INTEROFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

Los Angeles Unified School District Independent Analysis Unit

<u>INFORMATIVE</u>

TO: Members, Board of Education DATE: November 5, 2021

FROM: Glenn Daley, Director, Independent Analysis Unit

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SUBJECT: SUPERINTENDENT'S SEARCH SURVEY ANALYSIS

In response to a request from Board President Gonez, the Independent Analysis Unit (IAU) analyzed results from the Superintendent's Search Survey conducted the summer and early fall of 2021 by Collaborate, Inc. Collaborate surveyed L.A. Unified stakeholders to elicit their feedback regarding important traits and qualities to look for in the next superintendent, working to reach a broad spectrum of stakeholders. The purpose of this analysis is to provide insight into potential differences in the opinions of survey takers from different stakeholder groups.

Approximately 28,500 parents, students, employees, and community members responded to a widely distributed invitation to participate in the survey—a method for collecting data well-suited to exploratory research. With this method, motivated stakeholders are the most likely to submit responses. Because of this, their opinions are not generalizable to the broader population.

Still, to enhance the Board's understanding of Collaborate's exploratory research, the IAU disaggregated responses by a few groups of interest. We sought to understand whether opinions from stakeholders with less representation in the respondent pool may have been masked by the opinions of the groups with the most respondents. Clear differences in opinion did emerge among survey takers when we analyzed responses by respondent's connection to school (e.g., differences in opinions between employees and community members who took the survey), among parents at schools with high versus low need (as defined by SENI-ranking), and among parent respondents in different Board districts.

The differences in opinion we uncovered may be valuable in guiding conversations about the search for a new superintendent. The diversity of opinion among respondents also may warrant further research, keeping in mind that for this survey, participants were not selected at random from each group, so their opinions are neither generalizable to their broader stakeholder population nor are differences between groups generalizable to the broader population.

In addition to responding to 18 close-ended questions, survey takers also wrote in their answers to three open-ended questions. Analysis of responses to two of the three open-ended questions corroborated several findings from the analysis of the closed-ended questions. Open-ended responses also offered greater insight into what survey takers believe should be prioritized by the next superintendent.

This memo includes a brief description of the data used, details about the numbers of respondents from each of several groups, and findings from the survey results disaggregated by these groups. In addition, we present a brief analysis of the open-ended responses.

About the Data

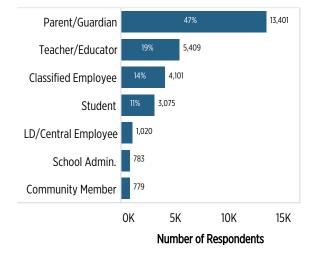
The following analysis used data from three sources: 1) survey responses collected from the online survey tool. 2) a master school list developed from several sources, including a School Directory for 2021-22 school year and school information files maintained by the IAU and, 3) a list of schools and information about SENI rank (FY 2022 SENI Allocation Summary-032621) available from the District web site.

Survey responses were collected from the following groups: parents/guardians/caregivers, students, employees (in several categories), and community members. The survey questionnaire included 18 close-ended and three open-ended survey items of various types. Among the information collected was school name for students and parents/families only. This master school list included school name and school type variables for all District schools and programs, including independent charter schools, early education centers and adult schools.

About the Respondents

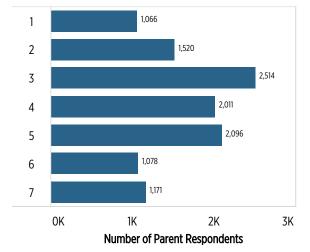
The Superintendent's Search Survey questionnaire included items asking respondents to describe themselves, including their connection to L.A. Unified, and, for students and parents (including guardians and caregivers), the schools to which they were connected. This information allowed us to match schools to Board districts and Student Equity Needs Index (SENI) ranking.





Note: LD/ Central employees represented 4% of all respondents. School administrators and community members each represented 3% of all respondents, respectively.

Figure 2. Number of Parent Respondents by BD



Note: Only parents/guardians and students provided school names, which were used to identify the respondent's Board District. School information was identified for 11,456 parent respondents.

