

Stakeholder Input Report for

**Montezuma-Cortez
School District RE-1
Cortez, Colorado**

submitted by



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EXECUTIVE RECRUITMENT & DEVELOPMENT

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Montezuma-Cortez School District Executive Summary of Common Themes Stakeholder & On-line Survey Results

Executive Summary

On February 9, 10 and 11, consultant Mr. Paul Reich conducted meetings with the district stakeholders representing the administration, school staff, students, parents, and community members to gather input regarding the selection of a new superintendent. Approximately 63 individuals participated in the five (5) one-hour stakeholder meetings including:

- 14 administration members
- Approximately 15-20 students
- 22 staff
- 12 parents
- 17 community members

In addition, 107 responses were received in the online survey which was open from February 12th through February 17th. Those results are included in their entirety (profanity and the names of individuals were removed) at the end of this report, and the general themes are incorporated as a part of this Executive Summary.

Tell us the good things about Cortez and Montezuma County:

- Abundant recreation opportunities, including deserts and mountains, parks, Recreation Center, hiking, biking, hunting fishing
- 1 hour to the mountains and the desert, and within driving distance to Phoenix, Salt Lake City, Denver, Albuquerque
- Great cultural diversity within the community
- Sense of community
- A great place to raise kids
- A very welcoming community
- Great youth sports program
- Still a small town feel where people help out one another
- Large enough to have some amenities but small enough to be friendly and easy to get around
- Multigenerational
- A safe community

- We are a small community that has locally owned businesses, commercial businesses and a great farming community.

Tell us the good things about your school district:

- Excellent staff who are committed to the kids and will go above and beyond to help
- Everyone cares about educating the kids
- Strong sports programs
- Strong extracurricular program in the arts and theatre
- Cohesive staff
- Good working relationship with the charter schools
- School health clinic
- Strong partnerships with area organizations like the Pinon Project, Farm to School
- Beautiful new high school
- Lots of options and programs for students in the high school
- The High School is working to carve out different meaningful pathways for students
- We acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of our students and families, and we honor each student's journey through the school
- Implementation of Restorative Practices
- Multi-age classrooms in the lower grades

What are the issues the incoming superintendent should be aware of as he/she comes to the district?

- Low salaries for staff
- Mill levies have been difficult to pass for new schools, increase in teacher salaries
- Turnover among staff due, in part, to low salaries
- Lack of trust in the administration to listen and take input from teachers
- Teacher recruiting can be challenging especially as we compete with neighboring districts on 4-day calendars
- High poverty rates in the community
- Issues with gathering stakeholder information and acting on it
- We are a conservative agricultural community with divided values
- The potential learning gap that has occurred due to COVID-19 and despite our success at keeping students in person for the most part
- Need to improve communication to the school community, parents, and broader Montezuma County community

What characteristics should the new superintendent have to be successful?

- A good listener
- Good communicator
- A bridge builder
- Someone with classroom experience
- Someone with proven success in raising student achievement
- Thoughtful and proactive, not reactive
- Someone with integrity, honest and open
- Someone who is committed to the community and the District

- A collaborator
- Someone who is familiar with school finance, budgets, mill levies
- A team player who knows how to build teams
- Grit and determination
- Wise and kind
- A strong backbone
- Visible in the community

Stakeholder Input
Reported as received from each stakeholder group

Name of Stakeholder Group: Administration

Tuesday, 2/9/21, 9:00 – 10:00 AM

Attendees: 14 staff

Tell us the good things about Cortez and Montezuma County

- Great weather
- Shopping is available
- Sense of community
- Desert 1 hour/High alpine tundra 1 hour away—two diverse climates
- Great recreational opportunities: hiking, biking skiing
- Diversity in the community; different and rich cultural groups in the community
- Positive diversity
- Recreation center
- Great place to raise kids
- Rural community
- Librarian knows your kids' names
- Small town feel
- Great youth sports programs
- Easy community to make friends
- Law enforcement and fire district are approachable; make a difference in our community
- Very tight knit community
- Beauty, outdoor activities, access to recreation
- Affordable community compared to other mountain towns
- Housing market—can be challenging for some
- Great place to raise kids

Tell us the good things about your school district

- We are proud of our district
- Very good district for students to receive an education
- Many highly qualified staff
- We prepare students for life after high school, not just for college but also for those students who enter right into the workforce
- A lot of veterans
- A lot of community partners-Pinon project, Farm to school project
- A lot of existing partnerships
- Not too much racism within the schools
- I can call anyone—we work well as a team
- District has Strategic Plan with identified priorities that we call Big Rocks
- Dedicated, caring staff

- Great place to educate kids
- Everyone was great with my kids
- Everyone cares about educating the kids
- Dedicated caring staff
- They will do anything in the best interests of the students
- Takes school safety seriously; a lot of work over the past three years
- Really strong team of principals and asst. principals—strong leadership at the building level
- One of the highest rating for principals from staff
- Strong robust current technical education
- Internships next year, partnering with businesses
- Award winning band and music
- Strong sports programs
- A lot of good things happening at the high school
- PD—trauma informed training; strong PD program
- Lots of opportunities for PD; lots of leadership roles for staff and opportunities for leadership
- Vision for the district; each school has a vision that feeds into the overall vision
- Big Rocks
- Clean audit for the last five years
- Good working relationship with the charter schools in the district
- Commitment to distributed leadership
- Teacher leadership team
- Aspiring leaders program to build leadership
- We have an infrastructure that is not the norm for a district of this size
- District is self reflective; we spend a lot of time looking at how we're doing and how it aligns with our goals and vision; constantly looking at how we can improve
- COVID-19—been in school almost 17 weeks this year; a lot of thought and process by staff; complex but clear plan; opportunities for staff to have a voice in the process; we've changed updated and adapted the plan to accommodate changes; clear and distinct plan; District has done a great job. From the beginning we have partnered with the county health department
- Cannot be understated the amount of work we've done this year; building leadership feels well supported
- SEL impact—staff really supported
- We do have systems in place-a good financial position; a good pd system and assessment system, good charter approval systems
- Accreditation is improving, graduation is improving; strong team leading that success

What are the issues the incoming superintendent should be aware of as he/she comes to the district?

- Low base pay for certified teachers
- 2 mill levy override attempts which failed
- School funding
- Balanced budget
- Wildly diverse school district
- Multiple entities to be a part of in the role
- Lots of different groups to work with
- Teacher recruiting and retention—turnover is a little higher than the state
- Pipeline partnerships are important—FLC/Boettcher/Univ. of Denver
- Mobility can be an issue at times; stabilized enrollment—poverty and displacement of families due to this
- Poverty rates; drug use; challenges in the community around these topics
- High rate of mental health needs in our area—a lot of pressure on school counselors due to problems with our partners
- In the throes of online/in person/hybrid—struggles with attendance; We have ongoing problems with attendance percentages. especially with our minority students
- As across the nation, we do struggle with teacher shortage. On a positive note, we have worked with FLC and Boettcher to recruit teachers

What characteristics should the new superintendent have to be successful?

- Advocate for our students and staff
- Someone who is adaptable, flexible, open to self reflection that we expect of ourselves
- Respectful of the work we've been successful with and the direction we are headed
- Being transparent
- Clear communication, transparency
- Live within the city limits of Cortez—would be nice if they live in the school district boundaries
- Someone who will participate in other activities in the community
- Committed and invested in the district
- Here for the long haul
- Not a stepping stone to some other opportunity
- Not so high up on a pedestal that they don't make time to talk to staff
- A team player; collectively in this work together
- Existing team is focused and works well as a team
- Accessible to staff
- Building leadership experience—relatable to staff; some experience in the classrooms
- This team is strong—strong supporter of our team
- Integrity
- Someone who understands K-12
- All the schools are our schools and all the kids are our kids
- Thoughtful and proactive, not as much reactive

- Very thoughtful and science driven. Lots of work with the community, especially County Health, to do what is best for both our staff and students.
- Someone who is thoughtful and is willing to listen before reacting and changing things.
- Someone who has vision and can see the endgame - keeps focused on the Big Rocks.
- Someone who is willing to become a part of the community.
- Someone who develops, empowers, and supports our school leaders
- Someone who is willing to do the work to understand the complex dynamics of our cultural make-up and the relationship with our Native American communities.
- Track record of success with improving student achievement
- Commitment to equity
- We have 3 charter schools and hopefully they will want to work with them

Name of Stakeholder Group: Students

Tuesday, 2/9/2021, 2:00 – 3:00pm

Attendees: Approximately 15-20

Tell us the good things about Cortez and Montezuma County

- Good sense of community
- Arts, athletics
- Recreational opportunities
- Welcoming environment
- Super friendly
- Strong support for the schools

Tell us the good things about your school district

- Commitment to the students and kids; the effort that people put out on behalf of students
- Atmosphere of schools
- How committed the district is
- Welcoming
- All one big community
- Diversity of programs—no matter which school you go to there are things to get involved in
- Keep the programs we have—FFA , Sports, and respect the programs
- Teachers at the middle school are working hard for students; teachers have worked really hard to make distance learning work
- Made learning accessible during COVID-19
- Teachers gave us their personal cell phones to contact them
- Sports programs—very thankful that basketball is going on
- Open Gym—really prepares students before the season
- Sports is so important—I wouldn't be in school if not for the sports program
- Teachers and staff have worked hard to make life as normal as possible; community and staff have come together to try to make things more normal

What are the issues the incoming superintendent should be aware of as he/she comes to the district?

- Distance learning has been more difficult; but generally good with some hiccups
- Teacher retention
- Turnover of teachers
- Appreciate the teachers to help reduce
- At high school—things feel very last minute
- Focused on the students' emotions and mental health
- Making sure that we solve problems that impact everyone and not just solve one issue
- Electives are not always at the top of the list for priorities—art, band, music, theatre
- Give us a level of respect as students and the adults we are becoming
- Let kids be kids—understand things from the point of view of an adolescent

What characteristics should the new superintendent have to be successful?

- Someone who is nimble
- Someone who is out in the community
- Inviting and welcoming to new ideas
- Trimesters we tried but didn't work
- Listening to the student voice
- Building a community
- Flexible, open minded
- Hiring good teachers, respecting teachers, listening to teachers; validate teachers
- Build a welcoming community
- Understanding of other people's situations
- Willing to listen and help
- Having a voice—not ignoring problems
- Seeing everyone's perspectives
- Need to be stricter in dealing with challenging situations
- We want them to be perfect

Name of Stakeholder Group: Staff

Tuesday, 2/9/2021, 5:30 – 6:30pm

Attendees: 22

Tell us the good things about Cortez and Montezuma County

- Geographically well located
- Outdoor
- Agricultures
- Extended families
- Multi generational
- Feel welcomed in the community
- Diversity within the cultures
- It is a great place to raise a family.
- Diversity within the schools

- Blending of cultures
- Feels like a small town
- Each of our schools have a culture unto themselves
- Undiscovered
- Still private
- Still a small town atmosphere
- True community where people help each other
- Lots of support here for families

Tell us the good things about your school district

- Connection to our students
- Strong relationships with students that continue beyond graduation
- All of our schools have great offerings
- At high school we have the best staff—most dedicated, educated people; wanting to share them with kids
- The best staff
- It's the people we have in our buildings that makes our schools incredible
- Dr. Suess day—we pull from within our schools
- Admin support system is strong
- A stronger parent connection due to COVID-19—impressive and strong feedback from parents
- 2 kids graduated with AA degrees; multiple certifications
- As teens we all wanted to leave Cortez, but many of us have come back
- Teachers have made a big impact
- We truly love our students
- Teachers nurturing generations of kids
- Graduates can keep the connection
- Community really supports our schools; community gathering place
- Graduation walks to the elementary schools
- Received a lot of support from administration
- A lot of love for the district
- Facebook page created by a parent—teachers could go online and ask for things for their classrooms
- COVID-19—custodial staff has kept our facilities clean; helped me feel safer
- A time to realize what our support groups do for us—out of the blue tech showed up, wifi
- Starting meeting in June to formulate a plan—very few positive cases in the middle schools
- 1st time online we had issues with families not having internet
- Learning was prioritized during COVID-19—district balanced safety with learning
- Think they have done well trying to adjust to the COVID challenge. Getting families what they need to succeed.
- Giving families options for online or in person I think has helped families feel safe.
- District supports the clinic—health clinic

- We're the heart of the community as we don't have a college here. If you want to see a play or some music, the school (pre covid) has great shows.
- Multiple new grants that if guidance is strong could have a positive impact.
- Our families are also very supportive. Parents are always asking what we need. They want to know how they can help.
- We have dedicated families and students with strong work ethics.
- Our secondary schools are known for their band program!
- I have two kids in the high school and two in the middle school. I feel like they are getting a good education. The teachers are expecting a lot from them and they are rising to meet the challenge. I have another son in college who increased his love of music due to his teachers and the opportunities that were offered.
- Another cool thing about the schools, they become like a home when you have teachers and their former students working together.
- Students in this small district have more opportunities to participate in sports than in bigger school districts where the competition is greater.
- Montezuma School to Farm programs were doing well before COVID.
- Prof ___ can come from in house sometimes too. We have amazing educators
- We have amazing paraprofessionals at the schools that deserve so much credit!

What are the issues the incoming superintendent should be aware of as he/she comes to the district?

- Professional development—working toward getting the district to offer variety as opposed to one size fits all
- Teacher retention- I feel we are a stepping stone for many good teachers who start here and move on
- Talk of a 4 day week- We lose teachers to nearby districts who have 4-day weeks
- Teacher morale is low; teachers need to know what is being done to help us feel that we are wanted here (not true at the school level)
- Teacher salaries are too low
- Live in a poor community
- Teacher salaries have been frozen
- Not looking for someone who sees this as a stepping stone for next job
- Need to look at our schools as a trauma informed school; not meeting the needs of all students
- Need additional staffing who work directly with the teachers
- Staff needs to be valued
- Very diverse population
- Our staff is an important factor of how we run our schools—kids need very individualized attention
- Takes all of us to make our schools run
- School funding impacts staffing
- School reputation is not great
- Should we restructure?

- For PD time, this is still a growing stride. We need improved PD for paraprofessionals that is differentiated for Significant Needs along with general resource. For Resource and our Significant needs teachers our PD has mostly come from BOCES or finding out on our own. That is not the districts fault but we do need more specialized PD for special education.
- Hope to recognize that it will take some time to return/readjust to "normalcy" or a "new norm" at the high school. Don't make decisions on departments/programs based on COVID numbers in the building. We are missing so many students still.
- Also need to have a plan to attend National conferences
- I do know that the new superintendent will have to do a lot of problem solving because of the academic gaps this has caused in our students. Maybe some creativity with the budget to get more people in the schools working directly with the students.
- I would love to see more work recognizing and celebrating cultural diversity.
- Schools need to be fully staffed!!!!
- Teachers need to feel valued. They need to be treated as professionals who can be trusted to make professional decisions.
- While Cortez is a wonderful community, we have a lot of community problems which a super will need to deal with; those trauma issues discussed earlier as well as a number of other issues related to rural poverty.
- We have a large portion of our population coming from trauma.
- A large number of our students are significantly below grade level. Our new leader will need to have a plan to address learning gaps in our students.
- Allow PD chosen by teachers...again trust teachers - at high school level we need the freedom to become better in our area of expertise
- We have teachers with great experiences that could teach small pd's. we need a superintendent that will take advantage of our skills.

What characteristics should the new superintendent have to be successful?

- A leader, not a manger. Someone who will listen to hear.
- Someone who is not afraid to make hard decisions ... do the things that need to be done
- Innovative
- Be a part of the community
- Need to stick around
- Need to understand who we are
- Someone who really wants to be here in SW CO
- A bridge to the community
- Someone who can build partnerships in the community
- Every school is unique and they have to appreciate the differences
- No other place that I know of that is this uniquely diverse—they need to understand that diversity and our community
- A leader who will take a hard look at district admin. Is everyone doing their job effectively?
- Open to having a teacher's table
- Someone willing to sit down and talk to us (the teachers)

- More bilingual opportunities
- Someone who shares the diverse qualities we see in our students and community
- Live within District boundaries
- Transparent
- Experience as a teacher—a lot of experience in the classroom
- Problem solver
- Communication
- Be in the buildings and visible in the buildings
- I want to put on record that I want our new superintendent to have been a teacher before. Someone who knows what its like to have been on the ground level and knows what we have all experienced.
- Needs to have classroom experience and trust the teachers to be professional and teach the students without micromanaging
- Creative and proactive
- Someone who supports a true standard based district
- Strong character
- Ability to love and be loved
- Be willing to look at programs
- Accountable and hold leadership accountable
- Charisma
- A family person

Name of Stakeholder Group: Parents

Wednesday, 2/10/2021, 7:00 – 8:00pm

Attendees: 12

Tell us the good things about Cortez and Montezuma County

- The small town atmosphere is great. Our community pulls together in times of need and is always there for others
- Outdoor recreation
- Lots of places to take your kids for camping and outdoor recreation
- Amazing teachers, instructors and staff—they have to be creative
- Size of our community; not too big, not too small
- I love the diversity of people and ideas in our area.
- We have great teachers and schools
- More resources than some smaller communities
- We know each other; accomplish things together
- Community is safe
- A good place to raise kids
- Super impressed with parent involvement
- A desire to a be a part of education
- Community members support these kids; they want to see success
- On a personal level, so many things which kids can be involved in
- Great sports programs

- Community has a lot of local talent and willing to give
- Comparatively speaking, housing is more affordable
- We can get to Denver, Salt Lake, Phoenix, close to Lake Powell
- Recreational amenities, parks
- Balancing act living here—enjoy some amenities (retail, parks, rec ctr)
- Values system we have as a community—good simple solid values
- Family is the central institution

Tell us the good things about your school district

- Willing to try new things
- New programs, new projects
- A willingness to take risks
- The teachers are fantastic—just an incredible staff; dedicated to their students
- Give their own time and money
- Go above and beyond
- Great arts program—theatre sets are beautiful and made from nothing but look spectacular
- Creative staff
- Facilities vary across the district
- District's greatest resource are the staff and students
- Lots of different cultures within the schools
- Charter schools are valuable to this district—glad that that choice exists
- School extracurriculars help kids to travel around the state and out of state
- We know each others' programs and school district has good partnerships—Pinon Project, Resource Center, Juvenile Services
- District is not an island
- Our pto at Lewis does a hoe down fundraiser each year and the community support and donations is absolutely amazing
- So many caring and dedicated teachers
- Great facilities at the high school, nice new building that is technology enabled.

What are the issues the incoming superintendent should be aware of as he/she comes to the district?

- Mill levies to support staff and schools- I think if we can do it differently than just a property tax increase, we will have a better chance at getting it passed. Not just property owners need to contribute, it needs to be community wide
- Changing perceptions of the needs in the school district for funding- previous administrations have failed to communicate and be trustworthy in the public eye and voters are hesitant because of previous experience.
- 1 tax passed in 21 years
- Low salaries for staff—some of the lowest in the state
- Teachers have to work multiple jobs
- A lack of trust
- High turnover in the schools among staff due to salaries

- Most underutilized members of our community are our parents
- Community members, parents, staff, and others are not listened to and their ideas are not heard and acted on—if you're not heard, you stop talking
- Opening the schools to parental volunteers—parents are underutilized. Many parents are willing to help in any way.
- Guidance into vo-tech and life skills should be presented as just as valuable as a 4-year degree.
- A generational perception of education—it gets handed down to the next generation and the valuing of education
- Communication is a struggle with the community
- Youth staying in our community needing jobs—large segment of students who graduate but don't always have the skills to enter the work force and the community does not have the jobs

What characteristics should the new superintendent have to be successful?

- Need a superintendent who can harness and encourage creativity among staff
- See what works and encourage those initiatives
- Flexible
- Bridge builder
- Experience with mill levies and fund raising
- Spend time listening to the parents, staff, community—take ideas and build on them
- Good communicator
- A good listener
- A proactive and out of the box thinker—an innovator
- Seeing every student as unique—and help those students achieve those goals
- See the resources we have and turn them into gold
- How do you engage students after COVID-19?
- Present in the community
- Be active in the community—we need someone who is willing to be involved and get out into the community and show us they care
- The face of the district in the community
- Comfortable being transparent, open communicator and honest with people
- Brave
- Communicate
- Head cheerleader- Toot the horn of what we are doing well in the district
- “Yes you can attitude”
- Willing to meet with all
- Be able to say no, but be willing to work for the yes

Name of Stakeholder Group: Community

Thursday 2/11/2021, 7:00 – 8:00pm

Attendees: 17

Tell us the good things about Cortez and Montezuma County

- Rural community
- Inviting to people moving from a larger community
- We like the lifestyle we have here and want to hold on to that
- Diversity of people
- Friends from all kinds of backgrounds
- Respect for traditions
- Multigenerational
- Incredibly beautiful surroundings
- Diversity of professions
- People with many different types of skills
- Lots of recreational opportunities
- Family values
- We want people who want to come here and become a part of the community
- Good about accepting diversity
- Great place to live
- Great place to raise kids
- Open spaces, mountains and deserts, proximity to everything
- Archeological history of the area
- Families that have lived here for generations and people that have lived here for a year
- Small town
- From young and old it's a tight knit community
- We work together
- Recreational opportunities—Rec Center
- Park system is a gem
- Strong traditional values
- Lots of good faith based preschool choices
- Local churches
- We're a safe community

Tell us the good things about your school district

- Great kids here who are resilient, hard workers-inventive and figure it out
- Wonderful teachers
- Diversity of students
- Can walk to school
- Great families
- Strong values
- Strong partnerships—Forest service lands for the SW Open School/SW Health System Board/Pinyon Project/local churches providing backpack program
- School based clinic

- Home visiting programs for infants/toddlers and preschool programs
- Community foundations support the schools
- Strong community partnerships
- Strong sports programs important to kids and the community
- Arts and music departments are great and need to be nurtured and supported
- We have a great band program
- Strong theatre program/drama department

What are the issues the incoming superintendent should be aware of as he/she comes to the district?

