

Sonoma Valley Unified School District

Leadership Profile Report

January 12, 2010

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes the findings of the *Leadership Profile Assessment* conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates, Ltd. (HYA) for the Sonoma Valley Unified School District. The data contained herein was obtained from input received from approximately 187 individuals who participated in interviews, focus groups, a public forum December 14, 15, 18, and 30, 2009 and/or on completion of *Leadership Profile Assessment* forms. The questionnaire, interviews, forums and focus groups were intended to help identify the primary characteristics sought in the District's next high school principal. Through this process, the consultant attempted to identify the personal attributes and professional experiences desired in the principal, as well as the skill-set necessary to maintain and deliver what stakeholders value. As directed, the consultant also garnered input regarding existing and emerging challenges or issues that the high school and the new principal are facing.

The District sought input from a wide range of participants, in order to generate a clear expression of interest in the high school and the principal search process on the part of the entire community. Stakeholders demonstrated an inimitable commitment to the education and success of all of the high school's students as they shared what they perceived to be the strengths of and challenges for the school.

Information obtained through interviews and the completed *Leadership Profile Assessment* forms reflected similar views from all groups with respect to strengths of the District. Chief among them was appreciation for the experienced, dedicated and diverse teaching and support staff at the high school. The District office was also commended for their efforts on behalf of the students and the high school staff.

Based on interviews with the Leadership class, the students at Sonoma Valley High School are aware of the beautiful surrounding of their school. As a student body, they are conscientious, concerned, dedicated and energetic. They are a proud, close-knit group which shows strong school spirit. Academic and sports programs are viewed positively along with other program offerings, including agriculture, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), Advanced Placement, culinary arts, electives, film, forensics, Regional Occupational Program, senior projects, video productions, the special education collaborative model, practices and materials.

The community is supportive of the high school staff and willing to help with fund-raising and people resources. Among the support groups who provide valuable financial

and human resource support to the high school are the Booster Club, Boys & Girls Club, CommonBond Foundation, Development Trust, English Learner Advisory Committee, La Luz, Mentoring Alliance, Teacher Support Network, Sonoma Valley Education Foundation, Sonoma Valley Fund, and the Vadasz Family Foundation.

The composition of the Board is stable and they are student-centered. Of note, the Board is willing to take criticism and endure unpopularity in order to achieve its goals. This basic aid District is financially solvent although it continues to implement significant cuts to the budget and programs. Finally, Sonoma is a wonderful place to live with access to the City, ocean, and mountains while enjoying a great climate.

However, as with many schools, there are a number of challenges to be addressed. A Strategic Plan is in place and scheduled for updating in 2010. While the document provides some guidance, it does not specifically address the District's vision of making all students college ready by 12th grade and does not serve as a clear plan for the high school. Thus, funding sources that might be available to help address these needs are not offered. The District's efforts to pass a parcel tax in 2004 and 2007 have been unsuccessful and some perceive that these failures reflect the community's concerns regarding the District ability to effectively use its resources.

The most cited concern was the school's limited efforts to serve the needs of the growing population of Latino students. Latino parents and students feel that school is not sufficiently responsive to their needs, concerns or goals. The achievement gap is significant and there is a perception that the school must develop and enhance academic programs that engage all students and better meet their needs. There is a related concern about the dropout rate for Latino students.

In addition, a culture of excellence is not evident at the high school. There are attendance problems and students are not inspired to excel. In fact, most respondents feel that students can easily "coast" without being challenged. This must be addressed in order for students to be college ready. In addition, there is a strong sense that there must be more career and technical educational opportunities.

Many respondents are concerned about inadequate communication and an ineffective working relationship among constituent groups. Parent and community groups are frustrated over their perceived inability to provide meaningful help to the high school. Parents want more communication with the school. In addition, students wish to be involved in helping shape decisions that impact their daily school life. Community groups do not feel their assistance, either human or financial, is welcomed.

There is a perception for some that there is a divided staff at the high school. Some feel that there is a lack of respect for staff as well as disconnects at all levels of administration. The school must improve its image in order to move toward the creation of a world-class high school. Promotion of high quality programs will require changes, and this can result in resistance, opposition and fear for some. The school needs a strong leader to address these concerns, and the leader will need support from the Board, the

District Office and community. Thus, problems at the high school are not unsolvable but will require a great deal of cooperation and planning from the various entities in the District and community.

HYA cautions the District and others not to look upon the delineation of the challenges contained herein as criticisms of Sonoma Valley High School or any component of it. Instead, this Report is merely an attempt to catalogue the concerns that appear to exist at the high school level in order to provide the District with an opportunity to identify those issues that are of the significance. This will allow the District to identify an individual who has the skill-set and experience to respond to them over a period of time.

The Sonoma Valley Unified School District is looking for an experienced high school principal who is able to address these challenges in a competent, caring manner. The new principal must articulate a clear vision for the school and possess a track record of improving student achievement with a diverse student population. He/she must understand and value Hispanic culture, be able to engage the Latino community, and thus demonstrate a clear recognition that they are an integral part of the community. A bilingual/bicultural individual is desired but not required. He/she should be a collaborator who communicates well with all stakeholders and has demonstrated the ability to work positively with school staff. This individual should be an inspired, visionary leader, open to new ideas. He/she must be able to foster a team-concept in the District, treating people with respect and professionalism. He/she must demonstrate integrity in all of his/her actions. This individual must have the ability and willingness to use data to make instruction and/or resource modifications based on student needs, and yet also understand that data is only one element of the decision-making process. He/she needs to be politically savvy regarding local, state, and federal government. He/she also must hold himself/herself and others to high standards, and be sure to hold people accountable.

It is important that the chosen candidate loves children and understands the high school student. There is a strong desire that this person be compassionate, credible, dynamic, optimistic, positive, trustworthy, visible, and possess a sense of humor.

The consultant wishes to express her appreciation to the District for selecting HYA to partner with them in this important process, and for casting a wide and inclusive net, which enabled them to hear from a broad base of the constituency. On behalf of both myself and the entire firm, we are exceedingly grateful to the many individuals who afforded time from their schedules to meet with us.

Respectfully submitted,

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(Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates)