

Merrimack School District SAU 26 Superintendent Search

The Merrimack Board of Education is very interested in hearing the perspectives of district stakeholders in regard to the search for a new superintendent of schools. The new superintendent will begin July 1, 2022.

Accordingly, on October 18th, 19th, and 20th, 2021, stakeholder meetings were held via zoom with the superintendent search consultant from McPherson and Jacobson, the search firm hired by the Board of Education to facilitate the search for a new superintendent. In addition, an online survey was available on the Merrimack School District website from October 12-19.

Over the seven sessions and three days, a total of 594 comments were received from students, teachers, support staff, administrators and community members to the four questions below. A compilation of the major themes for each of the four questions is listed below followed by all of the comments received:

1. What makes your community a good place to live?

Top Themes

1. The Merrimack Community is centrally located to many attractive places and has wonderful outdoor spaces. Being located between the two largest cities in the state makes many amenities available to residents; lots of community events, wonderful playgrounds for all ages, great hiking trails, close to highway and malls, beautiful New England seasons, and a small town feel.
2. The community supports public education and the school district. It is inclusive and family-oriented, focused on empathy, acceptance, openness, caring, passion and being friendly to one another.
3. The school system is wonderful; there are well organized sports activities at all levels, and strong community support for the schools. The passionate community cares about the academic success of the students.
4. It is a passionate community of involved people who want the best for their children even when the "how" looks different. It is incredibly supportive and kind community.
5. There are ranging political ideologies, white collar and blue collar workers, with varying incomes. For the most part, people truly care about it each other despite disagreements.

139 Actual Comments

1. The community cares deeply about its children
2. Parents want is best for their children
3. Parents are supportive of teachers and the school system
4. There are many community outreach programs, e.g. the YMCA, libraries, summer programs to create options for parents
5. It has a small town feel and people care about each other.
6. There is a lot of volunteering by parents
7. It is in a great location, centrally located in New England
8. There is a historical sense of community
9. The economy in the area is strong
10. The community is centrally located to many attractive places yet real estate is affordable
11. There are many youth activities and a quality library program with many activities
12. There are many thriving businesses and restaurants.
13. Many housing options—city living, country living
14. The school system is outstanding with positive student-centered children
15. There are many multi-generational families because of the attractiveness of the community
16. People move into the district because of quality special education services
17. The community supports public education and the school district
18. There is strong public participation at the school and in the community
19. The community is viewed as a trend-setter e.g. social-emotional learning
20. There is incredible longevity of staff; they come and stay
21. Progressive education system; positive family community; good community relations between school, fire, police, town officials, historical society, etc
22. Strong leadership, excellent maintenance, committed educators
23. Merrimack is a big small town. People do care about the community and the school district and are usually willing to be involved and do what's good for the students.
24. We stand together in times of need and have the needs of the many at the top of the list, (not the few and loud)
25. Our community has generations of deep roots. Many of our neighbors have grown up here, and are choosing to raise their children here as well. Myself being one of them. We are also a community that is growing, with out of state residents buying homes and renting. Our community is strong, resilient and enjoys gatherings such as sports and parades. Our recreational sports are always led by volunteer coaches and parents/spectators always have good sportsmanship. We are appreciative of our volunteers, teachers and support staff and routinely acknowledge their hard work with gifts and thank you cards.
26. I have found Merrimack to be a welcoming and somewhat organized community
27. We are getting wiser as a community.
28. See town page for this information No need to react it here
29. Many people put in an effort to be truly informed, and to help enlighten their neighbors who may not be aware or may have misinformation. When folks are involved, they try to do everything they can.

30. It has been our experience that Merrimack has been an excellent place to raise a family, and is heavily residential. Many parents provide valuable participation and support with the schools. Although finding housing can be a challenge, many young adults do try to come back to town (following college, military service, etc.) to live and raise families here.
31. Community orientated
32. The Merrimack community has residents that have passionate feelings about things happening in their town - from housing growth to the quality of education provided by its schools. Once all of the information has been shared by the governing bodies to its residents, Merrimack tends to (largely) get together to support things to make the town better. We may not always agree, but we do support each other once things are in place. The town tends to welcome newcomers with open arms, but tends to be hesitant to adopt new policies if it changes the "way it's always been". Overall it tends to be conservative, but with proper leadership, can become more "modern".
33. As divisive as Merrimack is about key issues right now, the citizens usually come together ten fold in a time of crisis; if there is a member of the community who is sick, suffers a loss, etc. Some neighborhoods are still very old fashioned, hosting block parties and annual get-togethers, and have holistic values. We have seen much negativity since 2016, but there are many good people who live and work in our community.
34. Wonderful School System, well organized sports activities at all levels, strong community support.
35. Have lived here for more than 45 years because it is inclusive, family oriented, others-minded and was a school system greatly coveted. Wanting students to have foundational concepts that would take them anywhere. Getting involved was made easy and, for the most part, we all got along. I still love this community.
36. Friendly, nice place to live
37. Merrimack is centrally located in Southern NH. Because of its location along Rt. 3 (proximity to Manchester, Nashua, metro Boston) and several large local employers (BAE, Fidelity) it attracts a variety of working class professionals. We are not an affluent town but the people in this working class community are generous and responsive in times of need. We've met a lot of great families here by choosing to participate in sports and music programs.
38. We pride ourselves in being a family-friendly community, tech-based professionals, and helping each other.
39. Nice quality of life with good schools, recreation and hiking areas and solid businesses.
40. Our community is passionate, comprised of those who have been here for 40+ years and those who have been here for only a few. Those who have been here long term love this community and those who have moved here came because of the community. We have low crime, love to give what we can. We are vocal, and we ask questions, even the ones people don't want to answer.
41. Small town that's has caring hard working teachers
42. There are a lot of people that are tied to various civic organizations that directly impact the town of Merrimack in a positive way. I feel that the positive voices and energy outweigh the negative, and overall the people of this town support one another.
43. This community is one focused on empathy, acceptance, openness, caring, passion and being friendly to one another. Any new superintendent responsible for our education

- curriculum and system needs to embody these traits and be willing to work with the parents to ensure we are putting the best interest of our children first.
44. The Merrimack community is truly a village with many voices that are as supportive as individually expressive. The quality of life is very nice compared to more populated areas. For a family I feel is a good choice when living in New England.
 45. Down-to-earth, good parent involvement, great place to raise kids, lots of recreational areas, (hiking, trails, etc)
 46. Merrimack is a tight knit community that I have found pulls together and supports each other when needed. The community is filled with great families, families that us and our children have formed long-lasting relationships with. Families here want what's best for their children. The town also looks to involve the community in several different ways - sports and recreation, parades, community gatherings, volunteer opportunities, etc...
 47. Welcoming, caring, involved
 48. Good relationship between parents and schools
 49. Merrimack has wonderful outdoor spaces. We are obviously located between the two largest cities in the state, making many amenities available to us.
 50. Enjoy personal freedoms Respectful of others Believe in individual rights Conservative values
 51. Passionate community that cares about the academic success of the students.
 52. Close Knit and welcoming. Great place to raise a family.
 53. Great support for sports. The people are very outspoken, so you rarely have to wonder where they stand on an issue.
 54. Merrimack is a community of people who are caring, passionate and concerned about our (and our children's) future.
 55. Largely positive, active, smart community, though they can be a bit complacent at times. The complacency is incorrectly perceived as apathy by some.
 56. Lots of awesome outdoor spaces right in town! Good schools. Easy drive to lakes, mountains, beach, Boston.
 57. I find that our community is open and welcoming. I feel the activities that are offered, such as the ones from the library or parks and rec, are inclusive and strive to keep us connected And together as a community
 58. great families, caring people, lots of community events, wonderful playgrounds for all ages, great hiking trails. close to highway and malls.
 59. Solid middle class, low crime, cool police force; we're within an hour of the beach, the mountains, the restaurants, shopping, and night life of Manchester and Nashua; 20 minutes to the Manchester airport, relatively easy access to Boston's Logan International airport; your vote actually matters here; and if you're not from around here, Boston Sports. Winning championships is AWESOME!!!
 60. Able to rely on each other during tough times. To share ideas and emotions over handling our kids. Helping share responsibilities as we raise our children and try and fit it all in. A feeling of pride and belonging that you can only get from being in person, working together and being happy...at a local level.
 61. This is a small, but growing community. I have lived here almost my entire life, and am raising my kids here. Good things... the community is very family oriented, and, for the most part, kind, caring and respectful.

62. Close-knit community. Vocal on social media, strongly opinionated on different issues which helps represent all types of students.
63. I believe our community is generally active and involved
64. Parents are actively involved in town activities and their child's education
65. I'm at a loss lately.. this community is racist, anti science, uneducated, and so very loud when it comes to their "freedom". The adults in this community are a disgrace. The best part of this community is the children that are choosing to still wear masks and follow protocol to try and end this pandemic while their parents are making fools of themselves at every point.
66. We enjoy that the community is quiet, Low crime, in close to surrounding cities while still being quiet.
67. This community really has their hearts in the right place and I believe want to give the students the best they can. I do not always think they have the resources to do so.
68. People generally care about our schools and the education of our children. They are (sometimes to a fault) willing to put money into the system to help improve things (although they are not seeing the outcomes they expect).
69. The community will rally around community members in need. There is a sense of community pride especially surrounding athletics.
70. Merrimack has great community resources like public outdoor spaces, a great library, parks & rec activities, etc. I feel like as a town, we are of average socio-economic status which gives a feeling that people are down to earth.
71. N/a
72. For the majority of the time the community is respectful and has the best interests of the kids in mind.
73. People care about what happens to the school and town and are vocal about it.
74. Some people who want to do the right things Strong scouting groups Many community groups
75. Merrimack, NH is located in an ideal geographic location, close to almost anything you could need or want to do, with beautiful New England seasons and a small town feel. It is a passionate community of people who want the best for their children even when the "how" looks different.
76. There are a large number of people that care about the community and its successes. These members are often not afraid to speak up and if needed, create a stance, for what they believe is right.
77. Our community is passionate Our community is caring and supportive Our community is vocal, and shares what we think, you know what you're getting Our community is beautiful - trails, lakes, mostly clean roads Youth sports are pretty big here and fun
78. I was born and raised here The town has grown and changed quite a bit since I was a child but Merrimack is still a small town community with so many good people that still want to maintain small town values.
79. Kindness and caring. We live in an incredibly supportive and kind community. It's evident by how the parents interact and the kids respond to challenges.
80. The Merrimack community has plenty of opportunities to gather and celebrate community - from town sponsored events like the summer concerts and movies to parades and other Parks & Rec events. We have lots of privately owned businesses that provide a family feel.

The local library is also integral in keeping the community involved and up to date on town and world happenings.

81. We have a great Recreation Dept and Merrimack Youth Association for town recreational sports. Excellent devoted volunteers
82. Eh. It has highway exits
83. They're involved in a lot of politics/ school issues.
84. Small and quiet with plenty of space for my kids to roam and play. People are mostly great. Awesome parks.
85. people are nice an helpful.
86. We now have a rotary and we are putting up ton of apartments to flood the already overcrowded schools
87. This community has strong ties to its schools and making things better for the kids.
88. Our community overall is dedicated to educating and supporting young people.
89. One of the biggest in this community is people love to help others.
90. Community celebrations and holiday activities that bring people together
91. Central location - ocean, lakes, mountains and Boston all around an hour drive.
92. There is socio-economic diversity. We are not a rich or poor town, we are a town that is a mix of education levels and professions. We have a fantastic rec sports program. You get a little of everything in Merrimack. It's a great place to raise kids.
93. It's a mixed bag...with ranging political ideologies, white collar and blue collar workers, with varying incomes and for the most part, do truly care about it each other despite disagreements.
94. We have a nice smaller community so many people know each other and you can talk to your neighbors and friends about what is going on in the school system.
95. Our town is a very tightknit community. A lot of us have grown up on this town. For the most part we all look out for one another.
96. This community will want to be heard. You will not have to worry about wondering what the parents and taxpayers think or feel on any given subject.
97. Merrimack has thriving economic community. Situated between the beautiful white mountains, within an hour drive to the seacoast and an hour away from Boston, Merrimack offers at all.
98. Small-town feel, low crime rate, beautiful scenery, some dedicated community-minded people
99. Merrimack has a "small town" community feel with access to a lot of big city resources being so close to nashua and manchester. Merrimack has active parent involvement at all schools and in youth sports and clubs. We have active civic engagement with youth. Everyone in town (not just parents) is very engaged in school issues. Parents work hard to be respectful even when they passionately disagree. Merrimack is a nice place to raise a young family where kids can still play outside with the neighbor kids in groups and go to the town's ice skating rink or sledding hills or skate parks. Merrimack has an active parks and rec department and ymca program that both run a variety of programming year round for families.
100. Merrimack has an amazing community feel. The town is always doing fun things for its kiddos. We have gorgeous parks and they're well maintained. Easy access to everything within 2 hours (beach, mountains, Boston).
101. Quiet place to live. Overall friendly people.