- Sometimes can be afraid of changes—need a superintendent who can show us what is possible and let us choose
- Teacher salaries and school financing
- Teacher retention
- Not enough preschool slots for parents
- Get us back to normal after or in spite of COVID-19—sports, in school
- Look at all the students whether college bound or trade school or work
- Don't just look at our test scores—don't reflect the reality of what our students are doing and what our teachers are doing—don't be scared of the test scores but dive deeper and be willing to learn more
- Do we teach to the test too much?
- Counseling programs and academics are going to be needed after COVID-19 even more
- What's the role of parents in social emotional learning?
- Students without parents present in their lives and high poverty levels in our community
- Shut down has resulted in loss of students from the District—going to alternatives
- Need our schools to be open
- Receptive to input—not feel that we're listened to
- Low trust in the schools because voices don't feel that they are heard

What characteristics should the new superintendent have to be successful?

- Embrace the diversity of our community
- Loving and caring for the community
- A passion for making the world a better place
- A bridge builder
- Strong focus on academics
- Trust in the teachers
- Understand the budget
- Aware of social emotional issues
- Good communicator with parents
- Transparent
- Good problem solver—not always willing to take the easy solution
- Strong listener
- Someone who is willing to listen and take into account what they are saying
- Take criticism without getting defensive

- Calm and able to listen
- Diversified in serving on a lot of levels
- Know who to contact and get something done
- Lives here or wants to put down roots here
- Not a stepping stone to another place
- Very focused
- Able to set priorities and stick to them
- Would rather have someone who is familiar with a rural community
- Someone who is ambitious and is not always taking the tried and true path
- Business knowledge; understanding of school finance; understanding of budgets

*Survey Monkey Results for Montezuma-Cortez School District
February 2021*

*(NOTE—these responses have not been edited,
they are printed as entered by the stakeholders)*

107 Responses

Administrators

Tell us the good things about your community. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)

- For the most part adheres to state regulations.
- We have a close community that works together to solve difficult problems and to support the community. We have great organizations, such as the Pinon Project, working to support students and families.
- At least 20--25% of us in Cortez believe in actual science.
- Strong multi-cultural appreciation
- Beautiful, peaceful place. Lots of open spaces and nature. Proximity to amazing outdoor destinations. Reasonable cost of living.
- Good things about my community are diversity, the support of community, and the opportunity our community provides .
- This is a warm community with many invested families. The community supports the school, supports its teachers, and supports student activities
- recreation areas/outdoor activities, rich in cultures, growing community in a transition of finding balance in multiple viewpoints
- Location! Less than an hour from mountains, rivers and the desert.

Tell us the good things about your schools. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)

- Wouldn't know but its not a good sign that 60% of h.s. grads leave and don't look back
- The teachers in the district are very dedicated and caring. There are some excellent community partners who work with the district.
- The toilets flush and the roof has never leaked during my employ.
- Always put the needs of students first
- The high school is a new building. A handful of the good teachers hang around despite the poor pay and the communities' lack of valuing/supporting education.
- Our schools have amazing staff, people genuinely here to support our students and fellow staff.
- The high school, in particular, is working to carve out different meaningful pathways for students (ex: a CTE pathway; an honors-track pathway, etc.). We acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of our students and families and are working to honor each student's journey through high school so that they graduate with a clear direction in mind and a skillset to help them to reach their post-graduate goals.
- implementation of Restorative Practice, multi age classroom, family support
- Caring teachers. Access to school-based health center for staff and students.

What issues should the superintendent be aware of as he/she comes into the district? (This information is shared with the final candidates.)

- This place needs more opportunities for employment
- There are many students who have experienced trauma and also many students who are from culturally diverse backgrounds. The superintendent will need to evaluate the responsiveness of the schools to these student populations.
- A strong awareness of trauma that is prevalent among the student body
- 4A couldn't be passed multiple times. The community doesn't support education or educators, largely. Lots of families come from poverty, which often creates trauma that affects learning/behavior from an early age. Families don't prioritize their children attending and participating in school. Staff are underpaid. Keeping good, experienced teachers is hard.
- Our new superintendent should be aware of the poverty in our community, our LGBTQ community, the diversity of our district and the people who make it diverse. They should be aware of school lunches making sure students don't go without a meal or have a meal taken from them if their account is low. Our superintendent should be aware of the substances that haunt our community, the safety of our students and staff.
- This is a small, rural community. Initial pushback to outsiders is not uncommon (speaking from experience). As someone new to the community, you have to work to build trust. Someone new coming in has to have a thick skin and perseverance during this initial phase.
- transportation, salaries, low socioeconomic levels strengthen relationships with local tribes, increase board diversity Deep sociopolitical divisions in the school and community. Lack of programs and equity or socioeconomically depressed families
- Individuals in key leadership positions have left/are leaving this year.

What skills, qualities or characteristics should the new superintendent possess to be successful here? (This information is used as we screen potential candidates.)

- Honestly. Integrity. Fairness.
- The superintendent should have excellent communication skills, leadership qualities that enhance and encourage the skills of others on staff, have background and knowledge of culturally responsive schools and trauma informed approaches.
- An understanding of tradition as well as updated educational research
- Grit. Creativity surrounding financial shortfalls of the district. Understanding of the importance and challenges of staff retention in this district.
- Humanity, listening, caring, open minded, willing to learn something new, and compassion.
- Perseverance, value for diversity, value for post-secondary options that include but are not limited to a 4-year university, value for the outdoors
- forward thinking, goal oriented, communication skills Staff and student centered for the future success.
- Desire to learn about community dynamics.

Community Members

Tell us the good things about your community. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)

- We live in a small, friendly community that tries to be very supportive .
- Rural Community with nuclear family values.
- Great outdoor activities, within 100 miles of just about any kind of outdoor recreation.
- It is diverse, and strong outdoor Activites.
- The people in the community are friendly and aren't afraid to tell you what they think.
- Some parents are...passionate. Some parents depend entirely on the schools to raise their kids.
- Quite, small town atmosphere. Close to many recreational opportunities.
- Though small, this community has a number of amenities that make Cortez an attractive place to live: A beautiful, extensive park system. Large Recreation Center with comprehensive programming based on community input and needs. Community focus on youth. Community awareness and response to needs within the community, I.e., homelessness, food security. Abundance of outdoor recreation opportunities including miles and miles of community initiated and maintained hiking/biking paths. Fishing and hunting. Moderate climate — lots of sunny days. Clean air. Beautiful vistas. Wonderful tri-city libraries.
- Beautiful weather, friendly people, scenery, outdoor recreation.
- Friendly. Diverse.
- We have a diverse community & I love that.
- Ideal climate Rural area Great Rec center, parks, open areas Low crime
- The Montezuma-Cortez RE-1 community is a vibrant, diverse community composed of long-time residents and new arrivals. There are numerous out-of-school opportunities for students and for parents, as well as amazing outdoor recreational locations.
- It is a beautiful place to live with lots of outdoor activities. In the winter there is skiing, sledding, snowshoeing. In the summer there is hiking and fishing, swimming, kayaking, paddleboarding, rafting, in the lake and river. In the spring the wildflowers are beautiful and in the fall the colors changing are spectacular.
- We supported a new high school.
- Beautiful landscape, generally good weather.
- We have access to the outdoor space right in our backyard. It is a simple, slow pacs life. And a wonderful place to raise kids for this reason.
- There are so many people here that really care about this community. The quality of life is great, its slower paced, not as busy, and endless recreation opportunities.
- Many recreational activities close by: mountains, rivers, desert, red rock country and including a fantastic recreational center in town. Several good parks as well.
- Give them something to celebrate . They will support schools if they see how it grows a strong town.
- The community is diverse.
- The lifeblood of this community is agriculture and other labor trades that bring hard working honest people to this community. Yet there is still diversity in this community that makes Cortez unique and special place to live.
- We have a low cost of living but are within an easy drive to some of the most spectacular natural resources and landscapes in the country.

- Abundant and convenient outdoor recreational activities; temperate climate, with 4 distinct seasons; great restaurants; no traffic.
- This community is very diverse. Economically, geographically and ethnically. If you want to do it, we probably have it. Although we lack "high culture" events like the symphony, opera and formal theater, those events are available nearby.
- Near mountain recreation.

Tell us the good things about your schools. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)

- Our schools have been open at least part of the time this last year. Friendly staff and teachers.
- Quality schools with plenty of opportunity for educating our youth. Sharing caring families to help one another lift up our youth and set them on a positive future. The youth are our future and they need a fighting chance.
- we have hardworking staff - from teachers to support staff - at our schools. Some were born and raised here; many are "transplants" from somewhere else who chose this place because of its location. These folks genuinely care about the quality of education.
- For the elementary schools they are continually striving to improve the quality of education for the students, our middle school brings the 4 elementary schools into one and at times did have to adjust with the number of students. The High school which is the newest and built with the community use in mind and also had the support of the community, this has allowed the students to walk easily through the building to their classes. It is very energy efficient, and with the help of the Montezuma school to farm project it allows the students to provide some fresh produce into the schools. The local hospital is a huge partner with having a clinic in the high school to allow students and staff to have access for health care. The high school has a strong career technical education. And the community is a strong advocate for the arts (music, choir and drama departments). The local community college has partnered with the high school to provide an avenue to obtain college credits .
- We have some good teachers, but there are many improvements that need to be made-- quality teachers, quality coaches, and much less administration.
- Teachers and staff are dedicated and see the struggle that kids go through and have a genuine desire to help.
- Clean and well maintained. They seem to be very successful in dealing with a very diverse population. They are very tied in with the community
- Dedicated, creative teachers. Community funded a bond to build a state-of-the-art high school.
- I grew up attending Beech St Kindergarten, Kemper Elementary, Cortez MS and HS. They were great schools with great teachers. I currently don't have kids who attend school but feel like the district needs a strong leader who cares about staff, kids, and families and how they can be supported for success.
- Outdoor garden spaces.
- Teachers and administrators are so dedicated.
- New high school building
- The schools in RE-1 continually strive to improve and to empower all of their students.
- The teachers are great. They work hard and are kind.
- We have an open high school,

- My children went through Re-1 schools K-12, both won scholarships to good research universities, and are both well employed.
- Because it is small schools, you really know the teachers and the teachers really know the kids. That is harder to get in a larger district.
- Teachers really care about their students and try their best with the resources they have.
- New high school with student links to higher educational opportunities. three elem. schools. Several charter schools with good accountability.
- Very good teachers Keep All the arts strong! This will keep students wanting to attend school. As a retired teacher, you have to offer more than what they can get online. Put the humanity back in a wholistic system that has been ruined by the unfair NCLB.
- The teachers care.
- Along with the community the schools have great diversity and show to have great teachers that deal exceptionally well with challenges presented to them.
- Our students are nice. I have taught in other areas and our students are very supportive of each other.
- Dedicated teachers and staff. Brand new high school. Extracurricular activities/programs, such as sports, band and clubs, which are proven to enrich students' lives.
- The RE-1 schools have been making great strides at improvements and collaboration between teachers, students and administrators has been very effective.
- A new high school facility.

