

**BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION
AGENDA OF IN-PERSON SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF
EDUCATION**

**MONDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2026 - 6:00 PM
CITY HALL ROOM 305
45 LYON TERRACE
BRIDGEPORT, CT 06604**

- 1. Public Speaking**
- 2. Discussion and Approval of the Leadership Profile as Prepared by Zeal Education Group.**
- 3. Adjourn**

Bridgeport Public Schools Bridgeport, Connecticut

Leadership Profile for the position Superintendent of Schools



Start Date: July 1, 2027



LEADERSHIP PROFILE

Superintendent of Schools | Bridgeport, Connecticut

October 2026

Selecting and evaluating the Superintendent of Schools are among a Board of Education's most important responsibilities. Input from students, staff, families, and community members helps the Board identify district priorities and the leadership qualities needed to address them. It also gives prospective candidates a clearer understanding of the community's expectations and provides a foundation for a productive working relationship between the Board and superintendent.

In Bridgeport, this process also reflects the district's ongoing partnership with the Connecticut State Department of Education, whose formal intervention and support began in January 2025. A Department representative has been an integral member of the current Superintendent Search Committee from the outset and will continue to participate through the appointment of the next Superintendent. This involvement provides continuity between the search and the district's improvement efforts. The appointment of Bridgeport's next permanent Superintendent is subject to the Commissioner of Education's approval¹.

Methodology

Bridgeport Public Schools retained Zeal Education Group to engage the community in identifying the skills, leadership qualities, and dispositions its next superintendent will need to succeed. Two complementary streams of input informed this profile: facilitated stakeholder conversations and an online ThoughtExchange.

Participation was voluntary. The findings reflect the experiences and perspectives of those who participated and should be interpreted alongside the participation information presented below. They provide community input rather than an independent evaluation of district performance.

¹ That pursuant to Section 10-223e(e)(2) of the Connecticut General Statutes, and in order to address the stability of operations of the Bridgeport Public Schools, improve student performance, and address other needs of the school district, the State Board of Education directs the Commissioner of Education to take the necessary action to implement, on behalf of the State Board of Education, the powers set forth in Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-223e(e)(2), including but not necessarily limited to 1) assigning a technical assistance team to the district to guide district initiatives and report progress to the Commissioner of Education; 2) requiring the board of education to undergo training designed to improve operational efficiency and effectiveness; and 3) requiring the appointment of a Superintendent approved by the Commissioner and/or the appointment of a District Improvement Officer selected by the Commissioner for a term of up to one year, with the understanding that such one-year term may be extended by the State Board of Education.

