



# LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT

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August 28, 2024

## INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Dr. Brian Harris, Dr. Karen Sullivan and Dr. Ken Arndt of Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in July and August 2024 for the new superintendent of Township High School District 211 to replace Dr. Lisa Small upon her retirement at the end of the 2024-25 school year. The data contained herein were obtained from input the HYA consultants received when they met with individuals and groups in either individual interviews, focus group settings, community forums, and from the results of the online survey completed by stakeholders. The surveys, interviews, community forums 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, community forums and focus groups collected information regarding the strengths of the District and some of the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years and the immediate and future priorities that the new Superintendent will need to address.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE DISTRICT

District 211 is governed by a seven-member Board, Township High School District 211 is one of the largest high school districts in the state with nearly 12,000 students in five high schools and two alternative schools. District 211 is located about 25 miles northwest of Chicago and serves the communities of Hoffman Estates, Inverness, Palatine and Schaumburg, and parts of Arlington Heights, Elk Grove Village, Hanover Park, Rolling Meadows, Roselle, Streamwood, and South Barrington.

District 211's five nationally recognized high schools serving grades 9 through 12 are: James B. Conant (located in Hoffman Estates), William Fremd (located in Palatine), and Hoffman Estates, Palatine, and Schaumburg High Schools. District 211's alternative schools are District 211 North Campus (located in Palatine) and District 211 Higgins Education Center (located in Hoffman Estates). These alternative schools provide a variety of programs. District 211 recently was named one of the "Most Envied School Districts in the U.S." by Test Prep Insight – one of only 10 Illinois school systems to be included on the list. Additionally, NICHE ranked the District among the top 10 Best School Districts in Illinois in 2024.

In line with its mission, each of the District's five high schools provide a comprehensive curriculum with more than 700 academic courses (including 35 Advanced Placement courses and 64 dual credit courses) and a Career Pathways program that allows for the exploration of careers through specialized coursework, career treks, offsite learning experiences, and

opportunities to earn career credentials and early college credit in areas ranging from nursing and early childhood education to manufacturing and building construction.

Each school offers more than 30 interscholastic sports as well as dozens of clubs and activities to encourage a sense of belonging for every student.

## **Equity**

District 211 has a strong history of valuing and integrating equity within the daily interactions of students, staff and parents. Equity as a whole is deeply rooted in the 5-Year Strategic Plan. The District 211 Equity Team, which includes staff and students, works to ensure everyone understands and responds to the ever-changing needs within the schools and our world. The District believes equity is most effectively demonstrated as a mindset toward every facet of the educational experience. To guide this, the District created a series of value statements to describe the school environment through the experience of students, staff and our organization as a whole:

**Students:** All students can learn at the highest levels when all staff ensure access, opportunity and support. All students must receive individualized support that is both encouraging and empowering. All students deserve to feel safe, welcomed and valued in our schools, both individually and collectively.

**Staff:** All staff are aware of the potential effect of their background, mindsets and biases in the classroom. All staff approach educational equity with a growth mindset and are open to participating in crucial conversations regarding equity. All staff are empowered to identify and eliminate inequities, barriers and past practices that potentially lead to opportunity or achievement gaps.

**Organization:** We strive to intentionally develop systems that ensure access, opportunity and individualized support for all students. We strive to foster school environments where students feel a connection and a sense of belonging. We strive to implement ongoing analysis, assessment and evaluation of our systems for the purpose of continual improvement.

## **Wellness**

The physical, mental, and social wellbeing of District 211 students is also of significant importance to the organization and driven by a District Wellness Team.

Each school has a Student Services department with a full complement of counselors, social workers, and school psychologists who work collaboratively with students, families and local resources to ensure the social-emotional health of students.

District 211 also provides a comprehensive wellness curriculum, which integrates both health and physical fitness into rigorous coursework. The wellness curriculum includes topics such as: decision-making, fitness concepts, social-emotional health, and nutrition.

### **Economic Condition and Outlook**

The economic outlook for the District 211 communities remains stable amid a time of high inflationary costs. The financial, commercial, and industrial businesses represent a broad diversity in the area, and have withstood difficulties in any one area. The District has been debt-free since 2017 and has committed to maintaining this status as long as economic conditions allow. Financial projections point toward financial stability over the next five years, despite budget deficits primarily resulting from the payment of major facility improvement projects.

