

North Stonington Public Schools Superintendent Search Leadership Profile



Prepared by

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Search Consultant

April 22, 2026

SUPERINTENDENT LEADERSHIP PROFILE

Introduction

Selecting a superintendent is the most important responsibility a school board undertakes. The role requires both tangible and intangible leadership skills to work effectively with the Board, students, faculty and staff, parents, elected officials, and the broader community to ensure a high-quality education for all students.

In light of the critical nature of this responsibility, the North Stonington Board of Education sought input from its community through interviews, focus groups, and a survey. The initial focus group options were as follows:

Constituent	Date	Time	Location
Teachers	Wednesday, March 25	5:00 pm	ZOOM
Teachers	Thursday, March 26	4:00 pm	ZOOM
Administrators	Tuesday, March 24	11:30 am	Central Office
Students	Wednesday, March 25	10:30 am-12:30 pm	Wheeler Conf. Rm.
Paraprofessionals	Wednesday, March 25	3:30 pm	ZOOM
Non-certified Staff	Wednesday, March 25	4:30 pm	ZOOM
Parents/Guardians	Wednesday, March 25	7:00 pm	ZOOM
Parents/Guardians	Thursday, March 26	5:00 pm	ZOOM

Four additional focus groups were offered to include town elected officials, staff at the elementary and secondary levels, and an additional one for parents.

This Leadership Profile presents findings from all the focus groups, interviews, and the survey conducted between March 13 and March 27, 2026. As a consultant to the Board of Education, I conducted 18 interviews and focus groups and spoke with 62 individuals, including students, parents, teachers, administrators, other staff, and members of the North Stonington Board of Education..

In addition, a total of 48 North Stonington residents and staff completed the online survey. I used a structured and unbiased approach in conducting interviews, facilitating focus groups, and developing the survey. In addition to asking about the strengths and challenges of the North Stonington Public Schools and community and how they may influence future leadership needs, I asked about the qualities, characteristics, and expertise most desired in the next superintendent.

The North Stonington Board of Education will use these results to guide its next steps in identifying the best possible fit for the district. I am presenting these findings without identifying any individual contributor.

The North Stonington Board of Education has made a concerted effort to include voices from constituents across the schools and broader community. I extend appreciation to focus group participants, interviewees, and survey respondents, whose commitment to the schools and the Town of North Stonington is evident in their thoughtful participation. Special thanks to Brandon Chance, who helped share information about opportunities to participate.

Mary Broderick
CABE Search Consultant
April 20, 2026

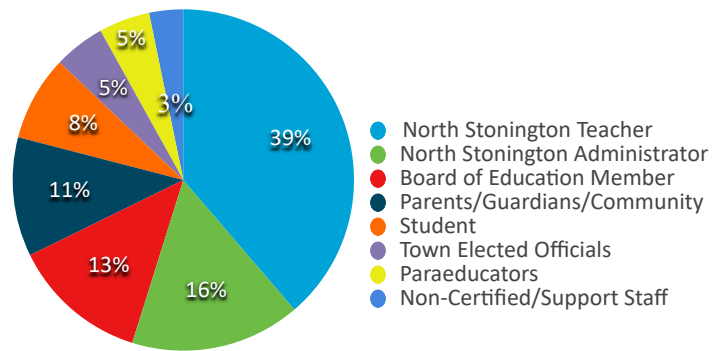
SUPERINTENDENT LEADERSHIP PROFILE

Data Collection

In total, 110 individuals participated through interviews, focus groups, and the online survey. These data do not constitute a scientific sample but instead reflect a snapshot of the North Stonington Public Schools and community at a specific point in time. The survey was voluntary and anonymous. Though the consultant gathered a range of perspectives, this profile does not fully capture the complexity of the schools and community. The findings nonetheless provide useful insights to inform the search process. The report includes perceptions that, in the consultant’s judgment, were expressed frequently enough to warrant the Board’s attention.