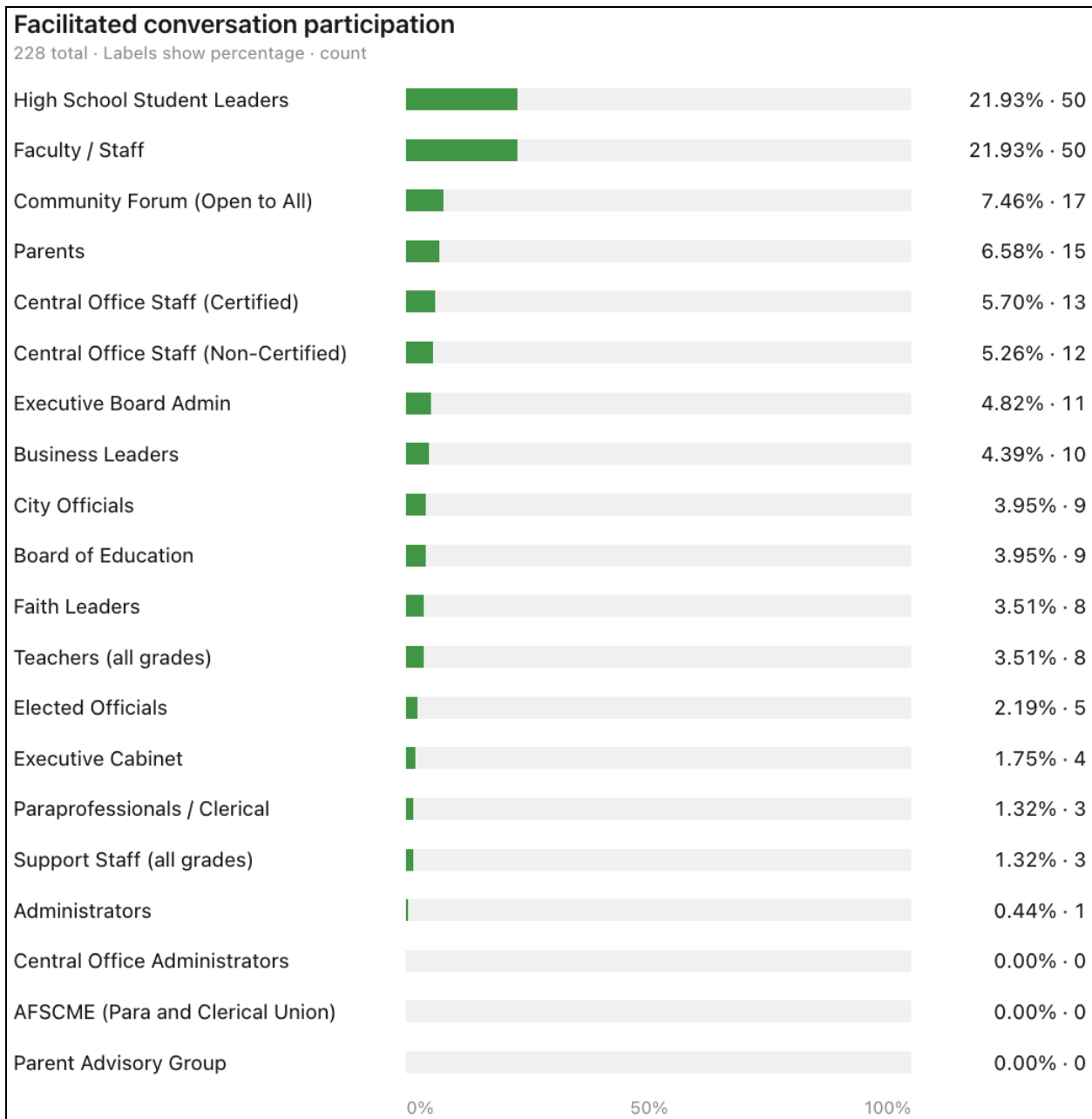
Stream One: Facilitated Stakeholder Conversations

The first stream consisted of a week of interviews, focus groups, and town hall discussions conducted in person and virtually. These conversations allowed participants to describe their experiences, explain their priorities, and discuss the qualities they seek in the next superintendent. Facilitators asked follow-up questions to better understand the context behind the feedback.

Conversations centered on four questions:

- 1. What are the district's greatest strengths?*
- 2. What are the district's greatest immediate challenges?*
- 3. What should be the new superintendent's change priority?*
- 4. Is there anything else you want to share?*

A total of 228 participants contributed through this stream. The following chart shows the distribution of stakeholder participation.



