

**BASTROP INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT  
SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH FOCUS GROUP MEETING NOTES  
October 6, 2009**

**GROUP 1**

**STRENGTHS**

1. Support of the community
2. Community involvement
3. Family feel
4. Recreational opportunities – location to lakes and coast
5. Growth – houses
6. Small town environment
7. Growth and opportunity
8. Growing community with small town feel
9. On the brink of change – want the best
10. Proximity to Austin and the airport
11. Time to focus on major bond issue
12. Lots of opportunity
13. Proximity to major resources – UT, MD Anderson, Capitol, A&M, ARC Foundry
14. Opportunity to build a team and take district to the next level
15. Challenges that will be exciting
16. Community will rally
17. Professional opportunity
18. Children ready to be taken to higher level
19. Teachers are outstanding
20. District is ready to move up
21. Strong parental involvement
22. Teacher compensation
23. Strong PTA and campus mentors
24. Dedicated teachers
25. Bastrop Education Foundation
26. Teachers eager to learn
27. Large district geographically, 300+ square miles
28. Board's vision and pursuit of excellence
29. High expectations
30. Facilities are excellent
31. Bond issue success
32. Technology in schools
33. Growth of Hispanic community – untapped resource
34. Performing Arts Center
35. 4<sup>th</sup> graders all have handhelds – 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> graders have laptops, interactive white boards
36. Community is willing to pay for schools

## 37. Principals

### **CHALLENGES**

1. We need a leader, not a manager
2. Too many children not prepared for life after high school
3. Continued technology growth
4. Building on community support, parent involvement
5. County, city and school need to work together
6. Challenge for students to see opportunities in front of them
7. Perception problems for Bastrop
8. Buildings have gone up, performance has gone down
9. Academic leadership team needs improvement
10. Investments have been made, time for performance to improve
11. Keeping families in Bastrop because of student performance
12. Erosion of tax base if people leave
13. Improvement of curriculum, not just test scores
14. Curriculum is test oriented
15. Need broader emphasis than state tests
16. Two high schools, loyalty
17. Keeping focus of district on all schools
18. Parent communication
19. Parent awareness of resources
20. Communication between educators
21. Community education regarding mission, goals, direction, pulling things together
22. Newspaper is a challenge
23. No connection between children, parents, teachers, principals
24. Not a family friendly or accessible system, parents don't know where to start with issues
25. Fulfilling all the expectations, prioritizing
26. Teachers feel intimidated, don't feel safe to discuss things
27. Transparency is a challenge
28. Growth, outreach to Red Rock, Flower Mound subdivisions
29. Close mindedness

### **PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

1. Educator
2. Texan preferred
3. Ability to lead
4. Visionary
5. Open to diversity – diversity in teachers
6. Respects diversity and cultural differences
7. IB advocate
8. Believes it is district's job to prepare kids for life beyond high school graduation

9. Willing to go against the grain
10. Renaissance person, someone who can do it all
11. Gender not important
12. Proven track record of success
13. Transformational leader who will stay and commit
14. Non traditional business person who holds people accountable
15. Compassionate strength, fair, sense of community
16. Thinks outside the box
17. Visible in the community
18. Communicator
19. Heart for children
20. Ability to merge business expertise and education expertise
21. Able to build a team
22. Plow horse not show horse, willing to work hard
23. Importance of confidentiality
24. Don't just think about where Bastrop is, think about where it will be.

## **GROUP 2**

### **STRENGTHS**

1. Small town feel
2. Growing community
3. Welcoming community
4. Diverse
5. Great place to raise a family
6. Sense of community
7. Affordable
8. Rich history
9. Beautiful natural environment
10. Great facilities
11. Strong community leaders
12. Opportunity to create tradition, two high schools
13. Chance to be part of something new
14. Community involvement is growing
15. Lost Pines, State Parks, Colorado River, etc.
16. Proximity to Austin and even Houston
17. Fine arts
18. Small town, but close to big urban areas
19. Incredible staff and teachers
20. Economic opportunities
21. Leadership not only of schools, but of whole community during challenging times
22. Quality of life
23. Lots of volunteers

24. Unselfish community leaders
25. Education Foundation
26. Location
27. Proximity to higher education
28. Passion for education
29. Strong community support
30. Great students
31. Athletics
32. Diversity of students

## **CHALLENGES**

1. Image of district
2. Change is coming
3. Qualified workforce, not everyone is going to college, work skills
4. Overall teaching philosophy, teaching kids how to think or how to pass a test
5. Improve communication with legislature about tests
6. Large number of commuters creates challenges for parent involvement
7. Growing number of non-English speaking parents and students
8. More diverse faculty and staff
9. Building diversity with two high schools
10. Need improved discipline
11. Home grown administration, are all qualified?
12. Bringing fresh ideas to the district
13. Educating the community regarding needs
14. Keeping public informed
15. Growing without industry
16. People can afford to live here, but spend time and energy in Austin
17. Pretty big “good-old-boy” network
18. Just getting used to Bastrop
19. Negative image
20. Elevating expectations
21. Demanding high expectations, accountability from staff
22. Rural based community has its own set of challenges
23. Need to bridge the gaps between communities
24. System needs to be tightened for student performance
25. Pay more than lip service to our students becoming good thinkers/problem solvers, not just test takers
26. Reputation of district needs to be improved
27. Community perception of district
28. Nepotism in BISD
29. Disconnect between reality and perception
30. Sylvan knew there was a chance to make money – they did their research
31. Discipline and consequences needed

