



**MCPHERSON** *MJ* **JACOBSON, LLC**

EXECUTIVE RECRUITMENT & DEVELOPMENT

This report summarizes stakeholder feedback in the Custer County C-1 Superintendent Search from 107 online survey submissions gathered between February 10 and February 21, 2024.

Stakeholders were presented with the opportunity to respond to a combination of multiple choice, rating scale, and constructed response questions. The cumulative results (all respondent groups combined) of answers to these questions are included in this summary.

1. When asked to identify the one group that most closely identified the respondent's connection to the school district, the largest group, as expected, of respondents self-identified as parents (46%). This group was followed by staff members (25%), community members (11%), parents of former students (7%), students (7%), and others (4%).
2. Respondents were then asked, "What one word best describes how you feel about the district?" Presented here is a word cloud that visually represents the most frequently submitted responses.

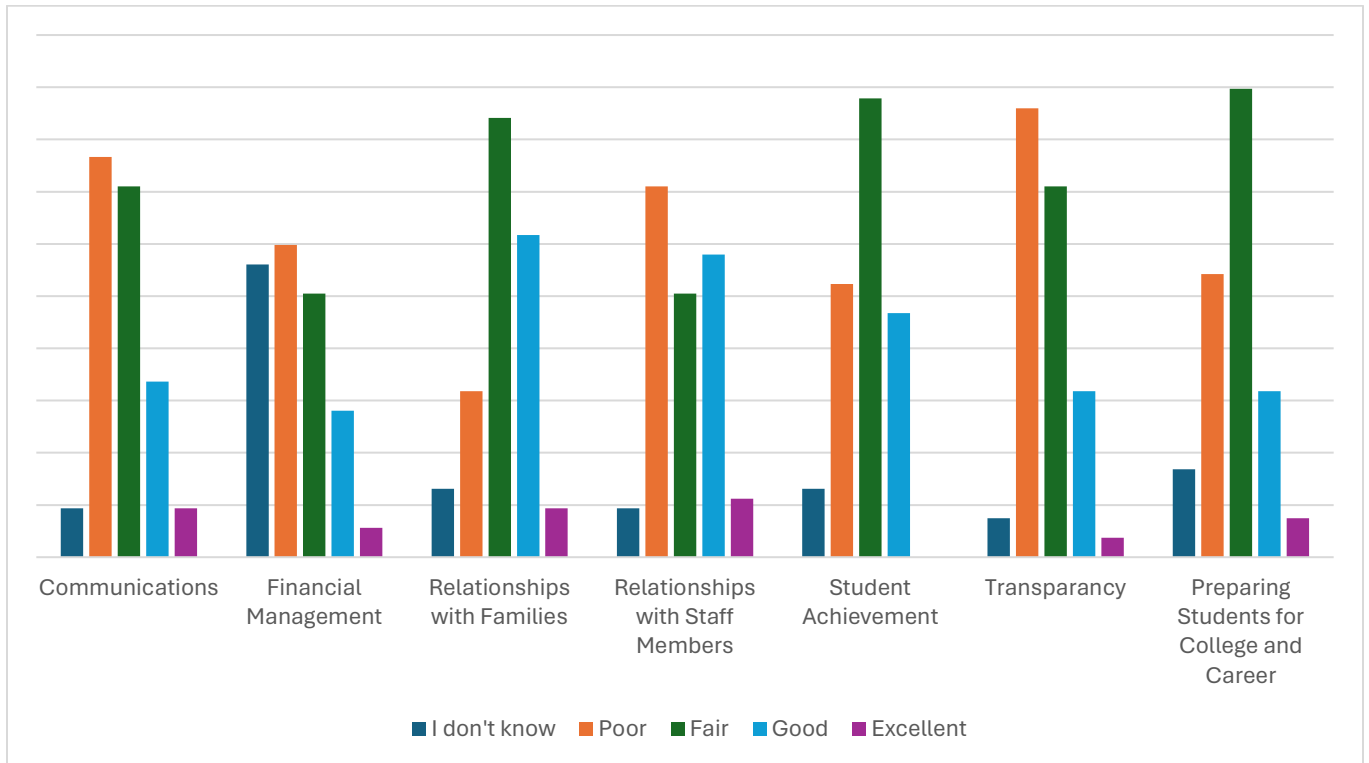
disorganized Conservative  
Worried Struggling  
Disappointed  
Concerned Lacking

3. Respondents were then asked via constructed response to answer the question, “What are three strengths of the school district that superintendent candidates should know?” The most common themes emerging from these responses included:

- **Community Involvement and Support:** Numerous mentions of community support, involvement, and dedication suggest a strong sense of belonging and active participation by community members.
- **Education and Schools:** References to the curriculum, student-teacher relationships, classroom sizes, extracurricular activities, and academic opportunities highlight a focus on educational values and the importance placed on learning and teaching.
- **Family and Relationships:** With multiple mentions of family, caring teachers, and a small-town atmosphere, there is an emphasis on close interpersonal relationships and a nurturing environment.
- **Values and Morals:** Words like "conservative," "leadership," "responsibility," "ethics," and "integrity" indicate an importance placed on moral values and character building within the community.
- **Safety and Well-being:** Terms such as "safe atmosphere," "supportive," and "hopeful" suggest a focus on the safety and overall well-being of community members, especially the youth.
- **Extracurricular Activities:** The presence of sports, FFA (Future Farmers of America), and AG/trades indicates that extracurricular and vocational activities are valued for student development.
- **Infrastructure and Resources:** Comments about modern facilities, updated buildings, and efficient staff point to pride in the physical and organizational structure supporting the community or school.
- **Access to Resources:** There are references to lunch programs, childcare, and volunteers, which suggest efforts to ensure that basic needs and support systems are in place for children and families.
- **Innovation and Growth:** Words like "innovative thinking," "growth potential," and "desire to improve" reflect a forward-thinking attitude and an aspiration for continual development.
- **Professionalism and Development:** Mentions of staff dedication, professional development, and good management practices indicate a focus on maintaining high professional standards and ongoing improvement.

