

Focus Group Responses – Community **Lewis-Palmer School District 38**

Date/Consultant: Thursday, January 24, 2019. Randy Zila

1. TELL ME A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR COMMUNITY. WHAT WOULD I WANT TO KNOW IF I WERE CONSIDERING MOVING THERE?

- Small town feel
- Parents model what they want for kids
- Diverse – people relocate here with different opinions and viewpoints
- Supportive of academic advance of students
- High achieving school district with high stress
- Well educated
- Growing fast
- Good support of schools from parents
- Divisive of how school district proceeds on issues/a lot of social media
- 70% of people do not have kids in schools
- Volunteer in schools
- Allot of support for teachers

2. WHAT ARE THE SCHOOL DISTRICT'S STRENGTHS?

- Teachers and principals are great
- Supportive involved parents
- Small class size – teachers know students
- Diverse opportunities for learning; AP, music, dual enrollment
- Special needs opportunities
- High standards in education – rank high – John Irwin Award
- Top notch music program
- Openness in principals to speak with parents
- Accessibility of staff
- Open communication
- Recognize needs of student and adapt to it – also seek out ways to support
- Character education
- Teachers lead innovation
- Students accepted into top colleges

3. WHAT ARE THE DISTRICT'S CHALLENGES OR AREAS NEEDING IMPROVEMENT THAT THE NEW SUPERINTENDENT WILL HAVE TO ADDRESS?

- Lack of funding
- Teacher salaries
- Hire/retain good teachers
- Parental involvement cuts both ways – good and bad
- Return the focus of community to education
- Gaining trust
- Strong opinions and divisiveness
- Overcrowding in middle schools
- Tax adverse community

- Student suicide note
- Mental health support for students
- Unfunded mandates in state legislation
- Some students falling through the cracks – SPED needs
- Challenges in becoming a larger community, people believe it's like Mayberry
- New members need to catch up with history
- Challenges in education law that impacts funding, challenge to bring people to table with different ideas and opinions
- Growing class size results in less accessibility
- Personal feel will be less
- Size of district – doesn't enjoy economy of scale like bigger district
- Facilities
- Developing an effective relationship with school board
- Grace Best School

4. GIVEN YOUR DESCRIPTION OF THE COMMUNITY AND THE CHALLENGES YOU'VE IDENTIFIED, WHAT QUALITIES AND/OR EXPERIENCES DO YOU BELIEVE ARE ESSENTIAL IN A NEW SUPERINTENDENT?

- Bold strong leadership
- Experience
- History of demonstrated problem solving with issues the district is having
- Educational background – teacher
- Great communicator
- Bring people together
- Experience in school finance and execution of budget
- Solid ethic and integrity with right decisions
- Student focused – support classroom
- Best for kids
- Fiscal transparency
- Strong advocate for excellence in public education
- Create a team with common purpose
- Inspiring, challenging, supportive
- Clear vision for school district
- Don't allow personal politics
- Vision top down culture of excellence and accountability
- Don't be tied to financial public sector
- Thinking outside of box, many ways to obtain goals, creativity
- Collaborator
- Put emphasis on learning and not GPA
- Excellent listener
- Able to list 1-2 trends from teacher colleges and be able to discern between good and bad trends
- Not rubber stamp what's happening nationally
- Leads not follows
- Great manager
- Balance - realize when something doesn't work
- Advocate for all children

IF YOU COULD GIVE ONE PIECE OF ADVICE TO THE NEW SUPERINTENDENT, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

- Pursue a bold vision
- Thick skinned
- Children first in all things
- Focus on kids and education – let chips fall where they may