

*Stakeholder Input Report for*

**Soledad Unified  
School District  
Soledad, California**

*submitted by*



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# **MCPHERSON & JACOBSON, LLC**

## **EXECUTIVE RECRUITMENT & DEVELOPMENT**

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### **Soledad Unified School District Soledad, California District Stakeholder Input**

#### **Executive Summary**

During the month of April 2021 consultants Aida Buelna and Ben Johnson conducted nine (9) Zoom meetings with representatives from eight (8) different groups and two (2) open community meetings conducted in English and Spanish. The consultants received input from over 100 individuals in these groups. Input was gathered regarding the selection of the Superintendent of the Soledad Unified School District.

Outlined on this page and subsequent pages is the Executive Summary of the major themes expressed by the participants in the various 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 participant. The final section of the report consists of the singular responses of the (5) individuals who completed the online survey responding to the same four questions.

#### **1. Tell us Good Things About Your Community-**

- Small town feel with a tight knit community
- A welcoming and inviting community
- A safe community
- People rally together during difficult times
- Family oriented community

#### **2. Tell us Some Good Things About Your District-**

- Committed and dedicated staff and teachers
- Exceptional students/Really good kids
- We have many teachers who went through our schools and have come back to work here
- Many of our employees have worked here for years

### **3. What Issues Should the Superintendent Be Aware of in this District-**

- Extremely involved Board of Trustees
- Need to rebuild trust, respect, and relationships in community
- New Board; Very involved; Better understanding of their role
- A lot of people know each other and are treated differently because of their relationships
- Unique challenges due to the proximity of a state correctional facility

### **4. What Skills, Qualities, or Characteristics should the new Superintendent possess-**

- Bridge builder/able to build trust
- Focus on student achievement
- Bilingual can communicate with community
- Highly visible in the community and throughout the District
- Aware of the challenges leading in a small community. Will need to wear several hats to be successful

**Stakeholder Input**  
**Reported as received from each Stakeholder Group**

**Name of Stakeholder Group: Student Group (9 individuals)**

**What's great about the community?**

- Small – we know everyone
- Very welcoming
- Very close knit community
- The community works to give students lots of opportunities

**What's great about the schools?**

- We grew up together
- When my grades were low my teachers helped me.
- We have GAR that helps us in school and prepares us for college
- Opportunities
- Teachers contribute a vast number of hours to support us
- We have clubs
- We help out in the community

**What are the issues that a new superintendent will have to face coming into the district?**

- Our students want more assistance in math
- Our scores for math are low and we need training for our math department because of the low performance in this area
- Better education in the area of math
- COVID – returning to school, some parents want to continue with online and some want to go back to the classroom
- Currently there is a plan for elementary to return but not for high school

**What are the characteristics, attributes, skills that the new superintendent should have coming to the District in order to be successful?**

- Experience with a community like Soledad
- Understanding
- Allow students to have a voice so they can contribute
- Brings everyone together
- Creating fun activities along with the academic
- Adaptable
- Communication skills
- Communicate with students, teachers, parents and the community
- Open minded
- Engaging to everyone
- Sees a problem and will work to fix it

- Involved in the schools-visible
- Be able to see something happening and help to resolve it, like bullying
- Leadership
- Commitment
- Problem solver
- Believe in student voice
- Support student initiatives
- Inclusivity between all students
- Educating students in skills that they need after high school, i.e. technical skills and life skills

**Name of Stakeholder Group: Other Certificated staff (16 individuals)**

**What's great about the community?**

- Parents are very involved
- Coworkers are the best
- Real sense of community
- Teams support each other
- Excellent children, really good kids
- Always have kids in mind/student centered
- Diverse within the Latino community
- A sense of safety in the community
- Welcoming
- A sense of knowing each other
- Classified staff live in the community
- People know your name when you're out in the community
- Sense of unity within the city
- Generally very happy
- Common goals for everyone
- Help each other out, for example a car broke down in the school driveway and a police officer and myself moved the car out of the driveway.
- Small community
- Soledad is growing
- 20 employees that are teachers were once students of mine
- Former students return to work in Soledad

**What's great about the schools?**

- Dedicated staff both certificated and classified
- Great kids with good hearts
- Great wonderful staff
- Kids are great and wonderful
- Always feel welcomed
- Dialogue between the staff and the parents is genuine