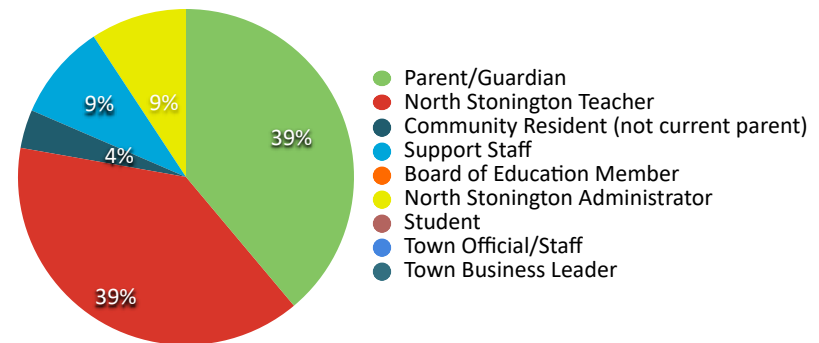
Interview and Focus Group Participants

PARTICIPANTS	#	%
North Stonington Teacher	24	38.7%
North Stonington Administrator	10	16.1%
Board of Education Member	8	12.9%
Parents/Guardians/Community	7	11.3%
Student	5	8.1%
Town Elected Officials	3	4.8%
Paraeducators	3	4.8%
Non-Certified/Support Staff	2	3.2%
	62	100.0%



Survey Responses

PARTICIPANTS*	#	%
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	48	
Parent/Guardian	21	38.9%
North Stonington Teacher	21	38.9%
North Stonington Administrator	5	9.3%
Support Staff	5	9.3%
Community Resident (not current parent)	2	3.7%
Board of Education Member	0	0.0%
Student	0	0.0%
Town Official/Staff	0	0.0%
Town Business Leader	0	0.0%
	* 54	100%



*Please note that survey participants identified themselves under multiple categories so numbers add up to more than 48.

Strengths of North Stonington and its Public Schools



North Stonington enjoys a clear and consistent identity. Across constituent responses, people repeatedly describe a school system defined by close relationships, individualized attention, strong academics, community pride, and committed educators. Respondents also point to a district that uses its small size as an advantage—creating flexibility, responsiveness, and opportunities that larger systems often struggle to match. Together, these themes paint a picture of a school community that knows its students well, values excellence, and works collectively to help children thrive.

Strong Sense of Community and Belonging

North Stonington’s most dominant strength is its deep sense of community. Constituents describe the town and schools as close-knit, family-oriented, and welcoming, where generations of families remain connected to the district and community members actively support school events, athletics, performances, and families in need. Many respondents note that the schools serve as the center of town life and a source of shared pride. This strong social fabric creates belonging for students, staff, and families alike. People feel known, valued, and invested in the success of the schools, which strengthens trust and engagement across the district.

Personalized Attention Through Small Size

Constituents consistently view the district’s small size as a major advantage. Small class sizes, favorable student-teacher ratios, and a smaller overall enrollment allow staff to know students personally and respond quickly when support is needed. Respondents repeatedly state that students do not “fall through the cracks” because adults notice struggles early and intervene. Families value the one-on-one attention students receive, while staff appreciate the ability to differentiate instruction and build meaningful relationships. Many compare the experience to a private school atmosphere within a public school setting.

Caring Relationships Between Students and Staff

The data strongly emphasize the quality of relationships throughout the district. Teachers, administrators, and staff are warm, approachable, responsive, and deeply committed to students’ wellbeing. Respondents note that educators know students not only academically, but also as people. Students are able to identify multiple trusted adults who guide and support them. Staff collaborate closely with one another and often describe coworkers as family. This culture of care creates a safe, nurturing environment where students feel seen, supported, and encouraged to grow.

Strong Academic Expectations and Student Preparation

North Stonington constituents take pride in the district’s academic quality. Respondents cite high test scores, rigorous coursework, strong reading instruction, myriad AP offerings, and consistent college

SUPERINTENDENT LEADERSHIP PROFILE

preparation. Many note that students graduate ready for college, careers, and future challenges. At the same time, the district appears to balance high expectations with a growth mindset, focusing not only on performance results but also on student progress and readiness. Families and community members value the district's ability to deliver strong outcomes while maintaining a supportive environment.

Broad Opportunities for Students

Despite its small size, North Stonington offers students a wide range of opportunities. Constituents mention athletics, clubs, drama, STEAM programs, internships, senior projects, work-study experiences, college seminars, scholarship fairs, and mentorships. Respondents also note that when the district cannot offer something independently, it uses cooperative programs with neighboring communities to expand options. This is a district committed to helping every student find interests, develop talents, and explore future pathways.

Dedicated Staff and Collaborative Culture

Many participants cite the professionalism and dedication of the staff. Respondents describe teachers as phenomenal, hardworking, and invested in students and the town. Many praise staff retention, noting that experienced educators remain in the district and provide continuity. Constituents also highlight collaboration across grade levels, schools, and departments, including curriculum alignment efforts and shared leadership structures. Staff members appear willing to solve problems together and continuously improve the student experience.