### **Awards/Recognitions**

Each of the District's five high schools has been recognized for excellence with the United States Department of Education's National Secondary School Recognition Program's Blue Ribbon Award.

The District's five high schools were named among the nation's Top 15% of High Schools within the state of Illinois, as well as the nation by U.S. News & World Report.

District 211 schools have a tradition of excellence, service and leadership. Annually, the Board of Education recognizes students for perfect ACT and SAT scores; winners of Congressional App Design Challenge; National Merit Scholars; and top state accolades in sports and the arts.

More than 130 District 211 educators have achieved National Board Certification.

Staff also are recognized each year by the Illinois State Board of Education's "Those Who Excel" program for excellence in education and working with students.

Individually, teachers have excelled with state and national awards in the areas of Project Lead the Way, mathematics, art, debate and business education

For the seventeenth year, the Association of School Business Officials International recognized Township High School District 211 with the Certificate of Excellence in Finance Reporting Award for demonstrating high standards and best practices for financial reporting and accountability.

### **Summary**

Through collaboration, innovation and partnerships fostered with higher education institutions, alumni – many of whom return to teach in District 211 schools – and business leaders, the District has created a pipeline for postsecondary success.

## PROCESS

During July and August, the HYA Associates conducted focus groups, interviews, and community forums. Over 25 focus groups were scheduled, 8 individual interviews completed, and 4 open community forums were provided for the community. In all, we had 186 stakeholders attend the focus group sessions and community forums. Additionally, 1,982 stakeholders responded to the online survey. The online survey was available to stakeholders from August 12 - 20 and provided an additional avenue for stakeholders to participate in the process of determining key attributes of the district and the desired qualifications and characteristics for the next Superintendent.

Here is a summary of the key stakeholders who participated in the focus groups/interviews:

### **Interviews and Focus Groups**

- Board Members
- Central office Leadership Team
- Civic Leaders and Community Partners
- Parent Leaders (PTO/Boosters)
- Local Feeder Districts' Superintendents
- Teachers/Certified Staff
- Support Staff
- Union representatives
- Administrators/Instructional Leaders
- High School Principals
- Students from each school

The structure of the focus groups and community forums was open, allowing for participants to build upon each other's comments. A majority of the focus group sessions were conducted via Zoom. Those involved in providing input into the selection of the Superintendent were asked to respond to the following questions:

- What are the strengths of the district and community?
- What are the challenges facing the district?
- What are the immediate and future priorities for the next Superintendent?
- What are the personal and professional qualifications and attributes that you desire in the next Superintendent?
- Do you know any candidates that you believe would be a great fit for this position?

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 are attributed. Items are included if, in the consultants' judgment, they warranted the Board's attention.

Finally, the community survey report and the desired characteristics are provided under separate cover and are meant to be stand-alone complementary pieces to the Leadership Profile Report. They will be used along with this report for recruitment of candidates and also as an entrance guide for the next Superintendent. A comprehensive report of the online survey is provided in a separate document titled: **Township High School District 211 Survey for Superintendent Search.**

### STRENGTHS OF THE DISTRICT

Township High School District 211 stands out for its exceptional community and family engagement, which significantly influences its high reputation and desirability. Residents frequently cite the quality of local schools as a primary reason for choosing to live in the area. This strong connection is reflected in the robust involvement of parents and community members, who actively support and participate in school activities, ensuring a collaborative environment that benefits both students and the educational system.

Academically, HS District 211 is distinguished by its commitment to excellence and innovation. It offers a wide range of rigorous academic programs, from advanced placement courses to dual credit opportunities, alongside a variety of extracurricular activities that cater to diverse student interests. This comprehensive approach not only enhances students' academic experiences but also equips them with the skills and knowledge needed for future success. The district's focus on integrating cutting-edge technology and fostering career readiness further underscores its dedication to preparing students for various post-secondary paths.

Financially, the district is highly stable and well-managed, operating with a substantial daily budget while maintaining a debt-free status. This financial strength allows for the continued provision of high-quality educational resources and support services. The district's leadership, comprising dedicated educators and administrators, plays a crucial role in sustaining this stability and allowing for continuous improvements. Together, they create an environment where inclusivity, support for diverse needs, and a commitment to student well-being are prioritized, ensuring that all students receive the support they need to excel academically and personally.