Connection to School

Survey takers were first asked about their connection to L.A. Unified. Of 28,568 respondents, close to half (47%) were parents/guardians/caregivers. Combined, employee categories made up about 37%. Students comprised about 11% of respondents (see Figure 1).

Board District

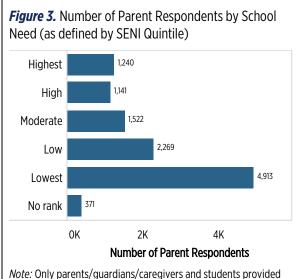
Parents and family-member survey takers were asked to select the L.A. Unified schools with which they were associated from two pop-down menus and an open-ended response text box. For 13,826 participants (11,456 parents, 2,360 students as well as few community members and employees), we were able to match their selected or entered school names with schools in our database to find the number of respondents from each Board district.

- No Board district lacked participants.
- Board districts 1, 2, 6, and 7 had substantially less participation than districts 3, 4, and 5 (see Figure 2).

Student Equity Needs Index (SENI) School Rankings

Each year, the District calculates an index number called SENI for each school based on specific student needs such as socioeconomic status and English Learner status. This index is divided into quintiles of schools. It is used to allocate specific funds to schools, with the greatest need schools (highest SENI quintile) getting the most funds.

- With one exception, the number of responses decreases consistently with each step up the index from low to high-need schools.
- The number of responses for the 'lowest' need quintile is more than double that for the next step above it, the 'low' need quintile (see Figure 3).



Note: Only parents/guardians/caregivers and students provided school names, which were used to identify the respondent's school's SENI quintile. School information was identified for 11,456 parent respondents.

Without responses from a stratified random sample of participants, it is not possible to say that the following survey results accurately describe the opinions of parents, students, community members or employees in L.A. Unified. However, substantial numbers of people with different connections to schools, from all Board districts and from schools with different levels of need did complete the survey questionnaire and the following results are their responses to the questions.

Superintendent's Survey Search Findings

The Superintendent Search Survey polled stakeholders on a variety of subjects related to the superintendent search and the Board of Education's five-year plan. In the following section, we discuss the results of closed-ended questions 9-16 in which respondents were asked to "identify the kind of leader" to achieve the vision that the Board has laid out for the District for the next five years. For the full list of questions used in this report, see Appendix A.

Questions 9-16 asked survey takers to rate the degree of importance of various leadership traits. Survey takers identified whether they felt a leadership trait was: (a) Critical, (b) Very Important, (c) Less Important, (d) Does Not Matter, (e) No Opinion. For ease of reporting, we grouped "critical" and "very important" responses together; then, we grouped "less important" and "does not matter" responses together. "No opinion" responses represent their own category.

Approximately 28,500 stakeholders took the survey, but not every respondent answered every question. We include the count of responses and percentage of survey takers who did not respond to each item in the notes section below each figure.

Most survey respondents believe that the next superintendent should embody every trait identified in survey items 9-16.

Most respondents to the Superintendent Search survey believe it is "critical" or "very important" to identify a leader who:

- Has experience working in public schools (90%),
- Has experience managing a very large organization in transition (89%),
- Comes from a historically underrepresented community (or reflects the diversity of the District) (66%),
- Has experience working with large and diverse communities (90%),
- Has a track record of prioritizing equity for historically underserved communities (83%),
- Uses data to help make policy decisions (76%),
- Has a prior relationship with the District (65%), and
- Commits to serving at least four years (79%).

When nine out of 10 respondents agree that a trait is desirable, we can assume that most survey takers from different groups (e.g. parents, students, employees), from every Board district, and from high and low-need schools (i.e. SENI rankings) all held this opinion. However, when the percentage of respondents who agreed that a trait was critical or very important, was less than 90%, we analyzed responses by relevant subgroups (i.e., connection to the District, school need as identified by SENI ranking, and Board district) to identify any potential difference between trends in the responses of these subgroups and the overall respondent pool.