Effective Leadership and Continuous Improvement

Many responses praise school and district leadership. Principals, assistant principals, curriculum leaders, and administrators are described as visible, supportive, student-centered, and capable. Respondents appreciate leaders who attend events, communicate openly, and work to unite the district around common goals. Several constituents cite recent progress in technology upgrades, accreditation work, curriculum improvements, and systems development. These comments suggest a district that values reflection, modernization, and steady growth.

Flexibility, Responsiveness, and Innovation

Constituents frequently connect the district's small size to its ability to adapt quickly. They note that North Stonington can make decisions efficiently, implement new ideas, and tailor programs to student interests and needs. Examples include customized pathways, internships, technology integration, AI exploration, restorative practices, and hands-on learning opportunities. Because people know one another well, the district can respond with agility and creativity rather than bureaucracy.

Overall, the North Stonington's greatest strength lies in combining small-school personalization with high expectations and strong community support. Constituents consistently describe schools where students are known, challenged, cared for, and connected to meaningful opportunities. Dedicated staff, engaged families, thoughtful leadership, and a culture of pride reinforce this foundation. In many ways, North Stonington appears to offer what many communities seek: a rigorous, relationship-centered public school experience where students can grow academically, socially, and personally.

SUPERINTENDENT LEADERSHIP PROFILE

Governance, Board Relations, and Role Clarity

Many responses point to governance tensions involving the Board of Education, Board of Finance, and district leadership. Constituents mention divided boards, personal agendas, lack of respect for boundaries, micromanagement, and inconsistent adherence to chain of command. Some also describe contentious budget processes and disrespectful treatment among governing bodies. These dynamics can distract from student-centered priorities and create instability for staff. Respondents suggest the district would benefit from higher-functioning governance built on clear roles, trust, respectful collaboration, and shared goals.

Communication, Transparency, and Trust

Constituents repeatedly call for stronger communication across the district. Respondents mention disconnects between Central Office and schools, insufficient staff voice, unclear messaging to the community, and a lack of transparency in decisions. Others describe the district as operating in “islands,” where groups work separately rather than cohesively. Trust appears especially important during budget discussions, leadership transitions, and periods of change. The next leader will likely need to communicate frequently, honestly, and consistently with all constituents.

Resistance to Change and Navigating Community Culture

North Stonington’s close-knit culture is seen as both a strength and a challenge. Constituents note that tradition runs deep, established relationships shape decision-making, and newcomers may struggle to gain trust. Some respondents describe tension between long-time residents and newer families, or between “old school” and more progressive perspectives. Others state that community mindsets have not fully adapted to modern educational realities. Effective leadership will require honoring local identity while helping the community embrace thoughtful change.

Staff Workload, Compensation, and Morale

Many respondents express concern that staff are overextended and under-supported. Constituents say employees wear many hats, perform duties outside their job descriptions, and face increasing expectations without sufficient compensation or time. Teachers mention minimal raises, loss of professional development (PD) opportunities, lack of voice in what is offered in PD, stress from accountability demands, and declining morale. Some also highlight challenges attracting paraeducators, custodians, coaches, and new staff because pay lags behind neighboring districts. Sustaining excellence will require stronger support systems, fair compensation, and renewed attention to employee wellbeing.

Technology, AI, and Digital Balance

Technology emerges as a complex challenge rather than a simple solution. Respondents mention outdated devices, cyber incidents, infrastructure gaps, and the need for clearer long-term technology planning. Others raise concern about inconsistent AI expectations across classrooms, confusion about acceptable use, and the impact of screens on attention, writing, and critical thinking. Cell phone use is another repeated issue. Constituents want students to develop modern digital skills while preserving human interaction, focus, and foundational academic habits.

Facilities, Athletics, and Infrastructure Needs

Constituents identify aging facilities and inadequate athletic spaces as ongoing concerns. Responses reference outdated buildings, worn fields, old stage lighting, limited gym access, maintenance pressures, and insufficient funding for upgrades. Athletic transportation and participation costs also burden families. While many acknowledge efforts to improve conditions, they worry that infrastructure needs

SUPERINTENDENT LEADERSHIP PROFILE

continue to outpace available resources. Strategic capital planning will be important to maintain quality learning environments and student opportunities.