## CHALLENGES AND ISSUES FACING THE DISTRICT

The district is grappling with several critical challenges that impact its overall effectiveness. One of the primary issues is the administrative structure, which is lean and overwhelmed, leading to difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified staff. This challenge is compounded by low salaries and benefits, making it hard to attract and retain talented building level administrators. The lack of internal candidates for administrative roles and an outdated administrative structure further exacerbate these difficulties, leading to increased workloads and a need for more robust support systems.

In addition to administrative issues, the district faces hurdles in meeting the evolving needs of its diverse student body. There is a pressing need to enhance career readiness programs, EL programs and improve support for mental health and academic preparation. The district also needs to address communication gaps, both internally and with the community, to ensure more effective engagement and information dissemination. These communication issues hinder the district's ability to connect with parents and stakeholders, impacting overall community involvement and support.

Facility and infrastructure challenges were also identified, with outdated athletic facilities requiring attention. The district must address these issues to maintain consistency with neighboring districts. Balancing the needs of a diverse student population, including English learners and students from various socio-economic backgrounds, adds another layer of complexity. The district must navigate varied community perspectives and demands while striving to offer equitable resources and support across its schools.

## FREQUENTLY NOTED THEMES

The data contained in this report were gathered from Board-identified or self-selected stakeholder respondents as outlined on page 3 of this report. Therefore, it should be emphasized that the data are not from a purely scientific sampling. However, in almost all cases the data were prioritized by the individuals and members of the groups from which they were gathered. In addition, prior to drawing any conclusions about consistent themes or recurring ideas, the consultants reviewed the occurrence of the indicators or Strengths, Challenges, Priorities and Leadership Qualities within and among the eleven reference groups chosen to participate in this study. So, it can be safely said that there is

certainly a rigorous method for bringing these conclusions to your attention and consideration, when selecting the desired characteristics for the next Superintendent for HS District 211. Items are included from the interviews, focus groups, community forums and/or survey, if, in the HYA Associates' judgment, they were repeated with sufficient frequency thus indicating a pattern and/or warranting the Board's attention. Those receiving multiple mentions are listed below and are not in priority order:

### **Strengths:**

- **Community and Family Engagement:** The school district's deep connection with the community is evident in the high level of parental trust and involvement, contributing to the district's reputation as a desirable place to live and educate children.
- **Academic Excellence and Innovation:** The district is renowned for its strong academic programs and innovative curriculum, including a diverse range of subjects and extracurricular activities, which collectively prepare students for success in college, careers, or military service.
- **Financial Stability and Resources:** With a robust financial foundation, the district maintains a debt-free status while effectively managing a significant daily budget to support high-quality education and extensive student services.
- **Dedicated and Talented Staff:** The district benefits from a highly skilled and committed team of educators and administrators who collaborate effectively, care deeply about student success, and continuously seek to enhance their professional skills.
- **Inclusive and Supportive Environment:** The district fosters an inclusive environment that embraces cultural diversity and offers comprehensive support services, including special education and career readiness programs, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to thrive.

### **Challenges/Concerns/Issues:**

- **Administrative Structure:** The district faces challenges with administrative structure and staffing, including difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified administrators, leading to a lean and overwhelmed administrative team.
- **Innovative Educational Programming:** There are concerns about meeting the evolving needs of students with innovative programming, particularly with respect to career readiness, mental health support, and academic preparation beyond high school.
- **Communication Improvements:** Communication issues exist both within the district especially with students related to policy changes and between the district and the community, with a need for more effective and inclusive outreach.



- **Enhance Facilities:** Facility and infrastructure challenges were identified, including outdated athletic facilities, and issues to maintain consistency with neighboring districts.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** The district struggles with balancing diverse student needs, including those of English learners and students from various socio-economic backgrounds, while addressing varied community perspectives and demands.