- Strong sense of pride
- It's like a family feeling at the sites
- Schools make us feel welcome
- Always someone to talk to
- Schools are an integral part of the community, they are an extension of the home
- Schools provide more than high scores, they provide experience and citizenship
- Diverse programs, Dual Immersion
- Teachers commute quite a distance to work in Soledad
- Supportive working environment

**What are the issues that a new superintendent will have to face coming into the district?**

- A cloud still lingers from the previous female superintendent
- Distrust among the employees, labor unions and the parents to the district
- COVID19 – how to make up for the loss of learning
- People have easy access to Board members, how do you manage this access
- How to work with 2 very strong unions
- Needs to know the role of the superintendent
- Needs to know the role of the Board
- How to grapple with the changes that have taken place nationwide with the issues of equity, the gap in the issues of color
- Lack of instructional focus
- Change of focus has been an issue as it happens every year
- Need to look at data and analyze to develop the non-negotiables
- Use the data to inform decisions
- Stick to the initiatives
- Over identification of the special education students

**What are the characteristics, attributes, skills that the new superintendent should have coming to the District in order to be successful?**

- People skills
- Relate to all kinds of groups
- Build relationships
- Approachable
- Decisive
- Leader that listens to all stakeholders
- Shared leadership
- Empowers staff
- Visionary
- Builds capacity of the team
- Instructional leader
- Active listener
- Supportive

- Data driven
- Allows sites to do what is working for kids
- Sound decisions are based on the data
- Create non-negotiables and stick to them
- Trust
- Supportive of administrators
- 21<sup>st</sup> century technology skills
- Global leaders keep up with the latest trends
- Communicator
- Will complement the Associate Superintendent position

**Name of Stakeholder Group: Teachers Meeting (58 individuals)**

**What's great about the community?**

- Small town that is close knit
- Very welcoming
- Supportive- when something comes up they come together to help out
- Weather is great
- Can grow anything
- Very family oriented
- Strong sense of pride
- Safe city for children to grow up in
- Kids ride to school on their bikes
- Soledad has a strong history
- Homestead families are very proud of their community
- Many staff live and grew up in Soledad and bring their kids to the schools
- 40% of the members live in Soledad
- More affordable than other places
- More affordable than Salinas
- Community is growing
- Homes are coming up in the North
- Soledad is a wonderful community with friendly people
- Family is a priority in our community
- People are always wanting to give their time to help their community
- Parents dream about the best future for their children.
- They dream that their children will have a good education
- Great commitment to community recreation
- The pinnacles and beautiful natural landscapes are a sight to see



### **What's great about the schools?**

- Teachers
- All staff care
- Counselors
- Dedicated staff
- Teachers stay-many have been in the district for over 10-12 years
- Students
- Experienced educators – know what good teaching looks like
- Good about training our own staff, we do our own staff development
- Our students are wonderful, supportive
- Opportunity for students to shine
- Well behaved students
- The time everyone gives to help our students
- Our students are amazing
- We have good professional training at schools
- We have a lot of PROFESSIONAL educators who like to be treated as the professional we are
- Teachers have wonderful workshops
- In-house professional development
- Our staff knows the community and the needs of staff and students better
- We have many teachers who went through our schools and have come back to work here
- Schools have good summer school

### **What are the issues that a new superintendent will have to face coming into the district?**

- It is difficult to afford many places in California
- The living is expensive in Soledad
- New teachers are struggling to find a reasonable place to live
- It is necessary to create a positive environment in schools
- We have a good community, but favoritism blossoms
- The teachers who live in Soledad are a priority
- The teachers from different areas are not favorite here
- Parents running the district's decision making abilities. There are some families in the community who seem to have a heavy handed influence on the Superintendent and it greatly influences decisions made on the teacher level.
- For a long time there was great turnover at schools
- Cultural sensitivity
- The reason negative environment when the teachers with different background are not acceptable
- It is so difficult to survive at school if you from another area
- Huge admin turnover rate at schools
- They also have to know how to deal with second language learning
- Gossip is another issue at schools

- It would be great to have more continuity in many areas
- Knowledge of and familiarity with legal issues revolving around special education
- If a person has a different background and is not a member of permanent community, this person is not acceptable
- Schools are in need of improvements and framework
- Gossip will be created trying to push this person away
- Mental health is another issue
- Because of negative environment and gossip, people have depression and anxiety
- We need to learn how to respect each other
- Wide range of grade levels TK to adult education
- Need to bring in people that are willing to listen to TK – College
- How to handle parents-demanding and those that don't show up
- Communication
- Transparency
- Strong core of teachers
- Administrators don't match the schools
- Cultural sensitivity
- Gossip
- Lack of continuity
- Small at heart but not small any longer, growing pains
- Mental health