Student Needs, Behavior, and Future Readiness

Some respondents focus on evolving student needs in a changing world. They mention distraction, behavioral challenges, post-pandemic learning gaps, social-emotional growth, and ensuring students remain engaged. Others want stronger life-skills preparation, career pathways, agricultural programs, and readiness for college or employment. Constituents appear committed to maintaining high standards while adapting supports for today's learners. This theme reflects the need to prepare students academically, socially, and practically for the future.

District Alignment and Cohesion

Several respondents point to disconnects between the elementary school and the middle/high school, as well as between departments and constituent groups. Some mention inconsistent curriculum expectations, limited K–12 social connection, competing priorities, and uneven attention across schools. Some feel district-wide initiatives (such as District accreditation) become paperwork rather than creating meaningful alignment. Constituents want stronger coherence so that all schools, staff, and students feel part of one unified system with common goals.

Overall, the North Stonington challenges portrays a district at an important crossroads. Constituents value the schools deeply, but also recognize that small-district finances, governance dynamics, staffing pressures, and modernization demands require thoughtful leadership. The next phase of success will depend on strengthening systems, rebuilding trust, aligning the district around shared priorities, and balancing tradition with innovation. If addressed strategically, these challenges could become opportunities to preserve what makes North Stonington special while positioning the district for a strong future.

SUPERINTENDENT LEADERSHIP PROFILE

Desired Expertise and Qualities in a New Superintendent

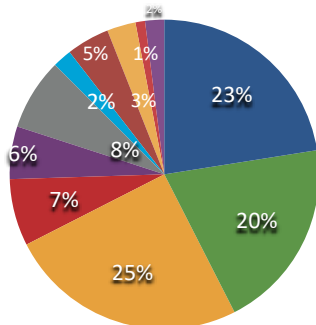
What are the most important expertise and qualities in a new superintendent to tap North Stonington Public Schools’ strengths and meet its challenges? An analysis of survey responses yielded the following:

Expertise

Overall, survey respondents weighted five of the 10 areas of desired expertise in a new superintendent higher than other skills. When examining participant’s **first choice**, *Builds trusting relationships with students, staff, and community*, at 27.7%, was overwhelmingly the top selection. In second was *Communicates and collaborates effectively in schools and community*, 21.3%, and then *Possesses strong budget and finance knowledge and skills*, at a distant 14.9%.

When considering respondents’ combined top five selections, *Builds trusting relationships with students, staff, and community* was in the top five choices of 80.9% of participants. *Communicates and collaborates effectively in schools and community* was a close second, at 78.7%, and *Possesses strong budget and finance knowledge and skills*, was still third, at 66%. Over half (53.25) of survey participants also felt the new leader needed to *Share district-wide vision of excellence and innovative instruction* and *Have a broad base of knowledge of educational issues and practices*.

DESIRED EXPERTISE IN NEW SUPERINTENDENT	#1	%	#2	#3	#4	#5	TOTAL VOTES 1-5	% IN TOP FIVE CHOICES
Builds trusting relationships with students, staff, & community	13	27.7%	11	6	6	2	38	80.9%
Communicates & collaborates effectively in schools & community	10	21.3%	10	10	2	5	37	78.7%
Possesses strong budget and finance knowledge and skills	7	14.9%	6	9	8	1	31	66.0%
Shares district-wide vision of excellence & innovative instruction	5	10.6%	2	6	6	6	25	53.2%
Has a broad base of knowledge of educational issues & practices	1	2.1%	4	4	8	8	25	53.2%
Has experience running a school district	5	10.6%	2	3	4	6	20	42.6%
Fosters professional development, team building, and staff growth	2	4.3%	4	2	5	4	17	36.2%
Demonstrates proven track record of success improving student performance	2	4.3%	3	2	2	3	12	25.5%
Shares and delegates leadership	1	2.1%	3	1	1	5	11	23.4%
Thinks well on their feet	1	2.1%	2	4	5	6	18	38.3%
Other	0	0.0%	0	0	-	1	1	2.1%
Totals	47	100.0%	47	47	47	47	235	



- Trustworthy, honest, respectful
- Accessible, approachable, visible in schools & community
- Keeps students’ growth and wellbeing the primary focus
- Decisive, confident, and objective problem solver
- Committed to transparent communication in schools & community
- Inspirational leader and team builder
- Fosters & values a culture of belonging
- Exhibits appreciation for & love of children
- Knowledgeable and hardworking, with attention to detail
- Life-long learner
- Other

