



HYA | HAZARD
YOUNG
ATTEA
ASSOCIATES

LEADERSHIP PROFILE
School District of TOMAHAWK
November 30, 2021
DRAFT FOR BOARD REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in October-November 2021 for the new superintendent of the School District of Tomahawk, Wisconsin. The data contained herein were obtained from input the HYA consultants received when they met with individuals and groups in either individual interviews or focus group settings and from the results of the online survey completed by stakeholders. The surveys, interviews, and focus group meetings were structured to gather input to assist the Board in determining the primary characteristics desired in the new superintendent. Additionally, the stakeholder interviews and focus groups generated information regarding the strengths of the District and some of the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years. It should be noted that the interview responses and survey data were consistent.

Participation

The total number of individuals interviewed or participating within an interview group was **86**. Adding the **233** community members, parents, students, and staff who completed the online survey, the total of participants providing input into this report totaled **319**.

The consultants interviewed 13 individuals and hosted 9 focus groups across the school community. Included within the profile interviews were the following: teachers, support staff, site administrators, community members, parents of children attending school, students, the administrative assistant, each individual school board member, and the former superintendent. Stakeholders were invited to complete the HYA Online Survey, with a link provided on the District's Website from October 18

through November 19, 2021. The survey data was disaggregated by six groups: administrator, community member, parent of student attending school, support or classified staff, teachers or licensed staff, and students. The School District of Tomahawk Survey was completed by 233 stakeholders. The largest stakeholder group surveyed were parents of students attending school representing 48% of the responses. Community members at 20% made up the second most populous stakeholder group. The third largest participant group were certified/licensed staff / teachers at 17% of all respondents.

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

Group	Personal Interviews or Focus Groups	Online Survey
Board	9	NA
Former Superintendent	1	NA
Administrators/Central Office	11	3
Administrative Assistant	1	NA
Certified Staff	21	40
Community	14	47
Support Staff	10	27
Parents of student attending school	12	111
Students	7	5
Total	86	233

It should be emphasized that the data are not a scientific sampling, nor should they necessarily be viewed as representing the majority opinion of the respective groups to which they were attributed. Items are summarized as themes across the data collection.

The link for the Online Survey results will be provided to the Board via the administrative assistant. Please note that the conversion of data from responses to the pie charts appears to have an error on the question about technology and the question on financial responsibility. The pie charts produced two categories of “not sure” for the technology question and two categories of “no” for the financial responsibility question. The error appears to be a formatting/program error, and could not be corrected. The data was therefore hand tallied for this report and was not reliant on the pie charts for those two questions.

Description of the District

The School District of Tomahawk serves approximately 170 staff and 1,207 students under one roof, in a 4k through 12th grade complex. The District has a 16.3 million dollar budget.

The School District of Tomahawk, in Lincoln County, of north central Wisconsin, is approximately 40 miles north of Wausau and at the northern end of Interstate 39. The District boundaries run from Irma on the South to the Willow Reservoir on the North and from the Harrison Hills on the East to Spirit Falls on the West. The district serves the city of Tomahawk and the surrounding townships of Birch, Bradley, Harrison, King, Little Rice, Nokomis, Rock Falls, Skanawan, Tomahawk, and Wilson with an approximate population of 11,783 residents.

The community and school district work closely together to provide joint activities and services to benefit everyone. Tomahawk area citizen's enjoy the school complex facilities of the swimming pool, weight room, indoor track and field house.

Tomahawk is a friendly small-town surrounded by more than fifteen lakes and flowages offering many recreational and fishing opportunities. The city of Tomahawk, founded by William H. Bradley (1838 – 1902), as a feisty up-start is referred to as “The Magical City.” This heritage and reputation remains today with innovative employers and full integration of community and school. The major employers in the Tomahawk area include Packaging Corporation of America, a corrugated medium manufacturer, Harley-Davidson Motor Corporation, manufacturing parts and accessories for Harley Davidson Motorcycles, Louisiana Pacific Corporation, a manufacturer of oriented strandboard. Other employment is provided by light manufacturing, service industries, and some tourism related small businesses. Of course, the School District of Tomahawk is also an important employer.

