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**WEST CENTRAL CUSD #235
NEW SUPERINTENDENT PROFILE REPORT**

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OVERVIEW

The West Central CUSD #235 Board of Education wished to have a better understanding of the school community members' perceptions of the District as they began their search for a new Superintendent. The Board requested that SCHOOL EXEC CONNECT consultant Diane Robertson gather information from constituents regarding the strengths and challenges of the District, as well as the skills and attributes desired in the new superintendent. This report presents a brief summary of the comments of **59** people who attended one of **8 Focus Groups** and **1 Open Forum**. In addition, **64** people responded to the District's **Online Survey**. Focus Groups were held with: District Office Staff, Building Administrators, Teachers, Non-certified Staff, Students, Parents, Community Partners, and Board Members. The Online Survey asked for respondents to self select from the following categories: Parent (past or present), Staff Member, Community/Business Member, Student and Other.

Due to the sampling methodology, this report should not be considered scientifically accurate. Respondents may have participated in both a Focus Group and the Online Survey. The opinions set forth may not reflect the opinion of the majority of the staff or District residents. The judgments of what should be included in this report are those of the consultant based on the statements heard throughout the data-gathering process. The Survey results are rank-ordered and the Focus Group results are not rank-ordered.

The Executive Summary presents the general findings of the Focus Groups and the Survey data. The data will give direction to the Board of Education as it enters the next phase of the search process.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FOCUS GROUPS SUMMARY INFORMATION

Perceived Strengths of West Central CUSD #235

- **Close-knit, Family-like Atmosphere:** The district is characterized as a small, tight-knit community where staff and families support one another like a family.
- **Dedicated and Exceptional Staff:** Teachers, administrators and staff are described as caring, invested, and willing to go above and beyond for their students both inside and outside of school.
- **Financial Strength and Stability:** The district is described as financially stable and has seen consistent financial progress over the last several years.
- **Strong Community Support:** There is a high level of community involvement, including active sports and FFA boosters, as well as a community that steps up during times of need.
- **Agricultural Heritage and Resources:** As an agricultural community, the district features a school-owned farm that serves as a source of income and a robust FFA program.
- **Active and Engaged School Board:** The Board of Education is composed of dedicated community members and parents who are actively involved in the district's success rather than being "passive".
- **Low Staff Turnover and High Loyalty:** The district benefits from a loyal, veteran staff with low turnover rates, with many employees being alumni who returned to work in the district.
- **Commitment to Facility Improvements:** Significant investments have been made in infrastructure, including a new football field, elementary playground and ongoing life-safety improvements to buildings.
- **Positive Culture and Morale:** The district maintains a welcoming environment with good staff morale, positive communication, and a strong focus on collaboration and teamwork.
- **Safe and Convenient Location:** The district offers a low-crime, rural setting that provides a safe environment for students while maintaining close proximity to larger towns.
- **Excellent Superintendent:** "We need another Stacey Day".

Perceived Challenges Facing West Central CUSD #235

- **Staff Recruitment and Retention:** Attracting and keeping qualified personnel is a persistent issue. The district struggles to recruit teachers, bus drivers, custodians, and administrative staff. There is a concern that lower starting salaries for teachers contributes to the difficulty of attracting talent to a small, rural area.
- **Curriculum Needs:** There is a general lack of diverse course offerings at the HS level such as AP classes, dual credit and career exploration, as well as guidance for accessing opportunities outside the district.
- **Transportation Hurdles:** A critical shortage of bus drivers makes it difficult to get students to school. This problem is compounded by the district's large geographic area, aging transportation staff and declining state funding.
- **High Poverty Levels:** The district faces significant socioeconomic challenges. High poverty impacts student support needs, family participation, and community engagement.
- **Student Discipline and Behavior Management:** Discipline codes should be updated to ensure "punishment means something". Bad behaviors should be managed before getting out of hand, especially concerning vaping and skipping classes.

- **School Board Governance:** There is concern the School Board is shifting toward micromanagement, tending to overstep its role and question or overturn administrative decisions.
- **Facility and Maintenance Needs:** The district's physical infrastructure is a concern, with reports of aging facilities, non-working toilets, and general lack of cleanliness.
- **Special Education Demands:** There is a growing population of high-needs and special education students, leading to long waitlists for alternative programs and a need to handle more placements in-house.
- **Community Characteristics:** Being a "bedroom community" without local industry makes it difficult to keep residents engaged in the district unless they have active children. This lack of local business also impacts the district's ability to attract new families.