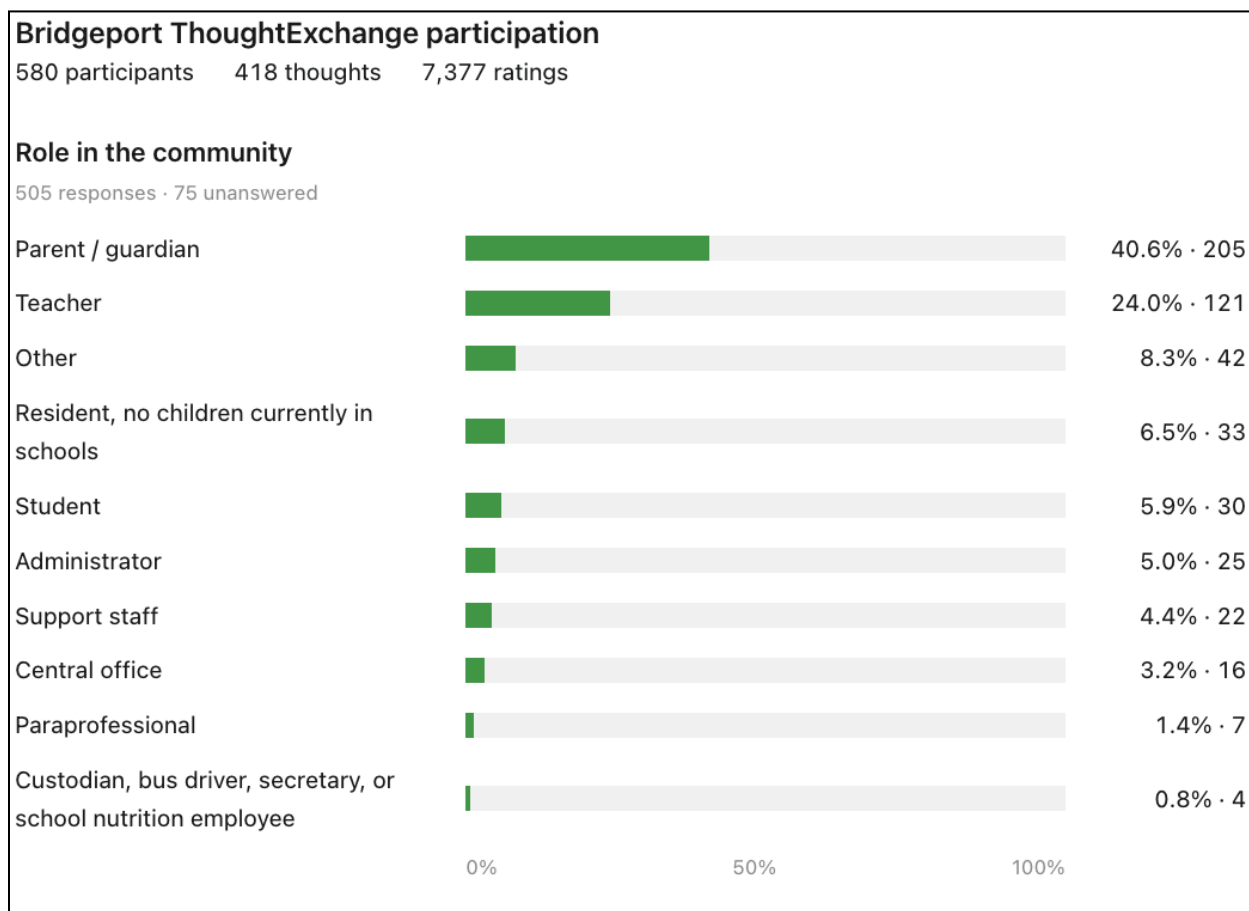
Stream Two: Online ThoughtExchange

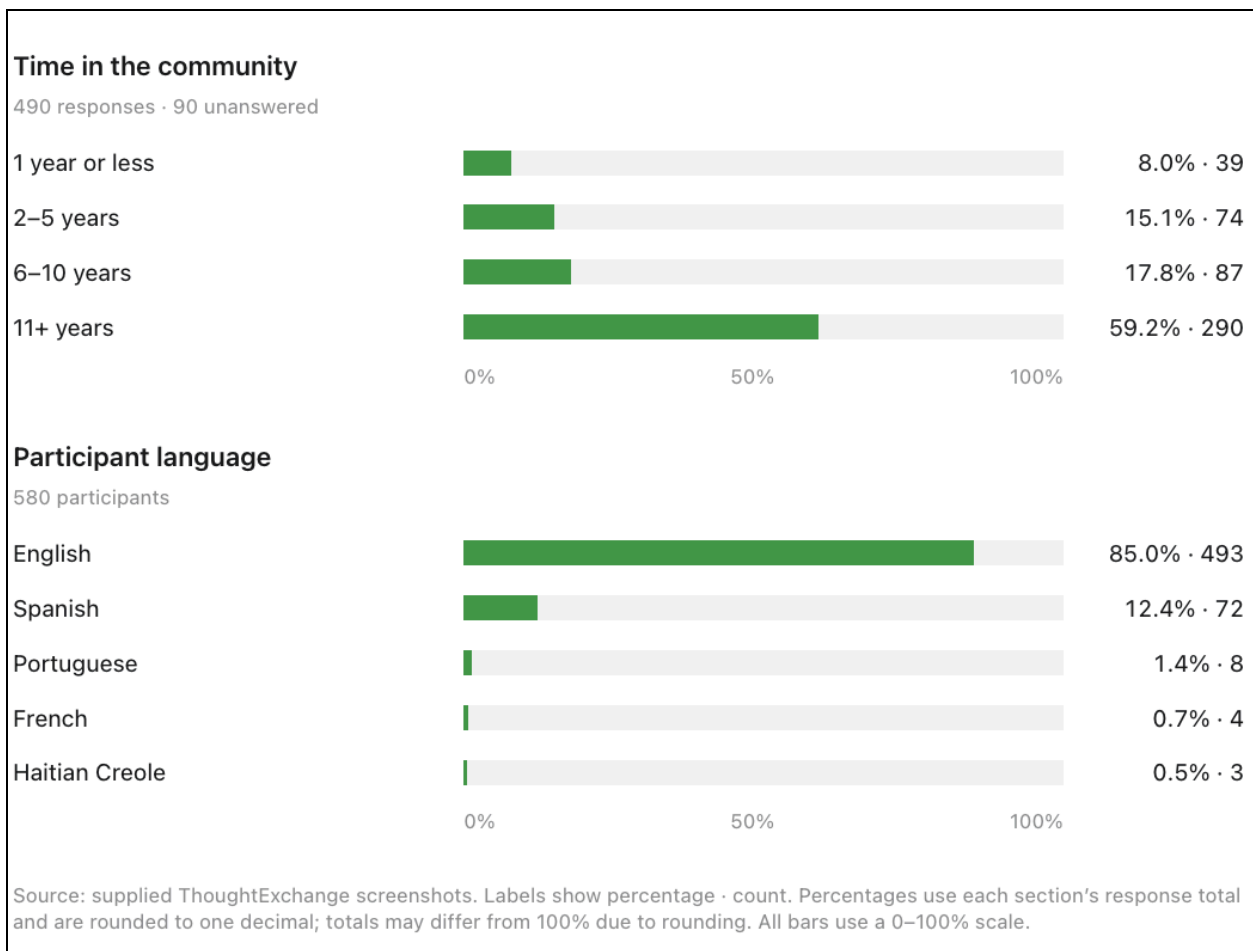
The second stream used ThoughtExchange, an online platform where participants could anonymously respond to the question, “What is your top priority for the next superintendent of schools?” and rate thoughts shared by others. Multilingual participation offered an additional way to contribute for people who could not attend a scheduled discussion or preferred to participate online.

Because participation was lower than anticipated, Bridgeport extended the deadline from September 4 to October 10, providing 36 additional days for input. The exchange engaged 580 participants, who contributed 418 thoughts and provided 7,377 ratings.

Parents and guardians and teachers represented the largest shares of online respondents, and most respondents had longstanding connections to Bridgeport. Participation also included students, other community members, and speakers of five languages. English accounted for 85.0% of participants, followed by Spanish at 12.4%, Portuguese at 1.4%, French at 0.7%, and Haitian Creole at 0.5%.

The charts below provide additional context about engagement, participant roles, time in the community, and languages.





The facilitated conversations provided depth and context, while ThoughtExchange expanded opportunities for input and identified thoughts that resonated with participants who rated them. The findings from both streams informed this leadership profile. The smaller shares of online participation from students and newer community members should be considered when interpreting the results. *The narrative themes below are listed alphabetically.*

Results of Stream One: Interviews and Focus Groups

Participants identified dedicated staff, resilient students and families, cultural diversity, and community partnerships as Bridgeport's greatest strengths. They also described challenges involving funding, staffing shortages, leadership turnover, inconsistent systems, and support for students' varied learning needs.

Across the four questions, participants sought stable, visible, student-centered leadership that listens carefully, builds on effective practices, and follows through on

commitments. They emphasized a sustained strategic direction, stronger instruction and student services, transparent financial stewardship, and meaningful collaboration with staff, families, students, and community partners.

What are the district's greatest strengths?

Participants described Bridgeport's people and community as its strongest assets. Their responses highlighted longstanding employee commitment, cultural richness, resourcefulness, and relationships that support students both inside and outside school.

Community Commitment and Partnerships: Participants identified caring families, committed alumni, locally rooted employees, and community organizations willing to contribute to student success. Relationships with nonprofits, universities, elected representatives, and other partners were valued as sources of support, opportunity, and funding advocacy.

Dedicated and Experienced Staff: Participants praised teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, social workers, and central office employees for their commitment to students and families. Many cited longstanding employees who have remained through leadership transitions and financial challenges. Respondents valued their community knowledge and experience supporting multilingual learners and students with disabilities.