What issues should the superintendent be aware of as he/she comes into the district? (This information is shared with the final candidates.)

- We are a conservative ag community.
- We value our education, we also value honesty and transparency in our schools. Something that has been lacking.
- You are walking into a community divided, in ideology and viewpoints. There is a progressive element in this community that wants to move education forward, to give our students the best shot at success. There is another element that wants to institute values and bring in ideology that has nothing to do with education, rather they want to exact political retribution on leaders who do not think the way they think.
- Our district has a high number of free and reduced students. And the county and city are very opinionated with their political views.
- A major problem is the lack of attendance--both those students who come from families who live on entitlements and those children from the reservation.
- The district currently pays its employees practically nothing, caters to and caves the loudest group of parents, and is astronomically lacking in knowledge on mental health.
- The diverse backgrounds of the student population
- RE-1 serves a conservative, rural, very diverse community. With a 25+% poverty rate, many students come into school with issues common to economically deprived families — food security issues, poor language development, few or no books or enrichment opportunities in their homes, absenteeism, and parents who, for a variety of reasons, are not as engaged in their child's education. The pandemic has intensified the digital divide many students experienced before the lockdown. Funding is an issue. It is hard to get voters in this district to vote to increase the mil levy which has resulted in cutbacks on staff and programming and makes teacher retention difficult. Long-standing issues

with our native population that have resulted in lack of trust and made it difficult to come together to solve problems.

- We have a diverse population. Rich, poor, middle class. Native, White, Hispanic, Black, Japanese and Chinese. Our kids need staff who teach to this diversity not to just kids who are top of the class. Staff need support teacher retention needs to be a priority and I don't think it's just pay I think it is providing support in the classroom with PARAs etc.
- -high teacher turnover/low pay -high poverty rate, many families are struggling. Covid has exasperated the issues
- The school board can get out of their lane. I listened to a recent board meeting about athletics & people attending- they should not be involved at that level.
- Low pay for teachers Politically conservative Low community support for school funding
- There is sometimes tension between long-time residents and new arrivals, and it can be difficult to feel fully integrated into the community.
- This town is very divided. One group is far right and bullying. "Patriots" parading on Saturdays. Other is a group who wants us to reach to the future in normal ways.
- Political divisions, suspicion of government
- There is a big divide between old school/new school think. The people born and raised here really struggle with new people moving in and see them as outsiders. This is challenging on a lot of fronts. There is also a lack of education in this community and so ignorance (I really dislike this word 🙄) can play a role in a lot of the tension. Rumors can also be problematic.
- There is a lack of trust in the administration from the community which leads to lack of funding. When asked to increase mil levy on the ballot, they usually don't pass because there is a lack of understanding or transparency on where the money will go.
- Racial inequities (Native American and Hispanic)
- This community as a whole seems to not trust district decisions .Transparency and community involvement in education as it relates to" it takes a village." Refuse state tests
- There are a lot of adult bullies in the region that do not value quality educational programming, and believe in alternative facts. They want to bring fringe Christianity into schools, even though that would alienate our large Native student population.
- The superintendent should be aware of certain cultural norms, be decisive in improving the culture and seek not just for educational improvement, but one of a higher social and moral standard. The chosen superintendent should be familiar with the community its unique challenges (by having lived in it), understand its strengths/operations and should have preferably taught within the community. This would ultimately be the key factors in them being aware of issues the district has.
- People from outside our area will have an adjustment with the Native American culture. It does not take long but what you THINK it will be like is not reality.
- A vocal minority of community members who seek to thwart change and progressive ideals (science and accurate history) and push a "Christian" agenda in public schools.
- This community is culturally and economically diverse. What drives one aspect of the community probably will not drive the entire community. Focusing on one part of the community will not unify the entire community.
- Radical right-wing extremists. Radicalized white evangelical conservatives.

What skills, qualities or characteristics should the new superintendent possess to be successful here? (This information is used as we screen potential candidates.)

- Be willing to cut costs where possible and work with everyone.
- Transparency to parents and the community. Focus on education not advocacy. An ability to reign in costs again with educating students as the focus.
- Patience, ability to see the future (20 years out) and start planning for it;
- She or he will need to be a great listener, they will have to believe in outcomes and not be satisfied with status quo. And will have to have a thick skin, as they will always be known as an outsider even if it is someone who is a local. The diversity of the district is a unique quality and can be stressful but when you peel back many layers you can truly see what each individual can add to the quality of life here in Southwest Colorado.
- This person should be realistic and down to earth. They should meet problems head on, and quit trying to please everyone.
- A backbone, an understanding of school funding, an understanding of the importance of mental health and its relation to school safety.
- Be flexible and willing to work closely with the community
- Will be critical that applicants considered understand what it means to live in a rural community. Shopping, entertainment, cultural amenities such as access to plays, symphonies, and museums is limited so if these are important, RE-1 may not be a good fit. If married, will the spouse need/want a job? A proven track record of being able to work with very diverse groups will be important. Excellent communication skills. Budgeting and finance skills plus expertise in applying for grants. Important that whoever is chosen will engage in the community on many levels and is willing to commit to staying here for a number of years rather than looking at this position as a short-term stepping stone to advance their career.
- Leave politics out of it, support academic, sports, music etc. Understand where families are coming from study up on poverty, trauma and Native culture
- - someone that understands diverse populations including Ute Mountain Ute tribe - desire to move district forward. -bilingual - creative and resourceful in helping underrepresented populations -increase Votech opportunities
- Proven track record. Is data driven & believes in testing to evaluate the quality of education that our students are receiving.
- Sense of humor Community engagement Determined to remain for long period of time Progressive
- The new superintendent should have classroom teaching experience in addition to administrative experience. They will need to be accomplished conflict managers and team builders.
- A strong backbone is needed
- Ability to work with different groups of people: white, Spanish, Native American.
- Strong support of faculty, ability to cooperate with broad spectrum of people, creative budgeting skills, GREAT love of children, ideas, critical thinking, STRONG belief in a bright future.
- Be able to cross bridges with old and new think. However, be able to stand his/her/their ground once decisions are made.
- High emotional intelligence, Good communication skills, good at fostering and maintaining relationships, and is not afraid to hold people accountable.
- Networking skills, grant writing, community transparency.

- Clear concise direction given to each principle but then going beyond to getting to know and trust those hired to do a job they were trained to do.
- Political savvy. Consensus builder. The superintendent will need to be able to navigate through the vitriol of the strong extremist special interest groups that are full of hatred and bigotry towards anything they can't comprehend or don't understand.
- The new superintendent should be a principle based leader. Their professional and personal life should reflect a person of character and high moral standard as it reflects back on the community. They should live, breath, preach correct principles (truths) and how these same principles when adopted can increase the individuals circle of influence for good. They should also have the energy and strong desire to optimistically find solutions without passing the buck onto others and increasing their workloads just because they can.
- Commitment, patience, perseverance, and fun
- Objectivity and excellent communication skills.
- The superintendent needs to have political savvy as well as understanding the two houses of business operations and educational operations. The new superintendent will also need the skill of listening and observing prior to making systemic changes in organization or process of education in the schools.
- Learn to use and carry a firearm. Our community members require it.

Non-Certified Staff

Tell us the good things about your community. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)

- Our community is small, but growing. There are so many programs to help children and families out.
- We have a strong, hard working and caring community. Remember though that we are rural, no shopping, no entertainment, no high end restaurants and limited medical services. There is a lot of outdoor activities, i.e. biking, skiing, fishing, boating and hiking. We have a variety of activities for children. Our weather is not extreme in any of the seasons.
- beautiful setting. recreational opportunities abound including Mesa Verde National Park, Hovenweep, Anasazi Heritage Center, Canyon of the Ancients, etc. Cortez offers all the basics in retail and services, but within an hour's drive one can access larger cities for quality medical, retail and restaurants.
- We are a close community, a lot of good people willing to go above and beyond for people
- There is a lot of cultural diversity in our community.

Tell us the good things about your schools. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)

- Our schools have such wonderful staff and the children are definitely the main focus!
- I have worked for the district for 24 years and we have made a lot of progress. We have a new high school and it has great educational opportunities for kids. We are proud to have a good safety system in place. Our grants department does a good job of securing grants to in order to provide added money to the budget. We have an exceptional band, choir and drama departments. All of our principals are strong and we are moving forward in educating kids. We have a high rate of poverty and face challenges with that. Our budget is sound, but dollars are limited and this is a continuing challenge.
- Neighboring districts and private schools offer parents a choice.
- Most teachers care about their students.
- Our schools are open in this pandemic and working hard to keep open.

What issues should the superintendent be aware of as he/she comes into the district? (This information is shared with the final candidates.)

- Our community is great, but we need more support for our schools and district.
- We have six key administrative positions that will need to be filled (due to retirements/resignations). New people in all of these positions at once is going to be challenging, but will also leave the door open to positive change and direction. I feel the one area we are lacking is communication among staff as well as the community. They will need to be aware of our Ute Mountain Ute Reservation and meeting their needs can be challenging. We have a new but very strong and finance director and I feel his expertise and knowledge can be trusted so the new superintendent will need to rely on his expertise. Listen to the teaching staff but be able to say a strong no to some of their demands.
- If provided an opportunity to speak candidly, staff morale is low. Transparency is often spoken of, but communication is sorely lacking. Favoritism abounds.
- Very low teacher/district budget

- Hourly employees are asked to work more hours than they are paid for because their duties take longer.

What skills, qualities or characteristics should the new superintendent possess to be successful here? (This information is used as we screen potential candidates.)

- Multi-tasking, open to changes for the better, friendly, proactive, and productive.
- Strong in both written and verbal communication skills. A good listener, but don't cave in to demands that are not possible. Open and friendly personality. A quick learner if not familiar with Colorado Education. Willing to try new approaches. Get involved with the community. Realize this is a FULL TIME position.
- I am hopeful that our new superintendent will dare to question the status quo and put a stop to nepotism! Humble leadership and approachability would also top my list.
- Someone who is personable and approachable - will not make you feel like you are a child when you speak with them about a concern.