102. Community based. Lots of family friendly activities and children focused.
103. Kids are always put first. If it is good for kids, you will have the support from the community.
104. All the events and activities for kids to do.
105. When our community needs something, we all come together.
106. Merrimack is a relatively diverse community (other than racially diverse, which is really a rural/suburban NH/New England shortcoming rather than a Merrimack-specific one) and children raised in the community benefit from exposure to a wide variety of perspectives. The community is within a short drive to Boston, the ocean, and the mountains. Its physical infrastructure is solid, it's safe, and has a reasonable percentage of green space relative to a community its size within the Greater Boston area. It's got a good tax base thanks to a number of larger employers/businesses and is located advantageously between the state's two largest cities, serving as a bedroom community of sorts.
107. Love the local law enforcement and firefighters. They're always so positive when they interact with young children and have the willingness to educate when questions are asked towards them.
108. Merrimack has a passionate group of parents who all feel that their voice matters.
109. We are a small community and mostly want to stay that way. To my knowledge we have not embraced trendy philosophies such as critical race theory or a doomed climate agenda. Students and teachers can think for themselves.
110. Opportunities for extracurriculars through the town (sports, library events, parades, etc.)
111. Merrimack is a town people love to stay in many leave but then return. The town celebrates traditional holidays but also acknowledged others without taking anything away!
112. Small town feel with lots of growth happening
113. The community is close, people do get involved locally and are passionate for their children to have the best education available.
114. Helpful Caring
115. Lately there have been many people involved in school board meetings. People get involved when passionate about a subject.
116. giving to those less fortunate
117. Engaged community, relatively safe suburban/rural setting with lots to do and close access to mountains, coast and cities.
118. We have a wonderful parents who are supportive of what teachers are dealing with and partner with them. District Leadership works hard to ensure students are supported in their learning academically, behaviorally and social-emotionally. Some also concern themselves with how their faculty is doing and provide support for them so that they can be there for their students.
119. N/A. I do not live in Merrimack and commute here for work.
120. We have a community that is deeply invested and engaged in how we educate our students. I feel we are resource rich compared to many other communities. We have grown a great deal over the years in terms of our businesses and we continue to grow in the diversity of our population.
121. A caring community
122. Clean, safe, growing businesses, close to Manchester, Nashua, and Boston

123. I am blessed to work with an amazing group of students and colleagues on a daily basis. My department is full of supportive, talented educators who work tirelessly to provide the best education possible.
124. I do not live in Merrimack but I do have contact with parents of my students and local organizations. I have to say I have been fortunate to meet the kindest, very caring parents of the students that I teach. I believe that working with the community moving forward in a positive direction works best. We may not always agree on every matter but we do have our students and children's best interest at heart, and that's a good starting point. Open honest communication of what is working and what is not is something I willingly share and have received much support. I personally look for these shared values in a Superintendent of schools that would bring people together and not only lift our students up but also the staff that support and do the daily work and love of their students.
125. Natural resources, hiking paths/trails lakes, proximity to shopping! Dining options. Employment opportunities.
126. Merrimack is a small community that likes to work together.
127. Safe, involved families, rural, great new businesses, plenty of resources
128. As a relatively new employee who is not from this community -- not sure of this one.
129. Merrimack still has a small town feel. It is a family centered community made up of many neighborhoods, where people generally care about each other and are willing to help those in need.
130. progressive
131. generally supportive of education; conveniently located;
132. Wonderful teachers and families.
133. This is a safety conscious community where we look after and come together to help each other for the greater good. We value family and a quality education that provides our kids with a variety of activities to meet their interests. Parents in this community choose to volunteer their time to support their children's schools and activities.
134. Community members who put safety of students and staff wellbeing first by promoting the protective measures that will help stop the spread of covid by mandating the best health practices to keep all our vulnerable members of the community safe, and enables the retention of staff without fear of getting sick from covid.
135. I think the community means well and wants what is best for our kids.
136. Many involved parents Community likes Merrimack events such as 4th of July, blood drives, Halloween Strong community based police department
137. It was considered one of the best places to live in 2011:
<https://activerain.com/blog/view/2458052/merrimack--new-hampshire-ranks-in-top-100-places-to-live>
138. There are people in the community who support and will go out of their way to support the school system. Parents, when asked, will get involved.
139. families are very concerned about their children succeeding and are generally supportive of the schools

2. What makes this a good school district for students and staff?

Top Themes

1. Excellent co-curricular programs exist on many levels, both academic and athletic. There are exceptional band and music programs at all levels and an increasing emphasis on social-emotional learning in addition to quality academic and extracurricular opportunities.
2. Excellent, caring, teachers, administration, and support staff. Teachers make every effort to go above and beyond and connect with their students. They are the soul of our schools. Their daily hard work and enthusiasm is what makes such a difference in each day for our students.
3. All schools work hard to encourage parent volunteers and see parents as partners in their child's education. There are a lot of open house and conferences and other opportunities for parents to see the school community and let their child show off their learning space and work.
4. Budgets are generally approved by the community which means Merrimack usually has enough resources to use for serving students and families in the community through our schools.
5. Great facilities, beautiful campuses. The schools are safe and clean.

146 Actual Comments

1. The school district has done a good job of hiring quality people who enhance the quality of education.
2. Teachers place the needs of students first and care deeply about them.
3. Safety is a priority
4. The administration cares about the faculty and staff.
5. The assistant superintendent actively visits schools and attends faculty meetings.
6. The central office administrators attempt to be a part of the schools and community.
7. There was a lot of emphasis on social-emotional learning—even before COVID; Merrimack's program was brought to the state level.
8. There is a lens on equity; accessibility is a priority; resources are aligned consistent with the demographics of the district.
9. There are a lot of extracurricular opportunities for students
10. There are many opportunities for students but small enough that people feel connected

11. There are community schools and small class sizes.
12. There are many high-quality teachers and staff
13. There is a sense of community
14. Teachers are very student-centered
15. Educators are innovative and build strong relationships with families
16. All of the educators are very talented
17. There is a nice administrative infrastructure in the district that is highly skilled and experienced; there is a good mentoring program in the district.
18. That talent is recognized throughout the state and is represented on many communities
19. Budgets routinely pass including building projects
20. There is robust professional development for all staff. It often develops future leaders from within.
21. There is open communication among all staff members who continually make decisions in the best interests of staff.
22. It is an extremely supportive and collaborative environment; people like and support each other
23. PLC teams are in place.
24. Merrimack has a very strong Tier 3 special education program and it is known for that and parent advocacy.
25. The staff is phenomenal. They are caring individuals who want to do their best for the kids. They are fairly well funded.
26. The teachers and school staffs!!!
27. Our schools are family driven. We pride ourselves in caring for students as a whole and not just a name on a roster. Speaking to that end I have experience being both a parent and a support staff in the school system. With the influx of residents joining our schools, they are bursting at the seams. Our teachers give more and more hours of their own time to answer our emails, and spend their own personal time or money to make sure our high standards continue to be met for all these students. Our teachers have perseverance, ambition and genuinely want to help students succeed academically and socially. I always hear, there isn't enough time in our day to give the quality time and attention they want and need to give their students. I also experience this as a support staff.
28. Several traditions and facilities available
29. Sports programs are good.
30. No idea I have no children In The school
31. Our district has unique offerings that have given so many kids great opportunities. This includes the incredibly well rounded and coordinated music programs and classes, as well as special offerings such as Arabic and Mandarin. Myself personally, I was able to partake in the China abroad program which lead me to Minor in Chinese studies in college and I have connections with my friends and host families from that program to this day.
32. Excellent co-curricular programs exist on many levels, both academic and athletic. Exceptional band and music programs at all levels. Unique and valuable foreign language opportunities at the high school level: Mandarin, Arabic.
33. Nice buildings
34. The merrimack school district has been outstanding in trying to reach students at all levels - from highly motivated/advanced - to those students that struggle - and to those students to need supports beyond a normal "mainstream" education. I believe the district sometimes

gets a bad "rap" because it doesn't measure up in 3rd party surveys to other districts - based on things like test scores and comments entered by those choosing to participate in these surveys. But there's more to a Merrimack education than that. I think that while there's always need for improvement, that showing the real "end result" of Merrimacks schools (I sometimes refer to it as the "product deliverables" - the success of our students) - we need to promote those things and raise awareness.

35. The teachers and most of the support staff have been amazing, especially through the COVID 19 pandemic. They adjusted to remote learning on the fly, being one of the first schools in the state to get remote learning up and running the Tues following shutdowns in March of 2020. I've seen much flexibility in these educators to respond in the moment, and my children love their homeroom teachers.
36. excellent teachers and administration
37. We had our 3 grown daughters educated in Merrimack and now have some of our grandchildren here. It has always been a great educational system, led by sound, educated and experienced staff that have supported both students and parents. They taught our girls to love learning and be part of a community that holds to behaviors of mutual respect and mutual goals. So candidates who live by these qualities and support the students to be the same. Basically great communication skills.
38. Employees are top notch
39. As a parent we've had a variety of wonderful and caring teachers over the past 11 school years. I'm impressed with the cleanliness of the facilities and the well maintained grounds offer large open spaces where our children can play at recess. There are increasing offerings at the children get older (5th grade +) to participate in extra-curricular activities and there are likely many areas/ways we could improve our instruction and bring in more rigor which I think most parents would support.
40. Not too big, not too small, we try to stay current on curricula, educational advancements.
41. Great teachers and special education staff.
42. We have people in our schools who care and want to do the right thing by the students and families. I like that there is an upper elementary before junior high. I like that only 7th and 8th graders are together as 6th graders are far behind 8th graders maturity wise.
43. Hard working loving staff.
44. My children have only had experiences at the elementary and upper elementary level. I love how the upper is grades 5 - 6 and the middle school is 7 - 8. I believe we have a lot of hard working teachers and support staff that give their all to our children. We have a team of administrators that are always looking out for what is best for our children as well. I believe we have a great program in place for social emotional learning, as well a fantastic special ed program. I feel that our district offers a variety of extra curricular activities, programs and sports which allows students to stay engaged and keep busy after school hours.
45. The passion and quality of the teachers in the kindergarten classes is top notch. The teachers I have engaged with at Masticola Elementary school have been amazing which has helped my child transition into the school district
46. I have three children one in elementary, another in Upper Elementary, and one in Middle School. The staff at all have been receptive and responsive to any concerns and communicate in a caring way with the children and myself as a parent.
47. Good parent involvement, enthusiastic teachers and there is staff

48. We have amazing teachers that work hard and want what's best for our children. While the academic aspect of school is priority, the schools also put an emphasis on the social and emotional learning which is also extremely important. It is important though for schools to not emphasize the social and emotional so much that not enough time is spent on the needed academic. This year (2021-2022), the school has made it a priority again to solicit opinions and feedback from parents and have taken that feedback into account in the various decisions it has made so far in this school year.
49. Willing to try new things, care about all students
50. Use of technology
51. We have many talented, devoted teachers. Our elementary schools provide best-practice ELA instruction.
52. Kind teachers High standards Believe in hard work Welcoming support staff
53. Hardworking teachers and administrators at Masticola Elementary School.
54. Great teachers and staff. Willing to listen to the community.
55. Lots of support for sports teams, especially football and varsity teams. Most staff are very caring and concerned about their students.
56. The elementary schools seem to have a great group of staff.
57. Many strong and committed teachers.
58. Thornton's Ferry School does an excellent job of fostering community with the kids, my kindergarten daughter comes home singing the school song all the time. My son in 5th at JMUES is loving the band program.
59. My children have had exceptional teachers that have been understanding and advocated for them when they've needed the help. They have been communicative with us, their parents, and helped them to learn and grow
60. good parent involvement, social events for families.
61. Our teachers are dedicated and focused on the kids.
62. Well maintained, well funded, well used, respected, and has the majority of things needed to teach and help raise community children. Supports traditional learning and more. It's good to be up on changes BUT no need to reinvent the wheel. It's hard enough to meet and exceed the great job our parents and prior educators have done
63. Social Emotional Learning focus! To me this is one of the most important things.
64. The teachers are amazing. Throughout covid and through numerous changes with management, they have been silently doing their job well as always. Students are kind, smart and most parents are involved in their activities.
65. Staff truly care about the kids, good accessibility and communication between staff/parents and students
66. The teachers are amazing and are doing their best to care for our children with their parents screaming in their faces.
67. Extremely disappointed with the Merrimack school district thus far from our experience beginning in 2019.
68. You are always made to feel welcome and that the door is always open. A majority of the faculty and staff are deeply dedicated to the students.
69. The majority of our teachers are phenomenal and are willing to do what it takes to make sure our children receive the education they deserve.
70. In our experience, teachers make every effort to go above and beyond and connect with their students.