**What are the characteristics, attributes, skills that the new superintendent should have coming to the District in order to be successful?**

- Bilingual -Spanish
- Tech savvy
- Understands our community
- Needs to have experience at all grade levels
- Significant special education population
- Not cookie cutter
- Knows reading instruction and interventions
- Has a plan of action – i.e. online academy

**Name of Stakeholder Group: Confidential Staff**

**What's great about the community?**

- Close knit
- Involved
- Intertwine
- Small town
- Very friendly
- Safe place
- Very involved
- All very connected
- Everyone is related to everyone else
- Hardworking
- Good people
- Humble community
- Two prisons nearby
- People truly care about education

**What's great about the schools?**

- Reduced turnover
- Hiring from within
- Value/respect each other
- Supportive
- Nice people
- Caring
- Rally around each other
- Students often come back as employees
- Long-term employees
- Heart
- Almost like family
- People all work together
- Kind to each other
- The students
- Enjoy helping parents
- People do more than their jobs

**What are the issues that a new superintendent will have to face coming into the district?**

- Listen to staff
- History about the District
- Community needs
- Union is passionate about their role
- Classified Active Union
- Difficult time hiring a CBO

**What are the characteristics, attributes, skills that the new superintendent should have coming to the District in order to be successful?**

- Someone that is involved
- Good communicator
- Decision maker
- Support every department
- Honesty
- Supportive
- Approachable
- Team player
- Feel like you are being heard
- Stand-up for employees when they do their job
- Hold people accountable including parents
- Valuing input of those impacted by decisions that are being made
- Unite people within district

**Name of Stakeholder Group: Elected Officials**

**What's great about the community?**

- Product of Soledad
- Sense of commitment
- Tight knit community
- Do everything we can to support our youth -mentorship, support
- Support of bonds and measures with support of our youth
- We care about helping each other out
- Committee to drop off food
- Help each other out-caring community
- Unity
- Community helps and supports, can really come together
- Involved
- Good relationship with district
- Young community
- Vibrant
- Family oriented
- Build housing
- Pro-growth
- Developing retail
- Able to support within instead of traveling
- Hartnell CC
- Investing in universal internet (for every resident)

### **What's great about the schools?**

- Bond for the District
- Governance
- Growing district
- Joint recreation facilities
- Good collaboration during Covid
- Community clinics
- Shared services
- Regular meetings
- Our staff and teachers
- We have a lot of teachers that have been here for years, long term commitment of giving back
- Commitment of creating more accessibility to the districts
- We are doing our best under difficult conditions
- Provide the resources
- Try to help out the most vulnerable
- We care about our kids and team members
- We have great parents that are involved
- Communication with the teachers, administrators and district

### **What are the issues that a new superintendent will have to face coming into the district?**

- Should SRO programs continue?
- Turnover is high
- Struggle to attract talent
- Looking at special housing opportunities for employees
- Very different
- EL Parents
- Absence of strategic directions which has caused friction with the unions
- We are a new Board, need to learn to work together
- Starting all over due to the new board, distance learning
- New superintendent coming on, the Board will be a little more hands on
- The role of superintendent and the board
- Need to work on our technology, we are behind
- Our students have struggled through the distance learning and teachers were not prepared for distance learning

### **What are the characteristics, attributes, skills that the new superintendent should have coming to the District in order to be successful?**

- Understand the community
- Someone has a big picture perspective
- Collaborative – community grounded – make sure everyone is at the table
- Everyone is part of the decision making process

- Approach of shared leadership
- Proven record of bringing people together
- Beginning very forward thinking to leave an impact
- Make Soledad shine
- Time to start leading
- Take charge
- Make decisions and ask for approval not permission
- Always do the right thing for kids
- A leader
- Won't give in to everything
- A strong leader without offending people
- Professional
- Respectful
- Approachable
- Open door policy to feel comfortable
- No division or walls to reach the superintendent

**Name of Stakeholder Group: CSEA**

**What's great about the community?**

- Always willing to help
- Close knit
- Culture of helping; very involved
- People want to help each other
- Like family
- Respectful
- Volunteering

**What's great about the schools?**

- Awesome teachers
- Good administration
- Relationships are improving
- Listens to parents
- Office is first line of defense for the school sites
- Good resource support for students
- Long term employees