Parents

Tell us the good things about your community. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)

- The area is beautiful. The Four Corners has everything an outdoorsman would love.
- Mostly conservative community
- It's beautiful, with quick access to the mountains, the desert, and many lakes.
- When someone is in need the community pulls together and helps each other out. No matter what the situation is.
- Nothing
- We are a diverse community, we have a lot of passion, and if put towards a positive direction, our community can really rally together. This is a great place to call home.
- We are a small community that has locally owned businesses, commercial businesses and a great farming community. There are great opportunities for the outdoor person-lakes and rivers for boating and kayaking and beautiful mountains for hiking or camping along with bicycling or just to enjoy. We have beautiful parks that are used for many things.
- The teacher really do give there all when it comes to the students.
- Pulls together to help. Close to outdoor recreation. Close to fun big cities. Bangin sushi restaurant. Four distinct seasons. Small town pride. Helpful neighbors. Teachers that go above and beyond.
- 4 hours from any major city, beautiful land and area, and Small community living
- Mesa Verde, Rec Center, several hiking, walking biking trails, within a couple hours to two great ski resorts, mild weather
- We are diverse group of people. Which has good and bad qualities.
- We are full of families, activities and extraordinary people here. We are small and quaint and care about our future and providing our children with best resources available to them.
- I love that our community is small, connected and rooted in care for one another. My favorite part of shopping or attending events is seeing all of my family, friends, neighbors and acquaintances. I also value that the majority of our community members value and practice hard work. This acts as a bond across cultures. Rural life is difficult but very rewarding.
- Montezuma County is rural and Cortez is still a small town. You will see people you know everywhere you go. Outdoor opportunities abound, nestled between canyon country and the rocky mountains.
- Small close knit, helpful community. Family values matter here.
- It's a beautiful area with lots to do during all seasons of the year.
- Small community, that cares about each other. Lots of outdoor activities
- The diversity

Tell us the good things about your schools. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)

- Like every school, there are positives and negatives.
- Not much good to say right now because we are required to wear masks and there is no science that says this works. It only makes humans look like we are all sick - and we are not!
- We have teachers who are willing to go above and beyond for their students.
- I feel like the teachers at the schools are incredible. We honestly don't give them enough credit.
- Kemper Elementary & Southwest Open School are the only schools that care about the wellbeing of their students.
- We have A LOT of amazing teachers who pour their heart and souls into our students and their community. These teachers are our backbone and my sons have benefited so much from having such amazing teachers and support staff.
- Right now, negatives outweigh the positives. Minority of teachers want to work. Shutdowns.
- Excellent teachers, upgraded technology
- My kids went to PV and small class really does matter. My children got the attention they needed when in their class.
- MANY parents that love to be involved as volunteers. Families know and support each other. Dedicated teachers and staff who truly love their profession. Community support in fundraising and providing materials
- As of right now, nothing. If there isn't some change and acceptance of others' life styles, then my child won't be enrolled in our district.
- Managua is a wonderful school full of hard working people who are so great with the kids.
- We have some great teachers and schools, and some not so much
- Our schools are in need of a good turn around. We have so much potential, I have seen it and witnessed it as I went to these same schools growing up. We need structure and someone who is willing to put in their all for the students and not just the staff.
- The schools serve to connect families and students that may not interact in typical social situations. When cultivated carefully, classrooms can be environments of respect and care for all students.
- The district has worked hard to meet every student where they are. A program is in place that helps students work toward career paths beginning in middle school. There are also several charter schools operating within the district umbrella which are all treasured options in the community. There are great connections with the Pueblo Community College southwest Colorado campus.
- The teachers are kind, hardworking, individuals that care about their students.
- Smaller schools, kids can be involved in lots of different avenues
- Highly qualified teachers, they love our students and devote their time to support them.

What issues should the superintendent be aware of as he/she comes into the district? (This information is shared with the final candidates.)

- The district has some tough students. Tough students should not be coddled and allowed to remain in the classroom. The classroom needs to be reserved for students who behave.
- Be aware that teachers no longer understand that skills need to be taught for kids to be successful - not emotional training.
- This community is divided politically and you will not be able to please everyone. It's not possible. Diversity should be embraced, not squelched, and you have your work cut out for you. I hope you have strong shoulders and enjoy challenges.
- There needs to be more communication with the parents from the district. This last year was embarrassing. They had all summer to plan for online learning and they waited til the last minute. We didn't even get a phone call til the day before to let us know how our Children's teacher would be. There is also too much bullying going on at the middle school. Next year my daughter is going to be attending there and I'm deathly afraid. And so is she. We are debating about taking her to Dolores because there seems to be nothing done to stop the bullying. There are so many young girls wanting to end their life because of how they are being treated there and that is so sad to see. You guys need to be there safe spot.
- RE-1 school district has administration & BOCES staff that are Mentalism or sanism. Every student that had an IEP & 504, they need to be checked on periodically, to make sure they are actually receiving correct accommodations & education. Some families are being treated horrible cause of their skin color.
- I feel our district has become so lax on discipline. It makes it hard to retain teachers when they are not able to teach the 20 kids that are there to learn because one or two are disrupting all those kids. Different accomodations need to be made without exposing all the kids to second hand trauma that a few project. Accountability to both students and parents is critical and this has greatly went by the wayside. Our teachers deserve to be able to teach without contant chaos and our kids deserve to feel safe at school. Buying into the idea of keeping every kid in school becasue they need school is hurting many others . The incintives for doing right to bribe kids need to stop and reward those that are already doing right. Too much focus is placed on the kids that are disrupting class. Our district needs to look harder at finding alternative options outside of the main buildings for those students.
- I feel that more motivation is needed for the students. Rules need to be enforced more and our students need to feel that they matter. With both parents having to have jobs our students tend to fall between the cracks but the student also needs to know that an education is important and teachers are there to teach and help them learn. The teachers in our community are excellent and do all they can do.
- There is not near enough support to the teachers. I feel the administration is spending money where it is not needed and thus the teacher are paying for it.
- Small town. Difficulty transitioning from larger city to very rural area. Limited funds, lower economic area.
- Be open to our community and not pander to the state
- The bus situation, people are not happy with the changes, or the falsehood from the soon to be previous superintendent and admin about why the changes were made.
- With the diverse group of people living here, you must make sure to hear all of them. Not just the one you politically align with. You communication skills must be on point.

This has been lacking the last few years Hold your administration accountable when they let things slide.

- There is some negative feelings here towards the district and I encourage the new person to come in and listen to individual staff member about what may need work or changed, listen to the students and the parents.
- I am primarily concerned with two issues. First, the seemingly endless charade around learning and the "Corona Virus". I am devastated to see students and parents being held hostage. Online learning is not a viable short or long term option for the children of our community. I am speaking with more and more parents who want consistent, in person school for their children and will begin to seek home school or private options if things do not return to normalcy. The second concern revolves around the introduction of Critical Race Theory into our school system. This is a THEORY and is being pushed across the country without discussion that it is just that. I will not tolerate it being normalized in our schools, especially without prudent and informed consent from parents.
- There is some long-held mistrust of the district, partially stemming to miscommunication and poor planning of the newest high school construction and the costly and slow demolition of the previous high school. This was the last tax issue passed by voters, and none in favor of the school have been able to pass since then. There seems to be pretty high teacher turnover, partially because of low salaries. We are a border community to the Ute Mountain Ute tribe and Navajo nation. It is critical to work with the Ute Mountain Ute tribe who depend on the RE-1 school district for secondary education.
- The dynamic of different cultures melding under one roof. This is a long standing challenge that requires extra attention. Political views in the school setting should not be allowed. Teachers should teach academically only without a slant of politics.
- That Montezuma-Cortez schools are public, not private. Therefore, it would be inappropriate for there to be any religious teaching. Any employee in the school district is able to hold whatever religious beliefs that they wish and it isn't okay for them to proselytize, influence, or teach students things of this nature on school grounds. Additionally, people in the administration should not let their religious views dictate school policies, curriculum, clubs that are allowed to be in schools, etc. I only say this because I have heard some in the community wanting the public school to be more like a Christian school. This is not acceptable. Also, our students need to learn the true history of our country, not the white-washed version.
- Political variables. Sometimes the community doesn't see eye to eye on things. Large tribal population that needs to be considered
- Salaries are terribly low, staff turnover is high

What skills, qualities or characteristics should the new superintendent possess to be successful here? (This information is used as we screen potential candidates.)

- We need a problem solver who isn't afraid to make hard or unpopular decisions. The decisions always need to be based on what is best for the STUDENTS. We need someone who remembers schools are built for students, not teachers.
- Problem solver vs appeaser. You cannot pass the buck.
- Go with the flow, keep the best interest of the students (including minorities and lgbtq+) as your focal point when navigating decisions.
- Leadership. A voice for the students and parents so they feel like they are being heard.
- Everything to do with IEP, 504 & special education.
- Value employees as family, yet high expectations. High expectations for students and parents as well. Good financial awareness. Make sure to treat teachers of great value while still having high expectations. Help create an environment that takes the rif-raf out of the buildings...stronger discipline so the teachers will want to stay and do their job and the students will feel safe.
- Strong-staff is not putting kids first. Need someone to push back on teachers not wanting to work. Push for consistency on direct instructions. No shutdowns like our surrounding schools. Budget-district is not handling the budget to best of its ability. Ex: Letting buses run into the ground completely and no plans for replacement until it becomes an emergency. Assertive-high school seems to be pushing out great career tech programs. Push for programs that encourage "all students matter" regardless if student wants to go straight to workforce, trade school, or college. Business background-running a school has many different spokes to the wheel. Supers need to trust their team to keep everything well greased and understand how to create those teams. Focused-now Super runs from one focus to another. Never completing the task at hand and staying towards the goal created. Department knowledge-knowing and understanding the departments to know if their teams head is on task. Ex. Curriculum leader just jumps from curriculum to curriculum without thoroughly investigated the curriculum of what is best for our students/teachers. She seems to maintain job while at least 80% of teachers disagree with her path. Respect-majority of staff and community does not respect admin. Someone willing to work on gaining respect for the admin building as a whole.
- Give 100% to their position. Know that there will be challenges that he or she will face. Share your knowledge with the students when something is questionable and know that the way you treat them will earn you respect with them. They are looking for someone to look up to and trust. Along with your many earned skills in education and your ability to guide them will make them successful
- Being able to eliminate what is not needed and getting what the teachers need meet. And asking the teachers what they want personally
- Willingness to hear and work with staff, teachers, and parents. Knowledge of small town issues, not wanting to treat the district like a big city district. Involvement with activities. Willing to get behind EVERY student from the ones that are behind to the ones that need advanced resources.
- Follow the county and local laws and not follow the states overreach that doesn't apply to our community. Be respectful of all aspects of people's lives like conservative ways and non mask policies parents don't follow or have faith in.
- Honesty.
- Communication - HUGE Parents and community need to actually know what is going on with time to prepare, not last minute happenings. Schools need to communicate, not

having parents beg for information or finding out on Facebook. NOT EVERYONE has Facebook

- They should know how to get funding and help to our small town schools, they should be present in the students life as well as the staff. Be visible at games and plays and school functions....be involved! See it first hand.
- The superintendent needs to be familiar with and ideally from a small or rural town/city. Those from large cities have little to no idea how rural communities function and often impose dictum that is irrelevant or inappropriate. We all choose to live in our county because of the home town lifestyle; someone telling us how to change it is not needed. Also, the superintendent should truly welcome and be respectful of all cultures. We do not need a superintendent who will villianize a group of people based on their skin color or heritage: this applies to everyone, including "white" people.
- We need a good listener that can listen to staff to understand the current situation and develop solutions with staff, board, and students to improve school systems. We need someone who cares more about student health and academic success than athletics. We need someone who is really interested in moving to this place and sticking around for a while.
- A strong belief in quality education with real emphasis on the challenges of a rural community. Someone focused on the success of students while in school and prepping them for the next step in life. Strong , independent thinker that can stay the couse without being swayed by any one group of opinions.
- A strong backbone. An ability to stand up for what is right for all of our children and to push back against policies that aren't inclusive.
- Communication - Transparency - Honesty - These are huge, and not currently there.
- He or she needs to be adept at working with a politically divided community and school board and not allow special interests to influence decisions.