Community members in the School District of Tomahawk gathered together beginning in August, 2019 to discuss its priorities for the School District of Tomahawk (SDT). Out of this discussion, a 5 year strategic plan was developed, taking the district beyond 2025.

The Board of Education for the SDT began the landmark event and process, “A Community Conversation for Educational Excellence”. At this event the Board convened a group of approximately 60 community stakeholders to develop a deeper understanding of community expectations. Over the course of two evenings, participants identified the issues and trends that impact our schools and our community, distinguished the attributes and skills our graduates need to prepare them to be successful after high school, and created a picture of how the SDT should prepare students for a changing tomorrow. This event served to create

connections between community stakeholders and the school district and to promote a sense of shared beliefs.

The SDT Board of Education and Administration places a high degree of importance on community input. After closely analyzing the themes from the “Community Conversation,” which represent our community’s expectations, the Board will be able to incorporate those expectations into their governance Results and Operational Expectation Policies.

Annually, District leaders, department leadership teams, and building leadership teams will set goals and identify the strategic actions to ensure progress towards the five-year outcomes identified in the strategic plan.

DISTRICT MISSION

The School District of Tomahawk will become the district of choice, known for its high levels of student achievement, the excellence of its programs, and sound stewardship.

- Student understanding will be fostered through a rigorous, coordinated curriculum that embraces global perspectives and best instruction practices, including relevant application of current technologies.
- Meaningful relationships among students, staff, and community members will be the foundation for student successes.
- Coordinated efforts between the school and community will effectively meet the social, emotional and academic needs of the whole child and every child.

District Demographics: September 2020 Total Student Third Friday Count – 1,1445

0.3%	American Indian
0.0%	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
0.5%	Asian
0.9%	Black or African American
1.7%	Hispanic/Latin
94.7%	White
1.8%	Two or More
14.4%	Students with Disabilities
0.1%	English Learners
38%	Free and Reduced Lunch Participants
69	Open Enrollment “IN”
62	Open Enrollment “Out”

The School District of Tomahawk receives a score of “Exceeds Expectations” on the Wisconsin School District report card.

The future Superintendent will lead the development of authentic relationships with staff, students, families, and community members. Being engaged in the school community, being the face of the district, and being highly visible are critical and frequently articulated expectations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Strengths of the District

When asked about the strengths of the School District of Tomahawk, groups noted that the location is superb. The community is a wonderful area in which to live. The community is described as caring and close knit. The area is indicative of the beautiful north woods of Wisconsin and recreational activities are available across all seasons. Many appreciated the family friendly environment of the district and the community.

Community members look to the school as the hub of the community. Citizens support their schools, take interest and participate in school activities, and enjoy school buildings as a source of community recreation. Citizens mentioned the use of the pool and the walking area in the school as valuable and they look forward to a normal (post Covid) reopening of such spaces.

The community also supports the schools in financial ways as evidenced by the recent Hatchet Pride Project. On April 14, 2020 The School Board approved moving forward with the Hatchet Pride project after donations of over **\$2.3** million dollars was raised and donated to the District to complete the \$2.6 million project which allowed the District to proceed with their needed upgrades to the track, football field and bleacher/concession stand areas.

An appreciation for staff was mentioned in almost all groups. Staff are described as qualified, loyal, caring, and willing to go “above and beyond” to help students, Many parents proudly stated they attended school in Tomahawk and wanted to raise their family here. They recognized that school facilities are clean and cared for and they are proud of their schools.

In addition to general community support, the relationships and support from the area business community was described as strong and valuable. The local radio station is valued as a strong school champion.

Students have numerous opportunities in academics, the arts and athletics. opportunities. Students who were interviewed believe they are well prepared for their next steps after high school citing preparedness for college, vocational opportunities and work.

In all, Tomahawk can be described as a small community with tremendous pride and support for their schools.

Challenges of the District

Effective communication and transparency, inside and outside the District, was mentioned as a challenge by focus groups. Consistent, clearly reasoned, articulated and timely messaging to the school community was viewed as a critical need, especially in preparation for the upcoming spring referendum. While the past two referendums failed perhaps for a variety of reasons, increased communication was suggested as a necessity for the upcoming third try.