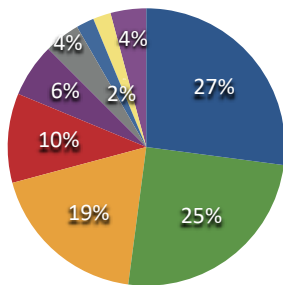
SUPERINTENDENT LEADERSHIP PROFILE

Qualities

In addition to the leadership expertise identified in the prior section, survey respondents highlighted several key qualities desired in a new leader. First choice options included *Accessible, approachable, and visible in schools and the community* (27.1%), *Trustworthy, honest, and respectful* (25%) and *Decisive, confident, and objective problem solver* (18.8%), each ranking well ahead of other qualities.

These same attributes also led the “top five” rankings. *Accessible, approachable, and visible in schools and the community* was in the top five of 81.3% of respondents, followed by *Trustworthy, honest, and respectful* (75%) and *Decisive, confident, and objective problem solver*, tied with *Keeps students’ growth and well-being as the primary focus* (both 68.8%) and *Committed to transparent communication* (52.1%.)

DESIRED QUALITIES IN SUPERINTENDENT	#1	%	#2	#3	#4	#5	TOTAL VOTES 1-5	% IN TOP FIVE CHOICES
Accessible, approachable, visible in schools & community	13	27.1%	11	9	5	1	39	81.3%
Trustworthy, honest, respectful	12	25.0%	9	6	6	3	36	75.0%
Decisive, confident, and objective problem solver	9	18.8%	6	6	5	7	33	68.8%
Keeps students’ growth and wellbeing the primary focus	5	10.4%	7	9	5	7	33	68.8%
Committed to transparent communication in schools & community	3	6.3%	3	5	6	8	25	52.1%
Inspirational leader and team builder	2	4.2%	3	5	2	6	18	37.5%
Exhibits appreciation for & love of children	1	2.1%	3	1	6	5	16	33.3%
Fosters & values a culture of belonging	0	0.0%	3	1	2	3	9	18.8%
Knowledgeable and hardworking, with attention to detail	0	0.0%	3	4	5	3	15	31.3%
Life-long learner	1	2.1%	0	2	3	2	8	16.7%
Other	2	4.2%	0	0	1	2	5	10.4%
Totals	48	100.0%	48	48	46	47	237	



- Accessible, approachable, visible in schools & community
- Trustworthy, honest, respectful
- Decisive, confident, and objective problem solver
- Keeps students’ growth and wellbeing the primary focus
- Committed to transparent communication in schools & community
- Inspirational leader and team builder
- Exhibits appreciation for & love of children
- Fosters & values a culture of belonging
- Knowledgeable and hardworking, with attention to detail
- Life-long learner
- Other

Needless to say, all of these qualities and skills are essential in a leader, yet they point to the prioritized needs of North Stonington Public Schools at this point in time. This profile will explore these areas of

SUPERINTENDENT LEADERSHIP PROFILE

expertise and dimensions of leadership, integrating perspectives garnered through interview, focus group, and survey comments.

Survey, focus group, and interview participants describe a powerful and consistent vision for the leadership qualities North Stonington seeks in its next superintendent: one who will lead with clarity, integrity, and purpose in an increasingly complex educational environment. Respondents emphasize the need for a leader who can navigate political realities, fiscal pressures, evolving student needs, and community expectations—without losing sight of the core mission: educating and nurturing every child. Together, these themes reflect a desire for a superintendent who balances strategic leadership with deep humanity, decisive action with thoughtful collaboration, and visionary thinking with practical execution.

Builds Trusting Relationships

Strong leadership begins with trust. An effective superintendent will build authentic relationships with students, staff, families, and community members by listening carefully, showing empathy, and following through on commitments. Trust grows when people feel respected, heard, and valued, and when leaders are consistent in both words and actions. In a close-knit district, relationship-building is especially important because collaboration and progress depend on strong human connections. A superintendent who prioritizes trust creates a positive culture where people feel united in service of students.

Communicates & Collaborates Effectively in Schools & Community

Clear communication and meaningful collaboration are essential to successful district leadership. A strong superintendent shares information openly, listens to different perspectives, and engages constituents in productive dialogue. Effective communication builds understanding, reduces confusion, and helps people feel connected to district goals. Collaboration strengthens decision-making by drawing on the knowledge and experience of staff, families, boards, and community partners. A leader who communicates well can bring people together, build consensus, and move the district forward with confidence.