71. In my family's experience the teachers have been kind and qualified. The schools offer an average amount of sports & activities. I like that my kids are in classes with kids of all different backgrounds and abilities.
72. Great music program Schools in Merrimack have no open door policy to parents so I cannot answer this question honestly
73. In my experience the staff we have has been amazing. They go above and beyond for the kids and always have their best interests in mind.
74. AP and Honors Program is top notch.
75. Good, caring teachers Relatively stable staffing from year to year
76. We have so much potential. We have an incredible set up with the way the upper elementary school and middle school are structured, with two grades each, making us unique in a great way.
77. We have amazing, dedicated teachers that care about the children of the community. We also have some great administrative staff within our system that are open to hear the communities thoughts and ideas, however, these individuals are not necessarily the "norm" within our school buildings unfortunately.
78. There seems to be a desire to make a difference for every kid The schools are mostly clean The kids are mostly good kids Most of the teachers are open to feedback and conversation Many parents are involved
79. Hands down - the people in the school buildings working with the children are the school's biggest asset. Our experience with the school system has been amazing. Merrimack has the most caring , loving , understanding people in our schools Administration needs to respect the relationships the staff has with the students and provide them the support and recognition they deserve
80. Love the independent thinking and stress on critical reasoning. I should note that my kids are in Honors Classes. The ones that have graduated have been incredibly well prepared for college. Also, can't say enough about the interactions between the teachers/staff/students. They seem to really like and respect each other.
81. The teachers are the soul of our schools. Their daily hard work and enthusiasm is what makes such a difference in each day for our students.
82. I went through the Merrimack school system and actually went to Bishop Guertin HS for 2 years. Transferred back to MHS and thought MHS was a better education. I Graduated from MHS in '84 and UNH in '88. I want to be proud of our school system. I feel like it may need to be improved.
83. The teachers are caring
84. There are some really great teachers.
85. I've loved all of the teachers at TFS. Great staff. Jmues was also pretty great. Middle school has had some struggles with teachers but it's also been COVID so hard to get an accurate read.
86. the staff that I have had communications with have been truly amazing.
87. They are overcrowded and didn't teach our children much last year but everyone passed anyway
88. The schools are full of teachers, paras and staff who are there for the benefit of our children and it shows.
89. Schools in town have been supportive and dedicated partners with parents and caregivers to give students the tools to succeed academically and emotionally.

90. Love the school here. The staff is really respectful and always want to help the best they can. I feel that my kids are in good hand.
91. Solid elementary school that supports and takes care of students
92. They are committed to the success of EVERY student. We have an amazing SpEd program that truly provides for kids who need assistance. We have an OUTSTANDING instrumental music program grades 5-12 that is the best in the state. We have a lot of work to do, yes.....but so much good is happening here.
93. Dedicated staff. Most teachers and admin are very committed, care about their students and are overall amazing.
94. This is our first year in the school system as our child is in kindergarten, and so far, everything has been great. The teachers are fantastic and very caring.
95. There is a dedicated core of staff that value education and work to improve and enrich our students.
96. The high school offers some amazing programs. The CTE program is one of the best programs out there. The high school has the best 504 coordinator I have ever met. The office staff at the high school is outstanding
97. Almost all teachers at the elementary level are fantastic. At the High School, the quality of teachers occupies one of two extremes; they are either exceptional or apathetic.
98. The Merrimack school district has a committed group of teachers staff and professionals who have shown they're willing to go above and beyond throughout the Covid pandemic.
99. Some great teachers, robotics program. Some STEM programming. Dedicated staff
100. Significant resources, dedicated, motivated staff, prior longevity of Chaffe and the stability that brought.
101. Merrimack has administration that truly cares about their staff and students. All schools work hard to encourage parent volunteers and see parents as partners in their child's education. There are a lot of open house and conferences and other opportunities for parents to see the school community and let their child show off their learning space and work.
102. Can't say much good here
103. Clear, open, and enthusiastic teachers.
104. Were great for special services
105. We have the greatest teachers and administrators in the state. The teachers work incredibly hard and always put the social-emotional and educational needs of the students first. The administrators support the teachers and the students, they always encourage feedback from parents and this has created a strong relationships between the families and schools.
106. The offering of after school activities.
107. The teachers are amazing! They do what is right for kids.
108. Merrimack's schools are solid, though there is room to make them the envy of our neighboring communities. There's a lot of passion from stakeholders to provide the highest-quality and educational experience possible for all students.
109. At this time, I'm a merrimack graduate but first year parent of the school. I have nothing good to say with the first month in. Too much school board control instead of educating children.
110. Mastricola teaches phonics and phonemic awareness, TFS is starting to teach phonics this year. Reeds does not allow class parties or room moms. Tfs allows class parties and

room moms. Mes allows class parties, room moms and all parent involvement in celebrations.

111. The teachers at the elementary level seem to realize the importance of their jobs and genuinely care about their students. They were excellent during remote learning, when it could have been tempting to "phone it in."
112. We do not want CRT taught in the classrooms
113. Engaging teachers that go above and beyond for students.
114. The schools are mostly run by people who truly care and want to be there!! They are open minded but share a common goal!
115. Clean, upkept buildings.
116. For the most part teachers, faculty members all have the student's best interest at heart. The school board members do need to be changed, there are too many members that are exerting power rather than than putting the school experience 1st. It is very sad what they are doing, our school system is falling behind. They have tried to implement programs that they did not fully vet out and now parents are putting a stop to it.
117. Excellent staff Helpful
118. Friendly Hard working staff Always for the kids
119. Teachers and support staff are great. We have many educators that are on the cutting edge of many things in education.
120. we are a community, a team working together
121. Caring, competent professionals who care about kids in the community and take pride in their role at their school. Budgets are generally approved by the community which means Merrimack usually has enough resources to use for serving students and families in the community through our schools.
122. Teachers work very hard to meet the needs of all students. They provide several interventions and have open communication with parents/guardians
123. At the high school, students have a wide variety of courses to select. Students also have many opportunities to be involved in athletics and clubs. Every year Merrimack students are admitted to top colleges and universities.
124. Our schools are filled with teachers who care deeply about the education of our students. I say that not only as a teacher in the district, but also as a parent of 4 students in the district, and a former student of the Merrimack School System. Our schools are clean and well-kept. Each is unique, but yet all appear to meet high standard of the Merrimack School District.
125. We have dedicated teachers and staff who truly want was is best for students. We work hard to include students of all different abilities and backgrounds in the general education classroom, despite a lack of appropriate supports.
126. Teachers are hard working, compassionate
127. Teachers and administrators truly care about students and make student wellness and success a priority; the majority of students respect their teachers, valuing their education and the opportunity to learn.
128. Great staff that truly care about their students
129. Amazing students, quality staff, (typically) supportive community.
130. We have had many staff leave, this seems to be a trend in education, that is alarming. I find that in Merrimack we still have many excellent teachers who not only work tirelessly for their students advancing and updating curriculum but take on the Social Emotional

Learning of all students in the building. You will see students caring for their teachers as their teachers care for them. Staff has felt for some time now that they are not appreciated by the Superintendent's office and the school board. A top down mentality exists instead of a collaborative open communication working environment. There is still hope that this may be achieved and that we can exchange ideas and share our expertise. I am really excited for the new organization called SSA, Students For Students Advocacy. This is a group that was created by students to have student's voices heard and represented with staff and administration. It would seem that there is a desire for everyone to have a seat at the table.

131. Dedicated educators. Special Ed services. Supportive families.
132. As an educational community, we hold ourselves to high standards of rigor and have worked hard to develop a system of care that meets the needs of all students.
133. Known for excellence in the schools, in the past. (Currently, the public has been disappointed in the test scores and achievement). Great facilities, beautiful campuses, dedicated staff who have longevity.
134. Dedicated leadership and staff Forward thinking Committed to on-going PD for all Staff
135. The schools are safe and clean. The staff are valued and supported and the student's are loved and cared for. School is a place that feels like home to me as it is the place I have spent the majority of my life at (31 years of being an employee so far).
136. The teachers & staff are really great and committed.
137. quality professional and support staff
138. At our school (TFS): - students come first - administrators care about us as individuals and include the voices of all (staff, educators and parents) in decision making that impacts our students and their learning. -students LOVE coming to school -staff is "all in", going above and beyond to support students and our community -everyone is valued not matter their role -schoolwide emphasis on improving direct instructional practices to personalize learning and support all students SEL and UDL are district wide initiatives designed to meet the needs of all learners academically, social-emotionally, and physically.
139. Highly qualified teachers.
140. Our schools strive to hire and retain highly qualified and innovative educators. All staff are there for students and will go far above and beyond to see students succeed. Our community supports resources needed to educate a 21st century learner.
141. High quality educators that collaborate to make effective changes to promote student success.
142. Much of the staff really cares about their students and wants to help them be successful.
143. Many extra curriculums are supported-- Many dedicated teachers, who offer before/after school activities for students (clubs, teams, help, advanced learning) outstanding band program-- recognized across state many parents who want to be involved in school activities Teachers want to build positive communities and relationships
144. Dedicated teachers, overall the student body is polite, supportive, and appreciates their teachers.
145. The kids are resilient, friendly and work hard when clear expectations are set and followed. Great community service atmosphere. Staff when feeling supported/respected by administration, will bend over backwards for the student benefit.
146. All of the staff members truly care about their students

3. What are the issues that a new superintendent needs to know about as he or she comes into the district?

Top Themes

1. Critical race theory and masks are volatile and divisive issues. Merrimack is quite polarized politically. Given the issues of the day in terms of public health and race-sensitive curricula, any new leader joining the district can expect an ongoing debate about such.
2. Curriculum improvement should be a priority. There is not a consistent curriculum e.g. reading being taught differently across the three elementary schools; special education services are viewed as either excellent or poor; there needs to be a greater emphasis on technology as an instructional tool. Education programming is viewed by some as not challenging enough and there are concerns that the public school system will not prepare students for higher level learning and critical thinking/problem solving.
3. Greater transparency regarding the rationale for decisions from the school board and administrators would be welcomed.
4. There needs to be a clear strategic plan—that would help the building level and district level teams to work in an aligned and strategic way.
5. The dropout rate is too high.

152 Actual Comments

1. There is a transient population
2. The school district is becoming for culturally and economically diverse
3. There has been a lot of turnover of administrators and teachers/that is a change from the past
4. The biggest issue is developing trust and transparency.
5. Parents and community members need to be informed about decisions and the rationale for them.
6. People don't trust information they are given by the school district.
7. There has been a lot of turnover in administration; they are still learning what they are doing.
8. There needs to be districtwide decisions instead of building level decisions e. COVID protocols and robocalls
9. The administrators have been islands onto themselves.
10. There needs to be a unified curriculum at the elementary level e.g. reading, math, handwriting, and the use of phonics
11. There needs to be a focus on reducing the dropout rate
12. There needs to be increased diversity, STEM opportunities, the Arts, and adding more extracurricular activities and 21st century skills

13. Critical race theory and masks are volatile issues—but Merrimack is not as bad as some other places.
14. There has been turnover in the last few years in terms of superintendent leadership.
15. The community is divided over issues-masks or no masks; critical race theory
16. The assistant superintendent and interim superintendent are both steadying forces.
17. There is a big social media presence in town e.g. Facebook groups
18. There are varying perspectives in town on controversial issues
19. There needs to be a clear strategic plan—that would help the building level and district level teams to work in an aligned and strategic way.
20. Many new issues have been tackled due to Covid. Going forward, decisions will need to be made about which programs or services to keep.
21. The staffing shortage has an impact on the Merrimack district; we need to look at how we retain people including leaders.
22. The shortage of educators has an impact on professional development; the competitiveness of Merrimack compared to other districts needs to be examined.
23. Some negativity at school board meetings, change is hard, vocal parents, special interest groups get involved with budget/school board
24. Being a "big small town" there can be some lasting issues from prior events that have not been forgotten.
25. Under staffed
26. ~Our community has several members that feel they deserve more attention than others. ~The loudest voice in the crowd is not a reflection on the whole crowd. ~ Our schools are too small, our class sizes too large. Our staff is heavily taxed with behavior needs of students daily, in multiple classrooms, and at all the schools. ~Our special education needs are growing. Case managers are struggling to manage their large caseloads. Many of them do not eat lunch in order to meet IEP 1:1 instructions. They sacrifice their own needs to serve the greater good. We need a better balance. ~Our community as a whole is very flexible, and the majority fall silent on big issues. I believe this survey and others are a great way to get accurate data about the communities wants/needs.
27. Challenges as this district serves a wide demographic of students.
28. Merrimack has allowed a lot of building of "temporary" living places. This has allowed a lot of "riff raft" to come in but I think we are getting wiser. Slowly but getting back to a town that thinks about our children again.
29. Listen to the wants and needs of the teachers Prioritize health and safety over expanding and installing a turf field Taxpayer money is precious Parental input is important to be considered. Do not shut anyone down who is trying to identify issues with costs and spending Do not usurp power over voting school board members
30. They should be well informed as to what went on in this town over the years involving the district. This includes everything from what happened with the Christian Coalition back in the late 90's up to now with the "Merrimack Concerned Taxpayers" who are trying to overthrow the schoolboard in their favor under some false pretense that they want "better" for the kids when they truly only believe the schools receive too much taxpayer money. They need to be aware of the currently hostile environment these people have created, and the outright disrespect the interim superintendent has been publicly met with at schoolboard meetings.