Students

No Responses

Teachers

Tell us the good things about your community. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)

- Everyone knows everyone, so relationships are relatively easy to foster. Despite stark lifestyle differences, neighbors still generally look out for one another.
- Our community is made up of good people who are willing to support the students and staff. They value the outdoors, agriculture, athletics, taking care of those in need, our first responders, our diversity and seeing our community succeed.
- Small town and you are able to build relationships with your students!
- M-C is a cross-roads place, in-between the high country and the desert, the midsized city of Durango and the expansive agricultural. With this said, our community is divided in a multitude of ways, both positive and negative.
- There is a lot of diversity in the community population, in culture, language and employment. Mesa Verde National Park is the tourist attraction that draws income to our communities hotels and restaurants.
- Outdoor recreation, lots of sunlight, cultural diversity, resilient, great restaurants,.
- 1.Beautiful place to live 2. the people of this community work hard to help their children 3. Farm country 4. very diverse 5. we have great cultural resources in the area 6.there is a good connection between the public library and schools 7. nice rec-center
- One of the great things about our community is the access to the outdoors all around us. From Cortez, you access the desert or the alpine all within a 2-hour time frame. There is nowhere else that I know of that can do that. Another great thing about our community is the people here. Cortez, Dolores, and Mancos have a great selection of people that are passionate about their lives and all the things they do. From art to athletics this community is full of talent and passion.
- It's small and manageable.
- The community is welcoming and family-centered. People who live in this area often live here for many generations, so there is a pride in the community.
- Cortez is a small, family friendly community. It is in a beautiful location-the perfect hub for many destinations such as Moab, the Grand Canyon, Durango, Telluride-as well as the home of Mesa Verde. The small community offers opportunities for outdoor sports and recreation making it easy for children to get involved at a young age. Cortez also offers opportunities for world class hiking and mountain biking.
- Small Great recreational activities Cultural hub
- desert, high mtn all within an hour and a half drive...need I say more
- Small, rural with a lot of open space. Neighbors Durango, Telluride with beautiful views to match.
- The diversity here is amazing. With out indigenous neighbors, you can meet people and learn about cultures that are unique to this area. The resilience of some of these people is awe inspiring. The geography in the Four Corners area is also special. There are features in this part of the US that are also rare. Within a 30 minute drive, you can go from a high plains desert to mountains. There is a multitude of opportunities to learn about the history of some of the cultures around us in this area also. Because we are a small town, you can also complete a number of errands in a very short amount of time.
- Lots of access to outdoor activities.

- We have a diverse community- many families from a variety of cultures. Many people who care for others in the community and their well being. Lots of people appreciate the beauty of the area we live in.
- Our community has the freedoms to voice our opinions and filters are not used. Our community has deep cultural identities which are clearly defined and recognizable once you live here.
- Cortez has grown more resilient in the wake of COVID and, over years, against a backdrop of rural poverty.
- This is a small community and a safe place to raise a family. The people here are kind and welcoming. There's space to breathe in the rural parts of the county and there's the feel of more urban or suburban life inside of the town itself depending on your preference.
- rec center Phil's World(for bikes),
- I like the fun activities the community offers.
- I've only lived in Mancos for the past 6 weeks. I like the varied beliefs within the community.
- Our community is wonderful. The majority of the people are incredible, the cost of living is much more reasonable than Mancos or Durango, and Cortez and the surrounding area are incredible!!! We are close to the mountains, the desert, national parks etc . . .The Southwest is an amazing place to live!
- A tight nit community. Helpful when people are in need. Like a family.
- Our community's cultural landscape is rich in diversity. This makes us stronger.
- Our community comes together for individual needs of the teachers and school. It is a beautiful place to live with tons of outdoor opportunities.
- N/A
- This is a beautiful area with a great climate. Cortez is also a diverse community where people from a variety of backgrounds live.
- Outdoor Activities, Historical Sites
- Small, family oriented, lots of resources for students
- The community is welcoming to new arrivers. People are friendly and helpful.
- Location-mountains, desert, and lots of outdoor activities. Great savings (thrift stores; Walmart; bargains at City Mkt)
- Small area, good for retirement, home town feeling
- I like that even though the community is small, we have access to a lot of really fun activities and adventure!
- We have many amazing outdoor activities. We have a strong community of small business that support our town and school. We have a little of everything: the town, the country, the mountains, rivers, lakes, and a rich history.
- Many diverse families with deep roots to the area.
- We are close to many outdoor activities, skiing, hunting, fishing, hiking, biking, camping...
- Many families are willing to be involved in district affairs, as evidenced by a community-based effort to recall an elected school board member.
- We live in a great area for the outdoors. There are lots of outdoor activities year round and it is beautiful.
- We have a lot of grit and perseverance.
- The great outdoors

Tell us the good things about your schools. (This information is used to help us recruit quality candidates.)

- We have awesome postsecondary workforce readiness supports for high school students and great relationships with PCC and Fort Lewis.
- Our schools are full of dedicated and hardworking staff who, day in and day out, try to do what is best for our students. The cultures in our elementary schools seem to be very positive.
- The people you work with and the school Heath system at the high school!
- MCHS is where I work and I think there are dedicated people holding the ship steady, while young talented teachers cut their teeth in education.
- The personnel are dedicated people to serve our youth in all capacities.
- Each school is a family of educators that support each other, PD opportunities, self-care activities, respectful.
- 1. Always working to be better. 2. Staff works hard and is committed to the child. 3. Determined. 4. Dedicated staff. 5. schools support each other/ we have a great drama class 6. staff should be happier because we got the hvacs in
- It is the teachers, hands down. I hope this comment is not taken out for "defamation of character". I put that in quotes because I grew up in a small town, and sometimes speaking the truth can be seen as defamation. Cortez is a hard place to teach, we are a rural school in an area stricken by poverty with little resources. However, great teachers still come here. Some places will try to lure you in by saying the students are their greatest resource or say something wonderful about the buildings. For Cortez, it is the people you have in the buildings and on the ground level doing the hard work on a day in and day out for one of the lowest-ranked salaries in the state of Colorado. We are in our buildings every day ready to challenge our students and ourselves to be the best version of ourselves that we can be for our community. While all of our buildings have great programs that we could describe in considerable detail, the best thing about all of our buildings is our teachers.
- We have a great staff at my school.
- Our schools are full of high quality teachers who genuinely care about their students. Pay is higher in surrounding communities, so the teachers who stay here stay because they love the community and the students.
- We have a growing population of parents who are interested in something more for their children and looking for change in our schools. There are many dedicated teachers who have persevered through challenging circumstances and despite low pay, and uninspiring work environments continue to show up to serve the students of Cortez.
- Dedicated staff In elementary, a solid language arts and math curriculum Lots of support for new teachers
- Awesome electives! This is what brings kids to our district! We need to hang onto and support them! As we do not have a college in town, we are the center for arts and education.
- Dedicated staff and district members, student focused.
- After teaching in Denver for years, I moved down to Cortez to be with my aging mother. As I look back over my 12 1/2 years here, I am amazed at how much I have learned. I have learned to be more patient, more understanding and even more clear with expectations and follow through. I have learned that building relationships, listening, and

expressing love to my students is so extremely important. I have learned to watch more carefully for cues that a student might be struggling and need some special attention that day. The population that we work with here is so impacted, that for many students, this is the place they can receive an "adopted" parent's attention and I try to fill both roles at times as needed.

- Department members work closely together. Students have many extracurricular opportunities.
- Our schools keep students in the classroom at all costs because our community needs children in the schools for practical reasons.
- I have taught at Southwest Open School for 20 years. We are the best thing about Cortez schools, period.
- The schools here are small, which allows us to get to know students not only as they are in our classroom but it lets us watch them grow up inside of our school family. This also lets us be a family, because that's essentially what the school becomes.
- Our schools are filled with insanely talented, committed, and dedicated teachers who would do just about anything for their students.
- We have strong leaders and mentors . We can think outside the box to solve problems. We don't need to be micro managed. We consider ourselves a family.
- I love the relationship between all teachers
- There are a lot of very caring teachers who do all they can for students.
- I was impressed when I came to the Cortez district because they had information on sexual harassment (albeit an older video, but still very spot on), they provided a wonderful support for new teachers with trainings, but especially with_____. (I feel as though I can run anything by her, share difficulties, celebrations professional development, book shares . . . the list goes on and on with that piece. And that is huge because oftentimes, new teachers feel isolated and alone, but not here! The administration staff is also amazing between _____, _____, _____ and _____ and the list goes on and on and on. In addition to all of those great things, I could not have found a more ideal and wonderfully supportive school than Mesa Elementary. From _____, _____ down, it's been nothing but fabulous. I stepped into an amazing team with _____ and _____ and I am so grateful. Every teacher here is like family. I truly feel blessed!!! And all of these positives in a crazy COVID year. If it's this great for me this year, I'm excited about what a more "normal" year might entail!
- Focused on closing achievement gaps. Want to see all students succeed.
- -Our students demonstrate incredible resilience -Some teachers are doing amazing, progressive things to engage students and create meaningful, rigorous learning
- The teachers love their students. Kids feel safe in their classrooms.
- Our schools strive to provide more than academics to our students. Our qualified and dedicated staff go beyond to bring the world into our classrooms.
- The schools have staff that care about students and are willing to do what needs to be for the needs of all. Most teachers adapt well to change and seek professional development opportunities to expand their knowledge base.
- Caring and hard working staff
- Our schools are good physical facilities with solid leadership. They work to serve our students well.
- Teachers support other teachers

- Most teachers are truly dedicated to the students and will do what is needed to be effective educators. Our administrators are passionate, hardworking and dedicated leaders. They deserve support and recognition from upper admin. We have wonderful students. A lot of them need a lot of love and support but they need this school district in order to function and achieve to their best ability. They deserve a phenomenal district from top to bottom.
- Students are kind and want to please their teachers.
- The high school is a new building and very spacious. Battle Rock is a great progressive charter school.
- We have good teachers, good family involvement, and it is a positive learning environment.
- I like that in the schools there is a family feel. I also like how teachers try to support our native students.
- We work hard. Our staff is dedication, exhausted, passionate, and driven to be the best. We put in the hours for not much pay, except the success and happiness of our students. We are rich in our after school activities, programs, and performing arts. We have students that are passionate about their education and their school. We have a family at our school.
- Room for professional growth, leadership opportunities
- We have an excellent, supportive, innovative leader at the middle school.
- The current principal at the high school has restored accuracy in school's record keeping and actual graduation numbers.
- Our schools have hard working staff that always put students first. They work really hard for very little pay.
- Great staff Positive work environment Great place to become a better teacher
- There is a dedicated teaching staff

What issues should the superintendent be aware of as he/she comes into the district? (This information is shared with the final candidates.)