These themes are indicative of a community-centric approach with a strong emphasis on education, family, and values, suggesting a tight-knit, supportive environment that is invested in the growth and well-being of its members.

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



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

1. Staff Recruitment and Retention	68.22%
2. Teacher Quality	37.38%
3. Communication	36.45%
4. Academic Outcomes	28.97%
5. College and Career Readiness	28.97%
6. Special Education Services	25.23%
7. Financial Management	18.69%
8. Family and Community Relations	13.08%
9. School Safety and Security	13.08%
10. Facilities and Grounds	8.41%
11. Mental Health Services	8.41%
12. Social Emotional Learning	7.48%
13. Diversity and Engagement	4.67%

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

- **School Climate and Culture:** There are calls for improving school climate, addressing discipline, and ensuring a positive environment for both staff and students.
- **Extracurricular Activities:** The presence of quality athletic programs, music, art, and drama, and extracurricular opportunities reflect the importance of a well-rounded education.
- **Political Influence and Focus:** There is a sentiment to remove political influence from education and focus on student needs rather than external political agendas.

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

1. Demonstrates high integrity and ethics and leads by example	50.47%
2. Communicates effectively	46.73%
3. Resolves conflict with dignity and grace	30.84%
4. Takes responsibility and is accountable for their actions	28.97%
5. Places the needs of students above anything else	28.04%
6. Builds strong community relationships	25.23%
7. Possesses a background in public education	24.30%
8. Engages and listens to stakeholders	22.43%
9. Previous experience as a superintendent	22.43%
10. Delivers improved student outcomes	20.56%
11. Spends time in classrooms	20.56%
12. Builds strong and diverse teams	17.76%
13. Promotes student participation in the arts, athletics, and activities	17.76%
14. Uses data to make informed and transparent decisions	16.82%
15. Stands firm behind decisions that may not be popular	15.89%
16. Promotes safety and security across the district	15.89%
17. Thinks and acts strategically	14.02%
18. Fosters creativity, risk-taking, and innovation	11.21%
19. Adapts effectively to changing circumstances	11.21%
20. Maintains a vision focused on the future	10.28%
21. Values school autonomy	10.28%
22. Values educating the whole child	9.35%
23. Is committed to equitable access to learning for all students	8.41%

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

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political and Social Awareness:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to be non-partisan</li> <li>• Avoids political issues</li> <li>• Respect for laws and separation of church and state</li> <li>• Awareness of social theories and ability to remain impartial</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment to Improvement:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated to improving school culture</li> <li>• Open to new ideas and challenges</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

9. Respondents were next encouraged to identify the three best things about the Custer County Community that might encourage a candidate to relocate to the area. The most frequent responses included:

- Community Support and Involvement: There is a repeated emphasis on the tight-knit community, with many references to a supportive environment where people are willing to help each other, especially in supporting the children and local schools.
- Small Town Values: The comments frequently mention the benefits of living in a small town, such as knowing everyone, having a slower pace of life, and a strong sense of familiarity and camaraderie.
- Education and Youth Engagement: There is a focus on educational support through financial means and volunteerism, the importance of smaller class sizes, and the involvement of parents and community members in educational settings.
- Natural Environment: The presence of mountains, outdoor activities, and beautiful scenery suggests that the natural environment plays a significant role in the community's identity and lifestyle.
- Conservative Values and Rural Lifestyle: Many comments point to conservative values, rural mindsets, and agricultural heritage, indicating a community that values tradition and a simpler way of life.
- Independence and Self-Sufficiency: References to homesteading, self-sufficiency, and independence suggest a community that values hard work and the ability to take care of oneself and one's neighbors.
- Safety and Peaceful Living: The community is described as safe and peaceful, with a slower pace of life and an environment conducive to a high quality of life.
- Volunteerism and Non-Profit Involvement: With mentions of a significant number of non-profit organizations and a community willing to rally for causes, volunteerism seems to be a cornerstone of the community spirit.
- Arts, Music, and Culture: Artistic activities and music are mentioned, indicating a cultural vibrancy within the community.

- Generosity and Resilience: The comments reflect a population that is generous, resilient, and willing to support each other through hardships.

Overall, these comments paint a picture of a community that is closely connected, values its rural and natural setting, and is deeply invested in the welfare of its members, particularly the youth and educational systems.

**Superintendent Search  
Stakeholder Feedback Summary Report**

***Custer County  
School District C-1  
Westcliffe, Colorado***

Submitted by Walt Cooper, Ed.D.

March 2024

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