31. Well-rounded knowledge of Merrimack's political history relative to the school district is essential, including socially and/or fiscally motivated efforts during the mid-1990s, mid-2000s, as well as these past two years.
32. Needs to do an overhaul. Start within empty plate and add to it, not start with a full plate and pour gravy and move things around.
33. There are certainly opportunities for improvement in our schools - and the community will support those improvements as long as they have a part to play in their development. Given Merrimack is somewhat more conservative than other districts, taking a balanced approach to managing the district as well as improving the district is the key. Think of the phrase "don't poke the bear". Doing "radical" things won't play here. But taking an evolutionary approach - addressing educational improvement as well as emotional/social learning improvement - is the key. Things today aren't broken - they just need adjusting. And communicating these openly with the voters is perhaps the biggest hurdle to overcome. Make it a partnership with the residents to improve schools. Don't take a position and ignore what others say.
34. Merrimack used to be known for its special education program, but now it has a lot of holes and is vastly unorganized.
35. strong right wing disinformation groups
36. The contentious climate from the COVID-19 pandemic ie., mask mandates led by Medical agency recommendations and staff vaccination. Order and respectful dialogue during School Board Meetings. Also the subject of contentious course content regarding Critical Race Theory. There seems to be a lack of understanding as to what that is. Recognizing the stress these kids are under and perhaps think about open forums for discussions for the students.
37. Some parents of school children are over the top
38. As a parent that is also an educator I am uniquely aware of what other local districts are doing and how my child's experience compares. While I appreciate that as a community we are not as aggressive or competitive academically as the town to our northwest, and we don't have the burdens of the larger city to our south, and we are a little more concrete than the town just west of us, I would like to see us put more resources into beefing up a more robust approach to teach the majority of our students who are approaching or just making grade level progress. There are resources allocated for "gifted and talented" and I question the ROI, expectations we hold for those students as well as the entrance criteria. I would rather see those talented teachers and resources going towards the middle base of our population where I think we could make instructional improvements (by limiting study halls, offering more academic based electives (i.e. forensic science) and holding higher expectations and graduation requirements for students to participate in service-based learning, extended learning opportunities or even basic volunteer work. The district has done a very nice job recently having seniors return to their elementary schools during senior week as a social event, and I would love to see more multi-age learning opportunities happening throughout the school year. I have heard mixed reviews about our special ed programming, but since I haven't experienced it directly I won't comment. I was incredibly disappointed last year with the concept of "independent learning" for 3 out of 5 school days a week during the pandemic. Our children went without direct instruction for 3 out of 5 days from Sept - April. Other districts our size and demographic were "fully in" 5 days and I'm afraid our students have lost some serious academic and social growth

because of this lack of vision and collaboration with other districts in southern NH.

Municipality wise I am concerned that our town is growing a little too fast (there has been a TON of work force housing and "professional luxury apartments" being built in the past few years and I'm concerned that our schools aren't necessarily informed, prepared or staffed to address the increase in population or student need.

39. We need to lower our dropout rate, we want the community to be proud of our schools - want them to appear on best schools rankings again. We need to address the mental health needs of our students and the family situations which may be exacerbating them.
40. Lack of holding students accountable for grades. Lack of teachers and subs due to Covid. A school board under siege from factionalized parties that don't really represent the town.
41. Children need to be in school learning. Living free, unrestricted. COVID will be with us for the foreseeable future. We need to continue to find creative ways to allow children to stay in school now that staff have had the opportunity to vaccinate or not. Kids with special needs 100 % and learning accommodations plans definitely need to be in school. Masking should continue to be up the parents. Covid vaccines should NEVER be required to attend school. CRT has come up. There should be limited lessons on race relations, racial inequality, and racial injustice as that should be taught at home. Children should be taught at home not to judge someone based on their race, gender, age or sexual preferences as well as the history wrt to race relations. Our schools are not keeping up with the schools around us, this needs to be thoroughly examined. Curriculum needs to be relooked at. Our sons continue to say they want to learn hands on and real life skills. Our MMS student has come home the past two days telling us all about money management, taxes and credit. Our high schooler swears that wasn't a part of FACS class when he was there. If new, great! But high school should have more focus on critical life skills. We appreciate the recent focus on mental health and health and nutrition in general as that has been extra important in recent year, or so. Schools need to be pushing back on the zoning board as recent building in certain areas (such as Thortons's Ferry district), stressing school districts. Note, Belmont, MA has 40+ kids per class with high taxes as do we. Children with special needs are seeking schooling outside of the district. We can't let teacher to child ratios get out of whack. Concurrent learning, while I appreciate all the attempts to adapt last year...did not work period. It is also not fair to staff and children. Third party apps such as Kami are a disaster, the kids learned nothing. Typing text boxes you need to size on a PDF, now workable for elementary kids. Definitely does no work for a foreign language given autocorrect. There are big gaps with where kids are at with respect to technology skills. If we are going to continue to use Canvas, all teachers should be trained to use it the same way. Assignments are where the assignments should be. One of the academic advisors of the top colleges in Massachusetts can't believe we are using Canvas. They use it. They think Google Classroom is best below the college level. But that ship has sailed I'm sure. There are significant knowledge gaps given COVID, children are behind and this will need to be recognized going forward. Standardized testing needs to take this into class consideration. Thank you.
42. Please don't let a relatively small, loud group decide the decisions for the entire town. Many other folks in town ALSO care deeply about the children's interest but voted to delegate the efforts to the school board who will likely make a more informed decision.
43. I don't think we are any different than most other school districts in NH. Parents all around the US have realized that schools and teaching have changed since we were in school,

and most of us are not happy with a lot of the changes. Of course, you cannot make everyone happy all of the time, but schools have become, and are becoming, a beacon of political activism, and this is to the detriment of students, families, and community. Our community is becoming divided by the divisive politics which seem to have infiltrated our children's lives. The well-being of the students should be the superintendent's main focus, but he/she should not lose sight of the fact that students do not belong to the schools. Students have parents, and we are aware of the trajectory of which schools and government have been moving, and we do not like it. Do not overstep your bounds, and stay in your lane. Parents parent, and schools teach. Get back to education, ditch the activism and the critical pedagogy, and leave the SEL to the families.

44. Need to build the relation between school and parents and instill a proper education
45. A higher dropout rates for high schoolers, as well as literacy & math proficiency rates across the schools being below 50%. There is not a consistent curriculum being taught across the three elementary schools, making it that much harder for the upper elementary teachers to pickup where each school left off. Open communication and transparency have been lacking, except for the past couple of months with the new Interim CEO in place who has done a great job with opening up these lines. It has been said by advisors and/or employers from the surrounding area that for schools such as Merrimack the difference when it comes to post-graduation plans (college, tradeschool or entering the workforce) is that students from our town generally do not hold themselves in the same manner as those from private school or the higher ranking public schools. It would be great to not only get our dropout rate down, but also to expose our students to many experiences which will allow them to gain the confidence to navigate networking, understanding where to go find information/resources needed for their task at hand, and be held accountable just like colleges and employers will expect from them. We need to raise and set our standard higher to prepare our students for what comes after high school, and we all as a community need to inspire all students to live up to and meet those standards.
46. Education and curriculum needs to be at the top of the list. The skills and qualities of the superintendent should reflect ensuring we have challenging and rigorous processes in place to ensure our children are being educated well. Seeing how far merrimack has fallen in the state when it comes to the quality of the curriculum and where our students are scoring in relation to surrounding districts should be a top priority of the new superintendent.
47. No doubt the main issue is COVID 19 Mask, Vaccination and any matter around this subject around. I believe the former Superintendent did a very good job considering the pandemic. A tight rope to be walked will be challenging is an understatement.
48. There is not enough data driven, evidence based curriculum/ practices the way Merrimack teaches reading needs a complete overhaul.
49. 1) Merrimack parents do not want critical race theory taught in schools 2) Parents feel as though children are behind academically due to the hybrid/remote models from the pandemic so what will be done to catch these kids up to where they need to be? 3) How do we offer more challenging academics as children get older to stay competitive with some of the surrounding private schools - i.e. quality AP classes in high school. 4) College acceptance rates seem lower for our high school compared to other schools both public and private 5) How do we increase the amount of STEM activities and learning within the

- schools both for females and males? 6) How do we continue to increase the use of technology in our schools and keep the technology use and learning competitive?
50. We are historically known as a strong system for special education. I hope we'll continue in this vein.
 51. Do not want critical race theory to be taught or to collaborate with a company that supports this ideology
 52. We are a purple town. Nothing has made that more obvious than the pandemic never-ending mask debate and the recent 2Revolutions debate. We need someone who can help our faculty ignore all the adult arguments and focus on best practices in academics and SEL.
 53. Masks mandates and how divisive they have become COVID protocols that don't make sense Parents feeling left out of the decision making process / not heard
 54. Poor reading curriculum (whole word/language based; NOT phonics based). Need to have all teachers at the elementary school trained in a phonics based reading program that is explicit and systematic. This is important for when students move grades they are not learning a new approach (and starting over). This is ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT for Title 1 and Special Ed students. The math program is very language based and rushes through the fundamental topics that need to be taught and retaught assessed and retaught again if needed. Without explicit and repetitive targeting of these foundational skills kids are not able to move forward without failure. It doesn't allow enough time for kids to repeat this information prior to moving forward.
 55. There is a serious communication problem between school administrators and parents. The volume of communication is not the problem. The problem is clarity, timeliness, and correctness. The handbook for example is riddled with spelling, grammar, and policy errors. There is a serious issue with guidance department. They should not be discouraging my honor roll child from taking honors classes and going to college. There is a serious problem with quality of education. The school is not focused on providing quality education. For example, the response to Covid was to cut the curriculum in half and get rid of all extra curricular activities and enrichment. We should have been focused on modifying the curriculum to fit in Covid restrictions. Why aren't we using the cameras we spent thousands of dollars on last year? Seems like a waste of money.
 56. Please do not further any support for critical race theory or contract with any consulting company. It is not required or needed in our community.
 57. The health issues facing our students and staff, the anger and frustration of all parties regarding those rules/guidelines. The age of a large percentage of teachers in the district (either near retirement or new). The need for more qualified subs and paras and bus drivers.
 58. Critical race theory is not what parents want taught in our school system.
 59. There is a loud minority of parents that get too much attention. Teachers are not sufficiently supported by the administration when dealing with such parents. The administration needs to be stronger in this regard. There is a general attitude that accepting loudly voiced opinions in order to avoid conflict is the correct policy approach. This is toxic. The school board too are just advising parents and community members. Not professionals. Not necessarily educated.
 60. Our highschool dropout rate has been rising, and our math and literacy scores are on par with NH state averages, those are issues that could use some attention. I would also like to

see some focus on unifying the curriculums used by the 3 elementary schools, so that when they get to the upper elementary kids are on more even ground, and teachers don't have to worry about merging the different approaches.

61. Even though my children have been given some needed resources and have worked with some great teachers, I feel there could be more resources for those children that need the extra help. As our community grows, there are and will continue us to be more children in the schools, creating larger classrooms and an even bigger need for those extra resources
62. IEP process, I have 2 kids with different types of IEPs, 1 learning and 1 behavioral and those meetings are soo different in attitude of the team, my learning challenged student has positive meetings and the behavioral is constant negative. I do not feel like the school staff look at the behaviorally challenged kids as good or not wanting to do bad things and are instantly labeled bad.
63. Our schools need more money.
64. Understanding what the community wants. Understanding that education should be from the local level. Let's not waste time and energy trying to fit a national criteria and a global criteria. Let's try and solve the school bus issue of bullying and wildness before we solve global issues and non issues from a local level. AND, no matter what curriculum is chosen, students should not come home feeling guilty of the color of their skin, of the country they live in. They must come home feeling pride in their community and family OR what's the use.
65. Alternative learning options - why not have a hybrid and remote option? Better, more streamlined communication - not everyone uses social media and thus those of us who don't miss out on a LOT of news. Bullying - there have been instances, one of which one of my kids was involved, which we were told "didn't meet criteria for bullying". This needs to be reevaluated. Snow days - BRING THEM BACK. This is a childhood rite of passage. Let's not force our kids to "work from home" due to weather. They have their whole adult lives to do that.
66. In our community, there seems to be a lot of debate on all policies regarding covid and management changes. The focus on learning and creating successful students has taken a back seat. Many AP classes have been discontinued, good teachers are moving out of the district and some after-school clubs are not running. Please help bring the focus back to education while creating a safe environment for students.
67. Children's social and emotional learning needs to be continue to be supported and prioritized. This is an incredibly difficult time for children and their families. Political views threaten the cohesiveness of the community. Misinformation surrounding school initiatives is being spread on social media and by those attending school board meetings.
68. There has been a significant decline overall for academics since covid. Kids are not where they should be in math, science, language. Many topics were not covered last year as we "ran out of time", I do not think clubs/activities have gotten off to a good start. My daughter is in NHS and hasnt had a mtg yet this year. She had 1 activity last year, very disappointing. Other clubs she was involved in prior to covid did nothing last year. Our sports teams have minimal participation. Coaching experience is lacking. There are drugs in our schools. I am not happy with how trans, gay, bi sexuality is being handled at JMUES and middle school. Exposure of this subject to young kids by their peers without supervision in school is very troubling to parents. We need to offer more challenges to the kids that are learning at a higher level.