- There are vast ideological and lifestyle differences represented in the communities RE-1 serves, and the gaps seem to be getting wider rather than smaller. This shift is represented in all aspects of county life, from housing prices and water shares to educational goals and post-grad careers. This is also a rural and impoverished district, so know going in that money is always, always, always tight and mill levies have not, historically, been successful. From a staff perspective, it feels at times like there is not a high premium placed on education in the county; "learned skills" are valued above "book learning" and that is a large part of the divide mentioned above. Finally, the district's relationship with Towaoc has had its ups and downs. Candidates should have a strong working knowledge of tribal culture, respect for traditional lifeways and how they are lived out in today's society, and work to balance the needs of Native parents and students with dominant culture expectations. I can't tell you how many times I have hear Native adults tell me that our school system is racist. I want a superintendent who changes that narrative.
- Teacher shortage. Low teacher salaries. Substitute teacher shortage. Students are very far behind for two reasons: 1. Learning gap that occurred due to the pandemic. 2. Learning gap that is present due to a change in the Language Arts curriculum at the elementary level. Central office employees: How are they helping our teachers? How are they helping the students? What is their job? Do they do it effectively? The relationship between the school district and the community has been damaged somehow. The community does not trust the school district and the school district does not trust the community. Communication needs improved and the school should welcome the community into the schools and not be afraid to accept volunteers and help/input from the community members and parents! We need to work as a team!
- Calendar and schedules and salaries are low! All other school located around us pay high and are on four day school weeks!
- Quality teachers are the most important element in our schools.
- I have worked with 6 different Superintendents over my tenure with RE-1 School District. In 20 years, there still is not an ELL / Second Language program that follows the District, State or Federal law / guidelines.
- Area that serves high poverty, trauma, great diversity, feelings that the community doesn't support education.
- 1. strong willed educators 2. disgruntled educators because of low salary, especially those that have never recovered from pay freeze 3. New educators use our schools as a stepping stone 4. Complicated relationship with Towaoc a "sovereign nation" 5. Educators are frustrated with our calendar, it's a mess. 6. Understand that all schools and community are recovering from the trauma of covid, many of us have lost family, people are sensitive. 7. the relationship between teachers and board of education is strained 8. We need a dress code for students that stand. Hats in the building is just as distracting as colored hair and skimpy clothing. which is also becoming a problem. No hats in building also help identify anyone who creates problems within the school. 9. we have no money
- From my perspective, your biggest issues will be teacher retention and community trust. While our biggest resource is our teachers being able to keep them here is our biggest weakness and it is what many of us have believed what keeps Cortez in a stagnant position. Again I hope this is shared with you because I fear that many people will want to give you the dog and pony show and maybe not the truth of some of these issues. We have lost so many teachers that were not able to stay due to teacher pay and the inability

to provide a basic sense of living for themselves off of the starting salaries that Cortez is able to offer. We are approximately 20,000 dollars less than the average salary of non-charter schools in the state according to CDE, <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/2019-20averagesalariesforteacherspdf>. I will hypothesize that in the end, the inability to keep teachers is costing the district more because we have to keep re-training new staff over and over again. In my years at Cortez, the best returning percentage of staff has been 70% and the worst was 40%. In my third or fourth year at MCMS, I went from being of the least experienced teachers to one of the higher experienced teachers. The second issue I want to bring to your attention is community trust. From the teacher strike in 1981 to today our community still has issues trusting the school district. This has resulted from teachers being called "radical liberals indoctrinating our children", I have had someone make that claim to me when I shared that I am a teacher in our district. The distrust has resulted in us losing two mill levy's over a 3 year period, and our community voting against a state measure that would have dramatically improved their child's quality of education while not raising their tax-status as most families in Colorado have an annual income that was under the limit that would have been affected. The rationale for the distrust may come from many origins. Our county is one that has experienced much trauma and distrust from other parts of their lives that can manifest in distrust for the school. There is also a distrust that runs deep from former superintendents. I know this is entry is longer than most, and I hope it isn't buried because people don't want you to know the big issues that you will face as a superintendent.

- He/She should be aware of the demographics of the community and the special privileges awarded to a certain sector of the community. It would be nice to treat everyone fairly. He/She should also be aware of the board's attempt to remove one of the board members and the reasons behind it. He/She should be aware of the attendance issues and prevalent poverty in the community and everything associated with it.
- The new superintendent needs to be willing to listen to and talk with the teachers and staff in the district before expecting to make changes. He or she needs to learn about the strengths of the district before working to fix the shortcomings.
- This community has become very divided-especially over the last year. There are individuals on both ends of the political spectrum and they are not afraid to voice their opinions. In addition, the school board has several members who have allowed their personal beliefs to get in the way of their duty to support the school system and the children within it. This has resulted in a mistrust of leadership, and the resignations of many in the educational system. Finally, Montezuma county has one of the highest poverty and illiteracy rates in the state.
- Attendance concerns Behavioral and social-emotional needs should be a top priority Attracting and retaining solid leaders to run schools and departments Need for smaller class sizes and/or extra adult support in classrooms
- poverty, lack of fiscal support for education from community, diversity
- Lower pay-rates of teachers, positions getting eliminated, multiple changes for covid protocols and lack of communication with changes
- I believe that we need someone who is going to stand up for the importance of child's education and the fact that for many, this is the only way out of their circumstances at home. This needs to be at the forefront of the superintendent's thinking with every decision that is made. There needs to be a strong message about attendance, parent-teacher partnering, and work to gain the community's support for the district and education.

- Chronically low teacher pay is leading to high teacher turnover in the district. High rate of credit recovery in high school, especially after COVID-19.
- There is an outstanding need for our district to address the serious racism inherent in our school system.
- Teachers in the Middle School are disrespected by students on a daily basis. Students ignore reasonable requests from teachers, cuss at each other and teachers, pee on bathroom walls and toilet paper, lie to teachers directly, steal or destroy items that belong to the school, make sexually explicit comments/actions towards teachers, say racially derogative statements towards minority groups in regards to race and sexuality. *This person needs to know that they will receive threats from community members because this already happens to staff and board members.
- Rural poverty, interpolitical strife, remoteness, Native American cultural presence and heritage, public lands issues, COVID, getting kids physically active and outdoors, good relationship with CDE and standardized testing
- The district is in a rural community that, although friendly, can also be close minded about certain topics. Change comes slowly to rural places, and this is no exception. The people here are stubborn and hard-headed and by and large don't appreciate change, especially if they have to pay for it.
- There is a widely held perception that district leadership's actions frequently contrast their spoken values. We say, "kids first," but then we cut bus routes, putting young children into dangerous transportation situations. We say, "We are going to move forward with our approved safety plan," but as soon as a few parents whine, we reopen the topic for discussion. We say, "We are committed to recruiting and retaining quality teachers," but then we consistently place teachers in positions where they are unqualified or inexperienced in order to "fill the holes in the schedule." The new superintendent should be aware of this track record of mixed messaging, as it will be up to him/her to repair this damage and rebuild this trust.
- We have issues with attendance.
- How much teachers spend on their class supplies due to budget cuts
- I believe the students are not treated very respectfully within the elementary schools. I see forced compliance instead of teaching students skills like self-regulation, coping mechanisms, and buy-in.
- Some of the issues that the superintendent might need to be aware of is that while the teachers and most parents are amazing, many of our students are from low-income households where education is not always the central factor. We are a border town and we need to work positively in all ways with the both the Navajo and Ute people and provide as many supports and communication as possible since we all value all children. However, like with COVID, sometimes we are in different places as far as spread and available health care. We need to understand and not judge why many parents have kept their children at home even though quite a few of the kids lack support at home and don't even have internet. Our white culture has not always been the kindest or most forthcoming with our Native brothers and sisters, so there is also distrust with certain issues. We need to work together with all people!!!! Another challenge will be this COVID year. A colleague and I counted up the weeks that we have been in school since last March and it is less than four months. Between the off and on, some at home, some not . . . it is going to take so much to work with students over the next few years. The haves seem to have moved upward and onward with supports from home, but the kids who already faced challenges, will be facing even more difficulties. It's super sad because

they are all such precious kiddos. And since we do have such a diverse school population, I would like to see that diversity celebrated even more!

- Teacher retention -- teacher pay is low for the area/state and makes it hard to keep teachers.
- -Need to improve family and community support of the schools -Need to improve the district's relationship and collaboration with the UMU Tribe -Need to support and retain teachers -Importance of addressing the social-emotional and basic needs of our students before academics
- It's a large district and each school has different dynamics. I would ask lots of questions and I would ask that they be visible. Please communicate with us and come to our classrooms.
- Please be aware that the staff as well as the community have diverse skills and needs. Even though low socio-economic issues play a big part in the recruiting and maintaining of staff, the staff that have been here and remain here should not be thought of as unqualified or lesser.
- The biggest issue is the mistrust of the community regarding spending practices by district administration. Recent attempts at mill levies have not passed.
- Salary is too low
- Teacher retention is tough because of the low pay and high cost of living, amongst other factors. Many students are underachieving and the district struggles to actually hold them accountable for their learning. Lazy or low level students are oftentimes passed through the system without actually developing the necessary skills.
- Parents are often not involved, community has a negative view of schools/education
- Difficult student population. Hard parent groups. Dysfunctional board. The community feels entitled to "run" the school and we need leadership who will create good relationships and trust within the community so that parents and community will support and get behind the district rather than fight against it.
- There are some significant behavior issues and no real consequences for those behaviors.
- Teacher pay is a big issue-with the time I work at school I earn \$10 an hour. In addition, health insurance is expensive and almost like not having health insurance. I am terrified to get sick or injure myself. It is also important to be flexible with teachers who have young families regarding pregnancy leave and flexibility with elementary schools having different schedules than the high school.
- We have a high turn over rate due to low salary wages
- The community does not support the schools very much at all. The new superintendent needs to build a relationship with the community ASAP before trying to get much work done. There has been some trust broken with the district admin/school board and the teachers this year as we have been navigating through covid. The new superintendent needs to know that teachers need to be heard and listened to.
- Our town does not always support the efforts and growth of our schools. We need someone to help inspire our community to trust and respect us more. PAY. Our employees are living pay check to pay check and those who are not, have been here a long time and have earned their STEPS. We cannot live off of what we make.
- Local tribal customs and traditions
- Many of our students are significantly below grade level. We have many teachers who are teaching outside of their license areas. We also have people in leadership positions, administration, who are unlicensed. We are not well supported by the community.