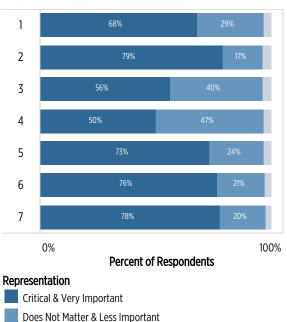
These efforts are exploratory, and it is important to note that findings are only valid for the survey participants and cannot be generalized to the broader population of parents, students, employees and community members in the District. Below, we discuss the findings for survey questions 11 and 13-16 by relevant subgroup.

Question 11: How important is it that the next Superintendent comes from a historically underrepresented community or closely reflects the population of students that the District serves?

Two-thirds of respondents want the next superintendent to reflect the diversity of the District. However, larger proportions of respondents from some groups held this opinion:

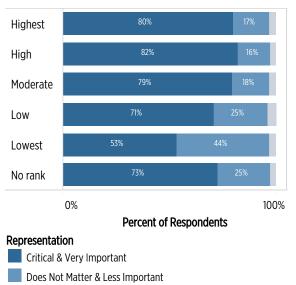
- Approximately 75% of classified employees who answered this question feel it is important to prioritize representation compared to only 57% of community members. About two-thirds of parents, teachers, students, administrators, and local district or central office employees feel it is important (see Appendix B1).
- Approximately 70-80% of parents who participated in the survey from Board district 1, 2, 5,
 6, and 7 believe it is important to prioritize representation in the superintendent search compared to 50-55% of parent-respondents from Board district 3 and 4 (see Figure 4).
- Approximately 85% of parent survey takers from the highest or high need schools want to
 prioritize representation compared to about 50% of parent survey takers from the lowest
 need schools (see Figure 5).

Figure 4. Importance of Representation to Parent Respondents by Board District



Note: Total parent respondents analyzed in this figure were 8,953. Parent respondents with unknown school information were excluded from this analysis (1,945 parent respondents).

Figure 5. Importance of Representation to Parent Respondents by School Need



Note: Total parent respondents analyzed in this figure were 8,953. Parent respondents with unknown school information were excluded from this analysis (1,945 parent respondents).

No Opinion

No Opinion

Ouestion 13: How important is it that the next Superintendent has a track record of prioritizing equity for historically underserved students, families, and communities?

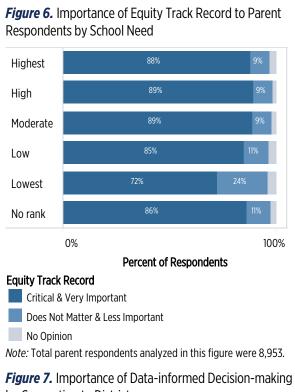
Just over 80% of all survey respondents believe it is critical or very important for the next superintendent to have a track record of prioritizing equity for historically underrepresented groups. Given the high rate of agreement among all respondents, most participants from different subgroups also shared this opinion, with a few differences between groups.

- Among parents who answered Q13, approximately 90% of respondents from BD 2 and 5 would prioritize an equity track record compared to 70% of respondents from BD 4 (see Appendix B2).
- Approximately 90% of parent survey respondents from moderate, high, or highest need schools would prioritize an equity track record in the superintendent search compared to about 70% of parent respondents from lowest need schools (see Figure 6).

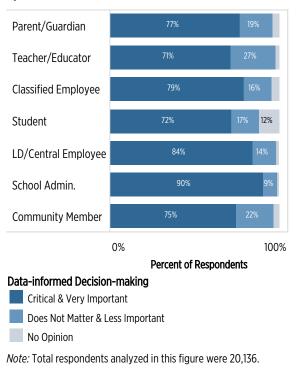
Question 14: How important is it that the next Superintendent uses data and metrics to help make policy decisions?

About three-quarters of respondents believe that it is important that the next superintendent use data to help make policy decisions. When we disaggregate this question by connection to the District, the degree of importance varies among respondents.

- Approximately 90% of school administrators who took the survey believe data-informed decision-making should be prioritized in the superintendent search,
 - compared to 70% of students and teachers and 75% of parents and community members who took the survey (see Figure 7).
- There was not a wide variation in opinion among survey takers when disaggregated by Board district or school need.