69. The fact that the school board is literally letting the lunatics in this town run the show. They are allowing themselves to be bullied in to all kinds of decisions so the new superintendent should be aware that they will get no help from the school board.
70. The school district has not put the best interest of the students as It's priority throughout the pandemic. We need a superintendent with a back bone, with knowledge, and with experience in order to best serve our students and our community.
71. I do not always believe that my child is getting their services or interventions with fidelity. Early in my child's special education journey I was mislead. Not on purpose, but I think to cover faculty shortcomings. If the school really wants to recruit quality teachers and support staff, the salary that individuals are making is vastly different from area towns. I also feel that it is time for some in depth supervision and evaluation of tenured faculty and administration.
72. There are historical issues that need to be addressed, old policies and ways of doing things that need to change. The town is not content with a mediocre education (or school rank). Priorities need to be outlined and acted upon to improve things. We cannot allow ineffective teachers to remain based on tenure and education level - there must be an objective way to measure performance and to bring new methods into this town. "Dinosaurs" need to go, or nothing will ever change.
73. The education programming provided is not challenging enough. We have concerns that the public school system will not prepare our students for higher level learning and critical thinking/problem solving.
74. I think we have a tough crowd when it comes to parents (I say this having seen lots of online chatter over the past years). I do hear parents talk about the [lack of] resources for kids with special needs (we are not a family that uses these resources).
75. Be aware of any contract that relates to CRT Teachers pushing gender identity
76. I'd like to see a continued focus on the mental well being of each child as well as the ability to tailor education to meet the child's needs.
77. SPENDING, it is out of control and very wasteful....
78. Very divided community Misinformed individuals Inflated grades Not enough rigor at the elementary-middle school levels to prepare students for challenging high school courses Better communication on what expectations are for content and skills—would like to have some sort of standards-based syllabus for each class a student in 1-12 grade takes. And a list of standardized tests (local and state) with when results would be available for parents. Just need better communication overall.
79. We need a superintendent who will champion and support diversity and understand the strengths of diversity, in all aspects. We need a superintendent who will support teachers and curriculum that accurately teach history and science.
80. The superintendent needs to be aware of the struggles that the district has faced thus far. Despite the high taxes and amount per student that our district receives, it continues to struggle to provide current data (not media) supported curriculums and to provide high quality education. Our schools scoring continues to be significantly lower than surrounding towns, many of which utilize less financial resources per student. Additionally, our district and the recent school board has struggled to speak in regards to the preferences of the constituents of the town. Despite surveys stating 3/4 of the responses towards one preference, the administration and school board pushed and voted towards the request of 1/4 of the responses. This is unacceptable.

81. Much of the exact opposite of what is good about the schools - the schools are old; the teaching style is old; the opportunity for competitive athletics is limited; although the resources for kids with ADHD, etc seem to be a lot, nothing really seems to get anywhere, just a lot of talking in circles; the parents are strong so I feel the leader needs to be strong too...we of course see everything through the lens of our own children, so we need someone who is not going to cave in every which way every time a different opinion comes up; the teachers don't seem to be held well accountable when they're not doing their job well; the high school has kids openly doing drugs in the bathrooms all day, enough that it's uncomfortable for kids who don't do drugs to even use the bathroom for what it's meant for
82. The special education department is going through some changes that have negatively impacted children receiving services in the district. The department is becoming less student focused and very much less engaged with the families. I feel that the staff in the building are not supported or respected. As the parent of a student with severe disabilities, I feel very misrepresented by the current "engagement" groups providing feedback to administrators. Instead of feeling like the department is here to support all students based on their individual needs, it has become more of a "squeaky wheel gets the grease" environment and that is becoming increasingly frustrating for the parents that don't want to be the squeaky wheel.
83. Politics, unfortunately, seem to be playing a more prevalent role in the schools. Both sides. People are more outspoken and it is impossible to please everyone. While we live in a generally good place, there are individuals that make broad statements, sometimes inaccurate, and cause dissension. Once again, this happens on both sides of the political spectrum. Ideally, the superintendent will be politic-neutral, the curriculum will be presented objectively, and an expectation of respectful discourse will be emphasized. By presenting things from either political side, some families will be disenfranchised. I'd like to see everyone participating respectfully in the education of our kids.
84. Our teachers need more support in terms of time and resources (time to plan lessons and provide meaningful feedback for students and a more competitive salary rate). Also, the needs of students need to be listened to and it would be nice to start moving towards a curriculum where students can have more input in their learning outcomes.
85. I think we need to make this school system into a place teachers want to be. Make sure the teachers are dedicated to the job and the school. This needs to extend to our school coaches in the athletic programs because these are the people that have the biggest impact on the kids. The teachers and coaches that care
86. The town is pretty structurally and overtly racist but claims to not be. Any hint of change aggravates people. I'm actually planning on leaving the district because my child will never see a person of color who doesn't clean the building or serve food in this town.
87. Bullying. Seems out of hand, and typically just swept under the rug.
88. Special education and getting all the school to utilize the same platforms and delivery the messages the same way. It's annoying to have to click an email, then open a link, and then scroll to get the information for your child. Streamline info going out to parents.
89. the hidden vaping and pems (weed smoking) in the school bathrooms
90. There are some active vocal people who want our children to wear masks and they don't speak for the majority
91. There is currently a strong divide in this community of parents regarding hot button topics like all things COVID related and the possibility of diversity, equity, and inclusion being

prioritized in our very white school district. We need a strong person who will be able to stand up to the much louder minority in our community. I'm hoping for more parent input to shut these arguments down. Majority and science should rule.

92. The superintendent should know that he or she will contend with a small vocal minority who do not share the priorities of the broader community. As with all recent issues, there is a preponderance of misinformation and disinformation that some are incapable of identifying. There is also a minority of those who would defund a large portion of the school budget at any cost of given the opportunity.
93. I don't have any issues to report for now.
94. The need to keep kids safe with masks, don't listen to the vocal few. Most of the population supports keeping the kids safe, we are just not obnoxious and loud about it.
95. High School needs to develop more comprehensive programs to assist at risk and struggling learners who do not qualify for a 504 plan or an IEP.
96. The pandemic has fractured our town. It will heal, but only with someone leading who is committed to walking into the mess and doing the work. We really are a blank slate if someone with vision comes in to shape this district, it would be revolutionary.
97. Guidance counselors office in high school needs improvement with organization and consistency (my child has had 6 or 7 different gc's during his high school career) and services have often left him frustrated and confused to the point that he does not want to bother anymore. :(CRT was just recently brought to the forefront as a divisive issue. I'd love a superintendent that is able to "read the room" and speak to racial concerns in a way that is not divisive but also does not ignore very real and very valid concerns either. There are not a lot of POC in the MSD but I have heard first hand stories of experienced racism from students while on school grounds. Stronger, more effective IEP/504 programs and earlier intervention. The utilization of SEL programs to increase SE skills for students AND staff which has been proven to increase academic success, teacher/student & peer relationships, improve school morale and often is a predictor of improved lifelong success beyond school. Communication is needed. More teacher/staff support and input in decision making; they are often left without a voice
98. It seems like there are some vocal minorities in the district who raise concerns about mask mandates, health guidance, etc., and now "critical race theory." I don't feel their concerns represent the majority of parents in the district, but I'm concerned if policies or plans are made to try to appease the vocal few.
99. There appears to be significant disconnect as students progress from elementary to upper elementary to middle schools. Furthermore, my perception is that the three elementary schools operate with some level of autonomy, which creates a disconnect across all 3 schools. This is an area of immediate addressing, to me.
100. There seems to be a very large lack in discipline with the students and staff. There are many issues with how the teachers teach the kids. There is a lack of respect on both ends. Parents are not taking serious when we raise our concerns and sometimes we are just ignored.
101. The conflict between the Board and the previous Superintendent has left a massive credibility gap with both entites.
102. There are inconsistencies in curriculum across the three elementary schools. Special education services at times are difficult for parents to obtain.

103. Like everywhere, there are political disruptions trying force their will on the community. Also, our dropout rate is too high, and we need to focus more on diversity, gifted program, and preparing our kids to be competitive in the modern world.
104. I am here for a strong public education system that benefits all kids. Special education is a huge area of opportunity. Not checking on IEP services when booking events, classes, or fun classroom experiences. Expectation is children will choose between services and events/classes. District is replacing district employees with contractors. I have to drive to school outside of school hours since my preschooler started for services. They don't allow contractors to have district email or calendars as of summer 2020. It's harder to see schedules and coordinate services and be inclusive. It is less expensive but kids lose because services cant be made up and parents have to transport outside of school hours. District treats service providers as just a thing they can put in and out of schedules and not people building relationships with kids and families. I appreciate that preschool has begun using handwriting without tears program and it is being piloted in all elementary schools in certain Kindergarten classes. Having a consistent handwriting program will benefit all kids and decrease referrals to special education for occupational therapy- especially after so many kids spent a year on devices. I am pleased that Mastricola has an existing phonics and phonemic awareness program in place k-4 and structured literacy interventions. I appreciate that Thornton's ferry is adopting the structured literacy program Heggerty this year k-4. The curriculum is not aligned across elementary schools. There is no universal elementary school curriculum so all 3 schools teach different curriculums and then the kids combine at the Upper Elementary (JMUES) and it's difficult for teachers and students. Thorntons Ferry used to teach no phonics and this year they teach Heggerty which is systematic phoinics. Mastricola uses F&P phonics which is analytics phonics and Words Your Way. I don't know what Reeds uses for phonics or if they teach it. In 2019 students in NH 38% of 4th graders were at or above the NAEP Proficient levels. (source nces.ed.gov nations report card). ***I'll repeat that so you can hear it again in 2019 only 38% of 4th graders in NH could read proficiently. *** . Merrimack's shift to having structured literacy in all elementary schools will benefit all kids by increasing math scores in middle school, decreasing the dropout rate in high school and enabling our children to be successful and productive members of society. I am here for a strong public education system that benefits all kids. In Merrimack only 15.7% of kids on IEPS in Merrimack could read proficiently in 2018-2019. (source dashboard.nh.gov ireport) and - for all students in NH 38% of 4th graders were at or above the NAEP Proficient levels. (source nces.ed.gov nations report card) Read that again. In 2019 only 38% of 4th graders in NH could read proficiently. Watch this trailer below to understand more... <https://youtu.be/Xhalu3JADJ0> It is my belief that the goal of the district should be to focus on inclusion and relationships. All the thoughts I have are central to the theme of inclusion. Relationships build trust and relationships build a community. With more time spent building relationships (keeping consistent staffing for students) the more trust there is between parents and educators. It is my belief that the goal of the district should be to focus on inclusion and relationships. All the thoughts I have are central to the theme of inclusion. Relationships build trust and relationships build a community. With more time spent building relationships (keeping consistent staffing for students) the more trust there is between parents and educators. Things I would appreciate being considered include: Portfolios of competency Professional development for paras Limiting use of seclusion rooms, restraints and police

involvement Addressing the root cause of truancy Uniform curriculum across all elementary schools (specifically in literacy). A district-wide handwriting program (I understand preschool is using handwriting without tears and some kindergarten classrooms are piloting this program). Phonics and Phonemic awareness taught in all elementary schools Uniform curriculum across classrooms in JMUES and Middle School Support for teachers in 5th grade when Merrimack combines 3 schools with different curriculums Uniform literacy curriculum (repeating for emphasis). Addressing the root cause of staffing turnover at all levels. Merrimack NEEDS to move to a structured literacy district and stop using balanced literacy. Statistics below from Pre-covid. Imagine what the reading instruction need is now. The most shocking fact should be that in NH only 17% of students with IEPs can read proficiently in 4th grade. NH is failing their children in reading. Merrimack loves to be a leader in change so let's shift to a structured literacy school.