### **Immediate and Future Priorities**

#### **Immediate Priorities include:**

- Establish Strong Communication Channels
- Visibility and Relationship Building
- Engage with Community and School Stakeholders
- Assess and Support EL Programs
- Financial Oversight and Stability
- Review and Enhance Safety Initiatives

#### **Future Priorities include:**

- Promote Equity and Diversity
- Strengthen Professional Development and Leadership
- Revise Administrative Structures
- Expand Community and Regional Partnerships
- Address Infrastructure and Facilities Needs
- Focus on Student Achievement and Career Readiness

### **Desired Superintendent Qualifications and Attributes:**

#### **Personal Qualities**

- **Collaborative** – Works well with others and builds strong partnerships.
- **Approachable** – Easy to talk to and open to feedback from all stakeholders.
- **Empathetic** – Understands and relates to the needs and concerns of students, staff, and the community.
- **Genuine** – Authentic and sincere in interactions and intentions.
- **Visible** – Regularly attends school functions and community events, and is known by students and staff.
- **Resilient** – Stays strong and effective in the face of challenges.
- **Warmth** – Exhibits kindness and a supportive attitude.

- **Good Communicator** – Clear, effective, and open in all forms of communication.
- **Sense of Humor** – Maintains a positive attitude and light-hearted approach.
- **Humble yet Confident** – Demonstrates humility while being self-assured in their role.
- **Honest and Fair** – Upholds integrity and equity in all decisions and actions.

### Professional Qualifications

- **Educational Leadership Experience** – Proven track record in instructional leadership and high school administration.
- **Previous Experience as a Superintendent** – Experience in a similar-sized district with comparable budget and challenges.
- **Financially Astute** – Strong understanding of budgeting, accounting, and financial management.
- **Strategic Thinker** – Capable of developing and implementing long-term plans and visions.
- **DEI Commitment** – Serious about diversity, equity, and inclusion with a demonstrated history of success in this area.
- **Instructional Expertise** – Deep knowledge of curriculum development and educational standards.
- **Negotiation Skills** – Experienced in collective bargaining and handling union negotiations.
- **Community Engagement** – Ability to build relationships with various community stakeholders, understand local demographics and navigate local community issues.
- **Cultural Competence** – Experienced in working with diverse populations and adapting to various cultural contexts.
- **High School Experience** – Experience working in multiple high school settings and understanding their unique challenges.
- **Innovative** – Open to new ideas and creative solutions to improve the district.
- **Transparent** – Provides clear and honest information, especially regarding financial matters.
- **Visionary** – Able to see and implement a forward-thinking vision for the district's future.
- **Adaptable** – Flexible and able to adjust strategies and approaches as needed.
- **Servant Leadership** – Focused on serving and developing others, with a commitment to personal and professional growth.
- **Problem Solver** – Effective at identifying issues and implementing solutions.
- **Crisis Management** – Ability to handle difficult situations and make decisions under pressure.

## Desired Attributes

- **Student-Centered** – Prioritizes the needs and success of students above all.
- **Open to Feedback** – Willing to listen to and act on feedback from staff, students, and the community.
- **Mentor and Developer** – Invests in the professional development of staff and builds leadership capacity.
- **Community Focused** – Engages with and understands the community, including its diverse needs and perspectives.
- **Long-Term Commitment** – Demonstrates a desire to stay with the district for a substantial period to make a meaningful impact.
- **Transparent Decision-Making** – Makes decisions openly and involves stakeholders in the process.
- **Positive Morale Builder** – Works to boost staff morale and keep employees engaged.
- **Ethical Leadership** – Acts with integrity and fairness in all decisions and actions.
- **Caring and Supportive** – Shows genuine care for the well-being of students and staff.
- **Tech-Savvy** – Keeps up with modern technology and its integration into education.

## CONCLUSION

The HYA Associates would like to thank all the stakeholders, who participated in the interviews, focus groups and community forums or who completed the online survey, for their insights and candor. A note of thanks to all staff members who assisted in facilitating our work in gathering this data, and for their extra efforts in handling the necessary arrangements for our virtual meetings, community forums, and follow-up on any issues of concern or clarification.

In closing, HYA is committed to recruiting and screening candidates who fit the leadership profile and will provide HS District 211 the high quality of successful leadership it desires. The next Superintendent needs to sustain all that is special about the schools, programs, and personnel and provide the vision, hard work, commitment and collaboration that will engage all stakeholders in moving the District forward to meet the expectations of long term success.