The School District of Tomahawk is a critical component of the community and citizens enjoy using the facilities. While the facilities are viewed as clean and well cared for on a daily basis, several comments were made about the need for upgrades to facilities. Deferred maintenance will become an insurmountable problem and attention must be given to maintain facilities. Past referendums failed and yet the community did not see or feel the impact. It was surmised that staff absorbed the impact and that approach is wearing thin. The community must understand the needs through better communication and come to understand the unfortunate consequences of another failed referendum.

While numerous opportunities exist for students within Tomahawk, it was suggested that the district continues to focus on the future for meeting student needs. Tomahawk citizens are proud of their students and would love for them to work or return to Tomahawk for employment. There is a growing understanding however that the district must prepare students for the world they will live in, often a world without borders. This is a growing challenge for all school districts, not just Tomahawk. The district is encouraged to continue to grow their efforts in helping students explore careers and post high school options, and to develop more partnerships, internships, and mentor opportunities. Additionally, because of the lack of diversity in Tomahawk, the district and community need to support all students and their understanding of the more diverse world they will be living and working in. This challenge is essential for student success in the future.

Another often mentioned challenge is the need to heal the community post Covid and repair relationships and trust which declined during past leadership. These statements are not directed at the current interim leadership who is viewed as a stable force and a breath of fresh air. The staff and community are hungry for new leadership who will become a strong part of the Tomahawk community, be highly visible, and restore morale and relationships to what was experienced in the past.

A few participants mentioned the need for the district to explore early childhood services and before/after school child care. While this comment was not a strong theme across groups, the associates considered it important to note as a suggestion.

Desirable Characteristics of Next Leader

First and foremost, those interviewed expressed the need for a leader who will become part of the community in all ways possible. This means being visible within the district and community, being a participant in school and community events, and passionate about Tomahawk students, staff and families. He/she should be a highly visible leader who is willing to invest the time and energy necessary to develop relationships within and outside of the district. Additionally, all groups indicated that the next superintendent should take time to learn and understand the culture and history of the District in order to build trust and restore a positive school culture. It is expected that a new leader will act with integrity in all aspects of the position and strive to bring people together for the good of the District.

Respondents cited a need for better communication from the superintendent, the board and the district. The district must create a plan to reach all constituents with accuracy and in a timely manner. This will be especially important for the upcoming spring operational referendum. The community needs to know the facts, the impact, and the consequences of a failed referendum. Past leadership was described as being ineffective in these areas. The community expects and looks forward to improvement.

The new superintendent must be a healer and a nurturer. He/she must strive to reunite the community following recent Covid stress. He/she must support the staff and recognize their fatigue during Covid and during the increased demands placed on them due to a failed referendum which resulted in budget cuts.

The new leader must recognize the past success and accomplishments of the Tomahawk district and celebrate future accomplishments.

The new superintendent must work closely with the active, dedicated school board who anxiously await progress and improvements in staff morale and community relations. Past history reminds us of what once was and is still possible in this active supportive community.

This is an exciting time for the future of the School District of Tomahawk. The hiring of a new superintendent is critical for future success, and it is the most important work the Board of Education will do. This time is also one of great transitions for the district and the interim superintendent is to be thanked and commended for his work during this time. It is also an invigorating time as the Board of Education now selects the next Superintendent for the current needs and ensures a strong future. We extend our appreciation to the current and past board members and to the interim superintendent, Joseph Innis, for their dedication to the community and families.

HYA and the Board intend to meet the challenge of finding an individual who possesses most of the skills and character traits required to meet the needs of the district. The search team will seek a new superintendent who can work with the School District of Tomahawk to provide the leadership and support for Tomahawk students, staff and community.

The consultants would like to thank all the participants who engaged in interviews, attended focus groups and/or completed the online survey. The consultants are especially grateful to Coleen Frisch, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent, for arranging the meetings and coordinating the many contacts needed to facilitate the completion of this report.