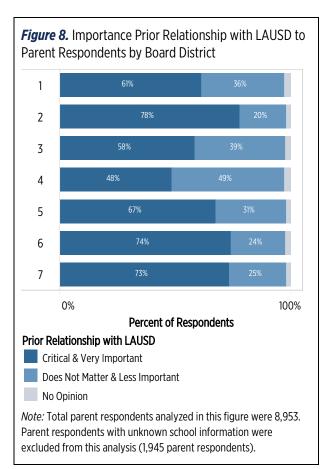
by Connection to District



Question 15: How important is it that the next Superintendent has a prior relationship with LAUSD public schools?

Approximately two-thirds of respondents responded that it is critical or very important that the next superintendent has a prior relationship with L.A. Unified schools. When we disaggregate this question by connection to the District, Board district, and school need the degree of importance varies among survey respondents.

- Approximately 75% of classified employees who took the survey believe it is important for the next superintendent to have a prior relationship with L.A. Unified schools compared to just 40% of community members who took the survey (see Appendix B3).
- Approximately 80% of parent survey takers from Board district 2 believe it is important for the next superintendent to have a prior relationship with L.A. Unified schools compared to about half of parent survey takers from Board district 4 (see Figure 8).
- Approximately 80-85% of parent survey takers from highest and high need schools believe the next superintendent should have a prior relationship with L.A. Unified schools compared to 50% of parent survey takers from lowest need schools (see Appendix B4).
- Approximately 80% of student respondents from highest need schools would prioritize a prior relationship with L.A. Unified schools compared to about 60% of student respondents from lowest need schools (see Appendix B5).



Question 16: How important is it that the next Superintendent commits to serving at least four years?

Approximately 80% of all survey takers believe it is critical or very important that the next superintendent commit to serving at least four years. There was not a wide variation in opinion among survey takers when disaggregated by the relevant subgroups (i.e., connection to the District, Board district, or school need).

Summary of Closed-ended Survey Item Findings

Though no generalizations about the opinions of parents, students, community members, or employees overall can be drawn from these exploratory results, this analysis reveals some differences in the responses of subgroups of survey takers that are of interest and could justify additional study.

Though respondents from different Board district expressed some different priorities, these are difficult to interpret and may reflect simple differences in who voluntarily participated in the survey. On the other hand, differences between employees—and different groups of employees—and other survey takers that appeared in the survey responses could warrant additional research into whether these differences actually exist in the population. It is reasonable to hypothesize that employees have different priorities for qualities in their superintendent than do students and parents. The relatively low number of survey takers from higher-need schools (high-ranked SENI schools) expressed marked different priorities compared to respondents from low-ranked SENI schools, which could suggest the existence of possible underlying differences in opinion in the actual population as well.

Open-ended Survey Item Findings

Survey respondents were asked to complete three open-ended questions to capture any remaining opinions about the next superintendent. We analyzed responses to two of the three open-ended questions:

- 1. If you could ask the next Superintendent one question, what would it be?
- 2. What are your top three priorities for the next Superintendent?

Around 10,000 stakeholders provided a response to both open-ended questions. To determine trends in responses, we analyzed open-ended response data using qualitative analytic software by performing text search queries to identify keywords that were mentioned most frequently in responses. Below, we discuss the results of this analysis and how they relate to results from the closed-ended questions in the Superintendent Search survey.

If you could ask the next Superintendent one question, what would it be?

Several themes emerged from the 10,000 responses to this question. The most common keywords referenced by survey takers were:

• Public school or public education (237 references)

Many responders to the open-ended questions expressed interest in understanding the next superintendent's experience with or belief in public schools. For example, one respondent asked: "How has your public school work experience prepared you for your current role?" Other survey takers referenced public schools or public education in their responses to ask how the next superintendents plans to improve District schools. One survey taker asked: "How can we make LAUSD one of the top 3 public school districts in the nation?" Somewhat less common references to public school or public education in response to this question pertained to controversial issues like charter schools or the teachers union.