_____ admits that phonics is necessary. Merrimack preaches UDL and yet the reading instruction is ONLY balanced literacy. Only 40% of children will learn to read with balanced literacy approach (statistics below) so what about the other 60%?? They end up in title one with more balanced literacy or end up in special ed with balanced literacy and maybe some phonics instruction if the special ed teacher is allowed to teach phonics in their elementary school. When that doesn't work the district pays OG tutors 10k+/year per pupil to teach them to read. By middle school parents who have not gotten structured literacy at school and have fought with special ed for years and are either paying an OG tutor or dyslexia center thousands of dollars a year or the district pays 40k a year to send them and bus them to an out of district school. Merrimack needs to teach phonics in elementary school general ed so all kids can learn to read. This will free up Title One and Special Ed for kids that truly cannot learn to read in a general ed setting. Reading effects math scores in Merrimack starting in 7th grade when the math is more language based. This effects high school graduation rates. Statistics on Reading: ((5% of children learn to read effortlessly 35% learn to read easily with broad instruction 40-50% learn to read proficiently requires code-based, explicit, systematic, and sequential instruction. 10-15% - dyslexia- learning to read requires code-based, explicit, systematic, sequential, diagnostic instruction with many repetitions -www.Nancy Young.ca.)) ((Only 38% of NH's students read proficiently!!! Reading rates are lower for underserved students 2019 NH Data - National Assessment of Educational Progress 4th Graders - 38% of 4th graders were at or above the NAEP Proficient levels 8th Graders - 38% of 8th graders were at or above the NAEP Proficient levels <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard.pdf>)) The most shocking fact should be that only 15.7% of kids in Merrimack could read proficiently. (source [dashboard.nh.gov ireport](https://dashboard.nh.gov/ireport)) So much needs to be changed. Parent concerns are discounted. Schools flat out refuse to test kids for special education. It is horrible to watch your child struggle and the school refuses to help. Testing is poor and they will say your child is advanced then when you question they re-do the test and your child needs intense intervention. It feels like if you aren't in high conflict you get nothing. That isn't a healthy relationship between home and school. Parents should be able to have a calm conversation and be taken seriously by school. Every time the annual IEP draft comes home it is gutted and all services cut and removed. You have to fight and be high conflict to keep the services your child needs. If the data says they have made progress then great-reduce services- but if they are still below 5%-ile then a conversation should be had before cutting services. It feels sneaky like school is hoping parents won't notice or know better

and just sign. School will do the 3 year testing and pull out just the good data from the testing and try to convince parents their child doesn't need special education and take them off their iep's and then the parent needs to fight to get their child help again. This impacts the general education teacher when you have a child with supports that are suddenly removed and it's all on the teacher to supplement the supports. I found a good website that summarizes the election backstory if you're interested in why school board was a hot topic. The 90s was the time they passed out bibles in front of school and teachers had lists of not just topics but words they weren't allowed to say. There is a lot of passion and fear as people see the strong voices against masks and CRT and worry that Merrimack is sliding back towards pushing religion into schools and censoring teachers. People see the "Concerned Taxpayers" group and all the talk of critical race theory around the election and worry.

http://www.markson.net/rr_merrimack.htm?fbclid=IwAR0v6aa_kszyt89uoEA24BWYHHIhK Gv0NG1I2NGsPGCPZLsfeZTFZ0Zin5I <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/02/13/us/town-divided-over-whether-to-teach-creationism-in-schools.html?fbclid=IwAR26Q2BfBwDPgr6hazbc1L9lJo5neFwLO6YITqZULMUqNqkN-xvYHf9WXcE>

The new superintendent should be able to be a good active listener. They are coming into a community of very engaged and passionate parents. They need someone who will truly sit back and HEAR what they say and then make the best decision possible. Someone who is too passive and just does what the majority wants won't be good because parents and the board won't respect them and that will cause issues. If the superintendent is a good active listener it will go a long way with parents and the board. Parents, staff, administration, the school board and everyone else has been through a LOT since covid and a lot just want someone who will HEAR them, validate their experience as the person sharing feels it to be and move forward acknowledging they will take the sharers experiences into consideration as they make decisions. You can have all kinds of skills and credentials but if you aren't a good active listener you won't be able to truly LEAD this passionate and opinionated group. I want to thank you for reading this far. Merrimack is a town with a complicated political history that a lot of outside political groups pour resources into at election time. I would love someone as superintendent that can be an active listener and keep the focus on providing a strong education system that benefits all kids.

105. Special education is a joke in this town. Falsifying IEPs, deleting them out of the system, lying about services being provided. Of course with covid masks are an ongoing issue, we have zero diversity
106. A growing discord between parents and the schools on multiple issues.
107. Parents have an awful lot to argue about. The town as a whole is not happy so much tax dollars go to the school. As a parent I'm ok with it as long as it's spent well
108. There is a minority, but loud, group that are fighting to move Merrimack backward and fight any progress involving making education more diverse.
109. Space and technology needs seem to be the biggest issues challenging the Merrimack School District. It is difficult to provide a 21st century education in a small buildings without proper technology to help our teachers teach and our students grow.
110. The town is upset with the school board and the things they are trying to pass into the school.
111. The District has had some major incidents that have been swept under the rug. We need transparency. This community will step up and support a person who is honest.

112. Like much of the country, Merrimack can be quite polarized politically. Given the issues of the day in terms of public health and race-sensitive curricula, any new leader joining the district can expect an ongoing debate about such. While it would be great if the town could keep politics out of its schools, Merrimack is not immune from the bickering suffered by communities where the political makeup is roughly 50/50 red and blue.
113. The town is divided on heavily debated political topics and the superintendent should be focused on actual education (math, reading, science and life skills like money management, cooking and stocks) instead of bringing the topics that are dividing the country in.
114. Special education is a mess. Merrimack needs to focus on inclusion.
115. A previous superintendent denied teachers the choice to count homework toward a student's grade. The town voted against this, and the superintendent still valued his own opinion over teacher choice and parent consensus. This was an arrogant and selfish decision, as was his defense of it. Not allowing the teachers this minor professional leeway was micromanagement that we do not need. Some school officials have also tried to align the district with an organization called 2revolutions, which appears to promote racist agendas such as CRT.
116. No CRT. Parents have a right to speak out about this.
117. The town is very divided. The school board in the recent years seems to listen to the loudest parents, instead of listening to the people who are knowledgeable about certain areas (particularly when concerning COVID-19).
118. I believe the "climate" at the upper elementary needs to be looked into these children are 10-12 year olds treated as if they are teenagers in one instance then held back and treated like 5-7 year olds in others for example not enough time to play outside...children who forget things at home are not notified they were dropped off assuming they ALL have cell phones. Not being dismissed to cars without parents coming to "pick them up" Standing in line til quiet and missing recess...
119. There is an undercurrent feeling of mistrust between some of the residents and some of the school board members. Not all happenings are transparent and there has been some "wash my hand and I'll wash yours" activity.
120. The school board makes poor choices based on power and control not what is best for the students.
121. We have alot of controversy on masking. Board members make decisions based on 1/3 of what the town wants ie: an opt out Crt.. should be taught.
122. Retaining staff Outside groups
123. The town is very divided on big issues and no decision makes any group happy. Our pay scale for both teachers and support staff is one of the lower salaries in the area while administrator pay scale is one of the highest paid in our area. We want to retain teachers and support staff. I would like to see a superintendent that works with building leadership and mentors them. There are some buildings that principals never walk through and see teachers in their classrooms. Mentoring and growing leaders should be part of the position. We also need to reduce the amount of scripted programs the district uses and allow teachers with multiple degrees to teach their students. We need to hire the best candidate in leadership positions rather than only promote from the easiest candidate since our students and staff deserve the best. Merrimack purchases and spends money on more programs than can be used which is a waste of tax payer money.

124. lots of unidentified students with learning disabilities that go under the radar
125. There is a glaring lack of consistent, engaged leadership at all levels of our schools. This has caused what was once a vibrant and interactive professional community to devolve into "silos" based on location, school or discipline area. There has been very little to no progress on updating curriculum in key discipline areas. Our district tends to be very traditional, an aspect which causes its schools to "drag its feet" on things which would be progressive in educating our kids along with best professional practices. Any new superintendent will need to build a culture district wide along with a strong relationship with the school board and community.
126. Parents have a lot of say in what occurs in the schools and sometimes the information they are going on is inaccurate. It is a district that always listen's to parent voice but should not always allow parents to dictate what occurs in the schools. School board can be unsupportive, at this time
127. I am concerned about the negativity and hostility that has been brewing in the Merrimack community towards the school district. The negativity has been on display at school board meetings, comments on social media, and during interactions with district employees and community members. I know (or at least hope) that these voices do not represent the majority of Merrimack, but they do seem to be the loudest. Because of the persistence of this population, their is a perception among staff members that their concerns are taken more seriously and acted upon more promptly. It is my hope that our new superintendent will be able to break through this barrier and assess the true wishes of the community.
128. Over the past couple of years I have witnessed a lack of support from our school board. The district spends a great deal of time doing research and making recommendations as to what is best for students and the board has disregarded or overruled these recommendations. From my viewpoint, they tend to value the opinions of their constituents over the academic expertise of the district.
129. There are a lack of Tier II and Tier III interventions and supports (for both academic and social-emotional areas), resulting in an overabundance of special education referrals. The referral and identification rates are therefore higher than would be expected, and there are students who may not have needed to be identified had there been interventions available to put in place. The need for more interventions is compounded as a result of the impacts of the pandemic on education. Additionally, we need to increase the pay for paraprofessionals so we can attract and fill the numerous paraprofessional position openings that are rampant across our district.
130. The community is extremely divided on many issues. There are pay scale issues with non-classroom teachers.
131. Political division on some issues and some tension as result (not unique to Merrimack);Confusion for students, families and teachers regarding the prior homework policy, as well as issues regarding excessive absences and late work. (Though some of this resulted from COVID issues, new standards must be agreed upon and enforced so that students have structure and an understanding of how attendance and effort are necessary for success in school and life.)
132. We need more paras. Our community seems quite divided over the mask issue.
133. Staff morale is at an all time low. We are losing quality educators to competing districts for a variety of reasons (e.g. pay, increased responsibilities without additional

compensation, lack of planning time, administrative tasks, lack of communication, lack of opportunity for educator input, etc.). The status quo must change. Teachers should be communicated with prior to parents and should not find out policy changes or the like on Facebook.

134. As there is polarization in the world right now so is it in each community and school. I believe a superintendent needs to be capable of opening up communication and really working at the heart of the problems that may exist. I also believe There is so much good happening in all of our schools with all of us students and all of us staff that this needs to be communicated clearly and effectively. I believe uplifting your staff and treating them with respect and care is a place to start. For many years now staff has voiced their concerns for the lack of respect from the Superintendents office and the school board.
135. Current pace for educators is not sustainable. Lost over 3.5 hours weekly of planning time. Language arts program in elem and upper elementary too disjointed, phonics should be reconsidered. Salaries low compared to neighboring districts. Communication improvements needed. Currently better than the leadership that left.
136. The district has worked hard to bring forward several new initiatives in the past 10 years. It is essential that we select ones that are most important (student centered) and focus on these rather than shifting and implementing new things every year that do not get the opportunity to make an impact.
137. Parents have too much say in what goes on in the schools.
138. The district has worked hard to bring forward several new initiatives in the past 10 years. It is essential that we select ones that are most important (student centered) and focus on these rather than shifting and implementing new things every year that do not get the opportunity to make an impact.
139. Merrimack does everything in its own unique way- the Merrimack Way. Nothing is fast & easily implemented. Everything is customized to our standards. Drop out rate is too high, drug activity at the middle/high school and more of the public has a negative attitude towards public education-either funding, curriculum, scores & achievement.
140. The pandemic was well handled by the Admin/ leadership and staff, but there a factions within the community who believe it was not. And-- staff are drained.. Re-connecting the schools and families positively will be critical Instructionally-- Merrimack needs to address the real lack of Tier 2/Intervention support for students. The lack of this support has created a huge burden on Special Education and student success.
141. Merrimack has a large number of student's with special needs. The numbers of kids who have disabilities requiring specialized instruction and therapy services appears to be going up each year. Some of these student's need intensive services, specific adaptive equipment and materials, technology supports and medical care. The most needy children should always be provided with the best care and learning environment possible. The focus should be placed on what the children and their families need. Staff need to be supported and trusted to do their jobs.
142. Very strong parent community
143. like most towns, some issues divide us and we need strong leadership
144. -A great deal of turnover since the onset of Covid. -
145. Unifying everyone is a priority.
146. The main issue from an educator's perspective is that some parents try to control and intimidate- School Board members to administrators to classroom teachers. Social media

runs negative forums in town that tend to get people fired up by misinformation. Comments tend to defame and attack the character of those who work tirelessly to educate the children of this town.

147. The school board members who have their own agenda instead of what's in the best interest for the health and safety of our community, and members who promote their politics over physical and emotional health of our community,

148. There is a lot of animosity and disagreement due to COVID issues. The community is very- vocally- divided. Also, as teachers, we have struggled, for several years now, with consistent, effective leadership. Many of us feel like we are not being heard or respected.

149. Growing division in community ripples into schools. Several athletics have a reputation in other towns for unsportmanlike behaviors. Teacher morale has been declining-- increased demands and late or little communication in recent years has contributed to many teachers feeling discouraged, overworked, overloaded, overlooked.

150. In 1995 the Merrimack, NH school board passed "Prohibition of Alternative Lifestyle Instruction," a highly restrictive policy that prevented teachers from providing any instruction to support "homosexuality as a positive lifestyle." The policy went far beyond sexuality education. For example, it forced a teacher to stop showing a film about Walt Whitman because it mentioned that the poet was gay. Community outrage over this decision resulted in the election of a new school board that rescinded the policy and replaced it with language saying the school would have "no program or activity which is intended to promote sexual activity or any sexual orientation. Twelfth Night was banned by schools in Merrimack for "encouraging homosexuality" because of its depiction of a woman dressed as a boy. Though it is not openly stated as such, the "moment of silence" during the morning announcements is the compromise that allows some to do a "moment of prayer" if they so choose. Though this segment of the population has less influence over the last 20 years, the school board has recently been dealing with a very angry minority who are upset by any masking requirements.