Many teachers and students are in trauma mode. We are not well supported by the Tribe. The district has a huge problem with teacher retention. Teacher pay is very low. The district loses teachers to nearby districts that work four-day weeks.

- Teacher salaries are terribly low, steps have been skipped, ideations about going to four day weeks have seen little real follow-through and would not be in the best interests of students.
- Some issues you should be aware of at this district are: recruitment of staff can be challenging due to low wages, we have a population of low economic students that are sometimes challenging, and we have a native population that have their own cultures that you should be aware of.
- The community is not really behind "education" as a whole, and this leads to not much family support sometimes.
- The poverty in the area and low teacher salaries

What skills, qualities or characteristics should the new superintendent possess to be successful here? (This information is used as we screen potential candidates.)

- Flexibility and diplomacy are essential. Having a strong vision that aligns with staff expectations, and gives staff a voice, will be crucial. You cannot, and definitely will not, please everyone. Being able to accurately identify the core needs of our unique community and unite folks under those shared goals will be paramount. Have a vision beforehand, otherwise it is so easy to be swayed by small but vocal groups of community members/parents/guardians/people who do not have youth in the school system but do have very strong opinions.
- Trustworthy, honest, welcoming, team player, not afraid to make decisions when decisions need to be made, proactive, critical thinker, problem solver, financially savvy (putting the money where it would make the most difference: paying for more staff to work directly with our kids!), Takes input from the community and teachers seriously. Understands that the voice of teachers does not come solely from the teachers' union. Many teachers disagree with the union's statements.
- Transparent, open, and honest! One that trust their teachers as professionals!
- Be able to court both sides of the political spectrum. Improve the communication with the community stakeholders.
- The new Superintendent should possess the ability to formulate a team to address the many layers of low reading, writing and math scores, to be inclusive to ELL students, and to embrace the cultural diversity as one.
- Likes small towns, resourceful, builds community between stakeholders, promotes increased salaries and benefits for educators, collaborative decision making, promotes trauma informed and resilience practices, gives educators credit for their part in input and projects, transparent.
- 1. willing to listen and hear what the staff is asking or saying. 2. be open minded, flexible 3. open communication, transparent 4. family man or woman 6.classroom experience (a strong understanding of how all grade levels work) 7. Honest
- Having been a teacher and be able to share a common bond that relates to the teachers of your future district. You will need to be someone whom we can see as a leader that we can follow into any situation and have a feeling that we will come out on the other side better than we went in. Be a leader who is honest with us and doesn't give us the spiel of "we can all do hard things" Have honest and open discussions with your teachers about our district, the struggles we are having, your advocacy for your district towards the state

for our needs. Be a fighter for education and have some passion and show that passion. Because I am a point in my career where I am scared that I am losing it because some days I feel the passion and other days I feel that this is just a runout clock feeling.

- Equity, honesty, ability to listen to the community and staff, sincerity, clarity, vision, ability to follow through, ability to stand up for what is right, persistence, endurance, respected, experienced.
- Strong communication skills are a high priority, as the superintendent really becomes the face of the school district to the community. He or she needs to celebrate the strengths of the schools, support the teachers and staff, and have an open ear to anyone who is facing challenges within any part of the system.
- Cortez needs someone willing to make changes to the school system. The current system of top-down decision making, and traditional schooling is a big reason we have such high staff turn over and high drop out rate. We need an out of the box thinker who can listen to the staff and lead through example. We need an individual who trusts the professionalism of the staff to make the best decisions for students rather than utilizing scripted, uninspiring curriculum. We need a leader who is determined to stop using soul-squelching computerized instruction programs such as Lexia and reflex to babysit students and instead allow teachers to utilize creativity and joy in the classroom. We need to inspire our teachers, to inspire our children to be problem solvers and to love learning.
- Good communicator Open door policy Dedicated to being in schools to support staff Budget minded People person Good listener
- creative problem solver open-minded not afraid of conflict
- high level of communication, really putting the safety and needs of our staff first,
- A strong back bone. Someone who can listen to all sides of an issue and convey the why and the importance of education when communicating decisions. Someone who will come to the schools and be in the classrooms and get to know these amazing young humans.
- Compromise: Ability to synthesize information from all stakeholders to determine the best outcome in a situation. Professionalism: Understand that district staff are professionals and treat them as such. Trust staff to perform their duties without an onerous amount of oversight, unless an issue arises. Brevity: Understand that teachers' time is valuable and is best spent in their classroom, as opposed to mandatory meetings.
- Honest and open Respect and understanding of historical trauma when trying to engage with underrepresented peoples - continued outreach needed with tact, respect, and patience Resource inequity that exists for many students- some are without homes, without access to internet, computers, food, clothing, support etc.
- In regards to the Middle School environment, we need a superintendent to make sure that students are not disrupting the learning environment and if they are there needs to be an alternative solution for those students so they can be successful; a possible solution is an alternative middle school which we currently don't have.
- The other questions should be used also! Interpersonal skills, good orator, grant writing/financial management, active role in promoting relationships in the community, familiarity with interacting with the Ute tribe, willing to blossom and live in our Southwestern Colorado environment, delegation of tasks in a positive way down the ladder of command, interaction with the local media, karaoke talent
- Charisma. The superintendent needs to be able to convince the community that change is necessary, and this comes with charisma and careful planning. They also need to be kind

and in-touch with what's happening inside of the schools and firm enough to hold their ground on issues. They need to be able to set aside their learned biases.

- The ability to "listen to understand" should be of paramount importance. In the past, we have had district leaders blow into this area with loud and exciting ideas, but because they do not take the time to listen and gain an understanding of this district's unique stakeholders and culture, these ideas often fail. I believe that the ideal candidate should show strong evidence of being able to listen humbly, and collect all available information before proposing solutions.
- Has taught before Wants schools that are NOT curriculum driven but teach to the standards Needs to want to communicate on a regular bases with the teacher.
- Check in with every school to make sure they're getting what they need.
- The new superintendent should be up on current educational research (I do not believe that is currently the case), move away from micro-managing towards delegation, and the reputation of the district needs to be repaired within the community.
- I think a new superintendent needs to be wise, flexible, strategic, communicative, honest, kind, sincere, and most of all really want to be here. I always hate when we get people who just want to come for a couple of years and then move on as they aren't invested in the culture, the community, the kids or anything really with the exception of their own personal goals. I believe that they need to have a "both/and" philosophy and not be black or white in their thinking. We have very conservative people here who are valued because they have helped our community so very much. This is such a small community to have such a beautiful park system, recreation center, outdoor pool, These gifts would not be here without people who have worked very, very hard to make amenities possible. We also have very progressive people, who also have wonderful ideas and appreciate all that Cortez is and hopes to be. (And then everyone in between and on the fringes of all aspects as well.) We need a leader who is able to bridge together ideas, people, differences- a visionary. As a new person in this district, I have been so impressed by our amazing upper leadership with _____ and _____ and their decision making efforts during this tumultuous year. They have truly balanced science, community, care, concern in such incredible ways. I was really, really sad to hear about _____ resignation as I think she and _____ provided stellar leadership in all ways!!!! I always felt safe and cared for and that goes so far. Thank you for doing such an amazing job and I pray that we can continue on in that same way.
- Understanding and experience with small communities.
- -Culturally responsive teaching, diversity, inclusion, and equity -Flexibility and creative problem-solving to adapt to shortage of resources
- Someone that hasn't forgotten how it is to live and breathe in the trenches. It's so easy to make decisions when you don't have to live and breathe it.
- The new superintendent will be most successful if he/she has no preconceived ideas about our people. Listen, listen, listen.
- A new superintendent should put the needs of the students and staff first. The staff makes a school district. If the superintendent is focused more on results and data instead of the well being of staff, resentment and low morale occur.
- Great communication and honesty
- The new leader should have a vision and the skills to implement it. They should be able to do positive community outreach as well as advocate on our behalf on a state level. The leader should care about this area and want to see our schools grow and improve.

- Good at public relations Some one who wants to maintain the good that is being done, not someone who wants to come in and make the district their own...
- Thick skin. Not afraid of standing up for the best interest of students from an educational standpoint and not give into board or parent pressure. A person of integrity and perseverance to deal with a community who seems rather disengaged and unsupportive of education right now. A leader who can unify and guide the board to be effective, unselfish, LEADERS of the district.
- Open to new ideas Well organized Approachable
Have an alternative to Willing to make changes Male - Sorry if that sounds prejudice we need a balance of perspectives and we have limited male influences.
Willing to hold students and their parents responsible for behavior not conducive to the educational environment.
- Training in diversity Communication and transparency (I hear a lot of rumors about siphoned funds. I'm not sure if they are true.)
- They should be a down to earth person that we can feel comfortable going to when needed. Knowledge about all areas of education and all areas that are a part of our district.
- I think we need a new fresh mind. Someone who is open to trying new things.
- People Person. Active in the community- visible around town and the schools. A public speaker- someone who can draw and hold an audience. SOMEONE WHO HAS TAUGHT BEFORE- been in a classroom-background in teaching. Someone who can get out community on their side and help raise our salaries. Someone who wants to be in the school and interacting with the students.
- A strong spine
- Excellent communication skills are a must. A candidate will need to possess the ability to work with the Tribe and the community to build trust. We need a strong leader with innovative ideas for retaining teachers (that the school board will not dismiss out-of-hand.)
- Visibility and availability with a willingness to visit with staff at all levels on a regular and sometimes informal basis.
- Skills and qualities a new superintendent should possess are: having educational experience in various grade levels, a willingness to stay in Cortez for the long run, dedicated to helping teachers and staff with raises, better insurance, and continuing education opportunities, someone who is able to stand up for teachers and staff when necessary, someone who is willing to hold students accountable for behavior and parents accountable for attendance, and someone who has good communication skills and will listen to various sources even if they disagree with them.
- Grit Perseverance Friendliness Reasonableness Professionalism Integrity Sense of Humor Dependable Creative Empathetic Team Player
- Not a local