

New London-Spicer Schools Superintendent Search

Stakeholder Engagement Superintendent Search Survey

Overview: On April 18, 2022, the “New London-Spicer Schools Superintendent Search Survey” was made available to the public both online and in hard copy. The survey remained open for respondents until April 28, 2022, and a total of 242 people completed the survey.

RESULTS: Survey takers were asked to identify the role that best reflected the basis for their responses. The categories selected by the survey takers are provided below.

- 61.83% of respondents selected “Parent/Guardian”
- 26.14% of respondents selected “Staff Member”
- 8.30% of respondents selected “Community Member”
- 2.07% of respondents selected “Student”
- 0.83% of respondents selected “Business Owner/Agriculture”
- 0.83% of respondents selected “Other”

Areas of Expertise: Those who responded to the survey were also asked to identify the top six desirable areas of expertise they believe the new superintendent must possess. The most frequently noted areas of expertise are listed below in order of preference.

- Budget and Finance
- Collaborative Leadership
- Curriculum Development/Evaluation (*tie with*) Personnel Management
- School Reform (i.e., Strategic Planning, etc.)
- Contract Administration and Negotiations

Specialized Skills: The top six specialized skills the new superintendent must possess were identified in the survey results as shown below.

- Acts with honesty and in an ethical manner in dealings with the School Board, staff, and community
- Is visible and accessible to the School Board, staff, students, parents, and community
- Is a “people person” with proven abilities in human relations and communications
- Experience in school finance
- Develops and directs an effective leadership team
- Effectively mediates and accommodates different perspectives; values teamwork



Previous Experience: Respondents were asked if previous superintendent experience is important. Based on the results, 44.44% of the respondents selected “Yes,” while 55.56% of the respondents selected “No.”

Personal Characteristics: Survey takers were also asked to identify the top six personal characteristics they believe the new superintendent must possess. The most frequently noted personal characteristics are listed below in order of preference.

- Honest and ethical
- Effective communicator
- Problem solver
- Transparent
- Personable
- Consistent

Additional comments: Finally, respondents were given the opportunity to answer open-ended questions in the survey and on average, 160 of the 242 respondents provided additional commentary. These results were then reviewed by MSBA representatives, with reappearing ideas identified and grouped into themes. These themes are highlighted below for each of the questions.

1. What are some of the good things taking place in New London Spicer Schools today?

<p>New London Spicer Schools does everything it can to meet student needs through a variety of curricular, cocurricular, and extracurricular programs. The community is excited about the academic strides of the students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>New science curriculum was approved. Students are making gains in academics, recovering from academic deficits resulting from Covid.</i> • <i>Implementing innovative ways to reach a dynamic range of student learning styles by educators and support professionals.</i> • <i>We are doing very well athletically.</i> • <i>We have great activities offered to students both in school and after school. We are moving forward with technology, though this is an area that could likely always need more support and improvement.</i> • <i>Students are on the right course to success.</i> • <i>The education of a wide range of students; a balance between academic activity and extracurricular and sports activity.</i> • <i>Vast amount of opportunities for after school activities.</i> • <i>Many options for kids outside of the regular school day.</i> • <i>Performing arts, athletics, safe learning environment.</i> • <i>Sports, Arts. EMT courses. Robotics/CatEye/Digital opportunities for students.</i> • <i>Innovation and learning geared toward todays societal needs.</i> • <i>I believe we are perceived as providing a quality education to students. We have a variety of programs that attract people to our district.</i> 	<p>116 related responses</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Wide range of academic and extracurricular activities.</i> • <i>Technology improvements, focusing on whole child, mental health support improvements.</i> • <i>We are innovating some of our programming to students in all buildings which will inspire our students to thrive in a 21st century world.</i> 	
<p>New London Spicer Schools has a caring, capable staff that goes above and beyond for each student.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Great staff; staff loves their jobs, and are working tirelessly to make a difference in all students lives.</i> • <i>Highly experienced staff of teachers.</i> • <i>Dedicated and caring teachers that know how to balance academics and mental health.</i> • <i>Staff that is committed to their jobs. Staff that is involved in the district besides just the classroom.</i> • <i>NLS has a committed and hard-working staff who work incredibly hard to provide the best educational experience for the students of NLS.</i> • <i>We have some highly qualified staff. I believe our PLTs are strong and doing some amazing work towards student growth and achievement.</i> • <i>The teachers seem to be doing a great job developing and implementing curriculum.</i> • <i>The staff has been very successful in striving to meet the needs of our students through challenging times.</i> • <i>Staff members feel supported and heard and that our experience and hard work are appreciated.</i> • <i>Staff cares about their students, great special education program.</i> • <i>The elementary staff is awesome.</i> • <i>There are many staff members that are dedicated to their students and go above and beyond to help them succeed.</i> 	74 related responses
<p>New London Spicer supports the district and will provide whatever help it can for the students to be successful. The community is excited about the opportunities the passing of the new referendum will bring to the students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Booster Club donated money for play clocks on the football field.</i> • <i>Community shows support.</i> • <i>The community is invested in the school, so families are involved and willing to help and attend school events.</i> • <i>Community involvement and a great amount of volunteers.</i> • <i>It's great that our referendum passed so the district can move forward with some plans and hiring decisions that will have a great impact on the students and the current staff of the building.</i> • <i>This is a tight knit community that strongly supports its students and programs at NLS</i> • <i>The passing of the referendum allowing us to keep staff and programs.</i> • <i>Passing the referendum, I believe was huge step forward for NLS.</i> • <i>The referendum being passed in November was excellent.</i> 	72 related responses