32. Perception that school district is racist
33. Perception that district is substandard
34. Employee turnover

## **PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

1. Fair
2. Honest, courageous
3. Passionate
4. Needs to run a tight ship
5. Knowledge of curriculum
6. Able to motivate staff and community
7. Work of business community
8. Disciplinarian
9. Patient leader
10. CEO skills as district grows
11. Willingness to do what is right, not what is easy
12. IB experience, including working through resistance that comes with implementation
13. Strong academic success, accountability, evaluations
14. Open office philosophy
15. Strong instructional leader
16. Teacher at heart, can sit with bank president and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade class
17. Ability to assemble strong team
18. Walk on water
19. Visionary
20. Personally gives back to community
21. Leads by example
22. Strong manager
23. Creative thinker, not just going along with status quo
24. Experience with smaller communities and larger districts
25. Strong instructional leader
26. Proven track record
27. Teaches and encourages others to rise to the occasion
28. Artist or musician
29. Strong personality, ability to make the best decision without being swayed by outside influences
30. Knows school law
31. Doctorate preferred
32. Experience in multi-high school district
33. Pride builder
34. Strong follow through
35. Consistent
36. Experience in diverse districts
37. Responsive to board with information and setting goals

38. Transparent, builds trust
39. Committed salesperson for community and district
40. Charismatic, visible, good at public speaking
41. Able to involve growing Hispanic community
42. Do not buy canned programs at every drop of the hat
43. Will not re-invent the wheel, recognize things that work
44. Get racism out of the discussion
45. Balanced interests, well rounded
46. Supports athletics and all extracurricular activities

### **GROUP 3**

#### **STRENGTHS**

1. People are welcoming
2. Fair
3. Growing, prosperous school district
4. Passionate community
5. Small town family atmosphere
6. Attractive natural environment
7. Large dedicated group of volunteers
8. Family oriented
9. District has been successful
10. Passionate family town
11. Diversity that Bastrop has to offer
12. Opportunity for someone to be visionary – catalyst for change
13. Progressive district not afraid to adapt
14. Small town charm with city conveniences
15. Stimulating cultural climate
16. Colorado River
17. Adaptability
18. Personal feeling
19. Location is desirable
20. Public safety
21. Access to well educated teachers and universities
22. Close to Austin
23. Good southern values
24. Overall quality of life
25. Great cooks
26. Educational resources
27. Church going
28. Strong tradition
29. Dedicated teachers
30. New high school

31. New alumni group
32. Facilities
33. Nice people
34. School district is at a point where it is ready to take off

## **CHALLENGES**

1. Administrators are not people persons
2. Poverty level
3. "Good-old-boy" hiring network
4. Achievement gap between whites and minorities
5. Getting where we need to be, need for a mission and a vision
6. Academics
7. Low test scores
8. Low performing campuses
9. Dropout rate
10. Lack of parental communication
11. Data and monitoring student performance
12. Look at dropouts as individuals
13. Bastrop vs. Cedar Creek
14. We want things to be the way they used to be and simultaneously want them to be new and exciting. How do you keep the best of both?
15. Growth and change
16. Old school values vs. what's best for district now
17. Special needs program doesn't always work
18. Teacher support
19. Growing non-English language population, correlated to dropouts
20. Funding
21. Teachers don't feel supported in discipline and control of classroom – particularly in high school
22. Parental involvement
23. The top has the money, the bottom is failing
24. Honey Bears, cost of outfits, only one African American, disparities around race and socioeconomics
25. Need for staffing changes
26. Focusing on high performing students who need to be pushed or those on verge of dropping out
27. Empty wagon syndrome – whoever makes the most noise gets the attention
28. Kids aren't prepared for college
29. Keeping people with masters degree in the classroom, not just central administration, no incentive to stay in classroom
30. Environment on campuses, keep consistent and fair
31. Changing culture so every student can go on to college, raising expectations for all children

32. Inbred, too many close relationships
33. Schools look like test preparation entities, need to create thinkers
34. Test fatigue

## **PROFESSIONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

1. Honesty
2. Courage
3. Proven track record
4. Knowledgeable of curriculum
5. CEO skills
6. Imagination – ability to see what others haven't seen
7. Person of faith
8. Willingness to do what's right – not what's easy
9. Organizational political ability
10. Recruit and retain good principals
11. Collaboration skills
12. Love of the profession
13. Ability to say "no"
14. Passion
15. Able to run a tight ship
16. Good classroom experience
17. School law experience
18. Personable
19. IB program experience and support
20. Teamwork skills
21. Integrity
22. Able to hit the ground running
23. Open to suggestions from all levels
24. Think on his/her feet
25. Select, empower, hold accountable stellar group of direct reports and team
26. Outsider, independent of Bastrop
27. Understands need for change, but appreciates culture of Bastrop
28. Experience in high performing districts
29. Someone who has faced similar challenges
30. Charismatic
31. Good communicator
32. Strong leader
33. Ability to work with variety of temperaments
34. Superintendent experience
35. Be involved in the community and belong, not just a stepping stone to another job
36. Knowledge of school finance
37. Open minded