Perceived Focus Areas in the First Year:

- **Staff Recruitment, Retention**
- **Transportation Management**
- **Relationship Building, Visibility, and Culture**
- **Facility Improvements**

Perceived Skills and Characteristics for the New Superintendent

- **Strong Leadership:** The most prominent requirement is a leader who can guide the school board, staff, and community with a clear vision.
- **Effective Communication:** The candidate must be a clear, consistent, and transparent communicator who can engage with the board, staff, parents, and the public.
- **Visibility and Presence:** There is a heavy emphasis on the superintendent being visible in all school buildings and active within the community.
- **Financial Savvy:** They must possess financial acumen, understanding school budgets and demonstrating fiscal responsibility while navigating financial constraints.
- **Approachability:** The community desires someone who is personable, friendly, and a relationship-builder who is "on the same level" as the rest of the staff.
- **Decisiveness and "Backbone":** The superintendent needs to be firm but fair, willing to have hard conversations, and capable of making tough decisions even when facing strong personalities.
- **Community Investment:** A successful candidate should become vested in the community, showing a long-term commitment to its success.
- **Supportive and Caring:** They must support district personnel and parents in difficult situations, showing empathy, compassion, and a genuine interest in the well-being of staff and students.
- **Professionalism and Experience:** The narrative calls for a professional with administrative experience and the knowledge necessary to manage a school district effectively.
- **Collaborative Team Player:** They should be open-minded, flexible, and willing to work with everyone, allowing others to take ownership of their roles.

ON-LINE SURVEY SUMMARY INFORMATION

Demographics

●	Staff Member:	58%	(37)
●	Parent:	31%	(20)
●	Community/Business Member:	6%	(4)
●	Other:	3%	(2)
●	Student:	2%	(1)
	Total:	100%	(64)

Greatest Strengths of the School District:

●	Positive, Nurturing School Environment	59%
●	Quality of Teaching Staff	55%
●	Quality of Leadership	45%
●	Student Safety	45%
●	Communication with Parents and Community	44%

Greatest Challenges for the School District:

●	Prepares Students for College/Career Readiness	55%
●	Student Conduct and Discipline	47%
●	Challenging, Quality Curriculum	45%
●	Community Support of Education	39%
●	Image of the District	36%
●	Clean and Attractive Schools	36%

Priorities for New Superintendent:

●	Student Growth and Achievement	53%
●	Facilities Improvement	42%
●	Relationships with Staff and Community	41%
●	Respect for Staff	38%

Most Important Skills and Traits for New Superintendent:

●	Trustworthy: Displays Courage and Integrity	67%
●	Is Visible in School and Community	60%
●	Has Clear Vision for Leading	58%
●	Has Warm People Skills; Is Approachable	56%
●	Builds Good Teams; Brings Out Best in Others	50%
●	Understands Finance and Business Side of District	45%
●	Hold Others Accountable	45%

Other Questions

	<u>Agree/ Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Disagree/ Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>No Opinion</u>
Proud of our District/Schools	70%	24%	6%
Meeting Students' Social Emotional Health	70%	19%	11%
Adequate Communication to Parents/Community	85%	14%	1%
High Expectations for Students/Staff	66%	23%	11%
Meets Needs of English Learners/IEP Students	67%	16%	17%
Meets Needs of Students Experiencing Academic Difficulties	61%	28%	11%
Meets Needs of Gifted/Talented Students	37%	35%	28%
Provides Extracurricular/Sports to Meet Level of Interest	85%	11%	4%

West Central CUSD #235
Profile of the Desired Superintendent

The new Superintendent should be a person who:

1. Provides **strong leadership and a clear vision** for the district while maintaining a **high level of visibility** in all school buildings and the community.
2. Is a **clear, consistent, and transparent communicator** capable of engaging effectively with the Board of Education, staff, parents, and the public.
3. **Understands poverty** and how it's related issues impact learning.
4. Possesses the **decisiveness and "backbone"** to make tough decisions, hold others accountable, and remain firm but fair when facing challenges.
5. Is **approachable and personable**, acting as a relationship-builder who treats staff with respect and stays "on the same level" as the rest of the team.
6. Is a **problem solver, creative** and can "think outside the box".
7. Can **prioritize staff recruitment and retention**, developing strategies to attract and keep qualified teachers, administrators, and support staff in a rural setting.
8. Demonstrates **strong financial savvy and fiscal responsibility**, understanding complex school budgets while navigating rural financial constraints.
9. Focuses on **student growth and achievement** by expanding the curriculum to include more AP classes, dual credit options, and career exploration opportunities and addresses placement issues for high needs students.
10. Is committed to **managing facility and infrastructure improvements**, addressing the maintenance needs of aging buildings to ensure a clean and attractive learning environment.
11. Shows **long-term community investment** and respects the district's strong agricultural background.
12. Can **effectively manage student discipline**, ensuring that behavior codes are updated and enforced so that the school environment remains safe and orderly.

This report may be used in several ways:

- After reviewing the input from members of the District, the Board may modify and approve the attributes that will serve as criteria to be used as candidates are screened and interviewed.
- The Board should review this report to become informed about the thinking of different constituent groups regarding the perceptions of those associated with the District.
- The Consultants will use this report as the foundation for screening and interviewing candidates who are well matched for the superintendent's position.
- The Consultants recommend that this report be available to candidates for a better understanding of the District and its issues.

Thank you to those who took the time to respond to the Online Survey or to attend one of the Focus Groups or Open Forums. The results of this report will assist the Board as they enter the next phase of their search for a new superintendent.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Robertson
School Exec Connect