Diversity and Cultural Assets: Bridgeport's cultural, linguistic, racial, and religious diversity was consistently identified as a strength. Participants described students and employees whose varied backgrounds enrich learning and school life. They highlighted multilingual families, multicultural events, and staff who reflect the communities they serve.

Educational Opportunities and Student Supports: Respondents highlighted magnet and career-focused programs, aeronautics and agricultural offerings, athletics, clubs, and student leadership opportunities. They also recognized literacy efforts, multilingual learner support, technology, and facility investments. Transportation assistance, weekend food distribution, and community clothing resources were valued for addressing everyday needs.

Resilience and Resourcefulness: Respondents emphasized the perseverance of students, educators, school leaders, and families. They described employees as flexible and creative in responding to limited resources and changing circumstances. Participants also recognized students' determination and individuality, while stressing the importance of supporting the people sustaining the district's work.

What are the district's greatest immediate challenges?

Participants described interconnected challenges affecting staffing, instruction, student services, and daily operations. Funding and leadership continuity were recurring concerns, alongside communication, trust, and equitable access to support.

Academic Achievement and Instructional Consistency: Participants raised concerns about foundational skills, academic proficiency, and preparation for college and careers. They described unfinished learning, limited intervention capacity, frequent curriculum changes, and competing initiatives. Respondents sought consistent instruction, relevant training, engaging lessons, and a well-rounded curriculum.

Communication, Transparency, and Trust: Respondents reported delayed responses, limited follow-up, late notice of events, and difficulty finding assistance. Staff and students wanted greater involvement in decisions affecting their work and school experiences. Participants connected these concerns to declining confidence and called for accessible communication and dependable follow-through.

Facilities, Technology, and Transportation: Respondents raised concerns about building conditions, temperature control, classroom acoustics, instructional equipment, and technology access. Transportation concerns included inconvenient stops, lengthy walks, and insufficient responses to problems. Participants viewed these conditions as barriers to safety, attendance, and instructional time.

Funding and Financial Accountability: Participants reported resource shortages affecting staffing, instructional materials, classroom supplies, and programs. Many believed state and local funding does not adequately reflect district needs. Respondents also sought clearer budget information, more equitable resource allocation, and plans to sustain programs supported by temporary funding.

Leadership Stability and Operational Systems: Participants described frequent leadership transitions, shifting priorities, unclear procedures, and insufficient coordination between central office and schools. Some emphasized limited administrative capacity, while others questioned whether existing structures effectively support schools. They sought clear responsibilities, consistent expectations, and stronger teamwork.

Staff Recruitment, Retention, and Workload: Respondents described vacancies and difficulty retaining qualified employees. Compensation, morale, working conditions, and limited involvement in decisions were recurring concerns. Reported shortages included teachers, paraprofessionals, nurses, librarians, counselors, social workers, substitutes, and custodians. Participants connected these gaps to heavier workloads and reduced continuity for students.

Student Well-Being, School Climate, and Engagement: Participants identified mental health, behavior, bullying, absenteeism, and belonging as concerns. Students emphasized respectful treatment, fair rules, counseling access, and basic needs such as restroom access and hygiene supplies. Families and employees sought stronger attendance partnerships and more accessible after-school opportunities.

Support for Multilingual Learners and Students with Disabilities: Participants questioned whether staffing, materials, placements, and specialized services adequately meet student needs. Families described difficulty obtaining timely assistance and meetings concerning accommodations. Respondents also raised concerns about service delivery and compliance, emphasizing the need for knowledgeable staff and coordinated support.

What should be the new superintendent's change priority?

Participants urged the next superintendent to begin by understanding the district and identifying effective practices before introducing major changes. They sought purposeful improvement supported by stable leadership, a clear plan, and meaningful stakeholder involvement.

Academic Achievement and Instructional Quality: Participants emphasized stronger reading, mathematics, and science instruction, timely intervention, and consistent curriculum implementation. They wanted evidence to guide decisions about what to sustain or change. Respondents also supported broader opportunities in arts, music, advanced coursework, vocational education, and hands-on learning.

Communication, Community Engagement, and Governance: Respondents sought timely, accurate communication and opportunities to raise concerns without fear of repercussions. They emphasized family engagement, community partnerships, and productive Board and superintendent relationships. Participants wanted leadership to communicate district needs openly while also recognizing Bridgeport's achievements and assets.