**What are the issues that a new superintendent will have to face coming into the district?**

- Sometimes they support parents over employees
- Open mind
- Not as transparent as they should be
- Office needs to be more available

- Mindset (Board members should not be given special treatment for family members)
- Needs training
- Better follow through needed
- Consistency needed with policies
- Small community
- Parents often find out things before staff ex: re-opening of schools due to Covid
- CSEA feels like second class employees
- Confidentiality is not always maintained
- Growing population of homelessness
- Housing crisis
- Struggling families
- Indigenous population
- Hiring of employees not regularly communicated to the staff
- Retaliation happens at times

**What are the characteristics, attributes, skills that the new superintendent should have coming to the District in order to be successful?**

- Approachable
- Open door policy
- Good communicator
- Someone cares about the community
- Be a part of the community
- Transparency
- Listens to all employees
- Gain input
- Stability
- Visible in the community & school sites
- Trusting and maintain confidentiality

**Name of Stakeholder Group: Soledad (Service Group)**

**What's great about the community?**

- Supports education
- People know each other
- Growing community
- Close to the beach
- There is a lot to do
- Pebble Beach
- Family community
- Connected
- People look out for each other
- Tight knit
- Collaborative

### **What's great about the schools?**

- People supported passage of a bond
- Local people work there
- Open door policy
- Good people
- Highly knowledgeable candidates
- Children (bright futures)
- many students return to work in the district

### **What are the issues that a new superintendent will have to face coming into the district?**

- K-12 district
- Complexity
- 80-90% Latino population
- Hard working people
- Long commutes
- Not 8-5 job
- Supported passage of a bond
- Has to wear many hats
- Unique demographic (large migrant population)
- Proactive board (supportive of children)
- Lack of services due to location
- Near a state correctional facility

### **What are the characteristics, attributes, skills that the new superintendent should have coming to the District in order to be successful?**

- Visible
- Familiar with community
- Multi-skilled
- Highly engaging with all stakeholders
- Networking
- High energy
- Motivational
- Uplifting
- Data driven
- Experienced at addressing performance
- Understands special education



## **April 19th General Community Meeting – (30 Individuals)**

### **What's great about the community?**

- Small and safe
- Healthy community
- United
- Happy and joyous
- Friendly
- People care
- Support the schools
- Small and a safe community
- We have a healthy community
- United
- We are happy and joyful
- Friendly place people care about the community and schools
- They support our schools

### **What's great about the schools?**

- Accepting students of each other
- Supportive parents
- People do what is right for students
- Welcoming school
- Supportive teachers
- Dual immersion program
- Informed
- High level communication
- Students are accepting of each other, supportive parents, supportive staff doing what's best for students- I appreciate that as a parent and teacher
- Supportive teachers, truly feel they are here for the students
- Dual immersion
- Felt informed as a parent-text messages, emails

### **What are the issues that a new superintendent will have to face coming into the district?**

- The Board is very involved
- Relationships need to be repaired
- Distrust (teacher and district)
- High turnover rate (6-7 principals in a short period)

**What are the characteristics, attributes, skills that the new superintendent should have coming to the District in order to be successful?**

- Bi-lingual
- Cultural competency
- There is a wedge between the community, teachers and district staff between the last superintendent; teachers and district vs. teachers & community need to repair this relationship
- They situation is getting better, but the new superintendent should be aware of it to repair this relationship
- We do have a high turnover rate - (10 years 6 or 7 school principals) teacher turnover is still high
- Approachable
- Open minded
- Bilingual can communicate with community
- 80% is Spanish speaking and high percentage of EL knowledge
- Support special education
- Help us close the technological gap and educational gap
- Be involved in all the district departments

*Survey Monkey Results for Soledad Unified School District*

*April 2021*

*(NOTE—these responses have not been edited,  
they are printed as entered by the stakeholders)*

*1 Spanish Response*

**Administrators/Administrador**

Ninguna respuesta

**Classified Staff/personal Classificado**

Ninguna respuesta

**Community Members/Miembro de la Comunidad**

Ninguna respuesta

**Parents/Padre**

**Tell us the good things about your community. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)**

**Diga las cosas buenas de su comunidad. (Esta información se utiliza para ayudar a reclutar candidatos de calidad.)**

- Es un pueblo tranquilo  
It is a quiet village

**Tell us the good things about your schools. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)**

**Diga las cosas buenas de sus escuelas. (Esta información se utiliza para ayudar a reclutar candidatos de calidad.)**

- Yo estoy muy contenta que mis hijos vallas a las escuelas aquí del pueblo por qué hay muy buenos maestros  
I am very happy that my children go to the schools here in the town because there are very good teachers