• School district (195 references)

Many responders to the open-ended questions want to know what qualifies the next superintendent to lead a district as large and diverse as L.A. Unified. For example, one respondent asked: "Why do you want to lead the second largest school district in the nation? What glows and grows qualifies you for the position?" Another respondent expressed a similar sentiment when they asked, "What is the most important thing you

have done thus far that that you think helps you to qualify for this position?" Other survey takers referenced school district in their responses to ask about the next superintendent's vision or agenda to improve the District. For example, one respondent asked: "What is your vision as the next superintendent for LAUSD?" Another survey taker asked: "What do you envision for Los Angeles Unified School District for the next six to eight years?"

• Special education or special education students (144 references)

Many responders to the open-ended questions wanted to know the next superintendent's experience with special education. For example, one survey taker asked: "What is your experience or knowledge with special education?" Other respondents wanted to know the next superintendent's plans to improve the District's special education services. One respondent asked: "What will be your solution on supporting and improving the extensive needs of special education?" Other respondents focused on outcomes for special education students. One survey taker asked: "What is your plan for improving outcomes for special education students?"

• Equity (143 references)

Many responders to the open-ended questions referenced equity in a variety of different ways in response to this question. Some survey takers wanted to understand the next superintendent's plans to promote equity in the District. For example, one respondent asked: "How will you ensure equity in schools for all students?" Other respondents asked about the next superintendents plans to promote equity specifically on behalf of underserved communities. One survey taker asked: "What is your vision to bring equity to ethnically and linguistically underserved communities?" Other respondents asked about equity in terms of District employees. For example, one survey taker asked: "What is your strategic plan and estimated timeline to promote and deliver equity to LAUSD students as well as to the teachers/staff/administration supporting the students?"

• Quality education (77 references)

Many responders to the open-ended questions want reassurance that the next superintendent is committed to improving the quality of education for all students. For example, one respondent asked: "How will you ensure that EACH school in the district is the kind of school to which you would send your OWN children?" Another respondent expressed a similar sentiment when they asked: "Will you make sure that all students from all communities get the same quality education AND school facilities?"

Other, more controversial themes were identified in responses to this survey item. The themes include: the teachers' union, charter schools, and COVID-19-related mandates. These themes were referenced across hundreds of responses. However, there was no consensus regarding each topic, some responses positively referenced these themes while others were negative.

Several of the themes that emerged from responses to this open-ended item mirrored the most agreed upon items from the closed-ended questions¹ of the survey indicating consistency in their expressed importance to survey takers. Though the themes listed above were the most referenced among survey takers in response to the open-ended question, no theme garnered more than 2% of total responses.

What are your top three priorities for the next Superintendent?

The second open-ended question was specific with its intent to elicit responses from the L.A. Unified community about what individuals would like to see a successful candidate prioritize when the new superintendent begins his or her tenure. Just under 10,000 respondents answered this question. The most common keywords referenced by survey takers were:

• Equity (597 references)

Like responses to open-ended question 1 that referenced equity, many of those who mentioned equity in response to open-ended question 2 were specifically interested in having a superintendent who understands the importance of equity in schools and for the diverse student population of L.A. Unified. For example, one respondent stated: "Make systematic changes that address equity of instruction and services for all our students with an emphasis on our marginalized populations." Many respondents also stated the need for a leader who will implement policies and practices that promote equity. Most respondents who mentioned equity as one of their top three priorities did not elaborate on the type of equity they would like to see the new superintendent promote, but some mentioned racial/ethnic and socioeconomic equity, as well as equity in funding schools and programs.

• Funding (562 references)

Many respondents who felt funding should be a priority for the next superintendent specifically mentioned the need for increased funding in certain programs, such as special education, libraries, early childhood education, and mental health/counseling programs. For example, one respondent mentioned the need to: "...keep schools well-funded with resources to manage the needs of our students and their families..." Some respondents also described the need for additional funding to increase the number and quality of personnel in schools. Other respondents discussed the need for funding to reduce inequities in schools. For example, a respondent stated: "Prioritize equity in distribution of funds and resources based on student/community need." Finally, some respondents stated that the ideal candidate would have experience in advocating for funding at the state and federal levels and would begin his or her tenure with a plan to increase or change funding for the District.