Funding Advocacy and Financial Stewardship: Respondents wanted coordinated advocacy for adequate, sustainable funding. They also emphasized proactive budgeting, transparent reporting, purchasing controls, and equitable allocation. Participants expected spending to reflect district priorities and demonstrate a clear benefit to students.

Listening, Trust, and Collaborative Change: Respondents recommended listening tours, a comprehensive needs assessment, and engagement with students, families, educators, and experienced employees. They wanted feedback to influence decisions and produce visible follow-through. Many cautioned against rapid changes that overlook institutional knowledge or disrupt successful practices.

Stable Leadership and Strategic Direction: Participants called for a superintendent committed to remaining long enough to implement and evaluate a shared vision. They sought a long-range plan that guides daily operations, establishes priorities, and connects decisions to student outcomes. Alignment among the superintendent, leadership team, and Board of Education was considered essential.

Staff Recruitment, Retention, and Support: Filling vacancies and retaining qualified employees were immediate priorities. Participants recommended competitive compensation, targeted incentives, stronger staffing pipelines, effective onboarding, and credential pathways for existing employees. They also sought relevant professional learning, collaboration time, and meaningful staff input.

Student Well-Being, Safety, and Voice: Participants wanted respectful, supportive schools with consistent behavioral expectations and appropriate counseling and intervention. They highlighted nurses, guidance counselors, transition support, and student advocacy opportunities. Transportation, restroom access, meals, and attendance procedures were also identified as priorities.

Support for Multilingual Learners and Students with Disabilities: Respondents sought stronger staffing, appropriate placements, effective interventions, and training tailored to student needs. They called for special education teachers to participate in planning and program redesign. Clear oversight and coordinated services were viewed as necessary for equitable access to learning.

Is there anything else you want to share?

Additional feedback reinforced the importance of community understanding, integrity, compassion, and a sustained commitment to Bridgeport. Participants sought a leader who values employee expertise, builds productive relationships, and addresses barriers to student opportunity.

Board Relationships and Governance: Respondents emphasized shared goals and clear responsibilities between the Board and superintendent. They raised concerns about political influence and adherence to policies and procedures. Transparency and fairness in the superintendent selection process were also viewed as important to public confidence.

Communication and Family Engagement: Respondents called for translated information, accessible budget details, staffing updates, and clearer reporting on district decisions. They encouraged parent meetings, volunteer opportunities, and collaboration with community organizations. Some also sought simpler communication systems that make essential information easier to find.

Community Understanding and Leadership Commitment: Many participants valued experience in a comparable urban district and the ability to connect with Bridgeport's families and institutions. Although preferences about professional background varied, respondents consistently sought someone prepared to understand the community, establish roots, and sustain the work of improvement.

Instructional Leadership and Future Pathways: Participants sought leadership that understands classroom needs and strengthens early literacy, instruction, and specialized support. They valued college preparation alongside vocational education, hands-on learning, and community partnerships that create credible pathways beyond high school.

Integrity, Compassion, and Visibility: Participants wanted an accessible leader who listens, treats people with dignity, and spends time in schools and the community. They also emphasized sound judgment and the courage to address difficult issues and make necessary decisions under pressure.

Resource Stewardship and Sustained Improvement: Participants wanted resources directed toward classrooms and student services. They encouraged proactive problem-solving and preservation of effective practices. While some favored new approaches and others emphasized continuity, both perspectives centered on improving outcomes for students.

Staff Expertise and Organizational Culture: Participants urged leadership to recognize employee knowledge and include staff in decisions. They sought greater trust between schools and central office, stronger onboarding, recruitment and retention plans, and succession planning. Paraprofessionals were identified as a potential source of future teachers.

Student Safety and Equitable Access: Additional concerns included bullying, mental health, transportation costs, healthcare access, and the effects of poverty. Respondents called for accessible facilities, safe school and bus environments, and equitable opportunities in athletics, language programs, and other activities.

Results of Stream Two: ThoughtExchange

The following 10 themes summarize priorities and concerns expressed in ThoughtExchange. They reflect participant perspectives and help clarify the leadership capabilities sought in the next superintendent.

