussed, with participants wanting a leader who listens, provides clear direction, and fosters open dialogue with all stakeholders.
- **Leadership Skills:** Participants mentioned the need for strong leadership with the ability to make tough decisions and manage district affairs independently. Leadership qualities like courage, accountability, and standing up to pressure were considered critical.
- **Cultural Context:** Participants want someone who values the town's traditions while balancing the need for progress.
- **Student-Centered:** Many responses stressed the importance of a superintendent who places students' education at the forefront, supports teachers in holding students accountable, and works toward improving academic outcomes. Participants also highlighted the need for a focus on students' well-being and success, with participants wanting a leader who works to create a supportive environment for their growth.

Significant Opportunities

What are the critical areas of improvement that the next superintendent should address? (N=72)

- **Academic and Instructional Quality:** Concerns about low academic performance were prominent, particularly the need to improve test scores in reading and math at all levels, with special emphasis on high school. Some respondents called for more teaching trainings on innovative teaching strategies, particularly in the face of changing student needs.
- **Attendance improvement:** Participants pointed out issues with student attendance, particularly in the post-COVID era, and stressed the need for strategies that foster parental responsibility and engagement in resolving this issue.
- **Behavioral Issues and Safety Concerns:** Participants frequently cited disruptive student behavior as a major challenge, with suggestions for behavior management programs, dedicated behavior classrooms, or alternative schools to address severe behavior issues. Respondents are concerned about the safety of both students and staff due to aggressive or violent behavior from students, and they stress the need for clear consequences and stronger support systems for managing these behaviors.
- **Budget concerns:** Some respondents expressed concerns about budget constraints, including the need to secure funding for key areas such as staffing, facilities, and special programs
- **Facilities and Maintenance:** Responses pointed out the need for significant maintenance of district facilities, including sports facilities, classrooms, and heating/air conditioning systems. Some participants highlighted the importance of these improvements for fostering a positive learning environment.
- **Staffing and Retention:** Participants stressed the need to recruit and retain high-quality staff, especially in light of burnout and dissatisfaction. They suggested improvements in compensation, professional development, mentoring, and fostering a supportive workplace culture. Several responses highlighted the need for better staffing and resources for special education to meet growing demands, particularly to address the needs of neurodivergent students and those with mental health challenges.

Significant Challenges

What do you believe will be the most significant challenges the next superintendent will have to confront? (N=69)

- **Behavioral and School Safety:** Respondents highlight growing concerns about student behavior, including aggression and violence towards staff members, bullying, and disruptive conduct. This issue is particularly prevalent in the lower grades and is seen as an escalating challenge.
- **Equity and Support for Marginalized Students:** Pendleton is described as having a significant population of low socioeconomic status students and families dealing with trauma and abuse. Participants stress the need for the district to provide additional support and resources for these families.
- **Enrollment Declines:** Participants cite declining enrollment as a significant challenge, which is compounded by budget constraints. The impact of fewer students will likely affect funding and resource allocation, leading to potential program cuts or staffing reductions.
- **Funding Challenges:** Budget constraints are a concern, with declining enrollment and state-level education cuts putting further pressure on the district's financial resources. Securing funding to support critical programs, staffing, and infrastructure improvements will be a challenge.
- **Raising Academic Standards:** Some participants highlight concerns about low academic expectations and the tendency to "lower the bar" to make progress seem easier. They call for a superintendent who will raise academic standards and ensure students are held to higher expectations to support long-term success.
- **Resistance to Change:** There is a strong sentiment that the community and some district employees are resistant to change, making it difficult for the superintendent to implement necessary reforms. A recurring theme is the perception that the central office has been resistant to change, requires innovative leadership, and must out-grow outdated practices. Participants mention deeply rooted traditions and small-town dynamics that may hinder the acceptance of new ideas or approaches. Participants believe that revitalizing the central office, fostering innovation, and creating a more collaborative, efficient administrative team will be essential for district progress.
- **Staffing and Retention:** There is concern about difficulties in retaining and attracting qualified staff, especially in special education and behavioral support roles. Staffing shortages are exacerbating burnout among current staff, and there is a need for increased support and resources. Some participants expressed concerns over turnover in leadership positions, creating instability and apprehension about change within the district.
- **Trust and Collaboration:** A lack of trust between district leadership, staff, and the community is a significant issue. The new superintendent will need to focus on rebuilding relationships, fostering open communication, and creating a culture of trust and collaboration across all stakeholders.



703.542.9601 | www.k12insight.com