• Safety (549 references)

Safety was also frequently mentioned as the most important priority for the new superintendent. Safety was mentioned in many responses in relation to COVID-19 pandemic protocols, with the desire to keep students and staff healthy and safe from effects

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¹ Has experience working in public schools (90%), has experience managing a very large organization in transition (89%), and has experience working with large and diverse communities (90%).

of the virus. For example, one respondent stated: "Continue the effective safety protocols established for the COVID pandemic as long as needed." Many respondents also mentioned general school and campus safety as a priority. Others expressed the desire to implement social-emotional learning and mental health tools as a means of keeping students and staff physically, emotionally, and mentally safe and healthy.

• Other frequently mentioned themes:

"Social-emotional learning and mental health" (500 references), "transparency" (495 references), "leadership" (422 references), "inclusive" (328 references), "communication" (292 references), and "teaching experience" (117 references) were also referenced frequently by respondents.

Some responses to this question were controversial in nature, with respondents discussing topics like vaccines (311 references), mask mandates (91 references), critical race theory (62 references), and school choice (11 references). On the topic of vaccines, responses were split, with some respondents being in favor of required vaccines for staff and of-age students, and others being vehemently opposed to vaccine mandates.

Key Takeaways

The Board of Education led a massive effort to engage thousands of members of the L.A. Unified community in the superintendent search. Stakeholders were surveyed and engaged in focus groups and listening sessions to help the Board "[choose the best superintendent] for our students and our community." This effort will go a long way to help create buy-in among stakeholders in support of the next superintendent.

About 28,500 stakeholders took the survey. The voluntary and nonrandom nature of the survey presents important constraints in our ability to interpret survey results. One major constraint is that the opinions offered in the survey cannot be construed as representative of the broader population of school and stakeholder communities in L.A. Unified. The opinions offered in this survey can only be interpreted as the opinions of survey takers. With this important constraint in mind, we offer two key takeaways from the analysis.

Aggregate reporting masked differences in opinion among survey takers from different subgroups.

A majority of survey takers indicated that they believe it is either critical or very important for the next superintendent to embody each of the traits expressed in survey items 9-16. Where there appeared to be somewhat less consensus, i.e., less than 90% of survey respondents indicating a trait was critical or very important, we disaggregated responses by relevant subgroup (i.e., connection to the District, Board district, and school need) to identify potential trends in the data. We found that reporting the survey findings in aggregate masked differences in opinion about superintendent traits between various subgroups among those who participated in the survey.

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² The Search for a Superintendent 2021 Survey. Retrieved from LAUSD Superintendent Search - Survey (English Final) - Google Drive

However, we cannot be sure that the opinions expressed by each subgroup is representative of the broader subgroup's opinions.

Disaggregation unearthed differences in opinions between parents in different Board districts across most survey items. Parent survey takers from Board districts 3 and 4 often expressed similar opinions regarding prioritization of superintendent traits, whereas parent survey takers from Board districts 2 and 7 typically expressed similar opinions. About twice as many parents from Board districts 3 and 4 responded to the survey than did parents from Board districts 2 and 7 which contributed to the masking of opinions.

Similarly, key differences in opinion were unearthed when we disaggregated responses by school need. A greater share of parent survey takers from highest needs schools considered several superintendent traits to be critical or very important whereas a greater share of parent survey takers from lowest need schools did not. Approximately five times more parents from lowest need schools took the survey compared to parents from highest and high need schools which contributed to the masking of opinions.

The key takeaway is that most survey takers want to prioritize each of the traits described in survey items 9-16, and, where aggregate results show less agreement, disaggregated analyses indicate high rates of agreement among survey takers by subgroup.

Open-ended survey responses affirmed closed-ended responses and offered more insight into what survey takers deem important

Approximately 10,000 stakeholders responded to the three open-ended questions from the Superintendent's Search Survey. Themes that emerged from the analysis of open-ended responses mirrored responses to closed-ended questions on which most survey takers agreed. For example, in response to open-ended question 1 ("If you could ask the next Superintendent one question, what would it be?), some of the most common responses expressed a desire for the next superintendent to have experience working in public schools and managing a very large and diverse organization. These responses parallel questions 9, 10, and 12 of the survey.