Communication and Trust: Participants sought honest, accessible, and consistent communication from district leadership. They wanted clear responsibilities, opportunities

to be heard, and transparent explanations of decisions. Leadership turnover and perceived gaps in follow-through were described as barriers to trust.

Community Understanding: Participants wanted a superintendent who understands Bridgeport's students, families, cultural diversity, and local context. Some preferred local or Connecticut experience, while others emphasized relevant urban district experience and the ability to build authentic relationships. Cultural responsiveness and community involvement were recurring expectations.

Fiscal Management: Respondents called for responsible budgeting, transparent spending, and resources directed toward instruction and student services. They questioned the value of some administrative, technology, and short-term initiative expenditures. Participants also sought stronger advocacy for adequate state and local funding.

Leadership Stability: Respondents described frequent leadership changes and shifting initiatives as obstacles to progress. They sought a superintendent committed to sustained service, a cohesive leadership team, and a consistent vision. Continuity was viewed as important to morale, implementation, and public confidence.

Resource Equity: Participants sought equitable access to staffing, instructional materials, facilities, arts, athletics, extracurricular activities, and intervention services. They described perceived disparities among schools and between Bridgeport and neighboring districts. Responses emphasized targeted support for multilingual learners and students with disabilities.

Safety and School Climate: Participants identified bullying, classroom disruptions, inconsistent behavioral expectations, and building security as concerns. They wanted safe, supportive environments with clear expectations, effective intervention, and appropriate employee training. Responses also connected facilities and basic student needs to well-being.

Special Education: Respondents raised urgent concerns about staffing, class sizes, specialized programming, and whether students consistently receive services outlined in their individualized education programs and Section 504 plans. They sought knowledgeable leadership, additional support personnel, appropriate placements, and relevant staff training.

Student Learning: Participants emphasized foundational reading, writing, and mathematics skills, early literacy, strong core classroom instruction, and timely intervention. They sought rigorous, evidence-based teaching and measurable academic growth. Some questioned the volume of testing and competing programs and wanted more time for direct instruction and targeted support.

Teacher and Staff Support: Respondents emphasized competitive compensation, manageable workloads, sufficient resources, and respectful working conditions. They called for relevant professional development and greater involvement in decisions. Participants viewed retaining and supporting employees as essential to student success.

Thoughtful Technology Use: Participants expressed differing views about technology's role in learning. Some questioned reliance on devices, online programs, and digital testing, while others identified outdated systems and insufficient technical support. The shared priority was technology that serves clear instructional purposes and supports meaningful learning.

Highest-Rated Participant Thoughts

The following are the five highest-rated thoughts among the exchange's 418 submissions. They are presented verbatim as displayed on the platform, including any platform-provided translations. Their ratings indicate that they resonated with participants who evaluated them; they should be read alongside the broader findings.

A person committed to Bridgeport not someone looking for their next job on day one. A person that knows the classroom: I need an educator not an MBA person.	😊 Neutral 👤 28	★★★★★ 4.5 Ranked #1 of 418 5 ★ 4 ★ 3 ★ 2 ★ 1 ★
A thoughtful leader who includes all stakeholders in his/her decision s. Too often new supers just do what they think will work without asking what others, especially teachers, want or need.	😊 Neutral 👤 28	★★★★★ 4.5 Ranked #2 of 418 5 ★ 4 ★ 3 ★ 2 ★ 1 ★
Students first. Administration last Too much \$\$\$ in salaries for top administrators. Teachers suffer	😊 Neutral 👤 28	★★★★★ 4.5 Ranked #3 of 418 5 ★ 4 ★ 3 ★ 2 ★ 1 ★
Talk to the people working in the schools. Ask our opinions on learning sites and tools. We do the work. We know the students. We have to use it. Ask us.	😊 Neutral 👤 28	★★★★★ 4.5 Ranked #4 of 418 5 ★ 4 ★ 3 ★ 2 ★ 1 ★
understands the community he's working for creating structure and consistency spending money wisely	😊 Positive 👤 28	★★★★★ 4.5 Ranked #5 of 418 5 ★ 4 ★ 3 ★ 2 ★ 1 ★

SWOT Analysis

This analysis brings together findings from both engagement streams. Strengths and weaknesses describe internal district conditions, while opportunities and threats identify external factors that could support or hinder improvement. It reflects participant perspectives and strategic implications drawn from the feedback rather than an independent audit.