151. Better communication with staff prior to information being sent out to parents/guardians/students. It feels like sometimes we are the last to know or find out information through Facebook or other social media. Sometimes staff feels like our thoughts and ideas aren't heard or taken into account. We feel expendable.

152. The parents make a lot of the decisions in this district that the district leadership/teachers make in other districts.

4. What skills, qualities, and characteristics will the new superintendent need in order to be successful?

Top Themes

1. The new superintendent must be an excellent communicator both orally and in writing; an active listener who deliberates before making decisions, who communicates broadly and effectively about school issues and how they relate to the overall vision of the school district; a strong leader who communicates the rationale for decisions.
2. Be humble, relationship oriented and a person who can unite the various coalitions who hold diverse viewpoints. A diplomatic person who listens to all sides of an issue respectfully, is nonpartisan, and who can lead positive change while managing difficult people, especially outside groups wanting to take more control of public education.
3. The superintendent should have the ability to thoroughly and calmly process situations that arise, keeping the children and families as their main concern. Possess the ability to make rationale, informed decisions based on data, expert feedback, past experience and feedback from the community.
4. Someone who is willing to be involved in the community and is willing to commit long-term to our district. A person who values the input of all stakeholders and is focused on uniting the community behind a high-quality, fiscally responsible school district.
5. The new superintendent must be a forward-thinking person of integrity, intelligent, experienced, knowledgeable about best instructional practices, an out of the box thinker, and possess a thick skin and sense of humor.

157 Actual Comments

1. Be a listener and learning. Assess what the community is ready for before making any changes.
2. Go slowly before implementing any change.
3. There is a lot of emotion attached to the mask or no mask viewpoints. Listen to the thoughts of the Board, teachers, administrators, and parents before making decisions.
4. Be open-minded to listen to all stakeholders.
5. Teachers needed to feel listened to and supported.
6. Be an active listener. Deliberate before making decisions.
7. People need to feel like they are heard and acknowledged even though a decision make not be what they want.
8. Strong communicator, both orally and in writing

9. Communicate succinctly versus long emails
10. People in Merrimack love surveys; keep using them.
11. People are feeling uneasy about the special education services offered.
12. Have a focus on inclusion.
13. Have a strong focus on literacy; increasing the percentage of students reading at grade level is essential.
14. Intelligence, compassion, strength, assertiveness, a solid reliance on rational thinking e.g. expertise in science
15. Adaptable, flexible
16. Expand diversity in hiring staff
17. Be open and honest with parents regarding issues such as bullying and helping students make the right choice
18. Be social media savvy
19. Build relationships with neighboring districts
20. Communicate broadly about school issues and how they relate to the overall vision of the school district. Communicate the why.
21. Be relationship oriented and a uniter.
22. Be a good listener; clarify, paraphrase; check for understanding; listen to all stakeholders before making decisions.
23. Be a good communicator to all stakeholders in the district.
24. Be comfortable being visible; be as comfortable in the schools as well as in one's office
25. Be vulnerable and willing to admit mistakes
26. Someone who really wants to be in Merrimack
27. Create pride PK-12.
28. An innovator who is engaged in and excited about education.
29. A leadership style that is willing to involve educators and others in making decisions.
30. Forward thinking, visionary, committed to recruiting diverse staff, committed to equity, inspirational, prior experience as a principal, collaborative with surrounding states.
31. Even keel, sympathetic ear, actual understanding of what teaching looks like right now. Ability to take control of a meeting while acknowledging any conflict.
32. Must be able to look at situations diplomatically and not personally or emotionally.
33. Communication skills essential. Ability to concede and weigh opinions. Decisive, Ability to anticipate obstacles and manage them proactively. Conflict resolution skills, Computer savvy, up to date on technology. Strong backbone, experience working in education and special education, knowledge of education law. -ETHICAL not politically driven.
34. Diplomacy and positivity will go much further than dictates and rules.
35. Organization, understanding and upholder of a firm budget. Knowledge in what's necessary for improvement versus convenience. Able to hire quality teachers.
36. Proven record in other school districts Good negotiator Meet EEO requirements Able to manage large budget and prioritize Would like to see examples of how \$\$\$ were spent at previous job
37. They need to demonstrate an ability and willingness to communicate openly with the public, be able to address student issues thoroughly and respectfully when

administration possibly falls short on an issue, and have an open-minded, collaborative nature. There are people in this community who would rather see a new person fail unless that person bends over to their every whim. Individuals who grew up in this district, such as myself, only want the students to have the best possible support systems, options, and to have the new superintendent succeed. Someone who can stand tall and confidently, especially with the support of those of us who want our district to truly succeed, will hit the ground running if brought in.

38. Becoming immersed in the community has proven valuable for Superintendents in years past, understanding the families, the voters, the political motivations. Of course, above all else, offering and maintaining a solid program of academics and supports for all students and all skill levels is the priority.
39. Live at least in the state. Willing to get their hands dirty. Willing to call a spade a spade. Willing to say we are failing.
40. Communication. Communication. Communication. Clear communication of what is being done is perhaps 90 percent of the job. A candidate should be willing to take both experiences that they've had as well as being aware of the pulse of the schools and the parents and the students - and try to manage what's there and evolve what's needed to improve.
41. The new candidate should be flexible. Merrimack is a hotbed of division right now, and the person coming into this role needs to be aware of how divided parents are about key issues. Patience would be the most important characteristic, in order to handle all of the communication from parents. Ideally, the new superintendent would have a terminal degree in the field of education (PhD, EdD) .
42. History of academic excellence, strong Backbone, ability to withstand outside pressures, history of school improvement.
43. Open-minded, a quiet strength, integrity, willingness to make hard decisions for quality education and safety. Experienced and minimum Masters prepared, Doctorate preferred.
44. Patience understanding knowledge strong will
45. We need a leader who is transparent regarding the real needs of ours schools. I want someone whose ego can be checked and the door and who works to build capacity to guide our district can makes changes and grow efficiently and expertly to get where we need to be. Our community's level of education and passion for public school varies, so our next leader needs to be able to communicate clearly, genuinely and succinctly and make decisions that are in the best interest of ALL the children (not just those who have the voice or expertise to be the loudest). We could and should be an excellent district and with the right guidance and some vision I think we can get there.
46. Listen to all sides respectfully, nonpartisanship, leading through change, managing difficult people, especially outside groups wanting to take more control of public education. Humility.
47. Be demanding of themselves and hold those who work for them accountable. Create uniform measuring tools to measure increases in classroom performance. Stand firm in their beliefs and not be swayed by opinions instead of data.
48. We need a strong, thoughtful leader who isn't afraid to lead during challenging times. Whose willing to listen to parents concerns and not brush them off. This is New

Hampshire and we need to keep that in mind. Many choose to live here for a reason vs California, New York, etc.

49. Experienced, well-spoken, balanced, fiscally responsible, caring, forward-thinking
50. The new superintendent needs to be tough and honest. They need to be transparent, not pandering, not wishy washy, and certainly not partisan. Politics has no business in this role. The new superintendent needs to be able to listen, take tough questions and criticism, and not pander to a new-age woke ideology. He or she needs to be open and welcoming to the community, as I'm sure the community will be to him or her. The new superintendent MUST understand parental rights.
51. Experience with a town that needs help. Fight for what is right of our students.
52. A listener; a critical thinker; someone that can make a hard decision and is able to articulate how and why they made that decision. Someone that is confident (not to be mixed with someone with a large ego) and knowledgeable that knows who/when to ask for help. Someone that inspires and empowers all district staff. Someone that has vision, but leads the district staff and students to meet the district core values/mission statement. Someone that is present, is involved with staff/students/families, someone with an open door policy. Someone that holds the community/families to the same standards as they set forth to the staff and students.
53. Empathy, passion, caring, focused on high quality education, focused on putting the needs of the students at the front of his/her decisions, willing to listen to the parents and come to common ground, well educated in the needs of K-12 curriculum and needs of the district.
54. 4. Skills, qualities, characteristics: a. Be fully certified by the state with superintendent credentials (degree and certification) b. Know how to identify effective classroom instruction (experience as a successful teacher and go to the district's classrooms to observe what is going on in schools and classrooms) c. Be committed first and foremost to student education, health, and overall well-being and safety. d. Communicate consistently with parents, staff, and community e. Listen to others (students, staff, parents) f. Make decisions based on data g. Be a people person; open and friendly
55. Strong people skills, able to relate to teachers and parents. Someone willing to go into the schools on a regular basis and see what is happening. Flexible, innovative, and a good sense of humor.
56. Ability to make rationale, informed decisions based on data, expert feedback, past experience and feedback from the community. Good presentation skills. Ability to present ideas in a clear and concise manner. Willingness to accept parental and community feedback. Experience with different types of learning techniques and various school structures. Ability to make measured and beneficial decisions with school budget without throwing money away on throwaway items or nice to haves. Experience with increased technology in schools.
57. Innovative, communicative, involved in the community
58. Excellent communication skills, a solid background in best instructional practices, management/organizational skills, compassion, and patience.
59. Humble in spirit Hungry work ethic Smart with people / high emotional intelligence Conservative values

60. Listens to the community, teachers and students. Needs to be an excellent leader and communicator to steer the ship but not micromanage.
61. Communication skills. Focus on education.
62. Patience and willing to listen to the parents. We are the parents and you are the educators. We should be a team. Parents still should have a say in what are kids are subjected to.
63. Communication, involvement, good listening and idea sharing. Go into the schools and see what it's like in the classrooms. Talk to the staff and students about their thoughts and concerns.
64. A good leader, who genuinely listens to concerns from parents, staff and students. Someone who's fair and balanced.
65. A smart professional with a willingness to put the needs of teachers towards the front. That's how you help the kids, in my opinion, by helping the teachers. Trust the teachers, wean out the weak teachers. Makes a strong school.
66. I would like to see a new superintendent with a solid background in public school leadership who has the strength, conviction, and communication skills necessary to work with a population that is sometimes quite divided about the goals of public education. I would like to see him/her support our admin staff and teachers to create the best possible outcomes for all of our students.
67. I think the new superintendent needs to of course have the educational knowledge and background. I feel they need to have the ability to thoroughly and calmly process situations that arise, keeping the children and families as their main concern. I think they need to be open and accepting and one with a special education background would be a bonus. I think they should be family oriented, have a sense of humor and have a thorough interest in the growth and development of all children
68. knowledge of student/family mental health, unseen disabilities (dyslexia, adhd, anxiety)
69. We need a superintendent with the chops, the persuasive abilities, and the "presence," if you know what I mean, to impose his or her will on the city counsel to get the district more money. We need someone who will stand up to _____ supporters and make the kids wear masks while at school - you know, so the kids DON'T DIE and so the kids that do live DON'T BRING COVID HOME TO IMMUNO-COMPROMISED FAMILY MEMBERS!!!
70. Obvious education requirements, from the local area, understanding the community and parents are in charge and not administration, and the ability to work with parents at the local level and not choose a national agenda. And please, have compassion for the kids. Let's let them be kids while still are
71. DIVERSE. Experience with equity. Experience with offering multiple learning and teaching modalities. I will say, thus far _____ has proven to hold the skills, qualities, and characteristics I would want to see in a future superintendent.
72. Patience, ability to ignore comments on social media, reason out with school board on why certain decisions will/won't work.
73. I believe the new superintendent must be someone who takes the time to listen to teachers and staff at all grade level to stay informed and involved. They should also actively look for feedback from parents and students in the community as well. The superintendent should be someone who makes decisions based on actual data and

- facts vs. feeling and emotions that may overshadow true issues and solutions. These decisions should not be based on support for one political party or another.
74. Feedback from parents, teachers, guidance, counselors is so important. Kids have been set back academically and social/emotionally due to covid. Superintendent needs to have great leadership, bring our schools together. We have had so much turnover at the higher levels throughout our district. Merrimack needs to be forward thinking. Our buildings are old, our fields are disgraceful. We are falling behind other schools in our area.
 75. They should be able to be non bias, have a background in education, have any kind of knowledge of public health, and have the courage to stand up for the children of this community.
 76. The new superintendent should not have a political agenda, should be based in fact, and should have the children of Merrimack in his or her best interest at all times in at all costs. I expect an honest, hard-working individual who is not afraid to disappoint others when it is in the best interest of our students.
 77. They need to be open to hearing what people are saying and fair in their decisions. Always think, "What is best for the kids". Hearing what people say doesn't mean you always agree with them No matter what, someone is always upset. However, make sure decisions are rooted in best practice and what is best for the kids.
 78. Respect! The new superintendent needs to understand their relationship with the school board. Bullying and manipulation will no longer work with this board, and if seen with the staff, there will be issues.
 79. Works well as a team, excellent communication skills, focusing on a vision for our schools moving forward.
 80. Clear, concise communication skills. Ability to do what's right, safe and smart despite opposition from parents/community. I hope this person puts the needs of our kids first rather than political opinions or standardized test results.
 81. Open minded Require good communication skills Students first not political agenda Needs to be hired within our own state
 82. The ability to keep kids the top priority in all decisions, even if it's unpopular amongst the guardians. The ability to hear all sides and make a decision based upon facts.
 83. Be aware and know how to do an audit because we need one.
 84. Attention to details Highly Organized Clear communication Being able to address important issues in the community with competence Being apolitical and science/research-based decisions Understanding school and district budgets, as well as knowing how to seek funds from various stakeholders/education-based grant programs Not being shy when it comes to accountability Being able to handle many tasks within a time period
 85. We need a superintendent who will champion and support diversity and understand the strengths of diversity, in all aspects. We need a superintendent who will support teachers and curriculum that accurately teach history and science.
 86. The candidate should be a knowledgeable and driven in their desire to improve the students ability to succeed through school and beyond. They should be open minded to hearing the wants of the residents in town, not just those that have children within the system and to acknowledge and follow along side the residents when their is a clear majority and the requested result does not negatively directly effect the students

education. As we are still currently working through a pandemic, it would be beneficial for the superintendent to realize the difference of school benefits which include not only formal education, but emotional and social learning and be able to separate that between what should be the parents decisions based on a childs needs ie. mask wearing, separating childrens ability to socialize etc.