Respectfully submitted,
Patricia Neudecker, Ph.D. HYA Associate
Mike Richie, Ed.D. HYA Associate

DATA SUMMARY

The individual and group interviews of stakeholders generated the following responses. Comments have been summarized, and careful attention has been made to accurately convey the message. They are listed with no attempt to prioritize them. The top-rated categories from the on-line survey are also shown. Topics in the stakeholder interviews and the survey results appear to be congruent and that is a positive finding. The variety of data collection methods as well as the presentation of disaggregated data across stakeholder groups produced similar results with very little variance on issues.

Strengths and Points of Pride: School District Stakeholder Comments

- ★ Support in community over all is very good
- ★ Dedicated, caring, strong staff
- ★ 4K-12 All under one roof - easy to align program and curriculum
- ★ Offer tons of activities for students
- ★ Phenomenal businesses in community (corporate and local small businesses)
- ★ Radio station that really talks up school district
- ★ School is center of community - walking - weight room - pool - auditorium
- ★ School does a good job preparing students for post high school
- ★ Good Business partnerships
- ★ Great blend of caring, giving businesses, downtown, lakes, big businesses
small business owners, tourism ...great town
- ★ Lots of community organizations that focus on kids
- ★ Minimal debt – strong fiscal position in district
- ★ Test scores: exceeds expectations on State Tests
- ★ More open enroll in than outs

Top Rated District Strengths: School District Online Survey(items over 50%)

1. Believe that Tomahawk is a quality school district 75 % support
2. Fiscally responsible to taxpayers 52 % support
3. Buildings are clean and well cared for 85% support
4. Great teaching staff 77% support and great support staff 85% support

72% of all respondents rated the overall quality of education as 7-10 on a 10-point scale with 10 being the highest.

Future Challenges: School District Stakeholder Comments

- Need to pass spring referendum
- Return to normal and unify after Covid
- Make decisions based on future needs of our students, not adults
- Facilities need upgrades and deferred maintenance needs attention
- Study the need for before/after child care
- Reach out to community and staff through improved communication

District Challenges: School District Online Survey(items over 50%)

1. The school district does a good job with communication
42% No and 16% Not Sure
2. School building is in great shape 40% No and 20% Not Sure

Desired Superintendent Characteristics: School District Stakeholder Comments

- ❖ Be present, visible, and become part of this community....be Tomahawk.
- ❖ Build relationships in the district and in the community
- ❖ Improve communication
- ❖ Understand and value small town culture
- ❖ Listen, listen and listen
- ❖ Support our kids and their current and future needs
- ❖ Make decisions, explain, and stick to the decision
- ❖ Support and strengthen leadership team
- ❖ Heal our community and staff post Covid
- ❖ Stand your ground and not cave in to opinions, use facts
- ❖ Maintain great staff and actively recruit the best
- ❖ Demonstrate impeccable character traits of integrity, honesty, compassion, authenticity, fairness, patience and being humble and trustworthy
- ❖ Nurture and celebrate success
- ❖ Be a leader
- ❖ Dedicated to improving student performance
- ❖ No ego
- ❖ Transparency
- ❖ Work with school board

Additionally, it should be highlighted that there was strong congruence between survey data and stakeholder groups and interviews. This demonstrates agreement and focus across stakeholders. A new superintendent will join a district who appears to be unified rather than fractured in their assessment of the district and their desired attributes of the new superintendent.

School District of Tomahawk
Superintendent of Schools
Desired Candidate Profile

The Board of Education seeks an educational leader who in collaboration with the Board, staff, community, and students will focus the district on shared goals. After seeking input from Board members, staff, students, and community via individual and group interviews and from the results of the Superintendent Profile Survey, the Board of Education seeks a strong, visionary educational leader who is certified, or is eligible to be certified, as a superintendent in Wisconsin and who possesses the following characteristics:

- Involved and invested in the community 100%
- Highly collaborative with all stakeholders; open door policy; approachable
- Able to take a stand on controversial issues and unite constituents
- Decisive; able to make the difficult decisions and explain rationale and outcomes
- Focused on students and their current and future needs
- Strong communicator with ability to improve district communication
- Knowledgeable in all areas of district management
- Ability to support and operationalize the strategic plan
- Relationship builder; bridge builder after Covid differences
- Ability to successfully seek solutions to financial concerns with and without the referendum
- Knowledgeable supporter of community culture
- Developer, supporter and recruiter of quality staff