**What issues should the superintendent be aware of as he/she comes into the district? (This information is shared with the final candidates.)**

**¿De qué temas el superintendente debe estar consciente cuando él / ella entre en el distrito? (Esta información se comparte con los candidatos finales.)**

- De que no allá bulging en las escuelas por que luego es una de las causas de que los niños no quieren asistir a la escuela

That bulging in schools is not there because then it is one of the causes that children do not want to attend school

**What skills, qualities or characteristics should the new superintendent possess to be successful here? (This information is used as we screen potential candidates.)**

**¿Qué habilidades, cualidades o características debe poseer el nuevo superintendente para tener éxito aquí? (Esta información se utiliza como examinamos a los posibles candidatos.)**

- Se sea amable, que tenga mucho interés en que todo valla bien en la escuela  
Be polite, have a lot of interest in everything going well at school

**Students/Estudiante**

**Ninguna respuesta**

**Teachers/Profesor**

**Ninguna respuesta**

## *Survey Monkey Results for Soledad Unified School District*

*April 2021*

*(NOTE—these responses have not been edited,  
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### ***4 English Responses***

#### **Administrators**

No Responses

#### **Non-Certified Staff**

No Responses

#### **Community Members**

**Tell us the good things about your community. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)**

- Soledad is a passionate city that wants the best for all of its residents . We value passion and although we are small we have a big heart

**Tell us the good things about your schools. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)**

- Soledad is full of passionate teachers who care about the betterment of their students . Students want to do well and are hungry for individuals to stand behind them and cheer them on.

**What issues should the superintendent be aware of as he/she comes into the district? (This information is shared with the final candidates.)**

- Teachers are overworked and undervalued. There is no extensive community involvement that allows for stakeholder to truly be a part of the school community
- We have a 2 prisons in our backyard, a new county jail, a new Juvenile Hall, and local police budget totaling to 45%. Any superintendent who wishes to work must understand that we have the infrastructure to destroy young people's lives through incarceration. Finding and funding alternatives to punitive punishment is critical. Creating an environment that promotes wellness and health is crucial to our community.

**What skills, qualities or characteristics should the new superintendent possess to be successful here? (This information is used as we screen potential candidates.)**

- Person should be well versed in the community and have some authentic involvement and care for improving outside of just sitting in their office all day. They need to be active, passionate, and motivated in change .
- I would like our new superintendent to have an understanding of the School to Prison Pipeline and how that impacts our youth. I would like the superintendent to prioritize mental health for students and staff. I would like to see a superintendent that is aware of our culture and promotes it.

**Parents**

**Tell us the good things about your community. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)**

- Our community prioritizes education and funding education.

**Tell us the good things about your schools. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)**

- Even though we have high turnover rates (specially for principal position), the teachers who stay are very passionate and dedicated to our students.

**What issues should the superintendent be aware of as he/she comes into the district? (This information is shared with the final candidates.)**

- High turnover rate. There is a palpable divide between district and those directly working with our students. Still recovering from damages and divides from previous superintendent. And lack of diversity in key leadership positions at district levels.

**What skills, qualities or characteristics should the new superintendent possess to be successful here? (This information is used as we screen potential candidates.)**

- Preferably someone local or of similar community background that can understand our challenges and reflects our community. Preferably someone bilingual who can support staff reaching all students and can prioritize our EL achieve learning standards. Someone who understands and has concrete ideas about how to bring educational equity and navigate educational disparities. Someone willing to move in to the community he/she will serve.

## **Students**

**No Responses**

## **Teachers**

**Tell us the good things about your community. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)**

- Soledad has many community service organizations who pull together to support the arts, sports, recreation, and service to the community. The people of Soledad care about humanity. We have beautiful murals all around town to honor our many cultural heritages and the history of our valley.

**Tell us the good things about your schools. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)**

- Devoted teachers.

**What issues should the superintendent be aware of as he/she comes into the district? (This information is shared with the final candidates.)**

- This is a small town everyone is connected.

**What skills, qualities or characteristics should the new superintendent possess to be successful here? (This information is used as we screen potential candidates.)**

- Understand reading instruction, Response to Intervention, special education and reading intervention.