Possesses Strong Budget and Finance Knowledge and Skills

Educational leadership requires strong financial stewardship. North Stonington's next superintendent must understand budgeting, resource allocation, long-term planning, and operational efficiency in order to sustain quality programs and services. This includes clearly explaining budget needs to governing bodies and the public, identifying cost-saving opportunities, and ensuring that every dollar supports student success. In districts with limited resources, financial creativity and discipline are especially important. A leader with strong fiscal skills helps the community feel confident that resources are managed responsibly and strategically.

Shares District-Wide Vision of Excellence & Innovative Instruction

A successful superintendent will cultivate, together with staff and the community, a clear vision for where the district is going and how it will get there. That vision should center on academic excellence, student growth, continuous improvement, and opportunities for every learner. Strong leaders inspire staff around common goals while encouraging innovation, creativity, collaboration, and professional growth. The leader will also build alignment across schools and grade levels so that students experience a coherent educational journey. When a district shares a compelling vision, it creates energy, purpose, and momentum for meaningful progress.

Has a Broad Base of Knowledge of Educational Issues & Practices

Today's superintendents must navigate a complex and evolving educational landscape. North Stonington's new leader will bring broad knowledge of curriculum, instruction, special education, school safety, operations, personnel, policy, technology, and student supports, understanding both classroom realities and system-level leadership. This broad expertise will allow the leader to make informed

SUPERINTENDENT LEADERSHIP PROFILE

decisions, support administrators and teachers, and respond thoughtfully to new challenges. A superintendent with wide-ranging knowledge can connect daily practice to long-term strategy and lead with confidence.

Accessible, Approachable, Visible in Schools and Community

Leadership is most effective when it is present and connected. A superintendent who is visible in schools and the community sends a powerful message that people matter. Visiting classrooms, attending events, greeting students, and engaging with families all help build relationships and understanding. Being approachable encourages honest feedback and open communication, while visibility helps the leader stay informed about district strengths and challenges. North Stonington's successful superintendent will be a regular presence and thus become a trusted and recognizable part of the community.

Trustworthy, Honest, Respectful

Integrity is the foundation of public leadership. North Stonington's superintendent must be honest, fair, respectful, and ethical in every interaction and decision. Trustworthy leaders communicate truthfully, admit mistakes, honor confidentiality, and treat all people with dignity. They create confidence by acting consistently and making decisions based on principles rather than politics or convenience. In times of challenge or disagreement, integrity becomes even more important. A superintendent who leads with character earns lasting respect from the entire community.

Decisive, Confident, and Objective Problem Solver

School districts face difficult decisions that require both courage and sound judgment. North Stonington's effective superintendent will gather information, consider multiple perspectives, and then makes timely decisions in the best interests of students and the district. Confidence matters because communities need leaders who can provide clarity during uncertainty. Objectivity matters because decisions must be based on facts, fairness, and thoughtful analysis rather than emotion or pressure. A decisive and steady leader helps the district navigate challenges with confidence.

Keeps Students' Growth and Wellbeing the Primary Focus

Every decision in a school system should begin with students. A strong superintendent will keep academic growth, emotional wellbeing, safety, belonging, and future readiness at the center of district priorities. This means supporting excellent teaching, equitable opportunities, strong relationships, and programs that meet the needs of the whole child. It also means ensure that policies and resources truly benefit students. When leadership remains focused on children, the district is better positioned to fulfill its core mission.

Committed to Transparent Communication in Schools and Community

Transparency builds trust and strengthens partnerships. North Stonington's next superintendent will share information openly, explain decisions clearly, and provide timely updates during both routine matters and difficult situations. The leader will be transparent, welcoming questions, acknowledging concerns, and avoiding unnecessary secrecy or confusion. In doing so, the leader will create a culture of openness and accountability. Especially in a close community, transparency helps people feel informed, respected, and included in the life of the district.

Ultimately, North Stonington seeks a superintendent who can honor the district's strengths while guiding it confidently into the future... a leader who is visible, trustworthy, student-centered, fiscally responsible, and skilled at bringing people together around shared goals. The next superintendent will need to balance relationships with results, tradition with innovation, and compassion and collaboration with decisiveness. A leader who embodies these qualities can build confidence across the community, strengthen the schools, and ensure that every student continues to benefit from the unique opportunities the district provides.