



HUMAN CAPITAL ENTERPRISES
REDEFINING HUMAN RESOURCES LEADERSHIP

North Lake School District Superintendent Search Stakeholder Engagement

Executive Summary

In all, seventy-one stakeholders- students, parents, North Lake School District employees, and community members- participated in 1:1 interviews, focus groups, or completed the on-line survey. Those participants were asked about North Lake School District's strengths, challenges, and personal and professional qualities, attributes, skills, and experiences desired in North Lake's next superintendent of schools. This input shaped the development of the Next Superintendent Criteria which will be adopted by the North Lake School District Board of Education at the January 26, 2026, special Board meeting.

The data contained herein was obtained from input received by Human Capital Enterprises consultants Steve Webb, Ed.D. and Hank Harris. It is important to emphasize that the delineations below are not a scientific sampling, nor should they necessarily be viewed as representing a majority opinion. Items are included if, in the consultants' judgment, they warranted the Board's attention. There is no ranking of importance intended.

Strengths

1. Community at the Heart

North Lake School is seen not just as an educational institution, but as a central hub for the three communities it serves. It is often described as the "center of life" in the area—a place where community members gather for events, athletics, and celebrations. This close-knit atmosphere fosters a strong sense of belonging and trust between staff, students, and families. Small class sizes and the district's size allow for meaningful connections. Teachers and staff are praised for their support, compassion, and for knowing students as individuals. Many noted that students are "kind," "welcoming," and "supportive of each other," and that relationships are one of the district's strongest assets.

2. Strength in Staff and School Culture

The staff at NLSD are frequently described as dedicated, collaborative, and invested in the well-being of students. There is clear pride in the professionalism and care shown by teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, and support staff alike. Many staff members feel empowered to teach with autonomy

and report feeling respected and trusted. Several respondents noted improvements in staff morale, discipline consistency, and follow-through in recent years, especially under the current principal and VP/AD team. However, concerns remain about student discipline and a need for stronger enforcement of behavioral standards.

3. Exceptional Programs: CTE, Agriculture, and FFA

One of the most celebrated aspects of NLSD is its Career and Technical Education (CTE), especially the agriculture and FFA programs. The addition of a meat lab has brought unique, hands-on opportunities for students to learn butchery and food processing—skills deeply connected to the community’s rural values. The FFA program is consistently praised for building both technical and leadership skills and giving students the chance to compete and succeed in meaningful ways.

4. Student Success and Academic Achievement

Community members shared pride in the academic growth and achievement of NLSD students. Highlights include:

- 100% on-time graduation rate
- High performance in OSAA Cup rankings for academic and athletic excellence
- Strong college credit and dual enrollment opportunities
- Support for students’ social-emotional and academic needs through small group instruction and one-on-one support

Teachers are described as using differentiated instruction and working collaboratively to help all students succeed. Some also mentioned strong data use and student progress monitoring.

5. Facilities and Fiscal Health

For a small district, NLSD is considered extremely fortunate in its facilities and fiscal management. The two gyms, well-maintained grounds, and recent facility improvements stand out. Staff and community members noted the pride taken in keeping the school clean and welcoming. NLSD has a healthy fund balance and is viewed as fiscally conservative and well-managed. This financial strength allows for continued investment in staff compensation, facility upkeep, and innovative programs.

6. Valuing Student Voice and Inclusion

There is a strong appreciation for how student voices are heard and respected. Respondents praised the district’s inclusive environment, efforts to address equity, and openness to diverse perspectives. The district’s character education efforts, particularly in elementary grades, were also seen as contributing to a positive school climate.

Challenges

1. Strong, Transparent Leadership

Community voices consistently expressed the need for leadership that is visible, accountable, and willing to address difficult issues. Past concerns around lack of follow-through, and inconsistent enforcement of policies have affected trust. The next leader will need to rebuild confidence through transparent communication, visible engagement, and action—while clearly defining roles and responsibilities across all levels of the district.

2. Communication

Communication challenges—between administrators and staff, among staff themselves, and between schools and families—were a recurring concern. Misinformation, lack of updates, and overreliance on social media have left many feeling disconnected or left out. The community wants more consistent and inclusive communication tools: regular newsletters, clear updates on policies, and direct outreach to families. Open, two-way dialogue is seen as vital to strengthening relationships and fostering unity.

3. Student Behavior and Discipline

Many respondents highlighted a need for stronger and more consistent approaches to student behavior and discipline. While recent changes have resulted in some improvement, gaps remain in how expectations are set, enforced, and communicated. Teachers, staff, and parents are asking for a discipline system that is fair, clearly defined, and supported by leadership. When students understand expectations—and when adults follow through consistently—school culture and safety improve for everyone.

4. Academic Growth Priority

Families and educators are deeply concerned about student learning and achievement. There's a strong desire to raise expectations and ensure all students are challenged and supported, especially in core academic areas like math, reading, and science. Post-pandemic learning loss is still visible, and some feel instructional time is not always used effectively. Community members want to see a renewed focus on high-quality teaching, more structured use of planning time, and increased engagement from students and staff alike.

5. Rural Context

As a small, tight-knit rural school district, North Lake School District continues to inspire pride and passion among staff, students, families, and community members. North Lake's rural setting offers a close-knit community, but also brings challenges—especially when it comes to staffing, transportation, and access to resources. Recruitment and retention are ongoing issues, as are long bus rides, housing shortages, and the high needs of a diverse student population. There's broad agreement that district leadership must understand the unique context of North Lake and advocate effectively for the support and funding it requires.