Strengths

- **Dedicated employees:** Experienced educators and support staff bring commitment, institutional knowledge, and community connections.
- **Cultural and linguistic diversity:** Students, families, and employees contribute perspectives that enrich learning and community life.
- **Resilience and resourcefulness:** Students and staff demonstrate perseverance and creativity through challenging conditions.
- **Community commitment:** Families, alumni, and locally rooted employees are invested in district success.
- **Established programs and partnerships:** Educational offerings and community relationships provide opportunities and practical support for students.

Weaknesses

- **Staffing and retention difficulties:** Vacancies, workload pressures, and compensation concerns affect continuity and services.
- **Inconsistent systems and direction:** Leadership transitions, shifting priorities, and fragmented coordination hinder sustained implementation.
- **Communication and trust gaps:** Limited follow-up, transparency, and stakeholder involvement weaken confidence.
- **Instructional and service concerns:** Participants report gaps in academic support, curriculum consistency, and specialized services.
- **Uneven access to resources:** Reported differences in staffing, facilities, transportation, and programs affect opportunity.
- **School climate challenges:** Concerns about behavior, attendance, mental health, and respectful treatment affect engagement.

Opportunities

- **State partnership:** Improvement support offers an opportunity to align leadership selection, priorities, and accountability.
- **Coordinated funding advocacy:** District, city, Board, union, and community collaboration could strengthen efforts to secure sustainable resources.

- Expanded partnerships: Universities, nonprofits, employers, and community organizations could broaden student services and learning opportunities.
- Educator development pipelines: Local preparation and credential partnerships could support recruitment and retention.
- Broader multilingual engagement: Accessible participation methods could involve more students, newer community members, and families in district decisions.

Threats (factors that may be outside the next superintendent's control)

- External funding constraints: Unpredictable funding, rising costs, and expiring temporary resources could further limit services.
- Competition for employees: More competitive compensation and working conditions elsewhere could draw staff away.
- Economic hardship: Poverty, transportation barriers, and limited access to healthcare may compound attendance and learning challenges.
- Political pressures: Competing priorities among governing bodies and stakeholders could disrupt decisions and progress.
- Reputational challenges: Negative perceptions could affect recruitment, partnerships, and community investment.

Leadership Capabilities Sought in the Next Superintendent

Across both streams, participants identified a consistent set of leadership expectations:

- Sustained commitment: Provide continuity and remain invested in Bridgeport through the work of improvement.
- Instructional leadership: Strengthen teaching, academic achievement, and support for varied learning needs.
- Financial stewardship and advocacy: Manage resources transparently and advocate effectively for adequate funding.
- Community understanding: Respect Bridgeport's history and diversity and build relationships with students and families.
- Collaborative governance: Work productively with the Board, city, state, unions, and community partners.
- Communication and follow-through: Listen, explain decisions clearly, involve stakeholders, and demonstrate progress.

Conclusion and Implications for the Next Superintendent

Bridgeport Public Schools offers its next superintendent an opportunity to lead a district with committed educators, resilient students and families, rich cultural diversity, and

community partners invested in its success. Participants expressed concern about longstanding challenges and belief in the district's potential. Their feedback establishes a clear expectation: leadership that understands Bridgeport, listens carefully, builds trust, and follows through on behalf of students.

The priorities ahead include strengthening academic achievement, supporting multilingual learners and students with disabilities, retaining talented employees, securing sustainable funding, and improving organizational stability and student services. Progress will require transparent financial stewardship, effective advocacy, collaborative governance, and consistent implementation. A focused strategic plan should build on successful practices and employee expertise while connecting district priorities to measurable improvements in learning, well-being, and equitable access to opportunity.

The next superintendent will find people ready to contribute their knowledge, energy, and commitment. By bringing them together around shared goals and developing productive relationships with the Board of Education, city, state, and community, the new leader can translate Bridgeport's strengths into lasting progress. This is an invitation to become part of the community, provide steady leadership, and help shape a future in which every student is supported, challenged, and prepared to thrive.

Interested in applying for the Superintendent of Schools role?

Explore the position details, key dates, and application requirements on our website.

Visit the Bridgeport Superintendent Vacancy Page

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Questions? Contact the search team at bridgeport@zeal-ed.com