87. A great communicator Someone steadfast and confident in their decision-making A caring listener Creative and innovative, today's kids needs to be challenged in different ways, sitting down in classes 45-90 minutes per class, quietly listening and taking notes is not how most kids learn anymore. They are inundated with flashy videos, colors, creative quips, instant gratification all day, they need to be challenged and moving. A leader and coach, someone the rest of the district can look up to and emulate Someone who holds others accountable
88. The ability to roll up your sleeves and spend time really looking at the way things are being run. This town needs a leader but we also need to feel like that leader is here to make a positive impact on our children. We need someone who is not afraid to right what's wrong but then to also celebrate what's right. Support the staff , students , and families that have gone through so much the past few years. Build relationships to truly understand what the faculty and families need to be our best.....together.
89. Calm, objective analysis, understanding of managing people, community-builder, understanding of financial management and neutral budget
90. A good listener and a fierce advocator of teachers' and students' needs. Someone who thinks outside the box in terms of students taking more personal ownership of their learning.
91. Needs to be someone that will not react to one disgruntled parent. Has to hear out the sides and not do the "safe" thing but be able to tell the school board and the parents no in a way that comes across as thought out.
92. Effectively drive change without stoking fears of the town
93. Outspoken, friendly, understanding.
94. Moderate that can balance conservative and progressive ideas. Open to suggestions from the staff, parents and students.
95. being patient and open with the students, communication is the way to success with the kids.
96. They should focus on the children learning at school, teachers who are more concerned about masks than teaching should be replaced
97. As stated in question 3, we need a strong leader who will look to the experts and not the minority of loud, disrespectful voices currently in our community.
98. The new superintendent should be a good listener and thoughtful about the impact of changes on the student body and their families. They should be driven by factual information and a calm, steady presence.
99. Be a great leader. Listen to the community to help them more
100. Does not make decisions based on politics but on fairness, with the kids best interest at heart. Listens to all sides not just the ones being the loudest.
101. Intelligent, sense of humor, experienced, out of the box thinker.
102. Committed to diversity, equity and inclusion. Good communicator. Steady, never get ruffled. Focused on UNITY not discord. Values the input of all stakeholders. Not ruffled by negative feedback. DECISIVE.

103. Compassionate and empathetic Exemplary listening and communication skills
Respects diversity and will not tolerate racism Looks to meet the needs of all students
Recognizes students as a whole child and not just based on academic performance
104. Excellent communication skills
105. I believe it is important for candidates to possess knowledge beyond k-8, and previous experience and knowledge of 9-12th grades, or post-high school education are imperative. Also, someone who has been involved in curricular review and has technology-deployment is also a key attribute.
106. They should be able to discipline effectively and stand their ground. Be respectful and have good communication with parents and staff. Have exceptional knowledge of rules and laws pertaining to our town and state. Be open and honest with the community and not hide behind a veil.
107. A superintendent who truly advocates for academic success and rigor, and not as buzzwords. Even before COVID, the climate in the high school erred towards a tepid focus on academics. The shift towards SEL has left a gaping hole in academics, one exacerbated--but certainly not caused by--COVID.
108. Our superintendent should possess the ability to understand of all the needs of the children in the Merrimack school district. The right fit for Merrimack would be someone who is willing to commit long-term to our district. Our children have felt the impact not only of Covid but also to superintendents within three years. We need a stabilizing force for students and staff.
109. Intelligent, compassionate, pro-diversity. Inclusive. Rational. Deferential to experts and scientists. Able to stand their ground against disrupts and focus on education.
110. Politically savvy, ability to meet in the middle of the road but stand ground with difficult decisions doing what is best for the majority, not the loudest. Leadership qualities that foster growth, shared decision making, honesty, compassion, commitment and work ethic. High expectations with the realization that we all come with different strengths and weaknesses. Strengths should be valued, weaknesses should be honestly reviewed and worked on without punitive measures.
111. The new superintendent should be able to be a good active listener. They are coming into a community of very engaged and passionate parents. They need someone who will truly sit back and HEAR what they say and then make the best decision possible. Someone who is too passive and just does what the majority wants won't be good because parents and the board won't respect them and that will cause issues. If the superintendent is a good active listener it will go a long way with parents and the board. Parents, staff, administration, the school board and everyone else has been through a LOT since covid and a lot just want someone who will HEAR them, validate their experience as the person sharing feels it to be and move forward acknowledging they will take the sharers experiences into consideration as they make decisions. You can have all kinds of skills and credentials but if you aren't a good active listener you won't be able to truly LEAD this passionate and opinionated group.
112. I'd like to see someone with a special education background. Someone that has a liberal background and will encompass all learning styles. Someone that fosters the relationship between the board and the town.
113. Level headed but able to stick with a plan and up to confrontational parents.
114. Strong conviction and moral compass, ability to hear from all sides of any given issue.

115. The superintendent needs to be able to provide our teachers and administration with the ability to make decisions which are best for their buildings and their students. While outside voices needs to be heard, the professionals/experts needs to make the final decisions.
116. The focus should be on academics. Nothing about Black Lives Matter and movements like that.
117. We need a good communicator who isn't afraid to make hard decisions. We need someone who is dedicated to doing what is right for children.
118. Any individual under consideration for this role should have extensive experience in educational administration, that goes without saying. But just as important, I think, is the ability to find what brings people together towards common goals, keep the temperature cool, and find ways to reach a middle ground on issues that warrant such an approach. That said, when a vocal minority seeks to disrupt progress for everyone else, the ability to put one's foot down is also appreciated - education is a pursuit of truth, after all, which means educational systems need to advocate for science and facts above all else, even when a portion of stakeholders inexplicably refuse to buy in.
119. Multitasking, good communication skills, someone not politically driven. Someone actually caring about daily life skills vs "hot topic" Debates. Someone that's focus is mainly on education instead of taking parents choices away.
120. You need to be able to listen without reacting. It has been a hard few years and no one feels heard. I don't necessarily expect someone to take action on everything but just HEAR what our kids are experiencing
121. We do not need any 5 year plans or new affiliations. We need to address real issues, keep the kids in school, and work together as a community
122. Willing to listen to parents. Logical thinker. Not in it for the money but for the kids.
123. Be calm, understanding to staff and parents Be firm and fair. Level headed and listen to expert opinion instead of angry parents. Someone who trusts teachers, listens to experts, and is grounded and calm.
124. Experience Open to public concern Honest with parents Holding teachers & staff accountable
125. Integrity first and foremost. Someone who can put their personal beliefs and feelings aside and lead where the community sees best. Someone who will stand behind their actions and be accountable for them, accept the blame as well as the praise.
126. Common sense is truly needed and able to work with a diverse group.
127. Transparency Communication
128. Have experience at all levels of the district Open door policy for all Interpret laws Know special education
129. Forward thinking; supportive of staff in front of parents and school board; mentor; willingness to move administrators to different buildings for experience and diversification.
130. someone who has been a teacher, understanding of both parents and staff concerns unbiased
131. Dedicated, authentic, possessing vision, transparent in their values, definitive in what they want Merrimack to be short- and long-term. This district has endured tremendous turnover and uncertainty. A good first step would be to have someone invested with these qualities.

132. A thick skin. Willing to listen to ALL. Ask and listen to faculty input since they are in the trenches and know what goes on their building. Making decisions as he/she sees fit for the students at large and consider the faculty as part of that decision.
133. It is essential that the new superintendent has experience as a classroom teacher. Our superintendent should be a strong advocate for public education.
134. This individual will need thick skin. S/he will need to have a clear sense of purpose and the ability to pivot to meet the demands of our board/town. This individual would benefit from being a clear and eloquent speaker/writer to convey the district's position to the community.
135. The superintended needs to be supportive of teachers and educational staff and be in touch with the realities of education. Far too often those in leadership positions are so far removed from the classroom that they are unable to make effective decisions on behalf of educational staff and students. Across America, there has been an increasing contention and negative view towards teachers/education that compounds the stress that educational staff is under. A superintendent who understands that what is best for teachers/staff is what is best for students is essential, and this understanding is something that has been absent in recent years (particularly with the school board). It is important that we have someone in leadership who is willing to follow through and hold the district accountable, as far too often the district will introduce a new initiative that fizzles out after a couple of years. Educational staff wants to work towards what is best for students, but that cannot be done if there is no follow-through and implementation of appropriate supports to appropriately apply the initiatives set out by the district.
136. Leading by example. Mentoring administration to improve leadership skills. Having teacher's backs with the community. Reducing the number of scripted programs in favor of more project based learning in elementary levels.
137. The superintendent should be a proactive leader and address future issues, rather than waiting for problems to arise or to see what other districts are doing. They should give everyone the benefit of the doubt and hear all sides of an issue equally before choosing a course of action. They should be a clear, concise, and supportive communicator.
138. Calm demeanor, teaching experience, willing to listen to staff
139. Communicative Interested in teacher/stakeholder input Able to increase staff diversity (the student population is changing as the staffing demographics remain stagnant) A good listener Able to support and encourage Able to remedy broken trust and improve staff morale Attract and maintain quality educators Advocate to the school board on behalf of staff and students Personable Respectful
140. I have already mentioned earlier important characteristics that a superintendent should have but will reiterate some here . There is some basic skills at all superintendents must have like balancing a budget and working with our state officials at the NH Board of Education etc but I believe Merrimack needs someone who can simultaneously be the heart beat of the district showing the very human, sometimes messy, side of education where working together is of utmost importance and really listening to the students and the staff and parents of Merrimack. Great leadership can happen when we take the time, understand the importance, of ALL that create this environment. I have seen superintendents walking into my classroom throughout the year and some who I have never met. I would like a Superintendent who has a presence in the daily classroom as often as they do with making policies.

141. Communication skills listening and speaking. Background in district leadership. Ability to partner with community for financial support in addition to tax base.
142. Empathy, honesty, integrity, transparency, and a strong understanding of the educational process.
143. Firm and willing to stand up for staff and students
144. Empathy for staff, appreciation for employees, parents and high achieving students. Very smart and articulate. Willing to work tirelessly, and a team player attitude.
145. Broad shoulders/thick skin Success with strategic planning Relationship building Receptive to input -- the good and the bad Listener
146. Someone with a calm personality, who knows how to lead by example and be an active listener. A person who will be visible in the schools and community and build a lasting and real relationship with Merrimack. A person who can be trusted to do what they say they will do. Someone who is able to make decisions after listening to all input without judgment or fear.
147. fair, find a way to support staff at the different schools and the parents. To be able to differentiate between the climates for ALL of the schools, not just the Middle School and H.S.
148. bridge builder, able to bring all sides together in a respectful manner; strong communicator, clear and precise;
149. -Clear Vision -Puts the needs of students first -Knowledgeable and supportive of educators and administrators -Committed to staying and supporting our district to be the best they can be. -Integrity -Excellent communicator -Is visible in the buildings and interested in what happens in the classrooms
150. Strong writing ability. Excellent leadership skills.
151. Anyone who wants to be successful in this role needs to support their administrators and educators, first. They need to recognize and appreciate that this district is made up of highly educated and motivated people. We like to do things the "Merrimack way," and want a say in change that will affect us or our students. Top down management is not effective. The leader of this district needs to listen to all stakeholders and base decisions on fact, rather than perception. They should be approachable and willing to discuss solutions to problems.
152. A person who communicates the science of this pandemic so that all in the community can connect in what we all want, a safe and welcoming school community, someone who can lower the temp in this community.
153. - remembers what it's like to be a teacher and is empathetic to the stressors and challenges we are facing on a regular basis - willing to listen to what is actually needed for our kids to be successful - willing to make changes within administration or address it when concerns are raised - a tough skin
154. The new superintendant should be: responsive rather than reactive mindful of demands on the staff mindful of communicating directly with teachers and asking what will/will not work be both humble and assertive strong interpersonal and relationship building skills, based on being non-judgemental be willing to admit to mistakes
155. Recognizing and utilizing the expertise within the staff. Merrimack School District likes to adopt its own programs, policies, competencies, etc.
156. Clear communication without being super wordy. Approachable, Involved, Leadership skills

157. having the ability to stick up for your decisions when they are the right call is a must!