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The ability to hire support staff with the referendum money is great as well.</i> 	
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2. What challenges do you see for our district over the next five years?

<p>The New London Spicer community wants to see continued improvement to the financial stability of the district.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Retention could be a challenge, not only teachers but other staff as well.</i> • <i>Retention of your best teachers that are burnt out or feeling unheard.</i> • <i>Recruitment and Retention - getting staff, including subs/paras.</i> • <i>Ensuring we are in a strong position to hire adequate teachers and staff while providing them with competitive wages.</i> • <i>Funding and meeting employment needs.</i> • <i>retaining highly qualified educators.</i> • <i>There has been a lot of staff turnover recently and we are all trying to adjust.</i> • <i>Teacher and support staff pay--the cost of living is rising rapidly and the salaries and hourly wages of staff members is not keeping up. This has and will continue to push out staff members. With the value of staff members' combined experiences and their skills we have seen that our staff is not easily replaced.</i> • <i>Making sure wages are competitive with area school generally to continue to entice quality staff to want to work at NLS.</i> • <i>Retaining employees due to job satisfaction and salary.</i> • <i>Employment, not only with teachers but with other staff. Food service, janitors, paraprofessionals, office staff, etc.</i> 	96 related responses
<p>The New London Spicer community understands the district is having trouble recruiting and retaining quality staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Finances is always a challenge and funding special education is on that list.</i> • <i>Maintaining fiscal responsibility.</i> • <i>Finances, we need either additional state aid or additional revenue raised locally.</i> • <i>I see financial struggles again in the near future. It seems like the levy passed and all that has happened is spend, spend, spend.</i> • <i>Budgetary/financial shortcomings.</i> • <i>Continuing to keep the district finances in good working order.</i> • <i>Technology and building repairs. These require a lot of money and hard choices will have to be made on some of the enhancements NLS wants to do.</i> • <i>Keeping the resources, we are adding. I hope that financially we can maintain the new positions to continue to support staff and students.</i> • <i>Funding will continue to be an issue; grants will be needed and possibly another referendum passed.</i> • <i>I think budget is always a concern.</i> • <i>Continue to worry about finances- it is important to make sure there is that financial security, so it is not worrisome like it has been in the past.</i> 	90 related responses



3. What does the new superintendent need to know about the history of the school district and community to be successful?