In addition to affirming closed-ended findings, open-ended responses revealed additional information about what some survey takers believe should be prioritized by the next superintendent. The first open-ended question ("If you could ask the next superintendent one question, what would it be?") drew responses about the belief of the next superintendent in public schools and the relevant experience that would qualify that person to be in the job. Some of these responses also revealed a concern about quality education in all schools and services for students with disabilities, which were not asked about in the survey questionnaire. In response to openended question 2 ("What are your top three priorities for the next Superintendent?"), several prominent themes emerged including, but not limited to: funding, safety, and socio-emotional learning, which also were not the subject of close-ended questions on the survey.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Survey Questions Included in this Analysis

The consultant group Collaborate, Inc. disseminated a survey to L.A. Unified stakeholders that consisted of 18 closed-ended questions and 3 open-ended questions. The IAU limited this analysis to the most substantial and interpretable questions from the questionnaire. Below is a list of items that were included in this analysis. For a complete list of survey questions, see the Superintendent's Search Survey.

Table A. Superintendent Search Survey Items Included in this Analysis

Survey Item	Question Text
Question 1	What is your connection to LAUSD?
Question 2	Which LAUSD school are you connected with?
Question 3	How would you rate the quality of education at your local LAUSD school?
Question 4	Over the last five years, how has the quality of your local LAUSD school changed?
Question 9	How important is it that the next Superintendent has experience working in public schools?
Question 10	How important is it that the next Superintendent has experience in managing a very large organization in transition?
Question 11	How important is it that the next Superintendent comes from a historically underrepresented community or closely reflects the population of students that the District serves?
Question 12	How important is it that the next Superintendent has experience working in and with large, diverse communities?
Question 13	How important is it that the next Superintendent has a track record of prioritizing equity for historically underserved students, families, and communities?
Question 14	How important is it that the next Superintendent uses data and metrics to help make policy decisions?
Question 15	How important is it that the next Superintendent has a prior relationship with LAUSD public schools?
Question 16	How important is it that the next Superintendent commits to serving at least four years?
Question 19	If you could ask the next Superintendent one question, what would it be?
Question 20	What are your top three priorities for the next Superintendent?

Appendix B: Results of Various Survey Items Disaggregated by Subgroup

Figure B1. Importance of Representation by Connection to School (N=20,136)

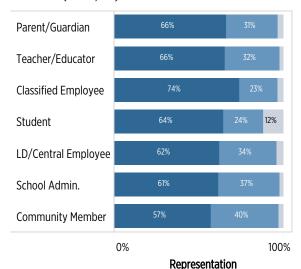
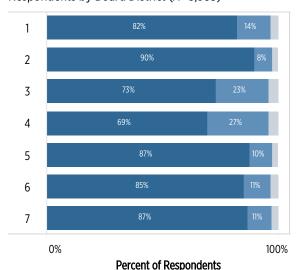


Figure B2. Importance of Equity Track Record to Parent Respondents by Board District (*N*=8,953)



Representation

Critical & Very Important

Does Not Matter & Less Important

No Opinion

Equity Track Record

Critical & Very Important

Does Not Matter & Less Important

No Opinion

Figure B3. Importance of Prior Relationship with LAUSD to by Connection to LAUSD (N=20,136)

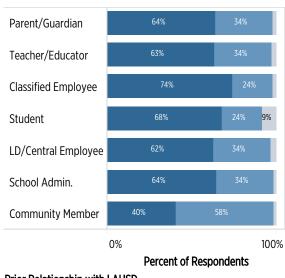
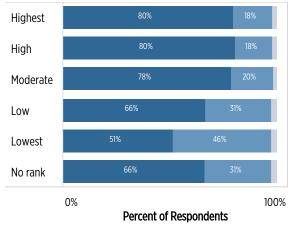


Figure B4. Importance of Prior Relationship with LAUSD to Parent Respondents by School Need (*N*=8.953)



Prior Relationship with LAUSD

Critical & Very Important

Does Not Matter & Less Important

No Opinion

Prior Relationship with LAUSD

Critical & Very Important

Does Not Matter & Less Important

No Opinion

Figure B5. Importance of Prior Relationship with LAUSD to Student Respondents by School Need (*N*=1,520)