<p>The New London Spicer community wants the next superintendent to understand the demographics of area and know it is a supportive, close-knit community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Our community is very involved in our schools.</i> • <i>NLS is a tight-knit community that strongly supports its students and education.</i> • <i>This community has a history of supporting our schools. This is a real asset and should nurtured -- not taken for granted.</i> • <i>The community is very loyal to the school and wants it to be the best it can be.</i> • <i>NLS is a strong community! Our schools are the center. They attract people to the area and keep the community thriving!</i> • <i>The school district and community are very active.</i> • <i>NLS is a wonderful community.</i> • <i>Knowledge of New London Spicer’s history and heritage.</i> • <i>A solid understanding of the rural public school and the community that accompanies it.</i> • <i>We are a small community with a sharp divide between the wealthy and poor demographics, not very many students are in the middle.</i> • <i>New London-Spicer Schools is an amazing district and an awesome place to live, raise kids.</i> • <i>Small town with very obvious split of classes. Rich kids and poor kids. The wealthy kids all seem to thrive and find a niche. The poor struggle. They are disconnected and the ones who really need the opportunities they cannot afford.</i> 	<p>37 related responses</p>
<p>The New London Spicer community wants the next superintendent to be visible, communicative, collaborative, and have strong leadership skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It would be helpful to hire a Superintendent who has a strong rapport with parents and honors their staff's professional judgement.</i> • <i>Directly reaching out to community members and businesses is a must.</i> • <i>We want to be informed and want the administration to be open and honest - good or bad news.</i> • <i>We need someone who has experience, integrity, and knows how to positively motivate people, by example. We need someone focused, manageable, moderate change in respect to any new goals or initiatives.</i> • <i>The community members have more trust in someone who is approachable and visible.</i> • <i>The new superintendent needs to be transparent, have good communication, integrity, and an appreciate for staff.</i> • <i>Better things are accomplished when you spend time getting to know your staff, you are accessible to staff, and you are frequently present in all of the buildings, so that you can see and hear the good things happening, and the concerns.</i> • <i>Be visible and approachable. Lead with empathy and honesty.</i> • <i>Listen to the people that make up the community, not just the select few who think they are the majority.</i> 	<p>36 related responses</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>He/she needs to be personable and honest with community members.</i> • <i>Needs a superintendent who is willing to be personable, creative, and willing to try new things while connecting with the community and its leaders!</i> • <i>Transparency is very important to the community.</i> 	
<p>The New London Spicer community wants the next superintendent to understand the district’s financial history.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>As far as some of the recent history, for the last few years when we were in the challenging financial situation. Now that the referendum was passed, some staff feel there's inequity across the buildings in the district.</i> • <i>The new superintendent should be aware of the financial situation, and the past couple of years of struggle with financials.</i> • <i>History of bonding and referendums, what's worked and not worked.</i> • <i>Budget and referendum attempts.</i> • <i>Should know history of problems and being able to budget.</i> • <i>Lack of community input on budget/spending BEFORE problems arise. This lack of transparency to the public resulted in the threat of loss of extracurricular programs, cutting staff, and reducing the educational experience.</i> • <i>Keep the community involved in the schools and show them where their tax money is being spent.</i> • <i>The superintendent needs to be open and willing to stand up and let the district know what is going on with budgeting, and the finances of the school.</i> • <i>They wasted a lot of money building cool things without taking some basic things such as tech and teaching at the core.</i> 	<p>21 related responses</p>

4. Additional Comments:

<p>The New London Spicer community wants the next superintendent to have strong leadership skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We need someone with experience to try and smooth the last many years of instability.</i> • <i>Teachers are hopeful to have strong leadership in a superintendent, someone who can delegate but encourage and build up their leaders (principals) and be present in classrooms all throughout the district, someone who is able and willing to engage in problem-solving.</i> • <i>We need someone who will work hard to convince the legislature and community to keep funding our quality curriculum programs and extracurriculars.</i> • <i>We'd like a candidate who will honor the entire Portrait of the Graduate when making decisions for our district with our programming and curriculum.</i> • <i>I want a superintendent that supports teachers and strives for excellence.</i> • <i>The "intangibles" are the important traits you should be looking for in your new superintendent. Good communication skills, good listening, good leader of people, etc.</i> 	<p>23 related responses</p>
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